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To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in opposition to the proposed Redstone to McClure Pass trail project, titled Alternative 2 - Proposed Trail with Seasonal Closures in the Draft Environmental Assessment.

The Draft Environmental Assessment (DEA) provides little reassurance that the fragile nature of the Crystal Valley or its wildlife will be protected from the increases in human traffic created by the additional access this trail it proposed to provide.

Despite having lived in this valley for only twenty years, it is clear to me that the environment is at a critical point and will not benefit from a trail that will leave the highway for over half its distance. The addition of trail bikes and the projected increase in overall recreational use will have a negative impact on the land, its current recreational use, and most importantly, the wildlife.

Both Elk and Bighorn Sheep are already experiencing challenges to their respective habitats. In my limited time here, I have witnessed a reduction in both populations based on visual observation. This proposed trail would run through a summer range for sheep and winter range for elk. The increase in usage projected in the DEA during the May-November period, especially the usage resulting from the introduction of a single-track bike trail, would place further pressure on this critical summer range. As would the no-leash requirement for dogs. Although there is a winter closure period proposed, the enforcement of such a closure in that area would be difficult given current staffing. Though the DEA states, "Long-term habitat management and enhancement projects aim to make the lower McClure/Placita area more useful for wintering elk. Increasing visitor use in this area would need to be managed to ensure sustainability of those long-term goals.," there is nothing in the proposal that indicates what those enhancement projects might be or what the long-term goals to ensure sustainability are.

The environmental impact on the land in the off-road segments would be negative. Vegetation and the surface surrounding the trail will be destroyed prior to and during the construction of the trail, the bridge at Huntsman Gulch, a new parking area, and the tunnel near the top of McClure Pass. The encouragement/addition of trail bikes on the off-road segments will add to the degradation of both vegetation and the surface, especially if the trail is indeed only 2.5-3 feet wide. Since these segments are intended to be multi-use, there will be many times a hiker, biker and/or horseback rider will meet. Based on the definition of single track and the designated trail width, someone will need to give way and move off the trail. My experience with trail bikers and horse riders is that they do not stop, dismount, and simply stand off to the edge. My experience leads me to believe there will be paths created off trail as a result of these meetings and as people explore the new areas to which they would now have easier access. Finally in this area, the management of increases in all kinds of waste, both human and non-human, resulting from the expected increase in trail usage is not addressed in the DEA.

I do support the creation of better bike segments along Highway 133. This would help alleviate an ongoing problem with road bikers and the safety of both rider and driver on this narrow highway.

An assessment that includes in the working group not just the Forest Service, but local environmental groups and other stakeholders should be considered.

Denny Meredith-Orr

Swiss Village