

Broomfield City Council
Open Space & Trails Committee
Municipal Building
1 DesCombes Dr.
Broomfield, CO 80020

May 16, 2003

Dear Members of the Broomfield City Council and OST Committee:

It is our understanding that you will be considering a Trails and Open Space Master Plan for Broomfield at several upcoming meetings, including May 22 and June 26. As it turns out, I have trail-related conflicts on both those evenings, so I wanted to take this opportunity now to provide some comment.

On behalf of the Front Range equestrian community, the Boulder County Horse Association (BCHA) respectfully requests you to continue to allow horses on Broomfield Open Space and Trails. We have many members who live in counties adjacent to Boulder, including Broomfield, Jefferson, Weld and Larimer, and we try to represent their interests in regional public land management matters as well.

As you know, horses were instrumental in the development of the West, and occupied a historic place on much of the Broomfield property under consideration. To this day, public surveys in Boulder County show a disproportionately high positive response from non-equestrians about the appropriateness of horses on open space in general and about encountering horses on trails in particular. People just like seeing horses "out there."

However, due to increasing urbanization of the Front Range, the horse population has declined drastically in the past two decades -- from 16,800 in Boulder County in 1982 to fewer than 8,800 in 1999. One could even say that horses are rapidly becoming the next "endangered species" in Colorado!

In order to retain horses as a way of life here for those who seek it, ensuring equestrian access to public lands has taken on a new urgency. We'll never insist on access to every trail (such as those concrete transportation corridors through subdivisions and along highways), but we do request continued access to soft-surface trails, as well as dispersed recreation opportunities on open lands.

In particular we have appreciated our historic access to the Lac Amora Open Space for its spectacular views and connections to Boulder County's Rock Creek Farm Open Space, and we hope that this access for equestrians will continue (also we hope that Broomfield will take an active role in converting the Burlington-Northern Railroad there to a rail-trail!). We also hope, as the City & County of Broomfield extend its acquired lands and trail system northeastward, that horses will continue to be allowed as part of the mix of trail users there, including in those more rural subdivisions. There may be other areas in your system where horses are appropriate also.

Most urgently, we have especially been looking forward to your developing trails on the Great Western Reservoir property which would connect south to Westminster's Colorado Hills property and west to Rocky Flats. But we note with dismay an article in the Boulder Daily Camera (5/7/03) about the proposed Rocky Flats trail plan, that the US Fish & Wildlife Service is now suggesting banning horses at Rocky Flats because Broomfield is considering not allowing horses at Great Western Reservoir! Please, Broomfield, say it isn't so! We will be working with Rocky Flats on this issue, because we view them as separate trail systems that would be made even better with regional linkages -- but we need your help.

As you consider the Broomfield Open Space Master Plan, we urge you to include various stakeholder groups in your discussions so that you may get the most balanced representation possible. We would be happy to serve as an equestrian resource in this regard, as would several other local horse organizations. Please don't hesitate to call on us.

And please, help us keep horses in Broomfield!

Thank you for considering our needs.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Webel
External Vice President
Trails and Open Space Chair
Boulder County Horse Association