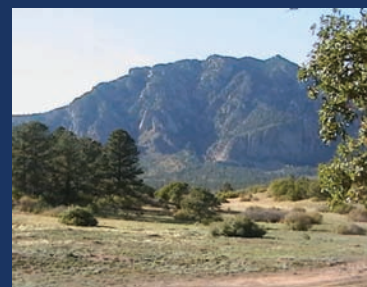


THE CHEYENNE MOUNTAIN STATE PARK TRACKER



Friends of Cheyenne Mountain State Park Newsletter

Volume 5 Issue 1

April 2006

an•tic•i•pa•tion / n. : the act of looking forward; *especially* : pleasurable expectation.



In This Issue

- 1 — President's Message
- 2 — Park Manager's Update
- 3 — Friend's February Hike
Welcome New Friends
Our Mission
- 4 — Resource Summary:
Vegetation
Communities
- 5 — Resource Summary
Continued
Trivia Contest
- 6 — Upcoming Friend's
Events
Board Contact
Information
- 7 — Friends Receive Grant
Wildlife Viewing Tips
- 8 — Tales from the Ranger
Station
Volunteer Opportunities
at the Park
- 9 — Membership Application

President's Message

This year, 2006, is the year for El Paso County's and Colorado Springs' first State Park. Finally, after years of preparation and efforts your Cheyenne Mountain State Park (CMSP) is in the final stages of being ready enough to open to the public. The park infrastructure is mostly in place and nearly all of the planned trails are ready for the park to open. Construction of the Visitor Center, the Trail Head Comfort Station, and the Entrance Station is well under way. You all thought this was too good to be true: a first class State Park, right in our own backyard. Well, it is about to become a reality!

While the excitement is building, the park is still not open to public access. We need to spread the word and ask family and friends not to jump the fence or bust down the gates trying to get a look at what is to come. Our uninvited presence during construction activities puts an undo burden on State Parks and all of the companies trying to get our park open for us all to enjoy. It's just not safe for people to be at the park before it is open. Anyone entering the park without permission prior to the official opening is trespassing and could be subject to legal action.

But what if you just cannot stand waiting

another day to see what is going on in the park? Or you have a burning desire to check out the trail system? Maybe you just want to do what you can to help make CMSP the very best park in our state? The good news is that there are special opportunities for friends members to see the park before it opens.

This spring and summer your Friends of CMSP Board of Directors has planned several activities for members. We will begin with a Park Clean-up Day where members will have the opportunity to help keep the land looking great as we approach that highly anticipated opening day. We also have moonlight hikes planned for the months of June, July and August. (See page 6 for more information) Looking to the future, we may even get a chance to tour Park facilities before the official opening day!

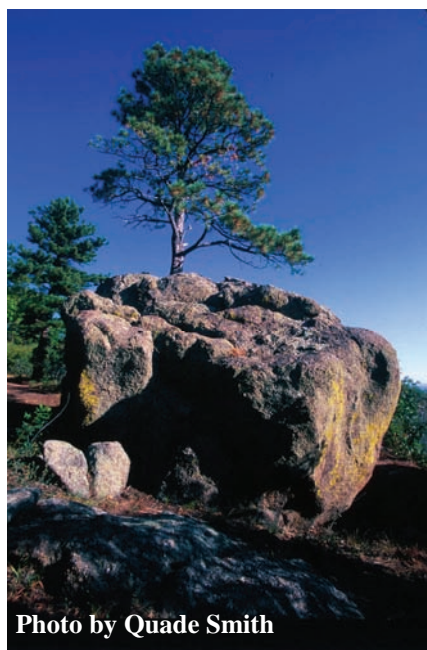


Photo by Quade Smith

It's important to see the park only during these sponsored events because your Board of Directors works directly and very closely with the CMSP Park Manager to ensure that our hikes, bikes and tours are approved and monitored safely and legally.

All events will be publicized in the newsletter. Keep your membership current, join the Friends of CMSP if you haven't already, stay tuned, and stay involved.

