

Friends of Mount Evans and Lost Creek Wildernesses



Goose Creek Trailhead, Lost Creek Wilderness, Photo by Dee Lyons April 2022

April Newsletter 2022

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Note from the Chair

By Peter Vrolijk

Bountiful Opportunities

This month's newsletter is full of information about how we can serve the Mount Evans and Lost Creek Wildernesses to help sustain the rugged and natural beauty of these areas and the ecosystems that thrive there. It's a little like inviting people to a party – will they come, and will it be a success?

We have outlined an ambitious plan of work for the season standing on the three pillars of our organization: maintenance of trail systems to minimize the impact of human visitors to wilderness, persistent treatments of invasive plants to preserve natural ecosystems, and public education about the special characteristics of wilderness and the obligations that visitors accept upon entering wilderness.

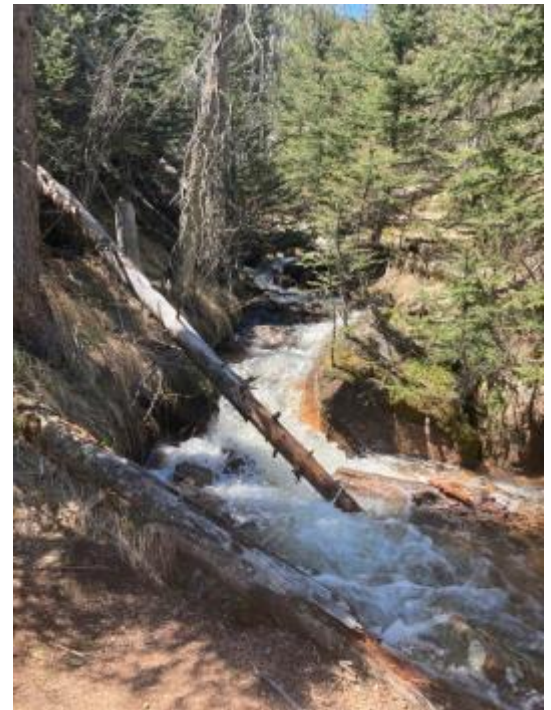
To help fulfill this ambitious work plan, we have adopted a web application that shows volunteers all the work opportunities while providing an easy and convenient way to register for projects: <https://fomelc.org/volunteer-signup>. As the article in this newsletter indicates, we hope this can help volunteers plan activities and thus make them more rewarding.

Our ambitions are outlined in articles that describe planned trail maintenance work on the popular Abyss Lake Trail and continued invasive plant treatments. These plans are becoming more proactive, trying to stem problems before they become worse from heavy usage. The trailhead boot brush kiosks are an example of how we are using charitable contributions to FOMELC to try to minimize the impact of wilderness visitors.

Ridding gear of winter's dust, we are reminded how to plan for a safe and successful hike, either for pleasure or on patrol. While for most of us this comes as second nature, it is nevertheless useful to revisit and think about adequate preparation. And once that backpack is ready, there is an exciting opportunity to contribute data about an essential element of wilderness – solitude. Many of us enjoy wilderness for that sense of solitude, and with information about where and when solitude is possible, resource managers can consider steps to ensure that the essential solitude aspect remains available in wilderness.

Already the summer seems too short, but for me the potential to make a difference is exciting.

-Peter



Spring snowmelt fills streams, a sign of changing seasons: Lost Creek Trail, Mount Evans Wilderness.

WILDERNESS SOLITUDE – AN ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT

*Dale Franchina, Lead Wilderness Ranger, South Platte Ranger District, USDA Forest Service
Peter Vrolijk, Chairman, Friends of Mount Evans and Lost Creek Wildernesses*

According to the Wilderness Act (1964), wilderness is defined as: “An area of wilderness is further defined to mean in this Act an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which ... (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation.” In wilderness areas adjacent large population areas, like the Mount Evans and Lost Creek Wildernesses, the influx of visitors challenges the idea of wilderness. A crucial part of taking the pulse of wilderness includes evaluating the extent to which solitude remains possible.

