

June 21, 2022  
US Forest Service – Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests  
Forest Supervisor Russ Bacon  
Denver, CO 80202

Dear Mr. Bacon,

We, the undersigned organizations, write to you on behalf of tens-of-thousands of Colorado residents, conservationists, sportspersons, and outdoor enthusiasts to share our deep concerns about the Rainbow Family Gathering scheduled to occur July 1<sup>st</sup> through July 7<sup>th</sup> in Routt National Forest in north Routt County. We request that the US Forest Service require the Rainbow Family Gathering to properly apply for and secure an event permit prior to assembling or employ appropriate enforcement to prohibit the event from occurring.

This historically massive gathering poses a serious risk to the environment, wildlife, and the forest itself. Routt County is currently undergoing moderate drought conditions and fire danger is of particular concern. Adams Park, the suspected gathering area, is known elk calving grounds and the timing of this gathering directly conflicts with when elk will rely on this habitat to birth calves. Colorado Parks and Wildlife has identified Adams Park as an elk calving area and elk concentration area for the E2 Bear's Ears elk herd, the second largest elk herd in Colorado. Elk are extremely sensitive to human disturbance during calving season and the weeks afterwards. Studies in Colorado have shown a decrease in elk reproduction rate of approximately 40% when subjected to nearby simulated human activities during calving season. It is unconscionable to allow an assembly of this magnitude into this sensitive area. The impact is worsened by the fact that many in the Rainbow Gathering are bringing dogs, posing a clear threat to local wildlife and their offspring.

A Forest Service report from the previous event in Routt County in 2006 can be read online at [SteamboatPilot.com/news/rainbow-gathering-update/](http://SteamboatPilot.com/news/rainbow-gathering-update/). The report details risks of fire hazards, water and riparian issues, inadequate human and dog waste disposal, soil erosion and compaction, wildlife displacement, parking problems with 4,000 to 6,000 vehicles, tree-cutting, impacts of domestic dogs on wildlife, and actual violence against law enforcement officers.

An additional analysis of the recent Rainbow Gathering in New Mexico (link here: <https://bit.ly/3tJu33K>) estimated that the event of 10,000 left behind 23 tons of human feces, 1.8 tons of dog feces, one half ton of soiled toilet paper, and 22,000 gallons of human urine onto the forest floor and trench latrines. The addition of rain causes waste products to become a toxic slurry left behind in the forest. In addition to the toxic waste left behind, the gathering poses extreme fire risk to the forest and surrounding residents.

We understand that the Rainbow Family Gathering is attempting to circumvent the required permitting process by claiming to be "leaderless;" however the USFS maintains the regulatory authority to intervene to prohibit actions inconsistent with its planning authorities and to protect the resource values of public lands within its jurisdiction. It should do so for the proposed Rainbow Family Gathering. A local petition calling for the halting of this event has already garnered the signatures of over 1000 local residents.

For the above stated reasons, we respectfully request that the Forest Service require the Rainbow Family Gathering to properly apply for and secure an event permit prior to assembling or employ appropriate enforcement to prohibit the event from occurring. We share the underlying mission and interest in the sustainable management of our public lands and we stand ready to assist the USFS in this matter.

Sincerely,  
Members of the Colorado Wildlife Conservation Project

CC: Michael Woodbridge

