

# Greater Buena Vista and Adjacent Fourmile North Study Area

## – Categorized Community Input

This is a summary by Tapis Associates of the Buena Vista/Fourmile Study Area input received in 2024 for the Chaffee County Trails System & Conservation Planning process. The input sources include

- Working Group and Agency tabletop critical needs worksessions
- Baseline Data collection (GIS trails and conditions)
- 2024 Public Meeting and Survey

From this input, focused efforts on the Chaffee County TSCP Early Wins plan and the two Study Area trail system and conservation plans (Greater Salida and Buena Vista/Southeast Fourmile) were identified. For all Trail System and Conservation Plan efforts, input and recommendations are organized by Critical Needs. The Critical Needs categories include:

- Natural Resource Health
- User Experience
- Social Trails
- Maintenance & Management

---

### Natural Resource Health Critical Needs

---

Most of the following critical need categories and the corresponding recommendations improve Natural Resource Health. Ongoing natural resource enhancement efforts in progress include extensive public land wildlife habitat enhancement on the BLM (Bureau of Land Management) and USFS (United States Forest Service) land in northern Fourmile. CPW (Colorado Parks and Wildlife) collar data shows that deer from 8 adjacent counties rely on low lying lands in Chaffee County (such as Fourmile) to survive.

This work aims to enhance habitat for many species including Mule Deer and Big Horn Sheep. Extensive projects to enhance habitat quality (such as by re-establishing meadows in overgrown Piñon forests and rejuvenating beneficial shrubs) are in progress and planned throughout the area. This includes completed and planned prescribed burns (such as at Limestone Ridge) and completed and planned vegetation treatments (such as Railroad Bridge).

### WILDLIFE - INPUT TO DATE

---

#### SOLUTIONS – COMMUNITY SUGGESTIONS

1. Assess opportunities to reroute trails in best habitat
2. Move new trails away from high value and production habitat
3. Close trails (and roads) in big game production areas
4. Reduce car traffic to trails - protects wildlife (collisions) migration pattern disruption
5. Target protecting specific blocks of wildlife habitat. Blocks have no trails or human disturbance (provide Refugia)
6. Seasonal wildlife closures need to be area closures not just route closures
7. Continued wetland/riparian restoration (i.e. Beaver Dam Analogs) to increase fire resilience

## **Greater Buena Vista and Adjacent Fourmile North Study Area**

### **– Categorized Community Input**

8. BLM travel management plan to restrict to designated routes in Chaffee County
9. Seasonal closure for wildlife USFS Road 345
10. Violations of seasonal closures near Bacon Bits trail.
11. Valuable vegetation resources are not sufficiently protected in this area. A much greater focus of planning and design to protect native plant communities, ancient piñon pine and bristlecone are needed.

# Greater Buena Vista and Adjacent Fourmile North Study Area – Categorized Community Input

## User Experience Critical Needs

### TRAILHEADS / PARKING - INPUT TO DATE

---

#### GENERAL

1. Toilet funding
2. Parking management needed
3. Parking near Johnsons Village
4. Inadequate parking areas at trailheads during busy times. Paid parking areas are not being used and should be rethought.

#### SOLUTIONS – COMMUNITY SUGGESTIONS

1. PARKING
  - a. Motorized vs non-motorized - Need more parking areas
  - b. the parking area at BV Overlook needs to be expanded
  - c. More parking at Turtle Rock outside camp area
  - d. Increase trail infrastructure and amount of designated Trails Heads. Increased visitors from Denver on our small number of trails are quickly degrading our trail conditions and maintenance would only be a band aid solution if people are not spread out.
  - e. Reduce parking lot size and demand for parking - Establish parking space capacities relative to desired trail capacities
2. RESTROOMS
  - a. Add restrooms
  - b. Chaffee County Economic Development Corp - help us with restrooms. We need more companies to pump toilets and build vault toilets
  - c. A toilet is needed inside the Northern Fourmile area
  - d. The trailhead up CR 304 could use better bathrooms. It is heavily used by mountain bikers, and pit toilets like the ones at the bottom could help with overuse and smell

### USER CONFLICT - INPUT TO DATE

---

#### GENERAL-user conflict

1. Bike/hike
2. Incompatible uses, trampled vegetation and/or erosion, safety, side-by-side 4 wheelers, motorcyclists, mountain bikers, runners, hikers. Runners vs bikes vs motorcycles vs ATVs vs eBikes. Too crowded - huge growth of visitors. Close to BV - too many difficult trails, not enough easy trails
3. firearm discharge control
4. Ped/ vehicle conflicts near midland tunnels. Peds and dogs walk around completely haphazardly and cars park wherever. They also walk aimlessly over the RR tracks to the river. Creates congestion, frustration, and is dangerous. A separate trail would be ideal.

