



RFVHC RECOMMENDATIONS TO TOSV & COMMUNITY

TOM BLAKE TRAIL CHANGES TO ENHANCE USE FOR HIKERS AND EQUESTRIANS

The **Tom Blake Equestrian Trail Parking Lot** is not large enough for equestrian trucks and trailers. We ask the POSTR Board to collaborate with us and the proper managers of the **Two Creeks Parking Lot** to allow summer / fall truck and trailer parking. **The RFVHC recommends** this change as a major improvement to the Tom Blake trail in enhancing the equestrian and hiker experience.

We inspected the current Tom Blake parking lot and we believe a larger parking lot may be possible, but we are concerned about the ingress / egress for trucks and trailers on the curved Owl Creek Road. Like the hikers, the users of Tom Blake would appreciate having toilets available. **Two Creeks Parking Lot** offers this convenient amenity.

There would need to be a design of a **short new trail** to meet up from the Two Creeks Parking Lot to the Tom Blake Equestrian Trail. This access would be to go up the ski slope and could create a circle/loop trail for hikers and equestrians. This new section of trail could eliminate mountain bike intersections that many hikers and equestrians fear. The RFVHC is interested in helping with the design of this trail.

An alternative connector trail to the Tom Blake trailhead for hikers and equestrians could be to park trucks and trailers in the Town Park / Rodeo Parking Lot. A new trail to Tom Blake would need to be a soft track built aside an asphalt connection path.

To answer POSTR's question posed to the RFVHC, horses can easily withstand walking on pavement for miles, but it is the safety aspect of the horseback riders on shared asphalt paths that the RFVHC recognizes as dangerous. The Rio Grande Trail, for the very same reason, provides a soft track surface for horses.

We have found many hikers and runners also prefer the soft track. **RFVHC recommends** for equestrians a soft track trail width of 10' as specified by the USDA – United States Forest Service for trails. <https://www.fs.fed.us/t-d/pubs/htmlpubs/htm07232816/page06.htm>

Regarding crossing roadways, roundabouts, and intersections; from our experience the safety options can include horsemen/hikers pushing a button on a post (mid height for horseback riders and an easy reach up for hikers) and flashing lights to alert oncoming traffic, so traffic then stops.

The RFVHC has expert consultants and traffic studies from around the United States that show this hiker equestrian alert system works perfectly for roadways with thousands of cars. (ie) El Jebel, Colorado has placed these signals for pedestrian crossings with excellent results.

In our research, the RFVHC recognize that many POSTR Board members want better neighborhood and community connectivity in TOSV. The idea of a horse "tie up high line" near the town mall could allow equestrians to ride there for lunch.

UPPER NORTH MESA TRAIL CHANGES TO ENHANCE USE FOR HIKERS AND EQUESTRIANS

After reviewing the Snowmass Town Park Master Plan and receiving maps of the new Parking area from TOSV, (versions 9/16/2021 & 2/9/2022) **we have concluded** that the available maps do not supply configurations for safe equestrian parking for the users, or for the public's safety. The plans for the egress and ingress for all trucks and trailers are also incomplete. We look forward to being asked to meet with your designers and new maps to aid in planning a safe, logical equestrian parking area. We have an equestrian guide for parking available for your design engineers.

UNLOADING ZONES FOR TRAILHEADS AND RODEO GROUNDS

The rodeo parking lot for the **Upper North Mesa Trail** is the trail head for local Guides & Outfitters, the public and the Rodeo contestants, **The RRVHC recommends** a "horse unloading zone" that will prevent accidents and increase recreational usage. Horses that are unloading backwards from trailers can slip on asphalt and their legs can get caught under the trailer, or they may fall down. This is a major safety issue. **The RRVHC recommends** making an area that is flat, of road base/ bedding-sand for loading and unloading horses. After unloading, the truck drivers would then move to the parking area.

THE VALUE OF GUIDES/OUTFITTERS OFFERING TRAIL RIDES IN TOSV

In the past, the Snowmass Creek Outfitters have maintained the Upper North Mesa Trail. **The RRVHC recommends** continuing to offer this Guide and Outfitter Service as a major enhancement to the equestrian experience for Snowmass Village trails. Offering trail rides in the summertime and fall for local homeowners and visitors will provide a unique and valuable amenity. Hiker and horse only trails, like the Upper North Mesa Trail, are comforting and unique in the RRV to users, because the users do not have to worry about fast-moving mountain bikes.

