

EagleVail Trail Extension Project

Fact Sheet

Project Initiation

The EagleVail Trail Extension was proposed by the EagleVail Metropolitan District and the Vail Valley Mountain Trails Alliance. A trail extension in this vicinity has been informally discussed since the original EagleVail Trail was constructed in 2009-2010. In recent years, private property owners adjacent to the western end of the proposed trail, along with the Town of Avon, expressed interest in allowing public access through their properties via easements which provides egress/ingress on the West terminus of the trail.

Proposed Alignment

The proposed alignment is located on the north-facing hillside above the community of EagleVail and crosses land owned/managed by six different landowners: the EagleVail Metro District, United States Forest Service, Town of Avon, Vail Resorts, Frontgate, and Aidan Group.

Currently, several social trails/game trails exist in the vicinity of the proposed trail. Many of these existing trails cross 25 different private properties. The proposed trail is meant to provide a legal access for trail users higher on the slope than the existing trails and off of homeowners' private property. The proposed trail would be located over 300' above homes on Deer Boulevard which is over 100' further away than the existing social trail(s). Tree cover and topography prevent direct views from the proposed trail into homes on Deer Boulevard in nearly all locations, which will eliminate many of the complaints that exist about the current social trail(s).

Access to the trail would be provided via the EagleVail Trail near its current western terminus, as well as at the Beaver Creek roundabout and Beaver Creek's Elk Parking Lot. We do not plan on creating any additional access points. However, if private property owners decide to create access points on their property such as the existing trails stemming from River Oaks, that is their decision and responsibility to manage.

Wildlife Impacts

The local Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) District Wildlife Manager was involved in initial discussions about this project. In an official comment letter to the Forest Service, Colorado Parks & Wildlife stated that they have no direct concern with the proposed action (the trail extension). The letter further states that "current adjacent land use, zones of influence, historic illegal trail construction and use has diminished habitat value, so CPW does not anticipate any significant additional wildlife impacts" associated with this project. The letter does state that CPW is concerned about significant cumulative adverse impacts from recreation in the area.

In subsequent discussions, CPW has reiterated to the USFS and other parties that they are not specifically concerned about this project but want to continue to work with all parties to address illegal trail construction and be involved in discussions about future recreation/trail projects from the outset.

Safety

According to public comments, trespassing onto private property currently occurs from the existing social routes described above, including people walking through backyards to get back to the neighborhood. Based on field visits, much of the backyard trespassing occurs due to a lack of trail management and signage directing people to the correct trail. General trespassing on private property would be mitigated by locating the proposed trail off private land, as well as farther away from private land. Again, the proposed trail extension for the official trail would be over 100' farther away from the existing social trails. We anticipate the trespass issues onto private property would be dramatically mitigated by the proposed trail extension, which would keep users on a more defined trail. Additionally, signage could be installed on EagleVail Metro District property stating to "stay on the trail". Closure of social trails connecting from EagleVail Metro District and Forest Service land to private property will also help this issue.

Need

The need for this project is to address social routes that cross private property and result in conflicts with local residents by providing a legal, maintainable route that is well-designed and will reduce trespass and soil erosion.

Currently, users of the EagleVail Trail heading west travel along neighborhood streets and onto the Eagle Valley Trail (paved rec path) to access additional singletrack trails in the Avon/Beaver Creek area. The proposed trail would provide a different experience and would connect to the Elk Lot at Beaver Creek via the roundabout at the base of Beaver Creek.

The existing social trail in the area is well-traveled and significantly established. The EagleVail community and surrounding communities use and enjoy this social trail for hiking, trail running, and mountain biking. This social trail was created because residents in western EagleVail and neighboring residents do not have access to a trail from their neighborhood such as the eastern EagleVail neighborhood does. The goal of the project is to meet the demand of the community by creating a legal and sustainable trail that stays off private property and eliminates future social trail creation.

Not every social trail should become a legal trail, nor is making a social trail a legal trail the correct way to approach new system trails. In fact, other social trails in the area have been decommissioned recently. However, this social trail is close to the existing neighborhood and satisfies a need for the community that benefits a wide majority of trail users. The existing social trail currently crosses through 25 private homeowner properties. Trail users on this existing social trail are currently trespassing. This has the potential to open up liability and safety issues for both the users and homeowners.

Additionally, the existing social trail has spiderwebbed significantly, creating numerous sections where there are 2-3 trails within 100 feet of each other. This is because the existing social trail is not built to sustainable trail standards utilizing proper tread width, drainage, terrain undulations, benching, and outslope.

Formalizing the trail will address all of these issues. The trail will be built sustainably, off of private property, significantly further from private property, and the spider webbing social trails will be

decommissioned. Trail users will now have a fun, safe, and enjoyable experience on a sustainable trail that is not in conflict with nearby private property owners.

Without constructing this formal trail across EagleVail Metro District, U.S. Forest Service, Town of Avon, Vail Resorts, Frontgate, and Aidan Group properties, the status quo of local private property owners experiencing trespass issues is sure to continue and perhaps get worse.

Trail Specifications and Sustainability

The 1.64 mile trail will be non-motorized and open to foot travel (hiking, trail running, etc.) and mountain biking. It will not be open to any class of e-bikes. It will have a tread width of 24"-30", a mellow grade of 3%-4%, and be rated as a green/blue – beginner/intermediate trail. Traveling on the trail from East to West, it has a gain of +160' and loss of -395'.

Soil erosion is apparent on the existing social routes, but the new trail is designed in such a way to reduce erosion potential by following modern trail design principles. Construction methods would follow best practices for retaining soil and material on-site.

Fire Risk

Some comments asked about increased fire risk that may come if visitation increases on the trail. There are many trails in Eagle County that see far greater visitation than the EagleVail Trail. Anecdotal local Forest Service information shows that wildfire risk is highest in areas with camping and improper campfire use, rather than on trails with day users who are hiking and biking.