



Friends of Mount Evans and Lost Creek Wildernesses



July Newsletter 2023

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Are you signed up for the next project? <https://fomelc.org/volunteer-signup>



Chairman - Steve West

Why Water is Important to Wilderness?

Weather is an important component of the many aspects of wilderness. With the record snowfall and rain totals so far in 2023, water has become plentiful compared to the past drought years.

The growth of flora and fauna depends on water. Grasses grow. Invasive weeds grow. Trails begin to resemble stream beds instead of walkable surfaces. When the moisture stops everything dries out leading to possible ignition points for fires. Lighting and unattended campfires can lead to catastrophic consequences. Invasive weeds replace native grasses. Trails become wider as users hike around pooled water trampling vegetation making trails unsustainable.

So water is both critical and a hazard to the wilderness.



How can we monitor the effects of water?



You can help FOMELC monitor the effects of water by installing Survey123 app on your cell phone which was developed to record issues in the wilderness. The app can also record issues with trails such as downed trees, water on the trail, ineffective or unnecessary structures, missing signs and illegal campsites. The app can record weed infestations by amount, type, and location. Contact Ralph at: ralph@fomelc.org for more app information.

Data that is recorded populates a database for both Wildernesses we serve. By analyzing this data FOMELC will be able to create a work plan to correct issues for now and in the future.

Last word

Get out and hike, use the Survey 123 app, and volunteer for weed, trails projects, or patrolling. You will make a difference!

You can sign up for all events at: <https://fomelc.org/volunteer-signup>

- Steve



Invasive



From the Weed Patch – Confessions of a Weed Killer

The 2023 weed season is officially open. We have a 10-week window to clean up as much of the wilderness habitat as possible. That window is dictated primarily by the life stages of the invasive plants as to when we most effectively treat them. What we fail to eliminate this season will be multiplied the next. I have been at this for over a decade, so forgive me if I take a moment to reflect on that path.

I am beginning to consider myself an “old timer.” In age, that is true, but related to the FOMELC Board tenure, I am only the fifth most senior member. It is gratifying to hear those senior to me in FOMELC or the Forest Service comment on the progress made since FOMELC expanded the weed program in 2014. Notable examples are Canada thistle infestations along the Beartrack Lakes Trail from the Forest Service boundary at Bear Creek to Big Beartrack Lake and the Resthouse Trail “switchback” infestations. In Lost Creek Wilderness, Goose Creek Trail and Hankins Gulch were overwhelmed with the number of species and their densities of Canada and musk thistles, common mullein, yellow toadflax, and cheatgrass. Since treatments began in 2019, the progress has been dramatic. There are off-trail areas that very few users ever see, such as the orange hawkweed infestation north of the Beartrack Lakes Trail and Canada thistle in Magic Valley, which is an off-trail infestation discovered by FOMELC volunteers, south of Beaver Meadows, which are steadily progressing to eradication. But we don’t do this for the aesthetics – yellow toadflax and orange hawkweed have beautiful flowers imported for America’s flower gardeners. Species like these escape flower gardens, quickly crowd out native plants, and have no forage value to support wildlife. They *are* harmful to the local environment.

We are making progress, but we are treating more acres than ever. That results from constant surveying to identify additional infestations, usually beyond the known perimeters of treated areas or along the same trail. Trails are the most common vector for spreading invasive weeds within and from outside the wilderness boundaries. So FOMELC continues to have much work to do on the natural habitat. We do not have any pixie dust that magically makes the bad plants instantly disappear. It takes boots on the ground and a will to persist.

The Wilderness Act of 1964 promised to protect and maintain the designated wilderness lands in their natural state for future generations. When I joined FOMELC, I thought *wilderness* was a nice idea without much reflection. Now it seems essential. Advocating for and practicing Leave No Trace principles *are not enough* once an invasive species is introduced into the local ecosystem. These alien species will not go away and will progressively assault biodiversity. We are moving forward in the fight, but large infestations like musk thistle in Pedee Creek tell us we must do more. We need your help with the invasive weed program to protect and enhance the *wilderness character* of Lost Creek and Mt Evans Wildernesses. Check out the opportunities at Events on <https://fomelc.org/events>

These projects can be challenging, but they are rewarding. Annie Legrand expressed it very simply at the training class earlier this season: “I love killing weeds.” She understands keeping the promise to protect wilderness.

The Ultimate Wilderness Stewardship Crew



The Crew from left to right: Annie Legrand, John Cruse, Deb Grass (front), Ralph Bradt, Martin Quinlan, Bob Legrand, Keith Kuhlman, Dahl Winters, Loren Winters

On July 8, FOMELC volunteers proceeded to treat meadows infested with musk thistle along the Indian Creek Trail from North Indian Creek to the Cub Creek Trail junction. In addition to applying 20 gallons of herbicide to the invasive weeds, they cleared the trail of deadfall measuring 14 and 20 inches in diameter and engaged with a few hikers venturing into the remote area. Even getting near this trail section was an off-road driving feat through the Mt. Evans State Wildlife Area on what is no longer even labeled a road.

THIS CREW DID IT ALL!

Thank you!

- Alan Rockwood

2023 Wilderness Stewardship Training Program

Online training for new and existing volunteers is now available. You need to have a Google email account to access the Google Drive training.

