

February 4, 2025

Attention Department of Interior and Bureau of Land Management

We, the undersigned, serve as elected officials representing the residents of San Juan County. We are writing to pursue the reauthorization of the originating section of Trail 1. A short section of Trail 1, that had formerly been utilized and authorized and connects the remainder of Trail 1, and the thousands of additional trail miles in the county, has been left off the map.

San Juan County acknowledges the significance of outdoor recreation, specifically the availability and utilization of trails for both local residents and visitors seeking recreational activities in our area. San Juan County increasingly relies on tourism as a vital component of our economy, situated as it is at the core of the Four Corners region. The off-road recreation community represents one of the fastest-growing user groups, and we anticipate that off-road enthusiasts will support our local businesses while exploring the extensive public lands that encompass our picturesque city.

Due west of the city limits of Blanding, even within their annexed boundaries, there is a section of land that provides a connection of public lands. That section is an 80-acre section of land, encircled by private property on three sides, which connects Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands on the west to a paved right-of-way on the outskirts of the city's inhabited area. This section is defined by its northeast corner at 37.60640, -109.48955, extending to the southeast corner at 37.60275, -109.48955, a distance of 440 yards. The boundary continues 880 yards to the southwest corner at 37.60275, -109.49866, and continues to the northwest corner at 37.60640, -109.49866, and returns to the northeast corner.

Within the aforementioned section of land, a physical, existing trail provides a connection from Blanding City via Ruin Road across Westwater Canyon to the main road at Westwater Point. Once reaching Westwater Point, this trail further extends westward across Big Canyon to Warren Allen. This trail is not merely an informal path; it has been significantly developed and improved over time. The trail features gates through range fences, a bridge spanning Westwater Creek, and modifications made through blasting to create a viable path up the western canyon rim. This trail was previously approved and designated as part of the original Trail 1, which encompasses a major loop throughout San Juan County.

We understand that this trail was not intentionally disapproved but was likely overlooked during the travel planning process, leading to its omission from official maps. Therefore, we seek the BLM's reauthorization of this trail and its reinstatement on the travel plan maps. The availability of this trail offers a direct westward route from Blanding to thousands of miles of trails designated for recreational use.

There exists a maintained bladed road that serves a similar function further north; however, it does not provide the thrilling experience that off-road enthusiasts seek while recreating. Additionally, a bladed road is designed for mixed-use by the general public, which can lead to

congestion and conflict, thereby diminishing the advantages associated with responsible recreation. There is an alternative off-road trail situated between the two previously mentioned routes; however, this trail traverses private property from the outset and encroaches upon the boundaries of the community of Westwater.

The desired trail is physically present, and its impact has already been assessed, sanctioned, and executed. The advantages for our off-road recreation visitors far exceed any minimal additional impacts that may arise. One rock requires removal to accommodate the passage of side-by-side vehicles, and San Juan County is willing to remove that rock and make this trail viable for the trail system.

As the elected officials of the local county, we respectfully request the reauthorization of the existing trail, which begins at 37.60284, -109.48967, turns west at 37.60347, -109.48971, crosses Westwater Creek at 37.60616, -109.49718, and terminates at 37.60613, -109.4992. This reauthorization would serve the interests of our community and our economy. We advocate for responsible recreation and believe that legalizing this physical trail will enhance and promote a functional trail system.

Signed



The origination of the trail on the east side



The trail forks and heads west



The trail continues westward





The trail turns goes through a gate.



The trail forks to cross canyon



Trail descends the east rim



Trail crosses Westwater Creek





Trail ascends west rim (the one boulder that Needs broken is on the right)



Trail continues to the west of the canyon



Looking east at the end of the trail (note the Faded sign indicating former approval)



A map showing the physical location

