TOPS Stewardship Update 2020

TOPS Working Committee
Gillian Rossi

Discoveries at Corral Bluffs

a.k.a. The Paleontological Center of the Universe

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"We knew it was a once-in-a-lifetime discovery when it happened."

-Ian Miller, Ph.D. (Paleobotanist)

"I'll be working on the fossils from this discovery for the rest of my life. The discovery will keep lots of scientists busy for centuries to come."

-Tyler Lyson, Ph.D. (Vertebrate Paleontologist)

"I hope these and future discoveries lead to the community gaining a sense of wonder and appreciation for the rich prehistoric, historical and biological treasures contained in right in their own backyard."

-Sharon Milito (Made the first critical find at Corral Bluffs, *Spirit of the Springs* recipient)

Discoveries at Corral Bluffs

a.k.a. The Paleontological Center of the Universe

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Loxolophus

New TOPS mascot?

Fulltime Staff

Park Rangers: Stephanie Fields, Hayley Noneman, Madison Peddy, Wesley Hermann, Joshua Joyner, Caroline Ogdahl, Michael Bowman

Fulltime Staff

Trail Project Specialist – Dan Allen

Park Ranger Supervisor – Gillian Rossi

Winter '19-'20 Seasonal Staff

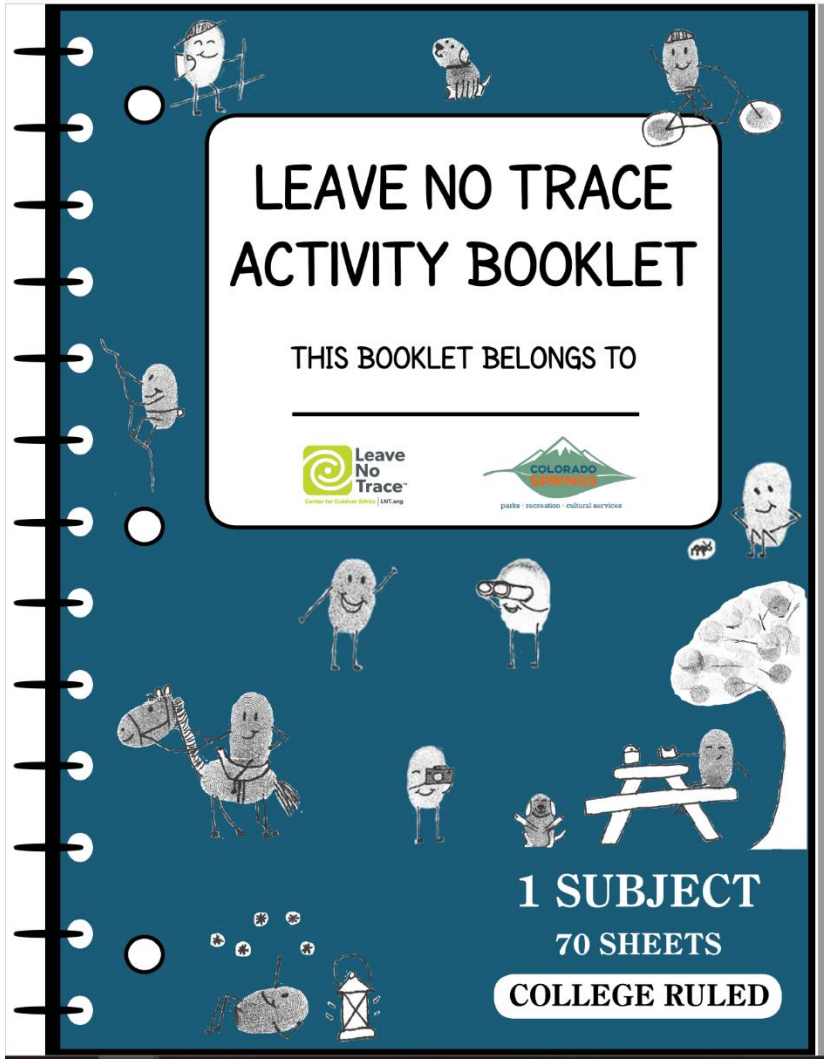
3 **Resource Technicians**:
Lindsay Williams, Jill Blackmon, David Reynolds

1 **Education Technician**:
Anna Eick

Education Technician

-Presented the award-winning *Traveling Trunks* programming to D11 Elementary Schools
-Assisted with creating a brand new trunk focusing on tree ecology, “Wood You Be-Leaf It?!”
-Updated program content to reflect new Colorado Science Standards
-Led guided nature hikes
-Created scripts for virtual programming
-Updated TOPS interpretive cache
-Attended career fairs
-Created a *Leave No Trace* Activity Booklet to supplement the Junior Ranger Nature program

CREATED BY
ANNA EICK



Resource Technicians

- Mapped 78 miles of multi-use trail as part of the Trails Assessment.
- Infrastructure and drainage issues were identified in additional to potential reroute locations.
- Assisted with data collection for the Jacobs Study.
- GIS and map making.
- Wildlife monitoring – game cameras.

