

Exhibit A – Project Information

NON-MOTORIZED TRAIL MAINTENANCE APPLICATION

Applicant or Organization Name: USDA Forest Service, Columbine Ranger District		
Complete Mailing Address: 367 Pearl Street Bayfield CO 81122		
Applicant Lead Contact Name: Kristina Schenck		Title: Lead Wilderness R
Telephone: 9708841415	Email: kristina.schenck@usda.gov	Is this the primary contact for this grant? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO

PROJECT MANAGER (this person will have day-to-day responsibility for the project)

Name: Kristina Schenck	
Telephone: 970-884-1415	Email: kristina.schenck@usda.gov

PRIMARY PARTNER INFORMATION (IF APPLICABLE)

Name:		
Mailing Address:		
Partner Contact Name:		Title:
Telephone:	Email:	Is this the primary contact for this grant? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Project Title: Weminuche Trails	
Grant Request: \$ 199,549.40	Match Amount (Min. 25%): \$ 287,072.00
Total Project Cost: \$ 486,621.40	
<p>Project Description: Please write a 2-3 paragraph description of your project and the expected accomplishments. Be sure to include Who, What, When and Where. This is your scope of work. (This section is not the place to talk about the project background, the benefits, the funding, or anything other than the actual work to be accomplished. Please address that information in question #1 of the Selection Criteria.)</p> <p>WHO? Who will complete the work, and who will oversee the project? Provide a brief description of your community or organization, highlighting its mission and purpose.</p> <p>WHAT? Explain what you are going to do or accomplish. What is the goal or the reason for your project? Break down the project into a list of specific activities to be completed. These should be quantifiable items that correspond to the categories on your budget page. Include quantity or quality as part of your description of work to be performed. How long? How many? How many feet? How many miles? What materials will be used? Is a specific standard or guideline being used?</p> <p>WHERE? Explain in detail the location of your project. Where is the project located? What county? What National Forest/BLM Office? Provide the names of the trail(s) or trail system and where the work will be performed. List the land manager agency or municipality.</p> <p>DEFINITIONS? Please define all acronyms and specialized terms that are used in your project description.</p>	

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Project Description

The USDA Forest Service (USFS) is a federal agency established in 1905 with a purpose of sustainable multiple-use land management. We manage public lands in the form of national forests and grasslands with a mission to sustain forests and grasslands for future generations. The 193 million acres of National Forest system lands provide a multitude of opportunities for sustainable recreation, which we believe facilitates meaningful connections to nature, resource stewardship, economic vitality, and healthy communities.

Weminuche Trails is a proposal for a large-scale trail maintenance project in the Pine River drainage during 2023 and 2024. Work will take place on the Columbine Ranger District of the San Juan National Forest, and will primarily occur in the Weminuche Wilderness. This Non-Motorized Grant Application seeks funding to support a conservation corps crew (SCC) specialized in crosscut to address a backlog of maintenance following the spruce beetle epidemic. The main access point is in La Plata County, and the majority of the project landscape is located in Hinsdale County.

The main objective of this project is to complete log out on approximately 69 miles of non-motorized trail in the Pine River drainage using crosscut saws and hand tools in 2023 and 2024. There are also two dirt projects that have been identified where crews will improve 2.25 miles of the Pine River Trail #523.

All work completed will follow design parameters established in the District Trail Management Objectives (TMO). The TMOs for selected trails will be performed in accordance with trail class 3 standards for both pack-and-saddle and foot traffic. The project will be managed by Lead Wilderness Ranger Kristina Schenck, and work will be performed by the Columbine Wilderness Crew and SCC.

Previous CPW grants awarded (last 3 years) List award year, category and project name

Non-motorized Trail Grant 2021 - Maintenance - Elk Creek-Colorado Trail Avalanches



File Code: 2300
Date: September 28, 2022

Colorado Parks and Wildlife
State Trails Program
13787 South Hwy 85
Littleton, CO 80125

To the Non-Motorized Grant Committee:

I am writing in support of the Weminuche Trails non-motorized grant proposal submitted on behalf of the Columbine Ranger District on the San Juan National Forest. This application seeks funding to provide resources to complete maintenance on 69 miles of trail along the Pine River drainage and its' tributaries in the Weminuche Wilderness.

If successful, the grant award will enable the Forest Service to pay for the Southwest Conservation Corps (SCC) to perform log out and tread and drainage projects during the 2023 and 2024 field seasons. This work will be completed alongside and under close supervision from the district's Wilderness Program.

Maintaining trails in the Weminuche is an ongoing effort involving a coalition of partners including the Forest Service and SCC. Staff from both groups plan to provide boots-on-the-ground in-kind support for this project in conjunction with potential grant funds. The San Juan National Forest and our partners look forward to the implementation of this project and managing the Weminuche Wilderness both for the sake of the Wilderness itself and for generations to come.

Lastly, Forest supports this proposal and understands the legal and financial obligations associated with a successful grant application. Please contact me at 970-884-1404 if there are any questions.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Francisco
Acting Columbine District Ranger



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LAND OWNERSHIP			
1. Provide the name/s of the property owners: National Forest			
2. The trail corridor is controlled by: <input type="checkbox"/> Fee Simple <input type="checkbox"/> Lease <input type="checkbox"/> Easement <input type="checkbox"/> License <input type="checkbox"/> Right-of-Way <input type="checkbox"/> Other:			
USER INFORMATION (Please check all that apply)			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hiking, Walking, Running	<input type="checkbox"/> Biking	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Equestrian	
<input type="checkbox"/> Skateboarding, In-Line Skating	<input type="checkbox"/> Snow Sports (non-motorized)	<input type="checkbox"/> ADA Accessible	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other Llama	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other Rock climbing	<input type="checkbox"/> Other	
TRAIL SURFACE			
<input type="checkbox"/> Asphalt	<input type="checkbox"/> Concrete	<input type="checkbox"/> Other	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Natural	<input type="checkbox"/> Crusher Fines	<input type="checkbox"/> Other	
PROJECT LOCATION (For multiple project sites attach a separate list.)			
Nearest Town or City: Bayfield			
County(ies): La Plata County and Hinsdale County			
Latitude & Longitude Coordinates (in decimal degrees): 37.447464 N, 107.504876 W			
State Congressional District (https://www.govtrack.us/congress/members): 3rd			
<i>Please fill out all applicable categories for your project:</i>			
Acreage of new trailhead		Miles of trail being planned	
Miles of new trail construction		Miles of trail maintenance	69.23
Miles of inter-connecting trail		Miles of trail reroute	
Miles of trail to be decommissioned		Miles of trail to be restored	
Miles of trail to be signed		Miles of trail grooming	
Other		Other	

Applicant Printed Name: Kristina Schenck

Applicant Signature: KRISTINA SCHENCK Digitally signed by KRISTINA SCHENCK
Date: 2022.09.29 12:04:51 -06'00' Date: _____

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Preliminary Timeline Estimate – Maintenance

Provide a timeline estimate using the following form. Remember that the project is to be completed within two and a half years of the award date. Any proposed changes, including extensions or modifications in the project timeline, must be requested in writing and approved in advance by the State Trails Program.

