

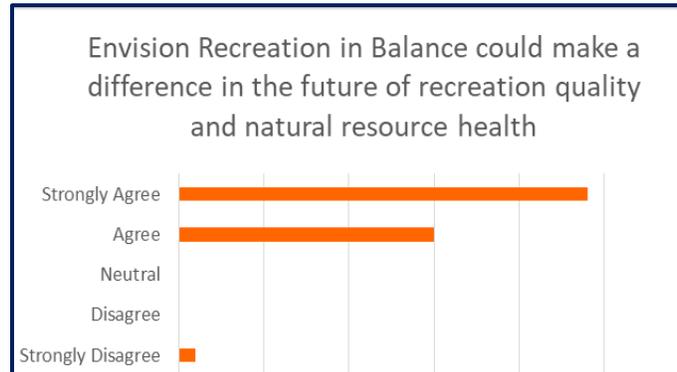


Envision Recreation in Balance Community Meeting #1 Summary – February 2019

On 06 February, 2019 a community meeting was held to introduce the Envision Recreation in Balance Program and to gather community input on program focus areas.

Roughly 100 citizens attended the session, along with leaders from the USFS, BLM, CPW, AHRA and Chaffee County.

Participants felt that the meeting was a good use of time, and that the program “could make a positive difference in the future of Chaffee County’s recreation quality and natural resource health” according to written survey responses (Figure 1 above).



To guide program direction, community members were asked to answer two questions by writing their answers on sticky notes. All written responses were entered into a data sheet and then categorized by skilled volunteers (see Appendix A). Here is what we heard:

Question 1: How might we accommodate outdoor recreation growth without negatively impacting the very things we love about Chaffee County, such as cool outdoor experiences, clean water, agriculture and wildlife?

The most common answer to this question was to provide **education to decrease user impacts**, with ideas ranging from “leave no trace” education to more signage (Figure 2 below, and Appendix A).

The second most common response was a call to **control dispersed campsite impacts**, including ideas such as installing barriers and “hardening” sites, or transitioning to a designated dispersed campsite system.

This response was closely followed by recommendation for **collaborative community and inter-agency planning** and active management to address issues. Some insight into the community’s top action priorities are suggested in the next three categories all of which suggest the need for active management “in the field”: Increased **management of human waste and trash, limiting or managing use** to manage impacts, and **management to protect wildlife/environment**.

