

Proposed Project Overview:

“...a vast majority (75 percent) of those surveyed (Coloradans) said that outdoor activities are important to the quality of life in Colorado.

Trails are the principle means used by people to get into nature and, at the same time, they are an important means for managing people’s impacts on the landscapes they visit.”

(Excerpt from p.6 On Nature’s Trail, a Guide to the Future of Colorado’s Statewide Trails System, Colorado State Parks 2000.)

“Single-track trails exemplify the highest quality riding experience. A well-designed and maintained single track trail could also benefit other trail users, particularly where mountain bicycling use levels are particularly light.”

“Due to the rapidly increasing popularity of Mountain Bicycling, new trails are needed to prevent user conflict and unacceptable resource damage.”
Excerpt from the BLM’s National Mountain Bike Strategic Action Plan (Nov. 2002 p12),

Presently there is a lack of quality back country single track trail suitable for mountain biking, trail running, hiking, walking, and horse back riding in Ouray County. Development of a multi-use trail system will enhance the lives of not only the residents of Colorado’s Western Slope, but the numerous annual visitors from outside the region. This enhancement will come not only in the form of higher quality recreational opportunities, but will also increase the areas already growing tourism industry.

We have identified two adjoining parcels of land under management by both the Ridgway State Park and the BLM’s Uncompahgre Field Office. Both these parcels comprise approximately 3 square miles (2,047 acres of BLM land alone) of varied terrain that offers stunning views of the San Juan Mountain Range and trail opportunities at all levels of challenge and difficulty suitable for the above multi-user uses.

The land parcels we are looking at presently contains a system of existing jeep roads and game trails that when integrated with a network of single track will offer a superior backcountry recreational experience unmatched in the area. This new system of trails will easily join to the existing paved Uncompahgre River Trail that connects the Town of Ridgway to Ridgway State Park as well as to the existing developed trail network within Ridgway State Park.

Because of its location this trail system will naturally become part of the larger regional trails system. This system includes the proposed Galloping Goose trail system that will connect Telluride to Montrose via Ridgway, the San Juan Hut Trail system that bikers can ride from Telluride to Moab, Utah, and Montrose area trails such as the Tabaguach trail connecting Montrose to Grand Junction.

Our Plan:

Our present proposal to both the BLM and Ridgway State Park is for trail development in three stages:

Stage one includes working with what we already have. We will comprehensively map and mark with signage the existing trail network in cooperation with and under BLM direction. Develop a trail rating system for these trails, and produce a trail map firmly establishing the presence of the intended multi-uses in the area.

Stage two will be development of a comprehensive plan laying out the construction of new single track trails that will maximize interest and appeal to users, and create a linkage among existing trail segments. These trails will be carefully planned with the assistance of a consultant to ensure longevity, low resource impact following tread lightly ethics, and paying attention to local wildlife needs or constraints. The best location for an interpretive trail will be identified and laid out. Every effort will be made to address the potential experiences of all appropriate trail uses. An Environmental Assessment (EA) will be preformed to ensure the protection of the resource according to BLM criteria and direction.

Stage three will include the actual building of new trails, and associated visitor services such as information kiosks, additional signing such as on the interpretive trail, parking areas, and toilet facilities as necessary. Construction will be performed by COPMOBA volunteers, youth groups, church and other community groups associated with and organized through COPMOBA. We are also willing to take on maintenance and assist BLM with providing visitor information such as a map and brochure.

Where we are at:

It is our understanding that the two land management entities involved, the Colorado State Parks and the BLM, have a shared desire for projects of this nature. Negotiations have begun with both parties and they have agreed to work together with us and each other as much as possible to facilitate this projects success.

Ridgway State Park is presently seeking to develop new trails for its users, particularly those seeking back country experiences. According to the Colorado State Parks web site, "...the Colorado State Parks Trails Program actively encourages the development of a variety of trails. The Trails Program, a priority of Colorado State Parks, provides outdoor recreation for people of all ages, interests and abilities. The goal of the program is to develop a statewide network of trails to link communities, preserve open space and provide access to public lands." (CO State Parks web site <http://parks.state.co.us/default.asp?action=park&parkID=98>). Our project will meet this need and more for Ridgway State Park. On the Park's parcel we would like to include an interpretive nature trail.

The BLM is presently has a National Mountain Biking Strategic Action Plan. This plan "recognizes the changing demographics, increasing populations... and increasing

mountain bike use” on public lands. This Action Plan further “recognizes mountain (bicycling) as an appropriate use of public lands under its jurisdiction” and sets “a goal of trails and miles to be identified and marketed.” “The BLM will identify and implement diverse mountain bicycle opportunities into (its) multiple use system of trails and roads.” Our project again meets these needs as well as National Interior Department strategic goals for providing quality recreation experience and access, working with partnerships and volunteers, and enhancing recreation.

The Next Step:

Before this project can precede any further we need the full support of the BLM. Would you please help guide us through the proper steps to make this project a reality for our community?