Pivot! Locate Assistance

In February, TOPS Winter ‘20 seasonal employees switched roles and worked with the Park Facilities Crew to assist with utility location.

Summer '20 Seasonal Staff

3 Trail Technicians - Deborah Ayers (lead), Seth Tyler, Kelsey Calhoun

2 Biological Technicians - Kristy Melton, Samuel Richards

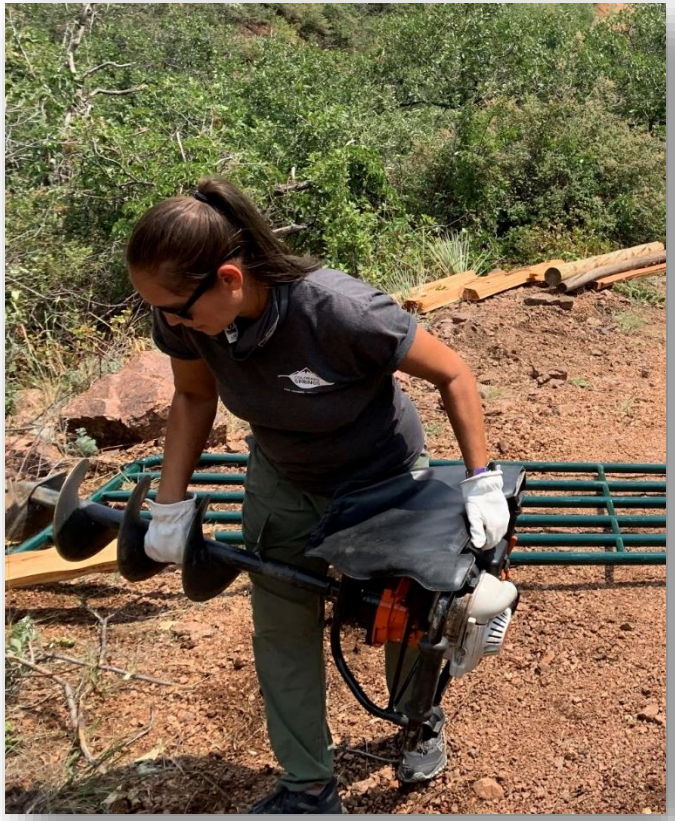
Trail Crew (Trail Technicians)

Responsibilities and percentage of time spent on tasks:

- Trail work, rogue trail restoration, fencing – 48%
- Daily rounds (parking lot inspection, trash removal) - 21%
- Mowing (urban trails, trail heads) – 16%
- Other tasks (volunteer management etc.) – 15%

Accomplishments:

- 925 feet of trail built
- 700 feet of fencing installed
- 20 steps built
- 31 drainage structures maintained
- 1800 feet of rogue trail restored
- 40 ft^2 of retaining wall built
- 600 feet of trail corridor cleared of vegetation
- 700 feet of trail pruned



Biological Technicians

Natural Resource Management

- Migratory Bird Treaty Act Surveys (35 days)
- Avian surveys (360 Point Counts)
- Wildlife monitoring
  - Prairie dog surveys
- Invasive weed mapping
- GIS and map making
- Multiple Myrtle spurge pulls
- BioBlitz and CNC coordination
- Assisted with virtual programming.

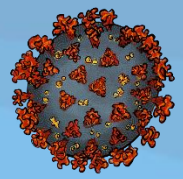
COVID-19 Response

Incline Attendants and Free Reservation System

Public Health Ambassadors

Healthyparks.co

COVID-19 Response



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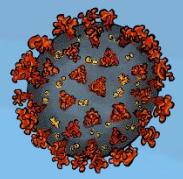
Public Health Ambassadors

10 employees hired

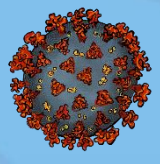
Training led by Rangers Ogdahl and Tatro

COVID-19 Response



- **Public Health Ambassadors**
  - Sanitize high-touch surfaces in parks and open spaces
  - Litter removal
  - Information on current safety guidelines
  - **Target Parks:**
    - Red Rock Canyon Open Space
    - Garden of the Gods Park
    - North Cheyenne Cañon Park
    - Palmer Park

Free Incline Reservation System (FIRS)

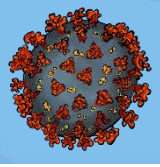


- Started August 6th, 2020
- Ended the closure of the Manitou Incline (March 18th – August 5th)
- Free reservations available using Aluvii software

- 45 people/30 minute session
- 6 a.m. – 6 p.m. (summer)
- 6 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. (winter)

Aluvii
POS Software

Free Incline Reservation System (FIRS)



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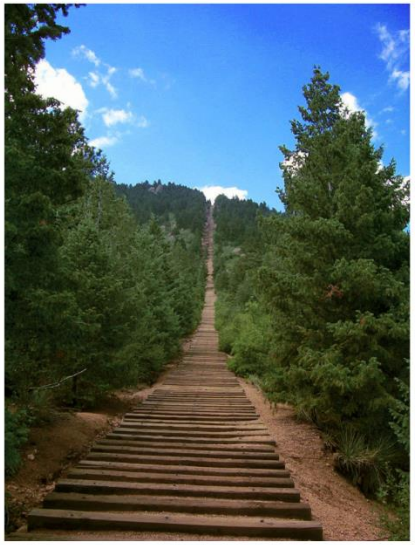
Manitou Incline Reservation - We

cityofcoloradosprings.aluvii.com/store/shop/productdetails?id=1&productId=1

Store Categories Search Products 0 My Cart Login

Store » Categories » Manitou Incline Reservation

Manitou Incline Reservation



Click to Enlarge

Share Tweet Save

$0.00

Description :