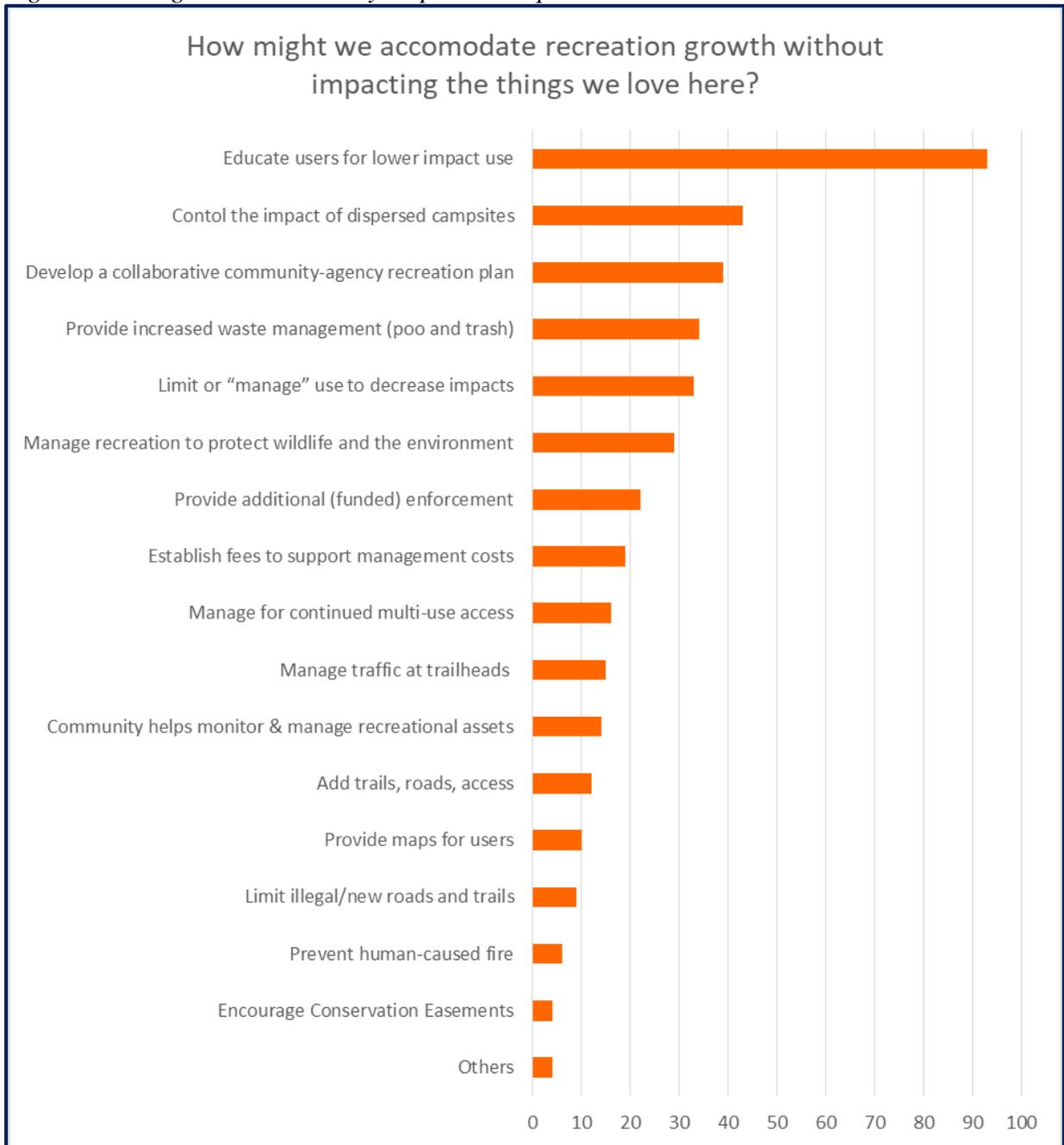
Citizens also recommended increased enforcement (with funding to support it) and increased fees to support general management. Maintaining existing multi-use assets, managing traffic at



trailheads and having the community engaged to support monitoring and management were the next most common responses.

Only 3% of responses included adding roads or trails, while roughly 2% suggested closing illegal roads or limiting development of new roads/trails.

Figure 2. Categorized community responses to question 1.





Question 2: What is one thing that you DON'T want to have happen from the Recreation in Balance Program?

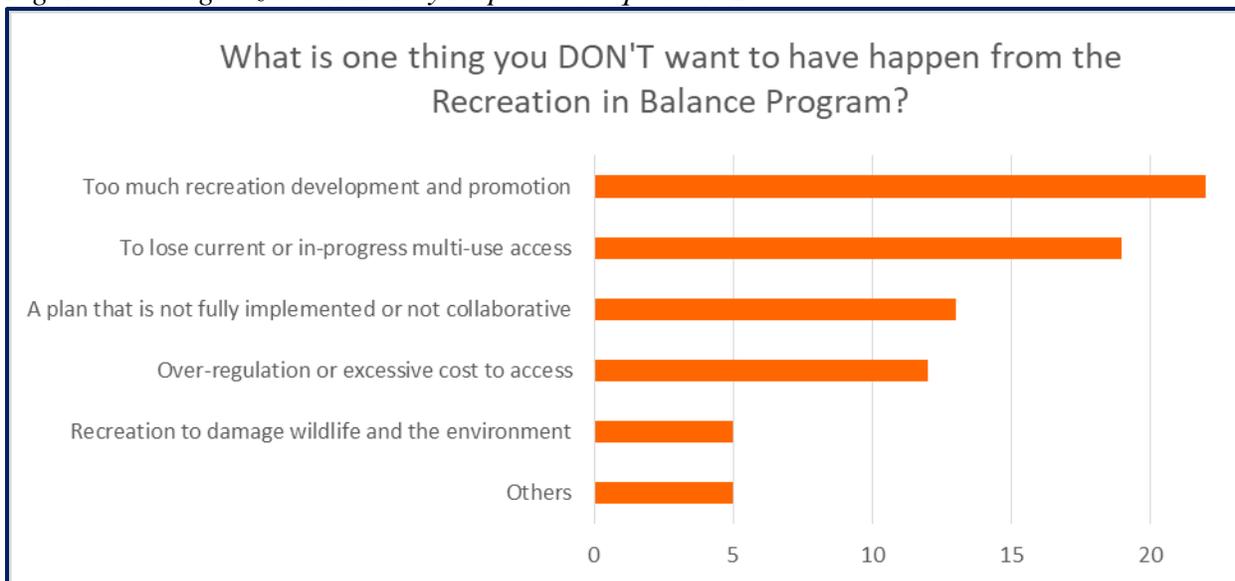
When citizens were asked what they **do not** want to have happen from the Recreation in Balance program, the most common response (roughly 30%) was **concern about too much recreation development in Chaffee County**. This was variably stated as “unfettered growth,” promoting recreation at the expense of other interests, significant increase in recreation infrastructure and use and “recreational sprawl” (Figure 3 below, and Appendix A). This concern is consistent with the results of the 2017 Envision Chaffee County survey, where 1,500 respondents called for impact management three times more than a desire for additional recreation development. This category is also closely related to a desire to not have recreation damage wildlife and the environment (the fifth most common response).

While not wanting “over development,” participants also indicated a **desire to maintain current access to roads and trails** and to **continue in-progress** or approved **development** of new trails.

Participants also want the **Recreation in Balance program to be collaborative** – including diverse user groups –**and to be successful** in the sense that resulting recommendations are fully implemented to achieve desired results. If citizens are going to spend time giving input and developing recommendations, they want them the work to make a difference.

Finally, participants indicated a desire to prevent excessive regulation that could impact the quality of user experiences, discourage visitation or add excessive cost and complexity.

Figure 3. Categorized community responses to question 2.





Envision Recreation in Balance Program overview

The Envision Recreation in Balance program is one of 40 citizen-led initiatives developed by the Envision Chaffee County community visioning and planning effort.

Increasing at a rate of 17% a year, outdoor recreation is booming in Chaffee County, bringing both economic opportunity and improved quality of life to residents and visitors. Outdoor recreation contributes 33% of Chaffee County economic product. But citizens are concerned that rapid growth is impacting local forests, waters and wildlife. According to data from GARNA's chapter Friends of Fourmile, for instance, the de-vegetated footprint of dispersed campsites in the Fourmile area increased 110% over the past 10 years. Community members have cited related concern about human waste, trash, multiple fire rings, impacts to agricultural operations and visual impacts associated with dispersed campsites county-wide.

The **Envision Recreation in Balance program** goal is to develop community-driven, collaborative solutions to manage expanding recreational use and associated impacts to watershed health. Program deliverables are:

- 1) **A Recreation and Natural Resource Atlas** will capture the current state of county-wide recreation amenities (ex. roads, trails, dispersed campsites) and natural resource assets (ex. critical habitat, riparian zones, agricultural use areas) for use in collaborative planning.
- 2) **A Recreation Impact Monitoring System** will measure recreational impacts (ex. sediment generation potential, habitat impacts at dispersed campsites) and collect consistent, county-wide impact data using a cellphone-based application and local user group volunteers.
- 3) **Rapid Response Projects** will identify sites that need to be addressed
- 4) **Community Balanced Recreation Plan Recommendations** will guide future recreation development balanced with watershed protection, in coordination with existing local, state and federal agency planning efforts.

