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## July 2020 Newsletter

### COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS UPDATES:

The safety of our community is our top priority, and we are committed to doing our part to limit the spread of COVID-19. We are also coordinating with our US Forest Service partners to remain in compliance with their COVID-19 response guidelines.

As of July 26th all scheduled volunteer programs in the South Platte and South Park Ranger Districts have been cancelled due to the rise in COVID-19 infections. As of this newsletter, scheduled volunteer programs are still ongoing with the Clear Creek Ranger District.

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## Note from the Chair – Peter Vrolijk

### Wilderness Principles

Work in the wilderness areas began in earnest this month despite the obstacles and hurdles that the COVID pandemic has created. We are succeeding at making some progress in part because FOMELC is used to working with small groups, and this has made it easier for our projects to adapt to the current work restrictions. However, we are all disappointed that the rising infection rate in the state will cause all volunteer activities in the South Platte and South Park Ranger Districts to cease after July 26.

Alan reminds us that the battle with invasive plants requires discipline and relentless effort. Anyone who has had to take on one of these plant types on her or his property will attest to this struggle. It takes a long view to really address this problem. Too little tribute is paid to Alan and the volunteers who join him on a regular basis to keep after this problem.

I had the article about cairns in mind when I came up with this month's title. Cairns have certainly proliferated in specific areas in wilderness. The east end of the Cub Creek trail, which is near my home, has experienced a lot of new cairns, which is surprising for how lightly this trail is used. The conclusion of that article is really the key – with every step and action that we take in Wilderness, will we succeed in the goal of Leave No Trace? How do we encourage other Wilderness users to embrace and practice these principles? Please try to honor these principles and discuss them with others at every opportunity you have.

FOMELC works closely with other volunteer organizations, but often this collaboration goes unnoticed. Our trail patrols and records of downed trees are used by the Front Range chapter of the Back Country Horsemen to help plan their trail-clearing projects. The number of trees down in some areas this year has been tremendous, and we appreciate the efforts of the BCH to make our subsequent work easier.

Finally, FOMELC volunteer Wyatt Stanland has planned an epic challenge in the Lost Creek Wilderness. Over the course of 4 days at the end of July, Wyatt plans to cover an off-trail course of 100 miles that touches all of the high peaks in the Wilderness. Beyond the physical demands and accomplishment, Wyatt is promoting the work of FOMELC to the trail-running community with his adventure. Three cheers for Wyatt as he undertakes this phenomenal challenge.



Craig Park Trail, Lost Creek Wilderness. View to the southeast taken east of Shawnee Peak

- Peter

# Forest Service COVID-19 Related Closures in Our Area

## **Mt Evans Road Closure :**

This road is access to the following Mt Evans Wilderness Trails: Summit Lake Trail, Chicago Lakes Trail and the Mt Evans Ridge Trail. The Weed Teams use the Mt Evans road to access Lincoln Lake and Beartrack Lakes to spray noxious weeds.

According to the USDA Forest Service Public Affairs, CDOT and Denver Mountain Parks Press Release:

**The Mount Evans highway will not open for cars at all this year.**

**CLEAR CREEK COUNTY** — Due to issues associated with COVID-19, USDA Forest Service and Denver Mountain Parks will not be able to provide services for visitors on Mount Evans this summer, and the Mount Evans Highway (Colorado Highway 5) will not open to motorized vehicles for the 2020 season. The Colorado Department of Transportation, the USDA Forest Service, and Denver Mountain Parks — the agencies that jointly manage Mount Evans — have reached this decision after careful consideration of both health and safety risks and economic feasibility.

