

## Trails, Roads and Use

Remember your first bicycle? Back in 1950 I got my shiny new \$70 Schwinn with leather seat, head light and even a horn, and with chrome fenders. They were all “one speed” then. If you went up in the hills you just worked harder as you looked for roads to ride and waved at cars that came by. Things have sure changed since those days. After the big war, the country flourished economically and this gave rise to more free time from work, which gave rise to recreation businesses. Along came fancier bikes, motor bikes, jeeps etc. to “get out and enjoy the outdoors”!

This was all good, and we all used the old logging, mining and rancher roads to enjoy the outdoors on the public lands in the pursuit of a recreation experience of site seeing, hunting, fishing and picnicking. Slowly at first, something ominous started to happen, roads began to be closed, gates put up and locked, restrictions were placed on when you could ride where. Then restrictions were put on certain kinds of transportation that could travel on certain roads. Only hikers could be on many trails, no bikes of any kind. Other roads and trails were for pedal bikes only while motor bikes could be on jeep roads, but jeeps could not be on the other roads. Equestrian users had to find their own areas. The closing of many of the roads began to concentrate more users in smaller areas, resulting in animosity between recreational interests. Mountain bikers don't want motor bikers on “their trails” and hikers don't want any of the others on “their trails”, the OHV and ATV riders are left out of most areas and the jeep people are relegated to the scrap heap with no place to go besides the paved highway . I bet you even believed these lands were “your” lands!

Today, the direction seems to be to separate all users to their own designated trails and roads and never shall they have to meet or confront the others, this is people control. Unfortunately this is resulting in divisiveness with some users having more access than others. The BLM is expanding the Phil's World mountain bike trail system and trying to create Equestrian trails in the attached area. The Forest Service is expanding the Boggy Draw Mountain Bike trail system. However the motorized bike trails access is being reduced and the OHV, ATV and Jeeps access has been and is being drastically reduced throughout all the public lands.

Most of the roads and trails were constructed and developed over the years by loggers, miners and ranchers, at their expense, as “tools” in the management of the lands. Resource management and use “paid” for and developed most of today's recreation access roads and trails. The recent revelation that resource management needs to once again be done to salvage what is left of much of the forest and range land resources, begs the question of why are they closing roads and trails needed for management, use and protection of the resources? Protection from fire and insects can begin with accelerated fuelwood gathering by locals to remove the heavy dead fuels, but this requires the roads to be open to pickups and trucks the same size that the roads had been built for in the first place. They have taken a 10-12 foot road bed and either closed it or limited it to no vehicle over 50 or 60”. Some ATV's are wider than that, and my jeep is 61”, and pickup is 75”. How wide are the Forest Service fire trucks?

Is there a solution? Certainly! Redirection of the purpose of the public land management agencies to be for actively managing the forests and range lands for their health and productivity in accord with local need and direction from a County! Re-open closed roads for access for management, protection and recreation. The road surface for management would determine the vehicle size access, not some arbitrary limitation to please one segment of the public. All roads and trails should be utilized by all users with suitable transportation for the road surface. For the past 100 years horses, wagons, cars, trucks, bicycles, motor bikes, hikers, etc. used the same road and trail and respected each other's right and need for its use. Recreation use is important today, but recreation of any kind is not a tool for improving the health, protection and productivity of the land. Logging, grazing and managed fire are the tools used in management that recreation uses benefit from. Incidentally, do you ever wonder why local fire wood gatherers are restricted and must pay to remove the dead wood that later the tax payer must otherwise pay a firefighter to burn? Heavy equipment is run through the forest to masticate and tear up trees and soil for fire prevention and thinning, but a recreation camper cannot drive off the designated road for fear of leaving a track? The recent Travel Management Plans reducing, limiting and eliminating road and trail access and uses are exacerbating the failing resource health and recreation problems.

Let's get common sense management, protection and recreation back on track for the benefit of the lands, resources, economy and all users.



Road closures have been done with signs and rock barriers or high berms and ripping, here is a closure on the Historic Lost Canyon Stock Drive and Wagon Road on Haycamp Mesa in the San Juan National Forest.

If a sign is not present, a user can be fined for use of the "closed" road anyway .

The Historic Lost Canyon Stock Drive and Wagon road had been used for 100 years with no problems and where it reaches the higher elevations in the Aspens, it was a favorite fall drive for the colors and picnicking, but is now closed to all users, even firewood gatherers. See picture below.