Rick Upton /President

Park Manager's Update: "...the wait will be worthwhile"

By **Rich Dudley** /Park Manager

Spring is fast approaching, and it brings us even closer to the realization of Cheyenne Mountain State Park. Development of the area has been gaining a great deal of momentum in the past year, but now, more than ever, you can see the progress of the construction and feel the excitement building in anticipation of our grand opening.



Construction of the Visitor Center: late March

It's a thrilling time for all of us as we watch the property turn into a beautiful State Park. There is still much to be done, but I am pleased to report that we have reached several important benchmarks in the past few months. Here are a few notable achievements:

- The first phase of construction, which includes roads, utilities, and the creation of parking lots, picnic areas, and campgrounds, was to be completed in December, but has been extended into April. While it is taking a little longer than first anticipated, the construction is still going very well and only final touches and smaller details need completed. In fact, two campground areas, Raptor Glen and Gobbler Grove, have been conditionally accepted by the park as complete. Several other areas, including the picnic area and group camping, will be accepted soon. Although we do not anticipate opening the

campground until 2007, having this work completed is certainly a step in the right direction.

- Perhaps the most obvious development is that construction of the Visitor Center, Entrance Station, and Trailhead Comfort Station has begun. The foundation of the Visitor Center is now complete and within the month I expect to see walls go up and the building really taking shape. Holes have been dug and foundations will soon be poured at the Entrance and Trailhead. In many ways, these buildings, especially the Visitor Center, will be the heart of the park, and seeing them become a reality is particularly exciting to me. Barring any major complications and delays, the contractor believes that the buildings may be ready by early fall of this year.

- With the completion of the Visitor Center in the near future, we have stepped up our efforts to plan the interpretive exhibits. I recently viewed the artist renderings for the displays. The designs and themes presented are ideal for the park and capture the spirit and message we want to convey. Our objective with the exhibits is for visitors to walk away with a greater appreciation for the park's natural resources and a desire to learn more by exploring the park further; I believe these exhibits will help us reach this goal.

- Also planned for the Visitor Center is a retail shop where we will sell nature books covering a wide range of topics, gift items that capture the spirit of Colorado, as well as many items with the Cheyenne Mountain State Park logo. We have begun planning the area and intend to integrate interpretive messages into the retail space which means visitors will have more opportunities to learn about the park and then take home a unique memento from their experience.

- 4240, the architectural firm that designed both the Visitor Center and

Event Center, are hard at work on the plans for the cabins. It won't be long before we will see some preliminary designs. The cabins are being designed with a theme to match our other buildings, and I am anxious to see what 4240 comes up with for us.

As you can see, we have our hands full as we begin to ramp up our programs and operations in advance of the opening of the park. Which, once again, brings us to the big question: when is the park going to open? Of course, there is no firm opening date set, but it appears that, barring any unforeseen complications or construction delays, we may be able to open the gates in late fall of this year.

Keep in mind that we will be opening the park in phases as facilities come on-line. When we first open, we will have the Visitor Center and the trails open for day-use only. As funding becomes available, the Camper Services building and Maintenance shop will be built, allowing the campgrounds to open sometime in Spring or Summer of 2007.

They say waiting is the hardest part, but I thank all of you, our friends and partners, for your continued support, and especially for your patience through this process. I am confident that the wait will be worthwhile and will pay off very soon in the form of an amazing park for us all.



The Management team inspecting Gobbler's Grove Campground in February.

February Friend's Hike Gave Preview of What's to Come

By Jack Busher: On February 4th, Park Manager Rich Dudley led a group of friends and interested local residents on a hike and drive into the park, sponsored by the Friends of Cheyenne Mountain State Park. Besides Rich, Lori and Jerry O'Hare, as well as Jack Busher, represented the Board of Directors for the Friends group. Gathering at an access point near the south end of the park, the group of fifteen met at 9:00 AM and were given a brief welcome and introduction by Rich. He then led them on a short hike along the Sundance Trail and the Zook Loop, stopping occasionally to point out different geologic and botanical points of interest.