Suggestion - use quarterly time frames. Initial expiration date - June 30 or December 31, 2025, dependent upon assigned funding source.

TASK <small>Mobilization, Staffing, Construction elements, etc.</small>	Dates	Dates	Dates	Dates	Dates	Dates	Dates	Dates	Dates	Dates
	Apr-Jun 2023	Jul-Sep 2023	Oct-Dec 2023	Jan-Mar 2024	Apr-Jun 2024	Jul-Sep 2024	Oct-Dec 2024			
Prepare equipment and tools	X				X					
Lake Creek #528, Pine River #523 log out	X				X					
#539, #525, #820, #652 log out		X				X				
#540, #653, #523 log out		X				X				
#527, #541 log out		X				X				
Pine River - Lake Creek dirt project		X								
Pine River - Divide Lakes dirt project						X				
Administrative Close-Out							X			

MAINTENANCE GRANT SCORING CRITERIA

All applicants must respond to the criteria questions. Use the numbered blank pages at the end of this section. This application will be scored on a 100-point basis. The maximum number of points that can be awarded for each question is shown in parentheses. Outside reviewers and State Trails staff will review each project. Projects will be ranked according to reviewer and staff scores.

Grant review subcommittee members review and score grant applications based on the totality of information available. This may include not only the answers provided to the application questions, but also additional information provided to the review subcommittee from agency staff and subcommittee member knowledge and information that is relevant to the proposed project.

Failure to provide a response to any question (unless otherwise noted) will reduce your project's score. Please read and understand all application questions prior to answering. Respond in **12-point font**. Reference all attachments.

1. Scope (10 points)

Describe the proposed project including the length/width of trail maintenance, any major components necessary to complete the trail such as maintenance materials, under/overpasses, bridges, trail heads, trail sections that will be maintained, number of maintenance features, etc. Address each trail component separately, specifically mentioning its characteristics. Describe the state of the existing trail, why it is no longer acceptable, and how it has arrived at its current condition.

2. Access/Trail Connections (5 points)

Briefly discuss how this project maintains trail loops, links, or improves and/or restores trail use and connectivity to other trails, park areas, outdoor recreation opportunities, and/or other public recreation and community centers. If the project is connected to a larger trail system, describe the size, extent, and predominant uses of that system.

3. Need (15 Points)

Describe the project's urgency and why it is being pursued at this time. Describe what issues this trail project will be addressing (resource damage, user safety, increased trail usage, etc.) and how this project will meet those needs. Why are CPW State Trails funds necessary to complete this project and what opportunities are lost if the grant is not awarded? Describe the community this project will serve and provide population and economic data. Discuss the significance of the trail segment to users. List each user group and estimate their percentage of overall trail use, e.g., bicyclists – 40%, hikers – 50%, equestrian – 10%. What features make this trail suitable for these uses?

4. Planning and Prioritization Process (10 points)

Discuss the planning process that identified the maintenance of this trail(s) as a priority. Is this project part of an approved master plan, federal Forest or Resource Management Plan, or a landscape level regional planning effort (such as an Outdoor Regional Partnership). If so, what priority is it given in that plan? Has this project been deemed a priority by any other agencies or given any significant designations? Please explain existing trails in the area and describe the need for improvements to this section of trail.

5. Design and Trail Work (10 points)

What best management practices will be used to ensure that the trail and its amenities will be sustainable? Who is designing/will design and oversee the trail work, and what are their qualifications? Who will perform the trail work (staff, volunteers, conservation corps, contractors, etc.)? Have trail reroute options been considered for current on-the-ground unsustainable trails and trail sections in the project area? If so, are there plans to decommission and/or restore these sections?

6. Sustainability (10 points)

Has an operations and maintenance plan been developed for the project areas for long-term sustainability? If so, please explain the plan in detail including who will be responsible for this work, the estimated annual costs, and funding plans. Is this a multi-phase project, and if so, how many phases is it and how will future phases be funded?

7. Wildlife and Natural Resources (15 points)

Describe how potential impacts to wildlife and natural resources were evaluated during the planning process for the trail (such as utilizing resources listed in Planning Trails with Wildlife in Mind). Describe any plans for avoiding sensitive habitat as well as minimizing, and/or mitigating wildlife and natural resource impacts. Describe the plan for trail management and monitoring after the trail work is complete. Were CPW staff engaged in the planning process? Describe how their recommendations will be implemented. For example, if a seasonal closure is recommended, what are the dates of the closure and how will it be implemented to be effective (signage, gates, game cameras, etc.)?

8. Public Engagement (10 points)

Public notification is mandatory for all projects.

Describe the public process for this trail project (regular meetings, public meetings, working groups, etc.). Please highlight any collaborative approaches that were taken and summarize the feedback received from the public that determined the need for this project. Describe any received opposition to the project, and how the concerns have been addressed.

9. Matching Funds and Partnerships (10 points)

Discuss partnerships established for this project and their contributions. What other funding sources have been dedicated or are anticipated to be dedicated to this project? If matching funds are not yet secured, what are the plans for raising those additional funds? Will applicant and/or partner funds be lost if State Trails funds are not awarded? Submit letters of commitment/support from landowners and/or funders as a separate attachment (resolution from the governing body should include support and resource commitment; a separate support letter is not required). Beyond these letters, up to 5 non-funding letters of support may be submitted.

10. Ability/Contingency (5 points)

Describe your organization's ability to complete the specific grant transaction(s) that will be necessary to accomplish this project. Please provide examples (if any) for grant projects of similar magnitude that demonstrate your organization's ability to manage the requested level of grant funding; including the project title, grantor, award amount and year the project was funded. If State Trails funding is not awarded, what is the plan to complete the project?

1. Scope of Work (10 points)

Weminuche Trails is a proposal to maintain a network of 10 non-motorized trails in the Weminuche Wilderness. The big-picture scope of work is to log out of 69.23 miles of trail, 66 of which are located within the wilderness and therefore must be performed using crosscut saws and hand tools. Additional project objectives include improving 2.25 miles of trail on the Pine River #523 to address tread and drainage issues.

The Pine River drainage is a remote, backcountry landscape located in the heart of the ongoing spruce beetle epidemic in the San Juan mountains. This is a mature spruce forest and significant blowdown events occur annually on each of these trails, and tree counts are increasing. In 2022, work crews logged out 867 from 33 miles of trail. In 2021, work crews cut out about 758 trees from 43 miles of trail in this area, or about 63 percent. In 2020, 482 trees were cleared from 36 miles of trail, or about 51 percent. The volume of blowdown in the Pine River drainage, and in the entirety of the non-motorized wilderness trail system on Columbine, has led to a backlog of maintenance on each of these trails. Tread and drainage have taken a backseat as the resounding issue of access takes priority each season. This project is a proposal to bring these trails back to standard over time. The following list provides more detail regarding the planned scope of work for each trail.