Free Reservations Required

The Manitou Incline is open. **All users are required to make a free reservation online before their hike**. This system is in response to concerns by the Manitou Springs City Council regarding crowding during the COVID-19 pandemic. The reservations will help staff manage the volume of people on the Incline at any given time.

Reservation Process

Reservations are open seven days in advance. Be sure to bring your confirmation, either on your phone or printed. City of Colorado Springs Parks' staff will greet you and check you in at the base of the Incline. You will be issued a wristband, which must be worn the entire time you are on the Incline.

· Reservations are available 6 a.m.-6 p.m., April-October, and 6 a.m.-2:30 p.m., November-March. No access permitted after 3 p.m.
· You can reserve more than one slot at a time, however, please only reserve days and times you plan to use. You may also reserve a time slot for another user, but **please limit group reservations to four hikers per time slot**.
· Up to 45 reservations are available for each 30-minute time slot.

Preparation and Safety

This is a vigorous and intense hike, complete with a false summit! The trail is recommended for physically active people and those adjusted to the elevation. Although the trail is just one mile in length, it is a 2,000 ft elevation gain straight up a steep, uneven staircase! Are you ready? Plan ahead and prepare!

0 My Cart

Products (0)	$0.00
Discount (+)	$0.00
Enter Code + ADD	
$ Sales Tax	$0.00
Total :	$0.00

CHECKOUT

Clear Cart

COVID-19 Response

Incline Attendants

5 employees hired

Training led by Ranger Peddy

COVID-19 Response

- **Incline Attendants**
  - Check trail users in at the base of the Manitou Incline
  - Assist with trail inquiries and safety information
  - Keep parking and attendance statistics
  - Interact with visitors from around the world!

HealthyParks.co

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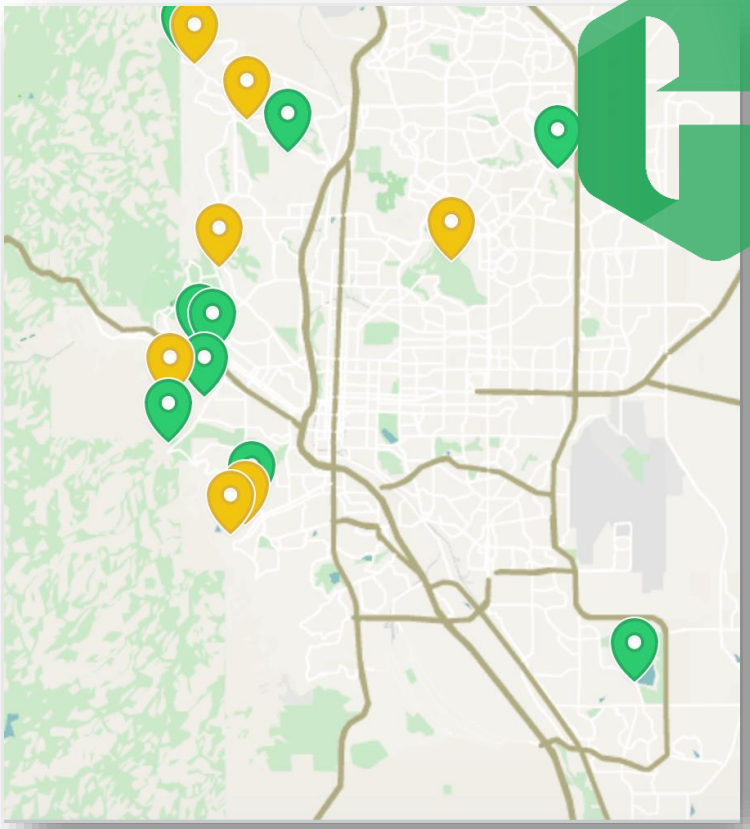
LOW TRAFFIC	MODERATE TRAFFIC	AVOID	CLOSED
28	21	6	0



Law Enforcement

CSPD Partnership Conservation Patrols

May - September

- Dogs Off-Leash
  - 19 Citations (15 from Stratton OS!)
- Scrambling
  - 8 Citations
- Parking Violations
  - 8 Citations

93.75 hours of patrols, 20 deployments

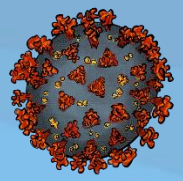
CSPD Vehicle Break-in Patrols (8)

- 30 Contacts
- 3 Felony Arrests

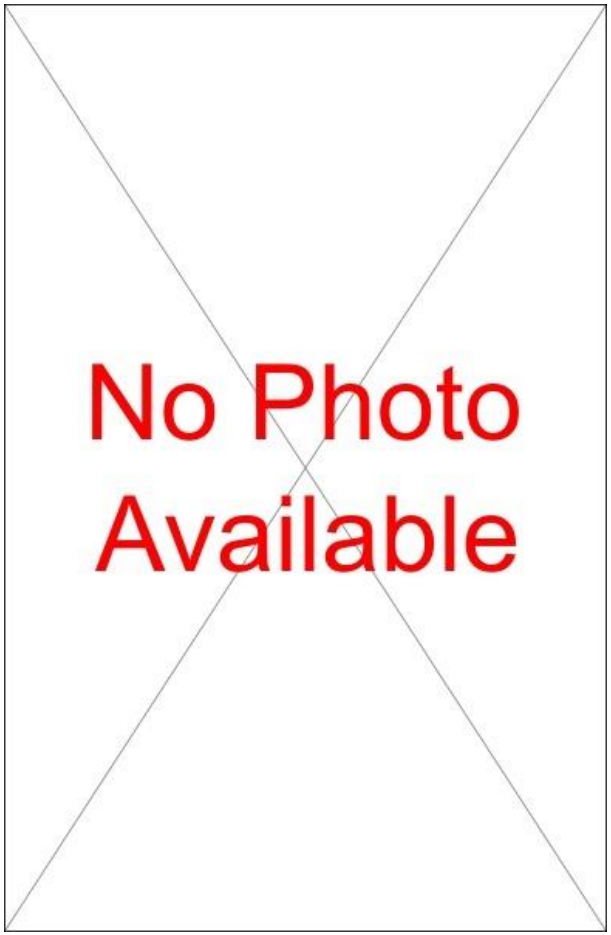
Interpretation & Education

- Traveling Trunks Programming
- TOPS Field Trips (*brand* new!)
- Tabling in TOPS Properties
- Guided Hikes
  - First Day Hikes
  - Families in Winter
  - Prairie Dog Day
  - Nature Journaling
- Family Nature Nights
- Family Fun Science Night
- Touch-A-Truck (1st year!)
- National Day of Unplugging
- Night at the Museum
- *Leave No Trace* Programming

Lost Programming

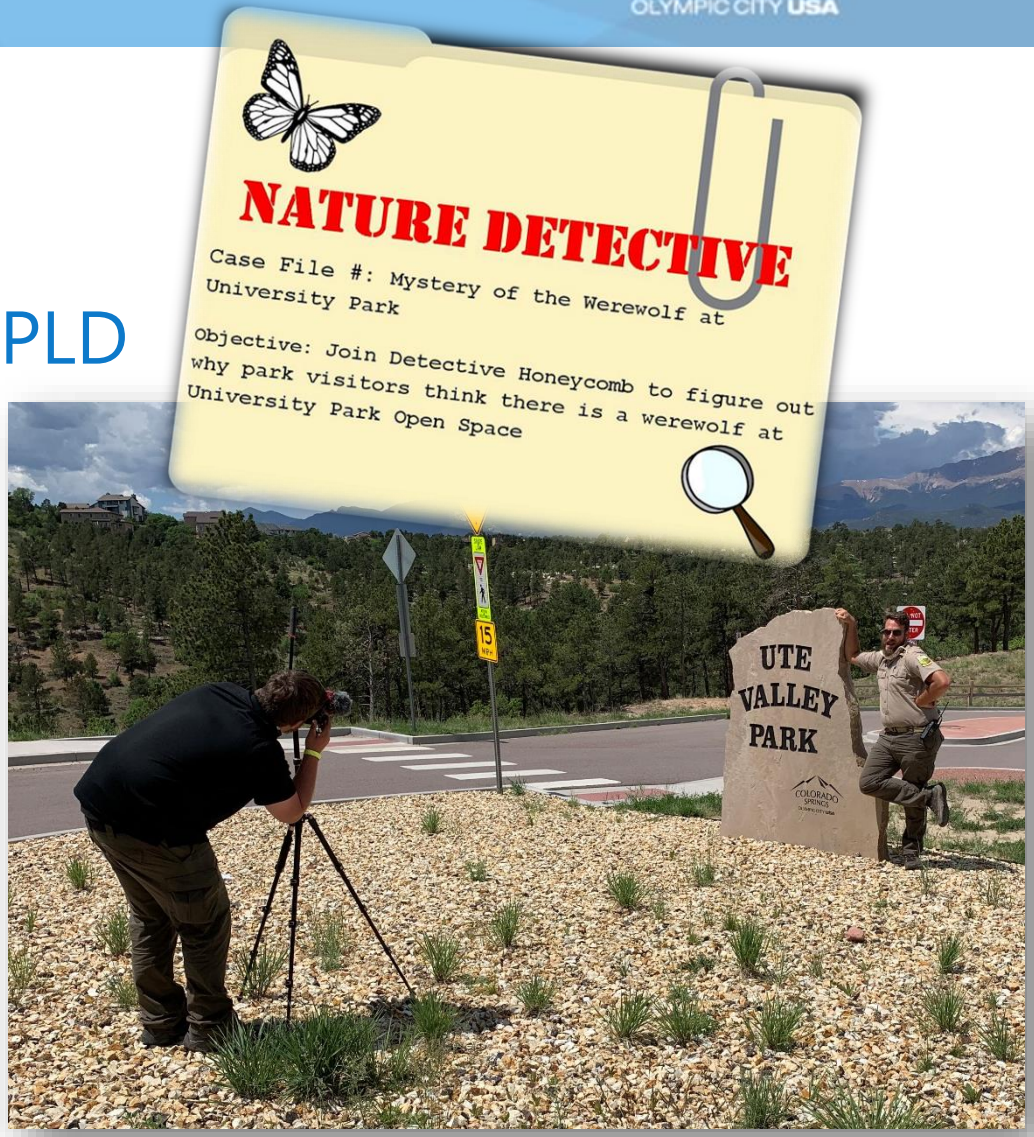


- **~6185** contacts lost due to the COVID-19 pandemic
  - 3/16/2020 – 6/22/2020
- 43 pre-scheduled programs and events were cancelled
  - Traveling Trunks & Field Trips
  - PPLD Programs
  - Summer Camp programs
  - CO Get Outdoors Day
  - Stratton Open Space Public BioBlitz
  - Pikes Peak Children's Water Festival
  - Generation Wild programs
  - Family Nature Night

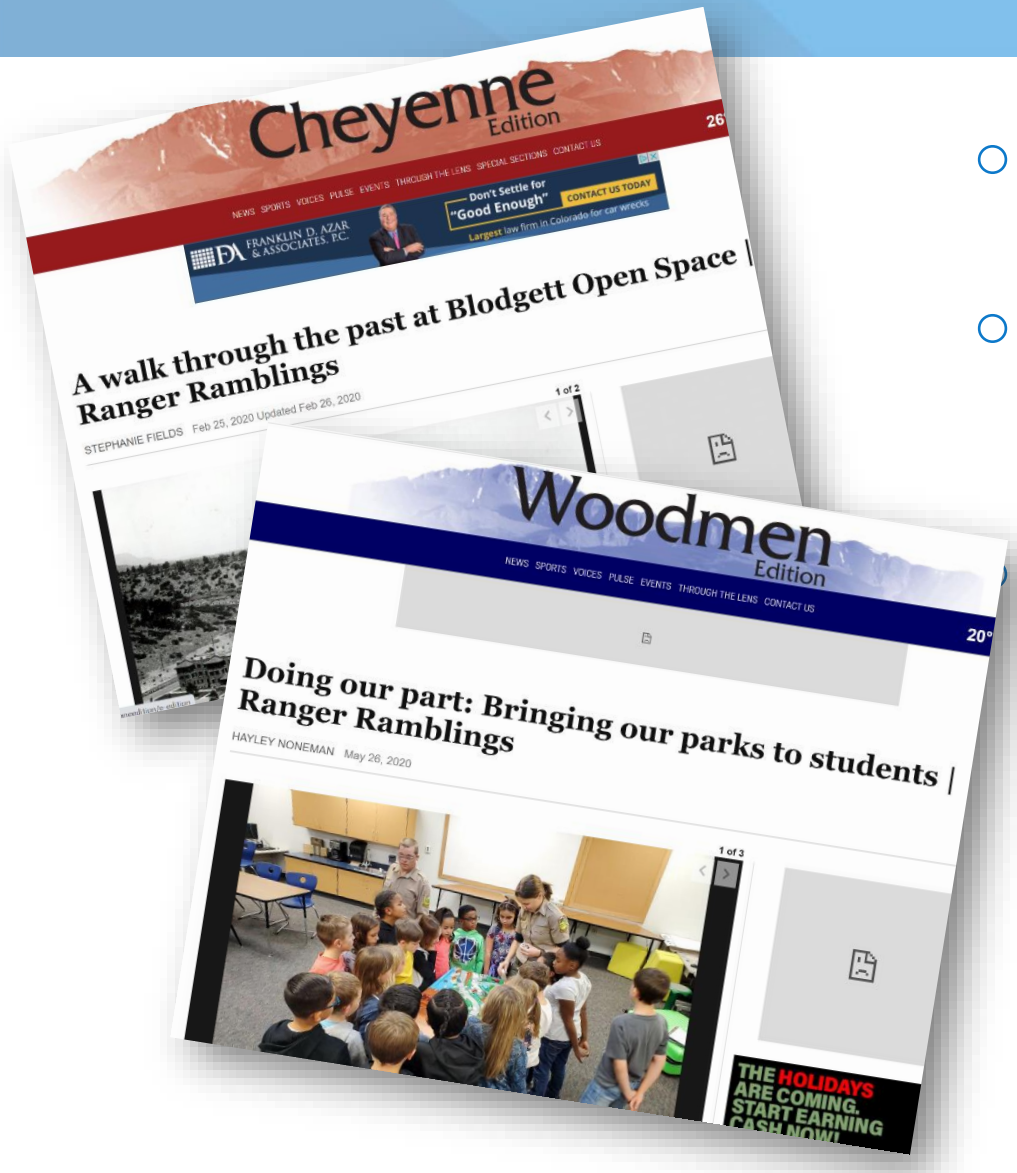


Virtual Programming

- Traveling Trunks
- Nature Detective
- Zoom Programs for PPLD
- *More to come!*



Gazette Column



- "Ranger Ramblings" column started in January 2020.
- Published monthly in the Cheyenne and Woodmen Editions of *The Gazette*.
- Contributions from full time and seasonal staff members.

