

Garfield County Commissioners

We wrote to you after our last Council meeting with concerns about your promotion of ATV/OHV trails. Since then many Boulder residents and landowners signed on to a Petition, and emailed your Trails Coordinator about your ATV trails maps. Our Fire Chief also wrote with serious concerns about increased demands on over-stretched volunteer emergency services.

We appreciated you welcoming our representatives to your Commission Meeting. They presented the Petition and expressed our concern that 'promotion' of ATV trails raised many potential issues and impacts which had not been addressed with the local communities. You and your County Engineer explained that the intention of the mapping was to provide off-roaders with an overview of ATV trails for the whole County, including USFS and GSENM lands. The first print run would be the minimum (1,500) so that issues could be addressed following public input. You also stated that we can regulate off-road vehicle use within our own Town limits.

We have researched other communities who invited off-road tourism in, but are now overwhelmed by the impacts. That experience is best illustrated by a Grand County commissioner's published quote about Moab: "We went fishing for a little tourism, and hooked a great white shark."

Is Garfield County making the same mistake? We think that in our region it is. There are several types of tourism and they do not necessarily coexist. Here are the primary assumptions and issues that Boulder Town feels we need to jointly address:

- Assumption - that ATV/OHV promotion to outside users is a good thing for the east side of Garfield County.
This was done without holding meetings in the local communities, assessing and being up front about the impacts upon our local culture, heritage, lifestyles and values. We feel this has the cart before the horse.
- Assumption - you said that Boulder town could do what it wants within the jurisdiction of its Town limits.
We do not feel that our area of interest and impact stops at the Town borders. Our community members -- including businesses who presently have a substantial base in non-motorized tourism, cattle ranchers whose existence depends upon range lands and watersheds, and residents who have stayed on or moved in to enjoy the peace and quiet of this rural lifestyle -- feel that any ATV promotion in the east side of Garfield County is to our detriment.
- Assumption -- that one-size-fits-all in this promotional effort.
We feel that it does not, and that we can jointly craft a better business plan. If the west county wants this promotion and the east county does not, then it can be a win-win to provide diversity of choice to customers and divide the tourism market along more appropriate lines.
- Assumption -- that passing an ordinance allowing children to use the Burr Trail as an ATV route and promoting this on maps and brochures is in the best interest of our region.

We feel that this is contrary to any municipalities mandate to protect the health, safety and welfare of these children. We also feel that this policy was instituted solely to facilitate the ATV promotional agenda of cross-county travel, allowing that agenda to override common sense.

In summary, we ask you to instigate a thorough review of this ATV trails promotion, and put the publicity machine on hold until that is done. We all need to know what we're getting into with this. Our communities need to be given a proper voice to make the choice for or against promoting ATV tourism in each part of the County. Also the overall trails network has to be planned as a whole so that it can all work together. We understand that the Scenic Byway Committee are bringing in the Institute for Outdoor Recreation and Tourism on June 20th to run a workshop on marketing strategies; this is the sort of professional experience we should be bringing to this process.

We trust you will give this matter the serious attention it deserves so that our community can continue to grow and prosper in our region of the county as we might envision. We assure you of our support in evolving a comprehensive approach to this challenge.

(Unanimously adopted by Town Council motion, 5th May, 2006.)
(Refer to attached list for cc's)