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www.fomelc.org

October 2020 Newsletter



(Fall Photo by Deb Grass)

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Please make a 2020 charitable contribution to: <https://fomelc.org/donate>

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Stage 3 Forest Service Closure Order In Effect

The following affects FOMELC's activities regarding Mt Evans Wilderness and all Forest Lands in the **Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests**. Forest is temporarily closed to **ALL** activity.

“(Oct. 20, 2020) – Effective Oct 21, 2020: Due to unprecedented and historic fire conditions, the USDA Forest Service’s Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests is announcing a temporary closure of all National Forest land. This decision will be re-evaluated daily as conditions change.”

The new starts and explosive growth of fires throughout the northern Colorado Front Range over the past week, including the Cameron Peak, CalWood and Lefthand Canyon fires, has led to this decision. The impacted counties are currently experiencing severe drought; extremely low fuel moisture conditions; a high occurrence of human-caused wildfires; limited capacity for response due to multiple wildfires; and persistent fire-danger weather conditions with no immediate relief in the forecast.”

Closure Order and Map: https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fseprd831610.pdf



(From the Colorado Sun, imagine source Cameroon Magazine)

FOMELC Fundraising Update

Our goal is to raise \$1500 in the fourth quarter of 2020 to help fund our operating budget. The operating fund of the annual budget relates to providing training, materials, tools, safety and other supplies and supporting services for patrolling, maintaining the hiking trails, camping areas and educating the public on the use of trails in the Arapaho and Pike National Forests.

A donation of as little as \$25 can purchase materials for education or to sharpen a saw for trail maintenance.

Currently we have received \$1320 in generous donations.

<https://fomelc.org/donate>



Or mail a check to Friends of Mount Evans and Lost Creek Wilderness
PO Box 34
Evergreen, CO 80439

Note from the Chair – Quiet Wilderness

Peter Vrolijk

With fall fully upon us, visitors to wilderness have decreased. I like this time of year because the days can be glorious and the sense of solitude that is essential to wilderness is possible on even the more popular trails. And while a lot of work has been completed over the summer, there is always more work to do. On the day that I took the photo on the Wigwam trail, I surveyed a number of recently downed trees on the Colorado trail, a product of the drought and the high winds that seem to be part of this fall season.

As the articles in this month's newsletter indicate, although the field activities are winding down, work continues. Alan's article about invasive plant treatment reflects on the accomplishments of the past year and the efforts, many of them in the off-season, to sustain that progress. Gordon describes work with a partner volunteer organization that complements our work and provides a valuable source of funds to our budget.

Our tribute to Steve West and his recent NWSA National Wilderness Stewardship Award highlights the value of long-term, sustained volunteer contributions.

The volunteer article helps illustrate all the different ways that volunteers are contributing, often out of the spotlight, with the appeal for more volunteers to step up her or his commitment and find a way to contribute more fully and effectively. We need people and their time to achieve our mission of sustaining wilderness, and there is no time like the present to step up that commitment.



Slow water seepage on the Wigwam trail turns to ice in the cool, fall mornings. Photo by Peter

- Peter



**National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance and Society of Wilderness Stewardship
National Wilderness Stewardship Awards**

Steve West: Our Trails are Better Thanks to Steve

Tribute prepared by:

Peter Vrolijk
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Steve West has contributed to trail maintenance in the Mount Evans and Lost Creek Wilderness areas for decades, both as an individual volunteer on trail maintenance projects, and as a leader and instructor for trail maintenance training courses, including sawyer certification, crew leader training, and general trail maintenance training. Steve has worked closely with Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado (VOC) for many years and is a board member of the Friends of Mount Evans and Lost Creek (FOMELC) Wildernesses, a stewardship organization of which he is one of the original members (founded in 2005). Moreover, Steve was involved in trail projects in Mount Evans long before FOMELC was formed. Beyond his work efforts on the trails, his impact extends farther through his project organization and training efforts where he has provided large numbers of volunteers the skills to undertake trail maintenance on their own. In recognition of his long service, Steve was recognized this month as one of three recipients of the **Wilderness Stewardship Champion of the Year Award** given by the National Wilderness Stewardship Alliance and Society for Wilderness Stewardship.



