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First name: Holly
Last name: McLain
Organization: Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council
Title: Communication Chairman
Comments: Roaring Fork Horse Council Comments Re: Redstone to McClure Pass Trail

The Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council (RFVHC), as a stake holder attended the January 28, 2020, presentation regarding the White River National Forest (WRNF) EA, which will provide information to Pitkin County for their Special Use Authorization, and allows the county to construct and maintain the trail on National Forest System (NFS) Lands.

The RFVHC appreciates the opportunity to be included in this process. We are a non-profit organization representing over 500 members who are valley recreationalists. We depend upon using USFS, BLM and County and state open space lands to ride our horses locally, state wide and nationally. The recreational equine industry is a multibillion dollar enterprise.  Horseback riders have been partnering with the USFS for maintaining trails for decades.

Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council would like to submit the following comments:

PROPOSED REDSTONE TO MCCLURE PASS TRAIL
The trail is located within the State Highway 133 right-of-way and along the way of the historic Rock Creek Wagon Road and Old McClure Pass Road.
We feel that while most of the trail's length remains close to the existing highway, this southern-most section following the Rock Creek Wagon Road and Old McClure Pass Road may constitute a fragmenting of wildlife habitat. The RFVHC  has great concern for the  wildlife habitat in this trail section, especially where the route diverges from the valley floor and Highway 133.

The RFVHC respectfully requests that the entire length of the proposed trail remain within in the right-of-way of Highway 133.

BIODIVERSITY AND SUPPORTIVE HUMAN CO-EXISTANCE
The RFVHC mission is to keep horses on trails, facilitate equestrian parking access for trucks and trailers and to educate all users groups about kindness and respect while enjoying our shared lands. Our goal is to plan recreational opportunities incorporating land stewardship, by using science as a foundation to thoughtfully direct trail development and improvements. Much of the Crystal Valley incorporates lower and higher elevations, where the wildlife live and where their critical habitat exists, in winter and summer on the land and in the rivers. This is important, because the Crystal River is the life of the Crystal Valley.
This fact creates a unique opportunity for residents and visitors to become educated about biodiversity and our supportive co-existence.  People seek out and travel around the world to experience this unique opportunity to connect with nature and wildlife. Together USFS and Pitkin County can design their recreational trail systems with careful, thoughtful planning and education to support this balance for humans, wildlife and the environment. If managed properly, this type of experience is an economic engine for many communities around the world. Consider making biodiversity and supportive human coexistence the primary goal of this plan.

The RFVHC asks that you consider making biodiversity and human coexistence the primary goal of this plan and to preserve the Crystal Valley a unique place to live and visit.

WILDLIFE
We ride our horses through wildlife habitats and are proponents for preserving the biodiversity of wildlife and their environments. We are aware of the Roaring Fork Watershed Biodiversity & Connectivity Study that is being

conducted by the Watershed Biodiversity Initiative and that the study has not yet been completed. The RFVHC strongly believes in the mission of the study. Careful attention should be paid to the results, before engaging in any trail building or alterations. We feel this study directly concerns this trail's potential impact on our wildlife and its' habitat and should be seriously considered before any trail is approved.

Please consider that before engaging in any trail building or alterations, that you include the results for Roaring Fork Watershed Biodiversity & Connectivity Study.

LACK OF EQUESTRIAN PARKING TO ACCESS TRAILS
Truck and trailer parking giving trail access to equestrians is difficult to find. Many parking lots are parked full by recreational user cars. The RFVHC is working with County and BLM organizations to plan and include equestrian parking in their projects going forward. We ask the WRNF & USFS to include this same parking initiative in all future and existing trailheads. Without parking horseback riders are unable to access trails.
Parking Lot Specifications and Data
An appropriate equestrian parking lot accommodates trucks and trailers as they pull in, swing around in the area, and angle park, facing out. Horse trailers are 7'8" to 8'6" wide. Tow vehicles are 6' to 8'6' wide. Maximum trailer height is 13'6". Legal limit in length of a trailer is 53'. 125 feet is the bare minimum space needed to swing around modern horse trucks and trailers. Shared parking works best, when vehicles have designated parking areas separate from the horse trailers. People unfamiliar with horses may not understand that horsemen and horses need extra space by the trailer for tying, saddling and loading.
Attached to this letter is a comprehensive parking lot document that we have been given permission to use for land managers and trail groups.

Realizing that the horseback riding community is a stakeholder in this Redstone to McClure Pass Trail proposed project, we suggest that the two new parking areas that are mentioned in this document should have horse trailer parking considered in their size and design.

In order to support the RFVHC mission of keeping horseback riders on the trails, sufficient parking is imperative.

COMPLIANCE & ENFORCEMENT
Who will oversee and enforce regulations for trespassers, who disregard signage or make bandit trails? We would submit that heavy fines be given to any and all trespassers into prohibited areas, especially during the closed periods. We would recommend cameras recording the illegal persons for prosecution. Trail rangers may be a helpful addition.

The RFVHC suggests that Compliance and Enforcement be added as an important Goal for the WRNF Redstone to McClure Pass trail Plan.
Rules without compliance and consequences are useless.

NEPA
National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the first major U.S. environmental law. Enacted in 1969 and signed into law in 1970 by President Richard M. Nixon, NEPA requires all federal agencies to go through a formal process before taking any action anticipated to have substantial impact on the environment.

The RFVHC is concerned that careful forethought be put into all current projects, because all decisions will create impacts which will be felt far into the future. We humans need to be thoughtful about how our choices can damage the environments where we work, play and live. Our choice is to preserve our lands for future generation.

We are aware that the Crested Butte to the top of McClure Pass trail is already under construction and the Redstone to McClure Pass summit is a continuation of this trail. The number of people potentially coming from

Crested Butte to the McClure Pass summit will definitely impact this section of trail.

Even more concerning is that this trail might be extended from Redstone to Carbondale through sensitive land such as wildlife habitats and privately owned properties.

"A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise."
Aldo Leopold - 1949 Sand County Almanac

(1) The RFVHC respectfully requests that the entire length of the proposed trail remain within in the right-of-way of Highway 133.

(2) The RFVHC asks that you consider combining biodiversity and human coexistence as the primary goal for the Redstone to McClure Pass Trail Plan to preserve the Crystal Valley as a unique place to live and visit.

(3) The RFVHC asks to please consider that before engaging in any trail building or alterations, that you include the results for Roaring Fork Watershed Biodiversity & Connectivity Study.

(4) In order to support the RFVHC mission of keeping horseback riders on the trails, sufficient parking is imperative.

(5) The RFVHC suggests that Compliance and Enforcement be added as an important Goal for the WRNF Redstone to McClure Pass Trail Plan.
Rules without compliance and consequences are useless.

Thank you for including us at the table to discuss this project, we hope our recommendations are helpful.

Respectfully Submitted,
The RFVHC Board of Directors

cc:
Pitkin County BOCC
Pitkin County OST board and staff

The Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization