

100 YEARS OF CONSERVATION AND PUBLIC SERVICE ON THE ROUTT NATIONAL FOREST

“Early Ranger Districts of the Routt National Forest” by Mary Peterson, Forest Supervisor

The earliest forestry employee on the Routt National Forest, according to M. Wilson Rankin's book "Reminiscences of Frontier Days" was Sam Reid, who lived in Hayden Valley and was employed in 1879 by the old "Bureau of Forestry" to report timber trespasses. Rankin delivered Reid his appointment telegram which was addressed "Sam Reid, Routt County, Colorado."

The first ranger on record was Harry Gibler. He was assigned to the Forest in 1905 but, according to former Forest Supervisor Ratliff, resigned before entering duty. John M. Ellis was the first Forest Guard serving from January 1906 to May 1906.

The first forest supervisor for the Routt NF was Thomas Hogan, who served in this capacity from 1905 and 1907 when the forest headquarters was in Kremmling. In 1907 forest headquarters were moved to Steamboat Springs.

By 1907 eight Routt NF Ranger Districts had been set up and manned. District #1, known as the **Kremmling District**, ran from the “Base Line” to the Muddy Creek Divide east of the Gore summit; District #2, the **Grizzly Creek District**, included the forest area in North Park from the Muddy Creek Divide to the Wyoming line; District #3, known as the **Yampa District**, extended from the Base Line to Service Creek on the Yampa River side; District #4, the **Steamboat District**, extended from Service Creek to Mad Creek; District #5, the **Hahn’s Peak District**, included the country north of Mad Creek to the head of the Encampment River, west through Columbine to California Park and south to the Forest boundary; District #6, the **Bears Ears District**, which existed until 1918, included the Bears Ears country south of the Snake River Divide and west of California Park; District #7, the **Counting Station District**, which existed until 1918, included the Snake River slope west of Columbus Mountain; and District #8, the **Three Forks District**, which existed until 1924, included the head of the south fork of the Snake River. The Encampment River area, originally part of District #8, was transferred to the Hayden National Forest in 1908. The south and east fringes of North Park were in the Arapaho and Colorado National Forests, respectively, until 1930. (If anyone knows where the Base Line is, please let me know.)

Between 1918 and 1929, these early ranger districts were combined several times. In 1918, Districts #6 and #7 combined to form a new **Bears Ears Ranger District**. In 1924, the refined Bears Ears District was made up from Districts #6, #7, and parts of #5 and #8.

In 1924, parts of Districts #4, #5, and #8 and most of the Encampment River area that was transferred from the Hayden NF to the Routt NF in 1929 to form the new **Hahn’s Peak District**.

In 1929, District #1, #2, #3, and #4 were combined to form the new **Gore Ranger District**. The Gore District was abolished in 1972 and portions were combined with the Hahn's Peak and Yampa Ranger Districts.

In 1929, the **North Park Ranger District** of the Colorado National Forest was consolidated with portions of old District #2, part of the Encampment River District of the old Hayden NF, the Rand District that was in the Arapaho NF until 1930, and the East Side District that was in the Colorado National Forest until 1930.

The present **Yampa Ranger District** was created on May 1, 1954. It was composed of parts of the old Burns Hole and Williams Fork Districts on the old White River National Forest. Transfer to the Routt NF was effected with the creation of the Yampa Ranger District.

The **Middle Park District** of the Arapaho NF was created out of portions of the old Colorado NF, Kremmling District of the Routt NF, and the Arapaho NF. (In my research, I could not find the dates of its creation and combinations and changes that occurred to the district boundaries. If anyone comes across this information, please share it with me.)

In 1997, after the 1995 consolidation of the Medicine Bow and Routt National Forests and Thunder Basin National Grassland into one administrative unit, the remaining five ranger districts of the Routt NF--Yampa, Hahn's Peak, Bears Ears, North Park and Middle Park Ranger Districts--were consolidated into three ranger districts. The North and Middle Park Ranger Districts were mostly combined into the new **Parks Ranger District**, headquartered in Walden, CO. The Williams Fork area of the Arapaho NF was returned to the administration of the Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest and some land areas of the two Parks districts were given to the Yampa RD to administer. The Parks Ranger District also maintains a presence in Kremmling, CO in a co-located office with the Bureau of Land Management. The **Yampa Ranger District** took administration of portions of the Arapaho NF on the east side of Gore Pass and also of some of the old Hahn's Peak District south of Rabbit Ears Pass. And, the Bears Ears and Hahn's Peak Districts were combined into the **Hahn's Peak/Bears Ears Ranger District**, headquartered in Steamboat Springs.

Sources:

History of the Routt National Forest (1905-1972).