



## ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK

NPS Photo by Russell Smith

### *Wilderness, Wildlife, Wonder*

When we sent out the Fall 2012 edition of Vistas in November, the Fern Lake Fire was still burning. Little did we know that it would still be burning in early January after making a run into Moraine Park on the morning of December 1. There's a link later in this edition to more information on the fire. Smoke was last seen in early January. We won't declare it officially out until the snow is gone and we can see if any heat remains deep in Forest Canyon. Thanks to all who assisted with the fire over the 3 months of active burning and for the forbearance of all those impacted by this very unusual late season fire.

We are looking forward to the completion of the Bear Lake Road construction project, now scheduled for mid-summer. After making good progress last fall and over the winter, and barring any significant weather delays this spring, we are planning to return to normal access in the Bear Lake Road corridor on July 20. Details on the project are later in this edition. Again, thanks to everyone for their patience while getting this much needed project done.

When this project is complete, it will conclude over 47 miles of improvements on Bear Lake Road and Trail Ridge Road. This amounts to over 80% of the park's main road system being rebuilt or repaved since 2003, representing an investment of some \$66 million in park roads from the Federal Lands Highway Program. Since 1997, over \$60 million of entrance and camping fees has been spent on various other improvements and projects in the park. All of this investment is getting the park ready for its next 100 years.

Speaking of the 100th Anniversary, things are moving along as we get closer to 2015. We have a slogan (Wilderness, Wildlife, Wonder), a logo, and a steering committee to help with planning for the Centennial year. Details are provided in this edition.

This year is proving to be one of the more challenging—a late season fire, continued drought and something called a funding “sequester.” Park staff have always risen to the challenges as they are again this year. Our commitment to you is that Rocky Mountain National Park will remain the special place that it has been for the last 100 years, so that your grandchildren and their grandchildren can enjoy the park as much as you have.

Come visit. We're open for business!

Vaughn Baker  
Superintendent

# Top 10 Visitation Days in 2012

In 2012, Rocky Mountain National Park recreation visitation reached 3,229,618 visitors, a 1.7% increase over visitation in 2011.

The Top 10 Days in 2012 were:

- 1 September 29 (fee free day)
- 2 September 2
- 3 August 5
- 4 July 22
- 5 September 16
- 6 August 12
- 7 September 3
- 8 July 15
- 9 September 15
- 10 July 30

## Keep up on the Latest With Rocky....

Park Website [www.nps.gov/romo](http://www.nps.gov/romo)

Like us on Facebook at Rocky Mountain National Park

Twitter <http://twitter.com/rmnpofficial>

Flickr [http://flickr.com/photos/rocky\\_mountain\\_np](http://flickr.com/photos/rocky_mountain_np)

Park Information 970-586-1206

Trail Ridge Road & Bear Lake Road Reconstruction Recorded Status Line 970-586-1222



Photo by Russell Smith

# 2013 Remaining Fee Free Days:

April 22 - 26 (National Park Week)

August 25 (National Park Service Birthday)

September 28 (National Public Lands Day)

November 9 - 11 (Veterans Day Weekend)

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# Wrapping Up Bear Lake Road Reconstruction

In early 2012, a major road construction project began on the lower section of Bear Lake Road in Rocky Mountain National Park. Much work was completed in 2012, however much remains to be done. Bear Lake Road is one of the most popular scenic roads in Rocky Mountain National Park and provides year-round visitor access to a variety of wonderful recreational opportunities.

This winter rock retaining wall and drainage work continued. This summer the contractor will be laying base rock and paving the new alignment from Tuxedo Park to Park & Ride.

Weather permitting, this project will be completed by mid summer 2013. Beginning in mid-March through May 24, visitors traveling on weekdays past the Big Thompson Bridge on Bear Lake Road may experience up to two 30-minute delays in each direction.

**Weekdays:** On weekdays from May 28, through July 19, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Bear Lake Road, approximately one mile southwest of Moraine Park Visitor Center to Bear Lake, will be accessible by free shuttle bus only. Private vehicles will be allowed both directions prior to 9:00 a.m. and after 4:00 p.m. On weekdays, visitors in private vehicles who make the 9:00 a.m. cutoff time will be allowed to leave throughout the day. All visitors, in private vehicles or shuttle buses, should expect at least two 20-minute delays both directions through the construction area. There will be no construction delays between Park & Ride and Bear Lake. There may be night closures during the construction. Night closures will be announced at least two weeks prior to occurring and will only occur on weeknights.

**Weekends:** Private vehicles will be allowed all day on weekends. Although private vehicles will be allowed to travel on weekends through the construction area, shuttle buses will also be running. Visitors may experience some delays on weekends.

The park's three shuttle routes will be modified again this summer during the construction. The Bear Lake Route will run between Moraine Park Visitor Center and Bear Lake with stops at Hollowell Park, Park & Ride, Bierstadt Bus Stop, Glacier Gorge Trailhead and Bear Lake. The Moraine Park Route will run between the Moraine Park Visitor Center and the Fern Lake bus stop with stops at Moraine Park Campground, Cub Lake



Trailhead and Fern Lake bus stop.

