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Comments: To Whom it May Concern,

I am reaching out as part of the scoping process on Pitkin County's proposal to construct and maintain a natural surface, non-motorized, multi-use recreation trail from Redstone to the summit of McClure Pass.

In particular, I would like to draw attention to the well-documented declining elk population in the Roaring Fork and Vail valleys and the resulting impacts to these native animals from additional recreation pressure in the proposal area. I would note the U.S. Forest Service Report entitled "Sustaining Wildlife With Recreation on Public Lands: A Synthesis of Research Findings, Management Practices, and Research Needs."

Key findings in this report include that animals tend to have stronger responses to less predictable forms of recreation (such as bicycles), and the proposed trail may result in further decline of elk populations in the area, if not change distribution in a negative manner that ultimately results in further decline of elk populations in the area. Additionally, while this study found that consolidating recreational impacts is preferred to dispersing those impacts, and the proposed Pitkin County trail alignment is along an existing road, this would be a new recreational impact in this area (i.e. there is no current recreation area or trail along Hwy. 133), and would thus constitute dispersing of recreation.

Thank you for your time.

Will Shoemaker  
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