



September 26, 2013

TO: Hunter Creek / Smuggler Mountain Cooperative Planning Group

RE: RFMBA's master plan intentions & trail system priorities for the HC/Smuggler area.

Portal Trail. High priority for 2014. New trail (pending final approval). This is out of the scope of the Coop Group, but is a critical connection trail between WRNF lands and Aspen. Construct to be wide enough for passing; allow for uphill & downhill shared use traffic. [Separate future phase work (see below) should improve the lower Hunter Creek trail for cyclists connecting via Rio Grande trail, same for uphill traffic using Hunter Creek trail above Verena Mallory trail.]

1. New signage & improved wayfinding. High priority for 2014. Review signage locations & designs. Use design phase to address separation of use discussion.
2. General trail improvement work. High priority for 2014 & beyond. In order to maintain existing trails to sustainable standards, perform corridor clearing (lopping), and drainage improvements on most existing trails, including those on Smuggler Mountain, Hunter Creek Overlook, Hobbit Trail, Secret-Jedi Trail, Shadyside Trail, and others as deemed necessary. Most of these trails have not seen annual maintenance, but are still in good condition. Continue maintenance program on an annual basis.
3. Hummingbird Traverse (+ Hunter Ditch Trail). High priority for 2014. New trail as approved in the draft EA. Discuss type of trail given connection between HC valley floor singletrack and top of Lower Plunge trail. Character of trail could be extended upwards as a re-route of the Upper Plunge trail.

Lower Plunge Trail. Either re-route steepest sections causing most drainage problems, or re-route the alignment entirely from top to bottom to create part of new high quality loop using the Hummingbird Traverse and the Hunter Creek Trail. Decide on character of this loop: beginner or intermediate.

4. Iowa Shaft trail, steep un-sustainable descent to the HC valley floor. High priority for 2014. Consider improving un-sustainable portions, but otherwise leave this trail segment as an advanced technical challenge. Create a new alternate easier trail segment (connecting the end of the Iowa Shaft's old road bench to the Hunter Valley South trail) that can serve two way traffic up & down. The current advanced descent is the crux of the easiest loop most new riders are introduced to in the area, this is not an ideal situation. This new trail segment will allow area trails to be more easily ridden in both directions, creating more riding options with just one short trail segment.
5. Hunter Creek Trail, improve segments for use by cyclists. With the addition of the Portal Trail, easier access to the WRNF will be possible from downtown Aspen. Ideally, cyclists will find their way to the Portal trail from the Rio Grande trail. A portion of the HC trail below Lani White trail should be improved (make less rocky) so that more cyclists can use this segment of trail. For cyclists riding up the Portal Trail, when they meet back up with the HC trail near Verena Mallory trail, there is a steep rocky section that should also be improved for cyclists.
6. Hunter Creek Trail, portions beyond second bridge. With the construction of the Hummingbird Traverse, this section of trail will see more use. Improve the steep rocky sections to make the trail more consistent throughout its length. Address portion of trail going through seasonal wet zone.
7. Hunter Creek Trail, portion between first & second bridge. Address portion of trail going through seasonal wet zone.



8. Hunter Creek Overlook trail. Address seasonal wet zone at east end with a minor trail reroute.
9. Sunnyside trail. Improve seasonal wet areas near intersection with the Secret-Jedi Trail.
10. 4 Corners to Van Horn Park trail. Either re-route steepest sections causing most drainage problems (especially adjacent to VHP), or re-route the alignment entirely to create a new high quality trail that can be used for climbing or descending, as part of a loop with the Hobbit Trail.
11. Create official route to top of Van Horn Park, using existing trail. Re-route existing trail at the steepest portion and improve signage to ensure motor vehicles stay off this high point.
12. Existing cutoff trail between Iowa Shaft trail & Hunter Valley South trail. Do not close this trail. Re-route steeper unsustainable portions. Consider separation of users; hikers on the Hunter Creek Cutoff (old road), bikers on this cutoff trail. If pursuing this separation, a short narrow section of the Iowa Shaft trail should be widened for safety. Also, if separation of use is pursued, continue the separation from Hunter Valley South to Hunter Creek Trail via a new singletrack trail segment. Goal is provide easy route finding for hikers and bikers, while reducing user conflicts.
13. Upper Plunge Trail. Either re-route steepest sections causing most drainage problems, or re-route the alignment entirely from top to bottom to create part of a new high quality trail that can be used for climbing or descending. A significant re-alignment would allow for connecting to the 4 Corners area via the Secret Trail from the new Hummingbird Traverse and the Hunter Creek Trail, allowing for a significant singletrack loop rideable in both directions.
14. Hunter Valley North trail. This is an old two track road. Address seasonal wet zones. Consider reclaiming one of the tracks to create a singletrack trail.
15. Create new singletrack trail parallel to FS Road 130 (connecting Van Horn Park to Hunter Creek Overlook trail). This would allow for a longer singletrack experience when connecting Hunter Creek Overlook trail to Hobbit Trail as a loop. FS Road 130 needs drainage improvements to limit erosion.
16. New Trail on South Side of Smuggler Mountain (Balcony Trail). Conceptually approved in the draft EA. Annual Implementation Plan working group to determine a trail alignment that can be brought into the WRNF trail inventory. Many portions of existing alignment can be considered sustainable. Identify any required re-routes that could become projects by 2015. The trail is currently in use, but is not properly regulated, leading to fears of future un-authorized trail expansion. Establishing a system trail & working with locals to re-route un-sustainable segments will alleviate the situation.
17. Hunter Valley South trail, extension to the east. A short dead end trail segment at this location was closed via the WRNF TMP. Reclaim and revegetate this segment, and create a new trail that traverses above the valley floor until a point where the trail would turn and cross the Hunter Creek to provide a loop opportunity with the Hunter Creek Trail. The creek crossing could be a bridge, or a natural step stone crossing meant to be viable only during lower water conditions.
18. Create new "Outer Van Horn Loop" singletrack trail connecting FS Road 130.1 to FS Road 131. This would be a backcountry style experience accessed by existing forest roads. The trail would flow along contour lines, providing a relatively flat singletrack experience devoid of significant climbs for 2+ miles. This trail would make good use of existing under-utilized dead end roads and offer spectacular views in an area that was once heavily logged.
19. FS Road 130.3. Possible Road Closure. This very steep road is unsustainable and could be closed in lieu of better opportunities in a no net loss strategy. The road encourages vehicle incursion into roadless areas in Bald Knob vicinity during hunting season. End of document.



See attached Memo for proposed project descriptions. #1 calls for improved signage and wayfinding. #2 calls for general improvements and maintenance to all existing trails throughout the area.



**Smuggler Mountain / Hunter Creek
RFMBA Master Plan Intentions & Trail System Priorities, 9-26-2013**