

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.

Q12 - IN THE AREA OF SNOWMASS VILLAGE AND SNOWMASS CREEK

UPPER NORTH MESA TRAIL (horses and hikers only) Directions: *this trail is accessed from Highway 82, to Brush Creek Road and at the roundabout, turn right into Snowmass Town Park / Rodeo Parking Lot.*

THE TOM BLAKE TRAIL (horses and hikers only) *does not have equestrian parking.*

Directions: *For hiker parking for Tom Blake Trail, at the traffic circle take the second exit onto Highline Rd. Continue onto Owl Creek Rd. the parking will be on your right.*

Did you know *Upper Mesa is a 2 -hour, 3-mile horseback ride with breathtaking 360 degree views of Snowmass Village, Aspen, Snowmass Mountain, Capitol, & Mt. Daly. There is an ancient Fen protected and off limits by the TOSV as an ancient site and a water source for wildlife. **Did you know** that hikers and horseback riders on the Tom Blake Trail can enjoy a mellow trail ride, up and back, entirely shaded in deep Aspen groves?*



The Upper North Mesa Trail

LEGEND: Survey Monkey responses are written in black

RFVHC Comments and Solutions are written in red

Multi-use Trails vs Horse and Hiker Only Trail

I was a 23 year resident of Snowmass Village (just moved to Carbondale in 2020) and used to ride & hike all the trails there. The town of Snowmass Village has embraced mountain biking on a level as to the complete detriment of hikers and horseback riders. It is such a travesty. I lived directly on the Rim Trail & up to about 10-years ago I would do a power hike daily with seeing only a mountain bike or 2 (usually locals).

In the last 10-years the Rim Trail, & new Seven Star, have become unsafe for hikers with rude, aggressive mountain bikers imported from other parts dominating the trail. We rode horses on all the trails in SV, again seeing just a few local, cordial bikers, but now horses have lost all trails but a few to the entitled, inconsiderate biking throngs.

I know there are a few dedicated horse trails but as stated above Tom Blake parking is not optimal & the Rim Trail horse trail (I believe is now called Upper North Mesa), is quite steep as is Tom Blake. We used to be able to ride from the rodeo grounds, where there's ample parking, to Tom Blake by accessing Lowline Trail. It was so perfect! Now we've lost that too. Even hiking is risky over on all Sky Mountain trails. Such a shame. TOSV has made it clear...mountain bikers rule.

Horses and bikes don't mix well on this trail. Construction is tough but it's getting better - TOSV is working to help equestrian parking we hope. I worry about e-bikes on this trail and am generally concerned about e bikes because of how quiet and fast they are. I predict there will be a lot of scared horses when an e-bike sneaks up on them. Horses and bikes don't mix well on these trails.

RFVHC COMMENTS - *Upper North Mesa trail and the Tom Blake offer beautiful mountain views and picturesque riding. We worked this summer with the Town of Snowmass Village, the R.F. Outdoors and the Rocky Mountain Youth Core via a grant to improve signage and usability on the Upper North Mesa trail for equestrians. The Tom Blake Equestrian trail needs parking for horseback riders with more signage at points where multi trails cross.*

RFVHC SOLUTION – *Allow equestrian parking at the Two Creeks area with a newly designed and constructed hiker/horseback only trail, which meets with the Tom Blake Equestrian Trail. This new addition could provide a loop trail for the slower moving hiker and horseback rider user groups. The RFVHC is interested in helping with the initial design of this trail idea. The mountain bikes and e-bikes are not going away, therefore we ask the land managers in charge of recreation and trails to designate equestrian and hiker only trails. No bikes.*

Tom Blake Equestrian Trail



Tom Blake Equestrian Trail



Enjoyable ride through the aspen trees



Headed back to the trail head



Crossing Owl Creek Road to Highline trail can be dangerous. Highline multi-use trail has steep drop-offs and can be dangerous, when horseback riders meet a mountain bike. At this time the only parking to access the Tom Blake Equestrian Trail is located at the Town Park / Rodeo Lot.

