

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.

Q9 IN THE AREA OF THE SUTHEY RANCH TRAIL, WITH THE PARKING LOT

Directions: *The Historic Sutey Ranch (horses & hikers only) with BLM's Sutey Equestrian Parking Lot is accessed from Highway 82 onto County Road 103, then left on Crystal Springs Road. Drive past Crystal Springs Ranch (on the left), go down the hill and the parking lot will be on the left. BLM's Sutey Equestrian Parking Lot accommodates trucks and horse trailers. Hikers and mountain bikers have a separate parking area. **Did You Know?** Sutey Ranch is in "The Heart of the Horse Country".*

The Sutey Ranch is a Western Heritage Homestead Ranch in the Roaring Fork Valley with fields and meandering trails. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has designated Sutey Ranch as a "Wildlife Priority Area". Dogs must be on leash at all times, on all trails, and please be courteous and clean up after your dogs and horses in the parking area. . In 2020, BLM received a generous grant from Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) to enlarge the BLM's Sutey Equestrian Parking Lot. On the far western perimeter of Sutey Ranch, a trail is built as a connector to Red Hill SRMA for mountain bikes. Mountain bikers are not allowed to leave this designated route. The RFVHC will work with the BLM as "Friends of Sutey". Our collective responsibility will be to respect the land, respect our wildlife, keep our new parking lot organized, manure free, and to park with others needs in mind. We need your help.

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

THE TRAILS



Sutey Ranch in "The Heart of the Horse Country"

It's like stepping back in time

Incredible! What an amazing parcel for all types of riders, young and old riders and horses - best in the area! Sutey Ranch is now a very horse-user friendly area due to the vast improvements to parking lot & trails. Wonderful work there for the horses. Thank you! I hiked on Sutey Ranch when the land trade was being considered, and then voted for the trade. It is a beautiful wide-open area with plenty of different trails for options to ride away from groups of people. Excellent beginner's trails. As Chair of Roaring Fork Audubon Society, I have visited this site a few times, installing and checking on nest boxes and birding watching. Fabulous!! I've heard it is beautiful and would like to ride at Sutey Ranch.

RFVHC COMMENT - *Our goal to provide Beginner trails has been fulfilled and the ranch is being loved by many. Our friends will continue to explore and clear trails that connect various areas. Continuing from the Sutey Parking Lot, we have a new designated horse trail onto the ranch and the RFVHC sends our newly mapped trails to BLM to be included on their maps/records.*

The only improvement I would like to see is some clearance for horseback riders on the single track trails on the ranch. I do a lot of ducking due to low branches.

RFVHC COMMENT - *Regarding the comment about low branches on single track trails, our advice is to carry a saddlebag saw and trim them. Clear the obstacles, don't duck! Be part of the team!*

PARKING

Rode it once. It was beautiful. Parking was easy with trailer. The new parking lot for trailers is amazing. Parking lot is sometimes too full on weekends. No room for a horse trailer. Great job on new parking area. The new improved truck & trailer parking is superb and very much appreciated. The new parking lot is amazing!

RFVHC COMMENT *The new Sutey parking lot has been an overwhelming success. There is ample room park horse trailers there. Cars do occasionally overflow into the trailer area but seem to organize themselves closer to the regular car park and outhouse area. If you have trouble, leave a kind note on the windshields of the cars or trucks that may have parked in the equestrian lot by mistake.*



SEPARATE HORSE and BIKE TRAILS SIGNAGE

Horses must be separated from Mtn bikes. All users should contribute to trail maintenance and clean up after their dogs. Parking lot signs should clearly state that horses should use trails separate from Mtn bikes. One of our favorite places. **Better signage for equestrian only trails** is needed. Have met bikers on trail because they did not see horse only signs.

RFVHC COMMENT - *Bikes and horses on Sutey Ranch have currently been a success. We have never seen many bike tracks and if seeing bikers or tracks again, use your cell phone and take a photo to send to the BLM – Alan Czepinski 970 876 9076 (o). Remind bikers about the BLM rules and say we are collecting photos of offenders. We hope that this deterrent will help keep bikers on their Northside Access Bike Trail. The BLM asked the horseback riders to stay off this trail, because the entire Sutey Ranch is designated for horseback riders and hikers. We should respect the BLM request to stay off this newly constructed, mountain bike connection trail to the Red Hill SRMA. The soils are fragile in some areas, and if we respect this trail, we can ask bike trail builders to help us build our equestrian trails.*



The beautiful Sutey Ranch Homestead corral at sunset.

SIGNAGE, DOGS and LEASH LAWS

The leash law is widely ignored, as are the trailer only parking signs. Not an issue for me as I ride down from Crystal Springs Ranch, but I have friends who avoid the area due to the dog problem. A few big fines for dogs off leash and encroachment parking will get the word out that we mean business. I don't use it more because of having to keep my dogs on leash. I prefer not to ride/hike on trails where my dog is not welcome.

We love it. We ALWAYS see dogs off leash. Horseback and leashed dogs do not seem to work for most equestrians. The RFVHC needs to make sure all members are aware of the “no dogs” except on leash! I always take my dog when I horseback ride so I cannot recommend this trail for this reason. Lots of loose running dogs though. I don't use it more because of having to keep my dogs on leash. I did not realize that Sutey had a dog leash policy. Love that hunting is permitted in the fall as well, what a great piece of land that can be used by everyone. I've heard this is beautiful and would like to ride at Sutey Ranch. I hike on Sutey Ranch and the northern Red Hill trails often.

RFVHC COMMENT – Signage for “no dogs off leash” policy must change change behavior. Despite fines being possible, without BLM Ranger presence due to shrinking budgets, regulation will not happen. Education is the key. Horseback riders or hikers could politely mention the leash law to hikers, but often off leash dog owners become indignant with the request. We suggest asking for the person's name then take a cell phone picture if possible. Now, horseback riders do not take dogs along because of wildlife concerns. Trail courtesy and etiquette should be posted at the Sutey Ranch entry from both the Equestrian parking lot and hiker & biker car parking at the entry gates. So that when people enter everyone understands the rules.

WILDLIFE

I hunt here. I don't want excessive recreation to push wildlife out. Not elk, not deer. Please, let's stop hyping places. Looking forward to visiting! We love Sutey Ranch!



RFVHC COMMENT – We agree with you! The RFVHC has taken our valley wildlife as partners. The importance of protecting our biodiverse environment has become a critical initiative for our organization. We are one out of many voices for our dwindling wildlife, because they cannot speak for themselves. The slower moving horseback riders and hikers will stop to admire and permit other creatures to pass, allowing them to move off quietly. Overuse of the Open Space Lands is leading to trail degradation and to flushing wildlife away from their natural calving grounds and ground nesting areas. We support making some areas of our Valley for the Wildlife only.

Sutey Ranch is open to hikers and equestrians from April 15 through November 30th.

Northside Access Trail for Mountain Bikers to Red Hill SRMA –Open June 1 – September 30th.

Winter Wildlife Closure to all human intrusion from December 1st – April 15th

Thank you to the BLM, CPW & Pitkin County for underwriting the Winter Wildlife Closures.

Sutey Ranch is in Garfield County and thank you to the Garfield County BOCC for their support.



Thanks to all those who spoke up during the NEPA comment period in support of horseback riding on Sutey Ranch.

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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