Pine River #523 - 23.2 miles – Log out 20 miles with crosscut saws. Three miles of trail on the Pine River #523 are outside of the Wilderness, and will be cut out using a chainsaw. The first dirt project proposes to improve 2 miles by benching and maintaining tread and drainage features between the Lake Fork– Pine River junction and Pine River – Flint Creek junction. The second dirt project will improve approximately 0.25 miles of trail between the Pine River – Divide Lakes junction and Pine River – La Osa junction by installing a retaining wall in an area where the trail is washing out on the outside bend of the Pine River.

Lake Fork #528 - 9.42 miles of log out

Flint Creek #527 - 8.48 miles of log out

Sierra Vandera #541 - 4.3 miles of log out

Divide Lakes #539 - 2.1 miles of log out

Granite Lake #540 - 1 mile of log out

Rincon La Osa #525 - 6.2 miles of log out

Rincon La Vaca #820 - 6.03 miles of log out

Snowslide #653 - 4.8 miles of log out

North Fork Los Pinos #652 - 3.7 miles log out

2. Access/Trail Connections (5 points)

The project Weminuche Trails is pivotal in maintaining a larger network of backcountry trails in the Weminuche, as the Pine River trail serves as a major link in connecting visitors to other parts of the wilderness. The Pine River trailhead is centrally located in the 500,492 acre wilderness and serves as a gateway to a serene and rugged landscape, characterized by a wide and open river valley that slopes gently for 20 miles to the headwaters at the Continental Divide. Visitors can access most of the 498 miles of trail in the Weminuche from the Pine River trailhead, and there are several opportunities for loop hikes such as the Lake Fork – Flint Creek loop, and the Lake Fork – Rock Creek – Vallecito Creek loop. People also access this part of the Weminuche from the trails on the Divide Ranger District and the Pagosa Ranger District, due to its central location in the Weminuche.

The Pine River is one of the busier trailheads in the Weminuche, and an installed trail counter measures daily traffic ranging from 30-50 people per day. Popular destinations include Emerald Lake, the second largest natural lake in Colorado, and the Pine River itself, a pristine watershed renowned for fly fishing. The Rio Grande Pyramid (13,827 feet), one of Colorado's Centennial Peaks, is located along the Continental Divide at Rincon La Vaca #820, a segment of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDNST). North Fork Los Pinos #652 is also located on the CDNST, linking the Pine River and the Weminuche Wilderness to 3,100 miles of trail that stretches between Mexico and Canada.

The Weminuche Wilderness is named for a band of Ute people and the project area is located on the ancestral lands of the Ute people. The Rio Grande Pyramid is culturally significant to the Jicarilla Apache tribe.

Allowable uses in this area, and the larger Weminuche Wilderness, include hiking, riding and packing stock, fishing, and hunting. Several outfitters offer guided backpacking, fishing, and hunting trips in the area throughout the summer season.

Lastly, the discussion of access is also significant in that we know there are barriers to accessing public lands in this country, and that barriers also exist for people who want to work in conservation. Access to quality gear is one example, and this grant application seeks funding to help break down that barrier by starting a gear lending library at the Columbine Ranger District for the conservation corps crew who will work on this project. This is reflected in the budget under Category 2 – Materials and Supplies.

3. Need (15 points)

Funding and implementation of this project is a priority for the Columbine Ranger District because land management in a beetle-kill forest presents a complex set of issues ranging from resource damage to illegal chainsaw use, and negative public perception along with user safety. Opening trails in the Weminuche Wilderness is a collaborative effort between the Forest Service, partner groups, and volunteers that requires a substantial commitment of time and money. CPW State Trails funds will supplement this effort by enabling the Forest Service to hire a conservation corps crew that will be a dedicated crosscut crew working on the district from June-October.

If this grant application is successful, funding will free up agency staff to perform other administrative activities, most importantly backcountry patrol in the Wilderness. Educating and enforcing visitors about forest regulations and principles of Leave No Trace are a critical piece of wilderness management, as is keeping trails open and accessible. Moreover, trails that are maintained can indicate to visitors that the Forest Service is actively managing the wilderness, whereas miles of trails blocked by dead and downed trees send the message that the agency is unable to carry out basic duties. As trail usage increases in the Weminuche, public perception is key in facilitating responsible recreation among visitors. It's a cycle that perpetuates while dead timber still stands, and the compounding effects of more downed trees and higher traffic underscores the urgency of this situation.

If this project is not funded, Columbine will likely only be able to open 30-40 miles of the 69 miles of trail in this area. Agency staff will spend their time logging out trail instead of making public contacts. The opportunity to educate the public regarding safe and sustainable recreation in the wilderness is the greatest loss, along with the fact that visitors likely will not travel on trails that are not clear. This leads people to congregate in other parts of the wilderness and reduces the opportunity for solitude. Furthermore, resource damage will occur as social trails will skirt downed trees, leading to trampled vegetation and erosion.

Trail user data shows that the average number of groups encountered per 8 hours on the Pine River Trail increased from 8 in 2021 to 18.5 in 2022, indicating that more people are visiting the area. It's estimated that 20 percent of trail users are traveling with stock, and 80 percent are hiking. The Pine River Trail itself has a gentler grade than other trails in the area, making it attractive for both stock users and hikers.

The trail system along the Los Pinos River in the Weminuche is significant to trail users because it provides a remote backcountry experience that is unparalleled in other parts of Colorado. The Weminuche is Colorado's largest wilderness area and the Pine is in the heart of it, thereby allowing people to venture deep into the mountains away from roads, technology, and modern developments.

This project serves the local communities of Vallecito, Bayfield, Durango, and Ignacio, all of which are within La Plata County. The population of La Plata County is 56,138. Tourism is a cornerstone of the local economy, and Visit Durango estimated that 525,878 people traveled to Durango in 2021. Additionally, Visit Durango reports that 77 percent of outdoor recreation groups are tourists from outside the area. Weminuche Trails will serve the community by providing a safer and more sustainable wilderness experience for locals and tourists alike.

4. Planning and Prioritization Process (10 points)

Fire, insects and disease such as spruce beetles, and climate change coupled with a general upward trend in visitation on the San Juan National Forest have created a challenging and dynamic environment for managing trails. On the Columbine Ranger District, the trail system is composed of 210 miles of non-motorized wilderness trail, 311 miles of non-motorized trail outside of wilderness, and 150 miles of motorized trail. Planning for prioritization of trail maintenance and reconstruction occurs at the district level, and trails are identified in order of priority by the district recreation staff.

This project follows the framework and management direction developed in the San Juan National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, as well as the Columbine Ranger District Travel Management Plan. Additionally, management direction for trail maintenance is discussed in the Weminuche Wilderness Management Plan 1979.

Existing trails in the area consist of mainly non-motorized trails in the Weminuche Wilderness on the Columbine Ranger District to the west, Divide Ranger District to the north, and Pagosa Ranger District to the east. On Columbine, trails in the Vallecito Creek drainage are directly west and are in a similar state as trails in the Pine River drainage in that downed trees fall across the trail in the hundreds each spring. These trails have been cleared more frequently in the past by district work crews, SCC, outfitters, and volunteers, so they are not included in this project. To the east, trails on the Pagosa Ranger District are logged out and maintained every year, which is more frequently than those in the Pine. In summary, the trails in the Pine River drainage are a link between several other areas in the Weminuche where trails are logged out each summer.

