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Mountain Chalet

# 40 YEARS

OF DISCOVERY

## Explore & Win!

From April 1 through October 1, we invite you to discover 40 locations across the Pikes Peak Region where RMFI has left its mark. The more places you visit, the more opportunities you have to win amazing prizes from Mountain Chalet.

Learn more and sign up at [RMFI.org/40](https://RMFI.org/40)!



01

# Austin Bluffs Open Space

## LOCATION

38.900935, -104.796968

## LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

 BEGINNER

## PHOTO INSTRUCTIONS

From Union Blvd to Collegiate Drive, go to Rockhurst and Montebello. You'll find the trailhead at the end of Montebello. Follow the coordinates above and snap your selfie at the bike ramp!

## OUR IMPACT

Totaling approximately 600 acres, Austin Bluffs Open Space is the overarching name for an interconnected group of parks and open spaces in the center of Colorado Springs. These parcels include Pulpit Rock Park, University Park Open Space, and Austin Bluffs Open Space. Austin Bluffs includes significant high-value natural and cultural resources, and is used for passive recreation including hiking, mountain biking and wildlife viewing.

Austin Bluffs has very few designated trails, which has led to a proliferation of rogue trails throughout the properties. This requires direct efforts to aid in the preservation, protection and maintenance of the natural and cultural resources.

During the 2017 field season, RMFI constructed the first of its kind rock ramp structure to help provide a more sustainable route for hikers and bikers.





02

## Barr Trail at Switchback 14

### LOCATION

38.854638, -104.940442

### LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

 **INTERMEDIATE**

### PHOTO INSTRUCTIONS

Start at Barr Trailhead counting the switchbacks on your ascent, or follow the coordinates above and take your selfie at the stairs! Remember to be respectful of other trail users.



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### OUR IMPACT

In 2018, RMFI constructed these timber steps at switchback 14 to provide a more sustainable route to a popular overlook.

Barr Trail is the primary summit route to the top of Pikes Peak, elevation 14,115 feet. Completed in 1921, the trail starts at the west end of Manitou Springs and climbs 7,500 feet over 12.6 miles to the summit of Pikes Peak. The trail sees a tremendous amount of use from hikers, runners, backpackers, and mountain bikers.

Work along Barr Trail is highly technical and requires trained personnel to ensure high quality, sustainable work is completed. Since 2013, RMFI has been working with project partners on trail improvement projects focused primarily on the lower 3 miles of Barr Trail and the Incline Connector Trail. Our work consists of trail tread improvements, erosion control and hillslope stabilization, trail assessments, and monitoring effectiveness.



03

# Incline Connector Trail

## LOCATION

38.855633, -104.946051

## LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

■ ADVANCED

## PHOTO INSTRUCTIONS

Choose your adventure! You can start at the bottom of the Incline or head up Barr Trail to find the connector at mile marker 2.5. Take your bandana photo by the fence line!

## OUR IMPACT

The Incline Connector Trail was completed in the winter of 2014 to provide a sustainable connector between the top of the Incline and Barr Trail. Until its completion, the connection was a mess of gullies, social trails, and significantly impacted hillslope that was beginning to suffer severe erosion and degradation.

After the completion of the Incline Connector Trail, RMFI continued to monitor usage, and began to observe growing impacts of runners and hikers cutting switchbacks.

In 2015, RMFI worked with partners including the City of Colorado Springs, City of Manitou Springs, and Mile High Youth Corps crews to construct nearly 600 linear feet of cedar post and rail fencing at priority section of trail to deter users from cutting switchbacks.

04

# Mt. Kineo Trail

## in the Bear Creek Watershed

**LOCATION**

38.792894, -104.930000

**LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY** **ADVANCED****PHOTO INSTRUCTIONS**

About 2.5 miles up the trail, you'll start to see some retaining walls along the S curves of the trail. Take your bandana selfie here! If you hit the 622 trail marker, you've gone too far.

**OUR IMPACT**

Just west of Colorado Springs, Bear Creek holds the only remaining genetically pure population of greenback cutthroat trout, Colorado's state fish.

The Bear Creek Watershed lies along the eastern flank of the Pikes Peak Massif. Encompassing National Forest lands administered by the Pike National Forest, El Paso County, and lands administered by the City of Colorado Springs, the Watershed is extremely important for its recreational opportunities, its value as a water resource, and as vital habitat for the greenback cutthroat trout.

Since 2009, RMFI has been the primary organization carrying out on-the-ground stewardship objectives in the Watershed. In 2020, RMFI worked to complete important improvements along the new Mt. Kineo Trail to shore up the trail's critical edge, increasing durability and off-trail drainage.



05

# Buckhorn Connector

## in the Bear Creek Watershed

### LOCATION

38.799139, -104.907000

### LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

■ INTERMEDIATE

### PHOTO INSTRUCTIONS

Follow the GPS coordinates above to the junction of High Drive Trail and Captain Jack's Trail and then start hiking down the Buckhorn Connector to take your selfie. Don't forget your bandana!

### OUR IMPACT

During the 2016 field season, RMFI worked to construct the new 0.89-mile Buckhorn Connector Trail in the Bear Creek Watershed to provide a connection between the Mount Buckhorn Trail and the Bear Creek Trail (USFS Trail 666) just below Josephine Falls.

The new Buckhorn Connector Trail was identified as a priority project through the NEPA analysis required to protect the habitat of the threatened greenback cutthroat trout.

To complete construction of the new trail, RMFI engaged community volunteers and a Mile High Youth Corps crew who worked to complete objectives over the course of 13 workdays. In the following field season, RMFI crews worked to construct additional in-trail structures to increase sustainability and durability of the trail.