SIGNAGE

The Upper North Mesa trail needs signage. This trail needs work as far as horse safety and parking. It was impossible to find from the neighborhood. The Tom Blake trail is nice but short. Once you reach the end of the dedicated horse section, the next section has an option for horses to continue, but at the next section all signs say **no horses**. Confusing! It is a problem that needs to be fixed right away. Also the only access up to Government Trail is up Anerobic which is a downhill for bikes. The signage has helped, and most bikers have been great but up Seward and continuing on, a less busy uphill would've been a better option for trail riders on the Government Trail loop.

RFVHC COMMENTS - *We agree. In the summer of 2021, the TOSV improved the Upper North Mesa trail's base footing and signage. Yes, there are sections of the Tom Blake Equestrian Trail that are shared with the multi-users, so signage needs to be placed in correct view spots. We advise all trail users to please be cautious and aware of possible oncoming bike traffic and upcoming bike route crossings. All equestrians and hikers are asked to notify us and the land managers, when they find signage needs and dangerous trail conditions.*

RFVHC SOLUTIONS - *The RFVHC would be interested in helping land managers with the initial design of these trail sign issues. We ask that the RFVHC Board members or our general membership volunteer to accompany the land managers to help in these wayfinding decisions.*

PARKING

Rodeo Parking Lot - There is no such area. It is known as Town Park

RFVHC COMMENT - *You are absolutely correct. For almost 50 years this area was known as the "Rodeo Lot" and it is now known as Town Park. The Town Park / Rodeo Parking Lot is the trail head for the **hikers and horses only Upper North Mesa Trail**. The dirt surface of the current parking area accommodates the **Snowmass Rodeo** contestants and their horses, as well as equestrian trail users. If the parking lot dirt surface is replaced by asphalt, then many competitors and equestrian trail users may choose to not park in the lot.*

The livestock, rodeo producer and cowboys and cowgirls put on the show. They are the rodeo! Let's work together for everyone's inclusion in the TOSV.

RFVHC SOLUTION – For The Tom Blake Equestrian Trail parking we ask that SkiCo. might allow trucks and trailers to park in the Two Creeks area with a newly designed and constructed hiker/horseback only trail, which meets with the Tom Blake Equestrian Trail. This new addition could provide a loop trail for the slower moving hiker and horseback rider users. The RFVHC is interested in helping with the initial design of this trail idea.

Another equestrian parking option might be at the Cemetery /Utility building area at the bottom of Sky Mountain Park. Mountain bikes and e-bikes are not going away, so we ask the land managers to advocate and designate some equestrian and hiker only trails. Most mountain bikers agree that separate trails for horses and hikers with separate independent trails for mountain bikers make the perfect scenario for safe enjoyable recreation experiences.

PARKING FACTS

- (1) The Town Park / and existing Rodeo Parking Lot is the trailhead access for the Upper North Mesa Trail and we don't want to lose it and we ask that it remain a dirt surface.
- (2) The existing "Rodeo Lot" is necessary for the weekly rodeo parking. The Wednesday night Snowmass Rodeo is the longest running rodeo in Colorado. It is loved by local residents and visitors alike.
- (3) The Town Of Snowmass Village is restructuring their concept for the "Town Park Master Plan", which appears to reduce the size and turn-around options for trucks and trailers. The RFVHC has a document regarding truck and trailer parking lot dimensions, which we can gladly share.
- (4) The new plan also removes the dirt parking surface, replacing it with asphalt. This surface is dangerous and especially treacherous for horses unloading from trailers.
- (5) The RFVHC is concerned that these proposed changes may endanger the continuation of our Western Heritage Tradition.

TOSV – Snowmass Village Town Park Master Plan

<https://www.snowmassrecreation.com/DocumentCenter/View/1184>





The Snowmass Rodeo is the oldest rodeo in Colorado. Throughout the summer, this historic western pageant thrills the crowds . Please support our Western Heritage tradition, still very much alive, every Wednesday night at the Snowmass Rodeo.



Asphalt and horses don't mix. A compromise will insure success for the rodeo and equestrian / hiker trail users. The RFVHC would like to become involved in the design for this proposed parking lot construction with a different composition, which is less expensive than asphalt and safer for all horses.

Here is the winter and spring 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 responses.

Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council
P.O. Box 127, Snowmass, Colorado 81654
* 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization *

rfvhc.colorado@gmail.com Facebook: www.facebook.com/keephorsesontrails/

Instagram : www.instagram.com/rfvhc/