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ROARING FORK
Mountain Bike Association

Attn: Appeal Deciding Officer, USDA Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Region,
740 Simms, Golden, CO 80401, sent via email: appeals-rocky-mountain-regional-office@fs.fed.us

CC: White River National Forest, Aspen / Sopris Ranger District staff: Scott Fitzwilliams (sfitzwilliams@fs.fed.us), Scott Snelson (ssnelson@fs.fed.us), Martha Moran (mmoran@fs.fed.us), Bill Kight (bkight@fs.fed.us).

From: Roaring Fork Mountain Bike Association, Mike Pritchard, Board Member, P.O. Box
4424, Basalt, CO 81621, 970-948-3486

Date: 6/10/2011

Re: WRNF TMP, Record Of Decision, issued 3/18/2011

The following are RFMBA's Comments on the recently released White River National Forest's Travel Management Plan, Record of Decision. These comments are not intended to be a direct appeal to the ROD. We appreciate that the TMP is a living document that can be revised at the detail level for logical reasons, and as such we provide these comments as a record of our intentions to work with WRNF staff to re-open specific routes to bicycle travel.

RFMBA respects the WRNF's multitude of decisions in coming to this Record of Decision, and we propose in this document to work with the WRNF to re-commission specific trails that are being decommissioned. We provide catalog of trails that are being decommissioned that are in direct conflict with the mountain biking community's current use patterns. In many cases these are trails that riders will continue to use, potentially unaware of the recent administrative closure. We respect that many trails have been appropriately decommissioned, but we must continue to disagree on certain details of this Travel Management Plan. Having signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the WRNF, and as a first year partner with the WRNF in a Cost Share Challenge Agreement program, we look forward to working closely with staff to eliminate as many on-the-ground conflicts as possible.

It is our hope that for existing routes that are being decommissioned, a NEPA process will not be required to reopen the trails for bicycle use. As mentioned above, many of these are well ridden trails. In some cases partial re-routes or trail maintenance may be required to achieve a fully sustainable route.

Decommissioned Routes that RFMBA will work to re-open to bicycle access:

- **Dinkle Lake Trails: 3-1957W.1A to 3-1957W.1D:** Per the response to RFMBA's original DEIS TMP comments, FS acknowledges that these trails can be analyzed in the lens of trail density and need.
- **Buzzard Basin trails: 3-1957.1C (non-Wilderness portions), 1-N117.1, 1-N116.1, and the undesignated fence line trail to Buck-N-Rail trail.**
- **Hay Park East & spur route, 3-N1957W.3A, 3-N1957W.3B, 3-N1957W.3C:** 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.
- **Un-named trails, 3-N1957W.3D, 3-N1957W.3E:** 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. Challenges include gaining of easement through private property to make this route a reality.
- **Ruedi Overlook trail 3-1912.1:** Used to be open to bicycles, now only hikers, as the land is a wilderness study area. If Congress eventually protects this land in perpetuity with a designation other than Wilderness, the trail should be re-opened to bicycle use.
- **South Branch of the Middle Thompson: 3-1951.1:** (Martha Moran thought it was strange that the South Branch was not going to be open to mountain bikers as it previously had been and all intersecting trails are still open to riding. She checked her data base, but could not find a reason why the decision to decommission had been reached. This is an important trail as it ties into the Middle Thompson trail, thus can be ridden as a loop.)
- **Stoney Ridge trail 3-1943W.1:** (This trail is steep at the entrances to each end; construction of re-routes would make the trail sustainable, and allow for a great loop with the adjacent Middle Thompson trail.)
- **Old Larkspur Mtn Road: 1-103W.2X, 1-103W.2Y, 1-103W.2Z:** 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. Per the response to RFMBA's original DEIS TMP comments, this request will be considered by the FS.
- **Red Canyon trail, 1-2189.1A:** 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. Per the response to RFMBA's original DEIS TMP comments, FS understands the easement issues between Pitkin County and Landowner at this time.

- **McFarlane Creek trail, 1-2198.1, 1-2198.2, 1-21-98W.1C:** 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 future recreational use. Reroutes will be required to deal with private land and dead-end issue at Wilderness boundary.

- **Un-named trail, 1-N121.1:** 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. Per the response to RFMBA's original DEIS TMP comments, FS has tentatively named this trail the Outland trail, FS staff has surveyed the route via GPS, and RFMBA's comment will be considered.

- **Un-named trail, 1-N161.1:** 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. Per the response to RFMBA's original DEIS TMP comments, FS has acknowledged that if a user group adopts the trail & brings it up to standard, it could be brought into the official trail inventory.

- **Hurricane Road, 1-N173.1:** 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. Per the response to RFMBA's original DEIS TMP comments, FS has acknowledged that if easement rights were granted, further analysis for a system trail through the area could commence.

- **Lower Fryingpan Powerline, 3-104.P1, 3-104.P2:** These historic wagon trail routes may provide future recreational users a safer alternative to the paved Fryingpan Road.

- **Lower Bowers Gulch, 3-1913.1:** 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. Apparently, as mapped, the route crosses a corner of private property. RFMBA will advocate for an easement to allow proper public access.

- **South Fork to Nast, 3-1924W.1:** 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 its turn off for Nast Lake. This connection provides a recreational loop opportunity in the upper Fryingpan Basin.

- **Mill Creek, 3-1937W.1:** This route is the upper portion of the popular Mill Creek singletrack trail, north of Basalt Mountain.

- **Almost High Park, 3-N1937W.2:** 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.
- **Crystal Canyon RR, 3-1954W.1:** 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.
- **Old McClure Pass Road, McClure Dispersed Camp Spur, Bears Gulch, 3-1966W.1, 3-1966W.2, 3-1966W.3:** 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.
- **Otto Creek, 3-2190.1:** 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.
- **High Park trail, 3-524.1B:** This route is part of the popular system of trails north of Basalt Mountain, if additional trail were created it would provide for a loop opportunity.
- **Placita River Road, 3-N314.2:** 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.
- **Kelly Lake Spur, 3-N537.2A:** 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.
- **Cherry Creek Trail, 8-2156.1:** 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 immediate re-commissioning of this existing high value recreational route for continued bicycle use.
- **Beaver Creek, 3-2092.1:** This route is located to the south of Sunlight Ski Area. This route 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. Per the response to RFMBA's original DEIS TMP comments, FS has acknowledged that if Pitkin County's easement is amended to allow mountain bikes, then a modification of the route's FS classification can occur to allow for bicycle access.

- Lollipop Trail: This is a popular route in the Hunter Creek / Smuggler Mountain area which is not recorded in the TMP documents. A majority of the trail is located within Smuggler Mountain Open Space and has seen recent improvements during organized trail work sessions. RFMBA recommends making this popular route an official part of the Forest's trail system.

We understand that everyone working on the TMP has had the best of intentions. For all of the time and effort that has been spent on this process, we thank you all heartily. As we move past the milestone of this Record of Decision, we look forward to continuing the process of creating the best possible system of trails for mountain bike use on the White River National Forest.

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



Mike Pritchard
Roaring Fork Mountain Bike Association, Board Secretary