

## **Colorado Mountain Club 2015 Stewardship Team Program Accomplishments**

### **Summary**

In 2015, CMC launched a new Stewardship Team program and hired a crew of young (25 and under), natural resource professionals to increase capacity of public land management agencies and coordinate volunteer projects across the state. The Stewardship Team has successfully hosted nine volunteer events and partnered with other organizations such as the Southwest Conservation Corps and Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado, for an additional six events. In total over 110 conservation enthusiasts volunteered more than 1,600 hours of their time working with the Stewardship Team. Their hard work resulted in 63,851 square feet of degraded habitat restored, 3,158 feet of new trail constructed, 1,820 feet of current trail maintained, 50 erosion control features installed, over 3,000 feet of fencing installed to protect wildlife habitat, along with a variety of other accomplishments.

### **Training Summary**

Prior to the start of the field season and throughout the course of the summer, the CMC Stewardship Team completed six weeks of training on a variety of topics. Orientation included an overview of federal agencies in Colorado, introductions to Forest Service Staff, discussion of stewardship funding sources, and an overview of other agency work that CMC participates in such as Forest Planning and winter recreation advocacy. CMC staff provided training on volunteer recruitment and management, outdoor leadership, and more. The stewardship team also completed several trail maintenance/construction trainings both internally and externally. All stewardship team members were certified as Wilderness First Responders and continually reviewed risk management. The Stewardship Team earned certification as crosscut sawyers and also attended a 5-day Leave-No-Trace master training to hone their outdoor ethics and provide future trainings for CMC volunteers.

### **Field Office/Project Detail**

#### **Badger Flats, Pike National Forest- USFS South Park Ranger District [6/26-27, 8/14-16, 9/11-14]**

The CMC Stewardship Team completed three weeks of work at Badger Flats and hosted three volunteer projects to close non-system routes and rehabilitate damaged areas. In total, 25 volunteers worked 345 hours (an in-kind value of \$8,860) to construct 3,100 feet of fencing, install 20 signs, remove 17 bags of trash, and actively restore 6,720 square feet of habitat by scarifying the soil and spreading native grass seed. These projects will help protect and rehabilitate hundreds of acres of wildlife habitat from illegal recreational use. The Stewardship Team worked alongside Forest Service staff who contributed over 250 hours and volunteer groups that included CMC members, local landowners, representatives from the Stay the Trail, and members of a local Off-Highway Vehicle Club. The diverse set of volunteers not only added great capacity to the Forest Service but built new partnerships across user groups and developed a strong contingent of Badger Flats stewards.

*"I am constantly touched and inspired by the people I meet out in the field, kindred spirits giving of their time and energy for the public good. A hard day of work is incredibly satisfying when*

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*shared with people of various ages, backgrounds and abilities, all of us, though, connected by our shared love and appreciation for these public lands.” – Badger Flats Volunteer*

**San Isabel National Forest, USFS Salida District  
(07/10/2015, 07/25-26/2015, 08/29-30/2015, 09/05-06/2015)**

The CMC Stewardship Team worked closely with the Salida Ranger District on the San Isabel National Forest to complete a wide variety of recreation and conservation projects along the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail (CDNST). The Stewardship Team partnered with Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado to lead trail construction projects in the Alpine Tunnel area near St. Elmo. The crews led by the Stewardship Team were able to complete 350 feet of new tread including a 10 foot wash crossing, and a 15 foot rock wall.

The Stewardship Team also spent time on Monarch Pass to complete trail maintenance on a popular two mile stretch to Old Monarch Pass. More time was spent on Monarch Pass monitoring users to determine how many and what type of recreationists were using the popular Crest Trail section of the CDNST.

Finally, the Stewardship Team also assisted in planning and coordinating a restoration project to protect Boreal Toad habitat in coordination with Southwest Conservation Corps (SCC) youth crews. Through the partnership with the SCC crew, over 55,000 square feet of Boreal Toad habitat was restored.

**Wheeler’s Way, Leadville, Cloud City Wheelers  
07/09/2015**

The CMC Stewardship Team partnered with the BOLD Earth Adventures Summer Camp to provide a stewardship experience to youth participants. The morning was spent discussing the importance of conservation, Leave No Trace principles, and safety guidelines. This was followed by some hands on experience clearing corridor and picking up waste on the Wheeler’s Way mountain biking trail at the Colorado Mountain College Leadville campus. The kids were able to enjoy a day of doing something to better others’ experience on the trail. Even during the afternoon sprinkles, the kids remained positive and took something valuable away from the day. The group was able to maintain and clear 1,200 feet of tread and collect 8 bags of garbage.

*“We went and rode the trails this weekend and were very pleased with what you and your crew did!”-Cloud City Wheelers*

**Pike National Forest- Three Mile Creek, Clear Creek Ranger District  
Partnered with CMC Denver 07/18/2015**

The CMC Stewardship Team worked with the CMC Denver Group and the Clear Creek Ranger District to replace two, two-stringer bridges that had been washed away. The Three Mile Creek Trail is very popular for day hikes because of its close proximity to Denver and other metropolitan areas. Six volunteers came out to help with this project and contributed a total of 49.5 service hours (an in-kind value of \$1,270). Despite the two mile hike to the worksite,

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morale remained high amongst this experienced crew from Denver and the bridges were successfully completed.

**Midland Hills Trail Maintenance and Construction, BLM Royal Gorge Field Office  
Stewardship Team (6/6/2015 - 6/7/2015, 6/12/2015, 6/18/2015, 6/21/2015)**

The Midland Hills Trail System, East of Buena Vista, CO is a new system of trails available for bicyclists, equestrians, and hikers alike. This system of trails has grown in popularity throughout these first years, but has seen degradation of unsustainable trails within the system because of heavy use and poor erosion control. These deficiencies have drawn attention from the BLM, who identified priority areas for multiple re-routes. The stewardship team also helped to identify areas in the Midland Hills Trail system that needed basic trail maintenance and the installation of erosion control features. These elements were created to be feasible for all user groups allowed on the trail system. During this time period, three erosion control structures were installed on the existing trail, twenty feet of trail was constructed to re-route around a technical portion of the trail, 300 feet of tread was maintained, and 110 ft of corridor was cleared. Additional features were installed during this time to mitigate possible erosion including: one waterbar, one grade-dip, nine drains installed, and five drains maintained. Eleven feet of rock wall was constructed to help maintain a sustainable grade for the tread, and one rock ramp was constructed to aid in the flow of the trail itself.

**Midland Hills Trail Maintenance and Construction, BLM Royal Gorge Field Office  
Partnered with the Southwest Conservation Youth Corps and Ark Valley Velo (7/16/2015 - 7/17/2016)**

The Stewardship Team also worked with the Southwest Conservation Corps and a local cycling club (Ark Valley Velo) to stabilize a trail re-route along a steep ridge. Simultaneously, the group closed off and rehabilitated the dangerous, eroded portion of the trail. The group successfully transplanted seven plants, rehabilitated 567 sq ft of old tread, built two large retaining walls, and maintained old tread by installing 2 drains and clearing the trail of obstacles. Ninety cubic feet of crush was also moved to aid in the stability of the tread. Another section of trail saw the installation of one check step to help in the crossing of a major wash. A rock cairn was also installed. In total, 13 volunteers contributed 100 hours of work during this project (an in-kind value of \$2,568)

*“The Stewardship team interacted with the [Southwest Conservation Corps high school] crew in three ways; gave direction on how to construct a difficult corner to the crew leaders, worked with the crew on the project, completed the education requirements for the crew. I didn't have time to devote to the crew and the team filled that gap for me” –Linda Skinner, BLM*

**Midland Hills Trail Maintenance and Construction, BLM Royal Gorge Field Office  
National Public Lands Day (9/26/2015) in partnership with Ark Valley Velo**

In celebration of National Public Lands Day the Colorado Mountain Club's Stewardship Team collaborated with Ark Valley Velo (AVV) to organize, market, and facilitate a volunteer event at Midland Hills. The goal of this event was to close off and rehabilitate an unsustainable portion of

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the Midland Hills trail system, while simultaneously constructing and completely opening up a new, sustainable section of trail that would better integrate the terrain and hold-up against the erosive qualities of water. For this event 14 volunteers participated in the trail work dedicating a total of 106 hours to the success of the project (an in-kind value of \$2,722). Accomplishments include the restoration of 920 sq. ft of old trail using one pound of native seed and natural debris spread throughout the area to naturalize it and deter further use. A total of 1,300 ft of new tread was constructed with features including a 15 ft rock wall to support tread.

**Visitor Satisfaction Survey at Guffey Gorge (Paradise Cove) BLM Royal Gorge Field Office (7/1/2015-7/2/2015, 7/19/2015, 8/6/2015-8/9/2015, 8/13/2015)**

The Stewardship Team assisted the Royal Gorge Field office in the distribution and collection of 249 visitor satisfaction surveys at Guffey Gorge, an 80-acre parcel of land a few miles east of Guffey, Colorado. The Gorge is a popular destination for front range metropolitan residents because of its scenic views, accessibility, cliff jumping, and swimming. This small parcel of BLM land will often see more than 300 visitors on a weekend day during peak months (June-August). Because of the high use trends, the local field office chose the area for satisfaction surveys to better understand the recreation practices and improvements necessary to manage the area properly. Guffey Gorge suffers from extensive littering, overcrowding, hazardous cliff jumping, dangerous trail conditions and visitors not following BLM rules and regulations for the area. The Stewardship Team had a presence at the trailhead to remind visitors of rules and regulations, as well as encourage safety. The Stewardship Team gave the visitors the opportunity to fill out the Visitor Satisfaction Survey distributed by Washington State University and submitted surveys into a locked box to be sent back to the University for results.

*“[The Stewardship Team] took the time to gain knowledge and information about the project before the scheduled work day. This enabled [us] to hit the ground running toward [our] daily quota.” -Royal Gorge Field Office Staff*

**Meeker Trail Construction, BLM White River Field Office in partnership with Conservation Colorado (7/31/2015 - 8/1/2015)**

The Colorado Mountain Club's Stewardship Team supported the BLM office in the construction of a new trail to extend the existing trail system by 1.54 miles. This area is part of a much larger system of trails for multiple user groups and it is a popular destination for local outdoor enthusiasts and tourists alike because of its close proximity to town, easy accessibility and scenic views. This trail system also supports the growing interest and participation in mountain biking locally. The Stewardship Team arrived a day early to start on construction prior to the volunteer event. On July 31, the team was able to learn about the local culture, history and environment while working alongside BLM staff to complete 354 ft of new tread, two erosion control structures, and the removal of one downed tree. A sign was also maintained at a nearby intersection of trail.

On August 1, the Stewardship Team met with Conservation Colorado, Colorado Mountain Club Denver Group members, and five volunteers to complete 1,134 ft of new tread. Together they

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also removed five downed trees, constructed one rolling grade dip, installed two drains, and built one climbing turn. In total, volunteers contributed 62 hours to the project (an in-kind value of \$1,592).

*“The group attitude and work accomplished was outstanding especially in light of the challenging weather and trail conditions.” Sasha Nelson- Conservation Colorado*

**Blanca Wetlands Signage Project, BLM San Luis Valley Field Office (9/23/2015-9/24/2015, 9/30/2015-10/4/2015)**

The Stewardship Team partnered with the BLM San Luis Valley Field Office to install trail confidence posts in the Blanca Wetlands. The Blanca Wetlands are just east of Alamosa, CO and open to the public from July-February for hiking, hunting, fishing, and scenic overlooks. Since the trail system in the Blanca Wetlands was unmarked, it was a very high priority for the Stewardship Team to install confidence posts and u-channels to better mark the trail system. In the future, the BLM staff will include user delegated signs to better organize the system of trails and roads. Over the course of a week, 62 posts were installed, 14 bags of garbage were removed, 2,200 square feet of parking areas were cleared of brush, and 5 bathrooms sanitized.

**Rio Grande Natural Area, BLM San Luis Valley Field Office (10/6/2015-10/9/2016)**

The CMC Stewardship Team worked with the hydrologist from the BLM San Luis Valley office on erosion control in the Rio Grande Natural Area, just south of Antonito, CO. The Rio Grande River runs along the southern part of the BLM land. The hydrologist indicated certain areas in the Rio Grande Natural area where erosion control features should be installed to reduce the sediment that is being washed into the Rio Grande River. Over the course of a week, the Stewardship Team built four 15x3' one-rock dams in a dry stream bed. The Stewardship Team also installed 13 hay wattles in a critical area of sediment loss.

**Program Review**

The Stewardship Team's efforts with various land management agencies across the state of Colorado were successful in accomplishing the goals that were set. The Stewardship Team was able to communicate with the different BLM offices in a timely manner while balancing input from other non-profit organizations to insure an across-the-board knowledge of the details for upcoming projects. Receiving feedback from project partners helped the Stewardship Team to improve their approaches (e.g. prior research of area/worksites, templates for project partners, overview of necessary skills, appropriate use of time, understanding of land agency processes, etc) to different assignments. With the Stewardship Team's capabilities and knowledge of conservation on a regional scale, they have become an invaluable resource for land management agencies to rely on for high-quality work and dedication. In coming years of this program the Stewardship Team can hope for more internal support in marketing and outreach to the CMC's 5,500 members for the volunteer events hosted by the Stewardship Team.

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*Above: Closing off an incredibly rutted out social trail in Badger Flats by spreading seed and digging holes for the fence posts. (Photo Credit: Michelle Holdener)*



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*Above is a photo of the SCC crew installing an informational sign and laying hay over the fragile re-seeded Boreal Toad Habitat area. (Photo Credit: Michelle Holdener)*



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*Above: The summer campers gets to work with their McLeod and loppers on the Wheeler's Way Trail.(Photo Credit: Michelle Holdener)*



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*Above: The CMC Denver Group's assembly line in action at the Three Mile Creek. (Photo Credit: Morgan Anderson)*



*Above: The new trail in Meeker, CO starting to come together. (Photo Credit: Morgan Anderson)*

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*Above: Morgan Anderson clearing bush from the Blanca Wetlands parking lot (Photo Credit: Michelle Holdener)*