

**January 10, 2022**  
**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.

**Q17 IN THE AREA OF EL JEBEL / BASALT MOUNTAIN**

*The RFVHC is interested in opinions and facts about trail riding on Basalt Mountain. There are many old roads and trails that have been hiked and ridden for decades.*

**Please Note:** Mountain Bikers use the NEW USFS #1911 for their downhill route. Please use caution while horseback riding.

**We are looking for the names of the trails, truck and trailer parking opportunities, old maps, photographs and any remembrances of riding Basalt Mountain trails.**

**Thank You.**

*Please contact:*

*Holly McLain or Karin Reid Offield with any of the above information for our research.*

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**THE LAKE CHRISTINE FIRE – 2018 - REMEMBERED**

The Lake Christine Fire destroyed a total of 12,588 USFS wilderness acres on Basalt Mountain.  
 Dead standing and charred timber became dangerous for many trail users.



Fire blowing up on Basalt Mountain



Lake Christine Firefighters  
 taking a well-deserved break  
 Notice the women in the thick of it!



Lake Christine fire - seen from Strang Ranch, Missouri Heights, Carbondale, CO



Basalt Mountain burning, while life goes on.  
Putting up hay on Highlands Ranch



Too close for comfort – Lake Christine Fire burned perimeter horse property fences  
Mount Sopris in the background



2018 - Basalt Mountain, scorched earth above Rumble Ridge.  
The fire weed was the first to grow back in the ashes.

Traditionally, horseback riders and hikers like to explore their open space lands. We are often the first to adventure into the unknown. Our “Great American West” was settled by these adventurers on the backs of horses and mules. That western spirit is alive and well in the “Heart of the Horse Country”, right here in our own Roaring Fork Valley, while we ride or hike on the trails. One year later, after the USFS and BLM gave the go ahead to proceed, horseback riders were exploring and viewing the fire damage on Basalt Mountain. (see photos below)



2019 – Just below the Ditch Trail  
riding through the burn scar already healing  
(photos by Louisa Davidson)



Heading to the  
Basalt Mt. parking lot



Out of the burn scar and into the untouched by fire area of  
Basalt Mountain

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

### **MULTI-USE TRAILS vs HORSE AND HIKER ONLY TRAILS**

I like to ride Basalt Mountain and have found most dirt-bikers are respectful of horseback riders. I have cross country skied up the Basalt Mountain Road. I remember riding those trails, 10 - 20 years ago.... when they were safe ie: no dirt bikes, maybe a few mountain bikes. I do not feel safe on the trails anymore. An equestrian only area would be nice on Basalt Mountain. Too many bikes, motorized and non. We have not had positive experiences riding Basalt Mountain trails due to the high volume of mountain bike traffic - makes it scary & unsettling. We'd love to see development of separate trails for equestrians + pedestrians, separate from bikes, modeled after Glassier Trail.

**RFVHC COMMENT** - *For example, riding uphill from the creek crossing on the Basalt Mountain Ditch Trail, there is a steep, narrow and rocky drop off. One of our board members took this uphill trail and luckily no mountain bikes were descending. If you meet a biker coming down this trail as you are going up, there is "nowhere to go but over the steep side." Another RFVHC member, who rides mountain bikes and horses said that she would never ride horses on that section, because of the extreme danger. Once the steep ascent is made by bikers, they hook into the Ditch Trail loop, most used by horses and hikers. All trail users need to practice proper trail etiquette.*

There are multiple good loops. It would be great to have an equestrian hiker only loops. The area is heavily used by motorcycles. I ride Basalt Mountain quite frequently and twice this summer I have run into the same mountain biker that was very aggressive towards me and yelled obscenities at me for not picking up my horse's manure on the trail. Except for this one unpleasant individual I have happily shared the trail with the mountain bikers even though I have been riding there long before it became popular as a mountain biking trail. An equestrian only area would be nice on Basalt Mountain. Too many bikes, motorized and non -motorized vehicles. Great area, but too much mountain bike traffic so no longer ride-sad!