## **Fire Restrictions**

Know before you go! Colorado Fire Bans:

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



## ***FOMELC Event and Project Status***

- As of July 26th all scheduled volunteer programs in the South Platte and South Park Ranger Districts have been cancelled due to the rise in COVID-19 infections. As of this newsletter, scheduled volunteer programs are still ongoing with the Clear Creek Ranger District.
- We are working closely with the Forest Service for policies regarding our volunteer work and projects on National Forest.
- Monthly FOMELC meetings are suspended until it is safe to resume gatherings like this one.
- Multi-person field activities, like All-Hands Days, remain in flux as we consider how the public health environment progresses into the summer.
- **Access to Mount Evans Wilderness through State Wildlife area:** CPW Commission requires a valid hunting or fishing license to access all State Wildlife Areas and CPW-leased State Trust Lands. A valid hunting or fishing license will be required for everyone 18 or older attempting to access any State Wildlife Area or State Trust Land leased by Colorado Parks and Wildlife, beginning **July 1, 2020**. It is recommended that FOMELC members doing trail work, spraying weeds or doing a trail patrol wear a FOMELC uniform to be exempt from the hunting or fishing license requirement. However a fishing license will also cover you for any Search and Rescue needs.

## **Weed Program Projects:** (Contact [alan@fomelc.org](mailto:alan@fomelc.org) to sign up for a project)

Mount Evans Wilderness (MEW)    Lost Creek Wilderness (LCW)

July 29 Wed	MEW: Beartrack Lakes Orange hawkweed (re-scheduled)
Aug 3 Mon	MEW: Pedee Creek #2 – Musk and Canada thistles
Aug 5 Wed	MEW: Resthouse Meadows – Orange hawkweed
Aug 10 Mon	MEW: Beartrack Lakes Orange #2 – Orange hawkweed
Aug 13 Thu	MEW: “Magic Valley”/ Bear Creek near Beaver Meadows Trail – Canada thistle
Aug 17 Mon	LCW: Lower Goose Creek Trail (on hold)
Aug 19 Wed	MEW: Beartrack Lakes “Burn Area” Wilderness – Yellow toadflax
Aug 26 Wed	MEW: Beartrack Lakes “Burn Area” Wilderness #2 (if necessary)
Sep 2 Wed	LCW: Wigwam Creek #2 – Canada thistle (on hold)



Creative Social Distancing – Goose Creek Trail Weed Project

## FOMELC Member Crew Shirts & Hats for Sale

Shirts (Dark Green only): \$15      Hats: \$10



Contact Gordon at :  
[gordon@fomelc.org](mailto:gordon@fomelc.org)

or Dee at:  
[dee@fomelc.org](mailto:dee@fomelc.org)

To order your shirt and/or hat.





**FROM THE WEED PATCH**  
*Alan Rockwood*



Our treatment program has gotten off to a great start. So far, we have completed projects at four sites – two each Lost Creek and Mount Evans Wildernesses. We have picked up two new FOMELC member volunteers participating in multiple projects. Chris Sill learned about us from working with Steve West on VOC projects and David Litke was been with Colorado Mountain Club for years and wants to do more conservation/stewardship work. We really appreciate their interest and efforts. Also, we welcome back some of the “usual suspects” in the fight against weeds – Dee Lyons, Deb Grass, Jim Shelton and Charlotte Wytias.



Our early projects have been on Rolling Creek Trail and Goose Creek/Hankins Gulch in Lost Creek. The target species were musk and Canada thistle. At Rolling Creek, we expanded our treatment area to include what is ostensibly the Colorado Trail Trailhead that added significantly to the acreage covered. This was our second year of treatments at Hankins Gulch and we learned more about the extent of the Canada thistle infestation. This was an area significantly impacted by the Hayman Fire. Aspen and willows at the site are recovering but that is a mixed blessing. This past week we treated Beaver Meadows and Captain Mountain “South” in Mount Evans. On our visit to



Beaver Meadows we finally found 15 orange hawkweed plants - zero three weeks earlier. Their numbers decline but slowly. Orange hawkweed is the highest priority invasive species for eradication we have to treat. Eradication of the thistles nearby is doing well but it requires years of consistent effort. At the Captain Mountain “South” site, we are making excellent progress on the musk thistle but in the marshy areas of this meadow Canada thistle remains a problem.

