



News Release

**Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests &
Thunder Basin National Grassland**

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Seasonal Closures in effect for wildlife winter range

(Steamboat Springs, Colo.) Dec. 1, 2010 – The Routt National Forest is encouraging recreational users in North Central Colorado to take note of new signs posted in Elk Winter Range areas.

The signs were developed in partnership with the Upper Yampa Habitat Partnership Program, Colorado Division of Wildlife, and the Forest Service. The public is being asked to avoid using 'Voluntary Closure Areas' during November 15- April 15 in the following areas:

- Swamp Park Trail (known as the Mad Creek trail- NFST 1100)
- Hot Springs Trail (Trail 1169)
- Lower Bear Trail (Trail 1206)
- South of the Steamboat Ski area.
- Sarvice Creek Trailhead
- Silver Creek Trailhead
- South of Long Park on Forest Road 225
- North of Toponas on Forest Road 285
- Areas adjacent to the Radium and Indian Run State Wildlife Areas
- Greenville Mine area (Road 440)
- Red Dirt trail (Trail 1171)

*Spring Creek trail (Trail 1160) seasonal closure is no longer voluntary. It is legally enforced.

Several alternate winter recreation areas have been identified and use of those areas is encouraged, so as to minimize human disturbance on the big game winter range which occurs on the fringes of the forest. Typically big game winter range has lesser snow depths due to lower elevations and southern exposures.

Suggested winter recreation areas on the forest include Buffalo Pass, Rabbit Ears Pass, Gore Pass, Lynx Pass, Bear River corridor (entrance to the Flat Tops), and Dunckley Pass. Other areas include the South Fork trail (forest trail 1100.5A) south of the Elk River with parking at the Hinman parking area (a non-motorized area) and forest road 430/ Scott Run (forest trail 1177). Another alternate area is located west of Routt County Road 129 at the Hahns Peak Lake Area on forest roads 486 and 488.

Elk survive winters by using their stored body-fat reserves and every ounce of energy counts in cold temperatures. As winter progresses, human disturbance and encounters, such as snowmobiles, cross country skiers, snowshoeing, or being chased by dogs, can upset the elk's energy conservation mechanism, reducing chances for survival. Thus the current partnership prompting users to recreate in areas outside of winter ranges. As traditional wintering grounds on private land become developed, the afore-mentioned public lands become more important for wintering elk.

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