**RFVHC COMMENT** - *Basalt Mountain trails used to be peaceful and enjoyable for hikers and horseback riders. These same trails that the bikers now use are rutted and banked and have made normal footfalls for hikers and horses unpleasant. We agree that most dirt bike and mountain bike trail users are respectful to others. However, many feel entitled and are physically and verbally out of control.*

**Good article – trail etiquette – “Outside” magazine -**

<https://www.outsideonline.com/outdoor-adventure/biking/trail-etiquette-tips-old-burnout/>

*Our advanced rider group has some trails totally separate from any bikers. Most of these trails are not for beginner or intermediate riders, because of bush-wacking, branch ducking and downed trees. Those riders who know these trails are hesitant to guide anyone there, because someone will tell their friends and then mountain bikes will appear.*

**RFVHC SOLUTION #1** - *Perhaps the BLM and USFS will designate a specific Basalt Mountain existing trail as a hiker/horseback rider only trail. Mountain bikes have taken over all of the original horseback and hiking trails on Basalt Mountain. The down-hill descent mountain bikers make trails scary and dangerous. The RFVHC would like to work with USFS and BLM to designate a hiker/horse trail for summer of 2022.*

**RFVHC SOLUTION #2** - *Making hiker/horse only trails would be great. However, we would prefer to aim our energy toward a new trail that can be designed for horseback riders and hikers from the inception. Getting Mountain Bikes off any existing Basalt Mountain trails would be a huge feat and confrontational. There is an area to the West and South of the Basalt Mountain Parking Lot that the RFVHC could mark for an equestrian/hiker only trail. We have never seen bikes in this area. This would make a wonderful alternative to the scary existing multiuse trails.*

### **PARKING**

I have ridden extensively on Basalt Mountain. The parking lot is great. Great parking at Lake Christine. Reason for horse and hiker only trails is because parking is good.

**RFVHC COMMENT** – **Agreed! Because there is ample parking for equestrian trucks and trailers on Basalt Mountain, it makes perfect sense to ride horses on Basalt Mountain.** Mountain bikes are not going away, so we need to offer the hiker/horseback riders trails to use to have a calm and peaceful experience.

### **NOXIOUS WEEDS**

Also, overgrowth of thistles.

**RFVHC COMMENT** - *Thistles are a huge issue and a project that might be influenced by communicating and offering to help with USFS and BLM. They have done successful thistle control earlier in some areas.*

### **EDUCATION / WAYFINDING**

I have ridden Basalt Mountain from above Missouri Heights and into White River National Forests and find people are especially rude speeding by with trucks and dogs NOT on leash. The mountain bikers/motorbikes do NOT yield to horses as required. Signage? It's VERY SCARY.

**RFVHC SOLUTION** – *Signage and Compliance will help control bad trail conduct. Trail Rangers can enforce ticketing and require (\$) fines, which are practices that are imperative for compliance. Our trail users need to help report all people who are out of line. It is a privilege to use our open space trails. **Educational signs at the trail heads will improve the trail experience.***



Basalt Mountain trails without mountain bikes are peaceful  
(photo by Louisa Davidson)

### **SIGNAGE**

Basalt mountain has many great rides and loops before the fire. I am not sure which trails have survived the fire. However, **I had a head on collision with a biker**. There needs to be more signage for multi-use.

***RFVHC SOLUTION** – The steep multi-use descent trails are dangerous for trail users ascending up those trails. Example - Signage placed at the upper entrance to the steep section leading to the down-hill Ditch Trail and warning signage at the bottom of this trail by the creek crossing of the Ditch Trail would help divert disaster. The danger would be somewhat reduced, but still present, because this down-hill descent trail flows into the Lower Ditch Trail Loop, most used by hikers and horseback riders. Proper warning signs may alert everyone of potential danger.*

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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