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September 25th, 2014

To Whom It May Concern:

We are reaching out to you regarding the proposed Greater Snow King Area Trails projects. Given that Snow King and Cache Creek are right in our backyard (and they're prime cougar habitat), these proposed changes hit close to home for The Cougar Fund, and we have some serious concerns over the precedent they might set.

- Do we really *need* more trails? **The Bridger-Teton already has an excellent trail system** that provides access to a wide variety of users, all within minutes of downtown Jackson. It's no surprise these trails are congested – they are scenic, convenient, and easily accessible to an active, recreation-obsessed population center. Busy trails are a reality we must live with.
- **It is unlikely that expansion of the trail system would relieve the pressure on existing trails.** Instead, it might do the exact opposite. There are plenty of examples from around the valley that suggest increased access and infrastructure results in increased use (just look at Snake River boat ramps, or infrastructure improvements in Grand Teton National Park).
- Wildlife, particularly the large carnivores that frequent the GSKA, need protection. **Further encroachment upon valuable habitat is unjustified, and has the potential to increase conflict.** Our community should be a model for balancing conservation and recreation values; incremental habitat fragmentation simply to accommodate the wants of a few would breed a sense of entitlement and greatly detract from the core principles that make our valley special.
- Implementing the changes proposed in this plan could set a dangerous precedent for the management of public lands. Will USFS build more trails to accommodate mountain bikers? Will the B-T eventually build new trails to accommodate increasing use by dog walkers? **Increasing use of public lands is *not* justification for increased development.**
- It would be far more prudent for the USFS to **encourage the modification of human behavior rather than modifying the resource.** Individuals recreating on the B-T *should* be expected to share the trail in a manner that ensures a safe and pleasant experience for all. This can be achieved. More accountability and education, rather than more trails, is what is needed.

We need to draw the line while there is still a chance to strike an appropriate balance between the *wants* of recreationists and the *needs* of wildlife

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed GSKA Trails project.

Sincerely,
Mike Canetta
The Cougar Fund