Open Space & Recreation Advisory Committee Meeting Agenda
Tuesday, November 7, 2023, at 9:00 AM
Council Chambers - Eagle Town Hall
200 Broadway Eagle, CO 81631

This agenda, meetings, and information about the Committee can be viewed at www.Townofeagle.org.
The public is invited to comment at the end of each agenda item

OSRAC MEETING ACCESS INFORMATION

This will be an in-person meeting with access via Microsoft Teams. First-time users of Microsoft Teams will need to download the free app before joining the meeting.

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AGENDA

9:00 a.m. CALL TO ORDER and ROLL CALL

9:05 a.m. PUBLIC COMMENT

9:10 a.m. APPROVAL OF OCTOBER MINUTES

9:15 a.m. PRESENTATIONS

9:15 a.m. (15 min) Colorado Parks and Wildlife- Herd management objectives in the Eagle Area

9:30 a.m. DISCUSSION/ BUSINESS ITEMS

9:30 a.m. (115 min) Open Space Management Plans and Policy Brief Recommendations to Council

1. Recommendation of Open Space Management Plans to Town Council
2. E-Mountain Bike Access and Management Recommendation to Town Council
3. Second Gulch Motorized Vehicle Width Access Recommendation to Town Council
4. Haymaker Winter Access/Wildlife Closure Recommendation to Town Council

10:55 a.m. (5 min) New Business/ Future Agenda items

11:00 a.m. ADJOURN

Open Space & Recreation Advisory Committee
Unapproved Meeting Minutes
Tuesday October 3, 2023, at 9:00 AM
Council Chambers - Eagle Town Hall
200 Broadway Eagle, CO 81631

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Phone Conference ID: 870 694 782#

9:00 a.m. CALL TO ORDER and ROLL CALL

Call to Order at: 9:02am

Roll Call:

Committee members present: Ernest Saeger, Chris Kehoe, Roger Mitchelle, Lizzy Owens, Erinn Hoban, Anna Nakae

Committee members absent: Phil Kirkman and Jessica Foulis

Staff Present: Brian Lieberman, Open Space and Trails Manager

Town Council Present: Ellen Bodenheimer

9:05 a.m. PUBLIC COMMENT

- A member of the public expressed concern that there are not enough dog parks and off-leash dog opportunities in the Town of Eagle. They thought there needs to be more education on dog

ownership to facilitate off-leash opportunities and that off-leash dog walkers should be a represented user group.
- A member of the public had concerns about electric dirt bikes using non-motorized trails in the open space south and west of 4th of July Road.

9:10 a.m. APPROVAL OF September MINUTES

MOTION to approve the September OSRAC meeting minutes by Owens and second by Hoban. Motion passed with a vote of 6 in favor (Owens, Hoban, Saeger, Kehoe, Mitchelle, and Nakae) and 0 opposed.

9:15 a.m. PRESENTATIONS

Hardscrabble Trails Coalition (HTC) Presentation- HTC presented to OSRAC on the Respect the Wild campaign for 2023, the Trail Ambassador program for winter 2023, and the coalition's position on the draft Open Space Management Plans and Haymaker winter management.

9:30 a.m. DISCUSSION/ BUSINESS ITEMS

OSRAC Town Council Update
- Members of the OSRAC presented the updated mission, vision, and purpose statements to the Town Council at the September 12 meeting.
- Council approved the current changes to the mission and vision and did not have other comments.
- Staff clarified that there is a purpose statement for the Open Space program that is separate from the mission, vision, and purpose statements of OSRAC.
    - OSRAC's reach extends beyond the Open Space program and therefore, they have their own mission statements.
    - When OSRAC discusses projects with the Open Space program, they should evaluate them through the OSRAC and Open Space program purposes.

Open Space Management Plan Timeline update
- Staff provided an update to the Committee on the updated Management Plan timeline.
- Staff provided an update to Council on the development of the plans at the September 12 meeting.
    - Council requested that the Committee and staff expedite the policy recommendation for the Haymaker Trail.
    - In response, the policy recommendation for the Haymaker Trail will be on the Council Agenda in November. The other three policy recommendations and the Management Plan adoption will occur in December.
- The Committee accepted public comment.

New Business/ Future Agenda Items
- A committee member asked about unsanctioned trail management in Open Space. Staff responded that the Open Space and Trails Master Plan provides guidance on how to tackle this issue. Staff have been using a youth corps and other seasonal labor to decommission, sign, and close off social trails. There is still work to be done, and this is an ongoing issue.

MOTION to ADJOURN at 10:42 by Hoban and second by Kehoe. Motion passed with a vote of 6 in favor (Owens, Hoban, Saeger, Kehoe, Mitchelle, and Nakae) and 0 opposed.

To: Open Space and Recreation Advisory Committee (OSRAC)

From: Brian Lieberman, Open Space and Trails Manager

Date: November 7, 2023

Agenda Item: Recommendation of Open Space Management Plans to Town Council

REQUEST: Staff requests that the Open Space and Recreation Advisory Committee (OSRAC) review the four Open Space Property Management Plans prepared by ERO Resources (ERO). Staff also requests that OSRAC recommend that the Town Council adopt the four Management Plans.

BACKGROUND: The Town's recently adopted 2022 Open Space and Trails Master Plan (OSTMP) highlighted the need to improve the Town's inventory of natural and recreation resources and to catalog management approaches for open space properties. ERO Resources was selected to tackle this by developing Open Space Property Management Plans (Management Plans) for Town open space properties.

The purpose of the Management Plans is to provide an assessment of existing natural resources and to guide resource management of properties in the Town's open space portfolio. More specifically, the Management Plans document existing conditions, highlight resource management issues, and identify strategies to address resource management issues and maintain the overall integrity of resources on open space properties. The plans also prioritize management recommendations that help to achieve management objectives.

Development of the plans started in early 2023 and involved several stakeholder meetings, fieldwork, and public input. The planning process included the following phases:

1. Focus Group Meetings (June 2023): Meetings with focus groups to discuss issues and objectives related to natural resource and recreation management.
2. Resource Assessment (June – July 2023): Evaluation of existing resource data and field assessments of open space properties.
3. Public Survey (July – August 2023): Online survey to assess community preferences around key open space management topics.
4. Draft Management Plan (September – October 2023): Completion and public review of draft management plans
5. Final Management Plan (November – December 2023): Completion and adoption of final management plan.

Additional information about the Management Plans and the development of the plans is located at the beginning of each plan (attached).

ANALYSIS: The Management Plans include a significant amount of data and information that will be beneficial for tracking changes over time and improving the management of open space properties. Most open space programs in Colorado use these management plans to guide resource management, public engagement, and restoration of impaired resources on open space properties.

The Management Plans include several maps and figures that illustrate and catalog current conditions and resource management issues on the properties.

The primary resource issues evaluated in the plans include noxious weed management, rare and endangered species management, overall vegetation management, revegetation and restoration of impaired areas, wildlife habitat conservation and management, raptor protection, pest management, and recreation management.

The last section of the plans includes a prioritized list of management strategies that are suggested to meet the overall management objectives of the plans.

Staff have worked closely with ERO to develop and review these plans and provide input on the evaluation and management strategies included in the documents. Staff believes the contents of the plans satisfy the objectives of the project and have been responsive to public and stakeholder input.

COMMUNITY INPUT: Development of the Open Space Management Plans and the policy briefs included several opportunities for community input. ERO led two stakeholder focus groups, a preliminary survey, an open house, and provided an opportunity to collect feedback through a second input form on the drafts of the management plans and policy briefs. 802 respondents participated in the first community survey, 284 people submitted feedback on the draft plans during the second engagement opportunity, and over 130 individuals attended the open house. 76% of respondents reported living in the Town of Eagle during the first engagement opportunity, and 82% of respondents who provided feedback on the draft plans reported living in Eagle.

The second engagement opportunity from the open house asked respondents how much they support the direction of the management plans for the following categories: fire mitigation, noxious weed management, wildlife habitat improvements, recreation access, visual character, pest management, signage and wayfinding, trail maintenance, on leash dog education, off leash dog opportunities, and ecological and riparian restoration.

The question asked respondents to rank their support from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Fire mitigation (77%), noxious weed management (71%), wildlife habitat improvements (64%), trail maintenance (77%), and ecological and riparian restoration (61%) all ranked high, with above 60% of respondents selecting “strongly agree” or “agree” for support on those management issues in the plans.

Recreation access (53%), visual character (51%), pest management (51%), on-leash dog education (50%), and signage and wayfinding (58%) all scored slightly lower but still with 50% or greater supporting the direction of the plans. Only off-leash dog opportunities scored below the 50% mark for “strongly agree” or “agree,” with 49% viewing the plans favorably.

Not all issues can be evaluated and “fixed” with the adoption of the management plans. However, the plans will go a long way in cataloging current conditions and providing recommendations for ecological

and recreational improvements. Some issues, such as off-leash dog opportunities, would require capital projects or a policy change to modify management.

Q4 How much do you support the direction of the management plans for each of the following?

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	TOTAL
Fire mitigation	39.50% 111	37.72% 106	16.73% 47	3.56% 10	2.49% 7	281
Noxious weed management	30.47% 85	40.50% 113	22.94% 64	3.23% 9	2.87% 8	279
Wildlife habitat improvements	30.47% 85	33.33% 93	24.37% 68	6.09% 17	5.73% 16	279
Recreation access	27.70% 77	25.90% 72	19.42% 54	12.23% 34	14.75% 41	278
Visual character	17.15% 47	33.94% 93	41.97% 115	4.01% 11	2.92% 8	274
Pest management	14.34% 40	37.28% 104	41.58% 116	4.30% 12	2.51% 7	279
Signage and wayfinding	16.67% 46	42.03% 116	34.42% 95	3.62% 10	3.26% 9	276
Trail maintenance	31.77% 88	45.49% 126	15.52% 43	4.33% 12	2.89% 8	277
On-leash dog education and enforcement	29.29% 82	20.71% 58	26.79% 75	13.93% 39	9.29% 26	280
Off-leash dog opportunities	24.10% 67	24.82% 69	27.70% 77	11.15% 31	12.23% 34	278
Ecological and riparian restoration	23.91% 66	36.96% 102	30.80% 85	5.43% 15	2.90% 8	276

BUDGET/ STAFF IMPACT: The project budget for the development of the plans and policy recommendations was $53,000. It also included significant staff time to develop the plans.

The plans include recommendations to improve resource management on open space properties. These individual projects will require additional work to determine an accurate budget, which would be developed as the project is proposed and vetted.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT / STANDARDS ACHIEVED: The following goals from the 2022 Open Space and Trails Master plan address the development of the Management Plans and ecological inventories:

- **OS6 – Ecological Assessments**: Conduct ecological assessments for Town Open Spaces to better understand noxious weeds, habitat, and other resource conditions. Prioritize assessments in open space properties that have high ecological value or that provide important wildlife habitat, such as the Brush Creek Open Space properties. These ecological assessments should include vegetation surveys, wildlife habitat surveys, and wetland delineation/reach conditions studies if applicable.

- **OS7 – Spatial Inventory of Town Open Spaces**: Create and maintain a spatial inventory of Town open spaces. The inventory could include named parcels, past assessments completed, and mapping of resources.
- **OS8 – Development of Open Space Management Plans:** Develop open space management plans for each open space property that the Town manages. These plans should help determine the need for ecological assessments (recommendation OS6) and include a robust inventory of existing conditions (cultural resources, ecological resources, existing uses, easements, geology/soils), a public process, and management actions around biodiversity protection and maintenance, recreation and special uses, education, interpretation, and enforcement. Further understanding the existing conditions and what needs to be done for Town open spaces will provide great clarity on where the department needs to go from a budgeting, partnerships, and capacity perspective.

RECOMMEND ACTION OR PROPOSED MOTION:

1. Motion to recommend that the Town Council of the Town of Eagle, Colorado, adopt the Open Space Management Plans prepared by ERO Resources.
2. Motion to recommend that the Town Council of the Town of Eagle, Colorado, allocate additional resources to address the following unresolved topics in the Open Space Management Plans:
   _____

ATTACHMENTS:

- Final Draft Open Space Management Plans:
  - Abrams Creek + Eagle Ranch Management Plan
  - Bluffs + Eagle River + Eby Creek Management Plan
  - Haymeadow + Spud Cellar + Haymaker TH Management Plan
  - Johnson's Corner + Brush Creek Management Plan
- Community Input
  - Public input from the preliminary survey (July/August)
    - Online Survey Summary
  - Public input from the Open House (October)
    - Engagement Opportunity Summary

To: Open Space and Recreation Advisory Committee (OSRAC)

From: Brian Lieberman, Open Space and Trails Manager

Date: November 7, 2023

Agenda Item: E-Mountain Bike Access and Management Recommendation to Town Council

REQUEST: Staff requests that the Open Space and Recreation Advisory Committee (OSRAC) review the attached policy brief that includes a background and recommendation on the E-Mountain Bike (e-MTB) policy issue prepared by ERO Resources (ERO). Staff also requests that OSRAC make a recommendation on e-MTB management to the Town Council.

BACKGROUND: Currently, e-bikes and E-Mountain Bikes (e-MTBs) are not permitted on any non-motorized natural-surface single-track trails in the Eagle area. This includes most trails in Eagle, except for Second Gulch and Dirt Surfer, as those trails also allow motorized travel.

Increasing opportunities for e-MTBs on natural surface trails has been discussed over the years, but nothing has ever materialized.

Addressing this issue came up during the stakeholder focus groups at the onset of this project. Stakeholders recommended that regardless of the management approach to e-MTBs in open space areas, the Town needs to develop a better strategy for addressing and messaging e-MTB rules.

The attached policy brief is focused on e-MTBs that travel on natural surface single-track trails in open space areas or on federal lands. It will not cover other e-bike use within the streets and sidewalks in the Town of Eagle.

See the attached policy brief developed by ERO for additional information on the background of this topic. The document also includes an analysis of the different suggested management options.

ANALYSIS: Those who support expanding e-MTB access on trails in the Eagle area argue that the biking industry is trending toward more e-MTB use and that it is inevitable that demand will increase. Further, proponents say that e-MTB permits more equitable access to nature for aging populations, people with disabilities, and people with different physical abilities. Restrictions on e-MTBs are seen as unfair to aging or challenged populations.

Proponents of maintaining the status quo and continuing restrictions of e-MTB on trails in Eagle argue that there are increased impacts to trails from e-MTB (over regular bikes), and they have concerns about safety, congestion, and conflict, and an overall apprehension for a loss of outdoor values and ethics.

Further complicating this issue is the varied land ownership in the Eagle area. Most trails in the Eagle are only on Town owned open space for a short section before crossing over into lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) or Eagle County Open Space. Further up in the Hardscrabble area, trails cross into the National Forest system.

Each of these land managers can have their own management approaches to e-MTBs. Having differing rules and managing approaches to e-MTBs by the various landowners in the area could cause significant confusion for recreationists and set people up to break the rules. Coordination among these landowners will be essential for effectively managing e-MTBs in the Eagle area.

Discussion for e-MTBs during this process has been focused on pedal-assist class 1 e-bikes only. For agencies that have already gone through this discussion, they have generally limited access on non-motorized trails to pedal-assist class 1 e-bikes only. Other types and classes of e-bikes have only been permitted on trails that also allow motorized travel.

Additional analysis is located in the attached policy brief created by ERO.

MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

ERO identified four management options to address this issue: maintain the status quo of prohibiting e-MTBs, permit some partial access on natural surface trails that do not connect to BLM trails, expand access to all Town trails without consideration of adjoining landowners' policies, or take a coordinated regional approach to managing e-MTBs.

ERO recommends that the Town pursue the fourth option – take a coordinated regional approach to managing and regulating e-MTBs with land management partners in the region.

This approach would permit staff from the various land management agencies to develop an improved management and messaging approach to regulate e-MTBs in the short term while planning for future needs.

Each land manager has its own process that would be required to evaluate the potential for expanding access to e-MTBs. These processes can be lengthy and require several environmental reviews. There are benefits to starting these discussions now.

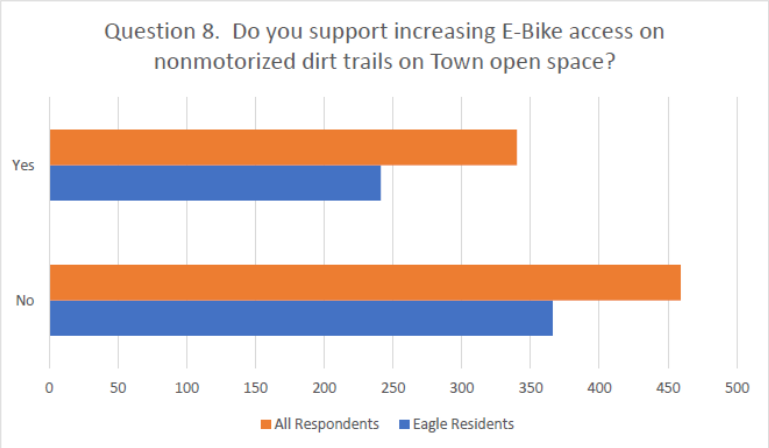
ERO is not specifying whether their recommendation for a coordinated approach is geared towards pursuing changes to the existing regulations for e-MTBs. Instead, the stakeholders involved in the coordinated effort would be tasked with evaluating current policies, completing additional public outreach, and determining if existing policies need to change.

Should the group determine that no change in e-MTB policy is the best for the community or that the existing policies need to remain in place for now, this coordinated effort could provide the opportunity to discuss messaging, signage, education, and enforcement to ensure the messaging/ rules are consistent across the region.

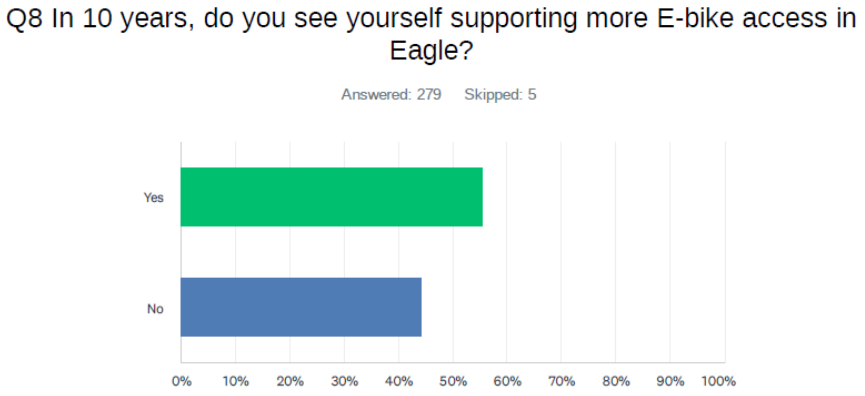
COMMUNITY INPUT: Development of the Open Space Management Plans and the policy briefs included several opportunities for community input. ERO led two stakeholder focus groups, a preliminary survey, an open house, and provided an opportunity to collect feedback through a second input form on the drafts of the management plans and policy briefs. 802 respondents participated in the first community

survey, 284 people submitted feedback on the draft plans during the second engagement opportunity, and over 130 individuals attended the open house. 76% of respondents reported living in the Town of Eagle during the first engagement opportunity, and 82% of respondents who provided feedback on the draft plans reported living in Eagle.

