

September 27, 2022

US Senator Michael Bennet
261 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Bennet,

As the reluctant host of the 2022 Rainbow Family Gathering on United States Forest Service (USFS) land, Routt County is writing to request the designation of annual funding for the USFS and local communities to directly aid with the financial impacts of the annual event. The gathering this past July saw roughly 10,000 Rainbow Family members descend on the Routt National Forest for their unauthorized 50th-anniversary celebration. This get-together has occurred for fifty years on USFS property and is anticipated to continue well into the future. The USFS plans for this event on an annual basis but has no designated funding to aid in managing the impacts. A gathering of this size requires the support of not only federal agencies but also local towns, cities, and counties.

Routt County bore the responsibility of ensuring the safety of our visitors and residents, and we were happy to do that, but it came at a cost. Routt County incurred \$89,300 in expenses to support this event. Of these, approximately \$47,000 is reimbursable from our cooperative law enforcement agreement with the USFS. The remaining cost of approximately \$42,300 fell on the County, with about \$20,000 of that being in-kind and \$22,300 being actual expenditures. Our local USFS officials worked tirelessly on this event at the expense of numerous local projects being delayed. The one constant message we heard from our federal partners was the need for a dedicated annual funding source to cover the significant expenses associated with hosting an unauthorized gathering of 10,000 people.

Routt County asks that you please work with the USFS and consider allocating annual funding to assist the communities and national forests chosen by the Rainbow Family for future gatherings. We appreciate the work you do for our County and your support for public lands.

Respectfully,

Timothy Corrigan
District I

Tim Redmond
District II

M. Elizabeth Melton
District III