The next couple of weeks require a pretty intense schedule because of plant cycles that determine the optimal time for treatments. Musk thistle and orange hawkweed are beginning to flower and need to be treated now. In August our focus will turn to higher elevations and species like yellow toadflax that is a late to mature. So, there are many opportunities to make a tangible contribution as wilderness stewards; sign up for a project and make a difference.



- Alan

Photos by Dee Lyons

A final note on COVID 19 safety, I believe our crews have been diligent with social distancing and the appropriate use of masks. At first mixing herbicides and filling the sprayers was a little awkward but we've got it figured out. Working in the fields, social distancing is not a problem. We have been working out patterns to fit the topography and keeps 10 or more feet apart. We would rather be carpooling but everyone accepts that it isn't practical this year. And, believe me out there in the field your focus totally shifts to wild lands and what you are doing and all the other "stuff" goes away.



## Is There Such a Thing as A Good Thistle?

Yes!



Photos by Dee Lyons

**Alpine thistle** or Mountain thistle (*Cirsium scopulorum*) is a big favorite on tundra hikes with its other worldly appearance. Its Latin name implies "of rocky places". We usually find this imposing flower at or above timberline on our "thru-hikes" to Beartrack Lakes and Lincoln Lakes. More officially its elevation range is given as 9,000 to 13,300 feet in boulder fields and scree. It is a biennial plant producing a rosette in its first season and a flowering stock in its second season.





## Good Thistles Continued



**Parry's thistle** (*Cirsium Parryi*) is in the same family as Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) and native to Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona. Plant is easily identified by its cluster of "hairy" yellow flowers. It is most often found in meadows, moist woodlands and streamside at elevations between 7,000 and 12,000 feet. We see it often in Mount Evans Wilderness – Beartrack Lakes Trail at Bear Creek, Beaver Meadows as the Trail re-enters forest lands near the wilderness boundary. This past week we found a Parry thistle in the Pedee Creek meadow.



**Wavy leaf thistle** (*Cirsium undulatum*) prefers lower elevations up to 9,000 feet and sandy gravelly soils. Although classified as a biennial the plant can survive to flower in successive seasons. It is a lovely plant with its beautiful flowers and silvery green foliage. We find it in abundance in the Hankins Gulch area and in meadows near the Rolling Creek Trailhead (Lost Creek Wilderness.) If we garden with thorny roses why not use spiny thistles?

Photo by Dave Litke



# MOUNT EVANS HISTORY

## THE RESTHOUSE TRAIL – *Ralph Bradt*

The Resthouse trail has changed a great deal over time. From the original alignment, sections have been removed, others added, and some rerouted. It appears that only one section of the original trail remains in today's Resthouse trail.

The original Resthouse trail was a part of the original trail system in the upper Bear Creek basin, created as a part of an agreement between the Forest Service and the city of Denver. In exchange for the city agreeing to drop its support of turning the Mount Evans area into a national park, the Forest Service agreed to develop recreational opportunities in the upper Bear Creek basin, expanding the trail system and creating four new backcountry campgrounds.

One of these campgrounds was the Resthouse, a cabin built by the Forest Service and furnished by the Colorado Mountain Club. Built in 1917, the Resthouse stood at the bottom end of Resthouse Meadows until 1968, when it burned down.



The Resthouse trail was built around the same time and connected the Resthouse to the trail to Beartrack Lakes, which had another backcountry campground at the lake. This section is now part of the Cub Creek trail. The trail also ran north from the Resthouse to join today's Resthouse trail, then northwest to the Lincoln Lake trail. This is the one original section of the trail that is still part of today's Resthouse trail.

