

Hundreds gather to rally against BLM's plan to close down miles of public land



By Daniela Pardo | Posted: Sat 8:25 PM, May 02, 2015 | Updated: Sat 10:20 PM, May 02, 2015

Grand Junction, COLO. The Bureau of Land Management's release of the Resource Management Plan has left many in the community with questions and frustration. A group of protestors rallied outside the BLM office in hopes of getting their concerns out in the open while addressing a state senator.

The Public Land Access Association says the BLM will close up to 2,000 miles of public land, and the BLM says the closures are limited to 850 miles. Today's peaceful protest was to inform the community about the closures.

"Very frustrated," said Jean Lockhart and many others who oppose the BLM's plan.

"We're holding the rally today for the community to come out, to get informed," said Brandon Siegfried, Director of the Public Land Access Association.

Siegfried says it's now or never to stand up for the right of ways.

"This affects everyone, and the federal government doesn't like to talk about the impacts to the elderly and the handicapped. This is their only access," he said.

Lockhart also believes enough is enough. They're making trails for bikers and hikers and motorbikes, but us people that can't do those things are not allowed to go on those trails – and that's not alright," she said.

Among the supporters for the BLM's plan to not move forward is Senator Ray Scott.

"The whole problem is that I think there's a lot of confusion between access and jurisdiction of public land versus trying to manage the entire problem," said Scott.

Senator Scott says he is going to tell Governor Hickenlooper to not sign off on the RMP.



"He needs to understand and I think he does, that we need to protect our protect land. Especially in an area like Grand Junction because it's so much different here than it is in the Front Range. They don't have the public land problem," said Scott.

Chris Joyner with the BLM says while 852 miles of routes will be shut down or mitigated as part of this plan, 2,375 miles of routes will remain open to motorized vehicles. The closures are to get rid of redundant trails and also those that threaten endangered plants and species, and contribute to erosion. According to Joyner, but maintaining access is a top priority.

Senator Scott says he will talk to Governor Hickenlooper within the next few weeks about the matter.

Those interested in writing to the BLM in in protest of the plan, must have it postmarked by May 11. All protests must be in writing and mailed to one of the following addresses:

Regular Mail:

Director (21 0)
Attn: Protest Coordinator
P.O. Box 71383
Washington, DC 20024-1383

Overnight Mail:

Director (21 0)
Attn: Protest Coordinator
20M Street SE, Room 2134LM
Washington, DC 20003



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