

Mt. Bierstadt Field Trip

Trip date: 6/17/2006

Ralph Swain, USFS
R2 Wilderness Program Manager

Observations:

- 1). The parking lot was nearly full (approximately 35 + vehicles) at 8:00 am on a Saturday morning. I observed better-than-average compliance with the dog on leash regulation. Perhaps this was due to my Forest Service truck being at the entrance to the parking lot and the two green Forest Service trucks (Dan and Tom) in the lot!
- 2). District Ranger Dan Lovato informed us of the District's intent to only allow 40 vehicles in the lower parking lot. Additional vehicles will have to drive to the upper parking lot. This was new information for me and I'm currently checking in with Steve Priest of the South Platte Ranger District to learn more about the parking situation at Mt. Bierstadt.
- 3). I observed users of all types and abilities hiking the 14er. Some runners, 14 parties with dogs (of which 10 were in compliance with the dog-leash regulation), and a new-born baby being carried to the top by mom and dad (that's a first for me)!

Management Issues:

- 1). Capacity issue: I counted 107 people on the hike, including our group of 14 people. The main issue for Mt. Bierstadt, being a 14er hike in a congressionally designated wilderness, is a social issue of how many people are appropriate? Thinking back to Dr. Cordell's opening Forum discuss on demographic trends and the growth coming to the west, including front-range Denver, the use on Mt. Bierstadt could triple in just a few years. Are 100 hikers/day ok? Are 300 hikers/day ok? Should the Forest Service establish a quota limit permit on a day use or continue to let the numbers increase indefinitely?
- 2). Physical impact issues: The trail is widening out from people walking side-by-side or from up and down traffic spreading out to let people pass. What began as a two-foot wide trail is now three or four-foot wide trail in some locations. Additionally, I went off-trail on three occasions and found human waste -- t.p. spots. The human waste issue needs to be documented and tracked over time.
- 3). Wilderness Management issue: As we starred across to Grays and Torreys (two 14ers outside of wilderness), I asked several members of our Forum group if they felt Mt. Bierstadt, a 14er inside wilderness, should be managed the same as those two outside of wilderness? I feel this is the crux of the issue. We all know that increase use is coming in the future. Are we going to manage wilderness areas the same as areas outside of wilderness that do not fall under the same congressional mandate to protect wilderness character?

Possible Management Actions:

1. Although there is little to no use of horses (stock) on the Mt. Bierstadt trail, I wonder if the District should prohibit stock use on this trail given the large capital investment of trail construction and maintenance by CFI and other partners to sustain one trail to the top.
2. Additionally, I wonder if the District should prohibit camping and campfires in the Mt. Bierstadt basin due to the sensitive vegetation and the sight-and sound concerns. (I'll check the current Mt. Evans Wilderness regs.)
3. Perhaps the District should prohibit dogs on the Mt. Bierstadt trail. The average compliance is about one-third to one-half of all users that have a dog fail to have their dog on leash at all times in wilderness. Due to the amount of use and users of all ages and abilities, I feel the District could rightfully justify a dog ban due to potential conflicts with other users and other user's dogs.

Next Field Trip:

July 22, 2006 (Saturday) to Missouri Basin in the Holy Cross Wilderness.

The field trip is hosted by White River National Forest, Eagle Ranger District. Contact Ralph Swain at 303-275-5058 to confirm your attendance on the hike. Contact Beth Boyst, 970-828-5168 if you have specific questions about the hike or pre and post camping opportunities in the area.

The group size regulation in the Holy Cross Wilderness is 15 people. Thus, we might break into two groups of 15, if needed.

Wilderness Team:

Craig Mackey from Outward Bound here.
Wanted to add my thoughts to the excellent summary Kim forwarded.

Field notes/impressions of the day:

- 1) I agree with virtually all of Kim's points.
- 2) I want to acknowledge the great work done on Bierstadt by CFI -- and other volunteers, I'm sure -- and the overall contributions of groups like CFI and RMFI. I have hiked relatively few 14ers. Given what I knew of Bierstadt's popularity and proximity to Denver -- and stories of impact and erosion on the 14ers provided by TJ -- I was prepared for the worst. Bierstadt is a good demonstration of what professional intervention and, in the greater scheme of things, relatively few dollars can do to manage and mitigate impacts.