Volunteerism

- Led 9 volunteer projects
- Over 213 volunteer hours
- Fort Carson, Friends of RRC, Incline Friends, Friends of Ute Valley Park, Friends of Peregrine Parks, Friends of Stratton Open Space, Medicine Wheel Trail Advocates

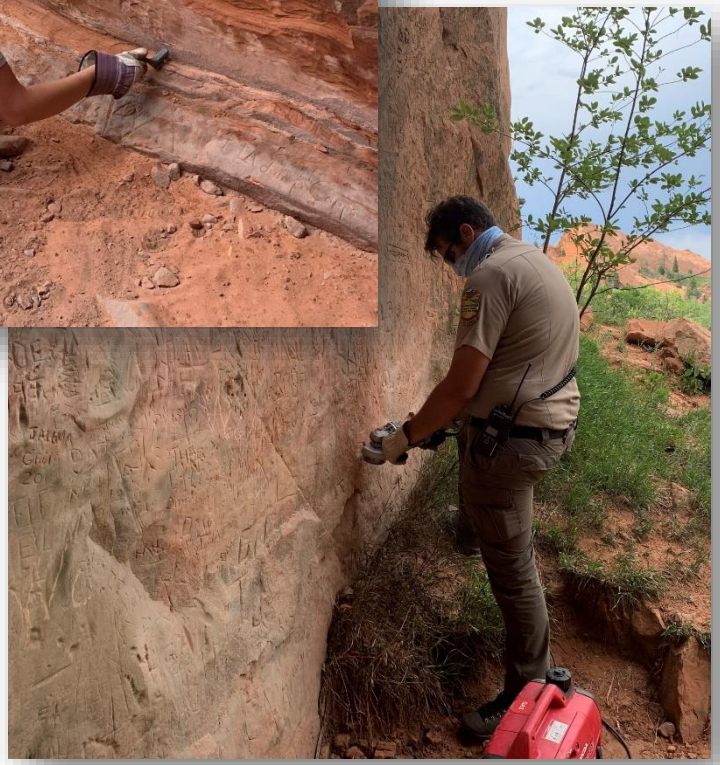
Park Maintenance

- Daily service of trailheads & parking lots
- Trails clear of hazards
- Fence construction
- Sign installation, Gate installation
- Removal of illegal camps & dumped items

Park Maintenance

RRCOS - Unauthorized parking was causing damage to vegetation- boulders were placed to prevent unauthorized parking.

