



Katsos Ranch Open Space and the Vail Trail – Preserving a portion of the Gore Valley as it was before Vail.

VAIL HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION

Report – Katsos/Vail Trail Mountain Bike Trail Extension

July 31, 2018

In the mid-1970's, the Town of Vail acquired a large portion of the Katsos Ranch property, south of Interstate 70, for the purpose of establishing a publically accessible wildlife and open space nature preserve. It was the intent of the Town of Vail to demonstrate its intention to maintain a harmonious relationship with the exceptional natural environment it shares. The site was acquired to prevent development in an area known to contain verdant habitat for the abundance of migratory and sedentary wildlife that inhabited the area on either side of Interstate 70. As well, newly applied zoning densities on the surrounding area, all of which had been recently annexed in the Town of Vail, were kept to the minimal residential uses.

Based on independent analysis, by a collaborative team of qualified interdisciplinary public and private professionals, a paved public path was constructed through the site. The chosen alignment for the path was in a location that was determined to be the least disruptive to the wildlife that was known to inhabit the area. The design criteria establishing the alignment was intended to minimize human dispersion throughout the entire parcel and to concentrate human activity along minimally intrusive access corridors crossing the site. The path was built so that it was located to follow the

natural contour of the land, to minimize scarring from construction and built on open terrain well removed and highly visible to wildlife sheltering in the nearby pristine forest, cliffs and waterways.

The Vail Homeowners Association, since its inception 25 years ago, has advocated for the preservation of the Vail community's natural assets and works diligently to preserve the character of the publically accessible open spaces set aside for those purposes. We have closely followed the Town's deliberation of the proposed amendments to its [Open Lands Plan](#). We note, with concern, the precipitous decline in certain wildlife populations due to urbanization as reported by State Wildlife Officials.

We observe and question whether there is sufficient and detailed independent analysis to verify a proposed additional separate trail for mountain bikes that would be consistent with the intent, purpose and functioning of the Katsos Ranch open space property. The proposed location of the mountain bike path intrudes through the



View from I-70 of Katsos Ranch Open Space, Gore Creek Wetlands and Wildlife preserve.

heart of the forested wildlife shelter zone. In places it traverses old growth Aspen groves, which are a rarity on the floor of the Gore Valley. The rugged terrain of the area, which would be disrupted by the construction of the path, could well leave an unsightly scar on the near pristine natural landscape, one of the most scenic and beautiful views in the community. In addition, any form of competitive mountain biking on such a trail would only further disrupt wildlife. For these reasons, it is requested that the route of the proposed extensions of the Vail Trail through the Katsos Ranch open space be removed from the Open Lands Plan trail recommendations.

We recognize and applaud the Town's effort, during the Cleveland administration, to respond to the increasing demand for recreational bicycling by expanding the aprons along the Frontage Roads, particularly from Ford Park towards East

Vail. These aprons can now serve as a means of diverting all forms of bike traffic around environmentally sensitive open space lands and congested areas of the community. Further, we applaud the creation of an extensive mountain bike trail network on Vail Mountain and urge that the focus of mountain biking remain there. The necessity to receive a promotional accolade as a stellar community for biking should be balanced with a higher need to preserve the natural assets and beauty that is one of the important bedrock principles upon which the success of the Vail community's harmonious sustainability depends.

Katsos - Buffer zone between paved Vail Trail recreation path, Gore Creek wetlands (left) and wildlife sanctuary zone (right).



Katsos - Wetlands near Memorial Park where the lives of those who helped define the Vail community are celebrated.



Attend Town Council OLP Trails Public Hearing August 7th, 2018 – Vail Town Hall

Community Service Link:

**Vail Valley Foundation
Colorado Pro Classic Bike Race Stage 1 & 2
August 16-17 2018
[Vail Road Closures:](#)**

Please provide us with Community service links that you find useful.

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