Given the use, I thought the trail was in very good shape and the impact to the resource relatively minimal and certainly still in the manageable category.

3) As I hiked and on the summit, I made it a point to talk with as many other hikers/groups as I could. To Kim's point: People clearly were enjoying their time on Bierstadt and their "experience" did not seem diminished by the number of hikers. Expectations were clearly a part of this and I do not think many people arrive at the trail head expecting a "wilderness" experience.

A significant percentage were from outside Colorado or the U.S. and this hike represented a "first" and a challenge for them.

4) I too was struck by the preparedness issue. A sudden storm or squall would readily add to the impacts as people scrambled for safety or lower elevations.

5) While a majority of dogs were on leashes -- and our presence and FS trucks in the parking lot may have impacted that behavior -- I am still troubled by the number of dogs and the apparent lack of waste removal for dogs. Dog behavior and waste management are cornerstones of the new LNT Frontcountry program. We may want to copy this body of work for settings such as Bierstadt.

General or "Wilderness" thoughts:

1) Given our discussions in the parking lot with Dan concerning quotas and parking restrictions, any discussions this group has may be superfluous in relation to Bierstadt. While it appears the agency has already charted a course to limit use on this peak, the general discussions around use, management and wilderness character are necessary.

2) A core question our team must grapple with is the cost/benefit analysis for wilderness and wilderness character from having many users tapping into an experience such as Bierstadt. [And the cost/benefit of telling would-be Bierstadt hikers, "No, you can't go."]

In the long run:

Is it a good thing to have many people -- and many new people -- experience wilderness through a Bierstadt?

Is it a bad thing to have many people -- many in wilderness for the first time -- get a skewed or even jaundiced view of wilderness by hiking in what is still a beautiful wilderness area but in numbers that are out of line with wilderness character?

3) I would interject here that I think very few of the hikers on Bierstadt knew of, cared about, or understood the relevance or significance of being in a wilderness area.

4) So one question is: Do we want to and do we have the capacity to increase a given user's knowledge of and appreciation for wilderness?

One thought: 1) Bierstadt is a high use area. 2) Traffic flow on and off Bierstadt is highly controlled by trails off the parking lots and the presence of the boardwalk. The agency should consider a corral or maze approach at the entrance to the trail that requires hikers to slow down, register and view educational materials. Rather than a simple box on the side of the trail, hikers would be greeted by the registration process and interpretive materials in wilderness, LNT, preparedness, dog behavior, etc.

In fact, if the agency is going to a quota system, you will have no choice but attempt to turn non-permitted users around through an educational process.

5) I am not sure anything about the Bierstadt experience we had violates the Wilderness Act. While the volume of use would certainly violate most definitions of wilderness character, the Act in no way states that every acre of wilderness must be managed to a given preservation or

character standard. Instead, I would argue the act is written to allow for significant flexibility in management and use.

While the number of hikers was high, I have hiked trails in "pristine" wilderness that were far more impacted -- mainly from stock -- than what we experienced on Bierstadt and one could readily argue that the overall wilderness character of Mt. Evans Wilderness remains relatively intact.

Is the experience of an individual hiker on Bierstadt a wilderness experience? No. But the Wilderness Act does not state that every footstep, every moment inside a wilderness boundary shall be a total wilderness experience. One is certainly not in full wilderness mode while landing an airplane, moving around a cattle herd, or even riding along with a pack train.

More importantly, these hikers have made a choice and recognize the tradeoff. They want to bag a 14er, they want to be surrounded by incredible terrain and vistas, and they are willing to do all this in the company of other hikers. The vast majority of Americans would argue this is a legitimate use of wilderness.

Are we being wise and are we benefiting wilderness in the long run if we tell them no?
Tough question.

I look forward to further trips and discussions.

Thanks.

