



ROARING FORK VALLEY HORSE COUNCIL

P O Box 127

Snowmass, CO 81654

www.rfvhorsecouncil.org

Erin Jones
Acting Associate District Manager
SW Colorado District
NEPA Coordinator
NW Colorado District
Bureau of Land Management
[2815 H Road](#)
[Grand Junction, CO 81506](#)

7/2//2018

Hi Erin,

Holly McLain here. I contacted you on February 1st of this year, regarding the BLM's 9,100 acres on the CROWN and the pristine 557 acre Historic Sutey Ranch, a Legacy Homestead Property, recently acquired by the BLM. In a previous e mail and phone conversation you mentioned you may be able come and meet with us for a site visit. We are hoping you might be able to come now. Miles Gurtler has recently written us that the public discussion for Sutey Ranch will occur July 12, 2018.

We are grateful that we will now be able to have a conversation about the recently acquired, Haines and Sutey Parcels at this BLM Open House Meeting in Carbondale.

The Colorado River Valley Field Office has been helpful and encouraging to the Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council (RFVHC). Recently we toured the CROWN with Miles Gurtler and Justin Dennis, looking at equestrian trail routes. At this time the BLM has not been able to find a Middle Country parking area for equestrians.

I am hoping you can make a site visit to understand and discuss the issues for equestrian parking on both the CROWN and for the Historic Sutey Ranch Homestead, in the heart of horse country.

**CROWN EQUESTRIAN PARKING – TO ACCESS THE MIDDLE COUNTRY
Haines Parcel & Haines Meadow**

Public involvement will continue to play a critical role as we move forward with site-specific planning for the Sutey and Haines parcels. We are pleased that the Haines

Parcel is included for public comment and that the Haines Meadow will be considered for potential equestrian truck and trailer parking.

Please read the letter written by the Pitkin Board of County Commissioners and Pitkin County Open Space and Trails asking the BLM, to provide equestrian parking on BLM Lands off Prince Creek Road to access the Middle Country and CROWN Road #8320.

See attachment **Addendum A** – Letter from Pitkin county to the BLM, written March 12, 2018

Please see **Addendum B** - attached is a map showing Prince Creek Road with the red star showing desired equestrian parking in the Haines Meadow, on the recently obtained Haines Parcel.

The Haines Meadow, a Historic Equestrian Parking location, creates the least impact ecologically, is already fenced and therefore can easily be managed and controlled, and has excellent line of site from Prince Creek Road for safe and single egress and ingress. This location requires no work for immediate use. The RFVHC is willing to create a parking loop within the meadow, thereby keeping the majority of the meadow intact. The parking loop will avoid the existing mountain bike trail.

The Penstemon Trail marked on the attached map connects the Haines Meadow going South to the South Porcupine Trail, a multi-use trail.

The Penstemon Trail is an existing trail that mountain bikers are not using and which is not on the Mountain Bike Trail Map that Mike Pritchard (RFMBA) provided to Horse Council Board Members.

The 1 through 4 - yellow markers on the map are for the Pitkin County Roads and Bridge Engineer.

Haines Meadow - Ready to ride.



SUTEY RANCH HOMESTEAD PARKING AND HORSEBACK RIDING

The Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council (RFVHC), representing the equestrian community, would like to have an area to horseback ride without encountering mountain bikes. The Sutey Ranch is centrally located, has potentially excellent equestrian parking, and there would be minimal environmental impact on the pristine, historic Ranch Homestead. Our Western and Native American Heritage is tied to this land.

The Sutey Ranch is located next to the 3,100 acre Red Hill SRMA, with 7 bike trails in a 6 mile loop. Aspen Valley Land Trust recently purchased 25 acres specifically for a parking lot for bikers and hikers, with 3 more trails to be professionally constructed soon. With this parking addition, bikers and hikers will have plenty of parking to access the Red Hill SRMA area.

Historically, the Sutey Ranch has been available for local neighboring horseback riders and hikers to enjoy. Crystal Springs Ranch Equestrian Center borders the Sutey Ranch, and horseback riders have enjoyed the trails there since the 1970s. Ironically, the new

Th newly constructed BLM parking area built by the BLM for the Sutey Ranch cannot accommodate truck and trailer parking. Hopefully this can be remedied. Horse truck and trailer rigs typically measure 40-60 ft in length including the truck. Most riders carpool to reduce costs and impacts.

New Sutey BLM Parking area off Country Road 112



Not big enough for equestrian parking

Horseback riders are losing their parking for trucks and trailers. Often these parking spots are parked out by cars or not included in parking plans, which takes away horseback rider's access to the many trails that ranchers built starting with the Homestead Act of 1862. Horsemen herded their cattle into the high country from their valley floor, home ranches. Men and women on horseback made the original high country trails opening the back country for recreational enjoyment.

The Roaring Fork Mountain Bike community claims miles of trails, and some are on BLM lands, stipulated as SRMAs for mountain bikes. The recent 2018 Cycling Magazine for Pitkin, Garfield, and Mesa Counties lists the following miles of mountain bike trails. Pitkin County – 213.4 miles, Garfield County - 175.1 miles, Mesa County - 306.1 miles, and there are miles of mountain bike trails in Eagle County and more will

be added on the CROWN this summer. Total number of recognized mountain bike trails recommended in this 2018 Cycling Magazine comes to 694.6 miles of trails. The RFMBA is working on adding even more mountain bike trails in our Tri-County Area. We feel that the mountain bike community is accommodated sufficiently with extensive bike trails.

