November 8, 2010

United States Forest Service (USFS)
San Carlos Ranger District
3028 E. Main Street
Canon City, Colorado 81212

Attn: Paul Crespin, Mike Smith

Gentlemen,

Since your first presentation to the Custer County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) regarding the USFS proposal to initiate a permit and fee schedule system for recreational access to South Colony Basin and the surrounding 14,000-foot peaks in the Sangre de Cristo Range we have been receiving a great deal of public feedback. The vast majority of that citizen and advocacy group feedback has been negative. The written and verbal communication that we have received to date is what prompted our BOCC request to have a further conversation with our USFS District personnel and the public.

We understand the issues are complicated and from the USFS point of view that includes: increased trail use; lack of adequate funding for maintenance, education, safety, sanitation, enforcement, and the restoration of degraded ecosystems and roads. From the county's perspective it is our desire to be good stewards of all of our land. As a local government agency we need the income produced by visitors, and the continuation of fully funding our Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT), so that we can continue to preserve the beauty of our county including our public lands now and for future generations.

We respectfully ask the USFS to rework the current proposal. We want the USFS work together with local governments, advocacy groups and our public to find a compromise and develop a strategy that helps to support everyone's needs. By entering into a meaningful dialogue through a scheduled public hearings process we can come to a conscience, develop a strategy and together work a plan that will support the needs identified for the majority of interested partners. Currently local and regional advocacy groups, conservation districts, youth conservation core members and others provide a great number of volunteer hours to maintain trails and provide a variety of support to the mission of the USFS and objectives. We want to see that partnership expanded to be more productive as we move forward.

Please call the Commissioner's office at 719-783-2552 to begin this process of starting a public hearing process. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Lynn Attebery  Jim Austin  Carole J. Custer Ph.D.,
Chairman  Vice-Chair  Commissioner
lynn@custercountygov.com  jim@custercountygov.com  carole@custercountygov.com

CC: Western Slope No Fee Coalition Group