Steve West completing final mop-up of large, complex tree down across the Threemile trail, summer 2020.

Steve West Continued -

Trail Maintenance Projects in Wilderness

- Steve has led numerous trail projects in the Mount Evans and Lost Creek Wildernesses for more than twenty years, working with both FOMELC and VOC, and often combining the resources of both organizations. He has also led non-Wilderness trail projects throughout the state.
- Steve's biggest impact has been in organizing All Hands Days each summer for FOMELC volunteers and span projects from coordinated trail patrol days in which volunteers conducted patrols on most trails in the Mount Evans or Lost Creek wildernesses to specific trail maintenance and construction projects. In 2018 he coordinated a FOMELC All-Hands Day with VOC to clear trees from trails in the Mount Evans Wilderness and led a group to replace a bridge in the Lost Creek Wilderness (Rolling Creek trail). All Hands Days typically involve 20-30 FOMELC volunteers
- Steve helped coordinate a joint FOMELC/VOC/CMC/USFS project in 2020 to inventory and rehabilitate illegal campsites in the Lost Creek Wilderness. Although public health considerations limited the ultimate effort, considerable progress was made toward achieving sustainable camping environments along popular Lost Creek trails.

Training Leadership

- Steve is a certified C level crosscut sawyer and has trained A and B sawyers. He has assisted in crosscut saw trainings for more than four years and has led crosscut saw trainings for volunteers across the state for the past two years as the crosscut saw program lead for Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado. Over the years, Steve has trained and certified 25-30 crosscut sawyers.
- Steve has also conducted trail maintenance trainings for FOMELC, and trail maintenance and crew leader trainings for VOC across Colorado, as well as helping to develop training programs for VOC's Outdoor Stewardship Institute (OSI).
- Although hard to quantify, Steve has led innumerable small, semi-formal general trail maintenance sessions to help individuals learn how to safely and effectively perform corridor clearing work, clear trail drainage structures, and communicate and educate general trail users. Steve's favorite admonition is to trail users is: 'If you contribute one volunteer day to trail maintenance, you earn the right to use all trails in the state guilt-free for one year.'



Congratulations to Steve!

FOMELC MONTHLY MEETINGS ARE BACK! VIA ZOOM

Mark your calendars - November 11th Meet the Woman Behind Colorado's Highest Trails

Our guest speaker for November, Loretta McElhiney, will give a presentation on Alpine Ecology, a topic that she is very passionate about.



As the Peak Manager for the Forest Service, Loretta has spent nearly 20 years on 14,000' peaks throughout the state. Based out of Leadville, she works with the Colorado Fourteeners Initiative to design and construct sustainable trails, and to close and restore the eroded scars of social routes created by thousands of peak baggers. She has become the foremost alpine trail designer in the state, if not the nation. Through her years working in the alpine, she has acquired a deep love and understanding of the alpine environment and ecology.

In 2018 Loretta received the Southern Colorado Conservation Award for Environmental Stewardship.

<https://www.palmerlandtrust.org/news/loretta-mcellhiney-the-first-and-only-fourteener-program-manager-for-the-us-forest-service-to>

How do pocket gophers play an important role in the alpine? Loretta explains.

<https://www.hcn.org/issues/49.11/meet-the-woman-behind-colorados-highest-trails>



This November meeting will be held via Zoom on Wednesday November 11th from 7-8 pm.

Please RSVP to peter@fomelc.org if you wish to attend the session.

There will be an opportunity during the Zoom meeting to ask Loretta McElhiney questions.

We look forward to continuing our monthly meetings with you!

