



Our mission is to create and sustain the best possible mountain bike trail system and experience in the Roaring Fork Valley.

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February 21, 2022

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620 Main Street
Carbondale, CO 81623

(Submitted online at <https://cara.fs2c.usda.gov/Public/CommentInput?Project=56913>)

Re: Comments on Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for
Redstone to McClure Pass Trail, Project #56913

Please accept this letter on behalf of the Roaring Fork Mountain Bike Association (RFMBA), a Chapter of the International Mountain Bicycling Association. RFMBA appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the Draft EA for the Redstone to McClure Pass Trail Project. We are grateful for Pitkin County's and WRNF's efforts to study this corridor to date, and would strongly support the decision to implement the Proposed Action. This visionary trail will be a benefit to those who select to enjoy and appreciate this area of public lands through non-motorized recreation use. It is worth restating our earlier support for a unique aspect of this project; Pitkin County will take charge of the Special Use Authorization that may be issued to construct and maintain the trail. As such, the day to day management of any approved trail will not over-burden the Forest's staff and limited resources with this new public amenity.

RFMBA members have been aware of the vision for a long distance trail to connect Carbondale to Crested Butte (CCB Trail Plan) since a feasibility study final report was issued in 2004. As part of the "Colorado the Beautiful" initiative, this trail was one of the 16 priority trails identified in 2016 that will help all Coloradans to participate in healthy outdoor activities. Prior to and throughout 2018, Pitkin County invested in a lengthy public process that studied the potential trail alignments between Carbondale and McClure Pass. That process resulted in the approval of a visionary plan that will require additional study and approvals over the coming years. Voices opposing specific portions of a conceptual trail in the Crystal Valley were successful in designating sensitive areas that the trail will not be approved within, and successful in strengthening the CCB Trail Plan's action items that the County approved regarding Biodiversity Preservation & Enhancement. The visionary trail Plan was approved with the support of many passionate individuals advocating for the future trail's manifold benefits. RFMBA urged support for the Carbondale to Crested Butte Trail Plan because:

RFMBA, a Chapter of the International Mountain Bicycling Association, is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization.

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1. The Plan serves as a long term vision for the overall trail while appreciating some segments need more study and time before the ideal alignments are selected, further studied, approved, funded, and constructed.

Imagine! The best trails on the planet – right outside your door!



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2. The CCB Trail Plan's action items are not just about the trail. The inclusion of biodiversity preservation and enhancement studies / projects are designed so that the eventual trail is not only a great place for riders to visit, but that the surrounding landscape can continue to sustain the wildlife that make the Crystal Valley such a special place to live in and to visit.

3. The least controversial portion of trail envisioned within the CCB Trail Plan, the soft surface route from Redstone to McClure Pass, saw no major opposition or alternate proposed alignments during the 2018 process. This upper section of the trail would allow for a 14 mile out and back mountain bike ride all by itself, bringing benefits to local residents, but also providing a very attractive experience for visiting trail users. In addition, this particular segment of trail can be considered a valued extension of the existing Ragged's Trail (a major part of the CCB Trail on the Gunnison National Forest) beyond McClure Pass.

Regarding the Proposed Action of the Redstone to McClure Pass Trail, RFMBA appreciates the variety of direct and indirect effects that have been evaluated, with most impacts identified as short term, limited, negligible, or non-existent, while a number of effects are noted to provide long term or substantial benefits. Further, we appreciate the consideration and inclusion of the cumulative impacts of future segments of the CCB Trail Project as this EA similarly catalogs mostly negligible effects. The Proposed Action is also found to be consistent with the Forest's 2002 Land and Resource Management Plan. Our view is that utilizing the Rock Creek Wagon Road and Old McClure Pass road alignments for this new trail, while overlaying a seasonal winter closure period, is an appropriate use, and an improved management, of these routes that will benefit both the public and local wildlife. Due to the historic and existing uses as well as the proposed management actions, we believe this Proposed Action should culminate in a finding of no significant impact, avoiding an Environmental Impact Statement prior to this project's implementation.

When it comes time for Pitkin County to implement any approved WRNF decisions and to manage the new trail as a shared public resource, we will bring funding partners to the table when appropriate, and we'll commit our growing trail maintenance efforts to the natural surface portions of the trail. Our independent Trail Agent volunteers and our Seasonal Trail Crew staff will work to maintain corridor growth, clear fallen trees, and ensure that drainage points are cleared and functioning properly. Not lastly, our outreach and communication efforts will get the message out about the need for respecting seasonal closures stipulated for the trail.

Circling back on the inclusion of this route from Redstone to McClure Pass on the list of 16 trails within the "Colorado the Beautiful" initiative, it is worth noting that routes like the Carbondale to Crested Butte Trail are, in the words of former Governor Hickenlooper, "not only about connecting our parks, trails and scenic lands, but about connecting people to the outdoor delights that set Colorado apart as a special place. It's important to bring our newest generations outside, away from electronic distractions and into the splendor of our waterways, forests, wildlife, grasslands, mountains and canyons."

Please feel free to contact me with any questions at (970) 948-3486 or mike.pritchard@rfmba.org.

Sincerely,

Mike Pritchard
RFMBA Executive Director