



r f m b a
ROARING FORK
Mountain Bike Association

Attn: Steve Smith, RAC Subgroup member, Liaison to N.W. RAC group.
From: Roaring Fork Mountain Bike Association, Mike Pritchard, Board President
Date: 8/17/2012
Re: Comments to the Resource Advisory Council Subgroup, regarding the BLM's Colorado River Valley Working Draft RMP and EIS

On the following pages, please find comments regarding the BLM zones that are within our regional area of concern. These comments are more detailed than time will allow for discussion during the limited time available during this series of meetings. Some points may help this group to achieve consensus. Detailed travel management planning should hopefully benefit from these comments, and some information may be incorporated within appendices for 'best management practice' guidelines.

The Crown

Strongly agree that this zone should be managed as an SRMA, allowing for best possible outcomes for recreation. Not only would this allow for creation of new singletrack routes, but it will allow for a detailed level of management that can focus on lessening conflicts between user groups. The Crown will act as a significant pressure relief valve for growing recreation use on BLM lands. IF The Crown were not be managed as an SRMA, it would be important to designate other lands as an SRMA (including Thompson Creek).

Significant issues:

- Currently, there is true potential for collisions between user groups. Motorcycles ascend quickly; mountain bikes descend quickly. Combined with the dense scrub oak vegetation surrounding the trails in this zone, serious injuries may result.
- Habitat protection can be improved through seasonal trail closures.
- Transient camping, largely unregulated, is a burden on the lands along Prince Creek Rd. Camp sites should be removed along the road to reduce this problem.
- Management of the land for multiple uses, with goal of lessening conflicts between users.

Access:

- Better access needs to be provided near the Rock Bottom Ranch, via the Rio Grande bike path. This will help keep trails close to population centers, cutting down on driving to trailheads to result in an overall reduced carbon footprint for the local community.
- Plan routes that will provide access to trails in Hay Park (WRNF) and Light Hill.

While we feel that many of the trails on The Crown should be mechanized only as they present safety and trail sustainability issues if motorcycle use were to continue. Some trails may be appropriate for shared use with motorcycles: “N. Porcupine”, “Lower Outtie”, and “Upper Buckhorn”. The trails that do not work well for motorcycles are “Skull Bucket”, “Innie”, & “Outtie”. Motorcycles should be routed away from trails close to the BLM access provided via Rock Bottom Ranch’s easement, in order to prevent a motorcycle from accessing the Rio Grande paved bike path. Thus, “Buckhorn Traverse” should also remain non-motorized.

Specific Comments:

- 1) Trail 23913, “Father of Ginormous” should be a downhill travel only trail due to the blind corners and fast decent. The top 1/3 of this trail leading to the top of the Crown needs to be reworked due to overgrowth. As mountain biking should appeal to all level of riders, consideration should be given to include additional features (roll over jumps & crossovers) which will heighten the enthusiasm of the younger generation of riders, and allow intermediate riders the ability to advance their riding skill set.
- 2) Create a more sustainable access route to The Crown; current access uses an easement through private property (ACES - Rock Bottom Ranch) that is a steep old 4wd route which is not sustainable.
- 3) Reroute the “Creekside” trail so that it avoids adjacent private property.
- 4) As proposed in the citizen’s group discussions, have a connector trail from “Innie” to the “Father of Ginormous” to keep bikes off of roads that can present conflicts with motorized users.
- 5) As there are no single track trails on the El Jebel side of the Crown, consideration needs to be given for a trail that starts at the top of the Crown and connects to the southeastern side of the “Buckhorn Traverse” trail. This gives El Jebel & Basalt residents the opportunity to easily access single track without having to drive to a trailhead.
- 6) One of the highest priorities for the Roaring Fork Mountain Biking Association has been to identify how one riding zone can interconnect to the next. This is important as it allows for riders to journey beyond a small area enhancing the amount of time a person can spend on a bike and their riding experience. As Prince Creek is the natural stepping stone to the Hay Park area on the adjacent WRNF, it makes sense to have a route system interconnecting the two (as proposed on a previously submitted map).
- 7) Safety issues are a major concern descending the road from Hay Park. It’s a heavily traveled narrow road which can result in a tragic consequence between vehicles and bikes. This can be easily mitigated by adding a trail descending on BLM land from the Thomas Lake trailhead parking lot.

NORTH THOMPSON CREEK

We can agree that the southern portion of this landscape should be managed as an ACEC. An existing route within this portion of land would be closed to continued use. We disagree that the northern portion of this landscape should be managed as a Land with Wilderness Characteristics. While we support the current staff recommendation that the Lorax trail remain open to mechanized

travel, and an existing two track route remain open to motorized travel, we also feel that this land should be designated in such a manner that future limited trail development would be allowed within the BLM's travel planning process. As was discussed by several members of this group, the northern portion of this land does not clearly qualify as a 'land with wilderness characteristics'. Were this land to be managed for multiple uses, we would recommend 1 or 2 additional singletrack mechanized routes to be developed through proper approval processes. IF The Crown were not to be managed as an SRMA, we would propose that this landscape could act as a pressure relief valve for growing recreation use, and would need to be managed as an SRMA.