Finding Rare Things in a Vast Wilderness — Peter Vrolijk

Invasive plants are rare in wilderness, yet where they exist they can crowd out native species. Too often humans are responsible for bringing invasive plants into wilderness, disrupting the natural eco-systems that wilderness is intended to preserve. While FOMELC volunteers search hard for invasive plants during trail patrols, and NWSA-sponsored grants funded comprehensive surveys in 2018 (Mount Evans) and 2019 (Lost Creek), we search only a small fraction of wilderness. What chance is there that invasive plants are thriving beyond where we look?

Each year new infestations are discovered, more by chance than design – along Beaver Meadows trail, on a remote stretch of Cub Creek trail, high on the Lake Park trail, and along Bear Creek. As these infestations thrive, they offer the potential to seed new infestations and further degrade the natural wilderness eco-system.

To address the question of how we look for infestations beyond the trails, we are attempting a science-based approach that combines expert opinion about how new infestations become established and what conditions favor their growth using our existing database of observations and wilderness conditions. A novel analytical and computational approach that is being developed and applied to other problems with large uncertainties – how to search for life beyond Earth, how to look for rare cold seeps on the ocean floor beneath kilometers of water, and how to map invasive species on the Great Barrier Reef – offers promise for invasive plants. All of these problems face the same challenge of confidently locating rare occurrences in vast areas.



FOMELC treatment crew applying herbicide to a newly discovered Canada thistle infestation along Bear Creek during Summer, 2020.



We are assisted in this study by Emily Huang, who is an MIT junior and has taken a position as FOMELC intern for the 2020 fall semester. Emily is pursuing a degree in Brain and Cognitive Science and Computer Science, and she became interested in invasive species as part of a high school science Olympiad. Emily's internship is supported by the MIT Social Impact Employment Program at the Priscilla King Gray Public Service Center, which is providing funding to support undergraduate interns working remotely during these challenging times. While our project is risky – the results we desire are uncertain – we are very grateful to the MIT Social Impact Program for helping give this problem our best shot.

By summer, 2021, we hope to have some maps of the probability of finding invasive

FOMELC intern Emily Huang, who is tasked with helping to develop methods to identify where invasive plants might be found in wilderness, and in particular places that we otherwise overlook

plants like Canada thistle in places no one has looked before. Some of these locations may be well off the trail! We would then visit some of these places to evaluate if thistle has developed there and based on those observations refine our model to improve. This kind of approach can help us identify additional observations we need to make

to improve our confidence and ultimately to be able to state with a high degree of confidence that there are no more infestations to be found. While this approach will be beneficial to the Mount Evans and Lost Creek Wilderness areas, its general design could be adapted to any wilderness area and for any rare occurrence of interest. Please welcome Emily to FOMELC, and stay tuned for future developments.

News from Marketing & Education – Gordon Brown

Platte Canyon Community Partnership and FOMELC Partnership Grant Participation

For the past three years, FOMELC has received grant money from Platte Canyon Community Partnership (PCCP) Resale Boutique in Bailey, Colorado. PCCP is a totally volunteer run organization that supports non-profit organizations and local initiatives along the HWY 285 Corridor. Their purpose is to promote community partnerships through financial contributions primarily through sales at the Resale Boutique and to utilize the expertise of volunteers. Without their generous support, FOMELC couldn't accomplish all that we do.

During the month of November, FOMELC will receive a portion of the sales revenue from the boutique as a Grant for our participation. In order to receive this grant FOMELC is required to provide service hours. There are many ways you can help: provide clean up around the outside of their building, do miscellaneous repairs as needed, deliver donations to ARC if not sold by the boutique and this year, help prepare for the Christmas season. In past years, FOMELC has sponsored a Boys and Girls Club of the High Rockies event teaching the children Leave No Trace Principles, proper procedures when hiking and US Forest Ranger responsibilities. Due to Covid-19, the event was cancelled for 2020. We hope to reschedule this fun event in 2021.

PCCP has requested our help on Sunday, November 1st from 10am to 2pm. We'll be stripping the store of fall décor and getting it ready for the twinkling holiday season. We need at least three volunteers. There's a brewery and winery just across the street in case you want to hang around for awhile and grab a drink or late lunch.

On November 28th (weather permitting) we'll need at least three volunteers to decorate an outdoor live Christmas tree. Please contact **Melanie Brown** to sign up for either of these events at **720-457-4722**.

If these dates don't work for you, there are other ways to help during the month. Please consider giving a few hours.

And remember, Santa is watching!

When you travel to the mountains on HWY285, please stop by the Resale Boutique in Bailey and help support the PCCP and FOMELC during the month of November. Look for the FOMELC display as you enter the store.



60629 US Hwy 285, Bailey, CO 80421

People – Our FOMELC Strength

Peter Vrolijk & Kay Hoisington

People are the fuel that makes FOMELC run and allows us to fulfill our mission of sustaining the Mount Evans and Lost Creek Wilderness areas. People are the volunteers who come out and participate in planned activities, who undertake trail patrols, trail maintenance, or invasive plant treatment on her or his own initiative, and who support the broader good either in formal board positions or informal, *ad hoc* roles. We need people in all of these roles, and we need more people to participate in multiple roles.



FOMELC crew participating in All-Hands Day, August 2019.

This past year saw some phenomenal informal contributions. Deb Grass and Debbie Black contributed countless hours in the development of our new website, and they continue to maintain and update that site with new information. Dahl

Winters has taken a job well out of the spotlight helping Dee Lyons produce each month's newsletter. Every job that our organization undertakes – from mapping and treating invasive plants, to trail maintenance, to cultivating and supporting our membership – benefits from volunteers willing to be more deeply involved in formal and informal capacities.

Volunteers on our board also need replenishment. Earlier this year Dee Lyons stepped aside as secretary in order to focus her efforts on the newsletter and training, and this allowed John Kruse to step into that role. Dave Swinehart left the board early this year, and we have yet to find someone with Dave's long experience with conservation programs to replace the at-large perspective he provided. Kay Hoisington filled a new Membership board position to address issues of new member recruitment and existing member engagement, and we really hope to see her roll when conditions allow us to engage our membership more directly.

With great sadness, Steve West is stepping away from his role in our trails program (tribute to Steve West follows in this newsletter on page 4). While Steve will continue to fully support our trails program, he is no longer able to fulfill a leadership role for this program.

Now is the time to act! Step up your commitment to wilderness by assisting someone in a formal position or stepping into a leadership role. Taking up a greater responsibility during the winter months offers the opportunity to work out the nature of your job and shape it to your interests and expertise so you can hit the ground running in the spring and summer. Please consider starting a discussion with a board member to see how you might help make our efforts to sustain wilderness stronger.

FOMELC Member Crew Shirts & Hats for Sale

Shirts are sold at ½ the price from original order price.

Consider purchasing a shirt/hat to support FOMELC.

Shirts (Dark Green only): \$15 100% lightweight polyester



Hats \$10

Contact Gordon at :
gordon@fomelc.org

or Dee at:
dee@fomelc.org

To order your shirt and/or hat.



FROM THE WEED PATCH
Alan Rockwood

IS IT A PERFECT ‘10’?

Last year at this time I wrote an article for the Newsletter -- “The Weed Program by the Numbers”. I thought to wrap this year up with different numbers, “WSP Scores”. WSP is short for Wilderness Stewardship Performance. Let me give you a little background. A few years ago, the Forest Service adopted this system to assess their stewardship actions to preserve and restore “Wilderness Character”. Ten different elements related to wilderness character are selected by the Ranger District. (There are other mandatory elements.) Both Lost Creek Wilderness and Mount Evans Wilderness opted to be measured on the control of Invasive Species. Each of the elements are broken down into 5 steps, or building blocks and are scored 0 to 10. The “10” level for “invasive species” requires that all the steps are being taken to control and eventually eradicate invasive species in the wilderness.