The preliminary survey asked if respondents supported increasing e-MTB opportunities on nonmotorized dirt trails in Eagle. 43% of the total respondents supported increasing e-bike opportunities, and 57% did not. For respondents who selected Eagle as their place of residence, 40% supported increasing e-bike opportunities, and 60% did not.



The feedback survey from the open house asked if participants would see themselves supporting more e-bike access in 10 years. 56% of total respondents said yes, and 44% said no. This somewhat interesting finding suggests people may not be ready for e-bikes now or in the next couple of years, but they could see their sentiments changing in the future.



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	55.56%	155
No	44.44%	124
TOTAL		279

BUDGET/ STAFF IMPACT: Staff time would be required to coordinate and participate in a regional effort to start the conversation about e-MTB policies in the Eagle area.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT / STANDARDS ACHIEVED: Goal P1 from the 2022 Open Space and Trails Master plan says, "Continue to evaluate e-bike policies on non-motorized trails in the system. The ultimate policy should be consistent system-wide to minimize confusion."

RECOMMEND ACTION OR PROPOSED MOTION:

1. Motion to recommend that the Town Council of the Town of Eagle, Colorado, maintain the status quo for e-MTB policy (no e-MTBs on non-motorized dirt trails in open space) and do not allocate staff time to starting a coordinated effort to address e-MTBs in the Eagle area.
2. Motion to recommend that the Town Council of the Town of Eagle, Colorado, allocate staff time to coordinate and participate in a regional effort to start the conversation about e-MTB policies in the Eagle area.
3. Motion to recommend that the Town Council of the Town of Eagle, Colorado, allocate staff time to determining appropriate non-motorized dirt trails in open space that could be opened to e-MTBs.

ATTACHMENTS:

- E-MTB Policy Brief and Recommendation
    - E-MTB Access Policy Paper
- Community Input
    - Public input from the preliminary survey (July/August)
        - Online Survey Summary
    - Public input from the Open House (October)
        - Engagement Opportunity Summary

To: Open Space and Recreation Advisory Committee (OSRAC)

From: Brian Lieberman, Open Space and Trails Manager

Date: November 7, 2023

Agenda Item: Second Gulch Motorized Vehicle Width Access Recommendation to Town Council

REQUEST: Staff requests that the Open Space and Recreation Advisory Committee (OSRAC) review the attached policy brief that includes a background and recommendation on the Second Gulch Motorized Access issue prepared by ERO Resources (ERO). Staff also requests that OSRAC make a management recommendation on the Second Gulch issue to the Town Council.

BACKGROUND: Currently, the motorized width limit on the Second Gulch Trail is 50 inches. The Town received a request to increase this limit to allow larger OHVs to access the trail in the summer of 2022. OSRAC has been discussing the motorized width limit on Second Gulch since that request. In 2023, the Committee recommended that the issue be addressed during the development of management plans for open space properties in the Town of Eagle.

In early 2023, the Town hired ERO Resources to develop these Open Space Management Plans and tackle three open space policy issues that OSRAC has been evaluating (including Second Gulch). ERO has developed a policy brief that includes a background on the issue, management alternatives to address the issues, and ultimately, a recommendation on how to proceed.

See the attached policy brief developed by ERO for additional information on the background of this topic. The document also includes an analysis of the different suggested management options.

ANALYSIS: The motorized community supports increasing the vehicle width limit on Second Gulch, and they have emphasized that UTVs and S x S's are equipped with more safety features than traditional ATVs. As a result, they are the new trend in motorized recreation, and limiting access from Second Gulch requires Eagle residents' who own OHVs to trailer their machines to a trailhead rather than riding from their homes to access public lands (as other recreation groups can do from Eagle). In addition, trends in motorized management on adjacent federal lands have moved away from managing trail width at 50-inch width restrictions.

Upholding the existing 50-inch rule would likely limit the motorized traffic on Second Gulch owing to the decrease in popularity of ATVs. Proponents of keeping the 50-inch rule have argued that the intent of access on Second Gulch was never envisioned for motorized recreation. Instead, it was for limited motorized access for hunting. With the growth in both non-motorized traffic and interest in motorized recreation on Second Gulch, proponents of upholding the 50-inch rule have also argued that the trail is not equipped to safely and sustainably handle an increase in motorized recreation. Further, should the

50-inch rule remain, the Town would not need to invest in new infrastructure to accommodate the increase in vehicle size and weight.

MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

ERO identified three management options to address this issue: maintain the status quo of 50 inches, increase the width limit to permit OHVs but not full-sized vehicles, or permit all vehicles on the trail. ERO also provided a fourth management tool that could help reduce some of the divisiveness of this issue, identify compromises, and build some common ground by forming a working group.

ERO's recommendation is to pursue the fourth option to further explore the Second Gulch issue through the formation of a facilitated working group. Although there is significant support for maintaining the status quo of the 50-inch width limit, ERO notes there has not been an opportunity for advocates and critics to participate in a facilitated discussion to identify potential compromises and common ground. In both engagement opportunities, 70 – 78% of respondents support maintaining the status quo. However, 53% of respondents said they would still support developing a working group to further explore and address the issue.

As ERO indicates in the report, the tools available for community engagement to develop management plans are insufficient to address such a divisive community issue based in recreation management. ERO also states that should the working group be unable to identify a collaborative solution, then the status quo of the 50-inch width limit would remain in place. In addition, this working group could help identify alternative options for Eagle residents to access public lands with OHVs.

If the Committee recommends the working group option, staff will work with ERO to develop a defined timeline and budget for this new scope of work. As ERO notes, having defined timelines and addressing this issue promptly and clearly will be critical.

