

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.

### Q13 and Q15 INTO THE SNOWMASS – MAROON WILDERNESS

*Main Snowmass Creek Trail leading to Snowmass Lake, East Snowmass Creek Trail over East Snowmass Creek Pass to Willow Basin West Snowmass Creek Trail to Haystack Mountain.*

***DIRECTIONS:*** The parking at the Snowmass Creek trailhead is usually filled by hiker's cars. Just before the bridge crossing of Snowmass Creek there is a pull-off, where trucks and trailers can park and turn around. The hikers and the local outfitter also uses this spot, so sometimes there is no place for equestrians to park. If you are lucky enough to find a spot open, it is a short ride across the bridge to the trailhead.

***Did you know*** that Snowmass Creek Valley is home to over 23 miles of Equestrian Trails. You can follow meandering creeks toward their headwater and head into the Maroon Bells Wilderness. Enjoy unmatched views from beautiful high alpine basins and mountain passes. The RFVHC recommends equestrians headed into this wilderness area **check first** with Snowmass Creek Outfitters for seasonal information. 970.704.0707 Parking at the bridge may be constricted by outfitter trucks and trailers.

***Did you know*** that our Roaring Fork Valley Guides & Outfitters keep many trails open for their commercial businesses? Many sections of our Wilderness trails would not be safe or passable for hikers or equestrians without their help. Please support them and book a trail ride that you will never forget!



Snowmass – Maroon Wilderness offers spectacular trail riding

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

I am a wrangler for Snowmass Creek Outfitters and know these trails very well! They are amazing. LOVE West Snowmass Creek Trail. It's a very big climb for horses over large boulders going all the way to the basin but totally worth the view. You need a fit, strong trail horse to go that far. Amazing rides. Great trails for equestrians. With older and retired horses, we seek easy to moderate trail riding, and know that access wilderness areas on horseback in the Rockies is likely to be more difficult than we want to demand of our horses. Our mules love these trails!

**RFVHC COMMENT** - *The Snowmass Wilderness offers some of the best riding and views in Colorado. Being wilderness, it is vast and can be daunting to someone that is not familiar with the area. We recommend that you always hike/horseback ride prepared for all conditions and carry first aid/safety items for both you and your horse. If you are unfamiliar with the trails, we highly advise going with either an outfitter or someone who knows the area. As far as parking for trailers, the USFS is a good resource to speak with about expanding the parking. This is something we can look for in the future.*

Can I bring my own horse? Would love to do these rides but not with outfitter. We live in Old Snowmass but struggle with this area. We do our own variation of the area. Watch out for bikers.

**RFVHC COMMENT** - *If you do not know the area, we highly advise going with either an outfitter or someone who knows the valleys and mountains. Contact them regarding riding your own horses. Also, bikes are not allowed in the wilderness - No motorized or mechanized.*

Wilderness is excellent for hiking. Horse waste in the trail is very unpleasant for hiking. Perhaps education signage about why horse manure is fertilizing/organic matter that does not need to be removed or buried, and human/dog is? I hear so many people complain about the horse manure...I grew up with horses so I don't mind it, I am used to it, and I am a pro at dodging it, but hear the outrage from visitors.

**RFVHC COMMENT** - *Horse manure is simply processed grass. It won't hurt hikers and it is easily cleaned from shoes. Although some find it unpleasant, it is preferable to dog doo on you shoes. Many equestrians compost horse manure, which is great for the garden. We offer a little gentle advice for those who are not used to being around horses and their byproduct. Step gingerly around the road apples and be happy that our mountain trails are shared with a living Western Heritage tradition. The early West was settled on the backs of horses and mules. Many of the trails that are enjoyed today were made by the footfalls of men and women riding horses and mules. Please appreciate that our western spirit continues in our Roaring Fork Valley, albeit with a little horse manure on the trail.*

### Roaring Fork Valley Guides & Outfitters

Tell them the RFVHC sent you!