06

# Beaver Creek Trail

## in the Beaver Creek Wilderness Study Area

### LOCATION

38.57049, -105.012

### LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

■ INTERMEDIATE

### PHOTO INSTRUCTIONS

Take your selfie at the trailhead, but feel free to continue on the 7 mile loop to enjoy the beautiful scenery. RMFI worked all along this trail so keep your eye out for our handiwork!

### OUR IMPACT

The Beaver Creek Wilderness Study Area (WSA) is located to the south of Pikes Peak, just north of Penrose, CO. It is one of the largest and most rugged remaining roadless areas in the Front Range. According to the Central Colorado Wilderness Coalition, "bighorn sheep and elk find winter and summer range in Beaver Creek. Mule deer, black bear, mountain lion, beaver, golden and bald eagle, and ring-tailed cats and the threatened Mexican spotted owl and peregrine falcon utilize the area. Vegetation includes Douglas fir, Ponderosa pine, Limber pine, aspen, pinon-juniper woodlands, and wetlands streams."

RMFI worked in partnership with the Bureau of Land Management starting in 2005 to repair the historic Trail Gulch-Beaver Creek Trail — a 7-mile loop trail that takes hikers through some of the most scenic terrain in the WSA. Much of the trail was constructed during Colorado's Gold Rush days.

07

# Black Forest Regional Park

## LOCATION

39.021575, -104.734653

## LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

**BEGINNER**

## PHOTO INSTRUCTIONS

Although you'll find our restoration work throughout the park, head north from the Black Forest Trailhead approximately 0.5 miles toward the coordinates above to take your bandana selfie.



## OUR IMPACT

The Black Forest Fire burned 14,280 acres in Black Forest, Colorado in June 2013. Surpassing the Waldo Canyon Fire in 2012, the Black Forest Fire was the most destructive fire in Colorado's history until the devastating fires in 2020. The fire was fully contained June 20, 2013 with the loss of over 500 homes and 2 lives.

Though the majority of the land burned was private, approximately 1,200 acres of El Paso County Parks land were affected. Beginning in 2013, RMFI worked closely in partnership with El Paso County to rehabilitate burned landscapes within Black Forest Regional Park.

The majority of the work focused on constructing trail stabilizing structures called log erosion barriers to help minimize erosion and sedimentation. RMFI also planted native species to stabilize burned hillslopes and landscapes.



08

# Dry Creek Trail

## in Blodgett Peak Open Space

### LOCATION

38.947606, -104.886000

### LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

**BEGINNER**

### PHOTO INSTRUCTIONS

Head south on the sidewalk from the W Woodman Road parking lot. Shortly after the drainage and as the road curves east, you'll see the stairs on the west side of the road – take your selfie here!

### OUR IMPACT

Blodgett Peak Open Space includes 167 acres of open space, trails, and wildlife habitat.

At the intersection of the Dry Creek Trail with West Woodmen Road, RMFI designed a unique solution to stop the sloughing of tread material from the steep trail onto the sidewalk and road.

During the 2017 field season, RMFI staff and volunteers installed 11 timber box steps and incorporated timber wings to form a parallel ramp of tread material for mountain bike use. By out-sloping the trail above the steps, water was forced to drain over onto the vegetated hillside rather than down the new step-ramp combination.

RMFI also restored the parts of this hill that lost vegetation during the building period.

09

## Dixon Trail in Cheyenne Mountain State Park

### LOCATION

38.722772, -104.855274

### LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY



ADVANCED

### PHOTO INSTRUCTIONS

RMFI worked with partners to build the entire Dixon Trail. Take your selfie along the Dixon approximately 0.7 miles from its intersection with the North Talon Trail. Remember to wear your bandana and stay on trail! Please note there is a \$9/day fee to use this area.

### OUR IMPACT

After years of anticipation, the long-awaited Dixon Trail finally opened to the public in the fall of 2018. This 5.2 mile trail connects the bottom of Cheyenne Mountain State Park to the Top of the Mountain (TOM) Trail, a 3.6 mile trail circuit completed by RMFI in 2015. Beginning in 2013, RMFI worked closely with Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Cheyenne Mountain State Park, Friends of Cheyenne Mountain State Park, Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado, REI, and others to construct the Dixon Trail.

In total, RMFI actively engaged 211 volunteers and 53 youth conservation corps members who, along with RMFI staff, contributed nearly 12,000 work hours over the course of 206 workdays. On October 26, 2018, a grand opening celebration was held at Cheyenne Mountain State Park to recognize the completion of the project and the hard work of many who made the project possible.



10

# Cabin Canyon Trail in Garden of the Gods Park

## LOCATION

38.869017, -104.891123

## LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

**BEGINNER**

## PHOTO INSTRUCTIONS

Hop on over to Cabin Canyon Trail from parking lot 14 following the GPS coordinates above to snap a selfie with these timber stairs. A defining feature here is the RMFI-built retaining wall!

## OUR IMPACT

In August 2000, RMFI completed the first formal trail assessment for the Garden of the Gods Park. In addition to inventorying and documenting the condition of the Park's designated trail system and social trail network, the assessment called for the creation of a volunteer stewardship program to engage the community in the care of the Park's trails and surrounding natural resources.

Since 2002, RMFI has been leading the volunteer stewardship program and working with partners to complete a wide variety of trail and restoration projects in the Garden of the Gods Park.

In 2017, RMFI replaced the existing timber box steps along the Cabin Canyon Trail and provided extra support on either side of the steps by constructing rock walls.