The RFMBA has their sights set on the Sutey Ranch. They talk about the BLM making the Sutey Ranch a SRMA for their use.

The Roaring Fork Valley Horse Council, on behalf of our membership, feels significantly burdened by the overwhelming number of bikes and how this is affecting our precedence of being able to trail ride safely. We are being asked to retreat. We are being repeatedly compromised to concede to bike access and it is affecting us negatively. We want to bring this reasonable argument forward.

According to the Colorado Horse Council, the horse industry has a 2.6 billion dollar impact on our Colorado economy, producing \$764 million dollars in goods & services. The value of all equine related assets totaled \$7.7 billion in 1998, and the recreational aspect of the horse industry, and trail riding in particular is growing. Horse owners, service providers, employees, and volunteers are part of this expanding economic market. Even more people participate as spectators. Surprisingly, the horse industry is larger than the film & tobacco industries combined. Due to the interest in outdoor activities, especially involving women and their family members, the equestrian demographic in our area is growing. Sadly the dwindling parking access and availability of trails without fast, downhill mountain bikes is sparse. Sutey Ranch could accommodate horses and hikers without mountain bike safety concerns.

The Roaring Fork Valley Land Managers have facilitated numerous miles of mountain bike trails in the last decade. Admittedly mountain biking is a popular activity and people need a place to ride. Our valley is fairly small and busy. The Roaring Fork Valley is surrounded by public lands that cannot be developed to house more people. There are limited natural resources, most especially water, and we are close to reaching capacity for human habitation. Currently the BLM and the USFS are reducing the overnight camping and number of visitors on their lands. Expansion of trails needs to be limited to sustain a balance.

A perfect example of bandit mountain bike trails and expanded use into USFS & BLM lands is **Hay Park**, another area that horseback riders have traditionally enjoyed. This area lies at the base of the Elk Mountain Range starting at Capitol Creek, it encompasses all the wooded area below Mount Sopris, and is the traditional wildlife calving ground and nursery for elk and deer. The mountain bikers have a culture of entitlement, which is predicated on never asking for permission, and establishing ownership through trespass. They pressure and overwhelm the land managers to accommodate them, resulting in severe impacts on the other historic, established, long time trail users, hikers and horseback riders. **Hay Park** has three excellent parking lots that accommodate equestrian trucks and trailers: Hay Park parking in Capitol Creek, The Divide Parking lot at the top of West Sopris Creek Road, and the Dinkle Lake Parking lot. The addition of fast moving, mountain bikers will drastically change the recreation trail experience in **Hay Park** for the hikers and horseback riders. Please work with the USFS to preserve and protect the peace and solitude in this area from the addition of this large, overwhelming user group.



Hay Park Family trail ride - packing into the woods

Mother with her 9 year old son, riding his mustang pony, in **Hay Park** and horse camping overnight at Thomas Lakes. Hiking Sopris Mountain was the following day's activity before packing up and heading home. This memorable family adventure would never have been contemplated in today's Hay Park. The bandit trails and mountain bikes careening around every bend and down all the hills make the **Hay Park** trail experience a challenge, rather than an enjoyable peaceful ride, where trail users are one with nature. **Please consider the peace and enjoyment of the other trail users, the hikers and horseback riders, when planning and managing the public lands.**

The Sutey Ranch is a wildlife sanctuary, and is a critical winter range wildlife habitat area. Winter use of the adjoining Red Hill area by mountain bikes will increase, due to climate change, winter weather, low snowpack. This will encourage human recreation during this crucial winter wildlife closure season. We have great concern about the welfare of our deer and elk herds and the general disruption of the biodiversity of this area.

Sutey Ranch is a Native American Cultural area, where our indigenous peoples, the Ute Indians hunted on these lands. Numerous arrowheads have been found.

Please see **Addendum C** – Kevin Wright's letter

Erin, introduction of mountain bikes onto this land would change the Western Heritage character of this beautiful place. I hope that you will come see for yourself, and you will want to preserve this small piece of unspoiled land, for the wildlife, the quiet hikers and horseback riders, as it has been since the Sutey Family settled on the land.

BLM is the new steward of this verdant, peaceful Homestead property. The Sutey brothers, who lived out their lives on this ranch would be thankful for keeping it just so.

Sutey Ranch Homestead photos



Old Horse barn with stall doors closed.



Corrals at the Homestead



Please see **Addendum D** –Signed petitions supporting and equestrian truck and trailer on the Crown, for the Sutey Ranch Homestead property.

Please see **Addendum E** – Letters from children, members of the Roaring Forking Hounds Pony Club, a local chapter of the International Pony Club organization, supporting equestrian parking and the importance of trail riding.

Please let me know your earliest convenient day, when you could make a visit. We can hike or ride horses. Your choice.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kindest Regards,

Holly McLain – RfVHC Communication Chairman – 970 948 2151
For the RfVHC Board of Directors, our over 450 members, and the entire Roaring Fork Valley Equestrian Community.

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