



BOULDER COUNTY

HORSE ASSOCIATION

The Voice for Horses and Horse People in Boulder County

May 10, 2004

BCHA's Response to the OSMP Visitor Plan Community Groups' "Prioritization, Agreements and Disagreements"

Areas of Agreement with the draft VP

- 1) Goals and objectives as outlined are acceptable (however, we'd like to see the first objective be "Maintain and improve visitor trails and other infrastructure").
- 2) Area management is a satisfactory technique.
- 3) Area definitions are acceptable, with the understanding that individual decisions will have to be made on a case-by-case basis.
- 4) Management decisions must be based on good scientific data.
- 5) Some of the proposed new Priority Trails are desirable.
- 6) Some social trails should be designated and some should be eliminated (but we believe some should also be allowed to remain as they are).
- 7) Some additional trail access should be allowed for mountain bikes west of Hwy 36 (such as an off-road trail connection to Walker Ranch).
- 8) Staff's "How major issues are dealt with" table seems to indicate that horseback riding will be treated like hiking. We agree (and this should be made clear in the text of the Plan itself).

Areas of Disagreement with the draft VP

- 1) The "Priority of Preservation" principle must be eliminated. We suggest replacing it with "Visitor experiences must be enhanced while preserving natural, cultural, and agricultural resources. OSMP will strive for balance among competing priorities. Cases of uncertainty, conflict, or impact will be resolved according to the focus of the relevant management area (i.e. recreation will take priority in RA's, environmental matters will take priority in HCA's, agricultural interests will take priority in AA's, and all factors will be weighed on a case-by-case basis in NA's)."
- 2) The definition of "passive recreation" must be changed to state that it "does not significantly impact agricultural, scientific, or cultural values."
- 3) The inventory of social trails must be agreed-upon by the stakeholder groups and a satisfactory, ongoing method of dealing with them instituted that includes the

stakeholder groups (such as reinstating the Trails Committee, the Common Ground Forum, or the Community Group Forum). Social trails should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis; not until all social trails in all management areas have been evaluated should decisions be made to eliminate any.

- 4) The draft VMP does not commit to specific time frames for analysis and decision-making. We want to see firm and timely commitments. Area management plans must be completed before binding management decisions are made. The VMP must contain provisions for timely evaluations of new properties.
- 5) We support more education and less regulation than staff appears to in OSMP decision-making.
- 6) The least restrictive tool should be used in visitor management – regulations and closures should be the last resort, not the first.
- 7) Standards, objectives and goals should be defined more clearly and quantitatively than the draft VMP appears to imply.
- 8) We want more flexibility in area management strategies (e.g. the concept of “HCA” should mean “minimal new trails” but not “not new trails at all”).
- 9) To the maximum extent possible, dog management should conform to the Dog Roundtable agreements. The north part of the Sage Trail loop at BVR should be Voice & Sight.
- 10) We disagree with the proposed permit system.
- 11) We disagree with the proposed fee system.
- 12) We want trailbuilding to keep pace with (and catch up to the pace of) new acreage acquisition. The proposed budget for new trail construction is too small and should not only come into being after all other expenses have been funded.
- 13) New trail construction should be a fixed item in the annual OSMP budget.
- 14) For every bona fide social trail eliminated, we want to see consideration of an equal amount of new trail construction (“no net loss in trails”).
- 15) We disagree with the proposed location of the south end of the Dry Creek Trail and with the entire location of the Hwy 128 alignment.
- 16) We have serious safety concerns about the Boulder Feeder Canal alignment, and believe it should be open in winter only (Nov. 1-March 31) when there is no water in it.

Prioritization

- 1) Eliminate the “Priority of Preservation” principle and replace it with “Quality visitor experiences are desirable and must be enhanced, while preserving natural, agricultural, and cultural resources.”
- 2) Change designations of North Foothills, the east half of Eldorado Mountain, and part of Tallgrass Prairie West to Natural Areas. Change Shanahan to Recreational Area.
- 3) Complete remaining Area Management Plans.

- 4) Construct the following Priority New Trails (more or less in order of priority):
 - A) Accelerate and construct the UPRR Boulder-Erie rail-trail conversion
 - B) Construct the West Beech Trail for pedestrians, equestrians and mountain bicycles
 - C) Designate social trails south and west of Doudy Draw for pedestrians and equestrians (or formally agree to allow the existing condition)
 - D) Complete the South Boulder Creek Trail extension across Hwy 93 and 170 (Eldorado Springs Drive) to Community Ditch
 - E) Relocate Marshall Mesa Trailhead to Hwy 93/Marshall Rd. and extend Marshall Mesa Trail westward to it
 - F) Complete the Dry Creek Trail north to Teller Farm and south to Cherryvale on existing OSMP land.
 - G) Construct the Axelson Trail from Monarch Rd to North Rim.
 - H) Reconstruct the east-west crossing over the Boulder Feeder Canal at its southern terminus to accommodate equestrians (it is too narrow now).
 - I) Complete the Gunbarrel (East Boulder)-Cottontail (Minnetrista) link
 - J) Complete the Marshall to Superior Trail with connections to points east and south as shown on the BCHA Priority Trails map.
 - K) Complete the Cottontail (Minnetrista) to Niwot Trail connection and the Gunbarrel to IBM (Coot Lake) trail connection.
 - L) Convert the proposed Pearl Parkway alignment to a Greenways trail (not an OSMP one)
 - M) Evaluate the Boulder Feeder Canal for winter trail use only.

CONCLUSION

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on these matters.

Respectfully Submitted,

Suzanne Webel

External Vice President, Trails and Public Lands Chair