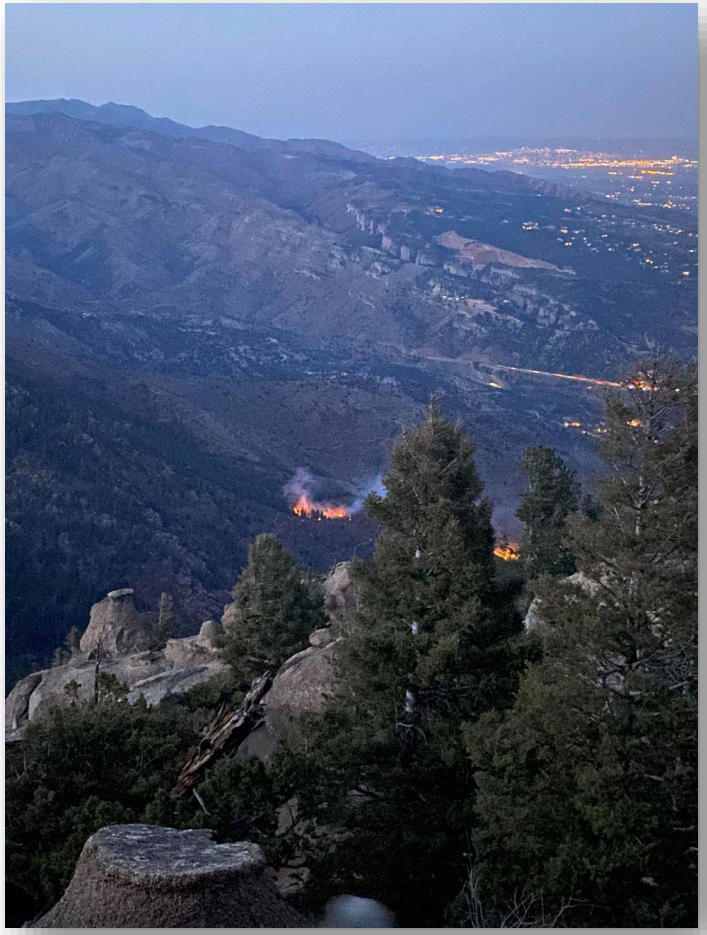
Cultural Resource Monitoring

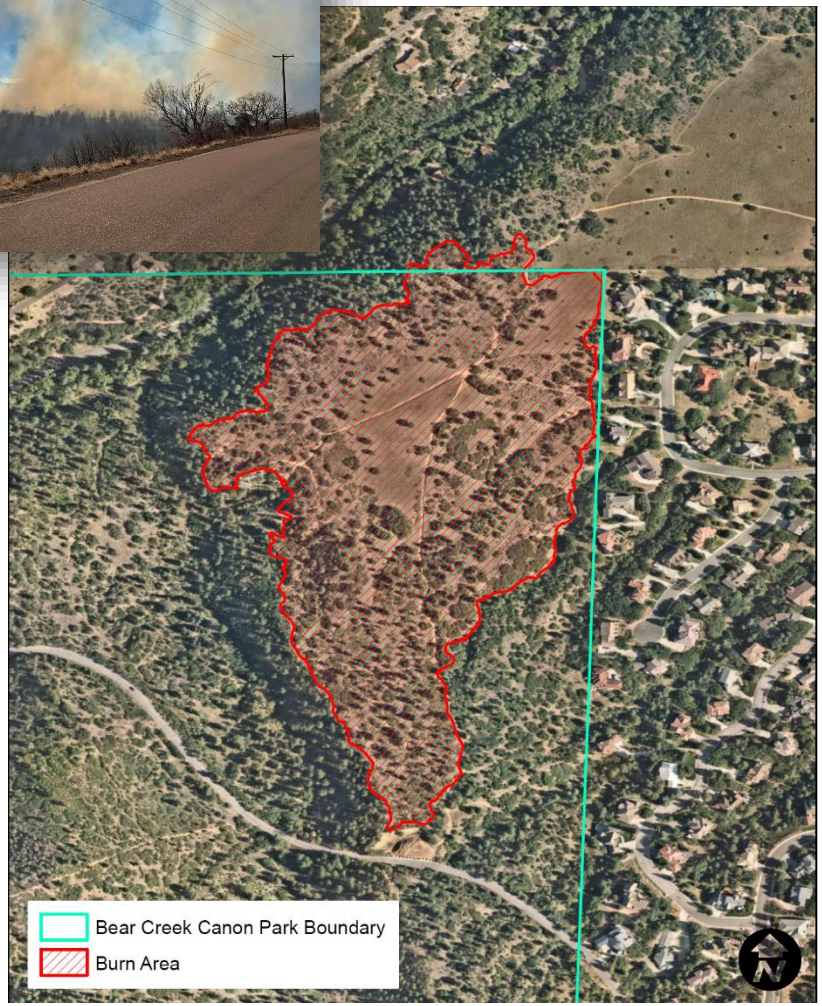


- Archaeological Assessment
  - Historic graffiti at RRCOS
  - Modern graffiti removal

Fire Response

Incline (Barr Trail) Fire, October 8th





Bear Creek Fire, November 19th

New Trails!

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Northern Incline Return Trail

Meadowlark Loop

Resource Stewardship Contractors

- FloRide Concepts
  - Meadows Trail @ Stratton, Northern Incline Return Trail
- Singletrack Trails
  - Ridge Trail @ Stratton, Lions Trail @ RRCOS
- Timberline Landscaping
  - Meadowlark Loop
  - Northern Return Trail
- Langston
  - Sand Creek Parking Lot @ RRCOS
- Rocky Mountain Field Institute (RMFI)

Rocky Mountain Field Institute

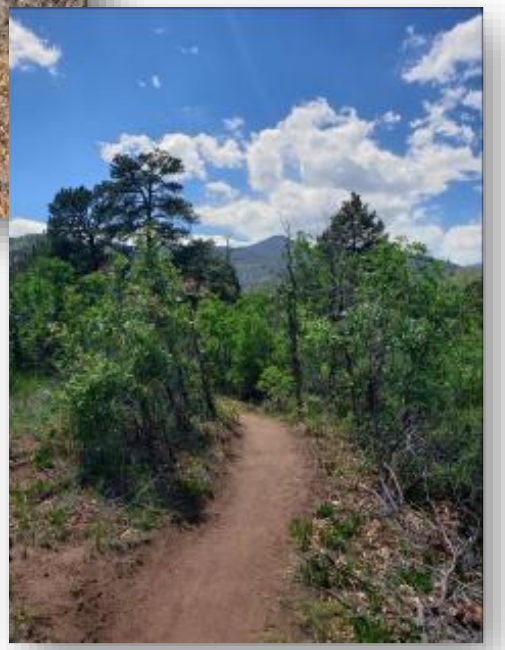
The end of the 2020 work season marked TOPS' 5th year working with RMFI!

