



May 19, 2006

To: Open Space and Mountain Parks
Re: Eldorado Mountain/Doudy Draw Trail Study Area Alternatives

Today Open Space and Mountain Parks properties offer limited recreational access to the mountain biking community. Of all the scheduled Trail Study Areas (TSA), the Eldorado Mountain/Doudy Draw TSA offers the best opportunity to improve this situation. The size, topography, and multiple access points of the TSA make it a very desirable mountain bike destination.

What are mountain bikers looking for in the trail system?

- Connections – This TSA can access other public land from every direction, but mountain bikers are most excited about:
 - West to Eldorado State Park and ultimately to Walker Ranch
 - South to Jefferson County
 - East to the Marshall Mesa/Southern Grasslands trails
- Multiple use – We are happy to share the trails. With finite real estate and large areas to preserve, multiple use trails provide the maximum visitor opportunities for the least cost in development, maintenance, and effects upon the land.
- Singletrack – Roads are not trails. We look for tight, contoured trails that are interesting and challenging. When properly designed, such trails provide quality biking experiences while avoiding user conflicts by controlling speed and visibility.
- A stacked loop system – Mountain bikers are more interested in the journey than the destination. A typical mountain bike ride easily exceeds ten miles. Distances of twenty to thirty miles are not unusual. A system of interconnected loops allows such rides within a small area. The loops allow us to vary our routes during a ride and every time we visit.
- Sustainable trails – Making trails sustainable does not mean paving the trail. You can make a challenging, technical trail that doesn't fall apart. We've built such trails and will be glad to help OSMP with future construction and reroutes.

To meet these objectives, BMA worked with other recreation groups of the Boulder Outdoor Coalition to develop a proposal for a system of trails within the Eldorado Mountain/ Doudy Draw TSA. This proposal addresses the needs of all the user groups. The attached map and detailed trail recommendations outline our vision for this system.

We are encouraged that the OSMP Draft Alternatives Report for the TSA includes these trails, but disappointed that the document seems to continue the historic treatment of bicycle visitors as second class citizens. Our detailed responses to the Draft Alternatives Report are attached.

We have the following system wide comments:

- Unless there is an overriding physical reason to exclude a user group, all trails in this TSA should be multiple use. In particular, the present default assumption that mountain bikes are banned unless explicitly permitted reflects an inappropriate staff bias. For planning purposes all trails should be considered for multiple use. Exceptions to this rule should be clearly justified.
- Roads are not trails. Social trails are excellent indicators of visitor access desires and traffic patterns, but are often not environmentally sensitive, physically sustainable, or quality trail experiences. Alignment of suggested trail corridor with an existing road or social trail is not necessarily an endorsement of that specific alignment. The trails we are recommending should all follow the OSMP Trails Sustainability Guideline.

The Visitor Master Plan clearly recognizes the need for additional mountain biking access:

- In the Conditional Analysis for the Visitor Master Plan and in the Visitor Master Plan itself OSMP has noted that "the extent and variety of cycling ...experience is limited" and there is room for improvement in "access for mountain bikes". Of the 134 miles of OSMP trails, only 35 (25%) are open to bikes.
- The Visitor Master Plan Recreational Opportunities Initiative Management Strategies include "Retrofitting Trails for Bikes" and "New Bike Trails". The former strategy envisions providing bike access to presently closed trails. The later strategy includes "connections to Walker Ranch" and "more mountain biking opportunities west of Hwy. 93".

