

January 10, 2021
RFVHC Survey Monkey Comments and Solutions

We asked, and You answered!

In 2021, RFV Horse Council sponsored a Trail Survey for Hikers and Horseback Riders, with Questions about Trails & Equestrian Access to Parking in the Roaring Fork Valley.

Q5 GLASSIER EQUESTRIAN TRAIL (horses & hikers only)

DIRECTIONS: *Pitkin County Glassier Parking Lot is accessed from Highway 82, take the second exit at the El Jebel roundabout (Willits Lane) and follow until the bridge where the road forks, take the right fork onto Emma Rd. then turn right on Hooks Spur Lane and the parking lot will be on your right.*

Did you know a trail ride from the Pitkin County Open Space and Trails (PC OST) Glassier Equestrian Trail to the BLM Divide Park Lot accesses the Crown Jewel Horse Trail? Shuttling horse trucks & trailers from the Pitkin/Glassier Parking Lot to the BLM Divide Park Lot (the final destination) makes the ride complete. On horseback, this ride takes about 4 hours with a 30 minute stop for lunch. This is a hike and trail ride you will never forget RFVHC received a generous grant and collaborated with Pitkin County Open Space & Trails to improve the trail for equestrians and hikers. Each summer we work together to improve the trails for your use.



The Pitkin OST – Glassier Equestrian trail is for hikers and horses only. It is a real pleasure to ride this fine trail without fast moving mountain bikes.

LEGEND: Survey Monkey responses are written in black
RFVHC Comments and Solutions are written in red

TRAILS

The Glassier horse trail can get hot and dry- but it makes a great evening ride. Good chance to see wildlife if you go ride just before daylight! As much as I like celebrating our Western Heritage by riding my horse through Glassier Open Space to access the Crown (and beyond!), it does make me feel a little uncomfortable when I think about the amount of taxpayer funding that was invested to provide a dedicated horse trailer-sized parking lot for my needs, as well as an exclusive (separated use) route onto the Crown from the Glassier trailhead.”

RFVHC COMMENT - What did it cost the land managers to give hikers and equestrians this trail and why? The original parking area was not meeting the public needs for parking cars for any of the trail users. When PITCO OST expanded the parking for cars it was easy to accommodate horse trailer parking at little or no extra expense. The separation of bike trail and hiker/equestrian trail was a necessary first step to separate and contain the bikes on the specific trails on Glassier (PITCO OST) and the Crown (BLM). This was an important precedent to further development for safety. We are grateful and we need public support to keep this hiker equestrian trail our own, and not to share this trail with bikers.

“I can't help but notice the disproportionate amount of area dedicated to my personal recreational preferences (horse riding) relative to what is provided to larger group of bikers and hikers, and wonder why we get so much more space per person in comparison? When I look at the vegetative regrowth on these trails climbing up into the hills from Glassier, it doesn't seem like very many of my fellow enthusiasts utilize this equestrian-only trail.”



The Glassier Trail gentle switchbacks were professionally made by Pitkin OST to bypass the steep erosion two tracks that previously existed.



What a stellar view of Basalt Mountain as seen from horseback on this trail.

RFVHC COMMENT - How often is Glassier used? Large areas of the Crown/Glassier recreation area are a BLM -SRMA for mountain bikes. We believe recreational use must be balanced in order to serve all trail users. Both bikers and equestrians/hikers agree that separate trails are safe for everyone. The loss of our riding trails during the last two decades continues to be a constant threat. Combined with rumors of mountain bike and e bike trail integration and every other day use further threatens to take over equestrian/hiker trails. This is a reality for equestrian trail riders who have worked hard for horse and hiker only trails. Add to that, the noticeable disparity in miles of accessible horse trails compared to bike trails. In the grand scheme of the things, for the Glassier Equestrian Trail and other equestrian/hiker trails, the long-term upkeep is the least costly to create and maintain, as long as they are planned and developed properly.