Volunteer “partner organizations” like FOMELC can and are assisting the Forest Service in managing invasive species. FOMELC from its origins has organized weed projects. At first it was “pulling weeds”, e.g. musk thistle. In 2014 we successfully applied for a grant to hire contractors to treat selected large infestations. Next FOMELC volunteers began chemical treatments under the guidance of Forest Service personnel. At the same time, we were gaining the expertise to survey for invasive plants in the course of volunteer patrols. Thanks to Ralph Bradt’s 1-2-3 “phone app”, this data has become key to Forest Service’s inventory of invasive plants in both Mount Evans and Lost Creek Wildernesses.

In 2018 FOMELC sought to complete “comprehensive inventories” of all potential invasive species in the wildernesses – a key step in the process. This required expanding our invasive plant surveys to other priority areas – social trails, campsites, stream banks near known infestations, etc. It also required looking at other non-native species – mountain goats and moose are “introduced” species, not native. Are they having a negative impact on the ecology? Are wilderness waters threatened by non-native aquatic “nuisance” species? FOMELC received grants in 2018 (Mount Evans) and 2019 (Lost Creek) to help us complete these steps. The conclusions were that invasive plants (not animals) are the primary management problem in both Wildernesses.

With the comprehensive inventories completed, we able to focus treatment programs on invasive plants and prioritize those infestations posing the greatest threat to the “Wilderness Character” of each wilderness. With our cumulative experience in treating these areas, we are increasingly able to assess the effectiveness of our treatments and respond accordingly. These are the factors in the 5th step of the WSP scoring for the Invasive Species Element. I would argue that in 2020 the management of invasive species in Lost Creek and Mount Evans are at the 10-point level. The Regional Forest Service offices will make that call. But this past season we have done all that we could.

It will be a challenge to stay there in the future. There are lower priority infestations that will need to be addressed. Will we recruit enough new volunteers to continue the surveys and treatments? Can we secure funding to hire contractors to continue treatments at the largest infestations? I’m not sure there is such a thing in controlling “weeds” on 200,000 acres as a “Perfect-10”. But, we try. *-Alan*

MOUNT EVANS WILDERNESS HISTORY

History of the Chicago Lakes Trail – Ralph Bradt



Mountain Lake

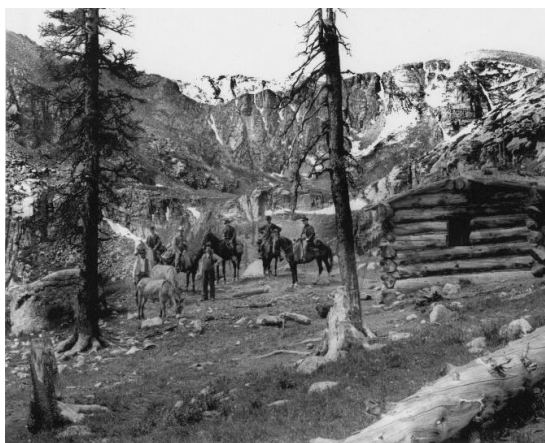


Storm in the Rocky Mountains – Mount Rosalie

In 1863, Albert Bierstadt, a German-born landscape painter, was guided up into the Chicago Lakes basin by William Byers, founder of the Rocky Mountain News. There, he painted Lower Chicago Lake as an oil sketch he called Mountain Lake. Later, in 1866, he used it as the basis for his spectacular canvas titled Storm in the Rocky Mountains – Mount Rosalie. On the same trip, he also made the first ascent of today’s Mount Evans, which he named for his wife to be, Mount Rosalie. In 1895, the Colorado legislature renamed the peak Mount Evans for the 2nd governor of the Colorado Territory and moved the name Mount Rosalie to a nearby 13,575’ peak.