Craig Mackey
303-324-1490
cwmackey@aol.com

Date: June 19, 2006

To: Ralph Swain
Wilderness Coordinator
U. S. Forest Service, Region 2

From: Suzy Stutzman
Lead Planner/Wilderness Coordinator
National Park Service, Intermountain Region

Subject: Mt. Bierstadt field trip, Wilderness Recreation Forum

Ralph -

What a beautiful day to climb, and how wonderful to experience the Mt. Evans Wilderness. Following our hike up Bierstadt as part of the Wilderness Recreation Forum last Saturday, June 17, you have asked for our observations and ideas related to high use recreation of wilderness. Overall, I found the physical condition of the resource acceptable, even better than it had been several years ago. There were certainly a lot of people on the mountain on Saturday, however I found it invigorating to see so many and such a diversity of people enjoying themselves in wilderness.

Unless I'm missing something about a really sensitive part of this ecosystem, I do not think that the trail tread and associated social trails up Mount Bierstadt are having a significant impact on the Mount Evans Wilderness. The boardwalk through the willows is a wise decision within the framework or minimum requirements analysis. The simple structures prevent the widespread impacts to wetlands that were occurring before. Trail tread above there was in good shape, and per discussion with TJ apparently worn into two-person width from its single person width constructed earlier. I suspect that has a lot to do with the very social nature of this hike – people enjoy talking on the way up, and also need room to pass others. This width does not bother me. There is a point where 4 or 6 person-wide pathways would cause significant resource and wilderness character impacts, but accommodating (with a 2-person width) the social nature of people making this hike is a good thing (more later). The upper alpine sections have been re-routed and there has been some stone work. Most appeared to be working, and according to TJ they have made adjustments as they learn how people hike. There were still some areas to recover, and some new impacts to work out, but it appeared to be in control. At the boulderfields near summit, people fanned out as there seem to be multiple cairns and less apparent trails. Pockets of soil between the boulders were trampled. I don't know how significant that is, ecologically. Letting people fan out over the boulders allows many people to simultaneously be going both up and down.

The social capacity of this wilderness is the big question. The parking lot was full, and people were parked on the road. There were a lot of people on the trail. If you stopped for a break, you sometimes had to wait a minute to merge back into the line of people climbing to the top. The top was pretty crowded, and you had to look around a bit for a place to sit. Is that too many people? I can't say I noticed anyone having a bad experience. I found it a wonderful day. There were little kids, older people, a guy focused on his time for completion of both Bierstadt and Evans, out-of-shape people, families, friends talking, couples, dogs (mostly on leash), and all sorts of other people. Is that a wilderness experience? In every direction, there was the unspoiled beauty of the Colorado mountains. Every step was a challenge. There were no motorcycles, jeeps, ATVS, or bicycles. The air was clean and cool. The lakes were clear and blue. I did not find solitude, but I had a wilderness experience.

The USFS Ranger told us at the bottom that the new parking lot will be capped at 40 vehicles, and they intend to enforce that number when it is complete as a means to controlling the number of hikers. They may also use permits to restrict numbers, and he cited the authority of the forest management plan. Standards regarding visitor encounters are being exceeded. I find this proposal alarming, as the parking lot was overflowing the day we hiked. That means many of the people we saw would be turned away in the future. We should celebrate the number of people who enjoy that wilderness, and without being too “preachy,” find ways to make them fans, stewards, and advocates of wilderness.

Social science is the squishiest part of wilderness management. Defining a single wilderness experience is impossible – everyone brings different ideas and values, and they change. I know that I am becoming more tolerant of seeing other people. Who can

say that the guy with the watch doing two peaks is not having a valid wilderness experience? The checklist peak bagger? The person wired to an I-pod? The guys constantly checking their GPS? The women discussing relationships and diets all of the way to the top? Sitting with 40 other people on the top? Each seemed to be enjoying their day in the wilderness. We as land managers can control the setting (ensure that the physical wilderness character is intact) and could control the numbers, but have far less control over the experience people take with them. Numbers of encounters and quality of wilderness experience do not necessarily have a direct relationship. There are a lot of complex factors. I doubt you have enough information to back up your forest plan on this issue.

There may be a social number for Bierstadt, but people are adaptable and I don't think it's even close yet. Permits and limitations begin to seriously "trammel" the wilderness. A lot of sophisticated social science and public discussion would be needed. A spectrum of experiences can be found throughout the region on all public lands, and planning for distribution of experiences needs to be done on a regional scale. Closing the gate at Bierstadt alone would likely have unintended consequences at other areas, and could trigger significant loss of public support for wilderness. Comprehensive, interagency regional planning for wilderness areas should be undertaken, and places like Bierstadt are opportunities for nourishing love and stewardship of wilderness.

