



**ROARING FORK VALLEY HORSE COUNCIL**

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[www.rfvhorsecouncil.org](http://www.rfvhorsecouncil.org)

[www.facebook.com/keephorsesontrails/](https://www.facebook.com/keephorsesontrails/)

Brett Meredith  
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2/12/2019

Dear Brett,

Thank you for sending the maps showing the existing RFTA Rio Grande right of way from the Carbondale Rodeo Arena to town.

As you know, the Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council (RFVHC) works diligently to preserve our Western Heritage by "Keeping horses on Trails." We ask the Roaring Fork Transit Authority to add a soft track trail within your Rio-Grand Trail easement from the Carbondale Rodeo arena leading to and through the Town of Carbondale. Our hope is to have a connector soft track trail leading to the Main Street Market Place, included in their development plans, with the potential a connection Thompson Creek.

The Town of Carbondale is surrounded by ranches, ranching families, cattle and horses. Neislanik Beef provides home grown barley to The Marble Distillery for their vodka, then the waste mash is recycled and fed back to the cattle at their home ranch. This is truly sustainable ranching, and their healthy natural beef is prized for its' flavor.

Many of our residents compete in the Wild West weekly rodeo or they enjoy watching as spectators. Tom and Ginny Harrington of the Crystal River Ranch host the Ranch Roping

Competition at the Carbondale Rodeo Arena every fall. Contestants come from Wyoming, Montana, Utah, Nebraska, and all over Colorado to show their cattleman skills.

Behind and around the Carbondale Rodeo grounds there are property owners who also own horses. Suzie Wallace owns quite a few horses and keeps them in different pastures in the neighborhood. Marian Nilsen boards and trains horses on site. There are also two large horse operations bordering the Town of Carbondale. The Iron Rose Ranch is privately owned by Tom Bailey, and specializes in cutting horses of national renown. The second is Skyline Ranch, a boarding facility with some 80 horses and specializing in reining horses for local and national competition. All horses benefit from riding outside of the area. Horse owners enjoy riding on soft track trails. We need these trails to make horse-back riding more available to everyone.

Ranchers use horses to herd their cattle from the home ranch up to the summer pastures and back again. Neislank Beef, Jerilyn and Marty; Bill and Marge Fales, Cold Mountain Ranch and Crystal River Ranch have high country grazing permits and they all use horses to manage their livestock. The Turnbull Family and the Ian Carney family are deeply committed to the use of horses for their cattle operations. Matt Turnbull grazes cattle on "The Crown" and he competes at the highest level in cutting competitions. Ian and his family compete in the weekly Carbondale Rodeo as well as rodeos around the state in the summer. The Town of Carbondale must understand that our Western Heritage is alive and well. Support from the community will keep this quality of life viable, healthy and in the bargain will maintain the beautiful open space lands that are our local ranches.

[www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=39&v=dxT10TSDvK4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=39&v=dxT10TSDvK4)

The current population boom of younger, new, city transplant residents carries urban sensibilities and no understanding of our early settlers, or the hardships they endured. These new residents have no understanding of the importance for preserving and protecting our Western Heritage. Riding horseback and hiking on our historic open space and wilderness trails is our "living American Western Heritage."

Education of and respect for our local history can be taught to the new demographic in our town. Our community can become engaged in its' historic foundation of ranching roots by seeing horses on trails, by attending the weekly rodeo - <http://www.carbondalerodeo.com/> and by supporting a Western Heritage Ranching Museum - [www.carbondalehistory.org](http://www.carbondalehistory.org) .

Carbondale is currently promoting the town as a mecca for mountain biking. The BLM has designated 9,100 acres of the Crown and 3,100 acres of Red Hill as Special recreation Management Areas for mountain bikes. These mechanized, man driven vehicles are fast moving especially when going down-hill. The physical work out desired by mountain bike enthusiasts often takes precedence over a peaceful appreciation of the wildlife and verdant beauty on our open space lands. Not always, but sometimes there are conflicts with the slower moving trail partners, caused by fast moving mountain bikes. Families with children and older trail users who enjoy hiking or horseback riding are especially vulnerable.

Mountain bikers are stoked about their 41 miles per hour ride down "Father of Ginormous" trail on the Crown. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=qvBrTrDbT10](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qvBrTrDbT10) . I give them a lot of credit for

their athletic ability and bravery. This is a down hill only track. Hikers and horseback riders do not go on these down hill trails. However, many mountain bikers ride our multi-use trails with fast descents. The camera that recorded this video is a head-helmet mount. Notice how the trail visibility is limited to a short distance, perhaps 6 ft to 12 ft looking ahead on the trail. Mountain bikers must look at the immediate terrain, which means that in cases of fast down-hill descents, many bikers do not see the oncoming hikers or horseback riders. Poor visibility on narrow twisting trails makes the danger even greater.

The only reason to mention mountain bikes and bikes in general is because hikers and horseback riders are losing our ability to enjoy safe, predictable, recreation experiences on soft track trails throughout the valley. We are losing the ability to park to access trails. Without access we are prevented from our historic rights to walk, hike and horseback ride on many multi-use trails. We are hoping that our education & safety campaign, partnering with the RFMBA will enlighten bikers how to share the soft track trails and what to do when they meet hikers and horses on the trail. The universal yellow triangle sign states that bikers and hikers yield to horses. But exactly what does that mean? Below are two signs. The RFVHC partnered with the RFMBA to produce the "What a horse sees" sign. It is comprehensive.



**A biker moving fast or quietly may appear to be a potential predator to a horse... What should I do?**

When meeting a horse, dismount and move a safe distance off the trail. If more than one biker, move to the same side of the trail.

Speaking to the rider helps identify you as a person and will help calm a horse.

Bikes, fishing rods, backpacks, and dogs can spook even a seasoned horse when surprised.

**TRAIL SAFETY IS BEST FOR EVERYONE**

Stop!

**Stand Back** **Speak**

Sponsored by the Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council and the Roaring Fork Mountain Bike Association

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The RFVHC is formally asking that the Roaring Fork Transit Authority (RFTA) add a soft track trail along and within the easement from the Carbondale Rodeo Arena area to and through the Town of Carbondale for equestrian access. Boarded horses and their owners could then ride from Skyline Stables to the rodeo grounds, and the surrounding neighbors would be connected to Skyline, the upper mesa, and in the future perhaps to the Crown. A soft track trail leading through the Town of Carbondale could connect to soft track trails perhaps linking to the Thompson Creek area. This would be a start and would accommodate the hikers and horseback riders for a viable and healthy soft track trail system.

Equestrians and hikers, who want soft track trails for a safe, more forgiving surface will benefit from this RFTA addition to the Rio-Grand Trail. Thank you for your consideration to include the “other” recreational trail users.

Kindest Regards,  
Holly McLain – RFVHC Communication Chairman

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