



File Code: 1950-1

Date: October 31, 2003

Greetings:

The Forest Service is considering a proposal to construct approximately 15 miles of new trails on the Norwood Ranger District. The project is called the "Telluride Trails," and is located within the Telluride Ski Area.

This letter provides an overview, a description of the need to take action, and the proposed action. I am asking for your written comments regarding the proposed action, and that they be sent to the address above by December 1. Based on your comments, an interdisciplinary team will identify the significant issues that focus the analysis and generate alternatives to the proposed action. This interdisciplinary analysis will be documented in an environmental assessment, which should be completed by the spring of 2004.

## **I. Overview**

There is a need to further plan for recreation uses and facilities, especially summer hiking and biking trails in the Telluride Ski Area and adjacent lands. The resort towns of Mountain Village and Telluride are continuing to develop, and there is a simultaneous demand for summer non-motorized access to the National Forest. Forest trails accessed from the Town of Mountain Village and the Town of Telluride have very high levels of summer use. This is particularly true within the ski area, in part due to the free public transportation provided by the gondola.

The current summer "trail" system on the ski area consists of existing mountain roads and one developed hiking trail (Ridge Trail) from St. Sophia gondola station to Mountain Village. The potential for a developed summer trail system on the ski area that links the Towns of Mountain Village and Telluride to system trails on national forest system land has not yet been realized.

## **II. Purpose and Need for Action in the Telluride Trails Project Area**

There is a need to:

1. Reduce adverse environmental resource damage from off-trail hikers and bikers,
2. Improve access to national forest system lands,
3. Improve trail linkages to the Town of Telluride and Mountain Village,
4. Provide recreation opportunities for hikers and mountain bikers,
5. Reduce heavy use on nearby trails, and
6. Contribute economically to the two towns as a result of more summer visitation.



### III. The Proposed Action

The Forest Service is proposing to construct five trails:

1. A universally accessible interpretive loop at the top of St. Sophia Gondola Station,
2. A hiking trail from Mountain Village to the Town of Telluride,
3. A trail from St. Sophia Gondola Station to Gold Hill, connecting to the Wasatch Trail,
4. An easy to moderate difficult mountain bike trail that loops from St. Sophia Gondola Station to the Town of Mountain Village, and
5. A mountain bike trail from St. Sophia Gondola Station that connects to the Boomerang Road and loops back to Mountain Village.

A key goal is to use gondola stations as national forest trailheads, with trails connecting the two towns and the national forest. This will serve the needs of the casual summer visitor and the year-round resident. Please refer to the attached map.

#### Participation in the Planning Process

Your participation in this process is very important to us. We hope you will have additional ideas or information that will help us to improve the summer, non-motorized trail system in this area. When responding to our proposal, please keep your comments specific to the proposal for this project. In addition, indicate if you wish to be put on the mailing list to receive further information on this project. Only those indicating a desire to be put on the mailing list will receive future mailings.

From information gathered during this “scoping period,” the interdisciplinary team will develop and analyze alternatives to the proposed action and will analyze the relevant environmental effects of each alternative. **You will have additional opportunities to participate as the project is developed.** According to the new 36 CFR 215 regulations, a 30 day comment period for proposed actions will follow the date of publication of a legal notice in the newspaper of record (Telluride Daily Planet). Individuals and organizations wishing to be eligible to appeal must provide specific substantive comments on the proposed action, along with supporting reasons, during this time period.

There will be a public meeting to discuss the proposal at 10:00 a.m., November 15, at the Wilkinson Library in Telluride. If conditions permit, we will visit sections of the proposed trail locations. Prepare for cold weather, bring water, and wear appropriate hiking boots.

I appreciate your interest and involvement in the management of the Norwood Ranger District. If you have questions, please feel free to contact Kathy Peckham, Recreation Program Manager, at this office at (970) 327-4261. If you have comments, please submit them in writing by December 1 to:

Attention: Telluride Trails Project  
Norwood Ranger District  
P.O. Box 388  
Norwood, CO 81423

You may also fax them to (970) 327-4854, Attention: Kathy Peckham.

Sincerely,

JUDY SCHUTZA  
District Ranger

Enc.