5. Design and Trail Work (10 points)

Complying with the Wilderness Act of 1964 and wilderness regulations are the most significant best management practices that will be used throughout the planning process. This includes using only hand tools to perform work on the project, and stock to transport materials to the project site. Work crews will also comply with wilderness regulations by limiting group size to 15 people or 25 heartbeats with stock. People will camp 100 feet away from water and take appropriate actions for managing human waste when staying in large camps for extended periods of time.

Sustainable trail design will decrease erosion and subsequent resource damage. All trails in this project were designed to Trail Class 3 standards and we will be using USDA Forest Service design standards for all maintenance activities. Obstacles on these types of trails 'may be common, but not substantial or intended to provide challenge.' The density of downed trees on these trails lead to conditions that do not meet standards outlined in the agency's trail class matrix.

The Columbine Ranger District's Trail Management Objectives (TMOs) establish that all 9 of the trails that will be included in this project are designed for class 3 pack and saddle. These trails are also managed for hikers. We will be referring to these design parameters when digging tread and drainage, when logging out trail, and working on corridor. This includes trail with a tread width of 24 inches and up to 48 inches on steep side slopes, with a target grade of 10 percent and a clearing width of 8 feet by 10 feet. Clearing and corridor widths are defined as eight feet wide by ten feet high.

This project will be managed and supervised by a team of wilderness professionals led by Kristina Schenck, Lead Wilderness Ranger on the Columbine Ranger District. Kristina is a C-certified crosscut sawyer with nearly a decade of boots-on-the-ground experience leading trail crews in the Weminuche Wilderness. The District Wilderness crew is composed of four seasonal employees, all who have three or more seasons of experience of trail work in the Weminuche. The Wilderness program will perform some of the crosscut work and will also oversee the Southwest Conservation Corps crew for their portion. Additionally, three wilderness crew members have worked on conservation corps crews previously. This experience with 'corps life' is extremely beneficial for engaging with the Southwest Conservation Corps crew. This partnership between the Columbine Ranger District and the Southwest Conservation Corps is a well-oiled machine and this team is prepared to manage all components of Weminuche Trails.

Lastly, the wilderness program will utilize diversity and inclusion best practices in the workplace both internally and externally when engaging with partner groups. We know that people who feel safe, supported, and valued at work are better prepared to perform and contribute to a common goal. This commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion is top priority and critical to facilitating safe, productive work environments, and has proven to be a driving factor of success for the Columbine Wilderness program in previous project implementation.

6. Sustainability (10 points)

Weminuche Trails is a proposal to increase capacity to conduct regular maintenance on non-motorized trails. The Forest Service maintains trails on a rotating schedule, and all trails on the district are given a numbered rating of 1 through 3 based on priority of work. Typically, trails that are rated 1 are cleared every year, priority 2 trails are maintained every other year, and priority 3 trails are worked on every 3-5 years. Because the volume of dead trees falling across trails occurs at such a high frequency, it really works better if trails are cleared every year in a beetle-kill forest. For example, the Flint Creek trail was not cleared for several years and had 500 trees down in 8.5 miles, or about 58 trees per mile. This backlog of maintenance creates situations where crews return to job sites week after week, which is just not efficient.

For this project, we will clear trails in order of their priority rating, just as we do for normal operations. However, the difference is that we will clear them in order of priority with the ultimate goal being to clear all 9 of the listed trails each year in 2023 and 2024. We anticipate that the forest is approaching peak blowdown along the Pine and that the volume of dead trees falling on trails will begin to decrease in the next 3-5 years. This estimation is based on forest health observations in Weminuche Creek, the next drainage directly east of the Pine. In Weminuche Creek, spruce beetles led to 70-90 percent mortality in some stands. Deadfall in that area has peaked and canopy is starting to open as most trees have fallen, and since the spruce beetle epidemic moved from east to west, we anticipate the forest along the Pine is a few years behind Weminuche Creek.

With the idea that we have not yet approached peak blowdown and have a few more years of heavy maintenance ahead of us, the Columbine Ranger District has secured Congressional funds through the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA) to implement trail maintenance on three trails in this area including Lake Creek #528, Flint Creek #527, and Sierra Vandera #541. In total, \$216,800 has been appropriated for Weminuche Trails for project work from 2022-2025. The Columbine Ranger District plans to spend \$155,000 on Weminuche Trails in the 2023 and 2024 field seasons, which is reflected in the budget as a cash match. The short-term plan for clearing trees in the Weminuche is to supplement GAOA funds with grant funds if this application is successful. The long-term plan is to continue monitoring forest pathology in the area to determine if there is a need to secure funding from additional sources for work beyond the year 2025. Additionally, the long-term plan is to clear trails based on the priority rating as clearing trails is an inevitable part of land management. Eventually the blowdown will slow down and clearing trails on a rotating schedule will be more realistic.

There are two tread and drainage projects that have been identified, and the Lake Creek – Pine River junction project will occur in 2023, and the Pine River – Divide Lakes in 2024. Both dirt projects are intended to be stand-alone events that will not require annual maintenance or future phases.

The ratings and work crews that will be assigned to area trails are as follows:

Priority 1

Pine River #523: mp 0-5.75 – USFS, mp 5.75-15 – SCC, mp 15-23 - USFS

Lake Fork #528: SCC

Rincon La Osa #525, Rincon La Vaca #820, North Fork Los Pinos #652: USFS

Priority 2

Snowslide #653, Flint Creek #527 : SCC

Divide Lakes #539: USFS

Priority 3

Sierra Vandera #541, Granite Lake #540: SCC

7. Wildlife and Natural Resources (15 points)

Previous NEPA analysis, communication with CPW, and consulting Forest Service specialists are the primary methods we have used to evaluate potential impacts to wildlife and natural resources in implementing Weminuche Trails. It is important to note that all trails included in this application have been system trails since the Weminuche was designated as Wilderness in 1975. Wildlife and natural resource issues were addressed when these trails were constructed.

The San Juan National Forest along with the Rio Grande National Forest completed a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis for management direction of wilderness resources in 1998. From this analysis, the forests determined the recreation-use capacity within the Weminuche Wilderness. Following this NEPA process, both forests began to restrict group sizes to 15 people with a maximum combination of people and stock not to exceed 25. The recreation-use capacity and group size limit is based on a number of factors such as campsite conditions and wildlife concerns. Another outcome from the 1998 Wilderness Management Direction was to restrict camping with 100 feet of lakes and streams. This regulation minimizes new impacts to vegetation and soils in fragile riparian areas. All crews working on Weminuche Trails will comply with the group size limit and camp at least 100 feet from water. Crews will camp at legal, existing campsites to concentrate impact in those areas, rather than trampling vegetation in undisturbed areas.