However, as noted above, the public engagement opportunities found that 70-78% of respondents support maintaining the status quo. This is notable and should not be overlooked. In addition, the engagement opportunities throughout this process certainly suggest that some community members are feeling the fatigue of this issue, and pressing it forward will come with renewed scrutiny. Recommending the status quo option would align with the community feedback received.

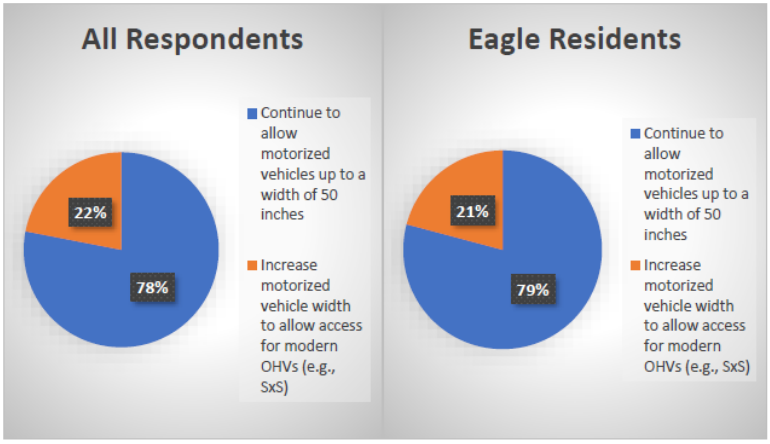
Even if the Second Gulch is not determined to be the preferred method for OHV users to access public lands, the Town could work with the motorized groups and other stakeholders to identify an alternative method to access motorized recreational opportunities.

COMMUNITY INPUT: Development of the Open Space Management Plans and the policy briefs included several opportunities for community input. ERO led two stakeholder focus groups, a preliminary survey, an open house, and provided an opportunity to collect feedback through a second input form on the drafts of the management plans and policy briefs. 802 respondents participated in the first community survey, 284 people submitted feedback on the draft plans during the second engagement opportunity, and over 130 individuals attended the open house. 76% of respondents reported living in the Town of Eagle during the first engagement opportunity, and 82% of respondents who provided feedback on the draft plans reported living in Eagle.

In addition, the project has been discussed at two OSRAC meetings this year that were open to the public. Refer to the Policy Brief, Survey Results, and feedback memo from the open house to view the completed community feedback.

The preliminary survey asked a direct question about increasing the width limit on Second Gulch. 78% of survey respondents supported maintaining the status quo of the 50-inch width restriction. The results were similar for Eagle residents and non-Eagle residents. 79% of just Eagle residents supported maintaining the status quo of 50 inches.

Question 7. What is your preferred management of motorized vehicles on the Second Gulch Trail within Town open space?

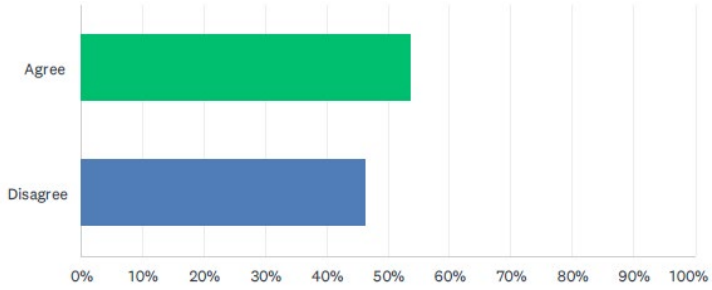


From the feedback survey at the open house, 71% of respondents also “strongly agreed” or “agreed” with maintaining the status quo of the 50-inch width restriction.

Q5 How do you feel about each of the three management options for motorized access to Second Gulch?

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	TOTAL
Maintain status quo – No change from existing management – 50-inch width restriction.	55.76% 155	15.11% 42	6.47% 18	5.04% 14	17.63% 49	278
Expand access, with restrictions – Expand the permitted width to allow UTVs and other modern recreation vehicles, with regulations, signage, restricting access to full size trucks and SUV's.	14.08% 39	7.94% 22	6.14% 17	14.44% 40	57.40% 159	277
Open motorized access – Allow all vehicles and uses, consistent with the adjacent regulations on BLM land.	16.30% 45	3.99% 11	11.59% 32	11.23% 31	56.88% 157	276

However, when asked directly if the respondents support developing a working group to address this issue, 53% said yes, and 47% said no. This suggests that while the majority of respondents support maintaining the status quo, there is still some support for continuing the conversation to see if a compromise solution can be determined.



BUDGET/ STAFF IMPACT: Staff and ERO estimate that hiring a facilitator to lead a working group would cost between $4,000 - $6,000. Should this option be recommended by OSRAC, staff would finalize a budget to present to Council in December. Significant staff time would be required to organize the group, hire a facilitator, and attend the meetings.

The status quo option would not cost any significant additional funds or staff time.

Permitting wider vehicles on Second Gulch would require investment in trail infrastructure. Staff estimated that this would cost about $5,000 earlier this year. Should the working group be recommended, and then the working group recommends any adjustments to the existing width restriction, staff would then prepare a more detailed budget for these improvements.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT / STANDARDS ACHIEVED:

- Goals 3-1 and 3-3 of the 2021 Elevate Eagle Comprehensive Plan advocate to “protect the Town’s unique activities” which includes OHV use and 3-3.1 says “Support efforts to enhance and expand parks, trails (hiking, biking, motorized), and recreation amenities).
- Goal SF6 of the 2022 Open Space and Trails Master Plan says “Explore opportunities to develop better motorized access into West Eagle/Hardscrabble. This portal could have limited facilities for motorized users, supporting ride-from-home explorations rather than out-of-town visitors.”
- AE6 speaks to establishing trail etiquette standards and says, “Work with local user group organizations and land management agencies to establish a standard set of etiquette guidelines and policies for trail and open space. This collaboration should also extend to the dissemination of etiquette information in member communications.”

RECOMMEND ACTION OR PROPOSED MOTION:

1. Motion to recommend that the Town Council of the Town of Eagle, Colorado, maintain the status quo of the 50-inch motorized width restriction on the Second Gulch Trail.
2. Motion to recommend that the Town Council of the Town of Eagle, Colorado, develop a specific community process to further explore and address this issue and engage a professional facilitator to manage and facilitate the process.

