



r f m b a
ROARING FORK
Mountain Bike Association

Attn: WRNF TMP Analysis team, wrtmp@contentanalysisgroup.com

CC: WRNF Aspen / Sopris Ranger District staff: Rich Doak, Tim Lamb, Brent Allred, Wayne Ives, Wendy Haskins, Bruce Davidson

Pitkin County Open Space & Trails: Dale Will, Gary Tennenbaum, John Armstrong

From: RFMBA, Mike Pritchard, Board Member, P.O. Box 4424, Basalt, CO 81621, 970-948-3486

The following are RFMBA's Comments for the White River National Forest's Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Forest's Travel Management Plan. RFMBA's analysis maps that were created with WRNF data are available at www.rfmba.org

General comment #1:

RFMBA does not prefer to see many hundreds of miles of trails needlessly decommissioned. Alternative F, which proposes to decommission fewer miles of routes than Alternative G, would meet our goals in this respect. However, Alternative G is officially the WRNF's Preferred alternative. RFMBA respects the WRNF's multitude of decisions in coming to this preferred alternative, and we will commit to working with the WRNF to revise this preferred plan. It is with these thoughts in mind that we submit comments based on the revision of Alternative G, rather than the simple, yet perhaps unrealistic, support of Alt. F.

General comment #2:

Approximately 470 miles of trails in the Roaring Fork valley will be decommissioned if Alternative G is adopted without revision. RFMBA has identified 70 miles of high value trails that were not identified as such during earlier phases of this TMP process. These trails have been identified as high value for a variety of reasons, including historic & current use patterns, connectivity and loop potentials for recreational users, minimizing user group conflicts and lastly, consideration for an increase in recreation use as regional populations increase over time.

General comment #3:

RFMBA has identified a number of existing routes that are not properly mapped within the WRNF's GIS data set. These routes are either mis-located, or are not shown at all. RFMBA will prepare an email package of suggested data corrections, sent to the attention of Bruce Davidson, WRNF's GIS data director. Each of these route data issues are noted separately, below.

General comment #4:

In speaking with Wendy Haskins, one of the key authors for this WRNF DEIS, RFMBA was told that there is perceived value in identifying areas that should be considered as existing mountain bike trail systems. While we are unclear as to how this may allow for revisions to Alternative G, we strongly appreciate this acknowledgement of the importance of mountain bike recreational use. The current density of mountain bike use and size of existing trail systems in the following areas warrant this type of designation: Hay Park area north of Mount Sopris, the area north of Basalt Mountain, and finally, the Hunter Creek / Smuggler Mountain area. These three areas include numerous routes proposed for decommissioning. Specific high value routes that should be kept open to recreational use are addressed in the below comments.

General comment #5:

RFMBA has decided not to prioritize the below list of comments as we appreciate that each comment will be considered on its own merit and logic by the WRNF TMP Analysis Team. RFMBA has reviewed these comments with WRNF staff from the Aspen/Sopris Ranger District and understand the hidden complexities behind certain route decommissionings. However, we continue to pursue certain comments based on the long term outlook of our organization. RFMBA's mission is to create and sustain the best possible mountain bike trail system in the Roaring Fork Valley.

Comments regarding trails proposed for decommissioning:

1-103W.2X, 1-103W.2Y, 1-103W.2Z, Old Larkspur Mtn Road. This route consists of 3 sections of singletrack trail that roughly parallel Forest Route 103, which connects Lenado to Kobey Park. These trails are generally ridden in the downhill direction by cyclists returning to Lenado from Kobey Park & Margy's Hut areas. These trails provide a high value, exhilarating alternative route for mountain bikers looking beyond the 2WD dirt route of Forest Route 103. RFMBA recommends that these existing routes be preserved for continued recreational use.

1-131W.1H, Smuggler Mtn. Trail. This route is shown south of Smuggler Mountain Road (Forest Route 131) that goes to Warren Lakes. RFMBA's field investigations show that the trail does not exist as mapped. However, a historic stock driveway trail does exist along the same general terrain, south of the road. Due to its close proximity to the City of Aspen, we recommend that this trail be preserved for continued recreational use. For trail sustainability, a re-route should be pursued at its steepest point: the portion nearest the Reflector along Forest Route 131. RFMBA will prepare an email for Bruce Davidson that will include the route's actual, existing alignment, via GIS data.

