



## *Spring Newsletter 2007*

### **Pondering the Peak**

Mary Burger

The snow is finally starting to melt off, and my faith in the coming spring is returning as the snow is leaving. It has been a severe winter, but a good winter. Not only have we received much needed moisture, we also participated in much needed dialog. Much was accomplished this winter. More than I had expected when the season began. Both Colorado Springs Utilities and the US Forest Service held public meetings this winter. The meetings were very different, but FOTP participated fully with both partners. Each set of meetings will be discussed separately. If you weren't able to attend and participate, we can at least bring you up to date.

Winter is a good time to rest and recover our energy for all the frantic activities of summer. It is a time of reflection and renewal. I hope you were able to relax, and recreate, enjoy the snow, and refocus for the next year. Because, we have quite a year planned, and we will need as much of your help as you can give.

So, read on, dear Friends, read on.

I'll see you on the Mountain

### **Wanted:**

**A few nurturing friends:**

The Project Support Committee is the group of people responsible to ensure the care and comfort of volunteers on projects. They meet only a couple times a year to form teams to provide food etc. on projects. If you would like to join them, the spring kick off meeting will be hosted by Alice Gardner at her home on Tuesday March 20<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 p.m. Call her at (719)590-7606 for directions. We could use about 4 more people on this team.

### **Save the Date:**

Saturday, October 27, 2007

5:30 p.m.

Friends of the Peak

Annual meeting and

Awards Party

### **CSU drafts an access plan**

Colorado Springs Utilities proposed an access policy this winter, and held a series of public meetings to obtain feedback. As a result of the strong and often argumentative feedback they received, they modified the policy to include the concept that some recreation may be appropriate

in the South Slope reservoir area. They also asked that the current policy be an interim policy for two years while they work out all the details. More information is available at: [www.csu.org](http://www.csu.org) and click on watershed access. Read the draft policy, review the maps, and send your comments to the Utilities.

This is a major breakthrough, as the Utilities had until this point refused to consider any recreational access. But, it does not throw open the gates to the south slope. In fact, the area is still closed to recreation. They only agreed to think about a concept, not commit to any particular use at any particular spot.

As we move forward, this is what the decision will mean for Friends of the Peak. We will request a permit to allow a select group from our organization to enter the South Slope area and determine if the Ring the Peak Trail could/should be built there. If we can find an appropriate corridor, we will then request permission to build the trail, and to change the designation of the corridor to allow recreational use. Of course, this is not a done deal until the COS City Council approved the access plan. Many things could change. At this time, we are proceeding as if this is the plan we will have to work with. It is certainly not the easiest, nor most straight forward of methods, but it is a way. Anyone who wants to join our efforts to align the RTP within the South Slope should contact the office at (719)471-9711 ASAP. The permitting process requires we identify all participants by name prior to being allowed to enter.

We will be submitting our permit request in early April. We currently have about a half dozen people who have assisted in the alignment to date. But, a few more could make the work easier. This team will scout the potential trail

corridor, and also consider the environment to ensure we do no harm. We need people who are strong hikers, and who are well informed about the sensitive nature of the environment above 10,000 feet.

The number of people will be limited. Most of the scouting will be done on Mondays. Hopefully, by the next newsletter, we will be able to tell you we have found an alignment, and are ready to build the trail.

## **The Forest Plan**

The US Forest Service, Pike and San Isabel Forest began the process to create a new plan this year. They are supposed to re-visit their plan periodically, and they are overdue. The last plan was completed in 1984. This one should be complete by 2009.

The first step in the forest planning process was to gain input from citizens on what should be done differently in the new plan. The USFS held a series of “first” meetings in several cities. There were two meetings in Colorado Springs, because too many people had to be turned away from the first one, as the room was too small to hold everyone. In all, my guess is about 500 people attended the Colorado Springs meetings. All the ideas that everyone had were captured. I would not want to be the person who tries to incorporate all that information into anything like a comprehensive overview, but that is just what they are going to do.

Friends of the Peak has two major concepts we want to see included in the new plan. The first is a change in philosophy. Because the USFS was created in an era when lumber harvesting was a major economic endeavor, the primary purpose of the USFS is to be the stewards of the forest so that the lumber harvest will not be jeopardized by

private control. To this date, this is still the major purpose of the Forest Service. However, especially in this area, the economy of harvesting the lumber has been replaced by the economy of recreating in the forest.

