

EAGLE POST 53

The newsletter of **ESWA - EAGLE SUMMIT WILDERNESS ALLIANCE** apprises you of important activities in and around Eagles Nest, Holy Cross, and Ptarmigan Peak Wilderness Areas.

www.EagleSummitWilderness.org



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BEFORE WE BEGIN - a few ESWA updates:

ESWA ANNUAL MEETING! Thursday, October 8. Tune in via [Zoom](#). In 30-40 minutes, we will review 2020 activities, look ahead to 2021, and announce winners of 4 prizes: Photo Contest, Currie Craven Award for Wilderness Stewardship, VWR of the year, and Sawyer of the year. Hope to "see" you there!

RANGERING & TRAIL PROJECTS: See some fun reports about recent work [HERE](#), [HERE](#), and [HERE](#).

- Several of ESWA's ADVOCACY campaigns have reignited recently:
- **RENAME THE GORE RANGE:** Summit County Commissioner Karn Stiegelmeier submitted a formal request to the USGS Board of Geographic Names to rename the Gore Range to the NUCHU RANGE. Read more [HERE](#) and [HERE](#) and [HERE](#).
- The USFS granted the request (link [HERE](#)) to build a road to the proposed BERLAIMONT ESTATES above Edwards, despite strong opposition lead by WILDERNESS WORKSHOP. Read how to respond [HERE](#); submit comments to the USFS [HERE](#).
- Peak Materials submitted their request to mine gravel along the unspoiled ranchlands of the Lower Blue River Valley. Read more [HERE](#) about the strong opposition to the proposal by the Lower Blue Residents United (LBRU).
- Read about all of our Advocacy Campaigns at our [website](#).

October 2020

Dear *|FNAME|*

Greetings! Our topic this month:
Homestake and Holy Cross - A 75 Year Perspective
Warren M. Hern

INTRODUCTION

The following article by Dr. Warren Hern is really a love story. In it, he describes how he fell in love with the Homestake Valley, in what is now the Holy Cross Wilderness. It evokes the quiet beauty of the place that all of us also love. In fact, Warren so loved the Homestake Valley that when the Cities of Colorado Springs and Aurora announced plans in the 1970's to enlarge Homestake Reservoir and divert even more water out of Cross Creek and its tributaries, Warren founded the Holy Cross Wilderness Defense Fund and worked tirelessly and successfully to defeat the Cities' plan. We are all truly indebted to him for his work.

And yet the threat to the Homestake Valley remains and has recently resurfaced. Aurora and Colorado Springs have once again proposed to build yet another water storage reservoir in the Homestake Valley - the "Whitney Reservoir" - and divert even more water from its streams, wetlands, meadows, and fens. All to quench their seemingly endless thirst for water. ESWA is joining with other groups to fight this mindless desecration of one of our greatest natural treasures. As the permitting process proceeds, we will ask you from time to time to write letters and submit comments to permitting authorities in opposition to this new proposed project, which we are calling Homestake III. But meanwhile, enjoy a good love story.

**Homestake and Holy Cross -
A Seventy-Five Year Perspective**
Warren M. Hern

In 1944, when I was six years old, my father took me on my first camping trip to Loch Lomand up a dirt road from Idaho Springs. We made our way up a rutted, boulder-strewn road in my dad's Model A roadster coupe with me riding back in the rumble seat. My dad's catskiner friend and his son were our companions. We got pine boughs for mattresses and slept in a pup tent under some wool blankets. It was cold. We cooked our breakfast of eggs, bacon and hash browns in a cast iron skillet over a campfire, then set off to fish in the lake. There weren't many trees, and they were short. I now know they were "krummholz" because we were at 11,500' elevation. It was a vivid experience that I remember in great detail, and I was hooked on being outdoors in the high country.



Warren Hern

My dad had just returned from Alaska and the Aleutian Islands where he served

in the Army Corps of Engineers building Quonset huts, piers, and other facilities. Before going to Alaska, he had helped build Camp Hale for the 10th Mountain Division. That's how he found out about Homestake Creek. He would go there with his buddies to camp at Gold Park and fish all the way up to Homestake Lake and beyond when he had time off.

