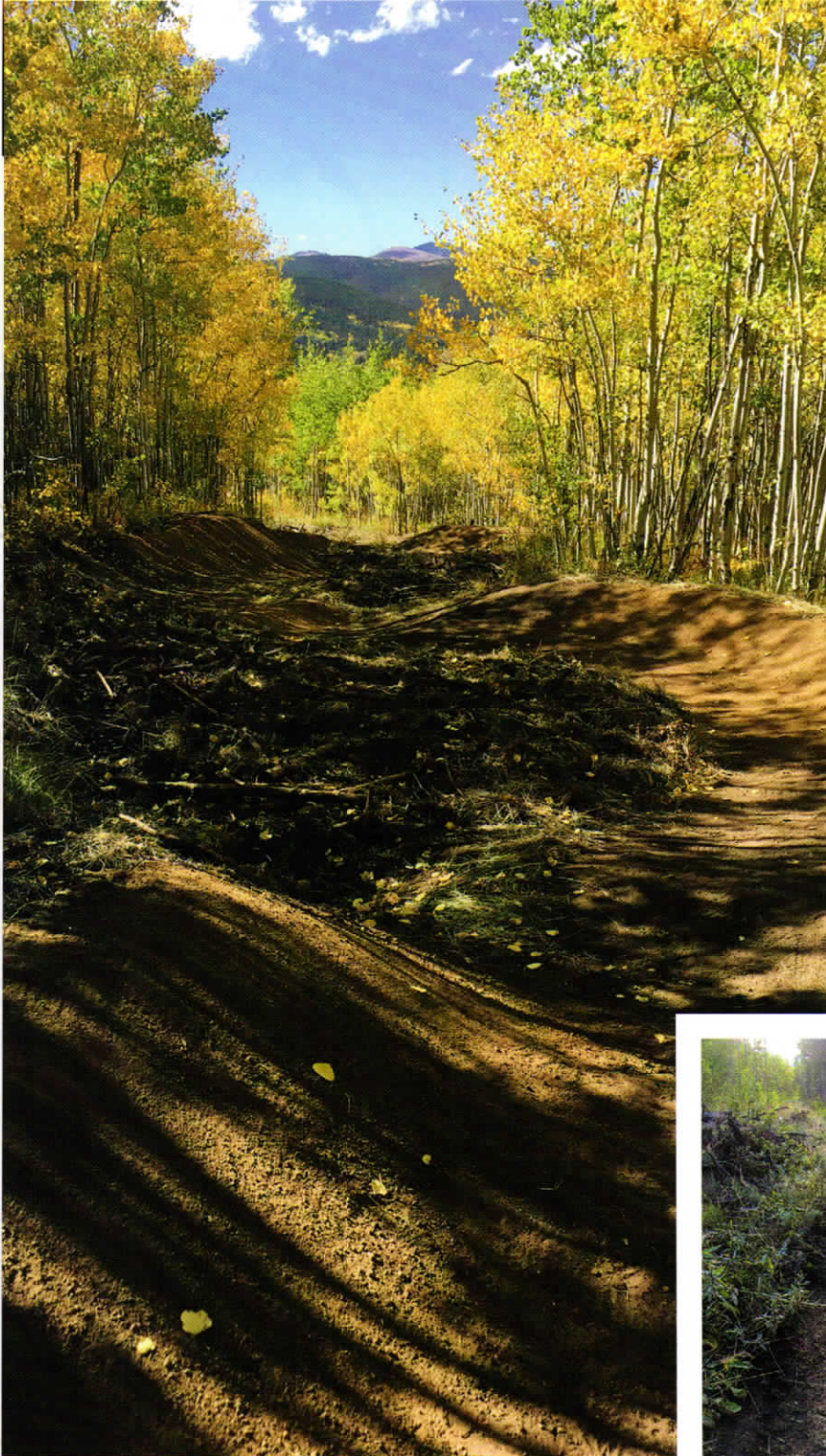


FROM ROAD CUT TO ROLLERCOASTER

BY AARON MATTIX



TRAIL SYSTEM: West Magnolia

LOCATION: Nederland, Colorado

LAND AGENCIES: U.S. Forest Service; Boulder Ranger District

TRAIL ADVOCACY GROUP: Boulder Mountainbike Alliance

TRAIL DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION: Contour Logic;

Gumpton Trail Works; Rocky Mountain Youth Corps

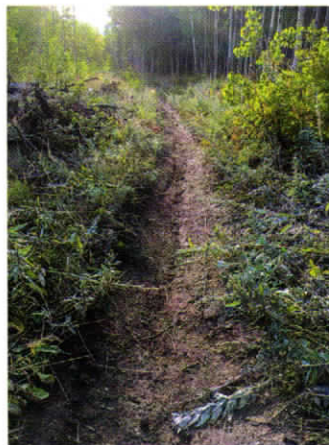
LENGTH OF TRAIL(S): 1.5 miles

THE PROJECT: Aspen Alley was one of the first projects in a plan for the West Magnolia trails. In order to accommodate the increasing number of trail users, the goal was to make the user-created social trails more sustainable and streamline the mazy web of intersections.

THE CHALLENGE: The original alignment of Aspen Alley was an old logging road with slash (tree limbs discarded in logging) piled on the sides to convert it to “singletrack.” The fall line routing resulted in a trail that became an ever-deepening rut. The road cut through one of the area’s densest aspen stands, which gives the ride its namesake. One of the goals of the project was to minimize further disturbance to the aspens. This constrained construction to the original road cut. The entrenched cut and grade of the alignment would require the large-scale moving of dirt to correct the trail’s drainage problems that were worsening with every rainfall and snowmelt.

THE SOLUTION: Mending the destruction caused by heavy machinery required more heavy machinery. A 6,000-pound Volvo excavator (small by heavy machinery standards; very large compared to normal trailbuilding equipment) enabled the team to move the dirt and reshape the road cut into a series of berms and rollers to better manage drainage and improve sightlines. Holes dug to supply dirt for the berms and rollers were strategically located to serve as drainage sumps and then filled with slash to bring it back to surface level. Undulating from side to side, the reconstructed trail replaces the straight-lined two-dimensional experience of the old road cut with a three-dimensional rollercoaster.

Boulder Mountainbike Alliance led a Rocky Mountain Youth Corps crew in hand-finishing the trail behind the machine and revegetating disturbed areas. Late autumn grass, laden with seeds, was harvested from nearby areas and scattered over the bare dirt outside the immediate tread surface to ensure rapid regrowth.



• **Before and After:** A rutted singletrack trail near Boulder, Colorado, was turned into more sustainable track with berms and rollers to improve drainage and open up sightlines. **Aaron Mattix, Gumpton Trail Works**