The program is funded by Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Greater Outdoors Colorado, USFS, BLM and Chaffee County, with generous in-kind contributions from community members and local non-profit organizations. Program leadership is by Envision Chaffee County (managed by Central Colorado Conservancy), the USFS and the Greater Arkansas River Nature Association. The program will be completed over 24 months from January 2019 to January 2021.

Acknowledgements:

Envision thanks community volunteers Alan Robinson and Sue Greiner for typing all 473 community comments gathered during the session and categorizing them. The time and energy spent on a difficult task is appreciated! Report compiled by Cindy Williams, Sue Greiner and Alan Robinson.



Appendix A: Envision Recreation in Balance - Question 1 Consolidated Responses

The following are the 401 written community responses to the question: “**How might we accommodate outdoor recreation growth without negatively impacting the very things we love about Chaffee County, such as cool outdoor experiences, clean water, agricultural lands and thriving wildlife?**” All written responses were captured and then categorized by common themes. The number of similar responses is indicated by the number in parenthesis (#). The categorization is somewhat subjective and imperfect, but provides a valid sense of trends; no individual comments were discarded.

1. Educate users for lower impact use (93)

- Education of users and locals about Leave No Trace, rules, camping limits, dog waste control, spectrum of permitted uses, safety, trail restrictions, etiquette (45)
- Educate on cumulative impacts of individual impacts and impacts of human waste (4)
- Educate through volunteer guides/stations/signage/kiosks/culture of education in county/maps at trailheads (17)
- Volunteers (e.g. ranger programs, guiding) (4)
- Hire youth ambassadors to educate visitors at trailheads (1)
- Educate users on proper treatment of wildlife / information kiosk (4)
- Manned educational trailhead booths on heavy traffic weekends teaching etiquette (1)
- Provide info on how to get involved in outdoor rec organizations (1)
- Educate users from first contact until they come into the county/including with TV, newspapers (3)
- Welcome kiosks at county entrance points with information about campsites, fire restrictions, trash/recycling etc. (1)
- Conduct multi-user events like 14er fest, organized hiking groups (2)
- Make education brochure (e.g. with LNT) for handout in local lodgings (1)
- Involve Chambers and visitor centers in educating visitors to responsible use (1)
- Ask businesses promoting recreation to help educate users (2)
- Outdoor education programs in schools (2)
- Introduce young people to quiet use activities (1)
- Respect private property messages (2)
- Emphasize stewardship of all public resources (1)

2. Control the impact of dispersed campsites (43)

- Control dispersed campsite size with barriers, establish “designated dispersed” camping areas, rotate sites (19)
- Increase monitoring of dispersed camping/control illegal camping (3)
- Harden (formalize and maintain) high use areas and concentrate traffic/use in those areas (11)



- Designate backcountry campsites and reduce overuse of alpine campsites, wildlife impacts (2)
- Paid access for dispersed camping e.g. in Fourmile (1)
- Lower 14-day camping limit (1)
- Provide large parking lots for RVs and trailers just outside of main towns (1)
- Limit number of campsites along county roads (1)
- Encourage/incentivize clean campsite behavior e.g. provide locally-redeemable coupons (1)
- Monitor/address inappropriate long-term camping by “homeless” users/ team up with Homeless Coalition (2)
- Remove multiple fire rings, post signs - no new fire rings (2)

3. Develop a collaborative community-agency recreation plan (39)

- Create and manage a comprehensive trails system both for motorized and non-motorized; incorporate wildlife and resource concerns and involve trailhead facilities that anticipate growth – only way to manage users / interconnected trails between communities (3)
- More collaboration on trail development/get input from other interest groups such as agriculture, DOW [CPW] (2)
- Use data and monitoring to adjust management resources and structure use/survey growth areas’ potential and impacts/conflicts (12)
- Coordinate efforts with Forest Service/advise agencies on impacts (2)
- Careful control of recreational growth and monitoring of impact of growth for revisions of recreation management plan as determined appropriate (2)
- Locals determine the recreation plan so that outsiders realize they are guests in our community (their experience is unique to this place) (1)
- Recognize Chaffee County locally has an overall theme of agro-ecology and encourage recreationists to adapt to this theme rather than dictating what they want (1)
- Allow local groups to take a leading role in determining of trail projects (2)
- Establish triggers (carrying capacities) for regulation (3)
- Survey citizens/visitors on where they want more rec opportunities and where they would want less, to aid in funding priorities (1)
- Continue communication with community and public and get feedback, include diverse viewpoints, community representation (7)
- Encourage inter-agency cooperation in recreation management (3)

4. Provide increased waste management (human waste and trash) (34)

- Toilet facilities at dispersed campsites, trailheads, along river (19)
- Consider requiring human waste containers [like river trip groovers] in certain campsites
- More trash collection (7)
- Provide free waste receptacles when camping – there is limited ability to bring trash to town for disposal (1)
- Provide for recyclables collection (1)



- Wag bags for dogs waste(3)
- Wag bags at trailheads/motels/grocery stores (1)
- Progress from portable toilets to permanent toilet facilities as funds available (1)

5. Limit or “manage” use to decrease impacts (33)

- Develop enough trails but cluster them so “wild stays wild”/consider how dense the number of trails should be (2)
- Monitor wilderness access and other use by having sign-ins at trail heads (2)
- Support “through” trails [vs in/out or dead end?] on conservancy area to disperse trail use (1)
- Create zoning where high, medium and low impacts are allowed (5)
- Create protective designations e.g. areas for no motor vehicles; for wildlife; dispersed camping; campgrounds (2)
- Consolidate areas [to discourage dispersed use?]/ do not disperse use/redirect users to areas that can absorb more use (5)
- Encourage users to expand experience by going to other areas [outside Chaffee County?] (1)
- Provide control of organized [large groups, events?] activities (1)
- Install sound baffles at rifle range: reduce noise (pending availability of rifle suppressors) (2)
- Ask ourselves if constantly increasing recreation-related revenue is a sustainable model (1)
- Limit impacts of larger groups (e.g. >10 people) through permit system (1)
- Regulate backcountry use (1)
- Reservation system for campsites (1)
- Set limits on usage and type of usage (1)
- Permit private boaters (1)
- Provide virtual experiences e.g. via a Virtual Access Center [online] as alternative to physical visit/use (2)
- Keep walk and wade outfitters to current numbers (1)
- Limit, after study, areas that strain our personnel and physical resources, i.e., hunting licenses/camping sites/parking spots (2)
- No new campgrounds on the river (1)

6. Manage recreation to protect wildlife and the environment (29)

- Create policies to aid in healthy environment, pollination, reseeded efforts, etc. (1)
- Establish seasonal/winter management practices for motorized vs. non-motorized use and road closures, especially with respect to wildlife/Establish rules about limiting use in critical habitat (12)
- Be sensitive and cognizant of productive agricultural lands and sensitive wildlife habitats e.g. [wildlife] winter range (1)
- Consider impacts on wildlife and environment when recreation resources are expanded (4)
- Identify sensitive wildlife areas that will not allow for recreational development (1)
- Erosion control (1)
- Prevent additional invasive species introductions (1)



- Restoration criteria/funding for impacted areas needed (2)
- Monitor water quality and take action when necessary (1)
- Designate public land areas as NOT available for recreation/limit even Quiet Use if wildlife impacted (2)
- “The solution to pollution is not dilution” (1)
- Spotlight on recreation areas along waterways [for minimizing impacts?] (1)
- Expand Quiet Use for winter recreation (1)

7. Provide additional (funded) enforcement (22)

- Fund more enforcement of resource protection laws and policies/more enforcement personnel (12)
- Use volunteers/college students for policing (2)
- Fund Search and Rescue (1)
- Be sure funding is sustainable over the long term (1)
- Fines for creation of new unauthorized sites (1)
- Enforce/monitor dispersed campsite rules (2)
- Encourage more jurisdictional overlap in law enforcement [between] CPW, BLM, USFS (1)
- Get grants to fund non-government ranger/steward positions for education and patrol (1)
- Get groups to come together to apply for more grants like this [RiB] one (1)