Locals and visitors will be able to enjoy stepping back in time by living their own stories of the real West. They will don their cowboy boots and cowboy hats, go to the Snowmass Rodeo, and take trail rides with the Snowmass Creek Outfitters. With these offerings, the visitors to Snowmass become part of our Western lifestyle. In the summer and fall, this amazing and unusual pastime for adults and children is a peaceful way to connect with our mountains, wildlife, and nature. With improvement, the **Upper North Mesa Trail is the perfect trail ride length**, with stunning views of our mountains and the ski area lifts that we all enjoy for our winter recreation. This is summertime Western recreation at its best.

In addition, the RRVHC recommends the Town Park design a **permanent concession/staging area for the outfitters** with simple corals and an office / tack room area to greet the day visitors for a true Western Trail Ride experience. We are aware that the Town Park plans are only at the 30% completion stage, so there is ample time to add this amenity. There is no place as convenient in the entire Roaring Fork Valley as the Town Park for making our guests feel "they have arrived in the west." The RRVHC Board and membership have had years of experience in this recreational offering and would be happy to make further recommendations.

IMPROVED SIGNAGE FROM THE UPPER NORTH MESA TRAIL

The signage from the Town Park, leading to the Upper North Mesa Trail should be improved to direct hikers and horses through the residential neighborhood, the landscaping and past the houses. **The RRVHC recommends** adding signage and would consider this a major wayfinding improvement for hiker and equestrian experiences for the TOSV trails.

The Upper North Mesa Trail starts at the Rodeo Parking lot, where outfitters have in years past staged their concession with corrals and horses. We ride by the employee housing area seen in the foreground. This is the original entry to the Upper North Mesa Trail.



The ancient Fen –The Upper North Mesa Trail now avoids this fragile ecological area, due to the generosity of a TOSV grant, in cooperation with RFVHC, RMYC, Round-Up Riders of the Rockies, and RFOV, for 2021 trail improvements.

TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS TO THE UPPER NORTH MESA TRAIL

The RFVHC recommends that the 2022-23-24 season the Upper North Mesa Trail improvements be concentrated at the shale hillside area above the development of employee housing units at ‘Horse Ranch’.

A recent comment about the Upper North Mesa Trail from one of our members said: “We arrived at the hillside where the shale had sloughed away, so basically there was no trail in this area. It was scary for my older horseback riding friend.” We agree and add that hikers may also be nervous in this slippery area.

THE RFVHC recommends this work be conducted by the work of a **professional trail crew**, as has been done by the TOSV for the mountain bike community. The RFVHC would consider this as a major enhancement the hiker and equestrian experience for TOSV trails.

THE PICTURES BELOW SHOW where the trail goes around the toe of hill, with a steep downhill side. This section is exposed and narrow. Shale hillside has sloughed away making it dangerous. The defining characteristic of the shales is its fragility. In other words, shale is easily divided into thin layers. We ask the trail to be set back into the hill with a flat base, where two people or horses can pass each other safely. It’s possible there may be still an **old cable** laying in parts of the trail, which crisscrosses it and runs in the trail in some places. This should be removed for safety reason and to continue the “Leave No Trace” mantra of our valley.





Water damage in places on the shale hill of Upper North Mesa Trail also needs attention. Drainage work from above the hill and water bars can be put in place to prevent wash out damage.



Trail rides on the Upper North Mesa Trail



Snowmass Creek Outfitter's guide headed up the Upper North Mesa Trail.

Summer views of our incredible winter ski slopes in the background.



The Western Experience is a tradition, enjoyed by Snowmass homeowners and visitors alike.

The RFVHC recommends continuing our RFV Western Heritage through Guides/Outfitters offering trail rides and giving the Snowmass Rodeo a long-term commitment.

Our community of slow-moving hikers and horseback riders will be pleased to be a part of the big picture for trail access, connectivity and use in the TOSV and Pitkin County, in and around **SKY MOUNTAIN PARK TRAILS**, the **UPPER NORTH MESA TRAIL**, and the beautiful **TOM BLAKE EQUESTRIAN & HIKING TRAIL**.



TOWN PARK, TRAIL HEAD AND PARKING

The RFVHC comments are reflective of facts and maps (versions 9/16/2021 & 2/9/2022)

The TOSV Community Survey dated 2019 states that 37 % of town residents - a majority - are over the age of 64. In the town 52% are full time and 32% are part time residents, and 61% of these people own their own homes. Also, 76% ride the village shuttle and 62% feel that the number of special events is just right. Interesting, only 5% of residents feel fully informed about current issues facing the town and 58 % have lived in TOSV for 15 yrs.