At one of those stops, Jerry O'Hare, past-president of the Friends, took time to encourage fellow hikers who were not already members to consider joining the Friends of Cheyenne Mountain State Park as a way of helping establish, develop, and maintain the park. He reminded them that these goals are a significant part of the Friends mission.

As the group proceeded along the Zook



Photo by Laurie Bliler

Loop, they were visited by one of the park's soon-to-be major attractions: a group of some 25-30 wild turkey raced ahead of them and then disappeared over a nearby ridge. Their appearance spurred the Friends along, and soon Rich had returned them to their cars, and was ready to complete the day's introduction to the park by driving into several of the recently completed camping sites. One of those, Raptor Glenn, is the highest campground in the Park. It provides wonderful views, particularly to the east and south.

While driving to visit other areas under development, the group paused long enough to observe two coyote. Seen from a distance of several hundred yards, the two appeared healthy and alert as they patrolled the northern boundaries of the park.

Next on the agenda were visits to several of the walk-in sites in the Lower Meadow. The group was particularly impressed with the set up of the individual sites, especially the fact each includes a sunken and covered fire pit and not only available water for the campers, but a separate water line, hydrant and hose meant specifically for emergencies.

The group also saw the early foundations of the visitors' center now under construction, as well as



Rich Dudley talks to the friends. Photo by Laurie Bliler

the event center site that will be used for private gatherings, receptions, and weddings in the future. On departure, everyone seemed eager and anxious to return soon to spend more time.

Regardless of whether you hope to find the spectacular or the commonplace, this newest of Colorado State Parks seems on the verge of satisfying your desires.

Welcome Friends: New and Old

"Friends are treasures" and we treasure our new friends and our old friends who recently renewed their memberships...

Jeff and Laurie Bliler and Family
 Jeannie Breeding
 Jack Busher and Kathleen Cook
 Ralph and Kathryn Cadwallader
 Jack Case
 Maggie Connell
 Marie Correia
 Jane Dillon
 Pam and Ken Jones
 Judy Myers
 Randy and Judy Percy
 Sheila Pereira
 Jim and Donna Purdy
 Paul Smith
 Leland W Tatum



Our Mission:

"The Friends of Cheyenne Mountain State Park serves to protect, enhance, and preserve, for all time, the natural state and spectacular beauty of the park. We are also dedicated to working with park staff to promote recreational and educational opportunities as well as advocating for important park issues."

**A very special thank you and welcome to our two new Lifetime Friends:
 Ann Brown and Jack McBride.**

CMSP Resource Summary: Vegetation Communities

This is the fifth excerpt from the CMSP Stewardship Plan, printed with permission. This issue focuses on the high quality vegetation that is found in the park.

Cheyenne Mountain State Park is a highly complex site in terms of vegetation and has high aesthetic values. A short hike through the park could easily traverse four or more distinct plant communities that are becoming increasingly rare along the Front Range. The condition of the



Source: Stewardship Team, 2000

vegetation on this site rivals that of Aiken Canyon, the nearby Nature Conservancy Preserve.

The park occupies an important transitional zone between Great Plains grassland communities and montane coniferous forest along Colorado's Front Range. Major vegetation types include short-grass prairie, oak woodlands, Ponderosa pine forests, and Douglas-fir forest. To a lesser extent, the park also supports communities of mixed foothill shrubland, riparian forest, and foothill prairie. Surface water is almost nonexistent on the park, largely due to hydrologic alterations created with the construction of the adjacent NORAD facility in the 1960's. Riparian communities are therefore very limited in both composition and extent.

Grasslands are abundant in the eastern portion of the park, at an elevation of around 6000 feet. At least two grassland types are present – mixed grass prairie, and foothill prairie. These communities are highly diverse and include such species as little bluestem (*Schizachrium*

scoparium), needle-and-thread (*Hesperostipa comata*), and western wheatgrass (*Pascopyrum smithii*). Areas of foothill prairie also include mountain muhly (*Muhlenbergia montana*), green needlegrass (*Nassella viridula*), June-grass (*Koeleria macrantha*), and purple three-awn (*Aristida purpurea*). Blue grama (*Chondrosium gracile*) is a common understory species in both communities.



Gambel's Oak

Moving west across the park, grassland areas grade into montane shrublands dominated by Gambel's oak (*Quercus gambelii*) and mountain mahogany (*Cercocarpus montanus*). Oak dominates most of the shrubland community in the park, but small patches consisting mainly of mountain mahogany and yucca (*Yucca glauca*) can be found on dry, south- and east-facing slopes within the park. Cactus (*Opuntia* and *Echinocereus*), side-oats grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*), and indian rice-grass (*Achnatherum hymenoides*) make up most of the understory in this distinct shrubland community. Large areas of oak-dominated shrubland can be found on both sides of Limekiln Creek, extending both north and south to the park boundary. This community is essentially



Butterfly in Snowberry

a mosaic of oak thickets and grassland meadows, with patches of snowberry (*Symphoricarpos* sp.) and a few ponderosa pine and pinyon pine scattered throughout.

Forested areas include ponderosa pine, white fir, and Douglas-fir in varying degrees of composition. The ponderosa pine forest includes both scrub-woodland and savannah community types and is best developed along and to the north of the Limekiln Creek drainage. Gambel's oak, mountain mahogany and skunkbrush (*Rhus aromatica* ssp. *trilobata*) are common in the understory of the scrub-woodland community, and this type dominates most of the ponderosa pine forest in the park. Less common is ponderosa pine savannah, which is characterized by low shrub cover and a



Chokecherry

dense understory of grasses, including blue grama, sideoats grama, mountain muhly, and little bluestem. Douglas-fir/white fir forest is also common at the park, especially in the steep, shaded portions along the western boundary, and north-facing slopes along Limekiln Creek. The understory of this community is typically sparse, but open portions along upper Limekiln Creek contain dense stands of American plum (*Prunus americana*), chokecherry (*Padus virginiana* ssp. *melanocarpa*), and poison ivy (*Toxicodendron rydbergii*). Moderate east-facing slopes along the western border support stands of mixed montane forest.

continued on page 5

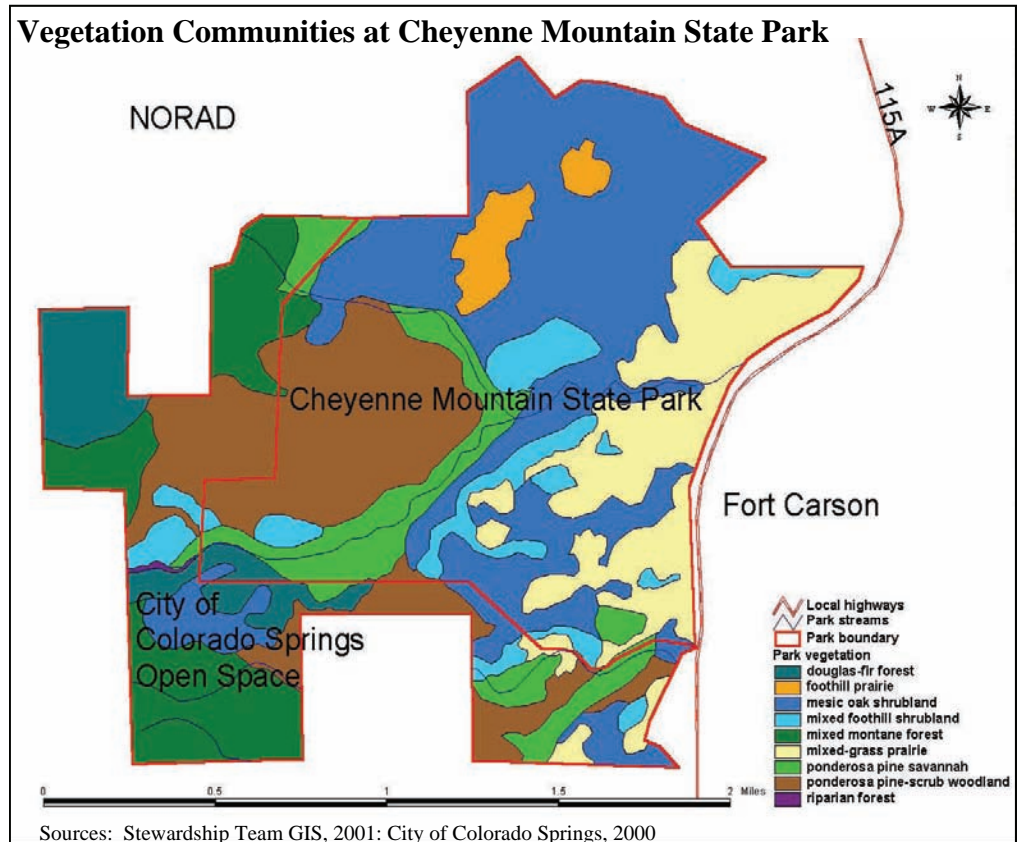
Resource Summary cont. **Significance of Park's Vegetation**

Continued from page 4. The following details the significance of Cheyenne Mountain's vegetation and why it is so important to carefully monitor and manage the area's plant communities to insure the health of the park now and into the future.

High quality grassland communities The park contains high quality mixed grass prairie, foothill prairie and mesic oak shrubland communities with high levels of diversity. These communities have been severely degraded or destroyed throughout most of their historic range in Colorado. Cheyenne Mountain Park rivals nearby Aiken Canyon, a TNC preserve, in terms of both quality and diversity of native species and may provide an important baseline for attempts to recover similar communities in other areas of the state.

Carrionflower (*Smilax lasioneuron*)

habitat This rare plant was identified during a field visit by State Parks staff on June 19, 2000. A complete map of the distribution of this species within the park has not been completed. Though not listed federally as an endangered or threatened plant, Carrionflower is considered rare and sensitive enough to be "watch listed" status by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program. The Heritage ranking of S3/S4 for this plant indicates that it is considered to be rare, with a restricted range, and limited to 100 or less occurrences in the state. Watch listed species are monitored by CNHP on a periodic basis in order to determine if the species is declining and should be more rigorously tracked.



Unusual Communities Preliminary field surveys of the park have discovered a number of unusual and uncommon plant communities, including pockets of old-growth Ponderosa pine forest, and good quality foothill canyon communities with large stands of wild plum and wild grape. An unusual community of Scribner's needle grass and Ponderosa pine was documented near the southern boundary of the park in the summer of 2001

Provides wildlife habitat The park is located in an important transitional zone between Great Plains grasslands and Front Range montane forests. Wild turkeys, black bear, elk, mule deer, and golden eagles are commonly observed in the park and rely on park vegetation for food and shelter.



Trivia Contest: Test your CMSP Knowledge!

Who was the first settler of the property that is now Cheyenne Mountain State Park?

E-mail your answer to cheyenne.park@state.co.us by 5:00 pm on **May 5, 2006**. Include your answer, your name, address, and telephone number. A winner will be randomly selected from the correct answers.

The winner will receive a gift package that includes a Cheyenne Mountain State Park baseball hat.



Upcoming Events:

Park Clean-Up Day

Help us with light trash pick-up around
the park and get some fresh air!

Saturday, April 22

Meet at the Pine Oaks Gate

At 9:00 am

Coffee and Donuts will be provided.

Friend's Pot-Luck Dinner and Twilight Hike

Let's try out those picnic tables! Bring a pot-luck dish to share and
then join us for an amazing hike by moonlight.

Wednesday, June 7

Meet at the Main Entrance (across from Fort Carson's Gate 1)

6:30 pm

To RSVP, please call Lori O'Hare at 719-260-13941 or e-mail her at
lajohare@peoplepc.com



This Spring. . .

Renew your Spirit.

Renew your Mind.

Renew your Friend's Membership.

This newsletter represents the opinions and views of the Board of Directors of the Friends of Cheyenne Mountain State Park. Except as specifically identified in an article, the views and opinions do not necessarily reflect official policy or endorsement by the State of Colorado or Colorado State Parks.

Friends of Cheyenne Mountain State Park Board

Have questions or want to find out how you can help support Cheyenne Mountain State Park? Contact a Board Member for more information.

President	Rick Upton	uptonrus@adelphia.net
Vice Pres.	Jim Schwerin	jim@windycreek.net
Secretary	Lori O'Hare	lajohare@peoplepc.com
Treasurer	Pam Karr	mjkarr@yahoo.com
Member	Jack Busher	jbusher@qwest.net
Member	Jane Dillon	TEXASNY@aol.com
Member	Jerry O'Hare	lajohare@peoplepc.com
Member	Nan Scranton	NanScranton@elpasoco.com
Member	Glenn Scott	glenscott@adelphia.net

Non-Voting Members

Park Manager	Rich Dudley	rich.dudley@state.co.us
Park Ranger	Monique Mullis	monique.mullis@state.co.us

Newsletter: Monique Mullis and Jack Busher

Friends Receive \$1300 Grant from Local High School

The Friends recently received a grant for \$1300 from Fountain-Fort Carson High School. The school is part of El Pomar Youth in Community Service (EPYCS), a youth grant making program. Through hands-on grant making, students provide direct financial support to nonprofits in their communities. This year, Fountain-Fort Carson students chose to grant money to organizations that focused on recreation and education opportunities in the Colorado Springs area. They saw the important role that Cheyenne Mountain State Park will play in the community and their support is greatly appreciated.

The \$1300 granted will be used to purchase environmental education resources that focus on teaching people about the area's diverse animal inhabitants. Just a few of the resources that the friends will donate to the park include bear, mountain lion, and bobcat

pelts, skull replicas, track replicas, and various books.

The resources will become wildlife education "kits" for Rangers and Volunteer Naturalists to use during school field trips to the park, during outreach programs throughout the community, and during campfire programs or hikes for visitors. These important educational resources give students and visitors a rare chance to get close to, discover, and even touch the pelt of an animal that can be found at the park.

Grants like this one are important because educational resources are hard for the park to fund, but are invaluable in helping people discover the natural world around them. These interpretive "tools" are vital to creating future stewards of Cheyenne Mountain Park and in turn, will inspire many to cultivate a life-long interest and

appreciation for nature and the environment in the Colorado Springs area and beyond.

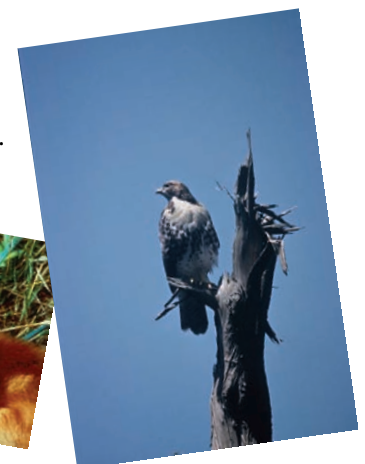
If you would like to know more about how you could donate educational items to the park, please contact Rick Upton at uptonrus@adelphia.net.



Picture of a Bear Track found at the park.

Wildlife Viewing Tips from the Colorado Division of Wildlife

- Observe animals from a safe distance — safe for you and safe for the animals. You can get "close" by using binoculars, a spotting scope, or a camera with a telephoto lens. If the animals you are observing have their heads up, ears point toward you, or appear jumpy or nervous when you move, you are probably too close. Sit or stand very quietly, without making eye contact, or move slowly away to a safer distance. Be especially sensitive to and calm around adults with young.
- Move slowly and casually, not directly at wildlife. Allow animals to keep you in view; do not surprise them. Avoid eye contact; watch from the corner of your eye.
- Never chase or harass wildlife. Harassment of wildlife is unlawful, and can be very harmful for the animals.
- Leave your pets at home. At best their presence hinders wildlife watching; at worst they can chase, injure, or kill wildlife, or your pet can be injured or killed.
- Using the animal's behavior as a guide, limit the time you spend watching if animals appear to be stressed.
- Respect others who are viewing the same animals.
- Do not feed wild animals.
- Respect private property; ask for permission to access private lands before your viewing trip.
- Animals at rest need to remain at rest; don't do anything that might make them move.
- Avoid animals that behave unexpectedly or aggressively. They may be ill, injured, or have young nearby.



Tales from the Ranger Station By Monique Mullis

Happy Spring to all of our friends! If you have read the update on page 2, you know that the park is on the fast track and we are busy preparing for the grand opening. I can't wait until we can open the gate to the park and let the public learn what we already know: that Cheyenne Mountain State Park is an amazing, beautiful place!

One of the big projects we have been working on over the winter is development of the park's volunteer program. Rich and I have had a great group of people helping us to get our program off of the ground. Jack Case, Debbie Ackley, and Jerry and Lori O'Hare (all fellow-friends) deserve a big pat on the back for their hard work and dedication to this huge undertaking.

Volunteers will play an important role at the park, especially on trails, working the Visitor Center, and facilitating environmental education. Basically, we can't do everything that we want to without a dedicated group of volunteers.

So, with that in mind, I'm happy to announce that we are now recruiting for the first official group of Cheyenne Mountain Volunteers! The positions we will fill during this first cycle of recruiting and training include Volunteer Trail Hosts, Trail Crew Members, Volunteer Naturalists, and Visitor Center Assistants. We will also look for people interested in helping with special events at the park.

As the program grows and the park evolves, we will add more volunteer

opportunities. For example, when the campgrounds open, we will need volunteer camp hosts.

Many friends have shared their interest in becoming volunteers at the park and I thank everyone for their patience with us as we develop this important program. Finally the time has come and we are hosting two Volunteer Orientations in April. I hope to see many of the friends there and I look forward to meeting many of you face-to-face. I also encourage you to invite other people who may be interested in volunteering at the park.



Wanted: Nature-ally Interesting People

Are you interested in the outdoors, creative, enthusiastic, motivated, and looking for a unique and rewarding volunteer opportunity?

Volunteer for Cheyenne Mountain State Park and become an important part of the newest state park in Colorado

Join us for a **Volunteer Open House and Orientation** at the State Park's South Region Office at 4255 Sinton Road in Colorado Springs
Wednesday, April 26 (6 pm - 9 pm), or Sunday, April 30 (1 - 4 pm)

Enjoy some pizza and snacks while you...

- Learn about the Volunteer Program and meet current Cheyenne Mountain State Park Volunteers.
- Talk with staff and volunteers about the many volunteer opportunities available to you.
- Sign-up for opportunities that interest you. We need Volunteer Naturalists, Trails, and Visitor Center help.
- Find out how YOU can get involved!



Anyone interested in attending should call **719-227-5266**
or e-mail Monique at **monique.mullis@state.co.us**
by April 24 to reserve a seat.



Friends of Cheyenne Mountain State Park Membership Application

I / We wish to join the Friends of Cheyenne Mountain State Park

New / Renewal (circle one)

- | | | |
|-------|-------|--|
| _____ | \$25 | Annual Individual Membership |
| _____ | \$35 | Annual Family Membership |
| _____ | \$50 | Annual Supporting Membership |
| _____ | \$100 | Annual Contributing Membership |
| _____ | \$100 | Annual Small Business Membership |
| _____ | \$500 | Annual Corporate Membership |
| _____ | \$500 | LIFETIME MEMBER: Never pay dues again! |

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ **State** _____ **Zip** _____

Phone _____

E-mail Address _____

Help us save postage! Please check here to receive "The Tracker" newsletter via e-mail _____

Make your check payable and please mail your application to:



Friends of Cheyenne Mountain State Park
P.O. Box 51453
Colorado Springs, CO 80949-1453

Thank you for your support of Cheyenne Mountain State Park!