

EAGLE POST 11

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EAGLE POST - The newsletter of **Friends of Eagles Nest Wilderness**, apprising you of important activities in and around Eagles Nest, Holy Cross, and Ptarmigan Wilderness Areas.



Greetings! Our topic this month: *A CRY FROM THE WILDERNESS*

Introduction: Bill Reed founded FENW's backcountry crew, who, on overnight trips, clean up and restore trails and campsites deep inside Eagles Nest Wilderness ([link](#)). Last summer, while ten miles deep into the Wilderness, Bill took stock, and his conclusion wasn't pretty. A new strategic vision emerged, which he outlines below. It involves giving the Wilderness lakes a rest. He speaks for everyone on the FENW board.

Bill's vision is shared elsewhere. Last November, our neighbors at Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness released a draft plan to limit backcountry traffic there ([pdf 13MB](#)). That plan's co-author, Kay Hopkins*, will explain their proposal in next month's (March) FENW newsletter.

Naturally, one wonders what is in store for us here in Eagles Nest, Holy Cross, and Ptarmigan Wilderness Areas. That, too, is being addressed: our local Wilderness Manager Cindy Ebbert and her colleagues will describe their plans for us in April's FENW newsletter. So this month begins a trilogy of essays about limiting access to Wilderness lake campsites.

*Kay Hopkins, Outdoor Recreation Planner, Forest Supervisors Office, White River National Forest. Phone: 970-945-3265. Email: kchopkins@fs.fed.us

A Cry From the Wilderness

By Bill Reed

For the past several years our FENW trail crews have focused much of their effort on removing illegal campsites from our wilderness lakes. Hundreds of fire rings have been removed. Trash has been packed out. Countless rocks, heaps of ash and partially burned logs have been scattered in undergrowth. From the Wheeler Lakes north to the Slate Lakes with many stops in between, hundreds of FENW volunteer hours and several thousand member dollars have been



Bill Reed

Make a donation
to FENW



Make a difference!

2016 Trail projects:

We spent two long weekends - one at Upper Cataract Lake, and one on Slate Creek - improving trails and campsites. We obliterated a total of **54** illegal rock-ringed campfire pits at lakes.

Day Projects Saturdays: June 4, June 18, July 9

Pack-in weekends (Fri-Sun): July 15-17 and August 12-14.

[Details](#)

Interested in becoming a **Volunteer Wilderness Ranger?** [Details](#)

We also need volunteers

outside the Wilderness

- **Member Relations - HELP** develop and implement communications plans to keep FENW members informed and involved... and maybe have some fun too.
- **Volunteer Recruitment - HELP** devise and deliver plans to greatly expand the field volunteer base through publicity, community outreach and partnerships.
- **Public Relations - HELP** plan and implement ongoing PR

expended.

The intent of all this effort has been to restore a semblance of natural, wilderness character around our lakes. By removing illegal campsites we hope to remove the invitation that an existing ring extends to build another illegal fire... and, perhaps, to help alleviate some of the camping pressure in these delicate areas. There is good reason to believe that we do at least slow down the proliferation of illegal campsites. When we remove twenty sites it might take a few years for five or ten to re-appear - but re-appear they do. And, try as we might, we aren't able to restore denuded vegetation or the thick duff and thin topsoil on which ground covers depend. We slow down the damage. We don't stop or reverse it.

My personal epiphany in this matter occurred this past summer at Slate Lake. Though we removed the campfire rings and the worst of the trash we found there, we left behind wide swaths of bare mineral soil contaminated with ash, partially buried toilet paper and countless bits of micro-trash. The limited area amenable for camping adjacent to Slate Lake was trashed when we found it last summer and remained so after we left.

Something has to change. Otherwise we are fighting a losing battle against loss of the wilderness character of the lakes in Eagles Nest Wilderness and against continued real environmental damage to them. Our beautiful alpine lakes are, understandably, visitor magnets that concentrate camping pressure in their very limited spaces. Campfire rings are a symptom of this but their removal alone does not halt, much less reverse the consequences of the concentrated usage.

The answer I believe is to institute *active management of the resource*. We should emulate the system long established for backcountry camping in our national parks - **designating disbursed campsites and managing access to them with a reservation system**. It works well in the national parks. It works well in other Wilderness Areas. It would work in the Eagles Nest. And by stopping the damage sooner rather than later, FENW could then focus its stewardship efforts on repairing trails, restoration of damaged sites and sustaining the wilderness character that we treasure.

Instituting such a system in the Eagles Nest would be a major challenge for FENW and the Forest Service. It will take several years of data gathering, public education, planning and implementation to pull it off. FENW volunteer efforts - rangers and trail crews - would be essential in all the phases of such an undertaking. We can do it though. Let's get started.

programs to raise the public profile of FENW in the community.

- **Advocacy - HELP** preserve and protect our backyard wilderness areas by developing and promoting FENW wilderness public policy positions.
- **Grant Writing - HELP** apply for grants to raise funds for FENW and Forest Service stewardship programs and special projects.

Details: contact **Bill Reed** (billr412@icloud.com).



**Friends,
Friends,
Friends!**
Check out
our sister

'FRIENDS'

- Friends of Dillon Ranger District (**FDRD**)
- Friends of the Lower Blue River (**FOLBR**)

Recent Newsletters

- January: "**Public Lands at Risk**" by David Lien
- December: "**My life as a Wilderness Manager**" by Cindy Ebbert
- November: "**Saving Native Cutthroat Trout**" by Matt Grove
- October: "**Loved to Death**" by Jackie Fortier
- September: "**Toward a Natural Forest**" by Jim Furnish
- August: "**Save the Colorado River**" by John Fielder
- July: **150th anniversary** by Bayard Taylor
- June: "**Birds of ENW**" by Dr. Susan Bonfield

Join us! for our next **Planning Meeting**

Thursday, February 23, 5:30 PM, Silverthorne >> **MAP**

Details at www.fenw.org/





Bill Reed (2nd from left) and crew

About Bill Reed: Bill Reed has served on the FENW board since 2009 and has run the volunteer trail maintenance program since then. Starting out doing campsite inventories, he was a member of the original class of FENW volunteer rangers and continues as a ranger today. During his tenure with the board Bill introduced and expanded the pack-in trail maintenance program and what has become the annual joint trail-head hosting day with FDRD. Currently he is developing a program for FENW to partner with such groups as the Wilderness Society and Colorado Outward Bound to conduct FENW-led trail maintenance projects for their members and staff. The first of these projects will occur this year.

Bill and spouse Suzanne landed in Silverthorne in 2004 after his twenty-five year career in management positions with various technology companies. When he is not rangersing or removing campfire rings, Bill spends his time as CEO of the Ceres Group.

CITY MARKET COMMUNITY REWARDS PROGRAM

Please register your City Market Value Card in 2016. This year, City Market will once again make a contribution to area non-profit organizations. The program allocates funds (rebates) to the organizations based on purchases made using the City Market Value Card. Organization members must go online at www.citymarket.com to register their Value Card, and link their card to FENW's organization name and/or registration number - **46910**. Individual purchases will be counted towards FENW's rewards allocation without compromising your earned fuel points. Please note that each card holder may only sign up for one tax exempt organization.

THANKS!