It's also important to note that all personnel working on this project will comply with Leave No Trace principles in addition to wilderness regulations.

The trail maintenance activities proposed in this application primarily involve hand tools and traveling by foot. All trails except for 3 miles of the Pine River trail will be logged out using crosscut saws and other hand tools, which are quiet, do not require any fuel, and have minimal to no impact on wildlife and natural resources. Using hand tools also mitigates impacts to wildlife because people move slower and therefore cover less ground/habitat, as opposed to motorized methods of work and travel that affect more area per unit of time because of both noise and the ability to cover larger distances.

Trail workers will keep cut logs out of drainages in areas that need heavy clearing in close proximity to intermittent or perennial streams, at the request of the district hydrologist.

Fisheries did not have any concerns regarding this project.

CPW Area Wildlife Manager Adrian Archuleta was informed on September 2 of the intent to submit a grant proposal. No concerns were raised at that time.

8. Public Engagement (10 points)

The public process for Weminuche Trails consists of feedback from the public, discussions with permitted outfitters, and collaboration with partner groups to clear trails.

The San Juan Mountains are the epicenter of the spruce beetle epidemic, and the resulting swaths of dead forest of up to 90 percent mortality are a glaringly obvious sign of change to the public. The subject of dead trees comes up frequently when engaging with visitors, and concerns about trail access are many. In general, verbal feedback from the public is positive when discussing trails that have been, or are going to be logged out. There are also concerns about safety regarding camping and traveling in a dead forest. We also receive negative feedback from people who believe that chainsaws should be allowed in Wilderness, both verbally and non-verbally. For example, chainsaw use in the Weminuche is rampant, especially on trails in the Pine River drainage. Since motorized uses in the Wilderness are illegal, this presents a management issue for the agency as we commit time to try to stop illegal chainsaw use. Overall, the message from the public is that they value access to wilderness trails, and that there are some who will turn to unauthorized, illegal methods of cutting out trails to improve access.

Permitted outfitter and guides frequently discuss trail access in the wilderness with the agency. Several outfitters log out their own trails and/or collaborate with the wilderness program to open trails in areas where they are permitted. The need from this community is clear, as their businesses depend on accessing remote, backcountry areas with stock.

We partner with organizations such as the Backcountry Horseman, Great Old Broads for Wilderness (GOB), San Juan Mountains Association (SJMA), and Colorado Trail Foundation to cut out wilderness trails each year. Since Columbine is a backcountry district with 323,625 acres of wilderness and 210 miles of non-motorized wilderness trail, it takes a village to steward our wilderness areas and trail system. These are groups that have come forward and requested that we enter agreements to allow volunteers to perform trail work on non-motorized wilderness trails, and this demonstrates a recognition of need as well as a commitment to stewardship. These organizations typically work on trails outside of the Pine River drainage, and this will enable the Forest Service to focus on the Pine for the purpose of this project. Lead Wilderness Ranger Kristina Schenck has presented at several meetings for GOB and SJMA on the topic of crosscut and wilderness trails.

Lastly, the demand for access to non-motorized wilderness trails has become more prominent over time. In May of 2019, the Regional Forester issued a decision to allow chainsaw use in the Weminuche and South San Juan Wilderness areas. This was in response to a movement of people in Pagosa who went directly to the Regional Forester with their concerns of trail access following a winter of heavy snowfall and more than a decade of witnessing the spruce-beetle epidemic. Eventually, the decision was rescinded, and litigated. To our knowledge, was no administrative use of chainsaws in either the Weminuche or South San Juan during this exception period. The administrative response to public demand, and subsequently, their need to access trails, is demonstrative of the overall need to seek out more resources to cut out non-motorized wilderness trails.

9. Matching Funds and Partnerships (10 points)

Weminuche Trails is a collaborative effort between the Forest Service and the Southwest Conservation Corps (SCC). The ability to field backcountry trail crews is the result of a long-standing partnership between both organizations, and also between the individuals who will be managing this project. We work closely together on the ground to implement grant funding and make these types of projects of reality. We have a mutual understanding that project management requires supervision and support from both the agency and from SCC, and this is represented in the budget as an in-kind match from the Forest Service.

The in-kind match for agency staff time is a commitment from the Columbine Wilderness program to provide supervision of SCC crews, and crew hours for logging out trail. The Columbine Wilderness program is prepared to offer \$52,072 of staff salary as matching funds, which includes 840 hours of crew time for log out, along with 215 days of staff time for supervision and support. We have also asked for funding for overtime from CPW funds. The overtime funds will help supplement staff salary as project locations are remote and often require multiple days of travel to access job sites. Overtime funds will enable USFS personnel to lengthen backcountry trips and spend more time on the ground working directly with SCC crews to ensure quality and productivity.

The cash match for this project has been secured by the Forest Service and is represented in the budget as a \$155,000 contribution from Congressional funds appropriated through the Great American Outdoors Act. This will be used to pay for weeks of work completed by SCC, and for packing services to pack in crews. These funds will not be lost if State Trails funds are not awarded, rather this project will just be implemented on a smaller scale.

Conservation Legacy/SCC is offering a 25 percent in-kind volunteer match. Conservation corps crew members and leaders provide that match based upon the difference between their living allowance and the hourly value of their service as determined by the Independent Sector, FICA, and Unemployment Insurance. This is shown in the budget as \$38,000 based on 2023 weekly rates, and \$40,000 based on 2024 weekly rates for a total in-kind match of \$80,000. Since this in-kind match is based on funding for 32 weeks of work total, some of it will be lost if this project is not funded. If this project is not funded, the Forest Service will implement 13 weeks of work with the match provided, and therefore SCC will provide an in-kind match of 25 percent based on those numbers.

10. Ability/Contingency (5 points)

This organization is well-prepared and fully capable of completing all transactions that will be necessary for successful implementation of Weminuche Trails. Previously, the Columbine Wilderness program was awarded \$55,810 for a Non-motorized Trail Maintenance Grant in 2021 to manage Elk Creek – Colorado Trail Avalanches. Though the funding request for that project was lower, Elk Creek was a more complex project due to the variety of partner groups who were involved and the technical aspect of removing avalanche debris in a wilderness setting. Regarding transactions, we successfully administered project agreements with Conservation Legacy/SCC, submitted invoices and progress reports with photos to State Trails on time, secured match funding from three different partner groups, and procured the equipment and supplies needed to carry out a blasting project.

On the ground, we removed more than 1500 trees from 0.3 miles of trail at four different project locations and used hundreds of pounds of explosives to re-establish trail tread and drainage features. We're proud of our work on Elk Creek here at the Forest Service, and so are our partners, and we're confident that a project of that complexity demonstrates our ability to successfully partner with State Trails in the future.

At the time of submission, the project applicant is currently administering and implementing the Columbine OHV Program 2022 as part of the Good Management program from State Trails. This includes managing a collection agreement with CPW, a supplemental project agreement with Conservation Legacy/SCC, and managing the district trail crew. The district received \$38,000 for this grant. The project applicant will continue to manage this grant until close out as the result of vacancies in the recreation program on Columbine.

