



From: Boulder Mountainbike Alliance
Date: 4-08-09
RE: Betasso Management Plan
To: Boulder County Parks & Open Space
c/o Ernst Streng, Natural Resource Planner

The Boulder Mountainbike Alliance appreciates the opportunity to comment on the draft Betasso Management Plan. While we applaud the effort the staff has put forth on the plan and support many of its recommendations, we do have several concerns to express and recommend the following modifications to the draft:

- Reconsider the bike closures; at the least leave the new loop open to bikes.
- Revisit the bike ban in 2 years to evaluate its necessity and fairness.
- Use trail option 2A rather than 2B.
- Provide for future consideration of an east west corridor in the HCA designation.

Our first and foremost concern is with the continuation of the Wednesday and Saturday bike closure at Betasso and the extension of that closure to the new trails. BMA believes the existing bike restriction should be reconsidered. We are opposed to the extension of the bike limits to the new trails.

BMA has always taken a position of "shared use" as the best way to protect the resource. By putting everyone on the same trails, we can minimize the ecological footprint of trail systems on the land. Sharing trails builds a community of users.

Solutions to user-conflict must be fair and equitable. IMBA has demonstrated a program of conflict-solutions that varies from least to most intrusive. The two-day exclusion is at the most intrusive end of the scale. Many other actions are available to reach the managers' goal of peace on the trail. We share that goal. We want a broader, better array of management tools to get there. We would like to discuss these alternatives in more detail.

In the past the limited Betasso trail system and the lack of alternate local opportunities for such activities as biking and nature studies may have justified the separating users, although this approach inequitably targeted only one user group.

The new trails at Betasso, new Boulder City bike access and trails, and the moving of the many naturalist hikes to other areas all indicate that the original arguments for the existing bike bans deserve reconsideration and make a case for removing the Betasso limits. In addition, the new trails at Betasso are far enough from the trailhead so that primary users will be bikers and runners. For these reasons, we recommend keeping the new loop and the Four Mile Canyon access opened to multiple use even if the staff elects to keep the restrictions in place for the Canyon Loop Trail and the connector between the loops.

If the exclusions are continued or extended in the short term, we expect the County to honor the commitment to reconsider the restrictions with a real debate once the new system has been in place for two years. In the mean time, bikers should, in the interests of fairness, be offered

additional opportunities elsewhere. We suggest opening the Nighthawk Trail at Hall Ranch to bikes on the days that bikes are banned from Betasso.

Our second concern is with one component of the proposed new trails. We support trail component 2A, rather than 2B as the plan proposes.

We believe the 2B option opens itself to more user conflict and trail erosion than does 2A. We are opposed to using tightly stacked switchbacks unless absolutely needed. The stacked switchbacks will encourage short cutting and do not provide a high quality user experience. The 2A option requires only one switchback and that is at a location with sufficient sideslope to allow a well-designed sustainable switchback.

We recognize trail loop 2A would extend further into the proposed HCA area than 2B, but believe a better designed alignment will ultimately have less impact on the environment than the draft's proposal. At the very least the county's trail construction experts should be given liberty to evaluate the alternatives.

Finally, the draft makes no provision for an east west corridor. The existing social trail network demonstrates an unmet recreation need for such a connection. The future County/BLM land exchanges will emphasize it. If the Benjamin property cannot provide the connection, what is BCPOS going to do to address this need?

We recommend the Betasso plan at least make allowances in the definition of the HCA (closed zone) for future consideration of a peripheral regional trail alignment to the west.

Please feel free to contact us to discuss these issues.