There may have been a social trail to Lincoln Lake before the Mount Evans road was built, but the first mapped trail appears when the road reached Summit Lake. Beginning at today's Mount Goliath Nature Center, the trail generally followed timberline south at about 11,500' to the lake. Beginning in 1933, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) began constructing a new Lincoln Lake trail, starting at a new campground at Echo Lake. Construction proceeded southeast from there about three miles, to a point about a mile past Vance Creek. By 1938, the trail was complete to Lincoln Lake, most likely the work of the CCC.

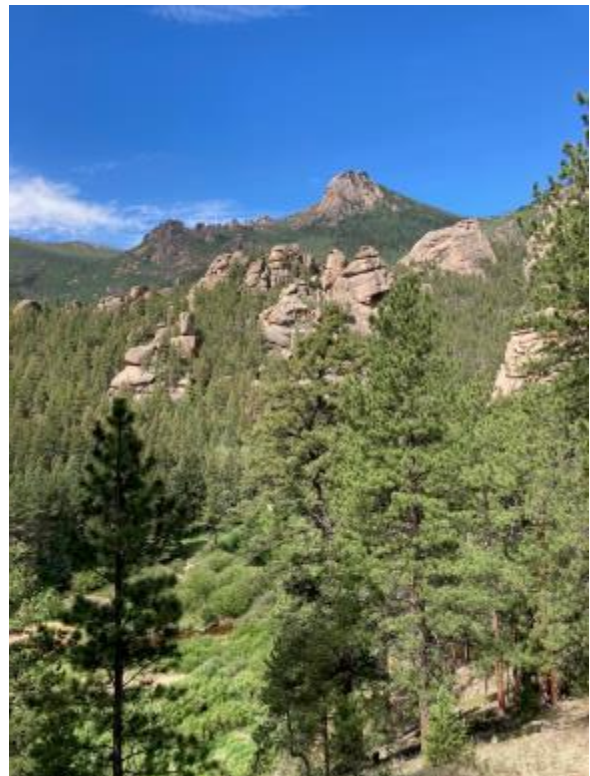
# What is Wilderness?

The **Wilderness Act** of 1964 was written by Howard Zahniser of The Wilderness Society. It created the legal definition of wilderness in the United States, and protected 9.1 million acres of federal land. The result of a long effort to protect federal wilderness and to create a formal mechanism for designating wilderness, the Wilderness Act was signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson on September 3, 1964 after over sixty drafts and eight years of work.

“In order to assure that increasing population, expanding settlement, growing mechanization, does not occupy and modify all areas within the United States. For this purpose there is established Wilderness Areas where the Earth and its community of life are... **untrammeled**. Where man himself is a visitor, who does not remain, where land retains its primeval character and influence.”

*-Wilderness Act of 1964*

Wilderness, as defined by the Wilderness Act, is **untrammeled** (free from man's control), undeveloped, and natural, and offers outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation. Within wilderness areas, the Wilderness Act strives to restrain human influences so that ecosystems can change over time in their own way, free, as much as possible, from human manipulation. In these areas, as the Wilderness Act puts it, "the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man, “untrammeled” meaning the forces of nature operate unrestrained and unaltered.



# News from Marketing & Education – Gordon Brown

## Lost Creek Wilderness and Its History

This Pike National Forest treasure near Bailey and Fairplay takes its name from Lost Creek which repeatedly disappears into and reappears from underground passages. When it reappears for the final time, the creek name changes to Goose Creek. Goose Creek empties into the South Platte River at Cheesman Reservoir just east of the Wilderness area. The Goose Creek watershed is part of the South Platte River Basin.

Lost Creek Wilderness is located approximately 60 miles southwest of Denver. Unlike most of Colorado's jagged Wilderness profiles, Lost Creek is a land of fascinating rounded granite domes and knobs, split boulders, rare granite arches, and tree-lined mountain parks. Its rock formations are among the most spectacular in the entire Rocky Mountains. Wilderness elevations range from 8,000 feet to 12,400 feet.

