



SPOKE TALK

Ride local, support local

Happy summer! As riding season kicks into full gear, I'm thankful for the amazing selection of local trails. I was so excited to hop on Flash of Gold last week after it reopened from the seasonal closure. I rode (literally tongue-wagging) viewing the gorgeous columbines dotted along the trail. And while I saw several trees down, I was impressed with the freshly sawed stumps that opened nonstop access to the sweet singletrack before me.

Flash is a favorite among locals and visitors, along with the trails it now easily connects Grouse, BTR and the brand-new Buffalo Billy cutoff. It just keeps getting better and better. I think it goes without saying that our trails are a key feature to the active lifestyles so many of us crave — and dare I say, thrive on.

I am acutely aware that our trails are taking a beating after increased use (especially over the past year) compounded with the dry conditions. They need a lot of TLC. Currently, the ever-popular NPR trail is undergoing major improvements thanks to a private donor, city staff, contractors and volunteers. And since trails don't manage themselves — that is where we come in. You and me, the collective "trail users."

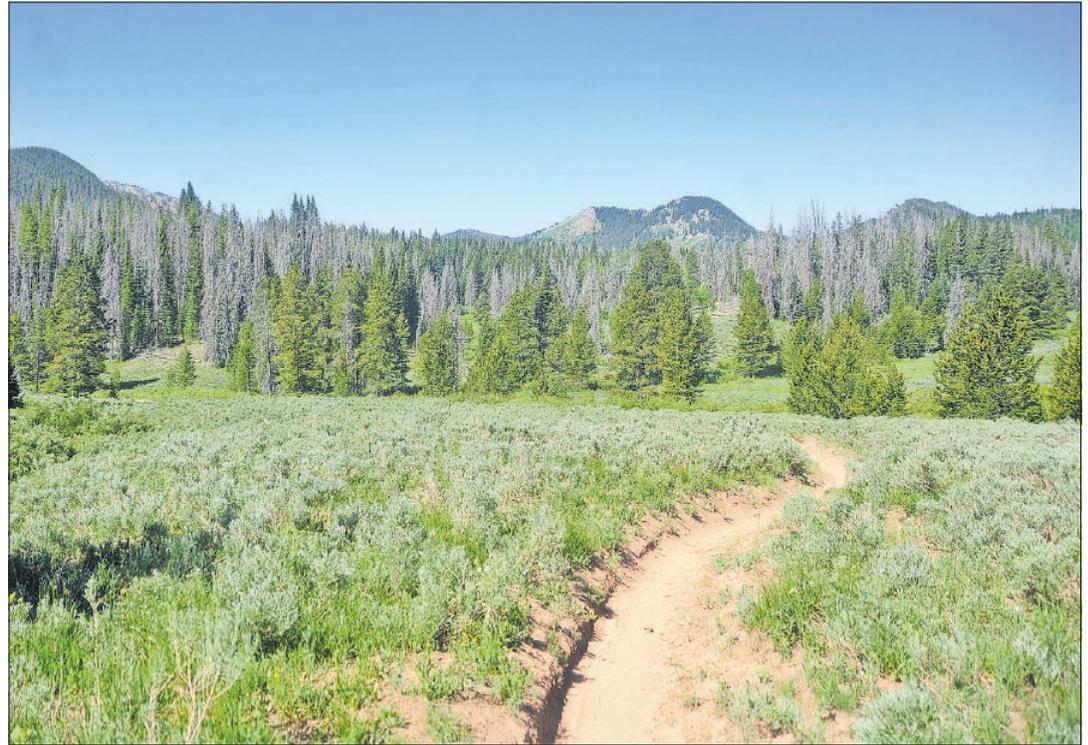
I urge you to consider the opportunities below to support the management, improvement and advocacy of our trails that is necessary to keep them riding — running and hiking — beautifully for years to come.

■ **Amazon:** Go to smile.amazon.com and select Routt County Riders as your charity. Download the app to make it even easier. Amazon will send you an email update regarding the amount contributed to RCR based on your purchases as well as the total amount RCR gets from combined supporters. Each update truly makes me smile. "Every little bit counts" it says. I would love to see the collective number go up.

■ **RCR:** Support RCR as a member. Go to RouttCountyRiders.org, click "Ride" and follow the links for membership. You will be directed to an IMBA page and simply select RCR as your local chapter. Membership goes towards RCR's mission of cycling advocacy in Northwest Colorado, and you get a few other perks from IMBA.

Read the full column at Steamboat Pilot.com.

Tonya Kennish is a member of Routt County Riders and is a trail ambassador.



SHELBY REARDON/STAFF

The Prospector Trail takes hikers and mountain bikers through lush meadows and patches of forest in North Routt. [View a video from the trail at SteamboatPilot.com.](#)

Prospector Trail

Follow this path through evergreens, wildflowers and more

Shelby Reardon
Steamboat Pilot & Today

NORTH ROUTT — Hiking the Prospector Trail has some mystery to it. While walking on the dusty single track, it's hard to guess where the trail will turn next. The rises and falls in the meadows and trees mask the trail in front of you, so it's a delight to discover where it leads.

Sometimes, it wanders through an expansive meadow with tall grasses, wildflowers and sage brush that shimmers in the breeze. Next, the path will turn into the woods, where the temperature is cooler and the evergreens shoot off soft spurts of new needles. Pet them. It's a delight.

Every once in a while, there is a water crossing, perfect for keeping furry hiking companions cool and hydrated. Powder blue butterflies flit around the stream, drifting this way and that like they're spelling a name in cursive with letters of another language.

A few spots near the water crossings were muddy, but the rest of the trail was dry. My ankles were covered in a layer of dust by the afternoon.

Except for a couple mountain bikers and a helicopter tending to a small wildland fire in the area, the Prospector Trail was empty and quiet. In a year without abnormal June heat, the Prospector Trail would be a comfortable hike for those who don't



GRAPHIC ONLINE

[View a map of the trail at SteamboatPilot.com](#)

want to start too early. Our dog Dallas had a blast and didn't get too hot, even with his brand new backpack on. He did pass out on the car ride home, though.

The best part of the trail is there are no real climbs or descents. The hills are small and sporadic as the trail stays around 8,800 feet above sea level. After crossing Forest Service Road 487, there is a somewhat intense mile-long climb over a ridge, but a casual hiker may not make it that far.

Mountain bikers who are seeking a more challenging trail will hit the Prospector Trail, which is rated difficult by a couple trail information websites.

In the winter, the area is known as Trilby Flats and is listed as an easy and accessible snowshoe spot.

The Prospector Trail begins in North Routt. There are a few access points, one just off Routt County Road 129, but the official trailhead is a little over a mile up Forest Service Road 488. A sign points left, where a short dirt road leads to a small lot with a large map and information board. From there, the trail moves west

where it eventually meets the Nipple Peak Trail. The trail also stretches back to 129 and then toward the Hahns Peak trailhead. It's 8.9 miles in total.

The only thing slightly negative about the trail is the first segment from the trailhead is downhill, which means the last haul to the car is all uphill. Thankfully, it's in a lovely shaded section of the trail and is over before you know it.

Right down the road is Hahns Peak Lake, a slightly less well-known watering hole perfect for paddle boarding, fishing and picnicking.

Normally, a North Routt hike calls for ice cream from the Clark Store, but the patio was packed with families looking to beat the heat. So, we opted for a milkshake from Johnny B. Goods. The Cookie Crumb uses their own baked cookies, and as much as I loved the trail, the first sip of that shake might have been the highlight of the day.