

Legal Notice
30-Day Comment Period (EA)

Opportunity to Comment on Irwin Backcountry Guide proposal

The Forest Service, Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests, Gunnison Ranger District, is preparing an Environmental Assessment for the proposed action of guided snowcat skiing and summer hiking, backpacking and peak climbing in the former Irwin Lodge permit area approximately 12 miles northwest of Crested Butte. The permit area would encompass 2003 acres from Robinson Basin to Independence Basin up to the top of Scarp Ridge and down to Lake Irwin. Avalanche mitigation would be necessary. This outfitter/guide service would be authorized by special use permit to Irwin Backcountry Guides, LLC. The number of service days being considered includes 2,300 days for snowcat skiing and 350 days for summer activities. Summer activities would be located on trails in the Crested Butte area. Additional authorization is being sought for locating a small weather station near the top of Scarp Ridge.

The base of operations would occur above Lake Irwin on private lands owned by Scarp Ridge, LLC. Access to the private property would originate from Crested Butte and the Kebler Pass Trailhead and would follow Kebler Pass Road (Gunnison County Road 12), Lake Irwin Campground Road (Forest Service Road (FSR) 826), Green Lake Road (FSR 826.1D) and Irwin Lodge Road (FSR 826.1C).

The proposal for snowcat skiing would provide diverse winter recreational opportunities for the public on National Forest System (NFS) lands near Crested Butte. This activity was previously permitted over a 15-year period (1986-2002) and was considered an appropriate use of NFS lands. If approved, snowcat ski operations would commence in the 2009-2010 winter season.

The proposed action description and other information are available from the Gunnison District Office and the following project website: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/gmug/policy/#recreation> Additional information regarding this project can be obtained from Bill Jackson, Recreation Manager, 216 N. Colorado St., Gunnison, CO 81230, 970-642-4439, wjackson@fs.fed.us .

The purpose of this comment period is to provide an opportunity for the public to provide early and meaningful participation on a proposed action prior to a decision being made by the Responsible Official. This opportunity to comment will serve as both scoping for this project under the requirements of NEPA, and the 30-day comment period required in accordance with 36 CFR 215. Those who provide comments or otherwise express interest during this comment period are eligible to appeal the decision pursuant to 36 CFR part 215 regulations.

How to Comment and Timeframe

Written, facsimile, hand-delivered, oral, and electronic comments concerning this action will be accepted for 30 calendar days following the publication of this notice in the Gunnison Country Times. The publication date in the newspaper of record is the exclusive means for calculating the comment period for this analysis. Those wishing to comment should not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source. The regulations prohibit extending the length of the comment period.

Written comments must be submitted to: Irwin Backcountry Guides Proposal, c/o Bill Jackson, 216 N. Colorado St., Gunnison, CO 81230 or by fax: 970-642-4425. The office business hours for those submitting hand-delivered comments are: 8:00am – 4:30pm, Monday through Friday, excluding holidays.

Oral comments must be provided at the Gunnison District office during normal business hours via telephone (970-642-4439) or in person, or at an official agency function (i.e. public meeting) that is designed to elicit public comments. Electronic comments must be submitted in a format such as an email message, plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rtf), or Word (.doc) to wfjackson@fs.fed.us. In cases where no identifiable name is attached to a comment, a verification of identity will be required for appeal eligibility. If using an electronic message, a scanned signature is one way to provide verification.

It is the responsibility of persons providing comments to submit them by the close of the comment period.

Individuals and organizations wishing to be eligible to appeal must meet the information requirements of 36 CFR 215.6(a)(3).

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