

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 5/13/2023 3:06:28 PM

First name: James

Last name: Galanes

Organization:

Title:

Comments: I will restrict my comments to the trail system in Frisco's "Back Yard" as I have no expertise in fire mitigation. In past professional experience I have worked for an engineering firm and have designed and constructed all manner of trails, from FIS Homologated cross country ski trails, hiking trails and hard surfaced trails and just about everything in between. While having more miles of trails is often desirable. The number one driver for a good trail experience is the quality of the design and construction of the trail. Operating with the goal of increasing miles of trails often results in a less than desirable trail system.

I may have missed something in the available online materials, I find some critical elements missing.

1. An assessment of existing conditions is critical in making any determination of what new or existing trails need improvements, realignments, or decommissioning.

2. There is no purpose or need expressed for trail improvements, decommission, or construction of new trails, other than general statements of managed use and to improve trail-based recreation.

3. There was no identification of any trail design standards that are important to creating a sustainable trail system.

I have two primary areas of concern regarding the existing conditions. One, virtually all the trails on Ophir Mountain have access climbs or descents for extended distances that exceed 20% grades, have extended fall line trails which has increased erosion, trenching of trails and surfaced a lot of rock in the trail bed. These conditions create a significant safety concern. Two, the 14 miles of unauthorized trails are very popular with the local community and some evaluation of those conditions and intended usage should be done. 14 miles of unauthorized trails, seems like a lot of trails dedicated to a small number of users who can safely ride those trails. I would recommend that further study be carried out on realignment strategies to improve these existing trails and enhance the user experience. As the trails on Ophir are currently constructed, they are not sustainable, and they do not provide for a range of levels of difficulty to accommodate a broad range of users.

There is no expressed purpose or need for new trails or redevelopment of the trails. I believe we need to have an expressed purpose and need for any trail improvements. Are the trails as suggested intended for multiple use or a single use for various skill, ability, and fitness levels. For example, the 14 miles of unauthorized trails and virtually all the trails on Ophir Mountain have excessive grades, loose rocky trail bed, no drainage structures and technical sections that are rideable for high level riders only. In my view there are no trails that would provide a good experience for general mountain bike riders and hikers.

One can look at the new trail development at the PRA in Frisco and see sustainable design standards for mountain bike trails. All the new trails at the PRA are well done and provide a spectrum of uses for all levels. In my assessment none of trails in the Back Yard are designed or constructed to sustainable standards. Similarly, there should be some design standards that address the needs of various ability levels.

The trail designated as Trail 25 on the maps, intended to be a managed fat bike trail in the winter. I would like to see an assessment of the purpose and need for this trail. I question whether there is a demand for this type of trail and whether the level of use demands the construction of a new trail. Personally, I don't see a need, based on observed usage of the fat bike trails at the PRA, that would indicate a demand for this trail. A new trail to Rainbow Lake, that due to terrain constraints would have the two trails very close together. Crossing already compromised wetlands and traversing areas of significant drainage.

One of the suggestions for managing the trails is alternating weeks for dedicated use of the trails. Clearly more study and thought needs to be given on how to manage trail usage. I can imagine all kinds of challenges and conflicts occurring because of overly aggressive trail management, when there is only one trail that is heavily used.

In my opinion I think the priorities are to; establish sustainable design standards for all trails, assess the existing conditions of all the trails, develop a plan to address problem areas identified in the existing conditions analysis and then develop a specific plan to provide the design standards, and designed use for the "Back Yard" trails. If the Town of Frisco is going to take on the care and maintenance of these trails at taxpayers' expense, then responsible action should be taken to ensure trails are designed and constructed to be sustainable.