3. Motion to recommend that the Town Council of the Town of Eagle, Colorado, expand the permitted motorized width on the Second Gulch Trail to allow UTVs and other modern recreation vehicles, with regulations and signage restricting access to full size trucks and SUVs.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Second Gulch Policy Brief and Recommendation
    - Second Gulch Motorized Access Policy Paper
- Community Input
    - Public input from the preliminary survey (July/August)
        - Online Survey Summary
    - Public input from the Open House (October)
        - Engagement Opportunity Summary

To: Open Space and Recreation Advisory Committee (OSRAC)

From: Brian Lieberman, Open Space and Trails Manager

Date: November 7, 2023

Agenda Item: Haymaker Winter Access/Wildlife Closure Recommendation to Town Council

REQUEST: Staff requests that the Open Space and Recreation Advisory Committee (OSRAC) review the attached policy brief that includes a background and recommendation on the Haymaker Winter Access/ Wildlife Closure issue prepared by ERO Resources (ERO). Staff also requests that OSRAC make a management recommendation on the winter management of the Haymaker Trail to the Town Council.

BACKGROUND: The Haymaker Trail has four loops that traverse a southern-facing hillside at the intersection of private property, Town open space, and federal lands. Currently, the first two loops remain open year-round while the third and fourth loops (Extra Credit) are closed during the winter to protect big game winter habitat.

In 2021, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) presented to OSRAC. They recommended that the Town close the first two loops of the Haymaker Trail during the winter closure period to protect wintering wildlife. Since then, OSRAC has been discussing winter management of the Haymaker Trail.

In 2022, OSRAC recommended that the Town work with partner organizations to increase education and outreach about responsible recreation on the trail during the winter and the importance of keeping dogs on a leash. In addition, OSRAC recommended collecting data on the number and types of users on the Haymaker Trail during the winter.

With advice from CPW, the Town partnered with Hardscrabble Trails Coalition (HTC) and Vail Valley Mountain Trails Alliance (VVMTA) to increase trail ambassador shifts at the Haymaker Trailhead, post new signage about responsible winter recreation, and support the Respect the Wild campaign. The campaign was geared towards creative messaging, for both on and off the trails, to educate about responsible winter recreation in the Eagle area. The Committee also recommended that the need for any additional restrictions on the Haymaker Trail during the winter could be evaluated during the development of Open Space Management Plans in 2023.

In early 2023, the Town hired ERO Resources to develop these Open Space Management Plans and tackle three open space policy issues that OSRAC has been evaluating (including winter use on the Haymaker Trail). ERO has developed a policy brief that includes a background on the issue, management alternatives to address the issues, and ultimately, a recommendation on how to proceed.

See the attached policy brief developed by ERO for additional information on the background of this topic. The document also includes an analysis of the different suggested management options.

ANALYSIS: Proponents of adding additional restrictions on winter use of the Haymaker Trail argue that it would benefit wildlife by reducing disturbance in an important winter range. Like most other trails in the Eagle area, advocates think this trail should be subject to the existing closure as the trail traverses ideal areas for wintering animals (south-facing hillsides at a low elevation). Further, there is concern that the trail has become a go-to location for off-leash dog walking in the winter rather than a location for winter recreation. CPW has identified that reducing disturbance from recreation on the Haymaker trail would be beneficial for elk and deer that overwinter in the area. Therefore, CPW recommends a full closure of the trail in the winter.

Proponents of keeping the trail open during the winter argue that it is one of the only available natural surface trails that remains open during the winter. Therefore, it needs to be protected as a location for winter recreation. Residents move to the Eagle area to enjoy recreational opportunities close to their homes, and the Haymaker trail is the ideal spot for this during the winter. Proponents of keeping the trail open argue that with the approved Haymeadow development adjacent to it, closing the trail within that disturbance buffer seems counterintuitive. Last, people will continue to recreate, and providing a location for that recreation will reduce violations of other seasonal closures in the area.

Additional analysis is located in the attached policy brief created by ERO.

<u>MANAGEMENT OPTIONS</u>

During the development of the policy brief, ERO identified several management options to address this issue. Through conversations with staff, OSRAC, stakeholders, and comments submitted by the community, they narrowed these down to three management options: maintain the status quo, a compromise balance of closing the second loop in addition to the third and fourth loops, or a full closure of trail during the winter.

ERO's recommendation is to pursue the second option – closure of the second loop during the winter in addition to the already closed third and fourth loops. Based on ERO's habitat disturbance and fragmentation analysis, this management option would provide additional meaningful winter habitat for big game species while permitting some winter recreation in an area that is, or soon will be, experiencing disturbance from development and other trail use.

As CPW has pointed out, any reduction of human disturbance in a winter range will have benefits for big game wildlife. Removing people from a landscape in a winter range offers more food and terrain for big game and reduces the potential of the animals being disturbed. However, ERO suggests that the amount of disturbance occurring from other uses outside of recreation will have an impact on the quality of winter habitat, even with the reduction of recreation.

As it is the Town's role to balance winter recreation access with protecting wildlife habitat, we have tasked ERO with providing an analysis of disturbance and fragmentation in the area during the winter to help inform these discussions. ERO used a habitat fragmentation tool that they've used throughout the state to help provide additional data to consider when evaluating these types of issues.

As ERO's habitat fragmentation analysis identifies, the first loop of Haymaker is within an area of existing disturbance. Land managed by the Bureau of Land Management directly to the north of the trail is not subject to seasonal wildlife closures for mechanized, equestrian, or pedestrian use. Therefore, disturbance would continue from trail users north of the Haymaker Trail. The first phase of the first filing of the Haymeadow subdivision is also under construction, and this will have a disturbance envelope that impacts part of the first loop of Haymaker. There is also a paved path adjacent to the Haymaker Trail that will remain open in the winter.

Disturbance may continue to occur in the area around the first loop of Haymaker even if the first loop is closed. However, removing recreation from the second loop during the winter would provide habitat in an ideal area for winter range that is away from disturbance, at least for now. This would need to be revealed with the build-out of the Haymeadow subdivision. For now, ERO recommends the closure of the Second Loop.