# Greater Buena Vista and Adjacent Fourmile North Study Area

## – Categorized Community Input

### MOTORIZED-user conflict

5. Issues with multi use (dirt use is pretty heavy)
6. Incompatible uses, trampled vegetation and/or erosion, safety, side-by-side 4 wheelers, motorcyclists, mountain bikers, runners, hikers. Runner's vs bikes vs motorcycles vs ATVs vs eBikes - Too crowded - huge growth of visitors. Close to BV - too many difficult trails, not enough easy trails
7. Northern Fourmile - side by side too damaging to trails
8. ATVs are out of control - need some enforcement - very dangerous to hiking/biking
9. Many of the Northern Fourmile trails shown are really roads open to ATVs and motorized use. The Fourmile area has become a "sacrifice area" for motorsports. This use has pushed wildlife out of what was formerly desirable habitat and winter range. This should be corrected with closures and habitat improvement. Having 2 ATV rental outlets in BV has only caused more resource degradation in Fourmile. At the current rate, all of Fourmile will need to be between fences. Currently, locals rarely go there, except in winter to avoid being in a "dust bowl"
10. All main routes through four mile are roads - this puts RVs, cameras, motorbikes, ATVs, bikers, eBikes, off-road drivers, hikers, dog walkers, and equestrians on the same roads

### SPECIFIC PROBLEM AREAS-user conflict

11. User conflicts on 376A
12. Issues along 304 - camping, parking, safety (drivers, peds and bikes) and ADA access and camping/parking
13. Road use conflicts (Arkansas & 371)

### TOO MANY PEOPLE-user conflict

14. Too many users with too few trails, trailheads and facilities (vault toilets) to spread which creates unsafe road travel.
15. Too many users, trail conditions, dogs off leash, social trails, etiquette, dispersed issue, off-road driving
16. Proximity to town creates mega-use. Familiarity with the area. I want to preserve the area and experience for our kids and grandkids.
17. Accessibility, proximity, volume, impacts users
18. Apt to become busier via location

### SOLUTIONS – COMMUNITY SUGGESTIONS

1. AGENCY PLANNING and ENFORCEMENT
  - a. BLM travel management plan to restrict to designated routes in Chaffee County
  - b. USFS must restrict mechanized use to designated routes consistent with BLM Fourmile Browns plans
2. TRAIL DESIGN/PLANNING

## Greater Buena Vista and Adjacent Fourmile North Study Area

### – Categorized Community Input

- a. Designated biking/hiking trails, downhill/uphill biking trails
  - b. Rotating use days on multiple use trails. Moto one day, hike one day, bike another day.
  - c. Add more trails close to town to reduce user conflict. Identify portions of trail systems for eBike use, enforce eBike restrictions and carefully plan areas where eBikes are allowed
  - d. Consider a fee-for-use, designated "dog park" with 10-15 miles of trails and open spaces to play (also open to non-dogs, obvi). No fences needed. Register your dog(s) to use the dog park on a daily/weekly/annual basis- set expectations to Public that dogs will be off-leash.
  - e. Options for trail loops and directional hiking recommendations would bring users. I'd pay for this. :)I'd help fundraise for signage/planning, too
  - f. Address the issue of expanded use of UTVs as a trails system issue, acknowledging that UTV, ATV and motorcycle use on system two track routes impacts shared pedestrian and mountain bike use on those two tracks
3. OUTREACH
- a. Bigger OHV crews/presence
  - b. Bike / hike Solution = training before e-bike and bike rentals
  - c. Address the issue of expanded use of UTVs as a trails system issue, acknowledging that UTV, ATV and motorcycle use on system two track routes impacts shared pedestrian and mountain bike use on those two tracks
4. ENFORCEMENT
- a. Hire more resource rangers to patrol and monitor camp sites and advise users due to heavy use
  - b. More enforcement
  - c. Citizen patrols
  - d. USFS must restrict mechanized use to designated routes consistent with BLM Fourmile Browns plans

### **GENERAL TRAILS - INPUT TO DATE**

---

1. Eroded steep unsustainable trail segment
2. Northern Fourmile - side by side too damaging to trails

### SOLUTIONS – COMMUNITY SUGGESTIONS

1. SINGLE USE/DIRECTIONAL USE
  - a. Biker/hiker only circle options
  - b. With trails not BUILT for bikes - too many useless mikes & turns to make it easy for them

## Greater Buena Vista and Adjacent Fourmile North Study Area

### – Categorized Community Input

- c. Create directional trails to alleviate uphill/downhill conflict - delineate trails for hiking only, directional management, and non-motorized bikes