Thanks for the opportunity to participate!

Mt. Bierstadt Field Trip
Observations, Notes and Commentary
Walt Horner

User Interface/Wilderness Permitting Process

- All users that I saw seemed to be really enjoying themselves and the ones I spoke with were very open to the idea (or already aware) of the issues facing our wilderness areas. The parking area/registration area seem like perfect places to educate users...and weren't being taken full advantage of (yet).
- The registration location doesn't seem to be located in an area or presented in a way that encourages folks that stop and fill out a wilderness permit. It is located far enough from the parking lot that if a person is walking by and daydreaming a bit, it is easy to just stroll on by. The box is small (possibly to limit the visual impact on the surroundings) and the signage could be more obvious.
- I think there is a plan in place to put up a kiosk or some type of informational display (like what is found in other areas) to better explain wilderness and its importance...that would help a lot (as would some type of "stop" sign or something else to catch a user's attention).
- In addition, upon exiting the wilderness, you could take the opportunity to educate users again using the back side of the kiosk (like in other areas).

- The registration box seemed a little roughed-up and could be made of a more sturdy and weather-proof material (I have seen some composite ones in Vermont/NH that work/look great).

Trail and Hike

- Although I had limited opportunity for solitude during the hike, I arrived with that understanding. If I had to guess, I would say that 99% of the users there understood that this was a high use area...so they weren't disappointed to see 50+ people at the top. What this means, I don't know...but I believe that people can perceive wilderness in different ways. For example: As I was hiking up the trail, I was able to look around at the pristine surroundings and understand that although the trail that I was on might not have all the benefits of true wilderness, without it, the surrounding wilderness might have lost some of its value.
- The trail seemed to be in good condition for such a well-used 14er.
- The boardwalk took nothing away from my experience, and actually might have enhanced it (vs. sloggng around in the wetland where I would have felt I was doing more damage).

General

- Potentially limiting the size of the parking lot scares me a bit. I see people parking up and down that road with the mentality of "if I drove up there, I have a right to use it!" Same with limiting the number of users. It also doesn't make sense to upgrade the road access and then in turn limit the parking.
- That being said, I have no strong feelings one way or the other about requiring a user fee for wilderness areas. It gives an opportunity to educate and provides revenue (although limited). It seems to me that a \$25 yearly pass isn't that offensive.

Thanks and let me know if you have any questions!

Observation from Mt. Bierstadt Fieldtrip June 17, 2006 by Dan Bereck, Access Colorado

I have hiked to the summit of Mt. Bierstadt on three previous occasions with the first time being in 1984. Back then, the route through the "willows" was a collection of braided trails and destroyed vegetation. The current trail constructed by the Colorado Fourteener Initiative (CFI) is a much better route and far less destructive to the environment. The wood walkways have prevented much damage. The steepness of the trail has been reduced along with erosion.

The trail is located appropriately. At times the trail does become wider but that allows up and down hikers to pass each other without additional degradation of the environment. The trail is not constructed as well near the summit, where mostly rock is encountered, and additional pathways are being used by hikers. The limited areas of dirt near the summit have been impacted but the vegetation being displaced is minimal overall. The dogs on leash rule was followed much better than I expected with almost no dogs being off leash. Many other hikers were encountered but the numbers were manageable for the trail and the peak experience. Desiring solitude on Mt. Bierstadt on a sunny, Saturday afternoon in the summer is not realistic. Having additional trails to the summit or encouraging bushwhacking could reduce hiker encounters but the environmental impact would be much worse. Having one primary trail to the summit is the best alternative for this Peak.

The \$45 million road construction project was a disappointment since it will allow many less informed tourists and non-hikers to visit the Pass. The old dirt road would have reduced visitors although it would not have prevented hikers desiring to summit from reaching the trailhead.

CFI did a wonderful job in constructing and maintaining the trail to the Peak. The trail has directed almost all hikers going for the summit along one avenue which can be managed effectively. I was disappointed to hear that only one trail work party limited to 10 members (I believe) could be present at a time for trail maintenance work.