It's also important to note that the partnership between Conservation Legacy/SCC and the Columbine Wilderness program contributes to our ability to manage transactions and boots on the ground. This is something we have done together before, with the same type of funds, on a smaller scale. If State Trails funding is not awarded, we will still implement Weminuche Trails and clear trails in the Pine River drainage, just on a much smaller scale with 13 weeks of work between 2023 and 2024. We estimate that instead of clearing 69 miles of trail, we would clear 30-40 miles of trail each year.

Federal Environmental Form and Land Manager Approval
Only to be completed if all or part of the project is located on federal land

The applicant is responsible for securing all necessary permits, licenses, clearances, SHPO, and environmental analysis documentation necessary to comply with local, state, and/or federal laws.

Project Name Weminuche Trails Project Sponsor USDA Forest Service

As the official responsible for management of the land on which the project will be accomplished, I agree to the following:

1. The project as described in this application has my approval.
2. The project is located on federal public lands and is in conformance with the appropriate Forest Management Plan, BLM Resource Area Management Plan or other decision document.

Title of document: San Juan National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan

Date of document: September 2013

3. A decision has been issued as part of the NEPA environmental review process.

Title of document: Categorical Exclusion not requiring a decision memo per FSH 1909.15 32 12(4)



Date of document: "Repair and maintenance of roads, trails, and landline boundaries."

If a decision has not been issued as part of the NEPA environmental review process, please state the reason why. No funds will be distributed until any required NEPA documentation is completed.

For more information about the NEPA environmental review process, contact:

Name: Cam Hooley, Environmental Coordinator

Phone number: 970-884-1414

Email: camela.hooley@usda.gov

4. The next planning process that may affect this project is planned for _____.

Land Manager's Name: Elizabeth Francisco

Land Manager's Title

Land Manager's Signature: Acting District Ranger

ELIZABETH FRANCISCO Digitally signed by ELIZABETH FRANCISCO
Date: 2022.09.29 09:03:57 -06'00'

Section 3 - Project Budget

Project Name: Weminuche Trails		Office Use:						
SOURCE OF FUNDS	Date Secured				CPW Trails Grant Request [A]	Total Project Match [B]	Total Funding (\$) [C]	
CASH								
CPW Non-motorized Trail Grant					\$ 199,549.40		\$ 199,549.40	
GAOA Weminuche Trails - USFS Match	7/1/2022					\$ 155,000.00	\$ 155,000.00	
IN-KIND								
SCC In-kind Volunteer Match	9/28/2022					\$ 80,000.00	\$ 80,000.00	
USFS Salary and Wages	9/28/2022					\$ 52,072.00	\$ 52,072.00	
TOTAL SOURCES OF FUNDS					\$ 199,549.40	\$ 287,072.00	\$ 486,621.40	
[CASH] Description of Work	Qty	Unit	Unit Price	Total (B*D)	CPW Funds	Total Project Match (\$)	Total Funding (\$)	Balance [should be 0]
CATEGORY 1-Contracted Services Identify as: Youth Corps, Engineering, Contractor, etc.								
Southwest Conservation Corps 2023	16	weeks	\$ 9,500.00	\$ 152,000.00	\$ 85,000.00	\$ 67,000.00	\$ 152,000.00	0
Southwest Conservation Corps 2024	16	weeks	\$10,500	\$ 168,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 68,000.00	\$ 168,000.00	0
Packing services	100	loads	\$ 200.00	\$ 20,000.00		\$ 20,000.00	\$ 20,000.00	0
Category 2 - Salary/Wages								
Overtime for GS-05	200	hours	\$ 25.53	\$ 5,106.00	\$ 5,106.00		\$ 5,106.00	0
Overtime for GS-04	100	hours	\$ 28.56	\$ 2,856.00	\$ 2,856.00		\$ 2,856.00	0
CATEGORY 3-Materials/Supplies Identify as: Signs, crusherfines, native seed, weed barrier, etc.								
Backpacks	10	items	\$ 225.00	\$ 2,250.00	\$ 2,250.00		\$ 2,250.00	0
Sleeping bags	10	items	\$ 143.97	\$ 1,439.70	\$ 1,439.70		\$ 1,439.70	0
Tent footprints	10	items	\$ 37.80	\$ 378.00	\$ 378.00		\$ 378.00	0
Tents	10	items	\$ 251.97	\$ 2,519.70	\$ 2,519.70		\$ 2,519.70	0
USE OF FUNDS - CASH SUBTOTAL					\$ 199,549.40	\$ 155,000.00	\$ 354,549.40	
*ESTIMATE NUMBER OF CREW HOURS [GRANT AND MATCH] CONSTRUCTION/MAINTENANCE					12460	8320	*REQUIRED INPUT	
[IN-KIND] Description of Work	Qty	Unit	Unit Price	Total (B*D)			Total Funding	Balance
Category 1 - Contracted Services								
SCC In-kind Volunteer Match 2023	16	week	\$ 2,375.00	\$ 38,000.00		\$ 38,000.00	\$ 38,000.00	0
SCC In-kind Volunteer Match 2024	16	week	\$ 2,625.00	\$ 42,000.00		\$ 42,000.00	\$ 42,000.00	0
Category 2 - Salary/Wages								
Forest Service employee GS-7 Kristina Schenck	75	days	\$ 222.74	\$ 16,705.50		\$ 16,705.50	\$ 16,705.50	0
FS Seasonal employee GS-05	90	days	\$ 159.50	\$ 14,355.00		\$ 14,355.00	\$ 14,355.00	0
FS Seasonal employee GS-04	50	days	\$ 143.03	\$ 7,151.50		\$ 7,151.50	\$ 7,151.50	0
Forest Service Crew hours	840	hours	\$ 16.50	\$ 13,860.00		\$ 13,860.00	\$ 13,860.00	0
IN-KIND SUBTOTAL						\$ 132,072.00	\$ 132,072.00	
TOTAL PROJECT COST					\$ 199,549.40	\$ 287,072.00	\$ 486,621.40	
25% REQUIRED MATCH						\$ 49,887.35		

Weminuche Trails Statewide Vicinity Map

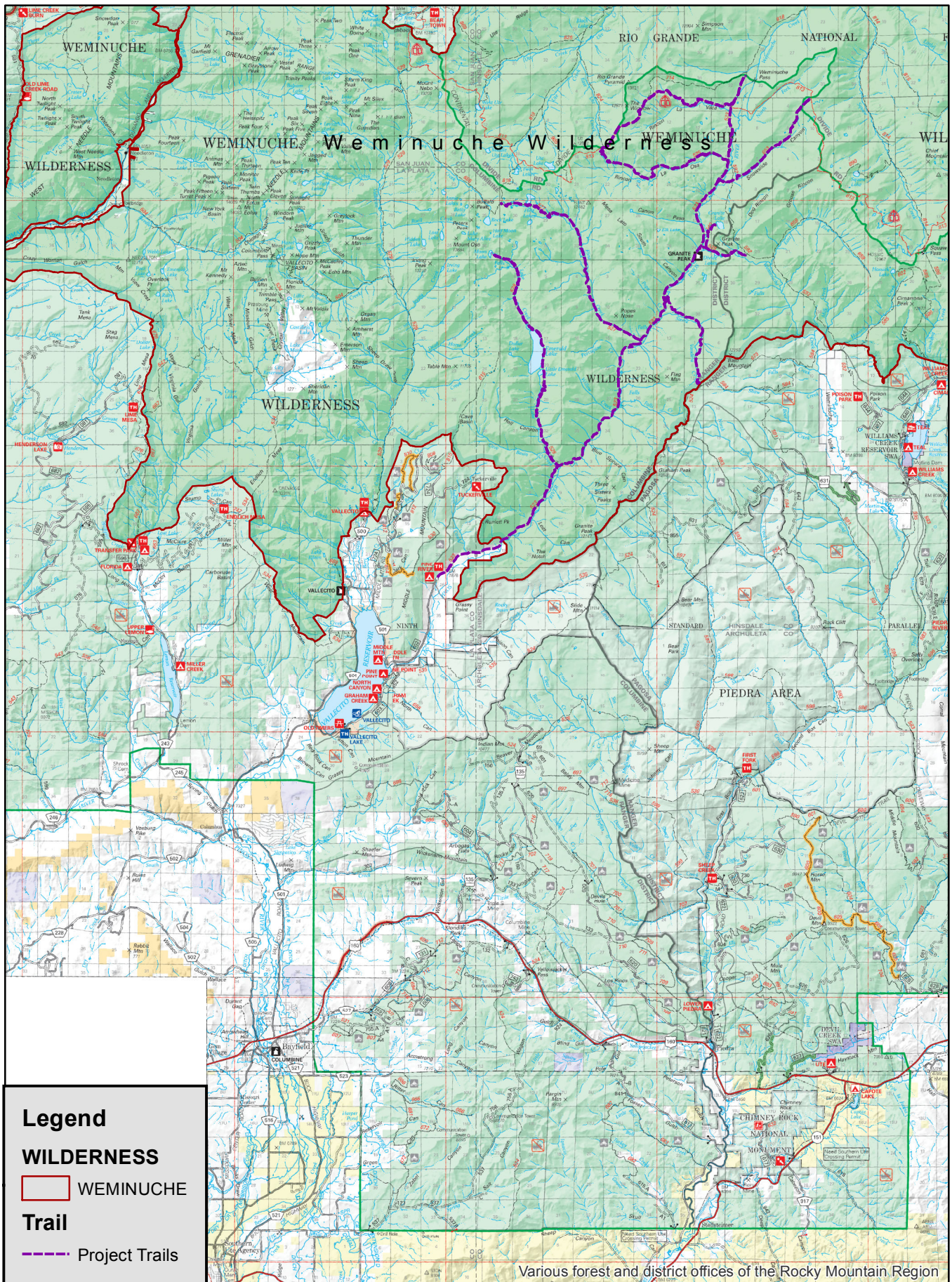
1:5,000,000



Sources: Esri, HERE, Garmin, Intermap, increment P Corp., GEBCO, USGS, FAO, NPS, NRCAN, GeoBase, IGN, Kadaster NL, Ordnance Survey, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong). (c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

