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Mountain Biker Tells Of Surviving Rattlesnake Bite

Man Was Bitten By Rattler While Riding Devil's Backbone Trail

Lindsey Sablan, 7NEWS Reportert

POSTED: 5:08 pm MDT August 7, 2012
UPDATED: 9:28 pm MDT August 7, 2012

LARIMER COUNTY, Colo. -- A Larimer County man has been released from the hospital after being bitten by a rattlesnake while mountain biking in the Devil's Backbone Open Space area last week.

Larimer County park rangers confirmed the incident after being contacted by 7NEWS. Rangers said there's been an increase in rattlesnake sightings this year.

Last Thursday, Daniel Baney was mountain biking with his nephew when a rattlesnake struck him on the backside of Devil's Backbone trail.

Baney said he didn't see the snake, because it was dusk and he wasn't wearing his prescription glasses.

"I never saw the snake at all, it was like a rock," Baney said. "It felt like a sting that felt like a yucca plant."

"I kept riding and then I stopped 20 yards later and was like, 'Wow! That really stung,'" he recalled.

"I put me leg on my top tube and looked at my ankle and it had two fang marks," Baney said. "So I turned my bike around and turned on a light and was going back 10 yards or so, and there was a rattlesnake lying there."

Baney biked three miles out of the trail and had his nephew flag down a couple nearby.

Park rangers said if you're bitten by a rattler, it's better to remain still because movement increases venom circulation.

But Baney said he didn't have his phone and there were other snakes around.

"A mile into coming back, my lips started to quiver and go numb and tingling. And then I had a metallic taste in my mouth," Baney said.

"They [doctors] say it was a big one," the cyclist said. "Of course, everything up the calf is black and blue from the venom having traveled."

Baney spent two days in the hospital. Doctors told him it takes a week to fully recover.

Larimer County Park Ranger Stephen Gibson said it's been two years since the last report of a mountain biker getting struck by a rattlesnake.

However, Gibson added that there have been twice as many rattlesnake sightings this year, than in past years.

"I don't know if it's the increased heat factor this summer or what the cause is, but we have seen a lot more rattlesnakes out," Gibson said.

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Rangers told 7NEWS almost 80 percent of the rattlesnake biting incidents they see involve someone trying to handle a snake.

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Oil bonanza could be waiting under Soapstone natural area

SOAPSTONE PRAIRIE — Only a trio of pronghorn and a light breeze broke Soapstone Prairie Natural Area's early afternoon stillness Thursday.

A refuge in what was historically known as the Great American Desert, Soapstone Prairie is a haven for prairie dogs, rare birds and numerous other animals and plants that rely on the rarest of high plains treasures — water.

That water attracted Native Americans and a plethora of wildlife to this unique place over the centuries, one of the reasons the city of Fort Collins spent \$7.3 million in 2004 to purchase and protect Soapstone Prairie Natural Area.

But Soapstone Prairie is a classic Western "split estate." When Fort Collins bought the area about 30 miles north of the city, the rights to own the minerals underground and bar them from development didn't come with it.

That means Soapstone Prairie still holds the allure of striking black gold in the otherwise protected tract of shortgrass prairie. The area is vulnerable to oil and gas exploration in the Niobrara shale,

something that also extends to city-owned Meadow Springs Ranch. Both are at the western edge of Northern Colorado's Niobrara exploration rush.

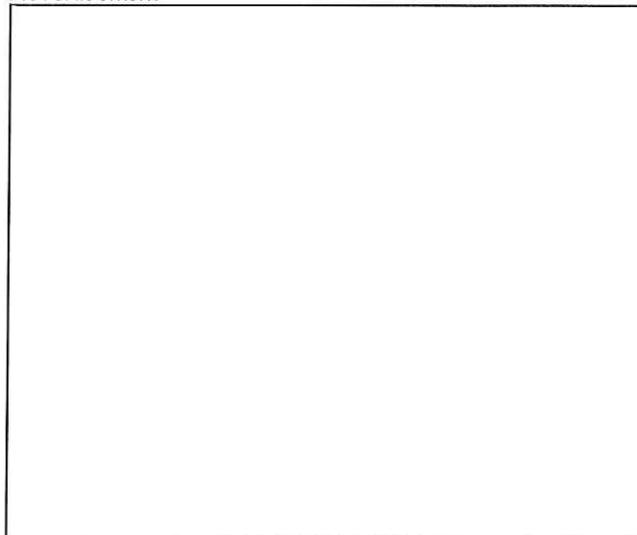
Oil drilling seems more likely than ever there now that at least one company has said it's targeting Soapstone and Meadow Springs Ranch for drilling.

In short, the future of oil and gas development there boils down to this: The State Land Board, which owns about a third of the minerals beneath that land and Larimer County's nearby Red Mountain Open Space, plans to actively pursue leasing its minerals there to oil and gas companies, State Land Board spokeswoman Melissa Yoder said.

How and when that will happen depends on a lengthy energy development planning process expected to wrap up in September.

The southeast corner of Soapstone Prairie and nearly all of Meadow Springs Ranch

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could see drilling and, most likely, hydraulic fracturing, for one reason: That's where the oil is.

Ripe for Drilling

Ask Vince Matthews about what he thinks the Niobrara shale looks like underneath Soapstone Prairie and Meadow Springs Ranch, and he'll say what he sees is "interesting."

Geologically speaking, the Niobrara is complicated, leading oil companies to do a great deal of hitting and missing before striking a rich pocket of oil beneath the plains.

But in the Soapstone Prairie area, there is most likely only one place that energy companies could go to look for oil, said Matthews, executive director of the Colorado Geological Survey.

There is a big fault that splits a hill called Round Butte, southeast of Soapstone Prairie, roughly in half, he said.

Driving into Soapstone Prairie from the south, Round Butte is the big hump in the plains you'll see north of the Rawhide Energy Station east of Rawhide Flats Road.

The land northwest of the butte — most of the natural area — isn't likely to be viable for oil drilling because the shale is too shallow, Matthews said.

But southeast of the butte is prime territory for oil production because the shale is just

deep enough that it could bear enough oil to be attractive to energy companies, he said.

Oil companies have taken notice. So much so that after the Niobrara oil exploration boom took off after a well gushed oil in northern Weld County in 2009, companies were interested in leasing all of the Colorado State Land Board's minerals beneath Soapstone Prairie and Meadow Springs Ranch, Yoder said.

Interest in drilling has been strongest for parcels on the east and south sides of those areas, Yoder said.

The State Land Board owns 15,718 acres, or a about one-third, of the mineral rights beneath Soapstone Prairie, Meadow Springs Ranch and Red Mountain Open Space, and all of the minerals beneath Round Butte. Anadarko Petroleum owns another third of the mineral rights to those areas, and a group of private parties owns the remaining third.

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Possibly "a handful of companies" may be interested in leasing some of the State Land Board's minerals there, Yoder said. The board, however, decided to hold off on giving energy companies the go-ahead to move in until the oil and gas development planning process is complete later this year.

No company with interests there, including Marathon Oil, Chesapeake Petroleum and Anadarko, would confirm that they plan to drill in Soapstone Prairie or Meadow Springs Ranch anytime soon.

Marathon is awaiting the results of two exploration wells that have been drilled south of Soapstone Prairie before developing future plans for drilling in the area, spokeswoman Lee Warren said.

Anadarko owns rights to large swathes of minerals in eastern Colorado, acquired through a historic Union Pacific Railroad land grant.

"We continue to evaluate opportunities on our land grant acreage throughout northeast Colorado," said Robin Hervig, Anadarko spokeswoman, adding that it's too early to discuss future activity in Northern Colorado.

A spokeswoman for Chesapeake declined to discuss the company's future plans.

If those companies move into the southeast corner of Soapstone Prairie, there is plenty that needs to be protected from oil development there, city officials say.

Rare mountain plovers are found there. Wetlands in the area are fragile and valuable to many uncommon plants and animals, and the historic resources are rich.

"There are literally cultural resources all over this property," said John Stokes, director of the Fort Collins Natural Areas Department.

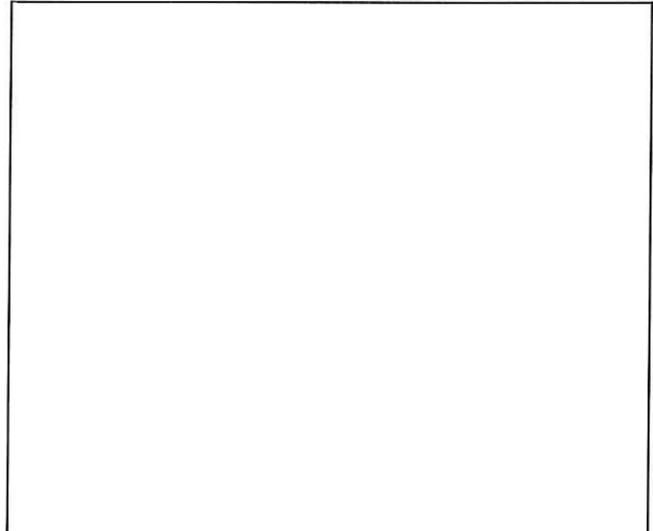
Energy By Design

Those in charge of caring for Soapstone Prairie, Meadow Springs Ranch and Red Mountain Open Space are working hard to encourage energy companies to avoid drilling in sensitive areas.

That's where the Nature Conservancy's "Energy By Design" planning process comes in.

Energy By Design is a process involving the State Land Board, Larimer County, the city of Fort Collins and the Nature Conservancy

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that will identify sensitive biological and cultural resources across 60,000 acres of protected land and outline ways to prevent oil and gas exploration from harming them.

Details about how Soapstone Prairie, Meadow Springs Ranch and the adjacent areas will be protected while oil and gas is being explored there will be revealed when the final Energy By Design report is released to the public at the end of September.

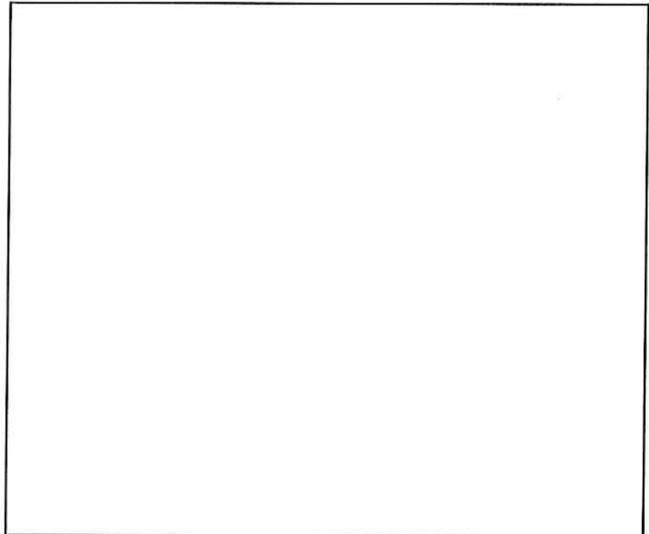
Already, those involved with Energy By Design have had conversations with Marathon and Chesapeake, said Daylan Figgs, senior environmental planner for the Fort Collins Natural Areas Department.

Once the final Energy By Design report is unveiled, “really, the next step is to really begin to more actively engage the mineral companies,” Figgs said.

Stokes said it isn’t a foregone conclusion oil rigs will arrive anytime soon.

Companies are sure to bid on oil and gas leases offered for the area, but “it doesn’t mean the properties will be produced or explored,” he said. “Then, we’ll just have to wait and see if whoever leases them actually follows through with any kind of exploration.”

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Volume 9, Number 29

Thursday, July 19, 2012 © Berthoud, Colorado

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A view looking toward the southeast from in front of the residence on the Eileen Jaskowski property. Inset photo: Eileen Jaskowski

Pioneer Park neighborhood meeting

By Rudy Hemmann
The Surveyor

Jim Birdsall of The Birdsall Group met with 15 to 20 neighborhood residents the evening of Thursday, July 12, to explain the latest changes to the Pioneer Park design and to answer any questions those in attendance might have.

The meeting was held at the southwest corner of the existing park which is located at the intersection of East Second Street and East Michigan Avenue. An easel which supported a large scale rendering of the park design had been erected for the audience to view.

Birdsall reported the contract for construction of the park expansion had been awarded and that work on the project was expected to begin the following week. He noted construction was beginning later in the year than expected, however he remained hopeful that the project would be completed by mid-fall.

"We are getting a later start than we had hoped," said Birdsall. "Based on our schedule, we anticipate construction to be completed by the week of Thanksgiving." He pointed out the construction schedule

was contingent on the cooperation of the weather.

He informed the group that changes were made to the design based on input from a previous neighborhood meeting, the (Pioneer Park) design advisory group, the parks and open space committee, planning commission and town board.

"Probably the biggest change to the concept from what was reported at the first neighborhood meeting is that we anticipated the pond feature to be completed as phase two of the project and now it is included in phase one; the irrigation system and the pond will be included in phase one," stated Birdsall. "What you see on this plan, with the exception of some very minor changes, is going to be what is built (in one construction phase)"

"It's an exciting project, and even though it has taken longer to get here than we had hoped, the steps along the way have created a better park for the community," he said.

According to Birdsall disruptions to the existing park, which consists of a large grassy area bounded by East Second Street on the west, East Third Street on the east, East Michigan Avenue on the south, and the East Indiana Avenue extension on the north, will be minimal. The only disruption contemplated to the existing park is a trench for connection to water and sewer lines near East Michigan Avenue.

Birdsall urged patience with the construction partying. "This is a large construction project ... and it is always disruptive when a big project happens in

your neighborhood ... there will be noise, traffic and dust. The contractor we have hired is a good one and we expect he will do the best he can to have as little impact on the neighborhood as is practical. At the same time things will probably happen that will impact (the neighborhood)"

He stressed that if residents saw anything that concerned them to contact the town and not the contractor. "The contractor has a contractual relationship with the town and Michael Patrick about the upcoming construction of Pioneer Park.

Birdsall, of The Birdsall Group, was on hand to answer questions from Norma Banzhaf and Michael Patrick about the upcoming construction of Pioneer Park.

Birdsall also asked for assistance from those present to sign up to volunteer to assemble playground equipment or help lay out part of the grant commitment by the town was to furnish "in kind" contributions for the park. (In other words,

in acquiring the property. She greeted the trustees and town staff members warmly upon their arrival at her property.

A residence and several outbuildings are located on the acreage, and Hart reported one of the stipulations of the agreement was that Jaskowski would continue to reside at the property until she chose to move away.

Hart also said the property will fit in nicely with the town's proposed trail and open space plans at Heron Lakes, since the property borders the northwestern portion of Lometree Reservoir.

The group spent approximately 40 minutes at the property before returning to town hall to continue the meeting.

In other business the trustees discussed enacting an ordinance regulating the use of compression release braking systems (lake brakes) commonly installed on larger trucks and semi-truck tractors.

In a presentation regarding the topic Police Chief Glenn Johnson reported the state's 2010 Model Traffic Code, which the town adopted, already addresses the issue of muffler systems on vehicles and the muffling of engine compression brake devices. He added Berthoud's town code also contains provisions regarding loud noises as a portion of a disturbing the peace ordinance.

"If there is someone that operates

TOWN cont. on page 2

Berthoud set to acquire additional open space

By Rudy Hemmann
The Surveyor

On Tuesday evening the Berthoud Board of Trustees convened a study session coupled with a special meeting. The study session was called to order at 6 p.m., and began with a road trip to tour of the Eileen Jaskowski property. The tract, which is located at 2905 W. County Road 14, consists of slightly less than 80 acres.

Jaskowski, the owner, expressed interest in donating the property to a local entity and having it established as a conservation easement. Town Administrator Mike Hart learned of Jaskowski's interest and contacted her. According to Hart she was thrilled to hear that Berthoud would be interested

in acquiring the property. She greeted the trustees and town staff members warmly upon their arrival at her property.

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than doing it all towards the end of the project) to cover bare soil in newly completed sections of the park in order to keep blowing dust to a minimum.

A sidewalk, which had been added near the western end of the large grassy area was no longer included in the design.

The community garden area will be provided with amended soil and mulch. It will be up to the neighborhood residents to coordinate and manage the garden area. Building a fence around the garden area was discussed.

There will now be three covered shelters rather than two, since the maintenance shed for the parks and recreation department was dropped from the design.

The pond will have vegetation to help prevent algae growth, and the pond will be no more than a foot deep eight feet from the shore.

The restroom area and adjacent pump room are the only portions of the pavilion/shelter complex which will be fully enclosed.

The town will be in charge of reservations for the shelters.

A water feature intended as an educational tool is still in the design. Talks are under way with Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District to determine the level of interest the district has in sponsoring and lending their technical assistance in construction of the feature. If the water feature does not materialize the area would be landscaped, according to Birdsall.



Photo by Rudy Hemmann

Jim Birdsall, of The Birdsall Group, was on hand to answer questions from Norma Banzhaf and Michael Patrick about the upcoming construction of Pioneer Park.

He estimated the cost of the boulders to be approximately \$100, which would cover the cost of purchasing the boulder, getting it engraved and set in place.

Birdsall addressed various questions regarding topics related to the construction process and park management. Topics discussed and/or Birdsall's responses included:

- Staging of the sod laying (rather

Fire is part of the forest: The High Park Fire ecology (Part 2)

By Kathleen Donnelly & Dr. Wilderness
The Surveyor

Up to the 1960s the prevailing attitude toward the forest was to save the forests by immediately putting out any fires. This approach developed as a response to the public saying they wanted fire excluded.

Smokey Bear ("Only YOU can prevent forest fires"), an advertising cartoon character created in 1914, is one of the most famous symbols promoting putting out any forest fire anywhere.

In 1950 advertising collided with reality when a black bear cub was found in a tree in the 17,000-acre Capitan Gap Wildfire in southern New Mexico. The scared cub had singed paws and burned hind legs. The cub recovered and lived out his life in the National Zoo in Washington. Smokey's real life popularity and symbolism was huge.

As time went on though, scientists began questioning putting out fires. More and more research showed that fire was actually as much a part of the forest as trees, bugs, beetles and

wildlife. To understand why fire is a critical part of the forest, it is important to first understand the varying life zones and ecology of the Front Range Forest.

"Forest fire occurrence, severity and effects are determined in part by what kind of forest the fires occur in. When talking about our local forests, there's not just one type," said Dr. Donnelly. "Forests are defined by their component tree species, and what species grow where is determined by available water. In the Front Range forest this means elevation plays a huge role in tree species survival and forest type because here locally increasing elevation means increasing moisture levels and different life zones. The foothills piñon-juniper zone has vegetation, including its namesake piñon pine and juniper species, which survive high temperatures and low rainfall. Above that, from about 6,000 to 8,000 feet in the montane zone, ponderosa pine grows along with Douglas-fir in moist areas, and also aspen, which can grow almost all these types. At upper montane elevations these species often blend with large areas of lodgepole

pine and possibly more Douglas-fir. Above that from about 8,000 to 9,000 feet up, Engelmann spruce and subalpine fir predominate, and then finally we reach timberline and mostly treeless alpine areas."

With the life zones you have to think about the basic necessities trees need to grow, which are water, nutrients and light. However, some tree species tolerate much more shade than other species. The same idea is true for various understory plants which have varying degrees of tolerance to shade. What does this mean? Why is this important?

"Because as trees grow that need sun, such as ponderosa pine or lodgepole pine, other trees that are more shade tolerant grow beneath them along with shade-tolerant grasses, low brush, shrubs, seedlings and saplings," explains Donnelly. "If climate is temperate over many decades, moisture generally is sufficient to insure that lightning-caused fires consistently burn slowly along the ground consuming much of the shade-tolerant underbrush. This is what apparently happened around the fire-carred, long-lived pine tree mentioned last week."

But weather changes. Periodic droughts occur, bringing dry storms, wind and lightning. Large areas of forest never have understory fires. Or, as has happened in the last 100 years or so, many understory fires are put out as soon as possible.

Thus, in many more locations, so-called ladder fuels accumulate and allow fire to climb from grass to shrubs to taller shade-tolerant trees, and on up into the canopy of mature trees 75-100 years old or older. If you add in low or no rainfall, higher than normal temperatures and high winds, the probability increases greatly for disastrous forest wildfires.

As the saying goes, it stops being a matter of "if," and simply becomes

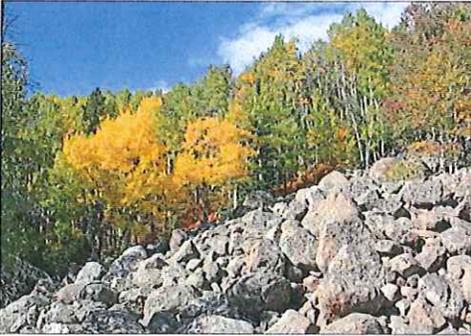


Photo by Kathleen Donnelly
Aspen are pioneer trees and we may eventually see more of them in the High Park fire area. Notice the thick forest mixed with pine beetle kill behind these Aspen.

"when," "where" and "how" will the fire start. And when the fire does start under these conditions, it quickly is beyond control, becoming in our case, the High Park fire, a whole different type of fire," said Donnelly.

"The High Park fire burned both the private and the public land. Forest cover in the fire area is a result of natural processes plus the effects of a century of land use for forest products, ranching and, most recently, primary and secondary homesteading. No matter who owned a given land parcel, it was probably protected against fire in a similar way. Fires were put out right away — a response that has become natural."

Without the natural burning of the forests over the last 100 years the forest became mature with trees primed to take a lightning strike or some other form of ignition.

"The forest sat there like this for a long time and there were no problems," said Donnelly. "We had wet years where the rain helped put fire out. We often had several years with excellent snowpack, especially very recently. That, along with the rain, meant the undergrowth became thick and lush. But this year we experienced one of the driest springs on record, with little snowpack and rain. With the "perfect storm" of dry fuels, high temperatures and, most of all high winds, the stage was set. One lightning strike was all it took. Unfortunately, this was High Park. The tragedy was the fact it affected so many people who lived up there."

In the final part of this series, Dr. Donnelly will discuss the types of fire and the future of the High Park area.

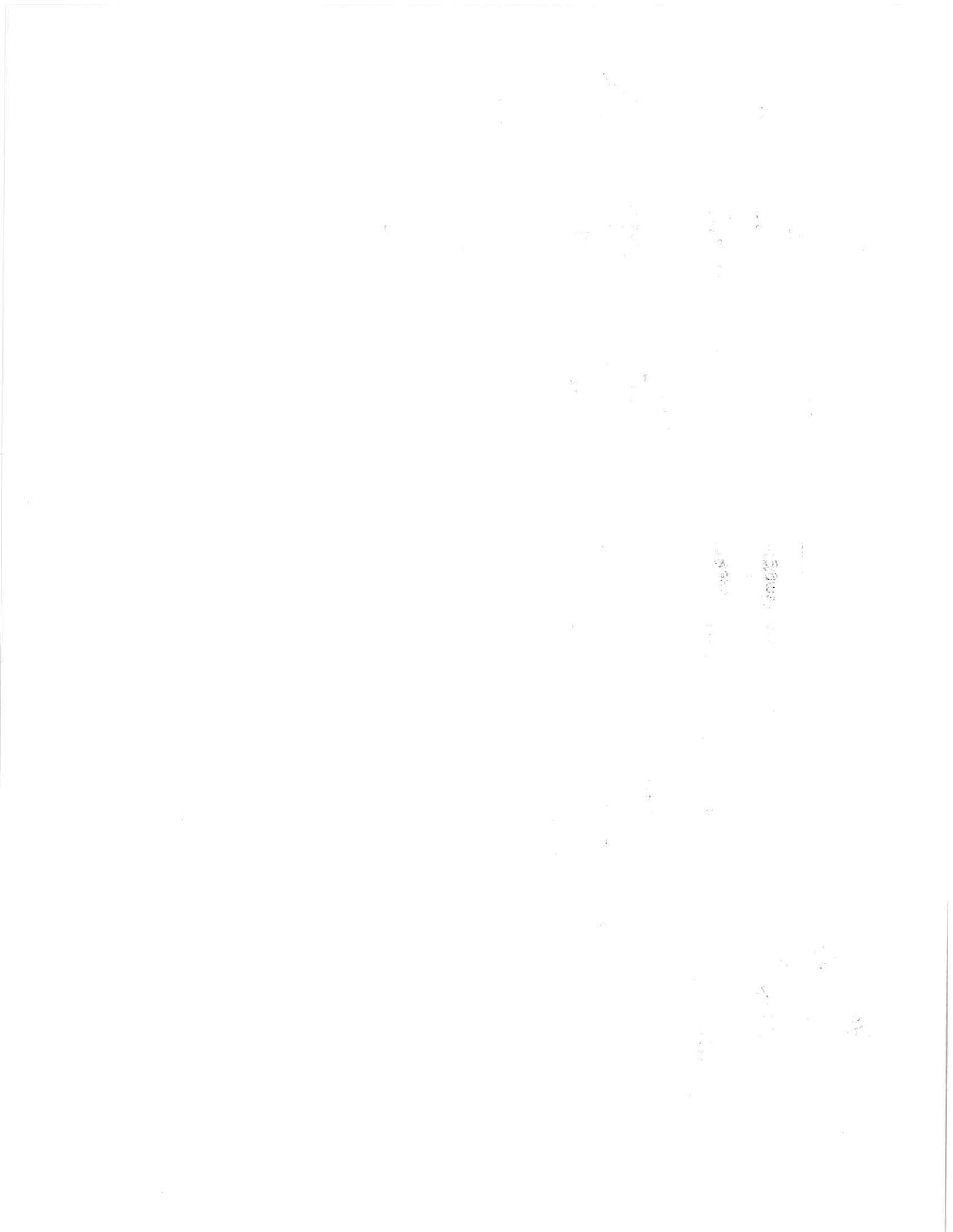
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Horsetooth Mountain Park to cease cash collection, be debit-, credit-card only

Posted:

ReporterHerald.com

LARIMER COUNTY -- The automated kiosk at Horsetooth Mountain Open Space has worked well enough that county land managers will no longer accept cash payment, according to a release. Starting Aug. 1, credit and debit cards will be the only means for users to buy self-service entrance passes.

Later this year, the self-serve kiosks will be added to other fee areas within Larimer County's jurisdiction, according to a county release.

Nature Notes Club offers fresh look at Larimer County Open Space offerings

By Reporter-Herald Staff Loveland Reporter-Herald

Posted:

ReporterHerald.com

The Larimer County Natural Resources Nature Notes Club will be accepting new members throughout the summer.

New members can join current members already journaling in the style of John Muir and Aldo Leopold with a volunteer naturalist.

The club will take several outings throughout the county's open spaces system, allowing members to see all that the open spaces have to offer.

They then get a chance to record their feelings, thoughts and experiences.

Club members will receive basic instruction on sketching, ecology, geology, wildlife and other natural sciences to enhance the experience.

A love of the outdoors, a desire to create and a notebook, camera and drawing equipment are all participants need.

Club members can participate in all sessions, or just a few, whatever fits their schedule.

August meetings will be held on Aug. 1, 15, and 29.

For details, or to sign up, email Heather Young at hyoung@larimer.org or call 679-4489.

Horsetooth Tri Training Series helps make Fort Collins top triathlon spot

Nearly every Wednesday this summer, a group of local triathletes and aspiring triathletes can be found on Horsetooth Reservoir's South Bay, swimming along the shore and running through the campgrounds.

Fort Collins resident and Ironman champion Wendy Mader heads a clinic, teaching a small group of people the finer points of open-water swimming. Geneva Mueller, a 2011 Rocky Mountain High School graduate, leads a pack of swimmers toward the beach. Lifeguards from the beach and people on kayaks monitor the swimmers who are timed in an aquathlon.

Boulder might be the mecca for triathletes, but Fort Collins has taken a step forward to make a name for itself in the triathlon world.

This new event is the Horsetooth Tri Training Series, a first-year series that's slowly growing from a humble beginning of a few dedicated souls into what event organizers hope blossoms into a permanent fixture on the budding Fort Collins-area triathlon scene.

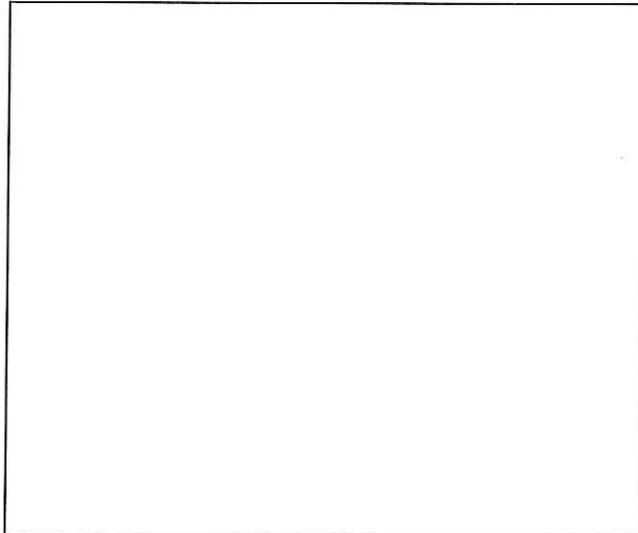
"It's the first time Fort Collins has had anything like this, so it's really exciting," event organizer Lisa Sinclair said. "It's definitely not where we want to be, but we're getting 20 to 30 people a week, which is a nice start. We still have some work to do to get more people involved as this sport continues to grow in Northern Colorado."

Series catching on

Inspired in part by Boulder's Stroke and Stride series, now in its 11th year, the Horsetooth Tri Training Series is a 10-week program. It is designed as a training opportunity for triathlon newbies considering participating in a triathlon and for seasoned triathletes who want the experience of a timed practice.

Athletes can swim either a 750-meter or 1,500-meter option, followed by a 5K run or participate in a 3,000-meter swim only. People also can opt to do only a 5K. All events are chip timed by Timberline Timing Systems, and all replicate a real race with

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wave starts in the water and a transition area from the swim to run on the concrete boat ramp.

Wednesday's showing was the best night yet, with 46 people of all abilities and ages donning their wet suits to hit the 65-degree water for their open-water swim before shedding the suits in favor of shorts and running shoes for the 5K.

"It was a great night. This is what we've been working toward," said Mader, a USA Triathlon coach. "I think we have a lot of people training for upcoming triathlons, and I also think people are talking about it and telling their friends to come out and try it."

Mader, a Michigan native and graduate of Eastern Michigan University, where she was a swimmer, started doing triathlons in 1992 and was immediately hooked. She moved to Fort Collins in 1995, completed her first Ironman two years later and in 2008 was the Ironman overall amateur world champion.

She's the co-founder and owner of t2coaching and for the past five years has taught open-water swim lessons in Northern Colorado, including the Lake Loveland swims. She also is race director for the Pelican Fest Triathlon in Windsor.

Mader teaches a swim clinic at 5 p.m. before the Horsetooth Tri Training Series, which takes place Wednesdays through Aug. 15, for people with little to no experience with open-water swimming or a

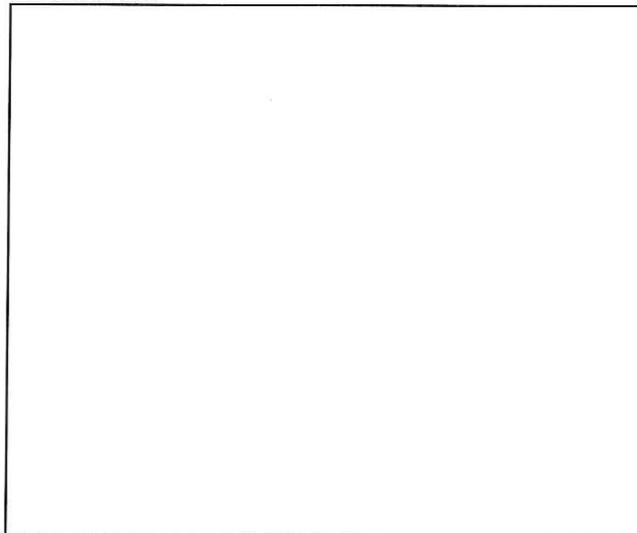
fear of swimming in the open water.

"It's completely different swimming in the open water. You can't see anything, there are no lane lines and you're in a big space of water. The sighting is difficult, breathing is different," said Mader, who still remembers the first time she swam in open water in the early '90s. "That moment will always stick with me. I remember thinking, 'Thank God I'm a swimmer because this is creepy.' I remember mentally panicking. It's a completely different feeling."

She had a class of 15 people on Wednesday, "which is awesome," she said. She hopes to teach people in her clinic one week and see them the following week competing in the series.

"That's how I envision it. It's my job to help people get comfortable in the water and get them racing the next week," Mader said. "I'm excited. It's been a great opportunity to teach the clinic and to see people trying out the sport."

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Prime place for sport to grow

Though no prizes or awards are given following the aquathlon, previous winners of the Horsetooth Tri Training Series include the 18-year old Mueller, a former swimmer and track runner at Rocky, and Ben Nelson, 35, a near top-10 finisher in the 2011 Horsetooth Half Marathon.

Fort Collins, with its elevation training and hundreds of miles of running trails and pristine road cycling, was named by Triathlete Magazine one of the top 15 places for triathletes to train and live. Mader, who said she has seen the sport “explode” in recent years, is encouraged by the series and hopes it can evolve into a triathlon club — something absent from the Fort Collins triathlon community right now.

“We’re not Boulder by any means. They’re kind of the standard for triathlons, but we have so many great athletes and masters swimmers living and training here in Fort Collins, and I think the opportunity is here to really grow the triathlon community,” Mader said. “We’re tired of having to go all the way to Boulder for events. The Horsetooth series has been great so far, and I think it’s an opportunity for people to start and not be intimidated.”

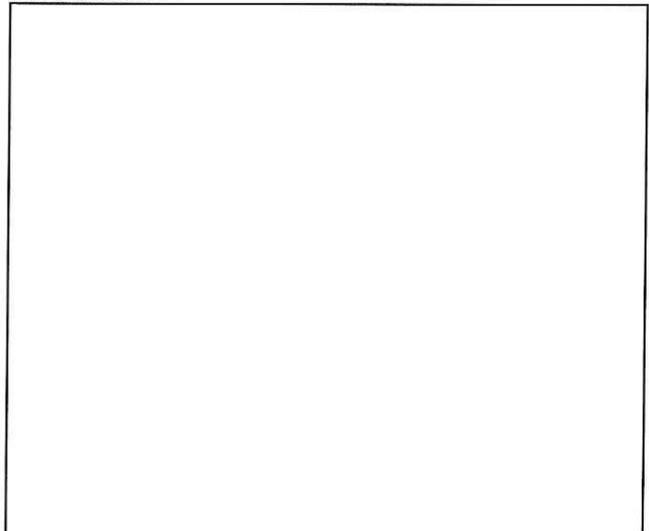


  Wendy Mader, triathlon coach, talks with a group about how to deal with open water swimming Wednesday at the Horsetooth Tri Training Series at the South Bay of Horsetooth Mountain Park. / Sam Noblett/The Coloradoan

Horsetooth Tri Training Series

- **When:** 6 p.m. Wednesdays, July 18, 25 and Aug. 1, 8, 15
- **Events:** Timed 750-meter or 1,500-meter swim, followed by 5K run or 3,000-meter swim only or 5K run only
- **Cost:** \$25 for single events, \$100 for 5-pack. \$30 for race-day registration;

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through open space taxes.

"There's a common misconception that local governments can't work together. This is tangible proof that local governments can and do," said Larimer County Commissioner Tom Donnelly.

Project Features

The Great Colorado grant and government monies will pay for several projects along the Poudre River, including:

Two new trailheads.

2.5 miles of trail construction, including a two-mile extension of the Poudre River Trail from the Arapaho Bend Natural Area to the Timnath Firehouse.

Interstate-25 overpass, linking the trail into the City of Fort Collins Arapaho Bend Natural Area.

23 acres of open space acquisition in Larimer County and 968 acres in Weld County.

1.5 miles of trail easement acquisition.

The trail initiative will complete all but five miles of the paved trail, which at full build-out will span 45 miles from Bellvue north of Fort Collins to Greeley's Island Grove Park.

The remaining five miles will extend from River Bluffs Open Space to the Arapaho Bend Natural Area and likely will be funded by additional grants.

"River corridors, trails, youth and families, and urban projects are all goals outlined in our strategic plan," said Kathleen Staks of Great Outdoors Colorado, adding that the corridor project meets the grant goals. "Getting so close to realizing this grand vision and having improved access to the river is really going to benefit the community from Greeley to Fort Collins."

Shelley Widhalm can be reached at 669-5050, ext. 531, or swidhalm@reporter-herald.com.

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STATE COURT REJECTS POWERTECH LAWSUIT
SHERIFF, FIRE CHIEF TO BRIEF CITIZENS ON HIGH PARK FIRE

TELL US YOUR STORY

Know of an act of bravery or heroism during the High Park Fire? How about a good deed? Contact us with the details via info@northfortynews and include your contact information.