The first bus will depart from the Moraine Park Visitor Center at 7:00 a.m. and the last bus will leave at 7:00 p.m. The last bus of the day will leave Bear Lake and Fern Lake Trailheads at 7:30 p.m. Bear Lake Route buses will run every 15 minutes... but may be delayed during periods of road construction. Moraine Park Route buses will run every 20 minutes.

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# Wrapping Up Bear Lake Road Reconstruction (cont.)

The Hiker Shuttle Route will make stops at the Estes Park Fairgrounds Park-n-Ride, the Estes Park Visitor Center, the park's Beaver Meadows Visitor Center and Moraine Park Visitor Center, where passengers will transfer to either the Bear Lake Route or the Moraine Park Route. The first bus will leave the Town of Estes Park Visitor Center at 6:30 a.m. and the last bus will leave the Moraine Park Visitor Center bound for Estes Park at 8:00 p.m. The Hiker Shuttle will run on an hourly schedule early and late in the day; switching to a half hour schedule between 9:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. On July 20, the transfer point for park shuttles will move from Moraine Park Visitor Center back to the park's Park & Ride facility.

Glacier Basin Campground will be closed this summer. Numerous pull-off areas may be closed at times during the construction. Visitors should expect congestion and very limited parking at Moraine Park Visitor Center. Visitors should also expect congestion and limited parking at the popular picnic and angler area in lower Moraine Park, north of the Big Thompson River.

Visitors who plan to go to the Bear Lake area on weekdays will have easier access if they plan ahead, hike early or hike late, and carpool. Visitors who are unable to make the 9:00 a.m. cutoff time may experience significant delays in transit and wait times at shuttle stops and may want to explore other areas of Rocky Mountain National Park.

All trailheads along the Bear Lake Corridor, the Park & Ride, Moraine Park Visitor Center and Beaver Meadows Visitor Center have limited parking spaces available. For those visitors who want to access the Bear Lake area on weekdays between 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., the best option will be to park in Estes Park at the parking lot near the Fairgrounds or the Estes Park Visitor Center and take the Hiker Shuttle to Rocky Mountain National Park.

This major project began in 2012, and is taking place on Bear Lake Road from the junction of Trail Ridge Road/ Highway 36 to the Park & Ride – Glacier Basin Campground intersection, covering 5.1 miles. The work is similar in scope and impacts as the first phase of reconstruction completed on Bear Lake Road in 2004, which took place on the upper 4.3 mile section of road.

This major project involves construction of significant retaining walls to improve safety and drainage. In addition, a 0.9 mile section is being rerouted away from Glacier Creek, in order to prevent impacts to wetlands and riparian habitat and reduce costs. Structural deficiencies will be corrected in the roadway and inadequate parking and pullout design will be improved. This project will widen the road and improve the road surface to better accommodate park shuttle buses. Safety associated with winter snow removal will be enhanced by the wider road.

Rocky is approaching its Centennial anniversary in 2015. Bear Lake Road was completed in 1928 and until 2003, no significant improvements were made. No major road work has taken place on the lower section for more than 80 years. When this project is complete, just prior to the park's hundredth anniversary, it will conclude over 47 miles of critical improvements on park roads since 2003.

The Federal Highway Administration awarded a \$23.4 million contract to American Civil Constructors and is administering this project on behalf of the National Park Service. American Civil Constructors is based in Littleton, Colorado. The overall cost of the project is \$27.7 million.

This project involves 5.1 miles of road and access to another 4.3 miles. Information on the Bear Lake Road Reconstruction Project is available at [www.nps.gov/romo](http://www.nps.gov/romo), the park's recorded road status line (970) 586-1222 or through the park's Information Office at (970) 586-1206.

# Fern Lake Fire Update

The Fern Lake Fire started in Rocky Mountain National Park on Tuesday, October 9, 2012, in steep and rugged Forest Canyon. Firefighters from across the country battled the Fern Lake Fire for two months before the spread of the nearly 3,500-acre blaze was temporarily halted by an early December snowstorm. The high-elevation winter fire eventually drew a national Type 1 Incident Management Team to Estes Park. This fire is unprecedented in park history.



RYAN WHITE 2012  
www.ryanwhite.com

Photo by Ryan White ©

Large fires in high elevations of the Rocky Mountains are different than many other areas of the country. They are infrequent and have the potential for high consequences. Largely inaccessible, Forest Canyon had been untouched by fire for at least 800 years. A long-term drought had left fuels tinder-dry in the forest fuel layer that sometimes exceeds twenty feet deep. Mountain pine beetles have killed half the trees in the canyon, with every compromised tree posing a hazard for firefighters. The typically windy conditions in the canyon only increased the danger.