The statement concerning the desire to restrict access to Bierstadt by limiting the parking area to 40 vehicles and using permits was a surprise. The trail to Bierstadt can accommodate the many hikers (over 100 on this day) who typically use it. To limit access will drive the American public to use other routes, like bushwhacking over undisturbed terrain, to reach the summit or force them to use other areas and peaks which are not as well prepared for the increased number of users. I believe that allowing Americans to visit and get to know their public lands is the best method for their future protection. The more people are exposed to the beauty and enchantment of these lands, the stronger the desire to protect them will become.

After participating on this hike, I also hiked to Geneva Peak (located in Wilderness) which is located about 3.5 miles southeast from the Pass and around 2 miles south of Bierstadt. The route to Geneva follows the Rosalie trail for about a mile then follows an old road for awhile before passing over rolling grass (no trail) to the summit. This area, even though it is located very near to Bierstadt, sees few hikers. None were encountered. On the next day (Sunday), I hiked to the summits of Revenue, Decatur, and Silver mountains by bushwhacking since trails were not available. No people were seen on these peaks and little recent (some old mines) human activity has occurred there.

Between my two days of hiking, I stayed overnight in Geneva Basin on Forest Service public lands. There were also many other people enjoying camping in this Basin. What surprised me was that I saw three fires that evening as I was driving into the area when there were numerous signs indicating that a fire ban was in existence. The possible destruction from one of these fires getting out of control was of much more concern to me than the Bierstadt situation. Another factor was the commotion about midnight which woke me up to observe 4 ATV's with lights on using a road/trail which was clearly marked as being closed to motorized vehicles. I have observed these occurrences this year in the Lost Creek Wilderness area as well.

Hiking and protecting the environment are not mutually exclusive activities. Many organizations have come together with the public land management agencies to forge cooperative efforts for the betterment of their public lands. CFI has done a great job with trail construction on many 14ers. The Friends of Mt. Evans as well as many other groups have also added much.

Hikers are a much older user group than some of the newer ones (ATV'ers, 4WD'ers, snowmobilers, mountain bikers, car campers, dog owners, etc) and their outdoor ethics tend to be more developed. No trash was encountered along the trail on Bierstadt, no forceful destruction by hikers was seen, no backpacking problems were observed, hikers tend to be a friendlier group to the environment and I believe that is due to their love for it based on their long use of it. I have encountered much greater environmental problems with all of the other user groups mentioned above.

The Forest Service and other land management agencies have a difficult task in their management of wilderness areas and public lands. Logging and mining, which are two uses of National Forests, have a long history on public lands and thankfully those activities do not occur in Wilderness any longer. Hiking has a long history in Wilderness and its continued use should be encouraged so people will better understand why public lands need to be protected from activities which are much more destructive.

From: Elaine Dermody, Friends of Wilderness (FOW)
Dear Ralph,

Thanks so much for letting us participate in the Mt. Bierstadt field trip. What a beautiful day! It was great to be out there and I learned so much from talking to some of the other participants. Below are my notes based on observations and talking with others:

I talked with TJ while crossing the boardwalk and learned about a USFS process called "minimum tool for minimum impact", which was apparently used in making the decision to install the boardwalk. We have areas in the Wildernesses where there is environmental damage/human danger issues that might be best solved by installing a boardwalk. I will be asking our local USFS staff here if they use the above process for decision making as it has never been mentioned in our discussions.

TJ also told me about their program "Retail Partners in Education". This sounds like something Win and I have been discussing a need for in our area and hope to address soon. On the hike, as on other hikes in our area, we noted people going off the trail when there was mud/water present. Retailers stressing the need for waterproof boots and the reasons for staying on the trails would help with addressing this problem. (TJ would make a good speaker for our fall workshop.)

It seems obvious that all high use trails in the Wilderness will someday require a registration/permit of some type to preserve them and allow hikers to have a quality experience. We need only look to Mt. Whitney and the Maroon Bells to see the future. It would seem the USFS and CFI should lead the way in developing guidelines for implementation.

I wonder if voluntary registration is the best first step. Why not bite the bullet and require (no fee) registration from the get go? Most people know "required" will follow "voluntary" and some may not register knowing this. Would the vandalism/resistance be any worse if it was required and won't we have to go through it all again when we switch from voluntary to required?

