

# Attachment 1: Crystal River Caucus response to USFS NEPA assessment of Crystal River Trail

Dear Pitkin County Commissioners,

July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2018

Our Crystal River Caucus Master Plan provides the community and elected officials guidance with regard to proposed development in the Crystal River Valley. Given that the Master Plan is a community based Master Plan, developed jointly by Pitkin County and the residents of the Crystal River Valley, the Caucus believes that the Plan should be used by staff and decision-makers to inform land use decisions.

The Plan provides clear direction on the values that we hold dear and have fought to maintain: “Our Valley is first and foremost a place where preservation of the natural environment and the protection of our rural character are valued. As the rest of our state becomes increasingly urbanized, the Crystal River Valley is a place where the rural character should remain substantially unchanged”. The Caucus feels that this bike trail will initiate a downward spiral that will substantially and irrevocably erode the rural character of our valley, leading to the urbanization that we’ve sought to prevent and which has come to characterize much of Pitkin County.

Consistently the Caucus has voted to support the development of a Pedestrian and Bicycle Path as part of the West Elk Loop path within the existing highway corridor - an alignment that will maintain the integrity of the wildlands, wildlife, stream health and rural community that we value and which our Master Plan clearly seeks to preserve: “A bicycle and pedestrian trail as part of the West Elk Loop should be developed. Trails should be designed to protect human safety and utility while minimizing impact upon wildlife, habitat, and stream health and integrity”.

Best available science regarding the wildlife in our valley comes from those professionals who have worked with the wildlife in our valley for decades, Colorado Parks and Wildlife’ biologists and wildlife managers. Consistently and for decades these professionals have advised against developing a trail through sensitive wildlife habitat because of the damage to wildlife that has always followed human recreational disturbance.

Our Master Plan is also adamant that: “Future development must...Preserve, protect and improve water resources and riparian and wetland habitat.” Analysis and assessment from independent stream ecologists and biologists are unambiguous in their recommendations to keep the trail in the highway corridor to prevent further degradation of stream and riparian habitat.

Each of these factors, wildlife, wildlands, and healthy streams, contributes to the rural character of the Crystal River Valley – character that our Master Plan seeks to protect and preserve. Our Caucus feels that the proposed trail development will undermine and lead to the loss of our rural character, inexorably leading to the urbanization of one of the last best places in Colorado. Accordingly, our Caucus submits the following resolution which supports a trail alignment that is restricted to the highway corridor and opposes the current draft trail plan alignment that supports a trail that intrudes into sensitive wildlife habitat.

A resolution regarding the Carbondale to Crested Butte Trail from the Crystal River Caucus follows.

Respectfully submitted,  
Delia G. Malone  
Chair, Crystal River Caucus

**RESOLUTION OF THE CRYSTAL RIVER CAUCUS REGARDING THE CARBONDALE TO CRESTED BUTTE  
DRAFT TRAIL PLAN, JULY, 2018.**

WHEREAS, the Crystal River Caucus (hereinafter "Caucus") is recognized by Pitkin County as the entity representative of the priorities and values of the Crystal River Valley; and,

WHEREAS, as stated in the Pitkin County Home Rule Charter, the function of the Caucus is to make recommendations to the county on matters affecting the caucus area; and,

WHEREAS, The Carbondale to Crested Butte Trail is a major public infrastructure project that will have a lasting presence and potentially significant impacts on the valley and is therefore a pressing and substantial matter affecting all portions of the Caucus area; and,

WHEREAS, the County has developed a Draft Trail Plan that has been put out for public comment prior to adoption; and,

WHEREAS, the Caucus met on July 12, 2018, to discuss the draft plan and the recommendations and comments the Caucus should make regarding the plan.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CRYSTAL RIVER CAUCUS that the Caucus voted to endorse and submit the following comments regarding the Draft Trail Plan:

1. The following motions regarding the Carbondale to Crested Butte Trail approved by the Caucus at their November 9, 2017 meeting, are reaffirmed:
  - a. Pitkin County should not develop any trails through sensitive wildlife habitat areas as identified by Pat Tucker and the DOW, Rick Thompson, and/or ERO including but not limited to McClure Pass, Bear Creek, Filoha Meadows, the Narrows, Avalanche, South and North Janeway and Red Wind Point.
  - b. The Caucus shall oppose any takings of private property through the use of Eminent Domain or RS 2477, or any other takings strategy, to establish a trail easement through private property.
  - c. The Crystal River Caucus recommends to the Pitkin County Board of Commissioners to discount the public input gathered by Pitkin County Open Space and Trails up to now since there has been no option for the public to indicate if they are in favor of no further trail development, and that the public opinion process be restarted with a determination first to be made whether or not the public believes any further trail should be built and is worth the cost of doing so.
  - d. The Caucus requests further analyses of actual costs of acquisition, construction, management and operation of the trail, as well as further analysis of specifications of trail build-out. The Caucus also requests that the BOCC analyze bandit trail construction, trespass mitigation, de-commissioning of bandit trails and management practices.
2. The following motion was made and passed by the CRYSTAL RIVER CAUCUS at the July 12<sup>th</sup> 2018 meeting and states the position of the Caucus regarding the Carbondale to Crested Butte Trail development plan: "I move that the Caucus oppose any further extension of the Carbondale to Crested Butte Trail on the east side of the Crystal River but supports extension of the Carbondale Crested Butte Trail within the highway alignment.