Park fire managers knew from the beginning it was going to be a long-term event. There was limited ability to fight the fire directly because of high winds, steep terrain, and beetle-killed trees. Firefighter safety is the park's number one priority. The high winds impacted both air operations and safety of firefighters.

Weather, wind, and the location of the fire limited our chances to drop water. The location of this fire at a high elevation and along the Continental Divide in a steep canyon with strong winds made direct air and ground attacks on this fire challenging and dangerous. When water was dropped, its effectiveness was often limited without firefighters on the ground. Frozen lakes and the ability of helicopters to carry water at high altitude posed additional challenges.

Despite these challenges we were able to drop thousands of gallons of water to contain portions of the fire line. Beginning on October 9 through December 6, a total of 248,400 gallons of water were dropped on the fire. Single-engine air tankers were part of the initial attack, but since the fire area serves as a municipal watershed, use of fire retardant was restricted and an ineffective tool.

Smoke from the Fern Lake Fire was last seen on January 7. It will not be called "out" until no smoke or heat is detectable. Once the snow has melted park staff will determine whether there are any hot spots left.

Wildfire experts anticipate that we can expect fires to continue at this level unless conditions change. We can expect continued drought, which will intensify the number of fires in our forests. The trend indicates larger and more rapidly spreading fires can be expected. The number of acres burned nationally has been at historic highs, six of the last nine years. There is no indication that this trend will reverse soon. Following are answers to a variety of questions pertaining to the Fern Lake Fire.

To see the newsletter that was sent out to all Estes Park residents, visit:  
[http://www.nps.gov/romo/naturescience/upload/Fern\\_Lake\\_Fire\\_Newsletter\\_2013\\_web.pdf](http://www.nps.gov/romo/naturescience/upload/Fern_Lake_Fire_Newsletter_2013_web.pdf)

# Forest Stewardship in 2013

Bark beetles continue to be active within Rocky Mountain National Park and have affected nearly 90% of the forested areas in the park. The park's priorities are to mitigate risks of hazard trees and hazard fuels to protect property and provide for public safety. For several years, Rocky Mountain National Park has had a proactive bark beetle management program. Since 2010, bark beetles were considered at outbreak levels throughout the park. In 2013, park staff will continue mitigation efforts which including spraying, removing hazard trees, prescribed burns, utilizing an air curtain burner, pheromone treatments and implementing temporary closures in a variety of park locations.

Starting in early April the park began applying a Carbaryl based insecticide to as many as 6,700 high-value trees to protect them from bark beetles. Treatment is occurring in the following developed areas of the park: Beaver Meadows, Moraine Park, and Kawuneeche Visitor Centers, Aspenglen, Moraine Park, Longs Peak, and Glacier Basin Campgrounds, Sprague Lake Picnic Area, Bighorn Ranger Station, McGraw Ranch, Holzwarth Historic Site, Leiffer Cabin, Kaley Cottages, Lumpy Ridge Trailhead, Hollowell Park, and Upper Beaver Meadows Picnic Areas, and the east and west side park service housing areas. In 2012, 6,555 trees were treated and nearly all of these trees were protected from bark beetles. Loop A in Moraine Park Campground and Timber Creek Campground remain chemical free.

The park is also treating up to 300 high value limber pine trees with verbenone pheromone packets to minimize infestation from bark beetles. Limber pine trees in the park are currently at risk of mountain pine beetle infestation and infection from white pine blister rust. Preliminary research has found that some limber pine trees within the park have resistance to white pine blister rust.

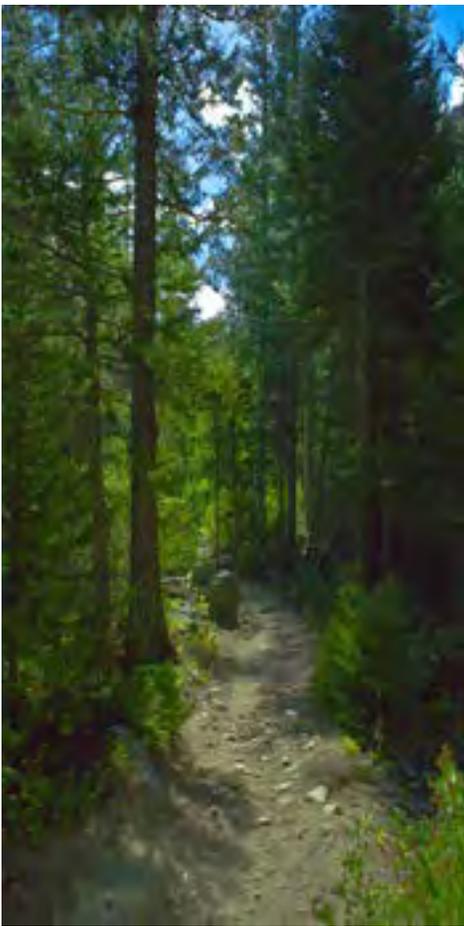
Park staff will conduct hazard tree mitigation through tree removal throughout the year. Planned project sites include: Bear Lake Trail, Sprague Lake Trail, Aspenglen, Moraine Park, and Longs Peak Campgrounds, the Wild Basin Area, Old Fall River Road, and Holzwarth Historic Site. Smaller scale, selective hazard tree removals could occur at trailheads, parking areas, picnic areas, roadside pullouts, campgrounds, and visitor centers. Temporary site closures can be expected at smaller sites to facilitate safe and efficient project completion. More detailed information will be provided on upcoming tree removal along Trail Ridge Road on the west side of the park and possible temporary delays.

Material disposal will involve piles for future burning and consolidation at designated sites for future use, including firewood collection permits. More information on firewood permits will be available later in 2013.



*NPS Photo by Crystal Brindle*

For more information about Rocky Mountain National Park please contact the park's Information Office at (970) 586-1206 or visit the park's website section on forest health at [http://www.nps.gov/romo/naturescience/forest\\_health.htm](http://www.nps.gov/romo/naturescience/forest_health.htm)



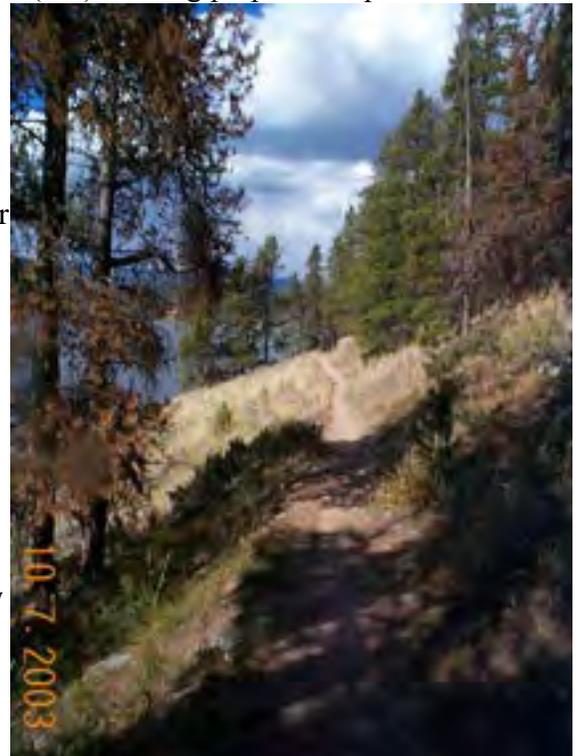
NPS Photo by Ann Schonlau

# East Side Multiuse Trail Study

The park received funding from the Transit in Parks Program to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) as part of the decision process on whether to develop a multiuse trail system on the east side of the park. A 2009 study demonstrated that such a trail system is feasible, and could connect multiple front country locations in the park (visitor centers, campgrounds, trailheads, etc.) with the growing trail network in the Estes Valley. The feasibility study examined a 15.5 mile corridor that roughly parallels existing roads. If approved, such a trail system may or may not include the entire corridor. It would also be many years in the making and would be costly to build. Public scoping was conducted in February and March, and the contractor who is preparing the EA will be in the park this spring conducting the necessary natural and cultural resource field work. It is anticipated that additional public input will be gathered this fall, and the EA will likely be available for public review and comment sometime in 2014, with a decision to follow.

## East Shore Trail

An Environmental Assessment (EA) is being prepared as part of the decision process whether to allow bicycle use on a two-mile section of the East Shore Trail. Public scoping and all field work have been completed, and the contractor is in the process of preparing an EA. It is anticipated that the EA will be available for public review and comment sometime this summer, with a decision to follow later this year.



NPS Photo

## The Alpine Ridge Trail



NPS Photo

In the fall of 2012, the Rocky Mountain National Park Trail Crew completed a

three year project to completely reconstruct the Alpine Ridge Trail, also know as Huffers Hill due to all of the huffing and puffing that occurs as one climbs to the summit of the hill, at over 12,000 feet in elevation. The elevation has not changed but the walking surface is a vast improvement over the previous rough and uneven trail.

Now, one can walk up the 440 custom formed concrete steps, designed to look like natural stone and on the flatter sections stroll along the 1,100 feet of paved trail, which used a hybrid asphalt mix to reduce the carbon footprint of the project. In conjunction with the trail work, park crews restored thousands of square feet of alpine tundra to heal the scars caused by years of use. Some final touches to the tundra restoration process will be completed this spring. The trail will be open to the public once the opening of Trail Ridge Road is complete.

# Aircraft Overflights

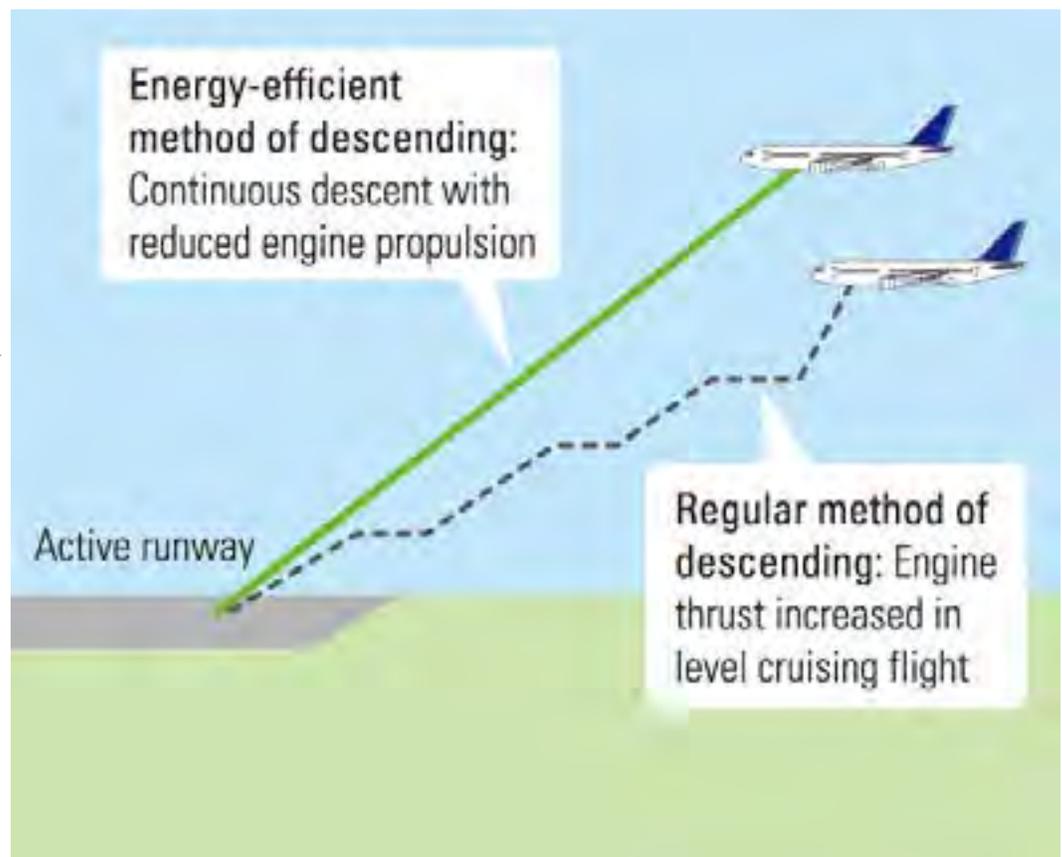
For the past three years the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has been developing new commercial aircraft arrival and departure procedures for three Denver Metropolitan Area airports, including Denver International Airport. There is a major commercial aircraft flight path that crosses RMNP on approach to Denver from the northwest. On an average day, approximately 600 aircraft fly over the park on approach to Denver. In the summer of 2010 the FAA contacted RMNP about their proposal to develop new procedures, and the park has been engaged with the FAA since that time.

Under the old procedures, aircraft on approach to Denver were “vectored” to a predefined point that lies east of Estes Park. This resulted in multiple, converging eastbound flight paths over RMNP which resulted in widespread aircraft noise impacts. Because aircraft must be at a defined altitude and airspeed once they reach the predefined point (termed an arrival gate), pilots often deployed speed brakes (spoilers on the wings) to slow the aircraft to the proper airspeed. Doing so creates noise. Also, at the direction of air traffic controllers, aircraft often used a stair-step descent profile to reach the runway. Because power must be applied each time a descending aircraft levels off, this also created noise.

The new procedures developed by the FAA take advantage of satellite based navigation technology and computerized Flight Management Systems (FMS) onboard most commercial aircraft. Using the new procedures, aircraft will fly more narrowly defined arrival and departure routes, and the aircraft will descend to the runway on a smooth profile, called Optimized Profile Descent (OPD), with throttles at idle. Working collaboratively, the FAA and RMNP identified a narrow flight path over the park that roughly follows Trail Ridge Road from west to east. This was done to concentrate aircraft noise in an area where anthropogenic (human-caused) noise is already present several months of the year in the form of automobile traffic. Therefore, the remainder of the park, beyond the flight path, would be quieter.

The new FAA arrival procedures took effect on December 3, 2012, and are now being used by most of the commercial airlines. The most significant advantage the new procedures provide to the commercial airlines is increased fuel efficiency. The advantage to RMNP is reduced aircraft noise over a significant portion of the park.

The Natural Sounds and Night Skies Division (NSNSD) of the National Park Service deployed sound monitoring equipment in the park from mid-November to mid-January to record aircraft overflight noise before and after the new procedures went into effect. The NSNSD is analyzing the data to determine how aircraft noise has changed.



# Elk and Vegetation Management Plan

Research has shown that the elk herd in Rocky Mountain National Park and the Estes Valley is larger, less migratory, and more concentrated than it would be under natural conditions. As a result, willow and aspen stands are declining, depriving other wildlife of the important habitat they need.



*NPS Photo by Ann Schonlau*

Rocky Mountain National Park's Elk and Vegetation Management Plan (EVMP) relies on a variety of conservation tools including fencing, vegetation restoration, and culling to restore the natural range of variability in the elk population and restore affected aspen and willow plant communities. The plan provides continued elk viewing for visitors.

The 20-year plan will end in 2028 and a full review of implementation and progress is planned for 2014.

No elk were culled during the winters of 2011-12 and 2012-13. Twenty-nine volunteers have completed training for the culling part of the program under direct NPS supervision. They have culled 52 elk since the winter of 2008-2009 to achieve a population objective of 600 to 800 animals on the winter range in the park. Meat from 47 animals (testing "chronic wasting disease [CWD] not detected") was disbursed to the public through a Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) lottery.

In January 2008, research began in the park to test fertility control and test live elk for CWD. Seventy-nine elk were removed for the research and the results are being evaluated. In December 2011, researchers from the NPS Biological Resources Management Division began a new research project studying the effects of chronic wasting disease on elk in the park.

The EVMP calls for temporary fencing to protect and restore aspen and willow, which will benefit other wildlife that depend on those habitats. From 2008-2012, 183 acres of willow habitat and 45 acres in aspen habitat have been protected. Other actions, including willow planting, prescribed fire, or mechanical treatment, may be used to foster vegetation restoration. Reintroduction of beaver could be considered to improve hydrologic conditions that support restoration.

In March 2008, WildEarth Guardians filed a lawsuit against the NPS alleging that the NPS did not consider a full range of alternatives in its plan and that it violated the Organic Act and the park's enabling legislation. In 2011, the Federal District Court found that the NPS complied with NEPA and that the Park Service's decision to use authorized agents (volunteers) to cull elk was not contrary to law. WildEarth Guardians appealed the decision and the Federal Court of Appeals affirmed the District Court's decision on January 9, 2013.

During the winter (October to May), two thirds of the elk population are found outside the park on adjacent public and private land in and around the town of Estes Park. Cooperation among the park, local communities, CPW, and the Forest Service is essential in managing the herd.

No elk were culled during the 2012-13 winter because winter population objectives were being achieved. Volunteers and staff collected elk population and reproductive data. Crews will measure vegetation growth and condition in preparation for the 5-year adaptive management review and evaluation of the program. Research on CWD in the elk population, in cooperation with CPW, will continue for at least 3 more years.

# Your Fee Dollars at Work - Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Projects for the Summer of 2013

The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) funds projects in Rocky Mountain National Park to improve facilities that improve visitor experiences. Since 1997, over \$60 million of entrance and camping fees has been spent on various other improvements and projects in the park. The projects this year include the following:

- Paving Moraine Park Campground Road
- Sewer upgrades to piping in Moraine Park Campground
- Remodel comfort stations in Aspenglen Campground
- Rehabilitate historic rock walls on Trail Ridge Road
- Rehabilitate Wild Basin Ranger Station and realign trailhead to increase visitor contact.
- Rehabilitate Flattop Mountain Trail, Finch Lake, Lawn Lake, North Inlet
- Stripe park roadways and stabilize road shoulders
- Repair accessibility issues in high visitor use areas.
- Improving solid waste collection to reduce visitor and bear confrontations
- Mitigating Bark Beetle Infestation around the road corridors for visitor safety



*Rehabilitated Historic Rock Wall on Trail Ridge Road*

*NPS Photo*



*Comfort Station Remodel*

*NPS Photo*

# Hazard Fuel Reduction



*Pile Burning at Rocky*

*NPS Photo*

Fire managers from Rocky Mountain National Park have taken advantage of the recent winter weather conditions by burning piles of slash from forest thinning (hazard fuel reduction) and hazard tree mitigation projects. Thus far this year, fire managers have burned approximately 663 piles on the east side of the park. As of April 22, 2013, approximately 691 piles remain. Piles were burned along Trail Ridge Road, the Bear Lake Road Corridor, Glacier Basin Campground, the Fall River Entrance area, Highway 34 near Deer Ridge Junction, and the Lily Lake area. Pile burning operations began in March and will continue through April 26 as weather permits.

Hazardous fuels were also disposed of this winter at Glacier Basin Campground by using an air curtain burner. Air curtain burners are designed to minimize or reduce the amount of particulate matters, or smoke, created while burning clean wood. The material that was burned was a product of fire suppression activities that took place during the Fern Lake Fire as well as material from various hazard tree projects throughout the east side of the park.

Thinning and hazard tree projects will continue during the summer of 2013 throughout the park. Areas include but are not limited to: Bear Lake, Trail Ridge Road, Aspenglen and Moraine Park Campgrounds, and Sprague Lake.

By accomplishing these pile burns, fire managers help achieve the park's goal of providing for the safety of visitors and employees as well as protecting communities and infrastructure.



*Air Curtain Burner*

*NPS Photo*

# Be a Part of the 100th Anniversary!



Rocky Mountain National Park's 100th Anniversary celebration is just around the corner, and planning has begun!

The park will be hosting kick-off and culminating events for the 100th Anniversary, as well as offering a limited number of special programs throughout the year. However, the year-long Centennial Calendar of Events will mostly reflect the creativity and initiative of community groups and organizations that wish to create special new events or link existing events to the 100th Anniversary in order to celebrate their connection with the park.

If you have an idea for a special 100th Anniversary event, you may partner with a group, organization, or business that wants to plan and put on the event, and then visit our website to fill out an application. Or if your annual event has a connection to the "Wilderness, Wildlife, Wonder" of Rocky Mountain National Park, consider celebrating that connection during our 100th Anniversary year by applying to be a 100th Anniversary event. Events can take place inside or outside of the park.

Approved events, educational programs, and activities will be added to the park's Centennial Calendar of Events and will be promoted through newsletters, press releases, on-line resources, and other park media.

Creativity is encouraged! Want to host an art walk? Sponsor a kid's art contest? Throw a birthday party complete with cake decorating contest? Organize an employee or volunteer reunion? Start a hiking challenge? Make those ideas part of the Rocky Mountain Centennial Calendar of Events!

Bring your idea for the 100th Anniversary to life. Celebrate your connection to Rocky Mountain National Park! Visit the 100th Anniversary website for more details: [www.nps.gov/romo/planyourvisit/100th\\_anniversary.htm](http://www.nps.gov/romo/planyourvisit/100th_anniversary.htm)



*Park staff, including Eagle Rock students, celebrate the National Park Service's birthday.*

# New Division Chiefs at Rocky

## **Rich Fedorchak**

### Chief of Interpretation and Education



Rich Fedorchak began his career with the NPS in 1984 as a seasonal park ranger at Mount Rainier. In 1986, Fedorchak worked as a park ranger historian at San Antonio Missions National Historic Park. He transferred to Carlsbad Caverns National Park in 1987, where he worked for three years in interpretation. While at Carlsbad Caverns, Rich attended the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center at Glynco, Georgia and received a full NPS law enforcement commission. From Carlsbad he moved to Lassen Volcanic National Park and worked as both backcountry and road patrol ranger. In 1991, he became the Assistant Chief of Interpretation and Visitor Services at Zion, a position he held for six years. In 1997, Rich served as the South District naturalist at Grand Teton NP and became the park's Chief of Interpretation in 2003. Rich became the NPS Servicewide Partnership Program Training Manager in September of 2005.

Fedorchak graduated with a B.S. in Environmental Interpretation from the University of Idaho at Moscow in 1983. He also earned an A.S. degree in Arboriculture and Park Management from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst in 1978.

Fedorchak enjoys kayaking, hiking. He and his wife Sheri have a sixteen year old daughter, Sarah.

## **Deb Pffeninger**

### Administrative Officer



Deb Pffeninger grew up in Buffalo, New York and graduated with a Bachelor of Science from the College of Environmental Science and Forestry and also has a Masters of Environmental Sciences from Miami University (in Ohio). She was originally introduced to the NPS as a high school SCA working trails in Bryce Canyon. For the last ten years, she was the Administrative Officer at Sequoia and Kings Canyon and has worked at Yosemite and Shenandoah National Parks. Her husband Paul works for the National Park Service's National Concessions office. Deb and Paul have two sons in college in California. The entire family are avid hikers and are looking forward to exploring Colorado.

# Rocky Mountain National Park's 2013 Group Volunteer Program

Rocky Mountain National Park's group volunteer program is off to a great start for a busy summer season in 2013! There are several groups scheduled to volunteer in the park this summer including: a high school group from Wisconsin, the National Smokejumpers Association, the Mountains and Plains Institute, a flyfishing expedition group, Boy Scout Troops, the American Conservation Corps, the Student Conservation Association and the Colorado Mountain Club, among many others.

On March 28, Rocky hosted a group of students from the University of Missouri's alternative spring break program in partnership with the Larimer County Conservation Corps. They brought out thirteen volunteers to work in our park greenhouse for a day of service learning. The students transplanted 2,381 plants into individual containers which will eventually be used in restoration projects in the park this summer. The group learned about Rocky's sustainability initiatives through a talk by park biologist Jim Cheatham and were lead in the day's project by Rocky Mountain Nature Association Intern Zach Szablewski.

Rocky welcomes volunteer groups from around the country. For more information on volunteer opportunities available for organized, please contact the park's volunteer office, 970-586-1330.



*Volunteers Helping Out In The Greenhouse*

*NPS Photo by Lindsey Prell*

# New Solar Shower in Moraine Park Campground

In late summer of 2011, the park constructed its first Solar Shower facility in Moraine Park Campground. The Solar Shower provides a place for campers to use their own Solar Shower Bags. Campers fill their Solar Shower bags with water and the water is warmed by the sun throughout the day. Once the water is warmed up, then the bags can be hung in one of the stalls and folks can enjoy a quick shower.



*Solar Shower in Moraine Park Campground*

*Photo by Ann Schonlau*

As the word has spread, the Solar Shower facility has become very popular with campers in Moraine Park Campground. On a mid-day drive through the campground, many bags can be seen sunning themselves on picnic tables. With this popularity and use by the public, the park will be constructing two additional Solar Shower Facilities this summer. There will be one built in Aspenglen Campground and an additional one in Moraine Park Campground. These facilities provide a good alternative to traditional shower facilities through significant water and energy savings. However, campers need to remember to bring their own Solar Shower Bag!

## Greening the Shuttle Bus Fleet

Beginning this year the park's shuttle services will be provided under a new service contract that was awarded at the end of last year. The contract was awarded to McDonald Transit, DBA Rocky Mountain Transit, who was our previous shuttle services provider. A new contract allowed the park the opportunity to make some improvements to the shuttle operations. Beside some operational changes, there was significant focus placed on "greening" the fleet.

The park identified three areas for prospective contractors to address and focus their efforts on; reducing emissions, increasing fuel efficiency and noise reduction. The winning proposal addressed all these areas the best as well as meeting the other contract requirements. Each shuttle of the current fleet will be retrofitted with an EPA approved clean diesel retrofit kit. The heart of these retrofit kits are the particulate traps installed on the shuttles' exhaust systems. The trap captures exhaust particulates and other exhaust gases, significantly reducing the emissions of the shuttles. Once every few days, the particulate traps are super-heated or "burned off" in a process that disposes of the trapped elements safely.

In addition to the retrofits, two Hybrid Shuttle buses have been ordered and are expected to be joining the fleet in April 2014. With the addition of these Hybrid Shuttles the contractor is expecting to see an overall 11 percent increase in fuel efficiency. Additionally these Hybrids are significantly quieter overall than a standard shuttle bus.



*NPS Photo by Peter Biddle*

# What Sequestration Means For Rocky

Lots of questions these days about how the ‘sequester’ is affecting the park. The park’s annual operating budget has been reduced by some 6% (\$757,00) compared to 2012. With the sequester and other reductions now in effect, we have identified the following impacts to our operation for the remainder of the fiscal year that ends on September 30, 2013.

This reduction in operating funds has limited Rocky our ability to hire a full complement of seasonal employees needed to provide visitor services for some 3 million visitors who are expected to visit the park during the busy spring/summer/fall season. Fewer interpretive/education rangers will be hired resulting in reduced visitor center hours of operation and the closure of Moraine Park Visitor Center for the entire 2013 season. In addition, we will hire fewer backcountry rangers. These rangers, several who also serve as climbing rangers on the park’s various high mountain peaks, respond to emergencies in the backcountry including technical rescues in areas such as Longs Peak. With this loss seasonal staff, visitors may have less contact with a park ranger while in the park and experience slower response times to backcountry emergencies.

Glacier Basin Campground, currently slated to be closed the early part of the summer due to the Bear Lake Road construction, will remain closed for the entire season thereby eliminating 148 single campsites and 13 group campsites.

Trail Ridge Road, one of the signature mountain drives in North America, spans the park and connects Estes Park on the east side to the town of Grand Lake on the west side. With reduced funding levels, we will need to minimize non-emergency overtime. Lack of overtime can affect the park’s ability to reopen the road in the event of late spring or early fall snow storms. Temporary closures can happen frequently (up to 10 days per season) in the shoulder seasons. These closures affect the economy of Grand Lake due to lack of visitors being able to reach that destination. Trail Ridge Road is described by Grand Lake businesses as the ‘life blood’ of their economy.

The effects of a long term sequester are cumulative. For example, the park was able to mitigate some of the impacts to our 2013 operating season by not filling vacant permanent positions and delaying research projects. As we fill mission critical positions and fund high priority research projects over time, this will further reduce funding available to hire seasonal employees to support the summer season.

Local communities and businesses that rely on recreation to support their livelihoods would face a loss of income should fewer visitors decide visit to Rocky Mountain National Park. Some 3.2 million people visited the park in 2012. In 2011, visitor spending associated with visitors to the park was over \$196 million.

## International Corner

In conjunction with our Polish sister park in the Tatra Mountains, a joint calendar featuring the scenery, flora and fauna of both parks has been produced. Please contact the superintendent's office if you'd like a copy.

\*\*\*Also, stay tuned for details on a new film, "Birds Without Borders" featuring the birds of Rocky Mountain National Park and Monteverde, Costa Rica.\*\*\*