Contact Dee Lyons at: dee@fomelc.org to register for the free training. All new volunteers are encouraged to attend the online training.

Success Stories!

Six new volunteers have completed the training program!

These volunteers finished the training with a mentor hike and have hit the ground running! Participating in trail maintenance, weed eradication and trail patrols! What an awesome group!



JAN AND RON SCHMIDT



L TO R: BOB KULP, KIM STAMMER & MARTIN QUINLAN



TARA KULP

FOMELC EVENTS & NEWS

Latest alerts, trail conditions, campfire restrictions, reservations and pass information:

Know Before You Go -

Arapaho & Roosevelt National Forests Pawnee National Grassland:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/arp/alerts-notices/?cid=fseprd613831>

Know Before You Go -

Pike-San Isabel National Forest & Cimarron & Comanche National Grassland:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/alerts/psicc/alerts-notices>

FOMELC Volunteer Needed

Interested in volunteering to track FOMELC membership and monitoring website inquires?

Contact Steve at: steve@fomelc.org

Priority Trails to Patrol: Mt. Evans Wilderness

BEAR TRACK LAKES
BEAVER MEADOWS
CAPTAIN MOUNTAIN
CHICAGO LAKES
CUB CREEK
HELLS HOLE
INDIAN CREEK

LINCOLN LAKE
LOST CREEK
MT EVANS RIDGE
RESTHOUSE MEADOWS
ROOSEVELT LAKES
SOUTH CHICAGO CREEK
SUMMIT FLATS



Wyatt Stanland
Trails Coordinator



GREETINGS FROM THE TRAIL!

Sign up for upcoming trail projects:

<https://fomelc.org/volunteer-signup>

The trails program at FOMELC is underway for the 2023 season, and lots of progress is being made!

Last May, volunteers completed a series of stone stairs on a steep and washed out section of trail. Combined with the bridge we installed last year, this section of trail has been completely revitalized and will only improve as the check steps and stone stairs fill with soil in the coming years.



Thank you to volunteers Annie and Bob Legrand, Keith Kuhlman, Dan Graver, Elizabeth Motley, Greg Angstadt, Loren Winters, Bob Hunter, Ralph Bradt, and Brian Parsons for their dedication and hard work on this project!



In June, volunteers began working their way up the Beartrack Lakes trail in Mt. Evans Wilderness, building stone and log check steps to continue rehabilitation on a steep, gullied section of trail. Some work was done in this section long ago, and volunteers continued that momentum to continue building up the trail. This was a strong visual lesson in the power of harnessing water runoff to deposit helpful soils where we want them! Thank you to volunteers Annie and Bob Legrand, Chris Sill, Tara and Bob Kulp, Dan Graver, Ralph Bradt, Greg Angstadt, and Brian Parsons for their dedication and hard work on this project



The July project will occur as this newsletter is being edited, so watch out for news of that project, led by Annie and Bob Legrand, in the August Newsletter.

The 2023 trail projects schedule is posted in SignUp, so go check that out! <https://fomelc.org/volunteer-signup>



As always as summer reaches its peak, it is time to get out patrolling the trails again, so update that crosscut saw certification, get your Survey123 ready, and get out on trail patrols!

Also new to the trails program for 2023, we have started a Trail Projects Committee. A group of volunteers has already committed to being a part of this, and a huge thank you to them! These volunteers have become crew leaders and will be leading

projects this year and in the future, very exciting! This committee is a group of volunteers who want to be more involved in the trails program. The committee will open up communication channels between volunteers and trail program leadership, provide a place to share trail maintenance knowledge, and will more easily connect volunteers with opportunities to improve their crew leadership skills. The committee will meet one or two times a year to discuss trail maintenance techniques, project schedules, trail maintenance strategy, and more.



Contact me at: wyatt@fomelc.org to sign up and learn more!



FOMELC Board Members

Chairman: Steve West
steve@fomelc.org

Trail Projects Coordinator: Wyatt Stanland
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Secretary: Loren Winters
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Membership Coordinator: Vacant - Volunteer Needed

Web Information Tech Lead: Deb Grass
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Noxious Weed Projects Coordinator: Alan Rockwood
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Newsletter Assistant Editor: Loren Winters

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Dee Lyons dee@fomelc.org

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Forest Service Liaison: Ralph Bradt
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FOMELC WEBSITE: <https://fomelc.org/>

COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS:

The safety of our community is our top priority, and we are committed to doing our part to limit the spread of COVID-19 (aka coronavirus). We are closely monitoring guidelines from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Colorado Department of Public Health and the Environment (CDPHE), and how these might affect our programs. We are also coordinating with our US Forest Service partners to remain in compliance with their COVID-19 response guidelines. Stay Safe and Healthy! As of April 2023, According to the Forest Service as of April 2023, there are **no restrictions** and all counties in Colorado are in low status.

FOMELC Mission Statement:

The Mount Evans and Lost Creek Wildernesses encompass 194,400 acres with over 170 miles of trails in Colorado's Pike and Arapaho National Forests.

We work in partnership with the US Forest Service, engaging in education, outreach and stewardship activities to preserve the wilderness character of these lands for current and future generations.



<https://fomelc.org/>

Friends of Mt Evans & Lost Creek Wildernesses
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“And Into the Forest, I Go To Lose My Mind and Find My Soul”

- John Muir