

Committee on Resources

Witness Testimony

Testimony of

DAVID FELTCH

Before the Subcommittee on National Parks

Forests, and Lands

April 30 1996

The Forest Service's river management policy for the Green River tries to put restrictions on its use that are unnecessary. I have been an avid user of the Green River for over twenty years, using it both for recreational river running and fishing. I have my own raft and float the river ten to fifteen times a year. I have gone down the river with many scout groups, family reunions and civic organizations consisting of ten to over a hundred people. The Forest Service's plan to limit the number of people allowed on the river on any given day raises several concerns. They say one major reason for this is to avoid congestion. They would do this by only letting people launch their rafts between 7:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. How this would avoid congestion is beyond me. Currently when we go fishing, we usually launch about 5:30 a.m. to avoid the recreational rafters who typically get on the river after 9:00 in the morning. Under the proposed plan they would force us all into a much tighter time frame that would greatly add to the congestion, not to mention that the best fishing is early in the morning not during the middle of the day. I agree that environmental concerns need to be watched closely. A second rest room is needed on the "A" section of the river as well as making sure that safety rules are followed. However, only allowing a limited number of people on the river at a time will not affect these concerns at all. It's impossible to wear out the water in the river. A thousand rafts can float the river a day and they don't leave any sign of their passing. We do need to be sure to educate river users of the importance of taking only pictures (and maybe a fish or two) and leaving only footprints. This is best accomplished through proper education and a few well placed signs, not by limiting the number of people allowed to enjoy our public lands. The Forest Service also plans to only let a limited number of people launch per hour. I have floated the river with groups as large as a hundred people. I wonder how much greater the congestion will be when a large group is forced to launch over a two to three hour time slot. This will result in long lines at the launch ramp not to mention the problem it will cause at the take-out ramp with people waiting for several hours for the remainder of their group to arrive. I am greatly concerned about the government telling us when we are having fun and when we aren't. For the Forest Service to say that if there are over "X" number of people on the river then no one is having fun is an overstepping of their duties and an infringement on citizens right to use public lands. When I take my family on vacation I know that whether we go to Yellowstone National Park or Disneyland there are times of the year and day that they will be more crowded. Using this knowledge, we plan our trips to make it possible for us to have maximum enjoyment. However, we also have to consider when the kids are out of school and when I can get off work. We go knowing that there will be other people there and that this will cause us to do some waiting at popular sites, but this is preferred greatly to not going at all. If the Forest Service had asked the question in their survey, "Do you wish you had not floated the river today because of the number of other people you encountered?", they would not have had anyone who would have preferred to stay home. There are three other river trips available in our local area (Split Mountain, Yampa and Gates of LaDore) with strict limitations as to the number of people allowed on each day. If a person wants to enjoy a wilderness experience they can apply well ahead and attempt to draw out on a private trip or pay a guide service and float one of these sections of river. The section of the Green River in this proposal is the only section that a person can take their family on a trip of a life time without costing a lot of money or having to make arrangements months in advance. Are we going to limit the number of people who are allowed to visit the Washington Monument or view the Grand Canyon because some people feel they would have a better experience if there were no one else around? Please let supply and demand work in regard to how many people are allowed to enjoy our public land and it's beauty. If families feel they didn't have a good time word will spread and the number of users will drop accordingly. We don't need a government agency regulating who can have fun and who can't.

Thank You

David Feltch

###