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First name: Janet

Last name: Long

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Comments on Redstone to McClure Pass Trail Project

Dear Mr. Fitzwilliams,

As a hiker, biker and 25-year resident of the Redstone area of the Crystal, I strongly oppose the proposed action regarding a Redstone to McClure Pass trail. To be honest, it appears from reading the report that the decision has already been made, but I will submit my comments in good faith. I have had deep respect for our local Forest Service staff over many years. I am appalled that this project appears to be moving forward.

The "Need for the Proposed Action" as outlined is flawed:

*The first bullet suggests that the impetus for this project is a local need, which I question, and elsewhere in the report the project is differentiated from the larger effort to build a trail from Carbondale to Crested Butte, but the reality is that the impact must be considered within the context of that effort and its implications for sheer numbers of users and their long-distance biking goals as you build a bike trail through what is now one of the few remaining peaceful refuges for day hikers with minimal impact on wildlife.

*The second bullet references existing unmanaged recreational use along the existing trails. If that is a concern, the Forest Service should take action to incorporate those trails into their system and manage them as hiking trails. This project is not the answer to that concern.

*The third bullet references improving safety for pedestrians and cyclists along Highway 133. Then keep the trail on 133. If CDOT says that's not feasible, don't build the bike trail. This bullet also implies that the impetus for the bike trail is from local residents of Redstone. I am a local resident of Redstone and I do not believe that the primary impetus for this project is coming from us.

I have read the full report, and here are my primary concerns:

*I am concerned about the impact on wildlife, and do not understand how the proposal can say that there would be no appreciable impact on wildlife but the trail would be closed in winter to protect wildlife. If the reasoning is to off-set increased use, the only explanation I can assume is that the trail would be closed when it is not of use to bikers or hunters, leaving hikers with minimal impact shut out. I have known the Bear Creek trail for 30 years and have watched wildlife population dwindle, but it is still the place where I am most likely to have a quiet, respectful meeting of eyes with wildlife. The disruption from construction of the trail to accommodate bikes, and the additional traffic (especially looking ahead to the likelihood of this being part of an extensive long-distance bike trail that will draw huge numbers of bikers) makes no sense to me. I see no excuse for taking the bike trail into the woods instead of keeping it along the highway.

*I am concerned about hiker safety. I have biked along the Crystal for a couple of decades, but I do so respectfully and do not bike the hiking trails out of respect for the hikers, the wildlife, and the erosion it causes. The Bear Creek trail is the only trail left where I have not had to literally jump off the trail to avoid being hit by careening bikers. I have had this experience on Avalanche Creek as well as on the Raggeds trail above McClure Pass, as just a couple of examples. The steep terrain of the trails that you are proposing to make "multi-use" make that danger even more intense. I have been run over by a biker when I wasn't quick enough. I would like to have some refuge left where I can hike safely.

Thank you for consideration of these comments.

Janet Long