For this reason, agencies responsible for wilderness areas have established processes for monitoring solitude to evaluate how this aspect is preserved. Volunteer organizations, like FOMELC, can contribute to this effort with observations made in the field using the Survey123 trail patrol application. A survey of this magnitude has never been conducted in either Mount Evans or Lost Creek. The data will be used to inform management decisions in the future (as the Pike National Forest must wait a few more years for the Forest Plan Revision process to conclude). The basic idea is that each Forest Plan has standards for how many contacts a visitor to each wilderness area may expect in each management class within the wilderness (semi-primitive, primitive, and pristine). These data will, perhaps even more importantly, serve as a solid and reliable baseline. It is fruitless to try and track changes over time without a solid baseline from which to begin.



Each wilderness now has two travel corridors identified as representative of three use categories. The categories are Very High, High, and Medium. This results in six total travel corridors. Each travel corridor must be surveyed on five weekdays and five weekend or holiday days, for a total of 60 days for each wilderness. The survey itself is quite simple and consists of two components: travel corridor encounters and occupied campsite encounters. The survey must occur for at least 4 hours but can continue up to eight. The surveyor may travel the length of the corridor or may choose a single spot and remain there. The surveyor may engage with the public if they choose to; we’re not hiding anything! And the surveyor can pursue other patrol observations while undertaking the solitude monitoring so long as all encounters are recorded.

That’s pretty much it. More info, such as maps of the corridors, specific detailed instructions, and copies of the Solitude Monitoring Plans, will be made available in newsletter and FOMELC announcements as the busy season approaches.

Contact peter@fomelc.org if you would like to become involved in this effort.

Thank You Award – Honoring Steve West

Award From the USDA Forest Service Rocky Mountain Regional Office

On April 6, Forest Service Staff from the South Platte and Clear Creek Ranger Districts recognized Steve West for his many years of volunteer service with the Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado (VOC) and the Friends of Mount Evans and Lost Creek Wildernesses (FOMELC). Steve began volunteering in earnest around 1992, which coincidentally is how he met his wonderful spouse Ronda, who also attended this day of recognition.

With 30 some years of volunteer service across a number of national forests and state and county open space parks, Steve has contributed thousands of cumulative volunteer hours with both of these groups dedicating a few hundred hours annually and thereby demonstrating his sustained and enduring service. Steve has even volunteered for the South Platte Ranger District to provide visitor information services during times of vacancies in that position to answer phones and respond to hundreds of visitor inquiries.



District Ranger, Brian Banks (Left) Steve West (right) Photo by Ronda Rolain

Steve has often served as a volunteer on public lands as a crew leader for both Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado (VOC) and Friends Of Mount Evans & Lost Creek Wildernesses (FOMELC) including providing training for others to become volunteer trail crew leaders. Steve has also served on the FOMELC Board of Directors as the trail committee leader and Forest Service trail liaison. Steve is a "C" level crosscut sawyer and has assisted the USFS for several years in instructing crosscut classes to recruit additional qualified sawyers for trail clearing and other wilderness based trail projects. As a volunteer, Steve has led many trail projects focused on trail maintenance and the overall sustainability of NFS lands. Steve has demonstrated sustained and enduring service as a USFS volunteer in numerous capacities, and has also helped to fulfill the Department and Agency goals and priorities of the USDA Forest Service.

In recognition, Steve was nominated for a 2021 National Volunteer and Service award. The districts presented Steve with memorabilia including a yeti mug, volunteer challenge coin, and a cap. In follow up, Steve will be receiving a certificate of recognition and engraved water bottle for his enduring service from the Rocky Mountain Region Office, facilitated by Kristin Schmidt (Region 2 Volunteer & Service Program Coordinator) and signed by Frank Beum, Region 2 Regional Forester.

Thank you, Steve, for your enduring service to the Pike and Arapaho National Forests and the Rocky Mountain Region; it is appreciated!

*Brandon Mitchell
South Platte Ranger District
Wilderness/Trails/Recreation Coordinator*

Invasive



Alan Rockwood
FOMELC Invasive Species Specialist

From the Weed Patch

In most issues of our newsletter, we talk about FOMELC's weed treatment programs in Mount Evans and Lost Creek Wildernesses and motivate members to volunteer. Humans have introduced invasive plants (noxious weeds) to our wilderness lands, and humans have to work to eradicate those species actively. We can also prevent new infestations of noxious weeds from becoming established.

Increasingly popular tools for doing this are boot brush kiosks placed at trailheads. The program is often called "Give Invasive Species the Brush Off." Through generous donations from private individuals, we will be starting the 2022 field season by installing two kiosks on popular wilderness trailheads – May 21st, Goose Creek TH (Lost Creek Wilderness), and June 18, Abyss TH (Mount Evans Wilderness). The kiosks educate hikers on the problem of noxious weeds and induce them to clean their boots before starting. The educational message is targeted to the situation of each location. Education is inevitably the first step toward solving problems.



But will brushing boots make a difference? Evidence strongly suggests they do. Early adopters of kiosks have carefully examined soils from the boot brushes. They propagated the seeds captured from below the kiosks and compared those plants to other samples of soil taken from areas along the trails. The plants grown from the boot brush samples were heavily weighted toward invasive species compared to the other samples. Brushing seeds from your hiking boots is an effective way to reduce the distribution of many noxious weeds. [Article: Boot Brush Stations](#)
These kiosks will require annual maintenance – collecting and disposing of the soils under them and replacing the worn brushes.

The boot brush program was made possible by gifts from the family and friends of the late Fred Hampel. FOMELC is matching their gifts with unrestricted gifts to acquire a total of four kiosks. Two more will be purchased and installed at trailheads in the Bear Creek Watershed later this season.

There is still much work to be done in treating the established noxious infestations in both wildernesses. You have recently received information about our new tool for project recruitment – <https://fomelc.org/volunteer-signup>
Check out FOMELC's schedule of stewardship projects and begin planning your volunteer time in the wilderness.

- Alan



*Wyatt Stanland
Trails Coordinator*

On the Trail



Welcome all to a new season on trails! As the snow begins to melt and the wilderness trails dry out for the season, we at the Trails Program are getting excited to get back outside and see what the trails look like after winter. Building upon last year's success on the Payne Creek Trail, FOMELC will be adopting the **Abyss Trail** for maintenance in 2022. The Abyss Trail is a beautiful trail that starts in the southwest corner of the Mt. Evans Wilderness, passing through expansive aspen groves and alpine tundra before ending at the picturesque Abyss Lake. This year, we will host a work day on the Abyss Trail once a month from May through September, so lace up your boots and join us out there!



History of the Abyss Trail is located on the front page of the Constant Contact email.

Check out the full schedule on [SignUp.com](https://fomelc.org/volunteer-signup), where you can easily sign up for all of our exciting projects!

<https://fomelc.org/volunteer-signup>.

As always, FOMELC and the Forest Service greatly benefit from trail patrol data collected in Survey 123 by our volunteers. We are expecting lots of deadfall after the wet spring snow and high wind events early in the winter, so trail patrols will be especially vital this year for collecting data on the conditions of the wilderness trails. If you are new to trail patrols, contact dee@fomelc.org or wyatt@fomelc.org for more information on how to get started!

New for 2022, the Trails Program at FOMELC is looking for a volunteer to lead the Trailhead Hosting Program. This position has the potential to become a major source of public outreach, education, and recruiting, and we are very excited to expand this program. See the position description elsewhere in this newsletter for more information.

As you can see, there are many exciting happenings in the Trails Program in 2022, with many different ways to get involved. We can't wait to see you all out there this year!

- Wyatt Stanland

Attention Smartphone Wilderness Survey123 App Users!

Ralph Bradt - ralph@fomelc.org

The last update to Survey123 (3.14.242) has created problems with the "Set as favorite answers" function. I generally save the number in group, name, other members, Wilderness, and trail name, but with the last update, it won't remember other members or trail name. I reported the bug and it should be fixed with the next update. Meanwhile, if you enter those two items in the initial "Start Patrol" record, I can fill them into the rest of the records for you. If you have an earlier version, you should be fine.

