

OBJECTION LETTER: Proposed Redstone to McClure Pass Trail

March 13, 2023

Submitted via: <https://cara.fs2c.usda.gov/Public/CommentInput?Project=56913>

USDA Forest Service
Rocky Mountain Region
1617 Cole Blvd., Bldg. 17
Lakewood, CO, 80401

To All Whom it may concern,

The undersigned previously submitted timely written comments during the public comment period emphasizing, *inter alia*, the need for the Forest Service to conduct an Environmental Impact Study (EIS) rather than the issuance of a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) due to the projected negative impact the trail would have on the Crystal River Valley. I was disheartened that the Forest Service issued a FONSI without an in-depth analysis of all the factors that would, and will, occur once the trail is built. Who, if not the Forest Service, will protect our valley and its wildlife?

Yes, there are recreation interests as well, but there are a multitude of recreational trails all over the Roaring Fork Valley that accommodate recreational interests and the Crystal River Valley is one of the last refuges for the wildlife. This valley is still relatively pristine and is a haven for the animals that are being pushed out of those areas that are being used, and now overused. That is why most of us in the valley moved here and not to the Aspen to Glenwood Springs corridor. This trail will change everything. FOREVER.

The Crystal River Valley is unique in its diversity of wildlife habitats. It provides specialized habitat for some wildlife species and seasonal habitat or movement corridors for other broad-ranging wildlife. Significant populations of deer, elk, and bighorn sheep rely on the area. Just last month moose have been sighted in our area! Yet, we all know that in general the populations of the wildlife has been in decline due to the increased development of private land and human use in the valley.

Given the foreseeable changes on the horizon, the Forest Service should take this opportunity to consider how best to protect natural resources including wildlife by managing that demand, controlling unauthorized use, and ensuring safety. This is the time to develop a recreation plan for the entire Crystal River Valley, not simply recreate it to death one trail at a time. We all know and have witnessed that trails like this result in “bandit trails” that connect to other trails. Build it and they will come! Then how will it be managed? Where will they go? Where will the animals go?

The Forest Service must consider alternatives that proactively guide future recreational use and avoid conflicts caused by more unmanaged recreation. Finally, the agency’s cumulative impact analysis must acknowledge the extent to which the greater CCB trail proposal and accompanying increased recreation will transform the Crystal River Valley without a proactive plan for the whole area. Building this trail will simply expand unmanaged recreational use further into the

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backcountry. A more reasonable way to address unmanaged recreation would be to come up with a recreation plan for the entire Crystal River Valley.

It appears obvious to all that the Redstone to McClure Pass Trail is a segment of the longer Carbondale to Crested Butte Trail (CCB Trail). The CCB Trail is proposed to address recreational demand, regional trail connectivity, and safety concerns. It will clearly impact sensitive public lands. Accordingly, it must not be approved without an in-depth study of the entire CCB Trail, or, at a minimum, the study of the 20+ mile Crystal River Valley.

40 C.F.R. § 1502.14 requires the Forest Service to consider and analyze a reasonable range of alternatives in its EA. The residents of the Crystal River Valley have voted overwhelmingly that the bike trail should only be adjacent to Hwy 133 and not go through sensitive wilderness areas, yet this segment of the trail does exactly the opposite!

Please reconsider your FONSI finding and protect our valley. At a minimum, please undertake an EIS so you have the facts in order to make an informed decision.

Yours Very Truly,

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