1-1998.1.A, Hannon Creek Spur A. This route is the southernmost trail in a large complex of routes being proposed for decommissioning in preferred Alternative G (along either side of Forest Route 508 & Forest Route 528). This route provides a traversing option to the steep gully continuation of 1-1998.1A, Hannon Creek trail. Also, retaining this trail creates a loop ride opportunity from the Kobey Park area. This route is proposed open to mechanized (bicycles) in both Alternatives A & F. This existing trail should be retained in the system for its high quality recreational attributes.

1-2186.2 & 1-N124.1, Arbaney-Kittle Trail. This route is the traditional start to the singletrack portion of the classic Arbaney-Kittle Trail. Many published maps indicate this route for the A-K Trail. This route departs west from Forest Route 508, at the top of Red Canyon. Retaining this route will also allow for a recreational loop opportunity with trail 1N127.1, which would otherwise become the de facto, yet, shortened beginning to this high value, classic mountain bike ride. This

route is proposed open to mechanized (bicycles) in both Alternatives A & F. RFMBA recommends that this existing route be preserved for continued recreational use. At the very least, this route should remain open, with trail 1N127.1 being considered for decommissioning.

1-2188.1, Dry Woody Creek. This route is a historic connection to Kobey Park, Triangle Peak, and various areas along the Arbaney Kittle Trail. While not currently a preferred route for mountain bikers, RFMBA notes the existence of a recreation easement granting access to this portion of public lands. This route is proposed open to mechanized (bicycles) in both Alternatives A & F. RFMBA recommends not decommissioning this existing recreational route.

1-2189.1A, Red Canyon trail. This route is a historic connection to Kobey Park, Triangle Peak, and various areas along the Arbaney Kittle Trail. While not currently a preferred route for mountain bikers, RFMBA notes the existence of a recreation easement through Aspen Valley Ranch, at the base of Red Canyon. A new trailhead and easement re-route are currently under discussion by the concerned entities. RFMBA recommends not decommissioning this existing recreational route, especially considering current easement access.

1-2198.1, 1-2198.2, 1-21-98W.1C, McFarlane Creek trail. This historic route parallels Richmond Ridge to the east for 5 or 6 miles. These routes provide a recreational out and back & loop opportunities with Richmond Ridge Road, Forest Route 123. If mountain bike access to the top of Aspen mountain ski hill becomes a reality in the future (as has been discussed) the McFarlane's road could become a valuable asset to recreation in the area. RFMBA recommends that these existing routes be preserved for continued recreational use.

1-N121.1, Un-named trail. This singletrack route parallels Forest Route 508, and is valued as a high quality preamble for those continuing on to start the Arbaney-Kittle Trail. This trail provides a rare traversing experience, and a quality, recreational alternative to the adjacent 2WD dirt road. Decommissioning this route would eliminate an existing, high value, singletrack trail from the system. RFMBA recommends that this existing route be preserved for continued recreational use.

1-N152.1, Un-named trail. This route is shown as being located on the lower slopes of Snowmass Ski Area and appears to be located where the popular Powerline trail is located. Other recreation trails are not shown within ski area boundaries. Note that TMP data in excel spreadsheet (mistakenly?) locates this route at Aspen Highlands Ski Area. RFMBA has learned that Aspen/Snowmass ski areas are managed under a separate permit and TMP, and that separate mapping exists outside this DEIS TMP process. RFMBA needs more information on what trail this is before accepting proposed decommissioning.

1-N161.1, Un-named trail. This singletrack route follows the valley floor, south of the Hunter Creek. This trail provides a challenging, traversing experience. Due to its close proximity to the City of Aspen, RFMBA recommends that this existing trail be preserved for continued recreational use. Although prohibitively expensive at this time, installation of a bridge or a more primitive crossing over Hunter Creek at this route's eastern terminus, would allow for a loop ride back towards the west on route 1-1992.3.

1-N173.1, Hurricane Road. This route provides access to Richmond Ridge Road via Little Annie Basin. The Aspen Cycling Club has historically run cycling races along this route. RFMBA recommends that this existing trail be preserved for continued recreational use, especially in the event that easements through private property are one day revised.

3-104.P1, 3-104.P2, Lower Fryingpan Powerline. These historic wagon trail routes may provide ___ future recreational users a safer alternative to the paved Fryingpan Road. Need further input from Mid-Valley Trails Committee. Route 3-104.P1 is proposed open to mechanized (bicycles) in both Alternatives A & F. RFMBA recommends not decommissioning these routes, even if future easements will be required to link these routes properly.

