

THE

STATE PARK

TRACKER



Friends of Cheyenne Mountain State Park Newsletter

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Park Manager's Update: Time to Visit

Greetings to all of our Friends! After a very windy spring, we are on the verge of what promises to be a hot, yet typically beautiful Colorado summer. The park is greening up nicely (some rain would be nice, though!), and all of the critters that make Cheyenne Mountain State Park such an interesting place, are out, active, and engaged in the day to day business of being.....well, a *critter!* I hope everyone can find time in their busy schedules to come out and enjoy the park.



Just another Critter...this one is a bobcat kitten using Blackmer Trail to his advantage

"What's going on at the park, Rich", you ask? Well, let me tell you that we have quite a few irons in the fire. At the top of the list is the campground. The most frequent question I hear from visitors is "when will that doggone campground open"? While I don't have a firm date to give you, I can assure you that we are making progress. The critical issue is our utilities, as they have been sitting unused for a couple of years now. Staff is working with our contractor and Colorado Springs Utilities to identify the necessary steps to get everything up and running. At this time, however, the soonest we will have the campground operational is late summer.....stay tuned!

The recent wildland fire on Fort Carson, which consumed 9,000+ acres, was a real wake-up call for staff. Fire season is definitely upon us, and it looks as if it might be a long, dry season at that. I urge everyone to please be careful when enjoying the wonderful outdoors, whether it is here at the park, or elsewhere.

While not directly involved in the fire, our staff played an important role during the Fort Carson fire. When State Patrol closed Hwy. 115 at the intersection of the Main Gate, and the entrance to the park, many people ended up in the park. Many of these folks were residents of areas south of the park, and were understandably upset and worried about their homes, pets, livestock, etc. Staff handled this difficult situation with a great deal of professionalism....kudos to everyone involved!



Geo-cachers Head Out on Coyote Run Just for Fun

This spring the park hosted a couple of notable special events. First up was the "Cache Bash", which involved a CITO (Cache In Trash Out) event with 65 local geocachers who helped clean up/prepare campsites followed by a BBQ hosted by the Friends of CMSP. In an effort to "grow" this annual event, a number of geocaching activities for kids, hardcore cachers, as well as newcomers to this fun pastime were held in the afternoon. Next up was the first annual "Climb to Conquer Cancer" event, with 250+ people participating and \$36,330 being raised for



"Climb to Conquer Cancer" Event: a Colorado First for Cheyenne Mountain State Park!

this important American Cancer Society fundraiser. This is the first time this type of event has been held in Colorado. Not only did participants hike on the trails or walk up the road, there were also teams of mountain bikers participating! SR Monique Mullis spearheaded this event, establishing the hiking and biking routes, as well as handling all coordination with the ACS. Staff hopes to make this a cornerstone event, so that in the future, when people hear the phrase "Climb to Conquer Cancer", they will automatically associate it with Cheyenne Mountain State Park.

The planning process for the property on top of Cheyenne Mountain is proceeding well. Staff has been working with the consulting firm Kezziah-Watkins, and has established dates for our public meetings. If you are interested in participating in this process, please mark the following dates on your calendar: July 15th (6:00pm), September 9th (6:00pm), and November 18th (5-7pm). We have not yet secured a location for these meetings, however, I will notify the Friends when we do.

President's Message: A Lot to Think About

Hello to all you Friends out there! Summer is fast approaching and Cheyenne Mountain State Park is providing numerous opportunities to hike, bike, and volunteer to get out and enjoy the great outdoors. It is awesome to see so many of you in the Park helping with everything from repairing trails to leading school groups on interpretive hikes. Thanks for all you do for CMSP!

As usual your Friends Board of Directors has been very active. Later in June you will be able to purchase the first CMSP trail guide! Largely the effort of Jack Busher, your Newsletter Editor, Communications Committee Chair and Trail Maintenance Expert; the trail guide is a delightful, detailed depiction of each and every trail available at CMSP. We will let you know via email as soon as the guides are ready.

We have accepted the first endowment for the Friends of CMSP! An anonymous donor has provided funding to purchase over 80 state park passes for Fort Carson enlisted soldiers and their families and endowed funds that will provide park passes every year as long as CMSP exist. This is obviously the first endowment of its kind and unprecedented for the Friends as well as Fort Carson. An exciting part of the agreement is that the donor has allowed for anyone to add to the endowment! Anyone who wants to do something special for our Fort Carson enlisted men and women, and their families can add to the principal amount of this endowment through their tax deductible charitable donation. Simply contact anyone of your Board of Directors to get the process started. The compassion and generosity displayed by local citizens never ceases to amaze me. Our heartfelt thanks and blessings go out to the anonymous donor who started the Fort Carson Enlisted Soldier and Family State Park Pass Fund.

Something extremely important to CMSP happened in May this year. The Colorado Springs City Council voted to use Trails and Open Space funds to join State Parks in purchasing a key parcel of land to be added to CMSP. The 80 acre plot, known as the Newman parcel, provides access to the historic Dixon trail and contains the only known active spring on Cheyenne Mountain within Park property. State Parks plans to reestablish the Dixon trail – the path used by an original Cheyenne Mountain homestead family in the late 1800s/early 1900's and that path passes directly through this newly acquired parcel. Your Friends Board of Directors has been involved with this acquisition since 2005 when we first contacted the owner, Bruce Newman. As you can imagine negotiations were lengthy and very complicated. Eventually, Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services took the lead and finalized the deal earlier this year. As a part of the contract for this purchase, the spring has been accepted as a donation from the Newman Family. State Parks and the Friends of CMSP are working together to recognize the Newman family for their generosity and kindness. The process of reestablishing the historic Dixon trail will take some time, more than a year, so be patient and look for opportunities to join in public forums as plans for the Top of the Mountain, as well as the Dixon trail are discussed.



To kick off a summer full of outdoor experiences at CMSP the Friends are involved in several events. First, you will see your Friends at the Bicycle and Trails Festival in the America the Beautiful Park on Saturday, June 7 from 10AM to 2PM. Come by, check us out and purchase merchandise.

And, mark your calendars for our annual "Friends only" Moonlight Hike and Potluck Supper in the Park on June the 20th. So update your membership, bring along a friend or 2 to join our 501(c) 3 charitable organization and come join us for walk under the moon in CMSP. A separate article below provides the details.

I will be looking for you out on the CMSP trails.

Rick



The American Cancer Society Sponsors a New Event at the Park

On May 17 Cheyenne Mountain State Park hosted the first ever *Climb to Conquer Cancer*, featuring a variety of activities to promote healthy living and raise money at the same time. There were over 250 participants and they raised over \$36,000 though their original goal was \$10,000!

These participants were able to browse the ACS displays set up at the Trailhead Parking Lot, and then select a favorite exercise. While some walked the park's roads, others sampled the trails, either hiking or biking. Through this commitment, they were able to

turn their own exercise into a funded pledge donation to support the ACS.

Congratulations to all those who participated as well as helping to sponsor this worthwhile program!

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.

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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 and Volunteers Make It Happen: Work Days Rock the Park



Maintenance Technician Brian Greenleaf keeps the materials flowing for the Geocache Bash



Fun in the dirt!



Work alone....



....Or in a group



Go on a Hike...burn those cookies off!



Find an amazing Rock!



...or Fit a Rock

Cheyenne Mountain State Park Recently "Bugged"

Thanks to the efforts of Ranger Monique Mullis, the park now has two geocache travel bugs. And, no, that isn't something to be alarmed about. No one will be listening in on our conversations, nor are there any strange viruses going around. For you non-geocachers out there, a travel bug is a specialized geocache "prize."



So that's a Travel Bug, eh?

Simply put, a travel bug is a trackable tag that you attach to an item. This allows you to track your item on Geocaching.com. The item becomes a hitchhiker that is carried from cache to cache (or person to person) in the real world and you can follow its progress online.

Each travel bug has its own unique tracking number stamped on it. This tracking number is used as proof by the user that they found the item. It also doubles as a way for the user to locate the personal web page for the travel bug.

Travel bugs are tracked with the help of users who go online and "grab" them from caches, or receive them from users. The idea is by picking up and dropping off travel bugs on the web site you are mirroring the bug's real world adventures.

Each travel bug has its own "diary" that follows its movements.

The park's two travel bugs were activated on April 29. The first is the *Colorado State Parks 50th Anniversary Bug* and the second is the *Cheyenne Mountain State Park Junior Park Ranger Bug*. The park will post a sign in the camper services building (when it opens!) detailing the travels of our bugs.

It should be fun to follow these bugs as they travel across the country and hopefully get where they are supposed to go. If you want to learn more about what travel bugs are, go to geocaching.com and look up the FAQ about travel bugs. We've already gone there and collected much of the information that has been included in this article.

If you want to watch our bugs travel and read the logs, go to **geocaching.com** and click on the "trackables" link on the left side. Then enter the tracking codes on the space that calls for the bug's tracking numbers.

The 50th Anniversary bug is 582461 and the junior ranger bug is 580297. Each bug has its own site and Mullis has added a few pictures to the gallery with the expectation of adding more later.

Friends Annual Moonlight Hike Set for June 20

If you ever wonder what advantages there are to being a member of our Friends group besides getting this newsletter several times a year, this is a partial answer. The Friends of Cheyenne Mountain State Park are once again invited to the annual June Moonlight hike. All Friends (and their families) are invited to attend. We will meet at the Camper Services Building at 7:00 PM for a BBQ followed by a hike to our favorite bench to watch the full moon rise. All who plan to attend are asked to RSVP before June 16 at 260-1391. You are also asked to bring a side or dessert for this potluck affair.

Those who have attended the previous moonlight hikes always seem to come away with one more favorite park story. For many, it is the memory of that magnificent orange orb rising up out of the prairie. For others, maybe it was the owl you heard hooting nearby, or your first encounter with a "dangerous" wild turkey prowling the scrub oak. Did you hear that? Was it a bear? Nah, just an ovenbird rattling around in the undercover.



*What to do on a Moonlight Hike?
(Find) And Catch a Kitten if You Can*

Park's Adopt-A-Trail Training Program a Big Success

Ranger Brian Kerrigan, who is in charge of volunteer programs at the park, has hit upon another successful program to keep the volunteer program at the park both fresh and vibrant. This is known as the CMSP Adopt-A –Trail program. The idea is to get local businesses and corporations to sign-on-to and select a specific park trail that they will help maintain throughout the year.

Part of their responsibility is to inspect their trail twice a year, once in the early spring and then again as fall arrives. Then, assisted by the park's volunteer trail crew leaders, they and their employee volunteers spend a day or two in the spring and fall bringing their trail back to standard.

On April 5 and 6, volunteers from two companies, Cheyenne Mountain Resort/Country Club of Colorado and the Bechtel Corporation, arrived at the park for their first trail maintenance training. After Kerrigan gave a quick run down of the Adopt-A-Trail program, its vision, and history, the volunteers spent the weekend learning from the volunteer crew leaders, Jim Purdy, Paul Smith and Jack Busher.

They received a curriculum of trail terminology, sustainable trail construction and maintenance highlights, trail and corridor specifications, tool use and safety tips. On Saturday they spent much of the afternoon on a guided walk. The purpose was to point out potential problems on the trail, as well as areas that seem to be doing well on their own. They not only had possible projects pointed out to them by the crew leaders, but also had a chance to make suggestions of their own.

On Sunday morning they came back to the park, met at the Trailhead parking lot, heard a tool safety talk, and then headed out on Zook Loop, their designated "teaching laboratory" for the day. By mid afternoon they had resolved many of Zook's critical issues. Best of all, they completed their training and Zook Loop got spiffed up in the process!

With their training complete, Kerrigan can expect to see improved conditions on at least two trails throughout the year. Bechtel Corporation has adopted Talon Trail, while Cheyenne Mountain Resort/Country Club of Colorado has chosen Coyote Run.



Walk to Iraq and Back Kicks Up Its Heels at the Park

Over a dozen people showed up at the trailhead at Cheyenne mountain State Park on May 3 to participate in a very special hike. Many were family members or friends of soldiers of the 4th Infantry Division from Fort Carson currently deployed in Iraq. They were adding their mileage to a popular support program called Walk to Iraq and Back.

Walk to Iraq and Back (WTIAB) is a program in which individuals and groups join together to collectively walk 14,160 miles - the distance from Fort Carson to Baghdad - as a healthy way to show support for our Soldiers. This program has spread across the US, particularly at Army bases throughout the country. As of this week, Fort Carson Soldiers, family members, civilian employees and civilian supporters around the Pikes Peak Region have walked a total of 15,595 miles!

Volunteer Trail Work Days Set for May thru July



Have you ever walked the park's trails and wondered why they aren't perfectly maintained every time you're out there? Doesn't the park have a maintenance staff that scours and grooms these trails daily? Obviously, the answer to that last question is "yes" and "no." With a system of trails of almost twenty miles and limited budget and staffing, the park maintenance staff spends a considerable amount of its time working the trails.

However, a trail system as extensive as ours cannot be maintained on a daily basis. And that is how the Volunteer Trail Work Days come in to play. As a way of keeping the trails both safe and useable, the park has established a series of days (and evenings) on which volunteer crew leaders will lead

crews to tackle those areas that have been identified as problem sites.



The 2008 season officially began on Saturday, April 27. A volunteer crew of approximately twelve people showed up to help debut the program. They worked at two work sites. The first was on Raccoon Ridge, just below the walk-in tent sites. There they built an armored swale across a section that had become a mud soaked as snows melted and rain fell. The second work area was on a higher section of Raccoon Ridge, near the Raptor Glen Campground. At this site, erosion was quickly de-

grading much of the trail surface. With a good deal of muscle power, wheelbarrow carting, and tread revision the site was greatly improved by the time the winds came up and chased the crew home.



So, now you know. Our trails are continually being maintained both by the park's crews and the hard work of many volunteers. Would you like to help? Contact Ranger Brian Kerrigan or go www.voutdoors.org, fill out a profile, select a password, and browse the volunteer opportunities.

Help with Merchandise Sale at Safeway on July 9

The Friends of Cheyenne Mountain State Park expect to have a table set up in the lobby of The Safeway Store in the Montana Shopping Center on South Academy. The purpose of the booth is two-fold. First and foremost, we'd like to make sure as many nearby residents as possible are aware that CMSP exists just two miles south of where they are currently standing. Secondly, it would be a good time to further promote the park and the Friends by selling merchandise that benefits CMSP and our volunteers while further spreading awareness of the park.

This project is being headed up by board member Jim Purdy. We would like to have the booth open from 10:00 AM until 6:00 PM. Jim is hoping to get some Friends to volunteer two hours of their time to help the board keep the table open. Please contact him at jpurdy@aol.com. If you can't volunteer, plan to stop by the booth and thank those who are there, and maybe make a purchase to refresh your interest in the Friends group.



The above photos relate to the story "Geo-cache Bash" on the following page.

Geo-Cache Trash Bash a Huge Success Once Again

A group from Geocaching Colorado continue to shake things up at the park. On Saturday, April 19, as part of a world-wide Geocache service project: (CITO, which stands for Cache-In-Trash-Out), spent a half day donating their time to assist in a variety of volunteer ventures.

This project, headed up by Senior Park Ranger Monique Mullis and volunteer coordinators, Dan and Pam Scott, welcomed close to sixty volunteers. They were divided into three groups. Some 10-15 spent the morning collecting weeds in and around the park's walk-in tent sites. Another group collected trash, while a third crew concentrated on trail maintenance chores. The Weeds and Trash crew collected over 25 bags of mostly weeds and construction trash.

The trail crew, led by Park Maintenance Technician Brian Greenleaf, resolved some serious trail erosion issues near the walk-in tent sites, where they built several rolling grade dips designed to divert water off the trail. They also tackled a serious drainage problem on Raccoon Ridge Trail. Here they developed an armored swale to elevate hikers over a low section of trail that tends to collect water in the spring, or after heavy rains.