8. Establish fees to support management costs (19)

- Permits and/or fees for high use areas, parking lots, bicycle use/generalized user fee for recreation (14)
- Fund campsite maintenance through fees (1)
- Increased user fees for popular areas to offset management costs (2)
- Charge (small) fee for use of gun range (1)
- Ask local recreation-related businesses to assist in funding outdoor work (1)

9. Manage for continued multi-use access (16)

- Reduce hiker/biker conflict by identifying hiking only trails (1)
- Collaborate with motorized users on roads that could become single track motorbike trails (2)
- Maintain existing trails and roads (2)
- Systematically keep recreation areas maintained (1)
- Balance uses/options for everybody (6)
- Use alternating days of use for different user groups to preserve desired experiences (e.g. one day bikes, one day hikers, one day motorcycles) (1)
- Try to separate and limit interaction of incompatible recreation uses (e.g. snowmobiles and x-country skiers) (1)
- Recognize that “multiple use” includes uses other than recreation (even though numbers are a lot smaller) (1)
- Find ways for addressing issues of conflict between user groups (1)



10. Manage traffic at trailheads (15)

- Recreation-focused public transportation to minimize crowding at trailheads (4)
- Establish/enlarge parking areas/control parking (4)
- Plan for overflow parking/users...during special times/events (1)
- More infrastructure at trailheads limiting “free for all” use/robust trailheads (3)
- Limit access (i.e. parking) to users on foot (1)
- More paved or good dust control on high-use [access] roads [to recreation sites] (1)
- Be aware that there are trailhead parking and [other] facilities being planned and implemented, designed and built by Salida Mountain Trails (1)

11. Engage community to monitor and manage recreational assets (14)

- Have users participate in monitoring (1)
- Volunteers for trail adoptions, stewards, work on improvements/maintenance (11)
- Provide a Volunteer Coordinator for the county to effectively use volunteers (1)
- Emphasize action “on the ground” monitoring (1)

12. Add trails, roads, access (12)

- More trails for motorized use (2)
- Build more trails/determine where to build more trails w/ future growth in mind/have strong plan (4)
- Further disperse use (1)
- Bike paths connecting communities to trailheads (reducing vehicle transportation) (1)
- More cross-country ski access in northern end of county (1)
- More raft put-ins (1)
- Designate space for dog walking (1)
- Work with railroad to give easements to clean up rail right of way and create rail trails (1)

13. Provide maps for users (10)

- Improve agency website/QR code for GPS referenced trail/area maps at trailheads with cell service and on web/good maps and online info/CPW Trail app (8)
- Improve mechanism(s) to get travel maps to all users (1)
- River rafting maps and expected conditions (1)

14. Limit illegal/new roads and trails (9)

- Close illegal trails and roads (5)
- No more Forest Service or BLM roads for motorized use (1)
- Allow no additional ATV and mountain bike travel [trails/use?] until adequate study is done (1)
- “If it uses gas take a pass”
- Encourage lower impact recreation activities (1)



15. Prevent human-caused fire (6)

- Provide fire prevention information/signage to public when fire bans are in effect (3)
- Make it easier to communicate fire restrictions between agencies for the public (1)
- Citizen monitoring of fire ban restrictions and other regulations (1)
- “Humans cause most wildfires” (1)

16. Encourage Conservation Easements (3)

- Increase use of conservation easements (1)
- Encourage conservation easements that provide access to the Arkansas river (to help disperse fishing along the river) (1)
- Encourage land trust activity in conservation and monitoring use of public land (1)

17. Other (4)

- Leave data gathering to technical [staff] only (1)
- Make F Street in Salida pedestrian-only from Sackett to 3rd St.
- Develop a “corridor” of experiences for those interested in agriculture [or another type like peak bagging, trail hiking, motorized etc.] so those with special interests can follow a certain path through the area (1)
- Don’t approve every request to subdivide 35ac lots when wildlife corridors are indicated



Envision Recreation in Balance - Question 2 Consolidated Responses

The following are the 76 written community responses to the question: **“What is one thing you DON’T want to have happen from the Recreation in Balance Program?”**

