



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 18, 2020

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White River National Forest (WRNF)
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% Shelly Grail Braudis, Aspen-Sopris Ranger District, Recreation Manager
PO Box 309
Carbondale, CO 81623
(Submitted online at cara.ecosystem-management.org/Public/CommentInput?Project=56913)

Re: Redstone to McClure Pass Trail, Project #56913 - Scoping Comments

Dear Scott & Shelly,

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 during the scoping period for the Redstone to McClure Pass Trail. We are grateful for Pitkin County's efforts to study this corridor to date, and believe that now is a good time to perform further detailed studies on the portions of the alignment managed by the WRNF. We anticipate that these studies may lead to a significant portion of a visionary and beneficial trail to be approved for non-motorized recreation use. It is worth noting our support up front for a unique aspect of this project; Pitkin County will take charge of any Special Use Authorization that is 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 since a feasibility study final report was issued in 2004. As part of former Governor Hickenlooper's "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 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.

Post Office Box 2635
Aspen, CO, 81612
www.RFMBA.org

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 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 or visit.

3. The least controversial portion of trail envisioned within the 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 Carbondale to Crested Butte Trail on the Gunnison National Forest) beyond McClure Pass.

RFMBA looks forward to participating in the Environmental Assessment process as this proposal for a trail between Redstone and McClure Pass moves closer to reality. 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 do our best to 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 members 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 any seasonal closures stipulated for the trail.

We would like to call attention to the fact that Pitkin County's Plan describes some of the trail segments as existing and having public use right now. In particular, utilizing the historic Rock Creek Wagon Road and Old McClure Pass road alignments for this new trail will limit impacts compared to new route construction. This outcome will keep trail construction costs down and ensure the highest quality experience for trail users on our shared public lands. Due to the historic and existing uses, we believe the forthcoming Environmental Assessment should result in a finding of no significant impact, thereby avoiding a costly and lengthy Environmental Impact Statement prior to this project's implementation.

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.

Best Regards,

Mike Pritchard
RFMBA Executive Director