



BOARD OF DIRECTORS August 9, 2005

Guy Burgess

To: Tina Nielsen,
Boulder County Parks and Open Space

Jim Knopf

Subject: Heil Valley Ranch to Lyons Trail Alternatives

Mike O'Brian

Properly sited trails support the Parks and Open Space (POS) objective of providing passive recreational opportunities. By channeling and controlling visitor access a well-designed trail system also furthers the County's objectives of preserving environmental, cultural, and agricultural resources. We are pleased to see the POS staff taking a proactive role in the completion of the Heil Valley Ranch trail system.

Adam Massey

Chris Morrison

We have reviewed the various trail alternatives presented by the POS staff at the July 26 Lyons Open House and have the following recommendations:

Gary Sprung

General Recommendations:

Holly Tulin

Eric Vogelsberg

Suzanne Webel

- We strongly support the establishment of a trail connection between the existing Ponderosa Loop and the town of Lyons. Over the years County open space purchases have surrounded Lyons with thousands of acres of POS properties. We have been remiss in providing the town with appropriate accesses to these properties. As a result, existing local accesses are via undesignated and randomly sited social trails. Providing an environmentally sensitive official trail connection is essential to the health of the property and to meet the reasonable expectations of Lyons inhabitants and all County recreationalists.
- We also support the establishment of an additional trail loop within the Heil Valley Ranch trail system. The 1996 North Foothills Management Plan envisions such a trail loop and the staff's alternatives allow for it to be constructed. The majority of the Heil Valley Ranch is designated for habitat conservation. The low trail density and undeveloped trail system in the areas open to the public allow for the design and construction of alternate sustainable trails that could provide enhanced quality visitor experiences. In addition to providing recreational opportunities, the existence of alternative trails will provide County POS with flexibility in designating temporary or seasonal closures should they become desirable to protect resource values.

Primary Connecting Route Recommendation:

We recommend a combination of trail Alternatives C, E, F2 & F3 as the primary connecting route from the existing Heil Valley Ranch trail system to the town of Lyons (here and in the following recommendations the trail Alternatives referenced are those on the map shown during the July 26 Lyons Open House).

The route departs from the overlook at Ponderosa Loop, winds around several drainages toward Red Gulch, then departs from the old quarry sites through Red Gulch, exits near the Lyons High School, and connects with the Lyons High school property and with the regional St. Vrain trail.

We prefer this combination of alternatives because

- a) Alternative C has the fewest environmental impacts offers the highest quality visitor experience of the three southern alternatives (Alternative A, B, and C) and
- b) Alternative F2 and F3 provide the most direct off-road connection to Lyons and minimize impacts to adjacent neighbors.

We are aware that trail Alternative C passes through an area that is presently closed to the public, but believe the closure is no longer required. It was originally put in place to provide a buffer area for a nesting goshawk pair. However, the nesting attempt failed, the birds left, and the nest blew down years ago.

Secondary Connecting Route and Loop Recommendation:

We also recommend implementing trail Alternative B to provide an alternate connecting route to the town of Lyons and to create the second internal loop identified in the 1996 management plan.

This route departs from the juncture of Wapiti and Ponderosa trails toward Red Hill and joins the primary route near the old quarry sites.

Not Recommended:

We do not recommend trail Alternatives A, D, and F1 due to difficulties in property acquisition and construction, poor user experiences, and/or environmental impacts.

In addition to high environmental impacts, serious construction and maintenance issues, and questionable visitor quality, trail Alternative A has property acquisition issues that could prevent implementation of the trail for decades. Trail Alternative D raises more environmental concerns than either Alternatives B or C and presents some significant construction and maintenance issues. Trail Alternative F1 is primarily an on-road route that present a poor experience for all users and negatively impacts adjacent homeowners. Alternative F1 also lacks parking space at the trailhead that could easily lead to serious safety issues and neighborhood discontent.

We appreciate the opportunity to contribute our comments.

Sincerely,

Boulder Area Trails Coalition Board of Directors