From the results of this 2019 Community Survey, the RFVHC has concluded that most Snowmass Village residents enjoy and support the Snowmass Rodeo, which has become a tradition for their families, their friends as a unique entertainment that they expect annually.

We believe that if the full time/part time residents, who own their own homes understood that the Rodeo might not take place in coming years, then there would be a large outcry about their loss. The RFVHC requests that the Town gives the Snowmass Rodeo a longer contract for their event.

- We see on your website the that the Rodeo Arena occupies an area of Town Park for 40% of the season, more than all the other recreational uses of the Town Park.
- On another presentation site, the Rodeo Arena is listed as being used 100% by the rodeo and is always unavailable to other uses.
- We read in the Rodeo contract that the POSTR Board requires the Arena to become available for other uses in the future. We agree.
- According to the Master Plans and maps, The North Parking Area #1 is occupied 30% of the season.
- The Rodeo Truck and Trailer Parking Area and Trailhead Parking #2 is occupied 35% of the season.
- The Northeast Parking Area #3 is occupied 25% of the season
- The Soccer Field is used 22% of the season and the Softball Field is used 20% of the Season.



The Rodeo Arena is where our members and equestrians compete and showcase their skills. This Snowmass Village amenity occupies the Town Park space from 40% to 100% of the season - all summer long. The RfVHC recommends the Rodeo Arena stay and be heralded as an asset to the town. According to all the feedback we have researched from the TOSV website, 2019 Community Survey, the TOSV Town Council and staff and meetings, the POSTR Advisory Board and staff meetings, and the Parks, Open Space and Trails TOSV department there are 10 items everyone wants for Town Park, and two of the ten are rodeo arena related. The first goal mentioned about the rodeo is an improved rodeo location or orientation, and the second is a Rodeo grounds of equal or larger size.

QUESTION: When the time is right, can POSTR clarify for the RfVHC the shared use capabilities of the Rodeo arena? Rodeo arenas around the world are used for alternative events. Our members are asking. The RfVHC would be interested in the arena for use by our membership. The RfVHC recommends this as a major improvement in enhancing the equestrian experiences for TOSV trails.

The Rodeo Arena is well used, well liked and ready to grow, bringing our Western Heritage to life. The RfVHC has an earned responsibility to speak to our community, to stand in front of the POSTR Board to show you the symbiotic relationship of Snowmass Village with the rodeo, children and beautiful horses.

SLIDE SHOW STARTS HERE - <https://www.rfvhorsecouncil.org/Snowmass-Rodeo-Slideshow.html>
 Photos by Karen M Kelly & Louisa Davidson

First, we know what horse people want, and what people in general like about horses.

We are concerned that our user groups, the cowboys and cowgirls and family members, their horses' handlers, respective farmers that supply the cow and horse feed, the horse breeders, truck dealers, veterinarians, Colorado State Agricultural officers, 4 H leaders, the Roaring Fork Hounds Pony Club, coaches, teachers and trainers and all the rest of the RFV equestrian community will be pushed out of TOSV and your Town Park if the Snowmass Rodeo is not sustained.

What we are seeing in this current plan is that the rodeo be replaced by more fountains, more skate parks, more bike skill routes, tennis courts, night lighting, more "play" features, shade structures instead of trees, more seating, a bigger pool, and a jump gym, whatever that is. We want to remind the POSTR Board that the brick-and-mortar hotels, restaurants, condominiums, and conference centers will and do offer community gathering places for locals and guests and need TOSV support, not competition. Only the location of the Town Park, at the entry to Snowmass Village can host the Snowmass Rodeo, Colorado's oldest and longest running rodeo.

We know you must choose a path forward. We want you, the POSTR Board and the town to fight to keep our rodeo by improving the rodeo location and orientation with rodeo grounds of equal or larger size. In turn, the Snowmass Rodeo promises to put on a show every Wednesday night, for a summertime experience folks will never forget.

The rodeo is not iconic. We are a staple in the American culture. Rodeo reflects a lifestyle and a tradition that is seen in the clothing, the hats, the manner of talking, the way of raising our youngsters, the way we go to church on Sundays before the rodeo, the way we keep our land, it is the way that we pray to have enough water to raise our feed crops, hope for enough sun to grow them and we bet our bottom dollar that the farmers and ranchers in this valley that raise our herds, grow our colts and fillies want what we want. We want to stay here in the valley.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to our hiker and horse trail recommendations and learning more about the RFV Horse Council. Do you have questions? Holly McLain and several Board Members are here to answer.