#### 2. CONNECTIVITY AND MISSING EXPERIENCE

- a. The Midland trail on the USFS could have some new singletrack loops off of the trail to spread users out to use the east end of the trail
- b. Figure out the missing recreation experience and a way to provide it
- c. non-motorized singletrack trails adjacent to existing roads to mitigate speed differences between user groups while maintaining wildlife habitat
- d. BV needs some non-technical smooth climbing non moto single track
- e. Steeper and longer trails for runners and hikers
- f. Have different trail types. Ex. If user-created Mountain bike jump line trails keep showing up. Have a legal one.
- g. Connectivity to Buena Vista
- h. ADA more trails on level ground around town. Easy topography = easy trail - Beginner friendly trails - 2) Need for Easier "entry level" mountain bike trail. The Sausage Link/Bacon Bits/Midland is a wonderful intermediate trail (Blue/Green), but it would be good to have a more basic Green singletrack for beginner riders.

# Greater Buena Vista and Adjacent Fourmile North Study Area

## – Categorized Community Input

### 3. MISCELLANEOUS

- a. Safety motion sensor lighting (in town only)
- b. More trails and new trails.
- c. Large tract of private land in the center of north Fourmile is ripe for development so consider acquisition
- d. Buena Vista Singletrack trails has consistently built difficult trails instead of a mix of trails suited to all user groups. The group has turned a deaf ear to requests to be inclusive regarding building more beginner intermediate “flow” trails. The terrain around Buena Vista is no excuse. It turns out that use gets concentrated on the few less difficult trails, increasing crowding. Recently there was a serious accident on the Broken Boyfriend South trail requiring a large SAR effort to rescue the victim. Pull your head out of your butt and start listening to the diverse user groups. I volunteer on many public lands work projects. - However, BV Singletrack Trails is not on my list as worthy of my sweat!
- e. More trails connecting existing trails to make loops - Expand singletrack trails from front country to backcountry loops

### **SPECIFIC TRAILS and CONNECTIONS - INPUT TO DATE**

---

1. River park bridge - trash issues
2. River park ADA access
3. Crank and Hammer missing
4. Close to BV - too many difficult trails, not enough easy trails - Make the techno sections of midland trail easier
5. The Buena Vista trail system should be treated separately from Northern Fourmile. Two entirely different kinds of use.

### SOLUTIONS – COMMUNITY SUGGESTIONS

#### 1. SINGLE USE/DIRECTIONAL

- 1) Create bike only option to segment fast downhill bike traffic

#### 2. CONNECTIVITY AND MISSED EXPERIENCE

- 1) Trails to connect municipalities on 50/285/29
- 2) County connections from municipalities to public lands
- 3) Create trails on abandoned railroad ROW - The Midland trail east of BV is gorgeous, but the places that bypass where there used to be trestles are too difficult to match with the beginner level of the old railroad route. It would be much better if beginners could ride the whole thing with ease. - The Midland trail on the USFS needs some reroutes to avoid eroded gulleys and make the trail more user friendly

## **Greater Buena Vista and Adjacent Fourmile North Study Area**

### **– Categorized Community Input**

- 4) Create more, safer, easier and better linkage routes from BV into the Fourmile.
- 5) Downhill directional mountain bike only trails in the Whipple + midland trail areas to separate users and provide better experiences for all
- 6) It would be amazing to develop a walking/hiking trail behind 375A



## Greater Buena Vista and Adjacent Fourmile North Study Area

### – Categorized Community Input

- 7) Midland trail/Davis Meadow/Vitamin B connector. Provide an uphill trail to Vitamin B - additional non-motorized singletrack trails in the vicinity of vitamin B to provide more user options in that region. - As a runner/ hiker, I can't even get on these cuz motor bikes, 4-wheelers, no round trip dustless option for Vit B
- 8) Interconnecting trails for north end of Vitamin B and Fourmile TH, and Davis Meadows TH
- 9) Establishment of separate non-motorized trail system or gravel bike routes
- 10) Create safer highway crossings from PSA Greater Aspen Ridge; specifically, to/from FR #308, FR #305 to/from CR 187 and CR 308
- 11) Limestone Ridge Singletrack
- 12) Need for Easier multi use trail that can be used by non-mountain bike cyclists (such as gravel bikes) - similar to the Mineral Belt trail in Leadville. Of course - a great solution would be to convert the old D & RG railroad to a "Rails to Trails" - but - from what I hear - that is not going to happen any time soon.

#### 3. MOTORIZED

- 1) Create new multi-use motorized single track specifically to connect to PSA Greater Aspen Ridge
- 2) Better road access
- 3) Volunteer policing of 4X4 use
- 4) Needs defined UTV routes
- 5) Add motorized single track, there are none presently - More motorized trails
- 6) Less roads open to side-by-side ohvs
- 7) Contain motorized to BARE ground
- 8) Better enforcement (and barriers) to keep motorized vehicles on designated trails/routes -which will reduce damage to non-trail areas
- 9) Open up existing trails to moto use

#### 4. MISCELLANEOUS

- 1) Integration of Class 1 eBikes - needs to address E-bike usage & collect data regarding such usage by establishing a "trial eBike legal trail" where Class 1 E-bikes are allowed on specified trail for a period of a year. Create a baseline data set to assess trail condition (erosion, etc...) with photos & educational signage before beginning trial period, then study the differences in user experiences & trail condition following the trial year. For BV, a suggested trail for E-bike data trial is the entire Midland Trail.

