

## EAGLE POST 59

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](http://www.EagleSummitWilderness.org)



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### BEFORE WE BEGIN:

On the horizon: 2021 **Training Days** for Citizen Rangers and Trail Sawyers. Space is limited so sign up now!

- June 5 is training day for **Volunteer Wilderness Rangers** (VWRs), who patrol trails, and for our newest crew, **Trailhead Hosts**, who staff trailheads and greet visitors on their arrival and departure. Sign up [HERE](#).
- June 11-13 is training weekend for ESWA **Sawyers**. The USFS requires that everyone who clears trees from trails in our Wilderness Areas must take this course whether they use a two-person cross cut saw or a single person saw. As you know, chain saws are not allowed in Wilderness. Register [HERE](#).

Not a member of ESWA? This is your last alert: in May we will be mailing *to our members* our 8-page, 24-article newsletter, full of newsy and fun items about ESWA – llama trips, botanical sojourns, new board member profiles, advocacy updates, and lots more. If you haven't joined yet, dues will set you back as little at \$25 per year, and will secure your subscription to the biannual newsletter. To join, please click [HERE](#).

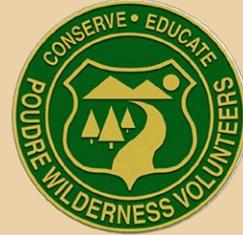
April 2021

Dear \*|FNAME|\*

Greetings! Our topic this month:

**Devastation from the Cameron Peak Fire**

By Mike Corbin, Chair  
Poudre Wilderness Volunteers



## INTRODUCTION:

Our sister organization, the all-volunteer Poudre Wilderness Volunteers (PWV), helps look after four Wilderness Areas in the Front Range. In 2012, trail and bridge damage from the High Park fire led them to create a Trail Restoration Crew, led by a new recruit, Mike Corbin, now PWV Chair and author of ESWA's newsletter this month, which contains an urgent appeal.



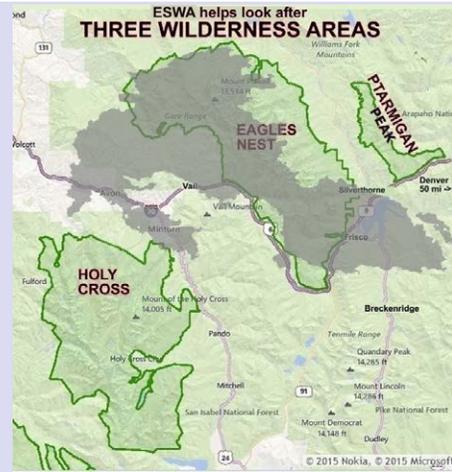
The PWV crew had barely begun restoration work after the 2012 fire when the terrible floods of 2013 caused even more damage. Altogether, full restoration required seven years of work, and was finally finished in 2019. Then, after a one-year breather, the Cameron Peak fire struck hard last summer and fall. Burning for 111 days, it was the largest wildfire in Colorado's history, damaging 120 miles of trails and bridges under PWV's purview,

laying waste to a third of them.

Mike's crew, well trained and highly experienced after the previous disasters, is ready to undertake yet another Wilderness rehab project. This one, however, is truly overwhelming in its sheer size. Thus, PWV has created a [GoFundMe site](#) to raise funds to buy supplies (mostly lumber) and to hire helper crews. They need our donations, as Mike writes, "to get all outdoor enthusiasts back on the trails."

Experts predict that even worse is yet to come, given the mega-drought, warming climate, and huge

fuel load of beetle-killed trees. One can't help but wonder: are we at ESWA next? The map on the right shows ESWA's Wilderness Areas, overlaid with the footprint of the Cameron Peak fire (gray), and illustrates the scary extent of that fire. We are making plans to follow PWV's lead and strengthen our trail crew expertise. We also want to express our support for their efforts by contributing \$1,000 from our discretionary fund to their GoFundMe project. We hope that our readers will contribute as well, and that you will urge others to pitch in, too.



## Restoring Wilderness Trails Damaged by the Cameron Peak Fire

### Mike Corbin, Chair Poudre Wilderness Volunteers

The Cameron Peak fire erupted on August 13, 2020 (probably started by humans) and raged for nearly 4 months, finally being declared contained on December 2. In the end it became the largest fire in Colorado history, burning over 208,000 acres, fueled by beetle-killed timber and whipped by continuous high winds that sometimes exceeded 70 mph. Firefighters frequently had to alter their attack as the winds launched tree-limb-sized embers across their fire lines. The fire also burned in rugged terrain, which firefighters could not safely address. The irregular burn patterns left broad ranges scarred in some areas, narrow lanes in others. Sometimes only the crowns of trees were torched, other times just underbrush was burned. Homes and other structures – 460 altogether – in its path were completely destroyed. Fortunately, no human lives were lost. See the photo essay [HERE](#).



In the aftermath of the fire, PWV and



others undertook damage assessment of the public lands, especially Wilderness Areas. There is a lot to do. All told, about 120 miles of hiking trails were impacted, with 42 miles being declared as severely burned. Fallen or weakened trees are a major safety concern. Bridges will need to be repaired or replaced. Watersheds face grave risks because surface soils were baked solid, rendering them incapable of absorbing snow melt and rain runoff, allowing “ashy” water to be washed towards our water supply.



Secondary human impacts were widespread, too. Representative Neguse, Governor Polis and Senators Bennet and Hickenlooper hosted a virtual community town hall around the aftermath of the fire, where people shared their sobering, sometimes heartbreaking stories. Some folks lost everything, while close neighbors were spared. “Immediate” evacuation notices forced people to prioritize instantly what to take with them. A local firefighter knew his home was not going to survive, but he remained on the fire crew protecting others. The ongoing smoke that moved over the surrounding towns dropped ash and caused many of us to stay indoors for weeks. Some livestock were at risk and the surrounding communities offered shelters for the animals.

Currently, we are aggressively developing trail restoration plans, in collaboration with the Forest Service. PWV has a well-trained, experienced group of trail maintenance volunteers. While we feel confident in our skills, the sheer magnitude of the damage is nearly overwhelming, way beyond the scope of our normal everyday projects. We are going to need help to restore these trails. To that end, we have launched a GoFundMe campaign, [Reopen Your Favorite Trails](#). Our goal is to raise \$25,000. All donations will be devoted to



acquiring supplies and hiring additional labor. Supplies: all of the bridge repairs require custom cut lumber, which has doubled in price (due mainly to COVID-driven home renovation projects). Additional labor: the additional labor will be managed by experienced PWV crews.

Please check out our short [VIDEO](#) (90 seconds), which is the focal point for the campaign.

Crowdfunding is made up of a lot of people donating a little bit, so every single dollar matters! Please donate, email your friends, and share the GoFundMe link on your favorite social media site.

<http://charity.gofundme.com/pwv-rebuild>



We all get absorbed by the beauty, the expansive views and the freedom to explore in the wilderness. Many, many people were impacted by the severity of the Cameron Peak fire. Restoration after the 2012 High Park Fire taught us that it takes a community to rehabilitate the forests. We have excellent relationships, and will work closely, with the Canyon Lakes Ranger District, other land stewardship groups and the local communities. We know we all have several years of hard work ahead, but we will achieve our goal to get all outdoor enthusiasts back on the trails.

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**ABOUT MIKE CORBIN:** Mike spent 30 years working for NASA in the Space Shuttle Program. He moved to Colorado in 2009 and joined the Poudre Wilderness Volunteers in 2010. After the High Park fire in 2012, PWV established a trail restoration committee and Mike has been the chair ever since. He also led the rehabilitation efforts of the 2013 100-year flood in Fort Collins. Mike is passionate about and has developed robust processes for restoration efforts. In his spare time, Mike is the 2021 PWV board chair. He thrives in the outdoors, particularly hiking and



**Mike Corbin**

backpacking.

Follow us



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Join us! Next **Planning Meeting**

**Thursday, April 8** at 5:30 PM via [Zoom](#). Questions? Send us an [email](#).

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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!**

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Become an ESWA Member today - click [HERE](#)

## JOIN ESWA

... and help ESWA "Keep Wilderness Wild!"!

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**THANKS TO OUR BUSINESS AND FOUNDATION SPONSORS**



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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And our sincere thanks to these foundations for their generous financial support of ESWA's work:

- **The National Forest Foundation** for their continuing support of our Noxious Weed Program, awarding ESWA funds to help ESWA hire contractors in coordination with the USFS to treat noxious weed outbreaks in our Wilderness Area.
  - The **Schuette Family** and **The Summit Foundation** for donations and grants that helped turn the Beau Schutte boardwalk into a reality.
  - **The National Wilderness Steward Foundation** for their continuing support of our trail projects and other on-the-ground efforts.
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AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST, thanks to the 132 incredible individuals who became

members and donated almost \$15,000 in 2020, including on Colorado Gives Day!  
Check out other [monthly eNewsletters](#)



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