

County Parks and Open Space

Heil Valley Ranch to Lyons Trail Alternatives

Pros and Cons

Many minor variations and combinations of these conceptual alternatives are possible and will be considered as the analysis moves forward.

CONCEPTUAL ALTERNATIVE A: *Departing from the Ponderosa Loop moving westward and then north through the Lyons Quarry to connect to Highway 7.*

PROS

Lowest impact to private property owners •••••

Fairly direct connection between Heil Valley Ranch and Hall Ranch

CONS

High environmental impact due to difficult terrain, closure areas and adjacent protected lands, unsustainable trail grades

Requires property acquisition and waiting for the termination of the Lyons Quarry lease (potentially 20 years+)

Poor visitor experience due to cold, icy conditions in the canyon, innumerable switchbacks, difficult terrain

CONCEPTUAL ALTERNATIVE B: *Departing from the juncture of Wapiti and Ponderosa trails toward Red Hill.*

PROS

- Does not fall within any current closure areas
- Provides access to old quarry sites for interpretive opportunities
- Good vistas of Red Hill Gulch

CONS

- Impacts elk habitat and migration east of the Wapiti trail, impacts raptor use of prairie dog colony along Red Gulch
- Challenging terrain may prevent sustainable trail grades
- Open terrain along Red Hill Gulch may be very hot in the summer months

CONCEPTUAL ALTERNATIVE C: *Departing from the overlook at Ponderosa Loop, winding around several drainages toward Red Gulch through a current closure area.*

PROS

- High quality user experience through diverse terrain
- Good western vistas to Long's Peak
- Provides access to old quarry sites for interpretive opportunities

CONS

Violates current year round closure area impacting potential habitat for raptors •

CONCEPTUAL ALTERNATIVE D: *Departing from the overlook at Ponderosa Loop through 2 closure areas to reach Red Gulch.*

PROS

- Provides access to old quarry sites for interpretive opportunities.
- Good western vistas to Long's Peak

CONS

- Violates current year round closure area and seasonal closure area impacting habitat for raptors
- Fair visitor experience due to rocky often exposed terrain
- Requires multiple switchbacks in a narrow corridor

CONCEPTUAL ALTERNATIVE E: *Departing from old quarry sites through Red Gulch, exiting near Red Gulch Road or the Lyons High School. Alternatives B, C, and D will all require the use of this option.*

PROS

- Does not fall within any current closure areas
- Good visitor experience

CONS

Requires property acquisitions and easements ●●●

Moderate impact to adjacent landowners

On road connection

CONCEPTUAL ALTERNATIVE F: Departing from Conceptual Alternative D, Conceptual Alternative F contains the following subcategories:

Alignment F1

PROS

- Most direct and shortest connection to Hall Ranch
- Least expensive option due to smallest amount of private land needed and minimal trail length

CONS

- Takes trail users onto Red Gulch Road for an on-road route to Hall Ranch
- Poor trail experience for pedestrians and equestrians
- Does not provide a northern parking area

Alignment F2

PROS

- Good trail experience, good views
- Off-road route to parking area
- Incorporates a northern trailhead parking area
- Interface with Lyons High School
- Soft-surface trail accommodates all users
- Utilizes an existing culvert crossing of ditch
- Facilitates a connection to the regional St. Vrain Greenway trail

CONS

- Requires significant land acquisition
- Trailhead parking requires approval and purchase from private owners
- Must use on-road route to connect to Greenway trail and/or Town of Lyons

Alignment F3

PROS

- Portions of the alignment are adjacent to St. Vrain Creek
- Incorporates a northern trailhead parking area
- Parking area is accessible from Hwy. 66
- Entirely off-road route to parking area
- Soft-surface trail accommodates all users
- Provides a direct connection to the regional St. Vrain Greenway trail
- Uses public lands for trailhead (Parking area is sited on land that is to be dedicated to the Town of Lyons)

CONS

- Passes through a yet-to-be built subdivision
- Requires approval and purchase from subdivision owner/developer
- Requires a bridge crossing over St. Vrain Creek

Alignment F4

PROS

- Good trail experience, good views
- Portions of the alignment are adjacent to St. Vrain Creek
- Incorporates a northern trailhead parking area
- Parking area is accessible from Hwy. 66
- Entirely off-road route to parking area

- Soft-surface trail accommodates all users
- Provides a direct connection to the regional St. Vrain Greenway trail
- Uses public lands for trailhead (Parking area sited on land that is to be dedicated to the Town)

CONS

- Requires approval and purchase from subdivision owner/developer and other private landowners
- Requires coordination and approval from Ditch Company
- Requires a bridge crossing over St. Vrain Creek

NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE: *Status quo: do nothing from Heil Valley Ranch to Town of Lyons.*

PROS

- Lowest impact to private property owners
- Lowest environmental impact

CONS ••

No functional trail connection to Town of Lyons or Hall Ranch

No northern access to Heil Valley Ranch (existing trailhead to the south on Geer Canyon Dr. remains as the main entry point for the property)