

HIKING

CROSS-COUNTRY TRAIL COULD BE MORE

By Mike McKibbin

A cross-country ski trail that only sees around 100 visitors could welcome many more people year-round, if the West Elk Multi-Use Club finds more volunteers.

The 10-mile looped trail, also used for hiking, horseback riding and mountain biking in the summer, is on White River National Forest land, with a trailhead at the end of Buford Road.

Club co-chairs Tod and Peggy Tibbets of Silt said most of the work over the last few years to mark and maintain the trail has been done by about four people.

"We'd like to have a better organization base and more stable funding," Tod Tibbets said. "This has been a user-supported trail from the start and we've always had enough, except for our own snowmobile to pack the trail."

Peggy Tibbets said they want to keep the trail open for no-cost recreation.

"You hear about so many Forest Service trails and facilities having to be closed due to budgets, we'd hate to see that happen," she said. "There are just so many gorgeous views, it's perfect if you like rolling hills, flat areas and sunshine."

"You can see Mount Sopris (by Carbondale) and the Elk Mountains," Tod Tibbets stated. "And you're already up on the Flat Tops, so the terrain is just gently rolling, maybe a few short hills. But you go through aspen and pine trees, and you can see the Roan Plateau and Mamm Creek (near Rifle.)"

For hikers and bikers, the terrain is not "radical," Tod Tibbets added.

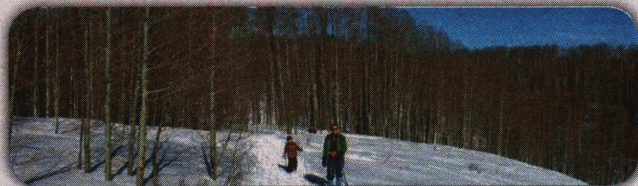
"That's why it's attractive to us," he said. "The terrain is undulating and the hills are fast enough for a short thrill, but even if you haven't skied a lot, you can use it."

The trail starts at about 9,300 feet in elevation and probably gains only 200 feet, Tod Tibbets said.

Mountain bikers could become a prime user of the trail.

"There's a good group of mountain bikers between New Castle and Rifle and I know they're all looking for places to ride," Tod Tibbets said.

Peggy Tibbets has started an online Web blog to draw attention to the club and the trail, wemuc.wordpress.com.



Peggy Tibbets