Black bear, deer, elk, bighorn sheep, and bobcats share the region. The northern section contains most of the Platte River Mountains and the Kenosha Mountains.



Photos by Stephen Bentsen



In 1963, the 15,120 acre Lost Creek Scenic Area was created under the precursor of the Wilderness Act, the "U-Regulations" of 1939. In 1966, the Scenic Area was also designated a National Natural Landmark. During the first U.S. Forest Service Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE) process, Lost Creek received more comments recommending its wilderness designation than any other Colorado area. In 1980 the 105,000 acre Lost Creek Wilderness was created under the Colorado Wilderness Act of 1980. Approximately 14,700 additional acres were later added to the west end of the Wilderness under the Colorado Wilderness Act of 1993. Lost Creek Wilderness is accessed by a 136 mile trail network, 105 miles of which are within the Wilderness boundary. The cross-state Colorado Trail passes through the Wilderness.

The Lost Park area on the west side of the Wilderness was one of the last refuges of the wild American Bison in Colorado.

### [How Do I Get There?](#)

Check out our website to view a map of our Wilderness trails:

<https://fomelc.org/interactive-trail-map>

Information on this Wilderness and all other Wildernesses can be found on [Wilderness.net](http://Wilderness.net)



# TRAILS - Steve West

## Scientists Say: Hey, Hikers, Stop Stacking Rocks!

Article by Melanie Radzicki McManus Jan 30, 2020



### **Art or Environmental Impact?**

If you've been out on a hiking trail lately, you've probably noticed them suddenly popping up everywhere – small, intentionally stacked piles of rocks, called cairns. And environmentalists worldwide are increasingly alarmed. Because moving rocks can have numerous unintended consequences for insects, animals and even the land.

People have been stacking rocks since the dawn of time, typically for directional or burial purposes. More recently, park officials began creating them on hiking trails – especially potentially confusing paths – to help ensure hikers don't get lost. In 1896, a man named Waldron Bates created a specific style of hiking cairn in Acadia National Park. The Bates cairns, as they became known, consisted of a rectangular stone balanced atop two legs, then topped with one stone pointing to the trail. These cairns were replaced by standard ones in the 1950s and 1960s. But the park began rebuilding the historic Bates cairns in the 1990s. Acadia now contains a mixture of both.

What's concerning scientists today is the new practice of creating rock piles as an art form, or for alluring social media posts. For stacking rocks is not an innocuous practice. Many insects and mammals head under rocks to live, reproduce or escape their predators. So move a rock, and you might destroy a home. Stack a few, and you may have just exposed the hunted to their hunters.



## **Rock Stacking Continued -**

And while it may sound melodramatic, whether you're stacking rocks in the woods, on the beach or in the desert, your actions could inadvertently knock out an entire colony. Or, in the worst-case scenario, threaten an endangered species.

Some rock-stacking fans note they're being responsible by returning rocks to the spots where they found them after creating, then disassembling, their artwork. However, the minute you move rocks, you may compromise a species' habitat in an unrecoverable manner. In addition, moving rocks in any fashion contributes to soil erosion, as the dirt once protectively tucked under them is now prone to washing away.

Should you come upon stacked rocks, especially in national parks, leave them alone. And if you're hiking, don't automatically follow them. The National Park Service recommends checking with park officials before setting out on a hike, as every park has different rules about cairns. You don't want to remove those intentionally set as navigational aids, nor do you want to follow those that may have been randomly assembled by visitors.

In the end, let your actions be guided by this important principle: Leave No Trace.

The idea of wilderness  
Needs no defense.  
It only needs more defenders  
- *Edward Abbey*



### **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.

## **I Have a Question!**

Got a general or specific trail question? [Admin@fomelc.org](mailto:Admin@fomelc.org) email will go to all board members and one of us will get back to you.

How do I become a volunteer with FOMELC?

Check out our **NEW website** to sign up. [www.fomelc.org](http://www.fomelc.org)