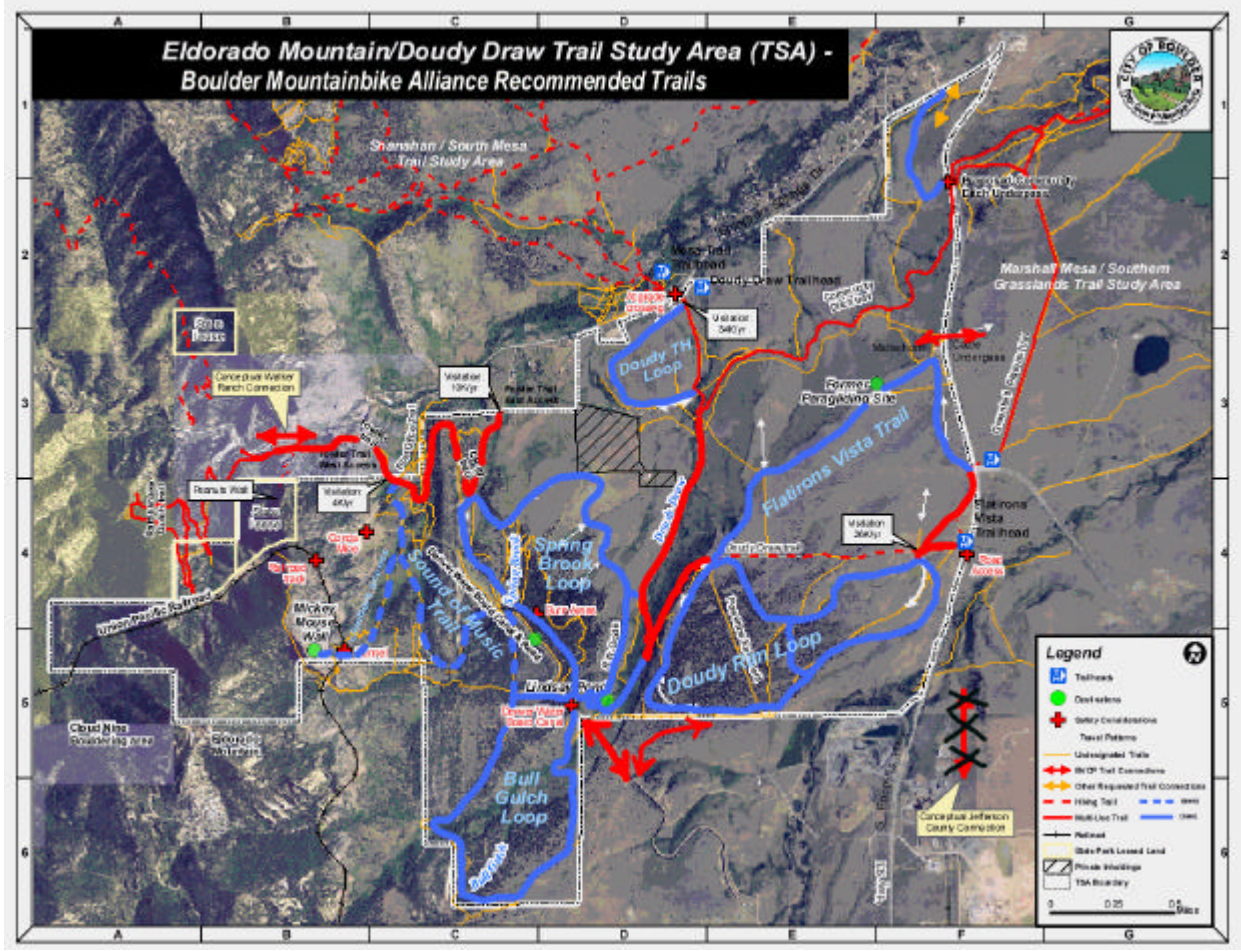
We trust that OSMP will take this outstanding opportunity to create a trail plan that addresses the clearly recognized need for additional mountain biking access. We look forward to working with the department to make such a plan a reality.

Sincerely,

Board of Directors

Boulder Mountainbike Alliance

Boulder Mountainbike Alliance Recommended Trail Map



BMA Recommendation & Comments on the OSMP Draft Alternative Report

Trail Alternatives (references are to the Draft Alternatives Report options):

We support trail **Options 6a, 6c, 7a, 10b (option 2), 19, 20, 21**. Together these options provide a stacked trail system on the Flatirons Vista mesa, trail loops in the Spring Brook and Buffalo Gulch areas, and connections west to the State Park and south to Jefferson County. Details of our vision for these trails are included below.