Win and I are ready to support no fee registration in our area on some of our trails as well as dogs on leash, but we can't be the ones to suggest it - too unpopular. As you know, Jon H. was opposed to both. I don't know how our new leaders (Steve McCone, Rachel Franchina, Jamie Kingsberry) feel about these issues. I suggest you develop a relationship with them and find out (-:

Posting/handing out descriptions of hikes outside of Wildernesses (i.e. "Hike of the Month/Week") would be one way to promote nonwilderness usage.

In talking with others I learned that a problem we recently encountered is not unique to our area. Last week 13 FOW volunteers spent the day doing trail work under the supervision of Steve McCone. We worked mostly on water bars and some of what we did was undoing what we had done last year under the supervision of Jon Halverson. I'm sure there is more than one effective way to do water bars, but I do feel the USFS should pick a standard and be consistent. Otherwise volunteers wind up in "townbars" wondering about the Forest Service (-: A possible solution: Have USFS staff and COTI work together to reach agreement on standards etc. and then outsource crew leader training to COTI.

You will not receive a separate email from Win as he had input into this one.

At the risk of going over one page, I'm leaving double spaces between paragraphs to make this easier to read. Hope this is helpful. Elaine

From: Kim Frederick, Jefferson County Open Space

Greetings All

My brief comments, notes etc are below. It was good to meet with you all!

Bierstadt Field Trip Notes

June 17, 2006

General Observations

- At any given time throughout the hike I was able to see between 25 and 50 people
- Lunch at the summit was with at a minimum 50 people
- The volume of use made it impractical if not impossible to satisfy any sense of solitude for me as I hiked up and down the trail. That being said I was able to isolate (by wandering away from the stream of trail users) myself from others and able to capture this sense or experience for myself personally
- Individuals were from all over, 2-3 foreign languages overheard, many out-of-state folks attempting their first 14'er
- It appeared to me that there were a variety of different objectives from the different people on the trail, some were just curious, others really motivated to "summit", and others were looking for that cardiovascular workout
- Overall all, the individuals I encountered seemed to be satisfied with the experience that they were having
- The range of preparedness of the individuals I encountered was huge. Some of them (based upon observation) were adequately prepared and others were poorly prepared
- I am curious about how individuals got/get information about how to behave and prepare for an experience in a wilderness area. Little information was available at the trailhead that would be useful in preparing an individual or giving them an understanding of what they might expect*
- The boardwalk had little influence over my experience
- My impression of the physical impacts associated with the use are that they are pretty typical considering the volume of and types of user. Generally, the impression that I had was that many of the users were confused or unaware about where to go and how to minimize their impact. This confusion results in trail braiding, widening and short cutting

I reviewed the complete text of the Wilderness Act that you provided. After review it occurs to me that significant interpretation of the text is fundamental to implementation of the concept. I look forward to talking with you more about how the USFS has interpreted it and what it means to implement it. Thanks again for giving me the opportunity to participate.

Kim Frederick
Trail Maintenance And Construction Supervisor
Jefferson County Open Space
700 Jefferson County Parkway #100
Golden, Colorado 80401
(303) 271-5987 office
(303) 271-5997 fax
email kfrederi@co.jefferson.co.us

From: Vera Smith, Colorado Mountain Club

Hi

Here are some observations on Bierstadt. Sorry for being tardy. Thanks
Vera

Bierstadt observations

The day and the mountain were beautiful. People at the trailhead and along the trail were respectful of one another, and all appeared to be enjoying themselves and getting out of the experience what they were after.

Although there were somewhere between 30 and 50 people on the summit, I did not feel robbed of a great experience in any way. Everyone was respectful, and obviously appreciative of the amazing view of a pristine landscape lying below.

In regard to trail condition, the trail was in remarkably good shape given the use it was receiving and the hard environmental conditions that exist at altitude. It was not a single track trail but on the other hand the trail users seemed very happy with it.

I am always struck by the educational opportunities that exist at well-used trails. I agree with previously made comments that the Forest Service could capitalize on these opportunities by providing a series of interpretive signs at the trailhead that explain what wilderness is, why the landscape into which they are about to embark is a wilderness, and how we can work together to preserve these wonderful places. It often strikes me that at trailheads we tell people all the regulations but we rarely tell them why wilderness is so special, with the inadvertent effect that we raise their hackles and, in turn, we lose an opportunity to enhance their experience through positive education.

