

STATE OF
COLORADO

Uebelher - CDOT, Jennifer <jennifer.uebelher@state.co.us>

Re: Backcountry assistance needed in Hinsdale County (Trout Unlimited)

2 messages

leon  Thu, Feb 11, 2021 at 7:04 PMA large rectangular area of the email is completely redacted with black boxes, obscuring the main body of the message.Greetings back, 

As an avid fisherman, hunter, and a lifetime member of TU and RMEF, I strongly disagree with your opposition to the CO149 Pilot Project. I am an employee of HCRB who maintains our roads. Our roads may have been deteriorating for several years due to poor management at the County Shop in previous years, but the issue is now being corrected. We have already begun to properly repair them, including the gates that close the loop to the public in the winter months.

I see abundant wildlife in our backcountry constantly, and they mostly seem completely unconcerned with human or vehicular traffic. In just the last week I've seen over 300 elk, a dozen moose, several foxes, 3 coyotes, deer too numerous to count (not counting our many "town residents"), and birds from magpies, camp robbers, crows, and ravens, to at least one golden eagle on Oleo Ranch road. In fact, as the designated County employee to groom snowmobile trails, I must be mindful of the many moose on Reboulet Park and Jirrosa Mesa as they can be dangerous if you get too close. I have tried winter fly fishing on the Henson, Lake Fork and

Many folks, visitors, and residents alike are physically not able to hike much of our beautiful backcountry and depend on OHVs to get them to areas otherwise difficult to access. Riding the loop is the only option for these people to have the opportunity to enjoy our beautiful landscapes and mountain views. I hope you are not suggesting that the elderly or infirm should not have access to our *public* backcountry.

You do have a valid point about the damage to the tundra, but the solution (as always) is to cite those breaking the law by driving on it, not to essentially ban or limit OHVs. Punish the criminal, not the lawful. In fact, your position would not reduce the number of OHVs by much (if any), it would only substantially decrease the amount of business that Lake City merchants would do with those traveling the loop from Ouray and Silverton.

The Hinsdale County Sheriff's department is instituting a program starting this summer that will add additional law enforcement specific to monitoring the OHV usage and has established an Alpine Loop Ambassador program to work directly with the lodging and OHV rental business in Lake City, Silverton, and Ouray. In addition, The Alpine Outdoor Association will have scheduled checkpoints to assist with education and monitoring loop users.

I do want to thank you for providing the contact e-mails though, I truly appreciate it I will contact them expressing my **SUPPORT** for CO 149.

Gratefully,

Leon [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, February 10, 2021 7:54 PM
To: Peter [REDACTED]
Subject: Backcountry assistance needed in Hinsdale County (Trout Unlimited)

Greetings,

I am writing to ask you for help with a letter-writing campaign that serves to protect my Town, County and backcountry wilderness areas. The goal is to terminate the **CO149 Pilot Project** that allows *Off-Highway Vehicles (OHVs)* to operate on the only State Highway that bisects the Town of Lake City and Hinsdale County.

If this project is not killed, Colorado will see OHVs allowed on other State Highways throughout the State. Highway access grants OHVs greater access to backcountry wilderness areas that need protection from overuse and damage by all mechanized vehicles.

The Colorado Transportation Commission will decide on the future of the CO149 Pilot Project next Wednesday, **February 17th**, at their monthly meeting. **Emails of opposition must be sent prior to Monday (see below for names and email addresses).**

The *CO149 Pilot Project* allows OHVs to “connect the loop” between County Road 20 and County Road 30, thus gaining greater access to backcountry wilderness areas. According to the BLM, traffic on the Alpine Loop nearly doubled during the 2020 tourist season. These backcountry wilderness areas cannot sustain the increased growth of mechanized tourism witnessed last year.

The Alpine Loop and connecting backcountry areas were severely impacted by increased OHV traffic that damaged fragile alpine tundra, destroyed roads and trails, and pushed herd animals such as deer and elk away from their feeding and breeding grounds.

Increased OHV traffic on the Alpine Loop resulted in *overuse* of parking areas and campgrounds; *increased* human waste and trash along the Alpine Loop and backcountry trails; *damage* to disbursed camping areas; *overuse* of backcountry toilet facilities; increased engine noise adversely impacted any chance of enjoying a quiet day in the wilderness; the wildflowers at *American Basin* suffered extreme damage.

The CO149 Pilot Project increased OHV traffic in Lake City and Hinsdale County. We can no longer sit on our porch and enjoy a cup of coffee in the morning or a glass of wine at night. OHV operators explore our streets and alleyways throughout the day and night; they park their trailers and trucks in front of our homes; they create dust and noise that destroy the once-peaceful atmosphere of my mountain community; there is a sense of lawlessness due to the lack of law enforcement.

Local elected officials are willing to sacrifice my Town, County and backcountry wilderness areas for the perceived (and unproven) financial benefit of increased OHV tourism. This type of mechanized tourism is not sustainable for our community, and the perceived tax revenue will not preserve or protect surrounding wilderness areas.