11

# Upper Loop Trail

## in Garden of the Gods Park

### LOCATION

38.875449, -104.880645

### LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

**BEGINNER**

### PHOTO INSTRUCTIONS

Access this trail through parking lot 7, then follow the coordinates above. Step up and snap your selfie on the timber stairs – don't forget to show off your bandana!

### OUR IMPACT

The Kissing Camels formation is one of the most famous geological features in the park and can be seen from the Central Garden!

Unfortunately, decades of high use have taken a heavy toll on the park, leaving the natural integrity of the Garden of the Gods at serious risk. Major threats include soil erosion, loss of native plant communities, invasive plants, wildlife disturbances, and the poor condition of the park's trail system. In 2000, RMFI completed the Garden of the Gods Restoration Report that evaluated the ecological health of the park, presented a list of recommendations to address the major threats to the park, and determined the cost for implementing the report's recommendations.

In 2011, RMFI built timber steps around the Central Garden along the Upper Loop Trail to help concentrate use and prevent further erosion of the existing trail.

12

## Palmer Trail in Garden of the Gods Park

### LOCATION

38.881289, -104.883670

### LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

**BEGINNER**

### PHOTO INSTRUCTIONS

Rock on for making it to Palmer Trail!  
Hike about 0.25 miles and take a selfie  
with this retaining wall – don't forget  
to show off your bandana!

### OUR IMPACT

The Palmer Trail is a popular multi-use trail for hikers and equestrians and is the longest trail in the Garden of the Gods Park at 1.72-miles. Water drainage from snowmelt and surrounding hillsides tends to stay on the trail, resulting in muddy conditions. Hikers avoid muddy areas, which subsequently causes braiding or widening of the trail.

During the 2020 field season, RMFI addressed many high priority issues along the Palmer Trail including constructing several in-trail structures to improve tread retention, reduce erosion, and enhance water diversion. A large rock retaining wall was also constructed to address severe erosion issues. RMFI also maintained several existing drains to improve water flow off the trail and restored many social trails in the area.

13

# Scotsman Trail

## in Garden of the Gods Park

### LOCATION

38.872417, -104.883917

### LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

**BEGINNER**

### PHOTO INSTRUCTIONS

Shortly after the picnic area, head north at the hitching post. Snap your selfie on the rock stairs – don't forget to show off your bandana! Look West to see the famous Scotsman Rock!

### OUR IMPACT

The Garden of the Gods Park is a Natural Historic Landmark managed by the City of Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services Department. One of the most popular destinations in the United States with an estimated 6 million local, national, and international visitors each year, the Garden of the Gods stretches the traditional definition of a city park. Given the park's relatively small size (1,300 acres), the visitation density far surpasses any similar site in the region.

The Scotsman Trail is 1.06 miles in length and is one of just 4 trails in the park that are more than 1 mile long. The trail is used by Academy Riding Stables for horseback tours, which has impacted the stability of the previously existing timber steps. In 2020, RMFI began removing the timber steps and replacing them with rock steps to increase the sustainability and durability of the trail for all users.



14

## Ute Trail (Southeast) in Garden of the Gods Park

### LOCATION

38.871163, -104.878428

### LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

 BEGINNER

### PHOTO INSTRUCTIONS

Step up and snap your selfie on the timber stairs located about 0.1 miles north of parking lot 10 – don't forget to show off your bandana!

### OUR IMPACT

This trail is a memorial to the Ute Native Americans that regard the Garden of the Gods Park as a sacred land.

The Mouache Ute camped on the perimeter of the area including along Camp Creek during the winter. The location of the current trail is essentially in line with a historic route the Ute would use leading in from the eastern plains, through Templeton Gap, across Monument Creek, and through Garden of the Gods on the way to Manitou Springs and Ute Pass.

As a multi-use trail in modern times, steeper sections of trail have been stabilized with timber steps and supplemented with ramped structures to accommodate bike traffic, a use permitted in the eastern area of the park.

Along the southeast portion of the Ute Trail, RMFI built timber steps to increase sustainability and durability of the trail.

15

# Gray Back Peak Trail to the top of Gray Back Peak

## LOCATION

38.73147, -104.907

## LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

■ INTERMEDIATE

## PHOTO INSTRUCTIONS

Take your selfie at the trailhead, but feel free to continue 1.75 miles to the summit of Gray Back Peak!

## OUR IMPACT

The Gray Back Peak Trail is an approximately 3.25-mile, multi-use trail that takes users to the summit of Gray Back Peak (9,348'). The trail is an off-the-beaten path experience, mostly frequented by local trail users. The trail is used by companies like the Broadmoor and Old Stage Riding Stables for equestrian tours. There are some developed climbing routes on the cliff faces of Gray Back Peak, so the trail is sometimes used by climbers to gain access to these areas.

The existing trail mostly runs along the top of a ridge that ends at the summit of Gray Back Peak. Long sections of the trail follow the fall-line of the hillside resulting in an unsustainable alignment and a deeply incised trail tread that channels water along its length causing further resource damage.

In 2019, RMFI worked with the U.S. Forest Service to construct approximately 1,800 feet of a planned 6,500 foot re-route.

16

## Guffey Gorge (aka Paradise Cove)

### LOCATION

38.771890, -105.333850

### LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

 INTERMEDIATE

### PHOTO INSTRUCTIONS

Step up and snap your selfie on the rock stairs – don't forget to show off your bandana! Please note there is a \$6/day fee to use this area.

### OUR IMPACT

Guffey Gorge, also known as Paradise Cove, is a popular swimming hole located just outside Guffey, Colorado. The area is managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) – Royal Gorge Field Office.