Especially here in our semi-arid area, where the trees grow so slowly, and the land is so uneven, lumber harvest is not a viable concern. In fact, I have been told, one of the reasons our forests are overgrown, and becoming a fire hazard is that our forest does not 'pay' to harvest. It costs more to cut the trees down and haul them to the saw mill than it pays for the wood.

So, we are proposing that the new forest plan reflect that the major economic impact of the forest is recreation, and it should be managed to maximize that effect while still protecting the environment and the eco-systems within that environ. We believe this change in philosophy will better enable the USFS to meet the needs of the citizens.

Secondly, we are concerned that Pikes Peak is a very small part of the Pike and San Isabel forest, and could easily be lost within the entire plan. We believe Pikes Peak should be separated from the rest of the forest as a special area, and given special considerations. Basically, what this would do is cause Pikes Peak to have a separate plan. FOTP thinks this plan could be based on the Pikes Peak Master Plan. Or, at least could look similar.

In order to be declared a 'special area' it would need to be unique. Unique means one of a kind, not just precious or valuable, but unlike any other. Pikes Peak is unique in many ways:

Geologically, it is a monolithic up thrust from the plains with different rock composition than any other mountain. Its composition is primarily Pikes Peak Granite, which is more

erosive, and less stable than many other forms of rock. It is the only 14,000 foot mountain which stands alone, not part of a range.

Geographically it is separated from the other 14,000 foot mountains standing further to the east than the rest. It is this feature which caused Zebulon Pike to refer to it as his "Grand Mountain", and made it the icon of the western advance of the settlers "Pikes Peak or bust". Because of its unique position it attracts different weather patterns than the other mountains. And it alters the weather at the base of the mountain. The distortion in the weather patterns causes peculiar patterns in the eco-systems. Due to the reduction in annual rain fall, this mountain is mostly in an arid zone.

Sociologically, and economically it differs from all others in that it connects directly to a metropolitan area of greater than 300,000 people. This is the only section of the Pike and San Isabel Forest which is contiguous with such a large population base. The majority of people who live and work here will list proximity to Pikes Peak as a motivator for the decision to settle or remain here. Although there is perhaps no concrete study to determine the effect of Pikes Peak on tourism in the area, it is without a doubt substantial. Approximately 1/3 the income of the Pikes Peak area is based on tourism. As outsourcing of our manufacturing and service jobs continue in the global economy, the proportion of income from tourism needs to increase in order to secure the livelihood of the area.

Pikes Peak offers the people who live at its base the unduplicated opportunity for fitness and recreation. And it constitutes a symbol to all Americans. Pikes Peak is second only to Fuji, in Japan, as the most visited mountain in the world. And like Fuji for the Japanese, it is destination for many an American pilgrimage.

For all of these reasons, Pikes Peak needs special consideration in the new forest plan and should be set aside from the rest of the forest as a special area.

All these thoughts, and more were expressed at the meetings, and I felt the USFS was listening. The process will take a couple years to complete. There will be more opportunity to work with the forest service as they develop the plan. It should be an interesting two years.

### **Our 2007 Project Season:**

All volunteer must register to participate. Register at [fotp.com](http://fotp.com) or by phone at (719) 471-3145

April 26, 28

#### **Crew Leader Training**

Volunteers who wish to move to the next level of participation may receive training to lead crews on new trail construction, and trail repair. The Thursday date is for an indoor class which will meet from 5:30 to about 9:00 p.m. The Saturday date is for an outdoor activity day where the students will practice crew leader skills while building a short length of trail. Graduates of this course may be asked to lead crews on FOTP projects.

May 3, 17, 31

#### **Tundra Rescue**

Volunteers will meet at the toll gate, and drive the length of the Pikes Peak Highway looking for and “rescuing” chunks of tundra which dislodge from the cut slope edge. The chunks will be re-planted along the highway. While this may seem a small part in the overall picture, we have already re-planted almost a 500 square feet of tundra, and growing.

Saturday May 19<sup>th</sup>

#### **Cut slope restoration**

FOTP will partner with the USFS and Pikes Peak Highway to restore vegetation on one of the cut slope areas currently targeted for improvement. Last year’s effort was a bit too late in the season, and only a few trees survived. This year we tempt fate by being much earlier, and can only hope the area is snow free for the planting.

Saturday May 12 and Sunday May 13

#### **Red Rock Canyon Open Space**

We will partner with Colorado Springs Park and Recreation Department, Friends of Red Rock Canyon, and Trails and Open Space Coalition, to build a portion of the trails mapped out for this new city park. Last year, this was our most attended project. This year we are training more crew leaders to enable us to lead even more volunteers in sound stewardship.