FOMELC Volunteer Open Position **Assistant Trail Projects Coordinator**

The Friends of Mount Evans and Lost Creek Wildernesses is looking for a dedicated wilderness steward to become an Assistant Trail Projects Coordinator. The Assistant Trail Projects Coordinator will have the exciting opportunity to build and run a **Trailhead Hosting Program**, which has the potential to be a significant source of public exposure and outreach for FOMELC. This position will also assist with organizing trail patrols, which are a primary source of trails upkeep and information for FOMELC and the Forest Service. Finally, the Assistant Trail Projects Coordinator will spread the love of wilderness to other users and will be a part of making the wilderness a special, inclusive, and welcoming space for all users!

Additional information is in the March 2022 Newsletter.

Interested? Please contact Wyatt: wyatt@fomelc.org

Training Opportunities for FOMELC Members **Trail Crew Leader and Invasive Weed Training**

If you are interested in any of these opportunities, please contact wyatt@fomelc.org for space availability and reimbursement information.

FOMELC is looking for enthusiastic volunteers who want to grow their wilderness stewardship knowledge and skills in 2022. There are a variety of exciting training programs that FOMELC members can take advantage of. **FOMELC will reimburse the cost of any approved training! Spots are limited and some courses fill up quickly!** We hope to see you all out there this year!

Additional information is in the [March Newsletter](#)

2022 MEMBERSHIP VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT DUE NOW

Attention Potential 2022 FOMELC Volunteers!

You must sign a new Master Volunteer Agreement each year.

Before your first volunteer event this season, please go here to sign up:

<https://fomelc.org/volunteer-signup>

Get this signed now and you won't have to worry about it for the rest of the year.

Volunteers are our lifeblood. Thank you so much for volunteering!

Questions? Contact John Kruse john@fomelc.org

2022 Wilderness Stewardship Online Training Program

New or interested in becoming a member with the Friends of Mount Evans and Lost Creek Wilderness Organization? A great way to begin is with an online training program beginning now. Be ready to jump into projects to protect these two wildernesses this summer.

We offer this training to help make the volunteer experience more enjoyable and rewarding, both when working in teams and individually. The training modules consist of three basic components:

- Modules 1-3: Discussion on wilderness protection and how the federal law came into being
- Modules 4-6: There are many ways volunteers can contribute
- Modules 7-9: How to collect data for the forest service and complete a patrol training hike

Are You Registered? Contact Dee dee@fomelc.org

ALL HANDS DAY RETURNS ON JUNE 18!

Many hands make light work! This is our FOMELC member spring kick off for the season. Come out to do some trail work on the Abyss Trail, help with public education at the Trailhead Host Booth, learn about the new installation of an invasive weed boot brush at this trailhead and then join us for a BBQ provided lunch about 2pm.

Sign up now! Bring your camp chair!

Check out more information on <https://fomelc.org/volunteer-signup>

2022 Fire Restrictions

As of April 21: Several counties are in Stage 1 and Stage 2 Fire Restrictions

Know before you go! Colorado Fire Bans:

<http://www.coemergency.com/p/fire-bans-danger.html>

“Only You Can Prevent Wild Fires!”



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FOMELC WEBSITE: <https://fomelc.org/>

COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS:

The safety of our community is our top priority, and we are committed to doing our part to limit the spread of COVID-19 (aka coronavirus). We are closely monitoring guidelines from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment (CDPHE), and how these might affect our programs. We are also coordinating with our US Forest Service partners to remain in compliance with their COVID-19 response guidelines. Stay Safe and Healthy!

FOMELC Mission Statement:

The Mount Evans and Lost Creek Wildernesses encompass 194,400 acres with over 170 miles of trails in Colorado's Pike and Arapaho National Forests.

We work in partnership with the US Forest Service, engaging in education, outreach and stewardship activities to preserve the wilderness character of these lands for current and future generations.

*Friends of Mount Evans & Lost Creek Wildernesses
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<https://fomelc.org/>

Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home; that wilderness is a necessity; that mountain parks and reservations are useful not only as fountains of timber and irrigating rivers, but as fountains of life.

- John Muir

