

USA Pro Challenge Pedals into Success through the National Forests

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It was hard to hear over the noise of screaming spectators chanting “USA, USA, USA” at the finish line of the USA Pro Challenge in downtown Denver. The city served as the end point for the more than 600-mile, seven-stage road cycling race held in Colorado for the third consecutive year. There were many excited faces in the crowd as 150 professional cyclists from 16 international teams sprinted through the finish line. **“This is not just a bike race,”** said a spectator who has attended the event every year. **“It’s about the people coming together to take part in creating a memorable event for something we love to do.”**

The race, which featured top-notch professional cyclists from around the world, took riders through several national forests and over the Rocky Mountains up to altitudes of 12,000 feet. This year, cyclists pedaled through the [San Isabel, White River, Arapaho and Roosevelt, and Medicine Bow-Routt national forests](#). Stages began and ended in the Colorado cities of Aspen, Breckenridge, Steamboat, Beaver Creek, Vail, Loveland, Fort Collins and finally, Denver.

“Partnering with the USA Pro Challenge is a great opportunity to build awareness with a unique worldwide audience about the value of national forest lands,” said Glenn Casamassa, forest supervisor for Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests and Pawnee National Grasslands.

Over the past three years, the Forest Service has participated in pre-race rides and hosted information booths at various stage locations. Last year, even Smokey Bear participated in the opening ceremonies by riding in a truck at the starting line. This year, the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forest’s Canyon Lakes Ranger District partnered with the Overland Mountain Bike Club, in an effort to raise awareness about biking opportunities on national forest lands. Forest Service staff and volunteers answered questions from visitors and handed out camping brochures and forest maps. The Overland Mountain Bike Club is a valued local partner of the forest donating 127 hours to education, outreach, restoration and backcountry bike patrol to the forest.

“The race is really exciting,” said Reghan Cloudman, public affairs specialist for Canyon Lakes Ranger District. **“It is a great opportunity for us to talk with the public about national forest land, conservation and partnership efforts.”**

Partnerships with the [Overland Mountain Bike Club](#) and the USA Pro Challenge are crucial to building awareness about Forest Service-managed lands. This momentum will be carried forward in planning efforts next year. The much anticipated [2014 USA Pro Challenge bike race stages were announced last week](#). Next August, the race will make its way through multiple national forests around Colorado. Preparation for next year has already begun.



Kristy Wumkes, partnership coordinator on the Canyon Lands Ranger District, and volunteers greet visitors to the U.S. Forest Service booth at the Fort Collins stage finish line. (U.S. Forest Service/Reghan Cloudman)



A cyclist waves to Smokey Bear on Rabbit Ears Pass on the Routt National Forest while waiting for the professional cyclists to ride by. (U.S. Forest Service/Aaron Voos)

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COLORADO: Arapaho Roosevelt NF & Pawnee NG • Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, & Gunnison NFs
 Pike-San Isabel National Forests and Cimmarron-Comanche NGs • Rio Grande NF • San Juan NF • White River NF
 NEBRASKA: Nebraska & Samuel R. McKelvie NFs • SOUTH DAKOTA: Black Hills NF
 WYOMING: Bighorn NF • Medicine Bow-Routt NFs & Thunder Basin NG • Shoshone NF