We are strongly opposed to **Option 7b** (substituting off-trail travel for trail construction) and to substituting "**Off-Trail Permit Access In Place of Designated Trails**". Since bike access is allowed only on designated trails, these alternatives are de facto bike closures.

Statistics:

There are about 35 miles of trails in this TSA, including 7.2 miles of designated and 27 miles of social trails. Only 2.7 miles are presently open to bikes. The newly designated trail mileage that BMA recommends is approximately 13 miles. The majority of the newly designated and presently designated trails should be opened to all users, including mountain bikes.

Trail Specific Comments (references are to the Draft Alternatives Report Map 1 Trail Locations):

- Doudy Draw Trail
 - The stacked loops southwest of Flatirons Vista trailhead do not use the existing Doudy Draw Trail road alignment. New trail alignments to create flow with climbs and descents are developed to the south of the road. A new trail alignment is designated to the north of the road.
 - The section of Doudy Draw Trail that descends from Flatiron Vista to Doudy Draw is extended southwest. The current switchback is too steep. It has grades in excess of 15% and requires too much maintenance. Extending the trail further south allows the switchback to be lower and grade to be eased..
 - Doudy Draw Trail is extended south toward Lindsey Pond to a trail junction that connects the Spring Brook loop and the Bull Gulch Loop.
 - The stream crossings on Lower Doudy Draw need to be armored.
- Doudy Rim Loop (**Draft Alternatives Map 1 Location 6**)
 - The drainages in this area offer the potential to create a high quality visitor experience. The map alignments are not exact. The trail sustainability guidelines and local expert advice should be applied to create a fun, challenging, and sustainable trail.
 - There is an interior connector trail that links the upper part of this loop with the lower, effectively creating a figure-eight pattern. This significantly increases the variability of the user experience for a small addition in trail mileage.
 - The Xcel power line access road is undesirable as a trail experience.
 - There is an opportunity to create multiple access points to this loop from the Flatirons Vista Trailhead. This will disperse visitors quicker and make for a better user experience.

- The Doudy Rim Loop has a trail junction with the Doudy Draw Trail where the Doudy Draw trail transitions from the existing road to the old railroad grade and the Flatirons Vista trail ends.
- Flatirons Vista Trail (**Draft Alternatives Map 1 Location 7**)
 - This trail starts at the Flatirons Vista Trailhead and heads north toward the old Matterhorn site.
 - The trail then heads west along the edge of the mesa and flows into the Doudy Draw/Doudy Rim trail junction.
 - There is a promontory spur off this trail to the northwest that affords wonderful views. It is a positive control point and an excellent place for a bench or picnic table.
 - A spur at the northeastern edge of the trail utilizes the existing cattle underpass near the old Matterhorn site to connect to the Greenbelt Plateau trails and the City Limits Trailhead east of the Highway.
- Highway 93 cattle underpass (**OSMP Map 1 Conceptual Connection**)
 - This connection was relatively ignored during the Marshall Mesa-Southern Grasslands TSA. The interface between the Marshall Mesa-Southern Grasslands TSA and the Eldorado Mountain-Doudy Draw TSA was not clear. This trail corridor is important as a connection between the two TSA areas. One of the foundation principles of the VMP is adaptive management. This connection should be reevaluate in this TSA while looking at the big picture.
 - The definition of this alignment within the Marshall Mesa-Southern Grasslands TSA area must be clarified to avoid closure of the connection during the seasonal on-trail requirement of the Marshall Mesa-Southern Grasslands TSA.
 - If this access cannot be realized, then the spur trail progressing north to the Community Ditch and a bridge crossing the ditch must be constructed to connect to the Community Ditch Trail.
- Community Ditch Subarea
 - For obvious safety reasons it is essential that the Community Ditch Highway 93 trail underpass be constructed.
 - A spur, the Community Ditch Connector (**Draft Alternatives Map 1 Location 4**), goes generally north from the underpass and to the gate near the junction of Colorado 93 and 170. This provides access to the South Boulder Creek Trailhead and the City Limits Trailhead.
 - At the west end of the existing Community Ditch trail, the trail should be continued in a south and west loop around the hill and then back to the Doudy Draw trailhead (**Draft Alternatives Map 1 Location 2**). This provides a short circuit for users that who desire just a short hike or who have only a short time to visit.
- Spring Brook Loop (**Draft Alternatives Map 1 Locations 10a & 10b**)
 - This loop meets the existing Doudy Draw Trail at two points: at the south end near Lindsey Pond and below the first stream crossing.