Larimer County's 2013 Small Grants for Community Partnering grant cycle begins

BY NFN ON JULY 16, 2012 IN DISPATCHES · ADD COMMENT

Larimer County Department of Natural Resources announces the 2013 "Small Grants for Community Partnering" grant cycle. Applications are due Friday, September 7, at 3 p.m., with awards announced by February, 2013.

These grants are offered to individuals, organizations and groups, and homeowner/property owner associations for community, neighborhood, and group projects for:

- Protection or enhancement of open space, trails, natural areas, wildlife habitat, river areas, and wetlands on private or public land
- Agriculture
- Increased access to open lands and natural areas
- Research on open spaces.

Grant selection criteria, application, and other information are available at www.larimer.org/naturalresources/openlands/smallgrants.htm Applicants are encouraged to read through the selection criteria and to contact Sue Burke, Coordinator for Small Grants for Community Partnering, with questions.

Application forms, selection criteria, and other information may be obtained:

- Online at www.larimer.org/naturalresources/openlands/smallgrants.htm
- In person at Larimer County Department of Natural Resources, 1800 S. County Road 31, Loveland, or
- By mail by contacting Sue Burke at (970) 679-4566 or sburke@larimer.org

Small Grants for Community Partnering are funded by the County's Help Preserve Open Spaces ¼-cent sales tax. Annually, \$20,000 is set aside for individual awards up to \$2,000 per project per year. Since 1998, 121 projects throughout Larimer County have received approximately \$171,000 in funding.

HIGH PARK - HOW YOU CAN HELP

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- Rist Canyon Volunteer Firefighters

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- Nexrad Radar
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Horsetooth Mountain Park to cease cash collection, be debit-, credit-card only

Posted:

ReporterHerald.com

LARIMER COUNTY -- The automated kiosk at Horsetooth Mountain Open Space has worked well enough that county land managers will no longer accept cash payment, according to a release. Starting Aug. 1, credit and debit cards will be the only means for users to buy self-service entrance passes.

Later this year, the self-serve kiosks will be added to other fee areas within Larimer County's jurisdiction, according to a county release.

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Hike of the week: Devil's Backbone a classic

4:20 PM, Jul 7, 2012 | Comments

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Written by Stephen Meyers

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Xplore U.S. Highway 34

Overview: I returned this week to one of my favorite hiking/trail running/mountain bike spots in the area, the 2,200-acre Devil's Backbone Open Space.

The Devil's Backbone (great name isn't it?) is a small section of the hogbacks found up and down the Front Range, and the Devil's Backbone trail connects to the Blue Sky trail, which is a part of Horsetooth Mountain.

One of the most popular mountain biking trails in the area, Devil's Backbone is a moderately easy dirt trail that sees just 200 feet of total elevation gain.

The area makes for a great trail run, with a number of loops you can do depending upon how far you want to go: the Wild Loop (2.4 miles), Hunter Loop (1.3 miles) and Laughing Horse Loop (1.5 miles). If you're hiking, as I was a morning this week before it got too hot, keep an eye out for the abundant wildlife.

Mule deer, elk, bobcats, fox and coyotes all call Devil's Backbone home, as do rattlesnakes, so watch your step. The area is great for bird-watching, as well, as the ravens continue to return to the Keyhole area each year to nest. Golden eagles and prairie falcons can be seen, too.

The best times to hike this trail, especially now with it being so hot, are at dusk and dawn. If you do go during the day, water is available at the trailhead. Make sure to pack enough if you're doing a long trail run.

Directions to trailhead: Take Taft Hill Road south to U.S. Highway 34 (Eisenhower Boulevard) in Loveland. Turn right and head west for 4 miles to just past mile marker No. 88. Turn right onto Hidden Valley

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Drive, which is east of the old water tank. The trailhead is on your left.

Fire evacuees 'get out of the way and wait'
Jun. 25, 2012



Difficulty: Easy to moderate

Distance: 3.5 miles one way

Fees: Free

Dogs: Allowed, on a leash

Also: The area closes at sunset, so keep in mind that the "dusk-to-dawn" gate at the trailhead will close. Plan your hike/run/ride accordingly.

Information: Larimer County Natural Resources, (970) 679-4570 or www.co.larimer.co.us/parks//bbone.cfm

Trail maps: For more than 30 trail maps, visit coloradoan.com/xplore.

PHOTO GALLERIES



Wellington Flood



Larimer County flooding

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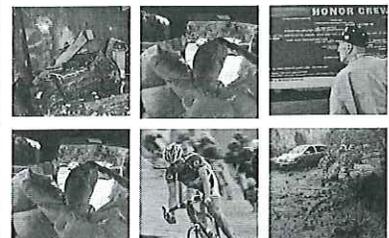
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THIS WEEK, C1

ROCKI



Firefighter watched his home burn, but he's Looking to the future

Mark De Gregorio says he'll study how the land rebounds from the High Park fire.

By PAMELA DICKMAN
REPORTER-HERALD STAFF WRITER

ESTES PARK — Mark De Gregorio pulled his vehicle to the side of Redstone Canyon on Sunday, June 17, and watched a wall of 200-foot flames push down the ridge.

After 25 years of living up there, in the Laurence Creek drainage, the education specialist for Rocky Mountain National Park, who has experience fighting fires, knew the landmarks by heart.

He could tell when the flames of the High Park fire were a mile from his home.

A half mile.

A quarter mile.

De Gregorio watched as fire overtook his rural property, knowing when he returned nothing would be left.

"Twisted metal and ash was all that was left," De Gregorio said just over a week later, sitting along the Big Thompson River in Estes Park where he is living temporarily.

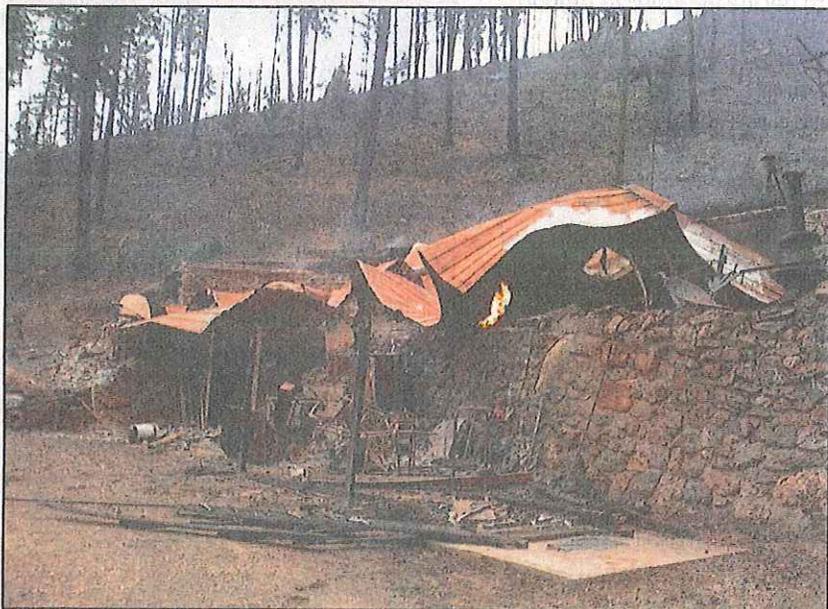
"It burned hot. Glass is melted. Metal is melted. The metal roof that was on the house was twisted."

De Gregorio knows fire. He has worked wildfires around the country for 35 years. He has felt the heat, flames and force. He has seen the destruction.

De Gregorio knows the risk of living in the mountains. He chose to accept that risk.

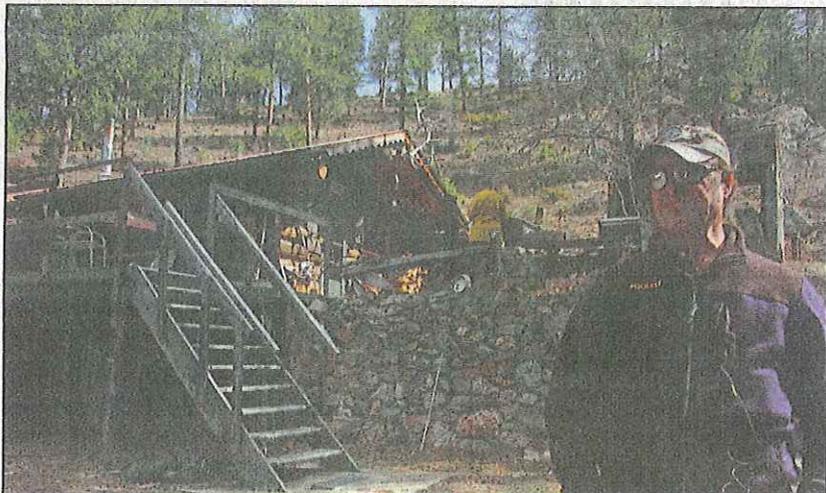
De Gregorio knows how it feels to evacuate. He left his home in April 2011, during the Crystal Fire, and returned to find it intact. This time, he left before the official notice.

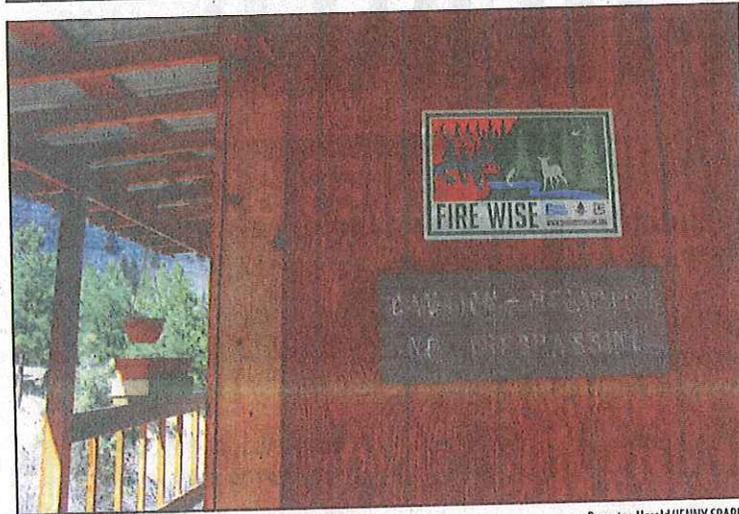
De Gregorio knew how dry the landscape was, the dangers of the dry forest, hot tempera-



Special to the Reporter-Herald/MARK DE GREGORIO

The incredibly hot High Park fire left little of Mark De Gregorio's mountain home other than twisted metal and debris. The veteran firefighter knew the fire was burning in disastrous conditions, leaving little hope that even the most protected homes could survive if overcome by the flames.





Reporter-Herald/JENNY SPARKS

Veteran wildland firefighter Mark De Gregorio knew the risks of living in the mountains and ways to mitigate danger of fire damage; however, he also knew that conditions were so dry this year any spark could rage out of control.

FIREFIGHTER: Not in a hurry to decide whether to rebuild

FROM PAGE A1

But De Gregorio did not know how it would feel to lose everything and the stress and decisions that go along with that predicament. A colleague who had been through the same situation told him to slow down and not rush the decisions.

That, De Gregorio said, is good advice, as is making sure to have adequate insurance.

He is saddened by what he describes as "carnage" left of his home for the past 25 years. His land. His retreat. Once forested and beautiful, it now looks like a moonscape.

The draw behind his home is bare.

The peach, apple and aspen trees are black sticks pointing toward the sky.

"You can do everything right, and when you get extreme conditions, there's nothing you can do."

Firefighter Mark De Gregorio

Other trees have disappeared altogether.

But as he watched the flames descend on his home, De Gregorio knew there was nothing he could do.

He spent 25 years doing everything he could to mitigate fire damage, thinning vegetation, installing a metal roof and more.

This time, though, mitigation would not derail a true force of nature. The fire could not be stopped without thousands of firefighters, weeks of work and a break in the weather.

"You can do everything

right, and when you get extreme conditions, there's nothing you can do," De Gregorio said.

While saddened by his and others' losses, De Gregorio is already looking at the future as a new adventure.

Following the advice he received, he is not in any hurry to decide whether to rebuild or when or where.

But what he does know is he will study the effects of this hot fire on his land, documenting what grasses and trees return and when that natural process begins.

He added, "I'm already fascinated, having lived up there, with what it's going to look like in three to four years, in 10 years."

Pamela Dickman can be reached at 669-5050, ext. 526, or pdickman@reporter-herald.com.