# Greater Buena Vista and Adjacent Fourmile North Study Area – Categorized Community Input

## Social Trails Critical Needs

### GENERAL SOCIAL TRAILS - INPUT TO DATE

---

1. Identify why individual social trails exist. What experience are users looking for?
2. Identify user created trails which serve a need and are sustainable. Do a NEPA process to add them to the system and decommission other non-system trails.
3. Convert some social trails to system trails

### SPECIFIC SOCIAL TRAILS - INPUT TO DATE

---

4. Identify 'social trails' and prevent further use as needed or evaluate whether it's a viable alternate route
5. Address social trails on 4mile creek

## Maintenance and Management Critical Needs

### GENERAL MAINTENANCE and MANAGEMENT - INPUT TO DATE

---

1. Hire rogue trail builders.
2. Trail resources for sustainably reducing erosion
3. Funding to maintain or reroute trails
4. Trail management and maintenance

### SPECIFIC MAINTENANCE and MANAGEMENT - INPUT TO DATE

---

1. The Vitamin B trail was built without authorization. It was built with fall line trails that erode quickly with downhill use and water erosion. It will need extensive repair and rerouting to avoid becoming a virtual trench.
2. Pursue agreements with town to manage urban interface trail systems and trailheads

### CAMPING - INPUT TO DATE

---

#### GENERAL

1. Dispersed camping continues to expand trampling vegetation and creating social trails all over the Fourmile area.
2. campsites left dirty, dispersed use
3. proliferation of new vehicle-based campsites too many to list here.

## **Greater Buena Vista and Adjacent Fourmile North Study Area**

### **– Categorized Community Input**

4. Perhaps a limit on where larger camping vehicles are allowed to access would help mitigate road impact. People with giant RVs don't need to be going deep into Four mile to set up their generators next to folks in tents
5. Preservation of existing camping opportunities including dispersed sites
6. Regulate the camping by designated sites but have enough sites to accommodate the busy season.
7. Make it a state park, charge for entry, camping and OHV permits.

# Greater Buena Vista and Adjacent Fourmile North Study Area

## – Categorized Community Input

### SPECIFIC

8. Zebulon Pike trail - camping and parking
9. Camping to road maintenance at Turtle Rock
10. County 304/MIDLAND: Issues along 304 - camping, parking, safety (drivers, peds and bikes) and ADA access and camping/parking - Camping management very difficult (i.e. 304 sign was put up and torn down in 24 hours) - manage camping better - it's a mess! and after the fire near Interlaken from a fire not put out properly, there's very real risk to our community and area. go out there on a Saturday or Sunday and you will find people camped in previously undisturbed areas, non-designated spots, anywhere they can fit their vehicle off the road, and even on private property. Perhaps a reservation system and better signage. The 'no camping beyond this point' sign at the Midland TH is useless - it's the 5th sign in a row of signs (some with bullet holes) and isn't even at the proper height to be seen from a vehicle.
11. Assist in establishing Designated camping sites once USFS finishes the "Camping Plan". This is needed if users are going to be able to access trails.
12. Continue to restrict dispersed camping in Northern Fourmile with buck and rail fences and boulders to protect critical wildlife vegetation.
13. Dispersed camping everywhere of 315. It's become very widespread with damage. Reduce availability of sites. Some of the best are so worn over. Also, OHVs going on the challenging routes creates tons of erosion.

### EDUCATION - INPUT TO DATE

---

#### SOLUTIONS – COMMUNITY SUGGESTIONS

1. Bike / hike conflict Solution = training before e-bike and bike rentals
2. Educational signage explaining how critical agriculture operations are to wildlife habitat and ecosystem health (at parking areas, trailheads, etc.)
3. Make trail information easily accessible, especially to visitors who aren't as familiar with the area. Visitor's Bureau website with interactive maps on trails and camping where you can easily find different rules and regulations.
4. Utilize stay the trail education and outreach
5. Provide clear signage of closed or illegal roads
6. Outreach on effects of human disturbance on ungulates and on the very rare plants that only occur here
7. Education at trail heads on staying the trail because of important wildlife habitat. This area is a critical winter range habitat for mule deer
8. Trash pickup enforcement is needed
9. Signs telling Jeep drivers to watch for motorcycles coming up behind them and to let them pass.