- The trail roughly parallels the Denver Water Board road, but it is important to note that the road is not an appropriate trail. It is wide, flat, often hot, and potentially dangerous. Even if the Denver Water Board grants visitor use of the road, a parallel off-road trail should be designated (**Draft Alternatives Map 1 Location 10b**)
- The northeastern portion of this loop (**Draft Alternatives Map 1 Location 10a**) could utilize portions of the old railroad bed.
- The northwestern point of this trail connects with County Road 67 and to the State Park's Fowler trail (**Draft Alternatives Map 1 Location 14**). This linkage is important for mountain bikers to provide an off road connection into the State Park, on to the Rattlesnake Trail, and to points west (**Draft Alternatives Map 1 Location 12**).
- Bull Gulch Loop (**Draft Alternatives Map 1 Location 18**)
 - This loop follows existing travel patterns and old roads. It minimizes impacts by staying on the outskirts of the property, while providing users with an opportunity to view a remote and beautiful OSMP area.
 - In addition to it's inherent value as a high quality visitor experience, this loop is important as a future potential link with public lands in Jefferson County (**Draft Alternatives Map 1 Location 8**). We understand that land acquisition and cooperation with the Denver Water Board may be necessary to make this happen.
- Sound of Music Trail (**Draft Alternatives Map 1 Location 17**)
 - This is a highly desirable trail with outstanding views that visitors will love.
 - The present grades of the upper sections of the existing social trail are excessive. The Trail Suitability Guidelines should be applied to create an appropriate, sustainable alignment. Such an alignment should accommodate both equestrians and mountain bikes.
- Jefferson County Trail Connection (**Draft Alternatives Map 1 Location 8**)
 - The trail plan must include provision for a future connector to Jefferson County Open Space west of Highway 93. This is a critical requirement for mountain bikers. The multi-agency Front Range Trail is a perfect fit for this area.

Activity Management Alternatives Comments (references are to the Draft Alternatives Report Activity Management Alternatives, pp. 14-15 & p. 20):

- We support Alternatives B.1 and B.3 which allow mountain biking on the trails in the Community Ditch and Flatirons Vista Subareas (here we interpret Alternative B.3 to allow mountain bikes on both the Location 6 and Location 7 trails).
- We object to the phrasing and intent of Alternative B.2 ("Allow on-trail mountain biking on the trail segments on the outside of the "figure 8" trail loops, with a "refuge" from bikes in the middle of the trail loops."). To the staff members who feel that the first class open space visitors require "refuge" from bikes we note that, with 100 miles of trails closed to bikes and no off-trail bike access allowed, OSMP already provides an excess of such refuges.
- An additional alternative, B.7, should be added which allows mountain bikes on both Location 10a and Location 10b trails. This is necessary to create the Spring Brook loop trail.
- We support Alternative B.6 which allows mountain bikes on the Fowler Trail. This is required to complete the connection to the State Park and points west.
- An additional alternative, I.3, should be added that allows mountain bikes on both Location 17 and Location 18 trails. Mountain bikers value remote open space experiences as much as any other visitor group. There is no justification to prohibit bicycle access in the HCA. Mountain bikes have been shown to have no more effects upon trail infrastructure or wildlife than any other visitor groups. The staff's default assumption that bikers are inappropriate visitors to the HCA demonstrates an unfortunate continuing bias toward this visitor group.