I love that there is space for everyone to recreate safely and this should not be jeopardized just because there are more bikers than horses. Creating separate ascending and descending trails for bikes on Glassier would be amazing, but not at the expense of eliminating the horse/hiker trail. Keep horses and bikers separate and no dogs! I grew up with horses and though unfortunately have not had the opportunity to ride in the RFV, wholly support all sustainable recreation in the valley. We can ride for hours on trails separated from bikes - this is a real plus. Given that this route climbs straight up the hillside, I am also concerned that this alignment is not sustainable and contributes to excessive erosion; that will eventually turn into an incised fall line rut. It seems like the other users' separate routes are much more sustainable in their planning and design, and very popular.

RFVHC COMMENT - Was the Glassier Horse Trail the original hiking and horseback riding route up that hill? Were the bikes routes trails designed and came later? The answers are that the original access path, now used for ATV by permit only, was undisturbed. These historic Glassier and BLM two track trails were steep with erosion washouts and the Pitkin County OST & BLM recognized that they needed to be abandoned and replaced with the now existing separated bike and equestrian/hiker trails. Both new trails were professionally designed and built to obtain optimal satisfaction of the users and allow for maintenance/upkeep while preserving the remaining acres for natural wildlife and grazing habitat. We are so fortunate!

Given the amount of land I take up in pursuit of my own recreational preference, I wonder if it might be better if Pitkin County were to instead invest more public funding towards other recreational activities. Considering that I am allowed to freely ride my horse across our public lands in whichever direction I choose, regardless of whether there is an established route, I feel like another way I can celebrate our Western Heritage is to simply ride in the same manner that our European forefathers did - no roads, no fences, just wide-open spaces, free for the taking. Is that bad?"

RFVHC COMMENT - The rule of riding wherever you want is a permission in the wilderness. Yes, in certain recreation areas the development of separate trails solves safety and habitat preservation issues. Small recreation areas nearest the general population often are the most used. Developing beginner hiker/equestrian trails in these areas will help to train new trail equestrians and just might help us to preserve our "Western Heritage". "Equestrians have a lot "riding" on the commitment to their horses. It takes a significant amount of time, money, effort and grit to enjoy a trail ride but what unifies all trail users is a profound appreciation for nature and the need for accessible, safe trails."

PARKING

“The Glassier Horse Trail is wonderful and easy uphill for horses. I do not do it in the summer as it's too hot but love it in the fall. Parked at a friends' house so can't comment on parking lot! Nice parking area, sometimes full Friday and Saturday. I've ridden this trail on the Crown, starting at the Divide Parking lot - never down the side to the Happy Day Ranch side. Great parking on both sides. I'd like to see better parking and turn arounds for horse trailers.”



There is room for two horse trailers in the Pitkin – Glassier Parking lot. Thank you Pitkin BOCC & OST!

RFVHC COMMENT - Yes, all equestrians would like to have trailer parking and turn-arounds near the trails they love to ride. We are working on that goal!

SIGNAGE, GATES and WAYFINDING



I think the signage at the top and bottom of Glassier is good, though I have seen bikers go down the hiking side because the bike trail is busy...Better gates/latches

RFVHC COMMENTS - *It is important to report trail violations on Glassier to PITCO OST, with this information they can watch the area more closely to determine if an additional bike trail is warranted for separate uphill and downhill mountain bike usage. We ask that our Glassier Trail be made perpetual, like Nancy's Path. We are investing in better gates and latches for equestrians!*



Here is the spring summer 2021-22 RFVHC Survey about RFV Trails

for Equestrians and Hikers: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/JL23DN3>

Instructions for filling out this survey

Answers to the following questions are optional, while we hope that you will provide answers to all questions, you are not obligated to do so. Simply scroll past any question that you prefer not to answer. Scroll up and down through the questions at any time.

We are asking for more Survey Monkey responses.

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