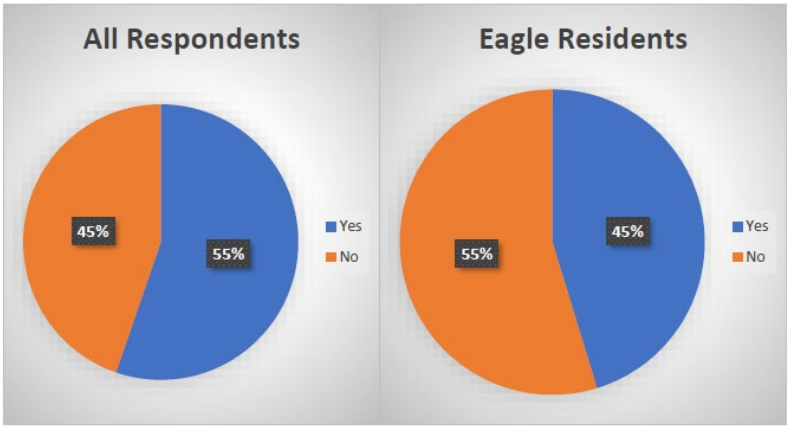
In the first survey, 55% of all respondents supported additional winter restrictions on the Haymaker trail to protect wildlife. However, only 45% of respondents who selected Eagle as their place of residency supported additional closures during the winter. The data received from the feedback on the draft policy recommendations during the open house supports this as well, with about 31% of respondents in favor of additional winter restrictions on the Haymaker trail, 16% neutral, and 53% in support of maintaining the status quo (no additional restrictions).

This suggests that a majority of Eagle residents feel the balance of wildlife protection and winter recreation has already been achieved in this area and would prefer to keep the status quo. In addition, HTC and VVMTA have put a lot of resources into education on responsible recreation on Haymaker, and they would like to give these efforts more time to be effective and make a difference for trail users and wildlife in the area.

COMMUNITY INPUT: Development of the Open Space Management Plans and the policy briefs included several opportunities for community input. ERO led two stakeholder focus groups, a preliminary survey, an open house, and provided an opportunity to collect feedback through a second input form on the drafts of the management plans and policy briefs. 802 respondents participated in the first community survey, 284 people submitted feedback on the draft plans during the second engagement opportunity, and over 130 individuals attended the open house. 76% of respondents reported living in the Town of Eagle during the first engagement opportunity, and 82% of respondents who provided feedback on the draft plans reported living in Eagle.

As noted above, in the first survey, 55% of all respondents supported additional winter restrictions on the Haymaker trail to protect wildlife. However, only 45% of respondents who selected Eagle as their place of residency supported additional closures during the winter.

Question 6. Would you support additional winter restrictions on the Haymaker Trail system to protect wildlife?



The data received from the feedback on the draft policy recommendations during the open house supports this as well, with about 31% of respondents in favor of additional winter restrictions on the Haymaker trail, 16% neutral, and 53% in support of maintaining the status quo (no additional restrictions).

About 42% of respondents supported ERO's management recommendation of closing the 2nd loop during the winter, 13% were neutral, and 45% did not support it.

41% of respondents supported a full winter closure of the Haymaker Trail, 8% were natural, and 51% did not support it.

BUDGET/ STAFF IMPACT: Any additional winter closures would require installing new gates. Staff estimates that either option for additional closures would entail 2-4 new gates at about $250/ gate. Staff time would be required to install and manage the gate every year.

Moving forward with the status quo could require funding and staff time to support the Respect the Wild Campaign and to assist in increasing educational efforts to improve recreational behavior on the trail during the winter.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT / STANDARDS ACHIEVED: Goal P2 from the 2022 Open Space and Trails Master plan says, "With seasonal wildlife closures, work to balance consistency, changing habitat needs of wildlife, and winter recreation opportunities. All recreational opportunities in mapped wintering range and/or other environmentally vulnerable areas will be considered for seasonal wildlife closures. Dates will be determined in partnership with CPW, BLM, and any other applicable land managers."

RECOMMEND ACTION OR PROPOSED MOTION:

1. Motion to recommend that the Town Council of the Town of Eagle, Colorado, maintain the status quo of winter management on the Haymaker Trail.
2. Motion to recommend that the Town Council of the Town of Eagle, Colorado, close the Second loop of the Haymaker trail (in addition to the Third and Fourth loops) during the December 1 – April 15 wildlife closure period for protection of wildlife habitat.

3. Motion to recommend that the Town Council of the Town of Eagle, Colorado, close the First and Second loops of the Haymaker trail (in addition to the Third and Fourth loops) during the December 1 – April 15 wildlife closure period for protection of wildlife habitat.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Haymaker Policy Brief and Recommendation
    - Haymaker Closure Policy Paper
- Community Input
    - Public input from the preliminary survey (July/August)
        - Online Survey Summary
    - Public input from the Open House (October)
        - Engagement Opportunity Summary
- Stakeholder letters regarding Haymaker winter management from Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) and the Hardscrabble Trails Coalition (HTC) are located directly below on pages 22-25 of this packet.

COLORADO
Parks and Wildlife
Department of Natural Resources
Glenwood Springs Area Wildlife Office
88 Wildlife Way
Glenwood Springs, CO 81601
P 970.947.2920 | F 970.947.2936

November 1, 2023

Dear members of the Town of Eagle's Open Space and Recreation Advisory Committee (OSRAC),

I am writing today to express Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW)'s recommendation and full support of a winter seasonal closure of the entire Haymaker Trail from December 1 to April 15. All loops of the Haymaker Trail fall within Elk and Deer Winter Range and Severe Winter Range and as so, carries with it a high ranked importance for elk and deer survival during the difficult winter months.

As winter sets in, elk and deer move down to their traditional winter range in search of any food they can find. By late winter, forage becomes very scarce and the animals survive primarily on the fat sores they developed over summer and fall. Constant stress caused by dogs running off-leash, bicycles, or just the mere presence of humans is very detrimental to wildlife. When people recreate irresponsibly, it spooks the animals causing them to move or run from the perceived threat, sometimes dozens of time per day for most of winter. These severely stressed animals eventually starve and die when their fat stores are used up.

Unfortunately, since the opening of the Haymaker Trail, CPW has observed a trend of many trail users of all types irresponsibly recreating directly upon the wintering wildlife in the Haymaker trail area, causing both deer and elk to vacate their location multiple times per day. This has a detrimental effect on the both the individual animal and the herd as a whole, since many of the animals being harassed within their winter range are pregnant females.