A few years after our first camping trip together, he took me with him to Homestake Creek. We camped in Gold Park and then hiked up alongside Homestake Creek to Homestake Lake, a natural high lake formed by the glaciers. Our routine trip took us up past Homestake Lake to fish in the beaver dams and small pools above the lake. They were full of cutthroat



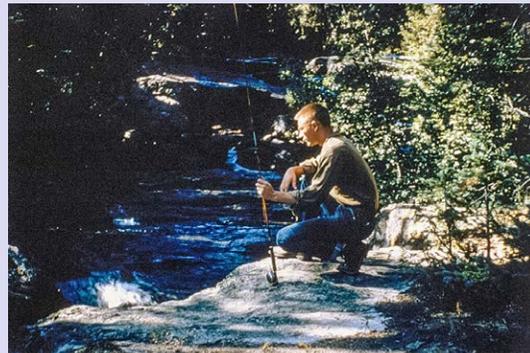
Homestake Lake, 1955

trout that we caught by the dozens. The daily limit was 20 for an adult and 10 for a kid like me. Along with my dad's buddy Willard, we always brought 50 trout back to camp and cleaned them in the stream before we started back home. We froze the fish and had them for dinner all winter.

It was in the beaver dams and ponds above Homestake Lake that my dad taught me how to fish; how to bait my hook, cast into the pool among the quite visible fish, move it gently, and then snag the fish I had my eye on when it took the bait. The water was clear and there were many fish. We would walk carefully around the beaver ponds and approach them from below the dam, then cast out from behind so the fish wouldn't see us. We always caught fish. They were delicious.

It was quiet. There were no other sounds except the running water, and we rarely saw any other people. Those are some of the most precious moments of my life.

Hiking by Homestake Creek was a wonderful treat. It was full of beautiful cascading waterfalls, and there were always fish in the pools below the waterfalls. To me, this was the most beautiful place on the planet. As I became older, I always thought that I would like to bring my own children to this wonderful place someday.



Author by Homestake Creek, 1955

One time, a mountain lion came into our camp and we scared it away.

The last time my dad and I went up to Homestake Lake was in 1955. I was about to start my senior year in high school. This time, we slept in his panel truck instead of the pup tent and cooked on a Coleman gas stove instead of the campfire. The hike up to the beaver dams and back was just as beautiful. Two of the pictures for this article are from that trip.

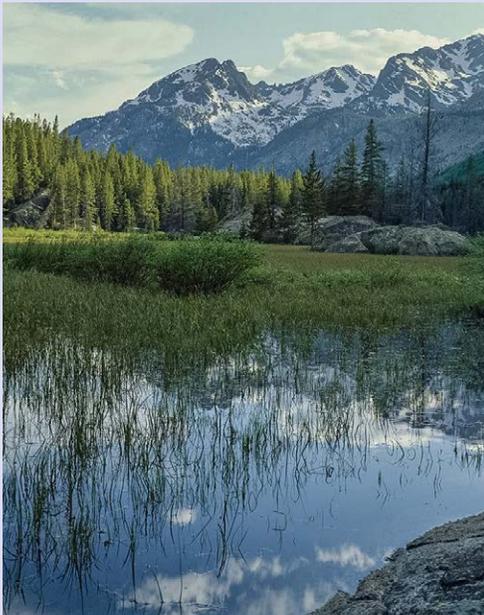
After high school, I was a pre-med student at CU in Boulder, then I attended CU medical school in Denver. My camping experience came in handy because I had construction jobs in the mountains and camped out. One of my jobs was running heavy equipment on the Dillon Dam project in 1960. I camped by the Blue River and caught my breakfast or dinner every day. At night, I read books. I didn't realize I was participating in an environmental disaster. In those days, being an environmentalist meant that you mowed your lawn twice a week and put your cigarette out in the ash tray instead of throwing it into the dry tinder by the road.

