

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 3/27/2024 6:00:00 AM

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Organization: Vail Valley Mountain Trails Alliance

Title: Executive Director

Comments: Attached are comments being submitted by the Vail Valley Mountain Trails Alliance (VVMTA) in support of the extension of the EagleVail Trail Project #61186.

Dear Reviewing Officer(s),

The basis and purpose of VVMTA's comments are in support of the extension of the EagleVail Trail as proposed. The Vail Valley Mountain Trails Alliance (VVMTA) believes that the proposed project's social benefits largely outweigh any potential or perceived negative impacts to habitat, wildlife, and/or landscapes. The benefits of a sustainably built trail, restoring existing social routes, increased user safety, and trail user experience in this already highly disturbed area meets a community and land need. The VVMTA believes that the recreation opportunities and limited impact these three trail projects have on our landscape, provide desired connections and experiences for the community.

The VVMTA supports the extension of the EagleVail trail. The existing social trail in the area is well-traveled and significantly established. The EagleVail community and surrounding communities use and enjoy this social trail for hiking, trail running, and mountain biking. This social trail was created because residents in western EagleVail and neighboring residents do not have access to a trail from their neighborhood such as the eastern EagleVail neighborhood does. The goal of the project is to meet the demand of the community by creating a legal and sustainable trail that stays off private property and eliminates future social trail creation. The trail provides a designated trail opportunity for surrounding residents including River Oaks, Frontgate, and the Town of Avon.

Not every social trail should become a legal trail, nor is making a social trail a legal trail the correct way to approach new system trails. In fact, other social trails in the area have been decommissioned recently. However, this social trail is close to the existing neighborhood and satisfies a need for the community that benefits a wide majority of trail users.

The area is already highly disturbed from existing development (houses, roads, buildings, etc.) along with the existing social trail(s). The trail is being designed to be as low and as tight as can be to the neighborhood and development to limit any potential further impact on wildlife. It is located in mapped elk winter concentration habitat and a seasonal wildlife closure will be evaluated through the US Forest Service's environmental review.

The existing social trail currently crosses through 25 private homeowner properties. Trail users on this existing social trail are currently trespassing. This has the potential to open up liability and safety issues for both the users and homeowners.

Additionally, the existing social trail has spiderwebbed significantly, creating numerous sections where there are 2-3 trails within 100 feet of each other. This is because the existing social trail is not built to sustainable trail standards utilizing proper tread width, drainage, terrain undulations, benching, and outslope.

Formalizing the trail will address all of these issues. The trail will be built sustainably, off of private property, and the spider webbing social trails will be decommissioned. Trail users will now have a fun, safe, and enjoyable experience on a sustainable trail.

Thank You,

Vail Valley Mountain Trails Alliance