1. Don’t want too much recreation development and promotion (22)

- Current citizens of Chaffee County to lose their peace of life and happiness
- To change small community feel (2)
- To get more roads
- Excessive infrastructure
- Significantly increased use
- To allow unfettered growth
- To allow rampant inappropriate use of public lands causing land damage and degradation
- To let things get so far out of hand that drastic actions/choices are necessary
- To allow recreational use to skyrocket because of these new [RiB] resources like the atlas
- To see a proliferation of new trails and roads that leads to overuse of our public lands Recreational sprawl (2)
- Exponential increase in trail users without careful planning
- To accommodate any more motorized use (obviously)
- To allow unrestricted access to natural lands by motorized vehicles (motorbikes, ATVs, snowmobiles etc.)
- To keep promoting area
- To let ranches get lost
- To promote recreation at the expense of other interests
- To develop all open space for recreational use (i.e. leave pristine areas)
- Some very popular programs taking too large a percentage of resources to the detriment of others. i.e. hunting versus hiking, biking or allowing one resource to get overwhelmed such as too many rafts allowed on the river daily
- More campground and dispersed camping along the river than is already available
- Increased un-needed infrastructure (e.g. more trails that are unnecessary)

2. Don’t want to lose current or in-progress multi-use access (19)

- Central Colorado Mountain Riders (and others) does not want to lose access to areas currently used for motorized use/especially motorized single track (3)
- Any more road/trails closed (3)
- Cut back on planned trails and camps
- To shut down well-planned organized efforts by volunteer organizations striving to provide quality enhancements to our trail systems
- Exclusion of currently permitted user group (e.g. excluding bikes from trails)
- Closure of use areas



- To create restrictions on development of new multiuse trails/systems that interconnect communities with existing trail networks
- Exclusivity (people of all income levels need to have access)
- To see focus on single interests e.g. rafting (accommodate other unique interests)
- “Keep public lands open to all uses” [I think this is an I want and not a Don’t want statement]
- Bike trails having superiority
- Further restrictions on commercial access to resources until private use is also regulated.
- Exclusivity
- Privatization of public resources and opportunities

3. Don’t want a Rec plan that is not collaborative and/or not fully implemented (13)

- To have a paper plan that fails to become action (2)
- Plans to dissolve, be mismanaged, not succeed
- Citizen recommendations/decisions that don’t align with land manager priorities/capabilities
- Plans to be seen as divisive/political and causing contention between people in our community
- People/organizations not collaborating to the best common solution
- To see under-funding. We need fees.
- To see new regulations without enforcement
- To see refusal to accept limits on recreation usage
- To fail to include all the “share-holders” and miss their representation (2)
- To let this process get bogged down
- To have people be disappointed in the outcome
- To accept/promote half measures or solutions proposed without adequate data, experience, examples to back them up

4. Don’t want over regulation or excessive cost (12)

- Too much policing (instead focus on ways citizens can address issues as they arise)
- Too many rules so that quality people quit coming and spending money (2)
- To create over-regulation (3)
- Don’t want to create regulated and for-profit wilderness experiences
- Restrictions perceived as over-reach
- No enforcement of paid camping. Keep dispersed camping
- Data collection, high tech systems which don’t get used enough to justify time and money spent
- To create a bureaucracy that makes success impossible
- It to be too expensive to camp and use recreation facilities

5. Don’t want recreation to damage wildlife and the environment (5)

- To let increased emphasis on recreation result in loss of wildlife habitat and agricultural land



- To allow anthropocentric values/desires to overwhelm needs of wildlife [or other] natural resources
- To destroy wildlife habitat and natural beauty of landscape
- To see increase in non-motorized and motorized trails at the expense of wildlife
- To see quality of environment deteriorate (wildlife, water quality, etc.)

6. Others (5)

- “No more cows”
- “Don’t build houses out there”
- “Seas of tiny little lot houses”
- Public funds to go to private lands without assurance of public access
- To let BLM manage for hunting