Weminuche Trails Local Vicinity Map

1:350,000




Legend

WILDERNESS

 WEMINUICHE

Trail

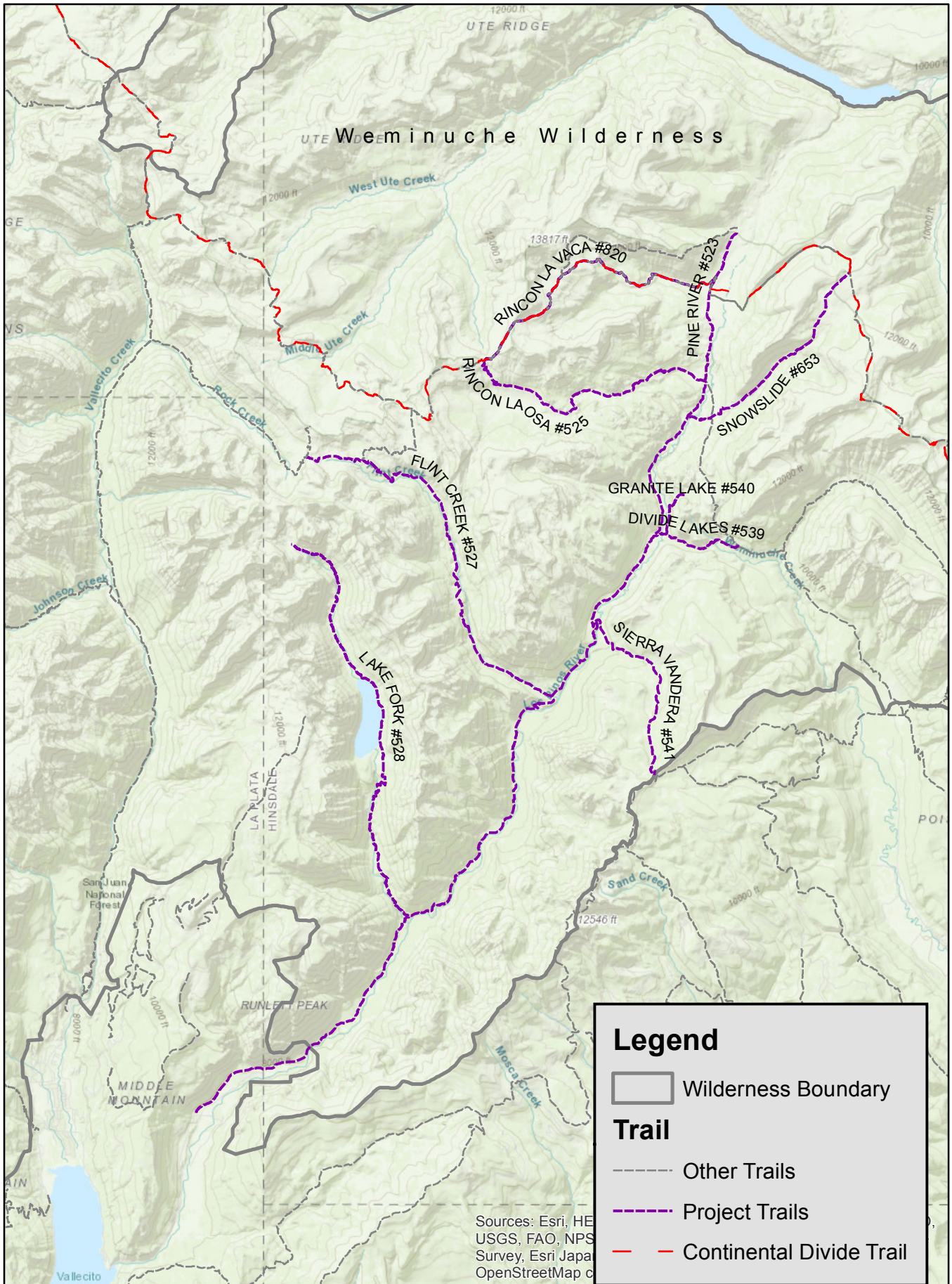
 Project Trails

Various forest and district offices of the Rocky Mountain Region

0 1.75 3.5 7 10.5 14 Miles

Weminuche Trails

1:200,000



Legend

Wilderness Boundary

Trail

Other Trails

Project Trails

Continental Divide Trail

Sources: Esri, HE
USGS, FAO, NPS
Survey, Esri Japa
OpenStreetMap c

0 1 2 4 6 8 Miles

Weminuche Trails Photos



Clockwise from the top left: A wilderness ranger is barely visible behind a jackstraw of trees on the Flint Creek Trail #527; Top Right: More down trees on Flint Creek; Bottom right: Rincon La Vaca from the Continental Divide; Bottom center and bottom left: Washed out area in need of reconstruction along the Pine River Trail #523; Center left: A wilderness ranger preparing to cut back a tree that was cut with a chainsaw on the Pine #523; Center right: A wall of trees on the Pine #523.





September 21st, 2022

Colorado Parks and Wildlife
State Trails Program
13787 U.S. Highway 87 N
Littleton, CO 80125

Re: Columbine Ranger District Grant Application

Dear State Trails Review Committee,

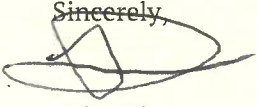
My name is Tyler Dixon and I am the Camp Director at Colvig Silver Camps, a family-owned residential summer camp in Durango, CO. We offer traditional summer camp programming (i.e. horseback riding, climbing, arts and crafts, etc.) as well as alpine backpacking trips for our campers ages 8 to 17. Colvig Silver Camps would like to offer enthusiastic support to the grant application being made by the Columbine Ranger District of the San Juan National Forest.

The Pine River drainage in the Weminuche Wilderness offers a prominent trail system in the Weminuche Wilderness and the Pine River Trailhead is one of the most prominent access points into the Weminuche Wilderness on its southern border. Over the past few years there has been a significant increase in down trees over the trails in this drainage due to beetle kill and blowdown. Our trip leaders have witnessed the amount of blowdown first hand and the significant impediment they create to backcountry travel in the area. The Columbine Ranger District's plan is to focus log out and tread and drainage efforts along the Pine River drainage in the summer of 2023 and 2024. Work will be implemented by the Columbine Ranger District Wilderness Program which is composed of two seasonal wilderness field crews as well as an 8-person trail crew from the Southwest Conservation Corps, a local youth engagement organization providing employment and teaching outdoor and trail skills on public lands. All trail work will be completed in accordance with the letter and intent of the Wilderness Act. We understand it can be difficult for the US Forest Service to accomplish needed trail work of this magnitude with their allocated funds and resources.

Being a residential summer camp and wilderness program, Colvig Silver Camps strives to give youth meaningful experiences in the wilderness while teaching appreciation and conservation for our wild lands. This grant will provide needed funds, matched by local resources, to allow Colvig Silver Camps as well as many other outdoor recreationalists and fishermen to utilize and enjoy the Pine River drainage and this beautiful part of the Weminuche Wilderness. We hope that you will seriously consider this grant application.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions and thank you for your consideration of our support.

Sincerely,


Tyler Dixon
Camp Director

CLAY COLVIG
Executive Director

JAMIE VORWALD
Office Manager



9665 FLORIDA ROAD • DURANGO, COLORADO 81301
(970) 247-2564 • FAX (970) 247-2547 • office@colvigsilvercamps.com
www.colvigsilvercamps.com

TYLER DIXON
Director

SEAN SPENCER
Program Director



San Juan Mountains Association

EXPLORE ♦ LEARN ♦ PROTECT

September 26, 2022

Colorado Parks and Wildlife
State Trails Program
13787 South Hwy 85
Littleton, CO 80125

RE: 2023 Non-Motorized Trail Maintenance Grant Program

Dear State Trails Review Committee:

The San Juan Mountains Association (SJMA) strongly supports the grant and funding application being submitted for the Weminuche Trails Project on the Columbine Ranger District of the San Juan National Forest. This project will continue efforts to improve and enhance access for non-motorized recreation through the continued maintenance of long-term sustainable trails. With the growing importance of tourism and public lands access to the local economy and the continuing challenge of downed trees due to the spruce beetle epidemic, these funds are essential to providing trail access and maintaining recreation opportunities in the region.

SJMA has over thirty years of experience in Southwest Colorado as the educational, interpretive, and stewardship partner of the San Juan National Forest. Through collaboration with volunteers, land management agencies, and partner organizations, we work to encourage the public to learn about, explore, and protect the public lands of Southwest Colorado. This proposal will help to provide outdoor recreation to some of Colorado's most scenic backcountry in the Weminuche Wilderness. Since 1988, SJMA has been committed to promoting the responsible use and stewardship of the Weminuche, Colorado's largest wilderness area. This project will ensure that the trails that locals and visitors rely on will remain clear, and ensure the viability of National Forest access for a multitude of non-motorized users in the Pine River drainage.

We are delighted to support this project, which will utilize Southwest Conservation Corps crews who will work to clear trails of downed trees, ensure proper drainage and tread alignment, and prevent trails from being lost to the beetle kill epidemic. This project will significantly enhance non-motorized access in the Columbine District maintaining these valuable assets for the local community, visitors, and our National Forest.

Please consider the great benefit that this funding will provide to the local community, the recreation economy, our cherished Weminuche Wilderness, and the people that value outdoor recreation in Southwest Colorado.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Stephanie Weber'.

Stephanie Weber
Executive Director

CONSTRUCTION OR MAINTENANCE GRANT APPLICATION CHECKLIST

MANDATORY:

Signed letter of resolution from the Governing Body (Board of Directors or Commissioners, City or Town Government, etc.) that states the resources and support committed to the project.

Timeline form has been filled out

Environmental forms (Federal or Non-Federal) filled out and signed by authorized personnel

Budget uploaded as an unprotected Excel document

Maps/Photos/Graphics uploaded as PDF document(s)

Letters of Support (maximum of five) uploaded. No letters from clubs, groups or individuals who are specifically working on the project. No letters from CPW staff.

Project should be completed within 2.5 years from receiving grant

Required MATCH funding is secured, including CASH match funds. If not secured at time of application, add a note in the comments sections at the bottom of this form.

Scope of work and project location map emailed to CPW Area Manager by September 6, 2022.

Project area is owned by a public land agency or has an easement that designates the area to be open to public outdoor recreation for at least 25 years.

Formal Environmental Assessment (EA) or NEPA (Must be completed prior to applicant presentations in January 2023. Include web link to EA).

Construction projects have been evaluated for required permits. If required, permits have been acquired (404 permit, etc.)

ADDITIONAL PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS:

Youth Corps or youth organization will be used on the project (name of organization)

Volunteers will be utilized on the project (name of organization)

Comments