After spending the morning on these clean-up projects, the volunteers enjoyed a BBQ hosted by the Friends of Cheyenne Mountain State Park. Board members Jerry O'Hare, as well as Barbara and Glen Scott, manned the BBQ assisted by ranger Tom Woerdeman. All involved in this huge volunteer effort wanted to thank the Friends for once again hosting the meal. So, thanks to all you Friends for your continued support of the park.



Friends BBQ Wraps Up the Geo-cache Work Session

Bechtel Corporation Takes on Talon Trail



As CMSP's Adopt-A-Trail program moved from its infancy to full-fledged potency, it was Bechtel Corporation's PCAPP Project that lead the way. Under the direction of Bechtel employee Andrew Tait, this ambitious group not only took part in the park's first training session for "Adopters," they became the first group to get out on a trail—Talon Trail for them—and actually study its issues, and then get their tools into the ground.

On Friday, April 25 Tait and several volunteers walked the trail, looking for areas that needed maintenance. They defined several areas that needed a variety of trail solutions. Sometimes it was simple corridor clearing, while other sites needed rock mono-walls established, as well as adjusting the outslope of the tread to keep users from slipping off the steeper sections.

A week later, Bechtel employee-volunteers arrived at the park bright and early Friday morning, downed orange juice, coffee and donuts provided by Tait, and hit the trail. By the end of the day, they had dealt with two-thirds of the problem areas, particularly taking on erosion control issues, as well as several trail tread issues.

Returning on Saturday, Tait's crew again dealt with some serious erosion problems and cleared up several of the corridor issues that had been defined as needing work. By lunch time, they had completed their task and were treated to a well-deserved lunch sponsored by Bechtel.



Kern Family Donation Goes to Support Trail Guide

Many members of the Friends group, along with other visitors to the park, have expressed interest in seeing a trail guide of the park's trail system. Thanks to a generous donation by the Kern family, that desire is soon to be met. During the summer of 2007 several park volunteers, led by Jack Busher, surveyed the park's trails. They gathered notes, not only on the trail features, but also on much of its flora and fauna. After many edits and revisions, the draft is about ready to go to print.

Printing costs were significant, if we were to purchase enough copies to make this a self-sufficient project. That is where the Kern donation met the challenge. Now the hard work of many volunteers will allow the Friends group to get the trail guide printed as a full-color, cargo-pocket sized booklet. Once again, a huge "thank you" to the Kern family.

TALES FROM THE RANGER STATION: New Seasonal Rangers Fill the Park

Summer is fast approaching and that means the full-time rangers (Rich, Monique, and Brian Kerrigan) get some much-needed help from Seasonal Park Rangers. This summer there are five rangers to help patrol the trails, maintain the park, and keep the visitors safe and happy.



Many of you may remember Grant Lockwood from last season. He is back this summer after spending the winter at the Police Academy. This year Grant is a Temporary Parks Officer. This means that he is an armed, fully-commissioned officer and has the same authority as the full-time rangers.

Jason Sharp also joins the ranks as a Temporary Parks Officer. A recent graduate from the Police Academy, Jason has also spent time in the military, where he completed one deployment to Iraq. Jason will be returning to school in the fall.

Some of our older friends may recall Josh Blake. Josh worked as a seasonal ranger in the summer of 2006. While he is not used to the park being open (he patrolled the park while it was closed in 2006), Josh is excited to see people actually enjoying the trails! Josh will return to nursing school in the fall.

Melissa Weaver has a degree in Biology and has volunteered for the Fort Carson Army Volunteer Corps surveying the park's wildlife populations. She has also been a contractor for the US Fish and Wildlife Service in Yuma, Arizona.

Brock Hodgson also joins the park this summer. He is currently working on his Environmental Engineering degree at UCCS. Brock has a second job as a Barista at Starbucks so he can make a mean cup of coffee!

We are lucky to have such bright, professional Park Rangers this summer. All of them are excited to work at the park and are willing to help the visitors at any time. They would love to meet you the next time you are in the park.



Grant Lockwood, Temporary
Parks Officer



Josh Blake
and Melissa Weaver



Jason Sharpe and
Brock Hodgson

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 _____

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

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