

BOULDER



Beaver Creek Trail, Indian Peaks Wilderness

Ranger District

2012 FACTS

District Staffing

- ◆ 31 permanent employees
- ◆ 25 summer seasonal employees

Partnerships & Volunteer Programs

- ◆ 35 volunteer programs and partners
- ◆ 1,000 volunteers in 2013
- ◆ 12,000 total volunteer-hour contributions in 2013
- ◆ \$283,315 total value of service

Boulder District Visitor Statistics

- ◆ 10,000 walk-ins served in 2013
- ◆ 18,000 phone calls answered



Como Creek valley along Peak-to-Peak Scenic and Historic Byway

Headquartered in Boulder, Colo., Boulder Ranger District (BRD) is 160,000 acres in size, intermixed with approximately 90,000 acres of city, county, state and private lands. U.S. Highway 36 and Colo. Highways 7, 72 and 119 offer year-round access. The Colorado Gold Rush, with its associated mining and homesteading activities, played a major role in the early development of Boulder and Gilpin Counties' highly fragmented land ownership pattern. Almost 20,000 people live within the boundaries of BRD and 3 million people live within a two-hour drive. These locals make up 70 percent of the 1.5 million annual visitors. Boulder and Saint Vrain Creeks drain the lands of BRD from the alpine tundra of Continental Divide to the canyons of the foothills.

► Recreation is among the largest program areas on BRD, offering opportunities in developed, dispersed and wilderness recreation. The **complex pattern of landownership** limits access for recreation, resulting in competition between user groups for recreation opportunity.

► BRD has seven developed campgrounds and the **Brainard Lake Recreation Area** under special use permit by American Land & Leisure. Recent re-investment in developed sites has been completed thanks to American Reinvestment and Recovery Act and Capital Improvement Plan funds. Of its two federally designated wilderness areas, the **Indian Peaks Wilderness** ranks as the second highest-use wilderness area in the nation. A permit/capacity regulation system helps reduce impacts associated with high use. James Peak Wilderness Area is also located on Boulder Ranger District.

► Vegetation, hazardous fuels and fire management is handled by a group of zoned employees that work on projects for both Boulder Ranger District and Clear Creek Ranger District. The focus for this "**South Zone**" team is altering vegetation density and arrangement with a primary goal of reducing the intensity of wildfire behavior. In 2013, the South Zone completed implementation of one manual fuels reduction project and awarded three mechanical projects as part of the **Front Range Long Term Stewardship Contract**, which are anticipated to begin later this winter.

► Fuels treatment activities often result in slash piles that must be chipped or burned. There are an estimated **40,000 slash piles** on South Zone waiting to be burned.

► South Zone averages **20 wildfire ignitions** annually; 90 percent of those are held to less than 1 acre due to quick reporting, rapid response time and cooperation with other local responders.

► South Zone planted a mixture of conifer species in some units after cutting was complete to provide diversity to the anticipated flush of lodgepole pine regeneration. **Thirty three acres were planted in 2013** with 275 acres planned for 2014.

► With a wide elevation range offering **diverse habitats**, BRD is home to a variety of wildlife, fish, and native plant species and communities. High

visitor use creates significant challenges in managing for terrestrial and aquatic animals, native plants, and watershed health. Management activities to **benefit ecosystems, watersheds, and native inhabitants** include naturalizing obsolete roads and trails; restoring damaged forest, meadow, wetland, riparian, and stream habitats; silvicultural and prescribed fire treatments, and invasive species management. Species-specific protection is sometimes needed, particularly for federally-listed and special-status species. Work is often accomplished with help from a variety of **partners and volunteers**.

► BRD's **noxious weed program** focuses primarily on treatment of known infestations. Inventory, monitoring and education are included as resources allow. BRD employees work with a variety of partners and volunteers, including counties, volunteer organizations, youth groups, mountain towns, university professors and students, and interested individuals. Mixed land ownership and rugged topography create challenges accessing weed infestations. Introduction and spread are further facilitated by high levels of human use and ground disturbance. In 2013, field crews, partners and volunteers together treated more than **250 high priority acres** out of several thousand infested acres across the BRD. To help prevent further spread or introduction of weeds into new areas, important prevention measures such as use of clean equipment and weed-free mulch are incorporated into management activities across program areas.

► The South Zone falls within **Colorado's Mineral Belt**—an area of the state rich in ore deposits. It was the precious metals that drew settlers here beginning in 1869. Evidence of this area's mining history is abundant, including unknown numbers of open shafts, tailings and waste rock piles. These present water quality issues and hazards to public safety. BRD aims to identify and mitigate those threats, working cooperatively with the State of Colorado to match state funds for safety closure and environmental abatement projects.

► The recent rise in the value of gold and other precious metals has reinvigorated interest in mining locally. **Since the flood** there has been a great deal more interest in recreational mining, including out-of-state inquiries. People seem to feel that the flood has flushed gold out of the streambeds and brought it to the surface, making it more accessible.

► BRD currently administers approximately **60 special use permits**, including recreation events, outfitting and guiding services and recreation residences. Proposals to operate on National Forest System lands come in from new outfitters and guides regularly. Many non-commercial special use requests are also received by BRD each year. These are required for use of National Forest System lands by any group of 75 or more people, including weddings, school trips, Native American events and events held by civic organizations.

► A **high level of activism** amongst its local constituency has allowed BRD to leverage its resources with a wide variety of partners and volunteers. Management success over the last decade would not have been possible without partners such as Indian Peaks Wilderness Alliance, Wildlands Restoration Volunteers, Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado, Trail Ridge Runners, Boulder Mountain Bike Alliance, Forest Watch and Colorado Mountain Club.



Lost Lake, above Hessie Trailhead



Shaft house of an abandoned mine in Gilpin County



Arapaho Pass Trail project with Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado