



Gilpin County Colorado

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September 11, 2015

Ron Archuleta
Acting Forest Supervisor
Arapahoe and Roosevelt National Forests
2150 Centre Avenue, Building E
Ft. Collins, CO 80525

Re: Forest Plan Amendment and Recreational Sport Shooting

Dear Acting Supervisor Archuleta:

I am writing in support of the goals and directives outlined in the proposed forest plan amendment for the Arapahoe & Roosevelt National Forests. We support the proposed dispersed shooting closures based on the following:

- Increased number of shooting incidents in this heavily utilized forest, thirty minutes away from the Denver metro area, has resulted in safety issues for residents and visitors.
- Land ownership patterns in Gilpin County where 52% of the land is state or federally owned surrounded by or adjacent to private lands with private residences.
- The difficulty of patrolling the forests with two USFS law enforcement agents as well as the limited ability of county Sheriff's deputies to respond to calls on USFS land. It is understood that full closures are easier to regulate than a patchwork of closures where it may be difficult for recreational sport shooters to identify closure boundaries.
- Developed designated shooting areas will continue to be developed within the closed area.

Gilpin County remains committed to finding an appropriate site for a public shooting range. We applied, unsuccessfully, for Colorado Parks & Wildlife range grant funding in both 2012 and 2013. We are in lease negotiations now with a private landowner for a range on Hwy 119, south of Black Hawk. We will be applying again for CPW funding in the upcoming cycle as well as reaching out to the NRA and local sport shooting enthusiasts. We believe that providing a safe shooting site for residents and visitors will provide the necessary practice opportunities for hunters and law enforcement personnel in addition to providing a recreational sport shooting opportunity.

There are two issues that, in my opinion, have not be effectively addressed in the scoping proposal:

Clear Creek County

The purpose of joining the Northern Colorado Front Range Sport Shooting Management Partnership was to address opportunities and safety issues on a "landscape level"—aware that closures in one area will only push the activity to another. Without comparable closures in Clear Creek County, there may be the unintended consequence of increasing conflicts for their residents and visitors to USFS lands.

James Peak Wilderness Area

Wilderness areas have been created to ensure a place where the impacts from humans are minimal; no vehicles, engines or structures. Surprisingly, dispersed shooting is allowed in the James Peak Wilderness Area which is served by a well-maintained, flat, gravel road minutes from Hwy 119 in Rollinsville. I am afraid that without the creation of a buffer zone around the trailhead and roadway, we will see increased shooting in this scenic and environmentally sensitive area that is utilized heavily by hikers and OHV enthusiasts.

Thank you for your consideration and the time that you and staff have spent on this important process.

Regards,

Gail Watson
Gilpin County Commissioner
District 3

Cc:
Buddy Schmalz, Gilpin County Commissioner
Linda Isenhart, Gilpin County Commissioner
Roger Baker, Gilpin County Manager
Ray Rears, County Planner
Garry Sanfaçon, Project Coordinator NFRSSMP