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Comments: Just because you can doesn't mean you should.

Would a bike path through the undeveloped Crystal River valley floor be beautiful? Yes. Would it attract more visitors to spend more money in restaurants and bike shops and grocery stores in Carbondale and Marble and Redstone? Yes. Would the new path grace the cover of magazines and tourism marketing throughout the West? Good chance. But are all - or any - of these things desired by the majority of residents who regularly travel this road or explore its periphery, or the wildlife for whom it is home? I'm not so sure.

As it is, the 133 corridor south of Carbondale is a scenic drive -- and a stunning one. Perhaps it's a shame there's a road through it, but it's hard to complain when you're behind the wheel - wildlife and wild vistas abound. For those seeking views and adventure beyond the windshield, there are hiking and biking trails accessible from the road or from small spurs from it - but few face the crush of tourism that has plagued spots like Independence Pass recently. It does take a bit of effort to discover some of these spots, and I think that's okay.

Like many, I would love to ride my road bike more many many miles up the Crystal, but I don't lack for other road-biking opportunities. Maybe a wider shoulder would make that activity a bit more palatable, but what is NOT needed is an entirely new trail that disrupts wildlife and creates yet another intrusion into an otherwise wild space. (Recent scholarship points to a direct link to decreased herd stress and human intrusion, particularly via vehicles including bicycles.)

I've explored many miles of the Crystal Valley's wild lands over the last 10 years, and I understand exactly where much of the trail would be built. The net gain in access is overwhelmingly negated by the loss of beauty and the threat to our wildlife and, for some, a way of life. I fear that this trails determined designers value the environment less than they do their own "improvements" to it. They're intent on creating what would be an incredibly impressive public works project, but a misguided one.

Instead of drawing more lines on the map, this time we should be drawing a line in the sand. I hope the Forest Service will act in that manner.