

Proposed Trail System Questions and Answers

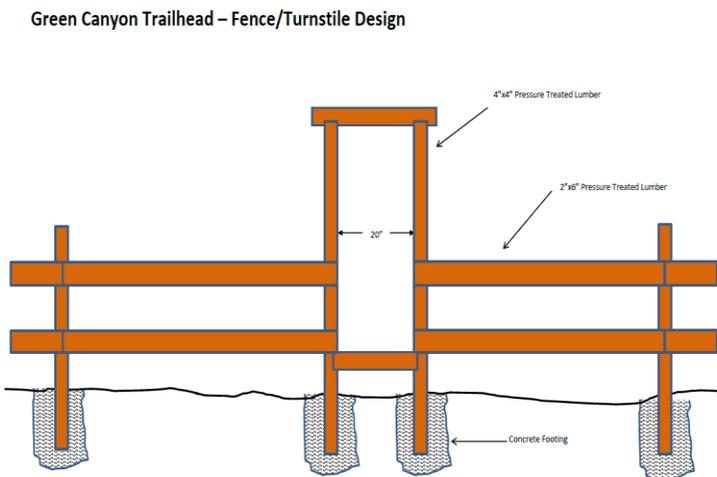
Based on public input to the proposed Star Valley Ranch Trail Plan, a few modifications have been made. The updated plan is now available on the town web page. In addition, the Natural Resource Board would like to offer the following clarification to explain some issues that have arisen during the public input phase of this proposal:

Use of Town Tax Money or SVRA Funds? These proposed trails and the reconstruction/maintenance of existing trails will be completed with the use of volunteers and a Recreational Trail Program grant from the State of Wyoming. Zero tax dollars from the Town of Star Valley Ranch will be used on this project. No funds from SVRA will be required.

ATV Use? The National Forest land east of the Town of Star Valley Ranch is currently identified in the Bridger-Teton National Forest Plan as **non-motorized** with two exceptions; the road that accesses the Town's water system in Prater Canyon and the road accessing the Association's water diversion in Green Canyon allow motorized vehicles. All other existing and proposed trails are now and will be **non-motorized** and will be designed and constructed to prevent ATV use.

Horses/Bicycles? Both of the existing trails in Prater and Cedar Creek have historically been used by horses and to a lesser extent by bicycles. We are not proposing to change this. We are proposing that the two new trails, Vista Prater and Valley View, be managed for foot traffic only. This can be enforced by the strategic use of fences, hiker turnstiles and how wide and high the trail is cleared.

See drawing to the right.



Parking? The trail plan and proposal calls for the establishment of two small trailheads; one at the mouth of Green Canyon and a second in the current overflow parking area north of the Association's barn. Both of these trailheads would be on National Forest Land. These areas are already used for parking but the plan would call for improvements including kiosks that would explain the rules and regulations for the area and other public safety information. They would bring organization, management and enforcement of regulations of this recreational use where there is little right now.

Traffic? A vast majority of the anticipated users of these trails, especially the Vista Prater and Valley View Trails will be local SVR residents. Both Cedar Creek and Prater Canyon trails have historically had users from outside the town. It is very unlikely that we will see any significant increase in use. The establishment of a trailhead north of the barn may reduce traffic on Cedar Creek Drive east of Cedar Creek Park.

Hunting? While hunting is permitted on National Forest Land, it is prohibited to discharge a firearm within 150 yards of a residence, developed recreation site or occupied area. Both of the two proposed new trails would fall within this restriction thereby reducing firearms usage close to the town. Both Cedar Creek and Prater Canyon trails have been used by hunters to access the national forest for many, many years and we do not propose to change that. It is unlikely that the new trails would change hunting in the area.

Watershed and Erosion? Construction standards for National Forest trails require grades of less than 12%, a trail width of 18 to 24 inches, outward-sloped trail tread and a reversal of trail grades every 100 to 200 feet. With these standards, erosion should be greatly reduced. The reconstruction of Cedar Creek Trail should improve watershed conditions by improving the trail and eliminating areas where erosion is currently occurring due to poor design and lack of maintenance.

Weeds? The primary vectors for the spread of noxious weeds along trails are horses and mules that have eaten non-certified feed. Since the proposed new trails will be managed as foot traffic only, there will be little opportunity for the spread of weeds in these areas. In addition, much of the horse use in Cedar Creek Canyon is done by outfitters that use certified hay. Because of this, noxious weeds have not been a big issue along Cedar Creek trail. Trail crews will also accomplish weed abatement when they do their annual trail maintenance.

Wildfire? The two new trails that are proposed will not increase wildfire risk, as these trails do not have locations along them for camping. Both Cedar Creek and Prater Canyon trails have been used by hunters, hikers and campers for over 100 years and the incidence of human caused fires in these areas has been virtually zero.

Security? A number of studies have now shown that trails do not increase crime and, in fact, are commonly regarded as improvements by adjacent property owners. Comparisons of crimes before and after a trail is constructed make it quite clear that trail crime rates are almost non-existent on a per capita basis in comparison to other areas especially when user facilities are well maintained and signed.

“The study found that incidents of vandalism and burglary do not increase as a result of a trail” *Trails and Safe Communities: The Experience on 372 Trails*. National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program, January 1998.iii Tammy Tracy & Hugh Morris.

Trash? Most of the incidents of trash have been attributed to the current informal trailhead on LVI property in the mouth of Cedar Creek. Very little trash has been observed along the existing trails in Cedar Creek and Prater Canyon. Moving the Cedar Creek trail and trailhead north of the barn will improved this situation by closing this area to vehicle access.

Wildlife? Some concern has been voiced over a conflict between hikers and elk/deer during the winter/early spring months. While it is true, the trail goes up into areas used by elk and deer, the base of the trail will still be snow covered in early spring. Very few, if any, hikers will ever go into this area before the elk and deer head for higher ground and greener pastures. In addition, the trail is designed to stay in the forest areas not out in the open, further reducing the chance for human/elk interaction.