



September 14, 2021

Kevin Warner
District Ranger
White River National Forest, Aspen-Sopris Ranger District
620 Main Street
Carbondale, CO 81623

City of Aspen Support for Maroon-Bells Snowmass Wilderness proposed fee

Dear Kevin,

As a mountain resort municipality with over 1,100 acres of open space being 'locally secured' and protected by taxpayer funded acquisitions situated within a county comprised of thousands of acres of federal BLM and Forest Service lands, the City of Aspen is in support of the Aspen-Sopris Ranger District's proposed fee collection in highly used areas of the Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness. Over the last several years we have noticed the marked increase in visitation and use in both our local wilderness areas as well as our nearby National Forests. We appreciate the White River National Forest's proactive efforts to create an overnight visitor use management plan to better manage the increasing use in the Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness. We recognize that this fee proposal is the next step in implementing that management plan aimed at providing better recreational experiences and restoring much of the heavily damaged areas caused by the overuse.

We understand and support the formula allocated for local return of the fee-revenue for management of the permit program. Having additional wilderness rangers presence is important to the City as both an education/enforcement tool and to ensure the safety of the people visiting the wilderness. Reducing the impacts in these heavily used areas and charging a fee to implement this permit program is necessary because the appropriated budgets coming to the Forests cannot support a program like this.

The one concern the City of Aspen has with the proposed fee relates to equity in access for all people. A \$12 per person per night fee may be a barrier for some to access these areas of the Maroon Bells- Snowmass Wilderness. We want to encourage the Aspen-Snowmass Ranger District to investigate options for ensuring that this fee is not a barrier to access, and that equity in access to public lands is addressed.

Thank you for the thorough outreach and opportunity to comment. If you have any questions or would like to learn more about the City of Aspen's thoughts and concerns related to the proposed fee, please reach out to Austin Weiss, Director of Parks & Recreation, 970-429-2023.

Respectfully,

Austin Weiss, Director of Parks and Recreation