

STATE OF
COLORADO

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CO149 Pilot Project,

1 message

Kate [REDACTED]
To: Commissioner.Zink@state.co.us

Sun, Feb 14, 2021 at 9:57 PM

Dear Commissioner Sidny Zink:

Please do everything in your power to help terminate the CO149 Pilot Project, which allows Off-Highway Vehicles (OHVs) to operate on the state highway that goes through Lake City and Hinsdale County.

If this experiment is not ended, it will set a damaging precedent throughout the state of Colorado. With the damage to iconic mountain ecosystems and the peace and quiet within these places, comes also, the eventual damage to Colorado's tourist economy.

This highway access has given OHVs much more access into backcountry wilderness areas which are fragile, and important for wildlife and for a biodiverse plant ecosystem, which supports all species that depend on a healthy alpine ecosystem. These fragile ecosystems need protection from overuse and damage by motor vehicles, especially as climate change forces more species of plants and animals to adapt by moving upward into alpine lands.

In particular, the Alpine Loop and surrounding backcountry areas have been extremely impacted by the increase in OHV traffic, which has damaged the fragile alpine tundra and pushed deer and elk away from their important feeding and breeding grounds.

Because of the dramatic increase of OHV traffic on the Alpine Loop, all facilities have been severely overtaxed. Roads and trails have been damaged. There is trash and human waste along the backcountry trails. Campgrounds are damaged. Toilet facilities, overburdened.

The noise pollution from OHVs is also significant. For all those who wish to enjoy this precious landscape without motoring around, the peace and majesty of the area has been destroyed.

This is also affecting the people who live in this special area. The quality of life for all the locals has been severely diminished. Increased traffic, noise, dust and decreased parking are all affecting the quality of life in this mountain community.

I understand the desire of elected officials to try new ways to bring more growth to this small mountain community, especially during this trying time of economic insecurity. Now that we have had time to assess the benefits and problems of increased OHV tourism, it is clear to me that it is unsustainable. Any short term financial gains to the town of Lake City and to Hinsdale County cannot make up for the serious damage to the backcountry. It is time to lay this pilot project to rest. Damaging the very environment that sustains tourism is not sustainable.

A recent survey of voters in Colorado and throughout the West; Republican, Democrat and Unaffiliated, shows that a wide majority of voters of all parties favor protecting lands for wildlife and biodiversity.*

Coloradans of all stripes want to protect more wildlands, not less, from the adverse impacts of the already overwhelming human footprint. Hunters and nonhunters alike want to preserve wildlife habitats, and migration pathways.

In short, I would like to state my opposition to renewing the CO149 Pilot Project. Thank you for your time and consideration of this important matter.

Respectfully,

M. K. [REDACTED]

- The State of the Rockies 2021 Survey of the Attitudes of Voters in Eight Western States.