What was once a recreation area known only by a few hundred users has become a summer destination for over 40,000 visitors each year. Trail users cut switchbacks and avoid durable trail features, which has resulted in trail braiding and the creation of rogue, fall line paths. These paths are eroding quickly, compounding the natural resource damage occurring at Guffey Gorge.

Beginning in 2018, RMFI began working with the BLM to improve trail sustainability through trail delineation, trail hardening, and grade control as well as educating users about site regulations and Leave No Trace principles.



17

# Prarie Loop Trail

## in High Chaparral Open Space

### LOCATION

38.904606, -104.721000

### LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

**BEGINNER**

### PHOTO INSTRUCTIONS

You'll start at the High Chaparral Trailhead following the GPS coordinates above. Step up and snap your selfie on the rock stairs - don't forget to show off your bandana!

### OUR IMPACT

In 2021, RMFI renewed its multi-year stewardship project in partnership with the City of Colorado Springs to complete maintenance and stewardship work at several properties purchased with proceeds from the Trails, Open Space and Parks (TOPS) tax. Work at the High Chaparral Open Space began in early 2017. The area consists of 54 acres of open space designated for recreational trails and wildlife habitat and is located in northeast Colorado Springs amidst an urban environment west of North Powers Boulevard and just south of Stetson Hills Boulevard. High Chaparral Open Space features a ridgeline vegetated by scrub oak patches and mixed prairie grasses which culminates at its crest in the highest point in eastern Colorado Springs. On clear days, the views from the ridge crest include the mountain backdrop of Colorado Springs to the west, Black Forest to the north, and the Spanish Peaks and Wet Mountains to the south.

18

## High Drive in the Bear Creek Corridor

### LOCATION

38.812803, -104.899782

### LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

**BEGINNER**

### PHOTO INSTRUCTIONS

Wave hello on High Drive by snapping your bandana selfie next to these check dams. You'll see plenty of these erosion control structures as you walk approximately 0.75 miles up High Drive from the trailhead.

### OUR IMPACT

Since 2009, RMFI has been working with partners to help protect the aquatic habitat of the threatened greenback cutthroat trout. In 2012, RMFI was awarded a grant from the Colorado Water Conservation Board to enhance watershed health and function by reducing sediment transport into Bear Creek.

High Drive is an unpaved, gravel road adjacent to Bear Creek and is a known source of sediment. The Bear Creek Watershed geology consists of highly erosive decomposing granite, further enabling natural erosion and erosion caused by the presence of the soft-surface High Drive. Over the course of a few field seasons, RMFI worked with partners to restore proper drainage flow to various culverts along High Drive, install check dams to control the flow of water in a defined drainage channel, and to plant native species along the berm between the road and Bear Creek.

19

# Upper Valco Ponds

## in Lake Pueblo State Park

### LOCATION

38.259920, -104.704515

### LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

**BEGINNER**

### PHOTO INSTRUCTIONS

Step up and snap your selfie on the stairs – don't forget to show off your bandana! Please note there is a \$10/day fee to use this area.

### OUR IMPACT

Lake Pueblo State Park is located in Pueblo County, Colorado. It includes 60 miles of shoreline and 10,000 acres of land. RMFI was contracted by Fin-Up Habitat Consultants, Inc. to design and construct properly aligned trails to provide bank stabilization and allow suitable river access as well as close and restore improperly aligned and redundant trails to minimize stream damage and stream bank erosion.

RMFI recruited community volunteers and a Mile High Youth Corps Crew to complete high priority trail construction and closure along the Arkansas River near the Valco Ponds below the Lake Pueblo Dam. RMFI constructed or stabilized 7 fishing access trails and closed and restored 7 unsustainable, user-created trails.



20

## Trail #15 (Rock Canyon Trail) in Mueller State Park

### LOCATION

38.876260, -105.201946

### LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

■ INTERMEDIATE

### PHOTO INSTRUCTIONS

Shortly after the pond, step up and snap your selfie on these timber stairs – don't forget to show off your bandana! Please note there is a \$9/day fee to use this area.

### OUR IMPACT

This beautiful state park, situated in the shadow of Pikes Peak, is typified by spring-fed meadows, forested ridges, and massive rocks of Pikes Peak Granite. There are several ponds scattered around the Park, a remnant of old homesteads that were established during the gold rush of the 1860s. In the 1980's, the Mueller family designated the ranch as a game preserve, which was later purchased by the Nature Conservancy, Colorado State Parks, and Division of Wildlife.

The majority of the trails are in very good condition; however, some trails have been converted from old ranching roads or user-created trails and therefore lack necessary grade-control structures or follow an unsustainable alignment. RMFI, in coordination with Colorado Parks and Wildlife, made improvements to the multi-use trail system in 2019.

21

# Chamberlain Connector Trail

## in North Cheyenne Cañon Park

### LOCATION

38.791600, -104.869000

### LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

■ INTERMEDIATE

### PHOTO INSTRUCTIONS

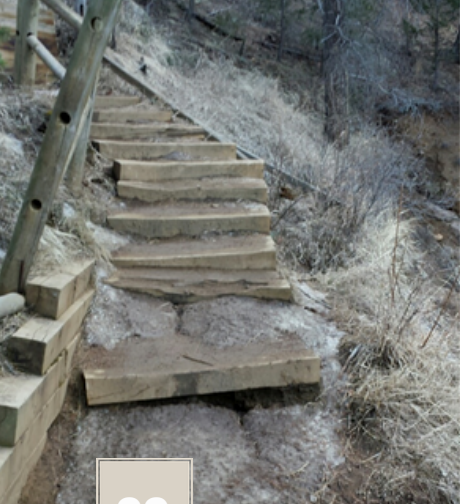
Head about 0.1 miles from the trailhead to snag a photo with the fencing protecting our restoration area!