Rocky Mountain Field Institute

- "Stew Crew" on TOPS Properties
  - Construction of 1,057.8 linear feet of new trail
  - Improvement of 6.75 linear feet of existing trail
  - 63.25 square feet of tread armored
  - 16 grade dips built
  - 274 square feet of retaining wall installed
  - 21,438.5 linear feet of restoration
  - 1,411.60 square feet of impacted area restored
  - 270 linear feet of fencing installed

Before

After



Rocky Mountain Field Institute

- TOPS Properties
  - Red Rock Canyon Open Space
  - Stratton Open Space
  - Ute Valley Park

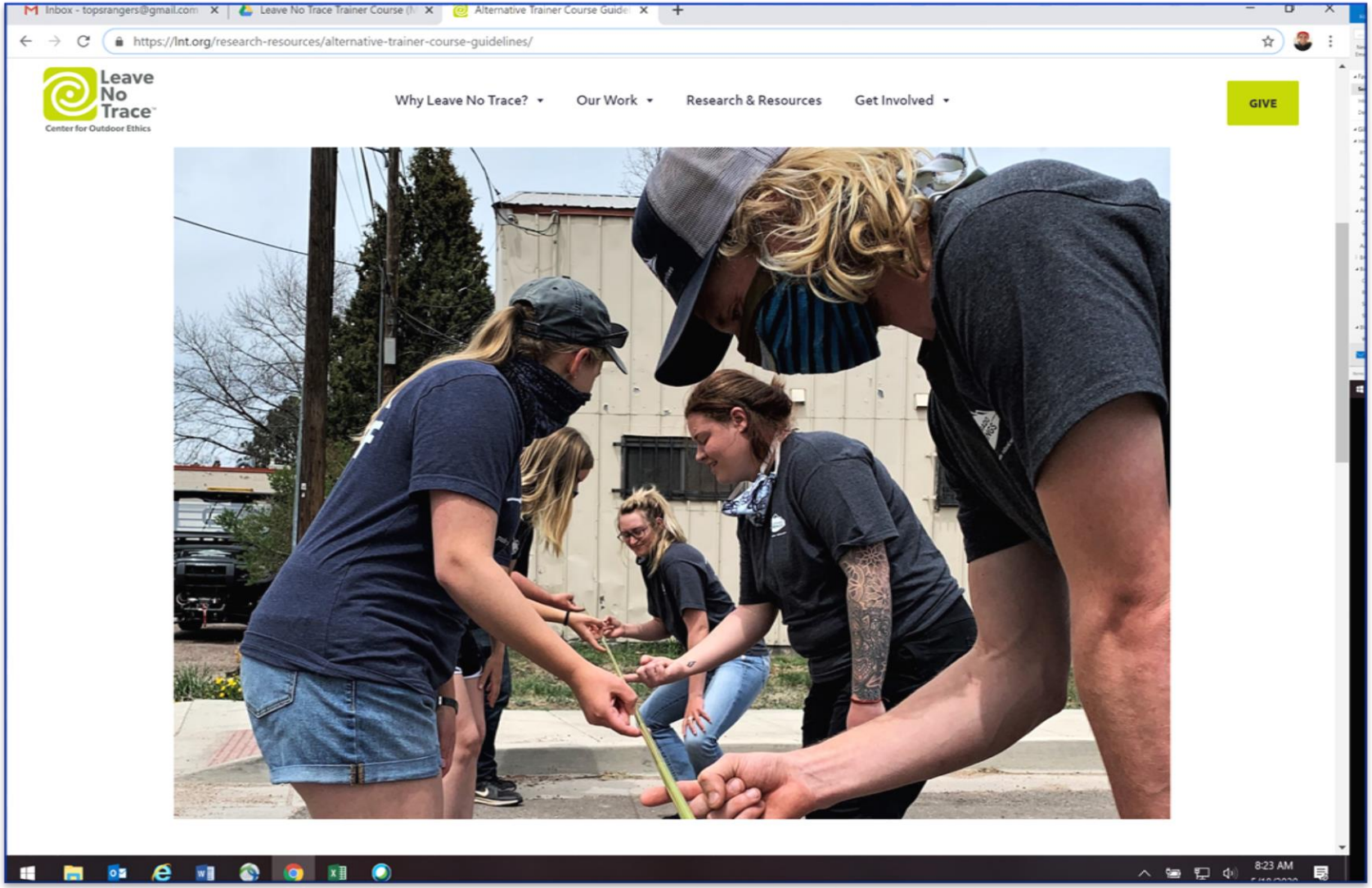
- Objectives
  - Closure and restoration of rogue trails
  - Erosion control
  - In-trail structures to improve trail durability
  - Trail reroutes

- **75 workdays spent on TOPS properties**
- **156.5 volunteer hours (~$4,616.75 value!)**
- **Over 2,959 hours invested (staff and volunteer-based)**

Leave No Trace Stewardship Initiative

- Hot Spot Week moved to 2021.
- On track to become the **1st park system** to earn Gold Standard Site status!
  - Added stewardship language to park signage and websites
  - Increased stewardship programming
  - Youth Accreditation pending
  - Led 8 *Leave No Trace* Trainer Courses
    - 6 virtual courses for partners and advocates

Leave No Trace
Stewardship Initiative



Leave No Trace
Stewardship Initiative

COLORADO SPRINGS
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1st *Virtual* Leave No Trace Trainer Course!

TOPS Thanks You!

Great-horned owlets at Bluestem Prairie Open Space
Photo by Cody Bear Sutton