

Buffalo Creek Recreation Area



Background

On May 18, 1996, a 12,000 acre forest fire started west of Forest Road 543 and continued east driven by high winds until it reached the South Platte River. Although Ponderosa Pine can normally survive ground fires, the Buffalo Creek fire burned extremely hot and crowned into the tops of the trees, killing most of them.

On July 12th 1996, torrential rains created heavy flooding which caused massive damage along Buffalo Creek, Sand Draw and Spring Creek as well as the Platte River. As a result, Forest Road 543 was closed to motorized traffic where it parallels Buffalo Creek. Buffalo Picnic area, Baldy and Tramway campgrounds were destroyed and major erosion resulted in severe damage to Shinglemill, Morrison and part of Gashouse Gulch trails.

Closures

These major events have changed the way the area is managed. Morrison, Shinglemill and part of Gashouse Gulch trails have been closed. Top-of-the-World, Baldy and Tramway Campgrounds and Buffalo Picnic area have been completely removed. Forest Road 543 is closed to public motorized use from the forest boundary near Highway 126 to the intersection of Forest Road 550 near Buffalo Campground. Camping within 1/4 mile of either side of Buffalo Creek in this area is not allowed due to the risk of further flooding. **There is no parking in the easternmost section of Forest Road 543 (by Hwy. 126)!** Please do not block access to this route. The Top-of-the-World Road (Road 538) has been closed to public motorized use and Motorized Trail 695 has been closed to ALL use. The bridge at the South Platte River for the

Colorado Trail was washed out during the floods but was rebuilt and opened in 1998. The trailhead at Highway 126 and Colorado Trail was closed and relocated on Forest Road 550 just off Highway 126. Due to the recent High Meadows fire, Crossons Road is closed at Skipper/Buck Trailhead.

Openings

Additional camp sites have been added to Buffalo Campground and a new trailhead facility near Meadows Group Campground was opened. Additional trails were constructed near Jefferson County's Pine Valley Ranch Park, which serves as a trailhead and access to the north part of Buffalo Creek recreation area.

Because of these changes you may wish to consider rerouting your access to the area. Trailheads at Forest Road 550 (at Hwy. 126) and Meadows Campground can be used to access the Colorado Trail and the southeast portion of the area. Trailheads at Pine Valley Ranch (just off Hwy. 126) and Miller Gulch (Forest Road 552) serve the north and west sections of the area. You can use County Road 68 southeast from Bailey and access much of the area faster than using Highway 126 through Buffalo Creek.

Since the southern portion of the area receives such heavy use, consider exploring the underutilized trails in the northern section from Pine Valley Ranch Park.

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South Platte
Ranger District



Buffalo Creek Recreation Area

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Trail Etiquette

With the increasing popularity of the Buffalo Creek Recreation Area, it is important that all trail users understand and practice proper trail etiquette. When you encounter other trail users, make verbal contact by saying 'hello' or 'good morning' to get their attention. Once contact has been made, yield the right-of-way in all circumstances with hikers. Mountain Bikers need to take special care when approaching other users and should slow to a walking speed when passing and yield to all other trail users. Also, trails users traveling uphill have the right-of-way over downhill traffic. Courtesy is important and contagious!



Volunteer Patrol

In 1997, the Front Range Mountain Bike Patrol (FRMBP) in cooperation with the Forest Service, began a volunteer courtesy patrol via mountain bikes in the Buffalo Creek Recreation Area. Operating on weekends from Memorial Day through Labor Day weekends, the Patrol acts as the eyes and ears for the Forest Service reporting on trail usage and conditions, emergency situations and assists all trail users in answering any questions they may have about the Buffalo Creek area. All patrollers are knowledgeable of the area, are well versed in emergency bike repair, carry first aid kits and have a radio for emergency situations. For more information regarding the Patrol, please visit www.frmbp.org.

FRMBP.org

Front Range Mountain Bike Patrol

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