Significant issues:

- Alleviate trailhead overcrowding and overuse of other popular nearby BLM areas. The nearby Red Hill SRMA documents 55,000 annual user visits. As the valley experiences additional growth and the popularity of recreational opportunities continue to increase, local trails will continue to see more use. North Thompson can alleviate this pressure.
- To provide cohesive relations between recreational users and ranchers, (IF land was to be managed as something other than an LWC) potential new trail layouts should work to limit the proximity of trails to private ranch land located on the valley floor adjacent to the Town of Carbondale. See comments below under "Trail improvement or additions".
- Suggest improving habitat protection through seasonal trail closures.

Access:

- The existing north side access provides close to home opportunities which helps reduce our carbon footprint.
- Consideration should be given as outlined below on allowing for interconnectivity to the Thompson Creek area.

Specific Comments:

1) Although Red Hill experiences 55,000 users at the trailhead, only a small number (less than 300) journey to the northern most trails. The same can hold true for N Thompson. Although there will be a lot of users at the trailhead because of the time and efforts required, very few users will venture to the far southern flanks of this zone (proposed to be an ACEC). Thus, a distant loop trail (IF land was to be managed as something other than an LWC) on the south side of the Lorax will cause little disruption to cattle, or as a noted rancher concern, chasing wildlife from BLM lands to the Carbondale valley floor ranching lands. Seasonal closures could also be used to address this concern.

2) Having connectivity with other riding zones is a high priority of the Roaring Fork Mountain Biking Association. As N. Thompson allows for easy access to the Thompson Creek trails, a loop trail (IF land was to be managed as something other than an LWC) on the western flank of this area meets this objective. This also meets the desires of the local ranchers by keeping trails away from the private ranching land in the Carbondale valley floor.

3) Provide a land management designation that would allow for future limited development of a trail that would create a loop system with the existing Lorax trail. A new route paralleling the western side of the land's primary ridge could serve this purpose.

RED HILL & FISHER CREEK

Maintain SRMA status for Red Hill, and allow for an approval process that would allow new mechanized routes to be added to the travel management system. There is at least one route in Fisher Creek that can be seen via satellite photos that was missed during route inventory efforts.

Significant issues:

- Overuse of trails.
- Habitat protection through seasonal closures.

Access:

- If the Sutey Ranch/Two Shoes land exchange materializes, access should be provided from the north side of Red Hill to alleviate overuse pressure on the Carbondale side.
- Trail access from Spring Valley/CMC to Fischer Creek will foster outdoor recreation opportunities for those students at the CMC campus and neighboring residential communities.
- Provide a new access route from valley floor at El Jebel to access WRNF land on Basalt Mountain.

Specific Comments:

- 1) A trail accessing Spring Valley/CMC would provide easy opportunities for the local college community to access trails. Many of these students have little to no means, so driving to trails can be limited opportunity, or simply out of the question. Access from this point will allow a perfect back door access trail for the college residents and the neighboring residential areas. Additionally, this will provide a potential loop to Red Hill as outlined in #2 below.
- 2) Although the hillside is steep, there is potential to create a sustainable trail accessing Red Hill from lower Cattle Creek. This would provide a solution that alleviates the pressure of the significant number of users accessing this SRMA from the Carbondale trailhead, all while providing easier access for the Ironbridge neighborhood and the Glenwood area.
- 3) If access is gained through a lower El Jebel subdivision as currently being pursued through Mid Valley Trails, the BLM lands on the Western Flank of Basalt Mountain would provide access to the existing Basalt Mountain (WRNF) trail system.

GREATER GLENWOOD AREA

Allow for an approval process that would allow new mechanized routes to be added to the travel management system.

Significant issues:

- This is the most populated area of all zones, yet there are the fewest trails in all of the zones located within this BLM jurisdiction.

Access:

- Easy access is available from many areas.
- As the RMP would effectively close many of the 4 wheel drive roads that currently exist in this zone, we suggest that many of these routes remain open to Mechanized (mountain bike) use.

Specific Comment:

1) As Glenwood is the most populated area in the valley and also heavily relies on tourist revenue, additional trails are needed to support this zone. Accessing the flat tops from Glenwood would provide a classic trail opportunity to reach high alpine zones with large vertical climbs/descents. If the trail head was placed at the South Canyon exit of I-70, there could also be a trail system that heads south from the Interstate.

BASALT (Light Hill, Arbaney Mesa)

Allow for an approval process that would allow new mechanized routes to be added to the travel management system.

Significant issues:

- Interconnectivity between other zones as described below.
- Habitat protection through seasonal closures, to be considered at only the most sensitive locations.

Access:

- Close to Basalt.

Specific Comments:

1) To provide Basalt residents an alternate access to the Hay Park trail system (on WRNF land), a new route connection from the north side of Light Hill makes sense. The main existing route on the ridge of Light Hill should be rerouted to provide a more sustainable trail and a more enjoyable riding experience for local residents.

2) Provide Basalt residents and tourists an alternate mechanized route to the existing Arbaney Kittle trail that accesses WRNF lands. The existing route is an old 4wd stock drive that is too steep for enjoyable riding, both up and down. An alternate route starting at the existing trailhead would separate pedestrian and mechanized use, and would provide a welcome amenity to the Town of Basalt.

We look forward to working with BLM staff to achieve approvals for the route system improvements proposed within the above comments. We support creating a strong framework for managing these lands over the next twenty plus years. We look forward to continuing our partnership with the BLM, to fulfill our mission of creating the best possible system of trails for mountain bike use throughout the Roaring Fork Valley.

On behalf of the Board and Members of RFMBA,
Most sincerely,



Mike Pritchard
Roaring Fork Mountain Bike Association, Board President