Referencing the Town of Eagle Open Space and Trails Master Plan, P2: "Seasonal Wildlife Closures With seasonal wildlife closures, work to balance consistency, changing habitat needs of wildlife, and winter recreation opportunities. All recreational opportunities in mapped wintering range and/or other environmentally vulnerable areas will be considered for seasonal wildlife closures. Dates will be determined in partnership with CPW, BLM, and any other applicable land managers."
A full winter closure of the Haymaker Trail will add to the consistency already found throughout the winter closures on other Town's trail systems. Additionally, due to the continued development within the Town of Eagle, especially the adjacent Haymeadow Development, the

Jeff Davis, Director, Colorado Parks and Wildlife
Parks and Wildlife Commission: Dallas May, Chair · Richard Reading, Vice-Chair · Karen Bailey, Secretary · Jessica Beaulieu
Marie Haskett · Jack Murphy · Gabriel Otero · Duke Phillips, IV · Gary T. Skiba · James Jay Tutchton · Eden Vardy

valuable winter habitat found within the Haymaker trail system has become even more important to protect during the winter months. As stated in the Master Plan, CPW strongly recommends that **"**All recreational opportunities in mapped wintering range and/or other environmentally vulnerable areas will be considered for seasonal wildlife closures ", especially with the Haymaker trail system.

Throughout many of the past OSRAC meetings, the status and condition of the elk and deer herds has been discussed. CPW's official stance is that both the local elk and deer herds are in decline. Degradation and loss of historic habitats are a significant reason for these declines. With a recommendation of a winter closure on the entire Haymaker Trail, OSRAC has the opportunity to provide a simple, yet highly effective decision that will benefit the local wildlife populations. CPW also understands that there are users that would prefer to see this trail system to remain open year round. However, unlike the trail users that have other local options for winter recreation, wildlife does not have the choice to go elsewhere, especially when severe winter conditions exist.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife appreciates the opportunity to provide our recommendation of a winter closure from December 1 to April 15 on the full Haymaker Trail to the Town of Eagle's Open Space and Recreation Advisory Committee. If you have any further questions, please contact District Wildlife Manager Brian Wodrich at Brian.Wodrich@State.co.us.

Sincerely,

Brian Wodrich
District Wildlife Manager
Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Brian Lieberman, Open Space and Trails Manager
OSRAC Board Members
Eagle Town Council
1050 Chambers Ave
Eagle, CO 81631

September 15, 2023

Dear Brian, OSRAC Board, Eagle Town Council

During the September 5th OSRAC meeting we were very disappointed when the OSRAC Board seemed to decide not to take the recommendation of ERO and have more discussion surrounding the management of the Haymaker Trail. We agree with ERO and Bill when he was citing that Haymaker, 2nd Gulch and E-Bikes as more complex issues that deserve more discussion and community engagement to come to true consensus decisions.

It wasn't clear at the meeting how this process was going to proceed so we wanted to express our concerns and make sure all the decision makers are aware of the following.

- HTC would be most supportive of the option to maintain the status quo management of Haymaker. Keep loops 1 & 2 open during the winter unless animals or kill are present. This has worked well in the past, is easy for the public to understand and is well complied with. Additionally, just last winter this is what OSRAC recommended and Town Council approved. Volunteer organizations brought together all stakeholders to launch the Respect the Wild educational campaign and the Town committed to supporting this effort. After just 2 short months there was measurable improvement. This initiative needs more time to be fully impactful.

- If an adaptive closure is going to be pursued, the default status should be open and changed to closed when specific, defined circumstances warrant a closure.

- The impact maps ERO put together clearly show the Haymeadow development will impact the habitat this closure is trying to protect. As the development grows, impact will grow. If the 2nd loop closure takes place now it is our belief that we will never get that access back regardless of habitat destruction from the development.

- The Town has consistently said they want to be consistent with adjacent land managers. The BLM land that is directly adjacent to the Haymaker trail is open to foot and horse traffic in the winter. It makes it very confusing for trail users and compliance. Closing Haymaker will only exacerbate this issue.

- If the Haymaker trail is closed there is a very strong likelihood of violations of other trail closures increasing. Violations in other areas would ultimately spread out and increase human impact rather then reducing it.

- The numbers CPW publishes show that Elk herds E16 & E12 and Deer herds D14 & D8 are all within their management objectives yet they keep pushing for additional closures. It would be beneficial for the Town and OSRAC to pursue having meaningful conversations with CPW about things that could really benefit these herds if they are concerned about their survival. Discussions could include reducing hunting pressure, reducing predator pressures, reducing animal/auto collisions, potentially not introducing wolves into an area if the herds are already stressed and habitat improvement projects. We firmly believe that if CPW is concerned about these herds (that take up a massive geographic area) the 1.5 miles of Haymaker we have been discussing for years now is not the problem or the solution.

- When Haymaker was built it was always envisioned as a place for Eagle to recreate year round. When the request came to close the 3rd loop and Extra Credit, we happily agreed. When the request came for a 2 week longer closure every year, regardless of conditions, we reluctantly agreed attempting to operate in good faith and the spirit of compromise. Asking to close the trail completely or have an adaptive closure that has the default status as closed is not reasonable for trail users.

Thank you for your time and considering our position. We believe an appropriate compromise has already been reached a strong educational campaign in is place. Please help us preserve access to Haymaker in the winter.

Sincerely,

Robert Tadlock, President
Charlie Brown, Vice President
Laura Turitz, Treasurer
Nicky Asselin, Secretary

Hardscrabble Trails Coalition
www.hardscrabbletrailscoalition.org

Final Drafts of the Open Space Management Plans, Policy Recommendations, and survey results.

November 2, 2023 OSRAC Meeting

Packet Attachments

Links to all of the attachments for the November 6, 2023, OSRAC meeting are included below. Select the link to view the attachment.

Links to the four final draft management plans:

Abrams Creek + Eagle Ranch Management Plan
Bluffs + Eagle River + Eby Creek Management Plan
Haymeadow + Spud Cellar + Haymaker TH Management Plan
Johnson's Corner + Brush Creek Management Plan

Links to the results of the preliminary survey and feedback from the Open House engagement opportunity:

Online Survey Summary
Engagement Opportunity Summary

Combined packet with all attachments:

Combined Management Plans, Policy Papers, and Engagement Summaries