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First name: Marcia

Last name: Gilles

Organization: Eagle County Government

Title: Open Space and Natural Resources Director

Comments: Dear Heather Noel and Michael Beach,

Eagle County appreciates the opportunity to comment on the proposed extension of National Forest System Trail (NFST) EagleVail Trail #2351 that will provide safer connectivity of the trail to the Town of Avon and address illegal user-created trails.

Eagle County overall supports the proposed extension of EagleVail Trail #2351 that will provide a legal, managed and maintained trail while restoring user-created trails in the vicinity.

Formalizing the user-created illegal trail is often not the preferred design method for implementing new trails. Eagle County understands the geographic and ownership constraints of this trail and supports the implementation of water drainage features to meet the class 3 Forest Service trail standards as proposed. The 0.27 mile portion of proposed trail that will transect U.S. Forest Service lands occurs within mapped Elk Winter Range, Elk Severe Winter Range, and Elk Winter Concentration Area according to Colorado Parks and Wildlife's Species Activity Map for elk. Residents and visitors of Eagle County highly value wildlife, and wildlife related recreation contributes to Eagle County's economy. According to Colorado Parks and Wildlife, elk herd populations in Eagle County have been declining the past couple of decades, and calf to cow ratios, a measure of elk herd sustainability, have been steadily declining since the 1980s.

Due to the proposed trail occurring within mapped severe winter habitat for elk, Eagle County strongly recommends employing a seasonal wildlife closure with closure timing that is protective of elk when they are most vulnerable, which is over the winter into late spring, to mitigate recreation impacts on Eagle County's local elk herds.

Thank you for your partnership and the opportunity to comment on the proposed extension of EagleVail Trail #2351. We appreciate your attention to our comments and look forward to continued opportunities to engage. If you have questions regarding this letter, contact Marcia Gilles via email marcia.gilles@eaglecounty.us or at (970) 230-1583.

Sincerely,

Marcia Gilles

Eagle County Open Space and Natural Resources Director