

SUMMARY OF KEY ESWA ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2023

NEW VOLUNTEER WILDERNESS RANGERS

ESWA trained 29 new Volunteer Wilderness Rangers over two six-hour training sessions on June 3 and June 10. The new VWRs also each completed at least one mentor hike with an experienced ESWA VWR.

VWR PATROLS

97 different ESWA VWRs:

- did 348 unique patrols (441 total counting Co-Rangers) on our Wilderness trails over 2,123 hours
- hiked 2,738 miles on those patrols
- encountered 10,916 Wilderness users and had substantive conversations with 6,142 of them
- had 166 fire safety conversations with Wilderness users
- encountered 1,120 dogs on leash and had conversations with the owners of 438 dogs off leash (72% on-leash percent)

VWR TRAILHEAD HOSTS

26 different ESWA Trailhead Hosts did:

- 99 hours of hosting at 7 different Wilderness trailheads:
- greeted 1,983 trail users and had substantive discussions with 1,133 of them
- had 15 fire safety conversions

LLAMA TRIPS

With assistance from USFS staff, ESWA volunteers completed four llama work trips into the deeper regions of our Wilderness areas to remove and restore illegal fire pits, collect and pack out garbage, clear and improve trails, and erect “no fire” signs in some locations.

In total, these trips removed over 150 illegal fire rings, collected and hauled out many pounds of trash, cut back thousands of willows and branches encroaching on the trails, built or re-established dozens of rock bars and drainage berms, and removed more than 125 trees across the trails.

The two llamas rented by ESWA also were used by the USFS and RMYC on their own work projects.

SAWYERS

In June, Anne Dal Vera and ESWA leaders trained 5 new Class B-Buckers and re-certified 2 Class B-Buckers. In agreement with the USFS, ESWA maintained 10 trails in Summit County and 6 trails in Eagle County during the Summer of 2023 with the following statistics:

- 41 separate Sawyer outings
- 513 trees cleared with 706 volunteer hours

TRAIL WORK

Trail improvement work done by ESWA volunteers, in addition to the trail work done on the above-described llama trips, included:

- helped complete the new Surprise Lake trail re-route
- did two workdays on the Deluge Lake trail in connection with VVMTA's Adopt-a-Trail program
- in consultation with the USFS, helped fund and plan the reconstruction in 2024 of the South Willow Creek bridge.
- in consultation with the USFS, planned and submitted a grant request to CPW for \$80,000 to repair the initial trail between the Frisco Meadow Creek trailhead and the Lily Pad Lake turn-off and repair a collapsed bridge 3 miles above the trailhead. This is part of a 10-year project called Wilderness Gateways that was planned in 2023 to improve heavily used Wilderness trails accessed off I-70.

WEEDS

ESWA hosted or participated in three weed pull outings. ESWA also obtained a grant from NFF for \$30,000 to fund a commercial weed sprayer to spray noxious weeds in or near our Wilderness Areas under the supervision of Steve Elzinga. ESWA volunteers also identified and cleared 2 new weed infestations.

SOLITUDE MONITORING

ESWA members assisted the Eagles Nest/Holy Cross Ranger District with their official solitude monitoring data collection on the Missouri Lakes and Half Moon Pass Wilderness Trails. ESWA members did 15 of the 20 data collection hikes required under the USFS protocols.

PUBLICATIONS

Each week, the Summit Daily published an article submitted by ESWA to help educate the public on Wilderness, wildlife, Leave No Trace, and other issues. ESWA also wrote several articles published in the Vail Daily on such issues in conjunction with the Walking Mountains Science Center. ESWA also sent a monthly e-newsletter to over 500 people each week on Wilderness issues, as well as ESWA activities.

WILD AND SCENIC FILM FESTIVAL

In partnership with A-Basin, ESWA organized and managed a Wild and Scenic Film Festival on February 11 at the Riverwalk Event Center in Breckenridge to show the public educational and inspirational independent films promoting outdoor ethics, protection of wildlife, and volunteerism. Approximately 200 people attended. Corporate sponsorships, ticket sales, and an auction netted \$12,000 for our cause.