1. **Avalanche Outfitters at Redstone Stables** - serving Coal Basin, East Creek Pass, Hawk Creek, Perham Creek 970.963.1144 - <http://www.redstonestables.com/contact.html>.
2. **Capitol Peak Outfitters** serving Sopris, Woody Creek, Lenado, Hunter Creek, Hell Roaring & Avalanche Creek area. John Howe: 970.928.0723 - <https://www.capitolpeak.com>
3. **Maroon Bells Guide & Outfitters @ T Lazy 7 Ranch** - at the mouth of the Maroon Bells Wilderness, Willow Lake Trail & Crested Butte Two-Day Overnight Rides.970.920.4677 <https://maroonbellsaspen.com>
4. **Snowmass Creek Outfitters at St.Benedict's Monastery & McCabe Ranch**, serving Main Snowmass Creek Trails, West Snowmass Creek Trails, East. Snowmass Creek Trails Snowmass Village. 970.704.0707 - <https://www.snowmasscreekoutfitters.com>

### WILDERNESS AND THE WILDLIFE



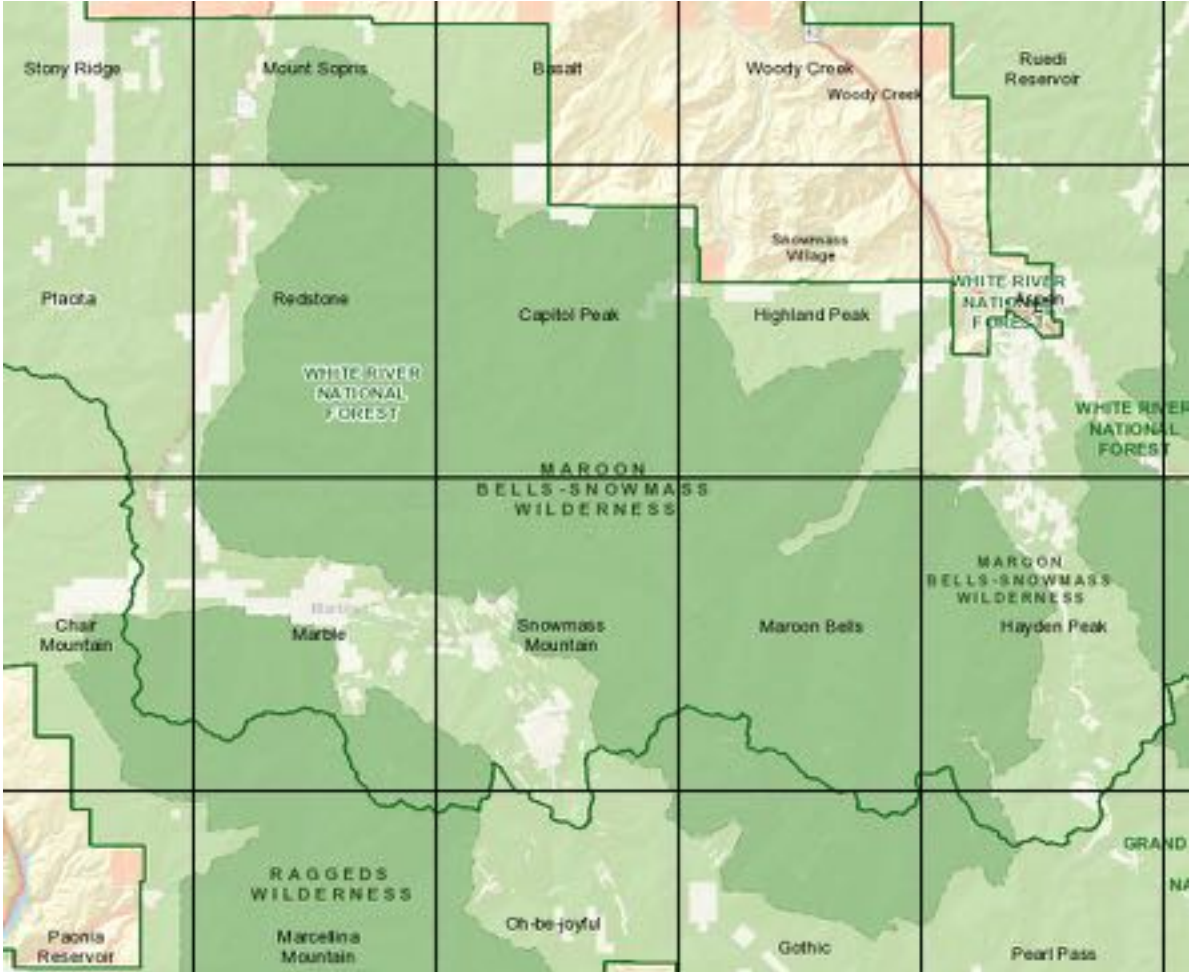
The Snowmass Maroon Wilderness contains pockets of wildlife herds. Bighorn sheep love the rugged cliffs of East Snowmass Creek and Avalanche Creek. Elk herds travel migration areas throughout this wilderness.