Alternate Thursdays June 14 - Sept. 20

#### **North Cheyenne Creek Trail (USFS#622) (aka Seven Bridges Trail)**

We will continue our maintenance of this historic route to Jones Park. We will repair the trail surface to allow appropriate drainage and prevent further rutting. USFS will allow volunteers to access the trail head on the currently closed portion of Gold Camp Road to accomplish this work. We meet at 8:00 a.m. at the gate, and finish work to hike out at about 1:00 p.m. if rain doesn’t drive us out sooner.

June 16 and 17

July 21 and 22

August 25 and 26

#### **Ring the Peak Trail construction.**

FOTP will continue maintenance of the previously existing trails into and out of Putney

Gulch. Last year's efforts produced the connection of USFS road #383, (Four Mile Road), to USFS 708, (Horsethief Park). This year we will focus on repairing the connecting spurs which need work to bring them up to standard. Each weekend project will offer participants the opportunity to camp at the base of the Putney Gulch Trail in the dispersed camping area of the Pikes Peak National Forest along Four Mile Road.

June 9 and July 28

### **Barr Trail Workdays**

FOTP has worked with the Pikes Peak Trail Dogs in maintaining Barr Trail since 1997. The Trail Dogs have subdivided the trail into ownership sections, and perform normal routine maintenance. This year, FOTP will sponsor two work days to address areas along the trail where additional work is needed.

August 4, and 5

Sept 15, 16

### **Crags to Devil's Playground**

FOTP began maintenance on the historic route in 1999. This year, we are planning to address the trail from the top, (Devil's Playground), down. We will offer two overnight camping events at the halfway picnic area along Pikes Peak Highway to encourage more volunteers to help us restore this route. Volunteers need not camp to work one or both days. The camping opportunity is exercised by only those who choose to work both days and spend an evening with other volunteers. The work will consist of restoration of the current alignment as far down the trail, from Devil's Playground as we can complete. With sufficient volunteers, we may be able to reach the top of the chutes, where the re-route is planned.

August 6 - 10

### **Devil's Playground trail reroute.**

The trail from the Crags Campground to Devil's Playground starts out as an old logging road. Just below tree line, it becomes a single-track trail. Just above this, the trail was originally a series of tight switchbacks, which have been eroded away into steep chutes. 2 miles down from Devils' Playground, and two miles up from The Crags, we will install two switchback legs to bypass the current chutes. Care will be taken to minimize damage to the tundra, and restore as much vegetation as is possible in the closed portion of the trail.

USFS will provide transport for tools, supplies, and water etc. at the start of the project and re-supply as necessary. In addition to volunteers, FOTP will hire a team of professional trail crew from the Rocky Mountain Youth Corp.

Volunteers will be asked to commit to the entire week long project. Camping will be on site at about 11,000 feet. Food and water will be provided.

Volunteers will be asked to pack in their own tent, sleeping bag, clothes, and other supplies.

## **Ring the Peak**

Did you know that the Ring the Peak trail has its own website? It does, and that website is receiving a face lift. The new and improved [www.ringthepeak.com](http://www.ringthepeak.com) should be available by April 15. It will include improved clickable maps, directions to most portals, and better descriptions of the trails. This is an ongoing project, and if you have some pictures, or would like to help describe the trails, contact us. We could use more help.

## **Help Wanted**

FOTP still needs more board members. The board meets the second Tuesday of each month to discuss how to further the goals and objectives of FOTP. We added two new faces this year, but we could use two or three more people who are interested enough to assist in ensuring sound stewardship of Pikes Peak. Duties are not overwhelming, but the joy of working on something this worthwhile is!

# Mail – In Registration form 2007

Return this form to either P.O. Box 2494 Colorado Springs, CO 80904-2494  
Or Fax: (719)471-3145

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

How many people are being registered with this form? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you a member? \_\_\_\_\_ (You do not need be a member to participate.)

Please Circle the dates you will volunteer.

April 26, 28

(aka Seven Bridges Trail)

**Crew Leader Training:**

You must be able to do both sessions. Thursday evening 5:30 to 9:00, Saturday all day 8:00 to 3:30 or so.

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# Thank you contributors 2006!

## Summit Level Supporters:

\$500 and Up

Triple Crown of Running      Barr Trail Mountain Race  
William and Tracy Thomas

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\$150 to \$499

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\$10

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*Friends of the Peak  
Preserving, Restoring, and  
Appreciating Pikes Peak*