3-1907.1, Lily Pad Lake. This route is a historic 4wd jeep road that has been abandoned to vehicle traffic due to an impassable washout on the road. However, the route is still accessible via foot & mechanized (bicycle) travel. This route provides summer access to the Betty Bear Hut, as well as a recreational loop opportunity via the Ivanhoe Ditch Rd. This route is proposed open to mechanized (bicycles) in both Alternatives A & F. RFMBA recommends that this existing route be preserved for continued recreational use.

3-1913.1, Lower Bowers Gulch. This route provides a jug handle loop opportunity off of Cattle Creek Rd. / Forest Route 509. This trail is ridden in conjunction with Mill Creek and other Basalt Mountain routes. RFMBA recommends not decommissioning this existing high value recreational route.

3-1924W.1, South Fork to Nast. This route provides a connection between the Norrie Road (Forest Route 504) where it joins the South Fork of the Fryingpan River and the Frying Pan Road at it's turn off for Nast Lake. This connection provides a recreational loop opportunity in the upper Fryingpan Basin. RFMBA recommends not decommissioning this existing recreational route.

3-1925.1, Chapman Campground trail. This trail segment is essential for connectivity/loop from Chapman Campground and allow for means of riding up valley without being on the main road by using existing water project roadways instead for better dispersed recreation. This route is proposed open to mechanized (bicycles) in both Alternatives A & F. RFMBA recommends not decommissioning this existing high value recreational route.

3-1930.1, Miller to Rocky Fork trail. This route provides a connection between the Kobey Park area and Thomasville. Additionally, this singletrack trail provides a loop opportunity around Ruedi Reservoir via the Rocky Fork trail. This route is proposed open to mechanized (bicycles) in both Alternatives A & F. RFMBA recommends not decommissioning this existing high value recreational route.

3-1937W.1, Mill Creek. This route is the upper portion of the popular Mill Creek singletrack trail, north of Basalt Mountain. The portion of trail proposed to be decommissioned is above Forest Route 524. Although it is not as popular as the lower portion of the trail, this existing singletrack is a high quality connection to the trail heading south to Almost High Park. RFMBA recommends not decommissioning this existing high value recreational route.

3-1954W.1, Crystal Canyon RR. This historic route parallels Highway 133 and could potentially be used as a trail segment in the planned Crested Butte to Carbondale bike path. Portions of these segments may be considered County Easement and if so would be outside USFS purview to decommission. RFMBA recommends not decommissioning this existing high value recreational route.

3-1957W.1A to 3-1957W.1D, Thomas Lake Way to Dinkle Lake Way. These routes are ridden as a popular loop from the Dinkle Lake area trailhead. RFMBA recommends not decommissioning these existing high value recreational routes.

3-1966W.1, 3-1966W.2, 3-1966W.3, Old McClure Pass Road, McClure Dispersed Camp Spur, Bears Gulch. These historic routes are existing cultural and recreational amenities. Portions of these segments may be considered County Easement and if so would be outside USFS purview to decommission. RFMBA recommends not decommissioning these existing high value recreational routes, especially considering existing easements.

3-2190.1, Otto Creek. This route provides a potential connection to the NE side of Basalt Mountain, allowing for a loop circumnavigation of the mountain. This is the only possible route for such a loop, given the land managed as wilderness to the east and private property issues to the west. This route could eventually be extended to access the Taylor Creek Spur (Forest Route 510), given that straightforward access is not available via private property 2 miles up Taylor Creek from the Fryingpan River. This route is proposed open to mechanized (bicycles) in both Alternatives A & F. RFMBA recommends not decommissioning this existing high value recreational route.

3-524.1B, High Park trail. This route is part of the popular system of trails north of Basalt Mountain. This route is proposed open to mechanized (bicycles) in both Alternatives A & F. RFMBA recommends not decommissioning this existing recreational route.

3-N1937W.2, Almost High Park. This route provides a connection between the riding area north of Basalt Mountain (Forest Route 524) and the Kelly Lake area, just north of the Lake Christine State Wildlife Area. Management policies of the Wildlife area may change from the current status of closure to a seasonal closure which could be compatible with multiple uses. RFMBA recommends not decommissioning this existing high value recreational route.

