

BOULDER COMMUNITY ALLIANCE  
Curtis K. Oberhansly, President  
P.O. Box 1442  
Boulder, UT 84716  
home: (435) 335-7434  
curtiso@bouldercommunityalliance.org

January 30, 2007

Noelle Meier  
Dixie National Forest  
1789 Wedgewood Ln.  
Cedar City, UT 84720

I am writing as President of the Boulder Community Alliance regarding the motorized travel plan for the Dixie National Forest. Thank you for hosting the comment session in Escalante on January 25th and particular thanks to your team for their open and helpful attitudes regarding information and input.

We as an organization and as a community have been critically interested in this issue and have committed substantial resources to all aspects of motorized recreation in the Escalante River Basin. Our citizens and our Town Council have taken a unified and official position against any efforts or policies that will increase motorized recreation with its attendant noise, damage and user created routes throughout the Escalante River Basin. (See resolutions and petitions in the form of attachments to comments submitted to you on January 27, 2007 by Tim Clarke, Town Councilor and Executive Director, Boulder Community Alliance.)

Our positions and the positions of Boulder Town are clearly spelled out in Tim Clarke's comments referred to above. I would like, however, to stress one point and will confine my comments accordingly. Our stand with Garfield County and all other agencies is that the growing use of ATV's and the impacts that follow should of necessity demand that motorized recreation be regionalized. A policy of one-size-fits-all is simply unsustainable over the long term.

Our position is site specific and can be summed up by saying that ATV use should be concentrated regionally where it is best suited. That is to say, in

Garfield County the ATV recreational routes should be enhanced, maintained and interconnected in certain areas of the Bryce Plateau and Powell Ranger District. As a corollary, they should then be limited throughout the Escalante River Basin with less emphasis on recreation and more on transportation to trailheads for backpacking, hunting, fishing and other forms of “quiet” recreation. Regionalizing and segregating motorized and non-motorized use is well within the criteria of the National Rule. The elements that would logically support our position are terrain, impacts, segregation of conflicting uses, enforcement, infrastructure and political will:

- ◇ Terrain -- The Escalante drainage has far fewer opportunities than the Bryce Plateau to interconnect routes. Cross-country opportunities are quite limited in the Escalante Drainage and should not be enhanced. The terrain ranges from ideal to challenging for boot and hoof recreation and should be set aside as such.
- ◇ Impacts -- Wildlife habitation, vegetation, watershed preservation and other critical factors are severely impacted by any form of motorized recreation. Spreading motorized use exponentially spreads the adverse impacts.
- ◇ Segregation of conflicting uses -- The National Rule and all Forest Policies recognize that in the last three decades the uses logically break between motorized and non-motorized. In the larger scheme, all the “quiet” uses on the National Forest Lands are basically compatible with each other, but incompatible with motorized recreation. All of the surveys in Utah have shown that the percentage of motorized users on public lands are a fraction of the non-motorized users; however, the impacts of that small motorized user group far outweighs the larger user group and tends to crowd out the latter users.
- ◇ Enforcement -- This has always been one of the primary problems. Too many users and routes, too little money and enforcement. Since enforcement resources are scarce, enforcement opportunities and quality of enforcement will be much enhanced by consolidating motorized routes. (It would also be helpful if the penalties matched the offense.)
- ◇ Infrastructure and Political Will -- The Towns and host facilities in the Powell Ranger District -- Panguitch, Ruby’s Inn, Tropic and others --

have the capacity to handle ATV club and jamboree activities. They also have the support of their residents for those activities. The Town of Boulder is one of the major gateways to the Escalante Ranger District and has made it clear that it does not wish to tie its future to the type of tourism being promoted as part of the Piute Trail or other areas currently catering to motorized recreation.

In conclusion, the Boulder Community Alliance feels that motorized recreational users create impacts that far outweigh their numbers or their importance. Our future in the Escalante River Basin lies in compatible tourism conducted in a manner that can be promoted as a renewal resource. If it becomes overrun, mirroring other notable areas in Southern Utah, the quality of our life diminishes with no gain. Our success as a destination for nonmotorized recreational users resides in our ability to increase numbers without exponentially increasing impacts or conflicts.

Therefore, we ask that you add to and enhance routes in the Powell Ranger District where they are most useful and appropriate. In the Escalante drainage, we ask that you eliminate all of the seasonal routes, the small spur dead-end routes, and other routes that fulfill little purpose, while authorizing only those routes that must logically remain open as basic travel corridors or access to dispersed camping and trailheads.

Sincerely,

Curtis Oberhansly, President  
Boulder Community Alliance

