

Russ Bacon, Reviewing Officer
Attn: Objections
USDA Forest Service,
Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests and Thunder Basin National Grassland
2468 Jackson Street
Laramie, WY 82070-6535
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Subject: Objection to the Proposed Mad Rabbit Trail System

Dear Mr Bacon:

On behalf of the Routt County Cattlemen's Association, representing the ranching families of Routt County, we would like to express in the strongest possible terms our objection to the proposed Mad Rabbit Trail System Project. Objections by many other stakeholders are well documented, but we would focus our comments on 3 particular areas:

1. The project's Environmental Assessment (EA) is inadequate to fully analyze impact. In fact, the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is plainly ridiculous. The Colorado Roadless Rule, which clearly applies, mandates that any "acts that would significantly alter the undeveloped character of a Colorado Roadless Area require an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)." This project should not move ahead without a full EIS.
2. The Mad Rabbit project is part of an overall trails proposal explicitly designed to attract 180,000 incremental summer visitors to the Steamboat area, each staying on average over 4 nights. Economic development is a necessity, but the overload of nearly 1,700 summer visitors per day during the summer months attracted by the incremental 42 miles of mountain bike trails simply cannot be sustained.
3. Agricultural impact from migrating elk, chased out of the proposed Trails area, will be significant. Loss of habitat will certainly mean movement to areas that are now not used for spring/summer habitat, and will negatively affect both the wildlife and livestock in those areas.

As made obvious by the content found in the Objections link on the project's website, many other valid objections have been lodged. We urge the USFS to re-think its EA FONSI for the Mad Rabbit Trails Project and to conduct a full EIS. Finally, we respectfully request that the USFS carefully weigh the economic value of this project to the recreation and hospitality communities, against the cost to the wilderness, wildlife, and agricultural resources that it will undoubtedly destroy.

Respectfully Submitted on Behalf of The Routt County Cattlemen's Association,

Kyle Monger, President