**Notes from a local outfitter** – “We stayed at our permanent overnight campsite just below Haystack Mountain. After an early campfire breakfast, we loaded client saddle bags with that day’s lunch and our mules carried, client gear, travel trip dome tents, cooking gear and food for two more nights and three days on the trail. We were headed for the Town of Redstone. As we climbed to the crown of the round topped Haystack Mountain, we quietly came upon a large elk herd bedded down on a meadow. All horseback riders were quiet and in total awe of the unexpected encounter. When the herd saw our horses and mules, their herbivore cousins, the herd’s first reaction was to slowly rise and watch us. These animals were magnificent. As we progressed the herd started to move with us, not running, but moving together. At first they walked and then they picked up an unhurried trot. We stopped to admire these majestic creatures. Everyone knew that what we had just experienced only happens once in a lifetime.”



**SNOWMASS - MAROON WILDERNESS – 183,847 acres**





On Top Of The World – Just below East Creek Pass – Capitol Peak in the background

### PARKING

**Here are some trail head parking explanations:**

**Maroon Bells gate house entry and parking**—Horse trailer entrance before TBD time seasonally.

**Main Maroon Creek Parking** available on right – **West Maroon Parking** farther on left.  
[info@visitmaroonbells.com](mailto:info@visitmaroonbells.com)

**Hunter Creek** – hunter's access only during the hunting season.

**Lenado** – Equestrian Parking is compromised by a faulty ditch at this time

**Snowmass Creek** – No trailhead equestrian parking- limited parking before the bridge

**Capitol Creek** – No trailhead parking – Hay Park Parking is good -2 miles ride to trailhead

**Basalt Mountain** – Trailhead parking is good

***RFVHC COMMENT - The Snowmass - Maroon Wilderness provides a step back in time. The wilderness gives everyone spectacular views, moments for contemplative solitude and this is where the hectic practices & attitudes of our current civilization matter not at all. People who choose to escape into this natural world find themselves communing with nature and connecting with their inner spirit.***

***Wilderness can be healing, but it is also filled with the unpredictable tenuous unknown. The mountains are like the oceans. They are constantly moving and changing. Weather can come with quick moving storms accompanied by lightning, hail, snow and rain. Our hot high altitude sun can cause dehydration and sap trail user energies. Rock slides, mudslides and falling timber are some possibilities that can await trail users. Our wildlife partners can surprise horses and their riders as well. Horseback riders must watch for trouble on the trail.***

*Professional outfitters clear mountain trails. They are familiar with the ever changing landscapes through which they safely guide their clients. We are thankful to those outfitters who keep the wilderness safe and available. For those adventurers who strike out on their own, we recommend to be prepared, leave no trace and make sure that you and you horses are fit and ready for the challenge.*

*RFVHC COMMENT – PARKING – Over the years, equestrian parking at the all USFS trailheads has become more and more difficult. With the Covid pandemic humans have discovered the great outdoors for all manner of recreation. Both the USFS and the BLM are challenged with managing our open Spaces and Wilderness lands.*

*Avalanche Creek – Rough road across Avalanche Creek to the trailhead – Parking ok, but washed out bridge crossing on the trail makes this trail for advanced horses & riders .*

*Redstone – East Creek – Limited parking on road side pull-offs at the end of Redstone Blvd.*

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.

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