Additional information from Vera Smith:
Thanks for a very nice trip! Hi there,

Thanks for the great summary. Doug Scott, a long-time wilderness advocate who has been involved in wilderness legislation for decades, a

year or so ago published a book on the history of the wilderness act. It is the best summary that I know of (and it is short!) that gives the reader an understanding of the legislative, political, and social history that led to the signing of the wilderness act. It also discusses the interpretation of the act in the courts and by the agencies after the passage of the act, as well as provides a perspective on modern day conservation/wilderness politics. It's an inexpensive paperback (all proceeds donated to wilderness work). Doug gives an outstanding slide show on this topic - maybe I'll see if I could get him to come during this process, if people were interested. I always learn a lot when I talk with Doug - he is an endless source of information on the topic and a wonderful personality.

From Vera Smith, CMC

From: T.J. Rapoport, Colorado Fourteeners Initiative

Howdy,

I too want to thank Ralph and the Forest Service for asking tough questions about wilderness management, and also for inviting each of us to offer our own reflections.

I share many of the same observations already described by Kim, Craig, and Suzy. One additional thought that I have relates to the use limits that the District Ranger told us about at the trailhead.

My concern stems from the fact that Colorado is the home of most our nation's high country. As I mentioned during the climb, 75% of all the land above 10,000 in the USA is located in Colorado. Much of this land is managed by state and federal land managers, who are the stewards of this remarkable natural resource. The 54 peaks above 14,000-feet are among the most popular "magnets" in Colorado's alpine zone, but all of the land above 10,000-feet is extraordinarily fragile. On our next field trip, we will again visit a popular "magnet" area that is located above 10,000-feet.

What concerns me is that many of the people who want to climb Bierstadt, and are turned away as a result of the use limit the Ranger described, may be displaced to other, less impacted wilderness areas. This could bring new damage, and increased rates of change to areas that are largely unimpacted at present. Even if many of us perceived Bierstadt to be a bit crowded, most folks on the climb seemed to think that the resource damage caused by the climbers is now minimal. So, now that Bierstadt has a Boardwalk, and a sustainable trail to the summit, is it better to let the crowds come and climb, or to risk damage to other places that are more vulnerable to damage from increased foot traffic?

I think that it is important that when management actions such as use limits are considered, the potential impacts to Colorado's alpine zone -- and the nation's alpine zone -- writ large are considered as well.

While it may sound as though I'm arguing against use limits, that is not my intention. Instead, I would like to urge that we consider the

potential for displacement to other fragile areas, in and out of designated wilderness.

Terrence J. Rapoport, MNM
Executive Director
303.996.2754

From: Janie Stuart, Friends of Indian Peaks Wilderness Alliance

Dear Ralph,

Thank you for the excellent presentation on Bierstaadt you gave us on the field trip. I apologize that I took so long to send you my recommendations on how to handle the overuse, etc., on the mountain. Frankly, I was having difficulty coming up with any ideas on how to ameliorate the situation of huge visitor numbers, easy accessibility, and proximity to large population centers.

Since all the above appear unchangeable, my one recommendation would be to put the emphasis on the education of the visitors. Lee and her group have done a great job with the use-permit to track numbers, which is important (and also daunting!!). And they educate the public as they encounter them on the trails.

It seems to me that a further beneficial education tool might be a trailhead blow-up of the photo we had on our packet on the 17th. It showed the shadow of the old erosion trail. Written material on the sign could explain why the route for the new trail was chosen, and why it is necessary to stick to the one designated route. I imagine many of the visitors are not familiar with this basic concept.

Also, I wondered if it is possible to put an edging of native rocks along the path as it reaches closer to the summit ridge, and then also do the edging along the summit ridge itself, in order to TRY to prevent the wide scattering of hikers and the subsequent damage to native vegetation.

I wish I had more ideas. I applaud your efforts, and those of FOMTLC.

I hope in the future that we can arrange an opportunity for members of

Indian Peaks Wilderness Alliance to come together with FOMELC to swap volunteers perhaps, and hike each others' trails.

Sincerely,

Janie Stuart

Indian Peaks Wilderness Alliance volunteer and board member