3-N1957W.3A, 3-N1957W.3B, 3-N1957W.3C, Hay Park East & spur route. This route is a jug handle loop to the east and north (and downhill) from the popular Hay Park Trail. This route is an existing loop ride accessed from the Dinkle lake area. RFMBA recommends not decommissioning this existing high value recreational route.

3-N1957W.3D, 3-N1957W.3E, Un-named trails. These routes provide a critical connection along the north side of Mt. Sopris between Hay Park Trail and Highway 133. This connection allows for a recreational loop ride from the town of Carbondale. RFMBA recommends not decommissioning these existing high value recreational routes, even if future easements will be required to link to Highway 133 properly..

3-N314.2, Placita River Road. This historic route parallels Highway 133 and could potentially be used as a trail segment in the planned Crested Butte to Carbondale bike path. Portions of these segments may be considered County Easement and if so would be outside USFS purview to decommission. RFMBA recommends not decommissioning this existing high value recreational route.

3-N537.2A, Kelly Lake Spur. This route connects Almost High Park and the Lake Christine State Wildlife Area. In part, this route provides a connection between the riding area north of Basalt Mountain (Forest Route 524) the Lake Christine State Wildlife Area. RFMBA recommends not decommissioning this existing high value recreational route.

8-2156.1, Cherry Creek Trail. This route is the most popular mountain bike route outside of New Castle. New Castle residents have adopted it as their own, putting in many hours of trail maintenance each summer. RFMBA recommends not decommissioning this existing high value recreational route.

Miscellaneous Comments:

1-107.1, 1-2182.1, New York Creek Trail. This route is categorized as limited to foot and horse (animal) traffic. The portion of the trail below 1-144.1, NY Canal Service Road should be re-categorized as open to Mechanized (Bicycles) for the following reasons: 1-144.1 has been categorized for bicycle use. New York Creek Trail is traditionally ridden as part of the following loop ride: Lincoln Creek Road, NY Canal Service Road, NY Creek Trail. Route 1-107.1 is proposed open to mechanized (bicycles) in both Alternatives A & F. RFMBA recommends re-categorizing this high value recreational route to accommodate existing use.

1-N130.1, Red Rim. This route accesses Sloane Peak and the Arbaney-Kittle Trail via Triangle Peak is categorized as open to two wheeled vehicles (motorcycles). In reality, this route is an existing 4WD road that easily accommodates full size vehicles. The road ends just south of Sloane Peak where it meets the Arbaney-Kittle trail. RFMBA has GIS data that will be shared with the WRNF's Bruce Davidson to clear up this error. RFMBA recommends re-categorizing this high value recreational route to accommodate existing use (licensed and unlicensed categorization recommended). RFMBA will prepare an email for Bruce Davidson that will include the route's actual, existing alignment, via GIS data.

1-N151.1, Un-named trail. Sometimes referred to as the Sugar Bowls, this route creates a loop ride from the top of Buttermilk Ski Area, to the west, then drops north to connect to the 1-1980.1, Government Trail. RFMBA applauds the inclusion of this singletrack trail into the WRNF system. However, this trail includes portions of unsustainable trail falling straight down the fall line. RFMBA recommends limited re-routes be considered to provide a sustainable trail for future generations.

3-2092.1, Beaver Creek. This route, located to the south of Sunlight Ski Area, is proposed to be limited to foot and horse (animal) traffic in Alternative G. RFMBA analysis shows this route as open to Mechanized (Bicycles) in both existing conditions Alternative A, as well as Alternative F. This route currently allows for a recreational loop opportunity via Four Mile Rd. at Sunlight Ski Area, connecting to Jerome Park Rd. & Spring Gulch. The east end of this trail passes through a private property easement that is currently not open to bikes. A future easement revision will be pursued by RFMBA to allow mountain bikes. RFMBA recommends re-categorizing this high value recreational route to accommodate existing use.

Lollipop Trail. This is a popular route in the Hunter Creek - Smuggler Mountain area which is not recorded in the TMP documents. Further, the area that this trail is located on is labeled as the Iowa Shaft Trail. RFMBA field research shows that the Iowa Shaft Trail is in fact located adjacent, but further downhill, in a different location. RFMBA GIS mapping data will be shared with the WRNF to correct these errors, with the hopes of making this popular route an official part of the Forest system. RFMBA will prepare an email for Bruce Davidson that will include the actual, existing alignments of routes in this area, via GIS data.