### OUR IMPACT

As the oldest regional park in Colorado Springs, North Cheyenne Cañon Park has served as a mountain retreat for residents who have loved its rugged, forested beauty and peaceful setting since 1885. Today, the park remains a showcase property for locals and visitors alike. However, widespread popularity, heavy use, and impacts from natural events has strained existing Park resources. In addition, property additions and the need to enhance connectivity to adjacent properties have highlighted the necessity for comprehensive planning and resource oversight.

Since 2015, RMFI has helped complete trail and restoration projects in North Cheyenne Cañon Park, and in 2020 completed work along the Chamberlain Connector Trail, which facilitates a link between the park and Stratton Open Space with the broader goal of linking multiple public lands along the Front Range.





22

## Silver Cascade Falls in North Cheyenne Cañon Park

### LOCATION

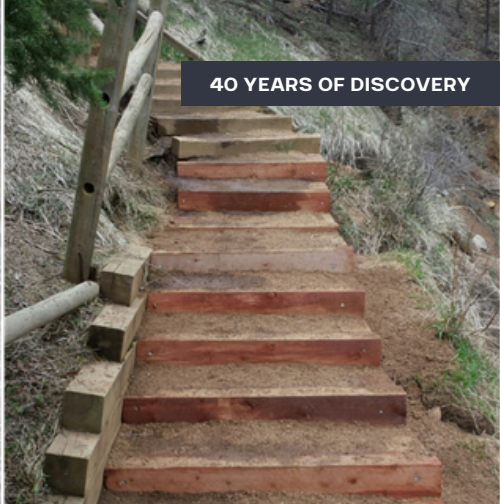
38.788781, -104.905000

### LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

 BEGINNER

### PHOTO INSTRUCTIONS

After you park near Helen Hunt Falls, make your way to the trail. When you arrive at the stairs snap a photo with them!



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### OUR IMPACT

The Silver Cascade Falls Trail (rising some 360 feet in 0.35 miles) is located within North Cheyenne Cañon, a park managed by the City of Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services Department. The trail traverses steep canyon walls, crossing over Helen Hunt Falls and rising along Silver Cascade Falls to two rock-walled overlooks. Featured in regional promotional media and publications, the trail receives over 150,000 visits a year with 100,000 visits occurring between Memorial Day and Labor Day. In the winter, Silver Cascade Falls is a popular ice climbing spot for climbers in the Pikes Peak Region. In addition, there are numerous technical rock climbing routes accessed from the top of the Silver Cascade Falls Trail.

In 2016, RMFI worked with City Parks and the Friends of Cheyenne Cañon to repair existing trail structures to create a safer and more enjoyable experience for users.





23

# Mt. Cutler Trail

## in North Cheyenne Cañon Park

### LOCATION

38.790799, -104.883323

### LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

BEGINNER

### PHOTO INSTRUCTIONS

Hike to the GPS coordinates (approx. 0.1 miles from trailhead), look down for some retaining structures, and then take a photo of yourself, your bandana, and the trail. Remember to stay on the trail!

### OUR IMPACT

The Mount Cutler Trail is a hiking-only trail approximately 1 mile in length that provides passage to the Mount Muscoco Trail, a scenic overlook, and the summit of Mount Cutler. It ascends a rocky, north facing slope of decomposing granite via multiple switchbacks. Many years ago, several timber retaining walls were constructed along the trail where full bench construction was not feasible. Due to the craggy terrain and unstable soils, many of these structures began failing causing a serious hazard to trail users.

Maintenance of the Mount Cutler Trail was identified as a high priority in the recently completed North Cheyenne Cañon Master and Management Plan. In 2020, RMFI worked with partners to complete highly technical improvements to shore up undercut retaining walls, rebuild a timber retaining wall, and improve drainage.

24

# Mt. Muscoco Trail

## in North Cheyenne Cañon Park

### LOCATION

38.791866, -104.886907

### LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

 **INTERMEDIATE**

### PHOTO INSTRUCTIONS

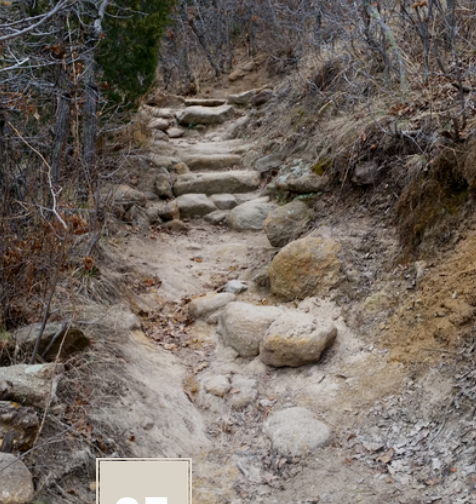
Snap a photo at the trailhead! And if you're up for it, continue to the top of the mountain see some of our trail improvements!

### OUR IMPACT

Mt. Muscoco (elevation 8,020 feet) is located within North Cheyenne Cañon, a park managed by the City of Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services Department. Until 2015, the peak, accessed via the Mt. Cutler Trail, lacked a designated summit route despite increased visitation and impact.

In spring of 2015, RMFI, the Colorado Springs Parks Department, and the Friends of Cheyenne Cañon collaborated on a trail improvement project to re-route approximately 2,500 feet of the existing user-created trail.

In addition, RMFI also worked to construct cross vane structures to stabilize head cuts and gullies that had formed in the area after historic rainfall earlier that spring.



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25

# Edna Mae Bennett Nature Trail

## LOCATION

38.881351, -104.777000

## LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

■ INTERMEDIATE

## PHOTO INSTRUCTIONS

Hike to the GPS coordinates and take a photo with some gneiss rocks working together to stabilize the trail!

## OUR IMPACT

At 730 acres in size, Palmer Park, where this trail is located, is the largest park inside of the metro area. In total, it has over 25 miles of hiking and biking trails, a dog park, an off leash dog area, a community playground, picnic ground, and many other amenities. The park is characterized by large sandstone bluffs, scrub oak, ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, and an abundance of wildlife.

RMFI has been working in Palmer Park since 2017 on trail improvements along the Palmer Point Trail, Edna Mae Bennett Nature Trail, Templeton Trail, and Templeton Connector Trail. The Edna Mae Bennett Nature Trail ascends the central bluffs through forested slopes on sandy and gravelly soils. The trail is paralleled by a major drainage on this ascent and is crossed in several points by minor drainages. The trail is named after Edna Mae Bennett who led nature walks in the area for hundreds of children.





26

# Templeton Connector in Palmer Park

## LOCATION

38.880919, -104.779108

## LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

■ INTERMEDIATE

## PHOTO INSTRUCTIONS

Find the Templeton Connector, show off your bandana, and take a photo of yourself with the trail or the fencing delineating the reroute!

## OUR IMPACT

Palmer Park is located northeast of downtown Colorado Springs and is named after William Jackson Palmer, the founder of Colorado Springs.

Approximately 15-feet beyond the Templeton Connector Trail Trailhead, the designated trail crossed a prominent drainage before traversing northeast. The trail was heavily incised, up to 4-feet deep, with little to no opportunity to improve water diversion.

To improve trail sustainability, RMFI constructed check dams and installed fencing. RMFI constructed a new trail reroute adjacent to the old alignment through a grove of gamble oak. The new, 108-linear-foot reroute was built with a sustainable design including traversing the cross-slope, outsloped tread, and drains.

27

# Devils Playground Trail

## LOCATION

38.873801, -105.123682

## LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

■ ADVANCED

## PHOTO INSTRUCTIONS

Our new reroute is not currently open to the public, so you can take a photo at the Craggs Trailhead or anywhere along the existing Devils Playground Trail where you spot our work!

## OUR IMPACT

The existing Devils Playground Trail is in very poor condition. The trail is aligned with the fall line in many locations and lacks proper stabilization structures in areas where the slope exceeds sustainable gradient standards. This has led to trail incision of up to 4-feet and over-widening of up to 20-feet in some areas, above and below treeline. Because the trail does not drain properly, channelized water flows have scoured the soil leading to mass wasting of vegetation and loose rock.

In 2016, Pikes Peak was adopted into the National Forest Foundation's Find Your Fourteener campaign. During the 2017 and 2018 field seasons, RMFI worked to stabilize the existing trail, while the U.S. Forest Service completed necessary environmental clearance and trail design for a reroute of the trail. In 2019, RMFI embarked on the 4-mile reroute project, which is expected to be completed in 2023.

28

# Mile Marker 17

## along the Pikes Peak Highway

### LOCATION

38.848733, -105.057048

### LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

**INTERMEDIATE**

### PHOTO INSTRUCTIONS

Drive up the Pikes Peak Highway to mile marker 17 and take a photo (like the one above)! The highway will be closed through May 23, so plan accordingly. Please note that there's an entrance fee at the gate!

### OUR IMPACT

Pikes Peak, renowned as 'America's Mountain,' is located west of Colorado Springs and reaches a height of 14,115 feet. The Peak is one of the principal landmarks in the western United States and provided inspiration for the song 'America the Beautiful.'

The area referred to as Mile 17 (approximately 13,000 feet altitude) is the location of a Pikes Peak Highway-maintained detention pond used to control stormwater discharge and alluvial deposition from the highway. RMFI previously worked in this area in 2010, 2011, 2015, and briefly in 2016 to restore degraded tundra adjacent to the then newly-constructed sediment detention pond. In 2017, RMFI crews removed 4,628 square feet of heavy black plastic matrix remaining from specialty restoration matting and also restored additional areas by decompacting, seeding, and matting with fully bio-degradable coir erosion control matting.



29

# Cascade Creek along the Pikes Peak Highway

## LOCATION

38.897537, -105.004176

## LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

**BEGINNER**

## PHOTO INSTRUCTIONS

Drive up the Pikes Peak Highway (approx. 3.3 miles), park by the Forest Service road, and hike to the GPS coordinates. Once there, take a photo (like the one above)! The highway will be closed through May 23, so plan accordingly. Please note that there's an entrance fee at the gate!

## OUR IMPACT

In 2017, RMFI began a multi-year partnership with the U.S. Forest Service to complete important forest health and mitigation projects under a new Watershed Health Improvement Program (WHIP). Watershed health improvements are part of an adaptive management strategy that focuses on landscape restoration and resiliency to a changing environment. Increasing risk of wildfire, impacts from climate change, and increasing demands on recreational opportunities, municipal water supplies, and natural resources are among the many drivers for an adaptive management approach.

Treatments under the WHIP program proactively mitigate the risk of wildfire by removing conifer encroachment in riparian zones and promoting fire resilient species. This allows fire to play its natural role as a regenerative agent while ensuring fires don't burn with the devastating intensity we have seen over the last several years.

30

## Pineries Open Space in Black Forest, CO

### LOCATION

39.027682, -104.652000

### LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

 BEGINNER

### PHOTO INSTRUCTIONS

RMFI built the entire trail network. Take a photo at the trailhead sign (with your bandana!) and feel free to explore the entire 9-mile trail segment!

### OUR IMPACT

The Pineries Open Space is the largest open space property under El Paso County ownership; all but approximately 30 acres of the area is under a conservation easement held by the Palmer Land Conservancy. The area contains populations of rare and unique plants as well as a mature Ponderosa Pine forest that is classified as old growth.

RMFI worked with El Paso County, Mile High Youth Corps, and other partners over the course of a few field seasons to construct approximately 9 miles of new singletrack trail in preparation for the public opening, which occurred in June 2020. The coordinates given here are for a reinforced bank turn constructed along the new trail system within the park.

31

# Sand Canyon Bike Ramp

## in Red Rock Canyon Open Space

### LOCATION

38.851061, -104.884000

### LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

 BEGINNER

### PHOTO INSTRUCTIONS

Approximately 0.3 miles on the Sand Canyon Trail from the Sand Canyon parking lot, you'll spot this sweet bike ramp. Take your selfie here!

### OUR IMPACT

Red Rock Canyon Open Space is situated on 789 acres near the western edge of Colorado Springs. Archaeological evidence suggests Red Rock Canyon was first settled around 7000 B.C. by various American Indian tribes including the Jicarilla Apache and the Utes. The canyon's proximity to nearby Fountain Creek and the presence of diverse wildlife made this area an ideal settlement location. Stone artifacts, chipped stone debris, and tools have been found in the central portion of the park.

The hybrid step/ramp feature constructed by RMFI in 2018 on the Sand Canyon Trail near the junction with Contemplative Trail exemplified some of RMFI's best technical work in the open space. To address the needs of multiple user groups, a hybrid design combining timber box steps and a rock bike ramp was implemented.



32

# Rainbow Gulch Trail #714

## LOCATION

38.979500, -104.991667

## LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

**BEGINNER**

## PHOTO INSTRUCTIONS

Hike to the GPS point to find the tread armoring pictured above! Then take a selfie with your bandana and a big ol' smile!

## OUR IMPACT

The Rampart Reservoir was created in 1967 when the 3,400 foot wide dam was built along West Monument Creek. The reservoir was created to supply water to the growing population in Colorado Springs and the surrounding towns. By 1972, the reservoir filled to capacity and the area was opened for recreational use.

The Rainbow Gulch Trail leads to Rampart Reservoir and is a highly trafficked area that lacked appropriate drainage features to move water off the trail.

Due to this water build up, trail users began to side cut the trail and create rogue paths, further impacting the vegetation and wildlife around this trail.

During the 2019 field season, RMFI armored the trail to keep hikers and bikers on trail and to protect the area from additional rogue trails.

33

## Roundup & Mesa Trails in Red Rock Canyon Open Space

### LOCATION

38.839231, -104.887000

### LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

**BEGINNER**

### PHOTO INSTRUCTIONS

Hike 1.5 miles from the parking lot to the GPS point to find this armoring the intersection of these trails, then snap a selfie with your bandana!

### OUR IMPACT

Red Rock Canyon Open Space is a project location RMFI works to steward under its Trails, Open Space, and Parks Stewardship contract with the City of Colorado Springs. The open space has similar geology and natural features as its more famous and heavily-visited neighbor, the Garden of the Gods Park. With fewer out-of-town visitors than the Garden, RRCOS remains a favorite of local outdoor enthusiasts throughout the year.

Situated at the foot of Ute Pass, its dramatic sedimentary rock formations and foothills vegetation frame great views of the Front Range rising to the west.

During the 2018 field season, RMFI worked to armor a section of trail located at the intersection of the Roundup Trail and Mesa Trail. This work helped to stabilize and increase overall durability of the trail.

34

# Willow Lake Basin

## along the Kit Carson-Challenger Ridge Trail

### LOCATION

37.99333, -105.613

### LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

■ ADVANCED

### PHOTO INSTRUCTIONS

Hike up to the Willow Lake Basin and snap a photo of yourself, your bandana, and the beautiful scenery!

### OUR IMPACT

The Kit Carson Peak - Challenger Point Trail Improvement Project was a multi-year effort to reconstruct the summit trail to Kit Carson Peak and Challenger Point, two of the most-visited mountains in the Sangre de Cristo Mountain Range. The ultimate goal of the project was to complete a new sustainable summit trail to the popular 14,000 foot peaks, thereby reducing visitor impacts to the highly used area and enhancing the quality and safety of the recreational experience.

The existing trail was an old, user-created trail that was not properly aligned or constructed, causing significant impact to the alpine ecosystem and safety issues for hikers.

RMFI completed the highly technical project in September 2020 and the new trail was opened to users. RMFI spent 6 field seasons camped in Willow Lake Basin while working on the trail construction project.



35

## The Gym - Ejection Seat at Shelf Road Recreation Area

### LOCATION

38.632922, -105.216496

### LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

■ INTERMEDIATE

### PHOTO INSTRUCTIONS

Hike 1.3 miles from the trailhead to find the Ejection Seat. Snuggle up with the crag and take your selfie!

### OUR IMPACT

Shelf Road Recreation Area, located approximately 11 miles north of Cañon City, Colorado, and managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), is best known for its world-class sport climbing. In addition to climbing, the area offers hiking, mountain biking, fishing, hunting, and horseback riding.

RMFI first began working with the BLM in 1991 to address recreation impacts in the area. Since that time, RMFI has constructed a sustainable trail infrastructure linking climbing areas, parking lots, and campgrounds. RMFI began maintaining the belay platform at The Gym - Ejection Seat in 2019,

The primary objective at Shelf Road is to create and maintain a sustainable and safe trail infrastructure, and to promote a strong stewardship ethic among the area's user groups.

36

# Lake Moraine Trail

## on the South Slope of Pikes Peak

### LOCATION

38.840915, -105.001000

### LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

■ ADVANCED

### PHOTO INSTRUCTIONS

Hike 4.4 miles up Barr Trail from the main trailhead to the intersection with Mt. View Trail. From here, go 0.2 miles to the turn off for the Lake Moraine Trail. Take your selfie here!

### OUR IMPACT

The South Slope Watershed lands consist of approximately 9,000 acres located on the south slopes of Pikes Peak, at elevations ranging from 10,500 feet to over 12,000 feet. For nearly 100 years, public access was prohibited in an effort to protect water quality and associated infrastructure.

In 2017, RMFI assisted Medicine Wheel Trail Advocates in completing corridor clearing along the new Lake Moraine Trail (aka Missing Link Trail), a highly anticipated trail connecting Barr Trail, Captain Jack's Trail (667), and Lake Moraine.

Encompassing spectacular views of Pikes Peak, the trail winds its way through aspen groves and granite boulder fields, crosses the Cog Railway and climbs out of Ruxton Creek to eventually connect with the Jones Park Trail.

37

# Gold Camp Path

## in Stratton Open Space

### LOCATION

38.799347, -104.875900

### LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

**BEGINNER**

### PHOTO INSTRUCTIONS

Use the Chutes pull-off on Gold Camp Road to find these timber steps about 0.1 miles down the trail. Take your bandana selfie here!

### OUR IMPACT

Stratton Open Space consists of 318 acres of open space situated adjacent to North Cheyenne Cañon Park. Stratton Open Space offers five distinct ecosystems, miles of trails, a rich variety of wildlife, and access to the Pike National Forest.

When the City of Colorado Springs designated the Chutes Trail as a downhill mountain bike trail, several projects to ensure multi-use access were implemented near the Chutes Pull off on Gold Camp Road.

In 2019, RMFI constructed a series of rock riser steps, cribbed timber steps, and retaining walls to shore up the new Gold Camp Path trail, which allows hikers to connect Stratton Open Space with North Cheyenne Cañon. These structures will work to hold decomposing granite tread from washing out.



38

## Stratton Springs Path in Stratton Open Space

### LOCATION

38.7993, -104.861

### LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

 BEGINNER

### PHOTO INSTRUCTIONS

From the La Veta parking lot, take the trailhead directly to the left of the bathroom. Don't miss the turn off for Stratton Springs Path on the right - take your selfie on this bridge about 0.25 miles in!

### OUR IMPACT

A trail construction project initiated by the Colorado Springs Parks Department in collaboration with Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado (VOC) required numerous in-trail structures, drainage control, and general refinements. The reroute of Stratton Springs Path positioned the trail out of a north-facing drainage to a south facing aspect to mitigate icy and muddy conditions that exacerbated maintenance needs. With the trail rough cut, RMFI refined a total of 530 linear feet of trail by completing 15 steps and 17 square feet of tread armoring; installing 17 new grade dips and maintaining 12 drains; building 59 square feet of retaining wall, 7 square feet of rubble wall and 95 linear feet of mono wall; installing 1 timber bridge and moving 1.85 tons of rock. RMFI also assisted in decommissioning 645 feet of the old alignment by installing 13 feet of buck and rail fence and moving 0.45 cubic yards of excavated materials from construction.

39

## Black and Blue Loop in Ute Valley Park

### LOCATION

38.90856, -104.827

### LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

 INTERMEDIATE

### PHOTO INSTRUCTIONS

Use the Tech Center Trailhead to access the Blue portion of the Black and Blue Loop. Take your selfie here and then continue on down the trail to spot all of RMFI's work!

### OUR IMPACT

Ute Valley Park Open Space is another project location included under RMFI's Trails, Open Space, and Parks Stewardship contract with the City of Colorado Springs. RMFI has contributed to the maintenance and improvement of the open space since 2016. The original portion of Ute Valley Park was donated to the City in 1969. Over several years, additional parcels have been dedicated and acquired through the City's Parkland Dedication Ordinance, expanding it to 338 acres.

A major work objective for RMFI during the 2017 field season was to construct the new Eastern Loop Trail (aka Black and Blue Loop) in Ute Valley Park. RMFI staff and volunteers worked to build 3,880 linear feet of new trail during the season to complete the new trail, which was opened to the public in the spring of 2017. RMFI also worked to close and restore nearly 3,500 linear feet of social trails.

40

## Hunter's Ridge Trail in Ute Valley Park

### LOCATION

38.91237, -104.849

### LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

■ INTERMEDIATE

### PHOTO INSTRUCTIONS

Head through the neighborhood on Popes Valley Drive for trail access. After a short walk toward the new reroute on Hunter's Ridge, take your selfie with the switchback pictured (but watch out for bikers!).

### OUR IMPACT

Ute Valley Park is very popular with hikers and mountain bikers. Climbers frequent areas of the open space as well, to test their skills on boulders.

A short section of Hunter's Ridge Trail was exceeding sustainable grades on the fall-line. During the 2020 field season, RMFI closed this route with 90 linear feet of fencing keying into the best available choke points. A total of 633.6 square feet of impacted area was restored along with the installation of 3 rock check dams.

In addition, RMFI constructed 580.8 linear feet of new tread complete with a climbing turn comprised of 31 square feet of retaining wall and 24 square feet of rubble wall. The turn shown in the photo above was approximately 6 feet wide, accommodating multiple users while controlling speed of bikes traveling downhill.