Jackson’s photo of the lakeside cabin



The trailside cabin. Photographer and date unknown



Later, a trail developed to the Chicago Lakes, following Chicago Creek, and probably used primarily by hunters and fishermen. There was a cabin constructed at the upper end of the lower lake, photographed in the 1880s by William Henry Jackson, of which nothing remains. Another cabin sat along the trail northwest of the lake and a sharp eye can still spot its remains, melting into the ground. Both cabins show on the 1905 USGS Georgetown quadrangle.

History of the Chicago Lakes Trail Continued

Idaho & Chicago Creek Wagon Road Co. was incorporated in early April, 1870 with the intent to build a road up Chicago Creek from Idaho Springs to the lakes but, fortunately, this either never reached the lakes or there no longer is any trace of the effort.



1933 – Two young girls on the newly-constructed trail from Echo Lake to Idaho Springs Reservoir.

1933 was the first year of the Civilian Conservation Corps and Company 829 established Camp F-11-C at today's Hells Hole trailhead. Among other projects, like forest thinning and planting, campground improvement, roadside cleanup, and road and trail building, they constructed the section of the Chicago Lakes trail from Echo Lake to the Idaho Springs Reservoir.

On October 9, 1978, people recreating at the upper end of the Idaho Springs Reservoir started a fire that got away from them. 1978 had been extremely dry and the fire ran up the valley, eventually reaching 400 acres by October 12. Seven crews were brought in from New Mexico and Arizona, and by October 16 the fire had been controlled. The burned snags remain and surround you as you enter the Wilderness.

As the popularity of climbing 14,000' peaks increased and damage from climbers ascending the gullies below Summit Lake, headed for the Mount Evans summit, began to add up unacceptably. In 2003, after two years of planning and study, construction began on a sustainable extension of the Chicago Lakes trail from the upper lake to Summit Lake. The work was done by the Colorado Fourteeners Initiative and was completed two years later.

Heavy rains in September of 2013 resulted in a major debris flow down a gully on the west side of Mount Warren, just above the upper lake, that buried about 600' of the trail and a tent. The occupants were fortunate enough to escape from being buried. Work on restoration of that section continues.

What is Wilderness? Dee Lyons

From Wilderness Connect

<https://wilderness.net/learn-about-wilderness/default.php>

Wilderness areas are the most protected public lands in America. Managed with restraint, they are intended to be self-willed lands, both philosophically and practically. Due to their unique character, these truly wild spaces have become part of a cavalier American identity. Found in most states, but concentrated in the west, they protect lush forests, arid deserts, snow-capped peaks, dank swamps and sandy beaches. Yet, the reasons Americans love wilderness are even more diverse than the areas themselves.

Prominent Figures In Wilderness History:



Howard Zahniser wrote the first draft of the Wilderness Act in 1956. An eloquent wordsmith, he chose the word "untrammelled" to characterize wilderness in the Act. Others questioned this choice, yet he was adamant about its use as the right word to characterize wilderness.

While no one person can be called "Father of the Wilderness Concept," Arthur Hawthorne Carhart has been referred to as "the chief cook in the kitchen during the critical first years." Throughout his life he wrestled with issues that still resonate with environmentally aware Americans today, such as the tensions between modernism and anti-modernism and the problem of defining and delineating "wilderness."



Bob Marshall was a voracious outdoorsman. The sheer magnitude of miles he traversed, peaks he climbed, and little known regions he explored constitute a great accomplishment. However, his drive and passion to preserve these places and experiences for all people moved him to organize the forces necessary to protect wild land.

Margaret (Mardy) Murie, "Grandmother of the Conservation Movement," was a committed lifelong protector of wildlife and wild lands. She married Olaus Murie, a naturalist, author, and wildlife biologist who did groundbreaking field research on a variety of large northern mammals. Both were diligent, adventurous and charismatic leaders of the American conservation movement.



**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.

How do I become a volunteer with FOMELC?

Check out our **NEW website** to sign up. www.fomelc.org

Friends of Mount Evans and Lost Creek Wildernesses
PO Box 3431
Evergreen, CO 80439