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Comments: Redstone to McClue Pass Trail Project

I missed, somehow, the informational meeting on the Redstone to McClue Pass Trail Project in early January I submitted the following to the Crystal Valley Echo, and feedback from Gentry Houghton, the editor indicates it will be published in the next, February issue
I pass it on as my comment on the proposed trail, for whatever that is worth to you as you sort your analysis and public response

Subject header: The Bicycle Rider Bopogeyman

One of the great aspects of living in the Crystal River Valley is that the American people own so much of our valley. Over 80% of the land in our portion of Pitkin County is publicly owned. This provides us daily with grand scenic enjoyment and trails to use. Our homes on relatively small parcels of private land are surrounded by Forest Service Land, including large swatches of Wilderness.

My belief, my values are that we have an obligation to share with the other owners!

In his January letter to the Editor Bill Jochems expressed his sincere concerns about a specter of scary & harmful bicycle riders, if I may: cyclists as BoogeyPeople. Cyclists who would use the proposed Carbondale to Crested Butte Trail, part of the larger "16 in 16" plan proposed for our Colorado by Governor Hickenlooper several years ago, will want to ride their bikes not get schlepped everywhere in cars. Moreover, many of us who live in the Valley find the proposal of great benefit for long walks off highway as well as grand bicycling. Let me cite one rider I encountered the summer before last while walking down the old road to McClure pass: a woman in her sixties cycled passed me going uphill on her mountain bike. We talked briefly. She noted that she always bicycled uphill and then used the highway for a rapid return to her car parked below at the trail head. This seems much more typical of future trail users.

Finally, with regard to the other boogey: wildlife. In recent years, one animal per mile per year has been reported to CDOT as roadkill along Hwy 133. That is a minimum, animals who drag themselves off highway before dying are not reported as certainly are some others who die on the shoulder. The other big threat to wildlife: hunters. I need to add: habitat loss due to a near doubling of residents in the valley and anthropogenic global warming. The trail's habitat impact will be much smaller and much of the route can use habitat already degraded by old road and rail grades. Any impact of trail users, cyclists or hikers, will not be measurable compared to these major hazards to wildlife.

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