OHVs are documented as “unsafe” when allowed to operate on paved roads, hard-packed surfaces and highway environments; they are not crash-test certified; they are prone to roll-over and loss-of-control accidents; they do not have highway certified headlights or signaling devices; they endanger public safety and destroy wilderness areas.

OHVs are a threat to public safety when allowed to operate on our State Highways. Documented proof and industry recommendations may be found at one of the following links:

- [Off-Highway Vehicles on Roads](#)

- [2020 Analysis of OHV Recalls: Increasing Number of OHVs Pulled from Market due to Safety Concerns](#)
- [Off-Highway Vehicle Safety and Fatality Data](#)
- [Off-Highway Vehicle Fatality Data](#)
- [2020 Report of Deaths and Injuries Involving Off-Highway Vehicles with More than Two Wheels](#)
- [Recreational Off-Highway Vehicle Association position papers](#)
- [ATV Safety Institute resources](#)

I am asking you to write a short email to the Colorado Transportation Commission and Staff. A simple letter stating your opposition to the CO149 Pilot Project or request the Transportation Commission to vote "NO" on renewing the CO149 Pilot Project will suffice. If you want extra-credit, dig into the safety data listed above, incorporate quotes and statistics, or write to my County Commissioners and Town Trustees (see below).

This is a "safety" issue that also impacts backcountry wilderness areas in three adjoining counties. Our streams are filled with world-class trout. Moose, deer, elk, beaver, fox, coyotes, marmots and other mammals live in these mountains. Bald and Golden Eagles, hummingbirds and songbirds are regular sights. Entire ecosystems are threatened by increased OHV tourism associated with the CO149 Pilot Project.

Please email the following with your opposition of the CO149 Pilot Project:

Transportation Commission:

Eula Adams <dot_transp_comm@state.co.us>
Gary Beedy <dot_transp_comm@state.co.us>
Kathleen Bracke <kbrackeTCdistrict5@gmail.com>
Shannon Gifford <Commissioner.Gifford@state.co.us>
Kathy Hall <Commissioner.Hall@state.co.us>
Don Stanton <dot_transp_comm@state.co.us>
Karen Stuart <Commissioner.Stuart@state.co.us>
Bill Thiebaut <Commissioner.Thiebaut@state.co.us>
Barbara Vasquez <vasqueztcdistrict6@gmail.com>
Sidny Zink <Commissioner.Zink@state.co.us>

Transportation Commission Staff:

Herman Stockinger <herman.stockinger@state.co.us>
Jennifer Uebelher <jennifer.uebelher@state.co.us>

Extra credit (Hinsdale County Commissioners):

Kristine (Kristie) Marie Borchers <district2@hinsdalecountycolorado.us>
Robert R. Hurd <district3@hinsdalecountycolorado.us>
Greg Allan Levine <district1@hinsdalecountycolorado.us>
Hinsdale County Administrator <administrator@hinsdalecountycolorado.us>

Extra extra credit (Town Trustees):

Mayor Bruce Vierheller <brucevierheller@townoflakecity.co>
Mayor Pro-Tem Jud B. Hollingsworth <judhollingsworth@townoflakecity.co>
Michelle Lynn Martin <michellemartin@townoflakecity.co>
David (Dave) Gregory Roberts <daveroberts@townoflakecity.co>
Douglas (Doug) Richard Hamel <doughamel@townoflakecity.co>
Jesse Allen Kendall <jessekendall@townoflakecity.co>
Linda K. Payne" <lindapayne@townoflakecity.co>
Town Manager Caroline Mitchell <carolinemitchell@townoflakecity.co>
Town Clerk Jennifer Louise Rightsell <jenniferrightsell@townoflakecity.co>

DISCLAIMER: I am writing this email as an individual member of TU. My request for help does not come from any TU official or group entity – I just need help from you as an individual to help protect my Town, County and backcountry wilderness areas that are known for world class fly fishing.

Thank you,

Peter [Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]

Uebelher - CDOT, Jennifer <jennifer.uebelher@state.co.us>

Thu, Feb 11, 2021 at 8:23 PM

[Redacted]

Good evening [Redacted]

Thank you for sending your comments. I have reviewed each and every letter that has been sent in regarding this issue and have documented all of the concerns and reasons for supporting the pilot program. I have finalized the February TC materials for the OHV presentation and will be posting all of the documents for the upcoming workshop and meeting to the website no less than 24 hours prior to the meeting workshops. Per our regular process timeline, the deadline for documents was Wednesday, February 10 at noon. You will be able to access the final commission documents as well as the live links to the workshops and meeting here: <https://www.codot.gov/about/transportation-commission/meeting-agenda.html>

Please note that all state government offices will be closed on Monday, February 15, 2021 in observance of President's Day.

Kind Regards,

Jennifer Uebelher
Transportation Commission Liaison
Office of Policy and Government Relations

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