After medical school, I was away from Colorado for several years doing my internship at Gorgas Hospital in the Panama Canal Zone and serving as Peace Corps physician in Brazil. From there I studied public health in North Carolina and worked as a public health physician in a national family planning program for the poor in Washington, D.C. I resigned that job because guidelines that I prepared to help protect poor women from sterilization abuse were suppressed by the Nixon White House. Then I came back to Colorado in 1972.

In 1975, I decided to go back to Homestake Lake to go fishing, but I discovered that a dam had been built there. I was appalled, and I didn't want to see it. I decided to go backpacking – for the first time – over into East Cross Creek. Being new at this idea, my pack probably weighed 75 pounds including a (somewhat lighter) skillet. Going over Half Moon Pass into East Cross Creek was a fantastic experience even though it rained a lot on that trip. It was a beautiful place.

On the way back home, I reluctantly decided to turn up the Homestake Road to see if I could see the dam. I dreaded it, but somehow, I had to see the reality of it. When it became visible, I stopped the car, got out, and looked at it. Then I was overcome with grief.

That moment explains a lot of what I have done since then.



**Mt. Bryen, Long Meadow
in spring flood
Cross Creek, 1980**



Pink fairy slipper orchids
near Cross Creek, 1982

Homestake Reservoir, and the John Elliot

Dam that holds it, is an unforgivable crime against nature. It turned a beautiful, wonderful, natural, pristine place into an irrigation ditch so real estate developers could make money and water blue grass lawns in a semi-arid high desert ninety miles away. The destruction of the Homestake Valley and Homestake Creek is a monument to greed and profits. It is not about thirst. It is the result of mindless, uncontrolled, malignant growth. It is the substitution of sterile cement for the complexity and wonder of natural beauty. It is death to the place where we live.

Water is the lifeblood of the wilderness. Homestake Reservoir and its misbegotten progeny are daggers in the heart of the wilderness.

Enough.



Pothole, Water Slide Falls, Cross Creek, 1985

ABOUT WARREN HERN: Warren M. Hern is a physician and epidemiologist who grew up in Colorado, graduating from Englewood High School in 1956, the University of Colorado in 1961, and the University of Colorado School of Medicine in 1965. He subsequently spent several years working in Latin America as an intern at Gorgas Hospital in the Canal Zone and as a Peace Corps physician in Brazil from 1966 to 1968. He received his Master of Public Health degree from the University of North Carolina School of Public Health in 1971 and his Ph.D. in Epidemiology from that same school in 1988. He served for two years as a public health physician directing a national family planning program for the poor in 1970-72 and then returned to Colorado. Since 1973, he has specialized in outpatient abortion services in Boulder, Colorado, where he has his private medical practice. Dr. Hern became a photographer in the early 1950's and worked as a free-lance news photographer for the Denver Post during those years. He became a serious natural history photographer in the 1970's and studied with, among others, the great nature photographer Eliot Porter, whose work inspired the Sierra Club calendars. Dr. Hern's photographs of wilderness areas and wildlife in both North and South America have appeared in **Sierra Club** publications, **Natural History** magazine, **Defenders of Wildlife**, **Time** magazine, **National Geographic** publications, and numerous books. He publishes his own wilderness calendars through his publishing company, Alpenglo Graphics. Dr. Hern lives with his family in Boulder but also spends time at his mountain home that he built with his father in 1972. His favorite recreations are skiing of any kind, backpacking in the Colorado wilderness, and both wilderness and wildlife photography.

Follow us



Join us! Next Planning Meeting

Thursday, October 8 at 5:30 PM, immediately following our Annual Meeting. Via [Zoom](#).
Questions? Send us an [email](#).

CITY MARKET COMMUNITY REWARDS PROGRAM

Please [register](#) your City Market Value Card, linking it to ESWA, which will send rebates to us without compromising your earned fuel points. Please note that each card holder may only sign up for one tax exempt organization. **THANKS!**

Make a donation to ESWA...



... make a difference!



A huge thanks to [ARAPAHOE BASIN SKI AREA](#). For more than two decades, A-Basin staff have donated generously to their **Employee Environmental Fund**, of which ESWA has been a steady beneficiary. Last year, more than 150 employees donated, led by A-Basin Director **Alan Henceroth**. Our enduring THANKS to them.

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