

Backcountry Use



ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK

In the past few years a rapidly growing number of campers has resulted in damage to some of the more popular backcountry spots. To protect the fragile resources of the Park, a camping permit system is in effect.

PLEASE HELP US BY KNOWING AND OBEYING THE PARK REGULATIONS. They are designed to maintain the quality of your National Park.

Violators will be issued citations requiring an appearance before the U.S. Magistrate at Estes Park, Colorado, and/or a fine.

PERMITS -- A written permit is required for all overnight stays in the backcountry. THEY ARE GOOD ONLY AT THE LOCATION AND DATE LISTED ON THE PERMIT. The free permits may be obtained in advance or upon arrival in the Park at the East or West Side Park Headquarters and at some ranger stations in season. The number issued is limited. The permit tag issued to the party leader should be attached to his pack and must be shown to backcountry patrol personnel upon request. When camp is established, the tag is attached to the tent. A permit is also required for all technical climbs.

RESERVATIONS -- Reservation requests may be made by mail or in person at any time of the year using the BACKCOUNTRY RESERVATION REQUEST FORM. Phone reservations will be accepted only October through May. Requests are not accepted before January 1 of the year of the trip.

PERMITS NOT PICKED UP BY 10 AM ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE PLANNED BACKCOUNTRY STAY WILL BE CANCELED IN ENTIRETY, AND SITES GIVEN TO OTHER BACKPACKERS. Permits can be mailed for trips taken during June, July, August, and September if no technical climb is involved and if the request is received far enough in advance. ANY ALTERATION IN ANY OF THE INFORMATION REQUIRES THAT A DIFFERENT PERMIT BE ISSUED BEFORE THE PARTY ENTERS THE BACKCOUNTRY. Backcountry camping is limited to a total of 7 nights between June and September and 15 additional nights between October and May.

CANCELLATIONS -- If you are not going to use your permit, please call (303) 586-2371 or write the Backcountry Office so sites can be released to other campers. DEMAND EXCEEDS THE SITES AVAILABLE.



DESIGNATED CAMPSITES -- A wooden sign with campsite name shows the direction to designated sites, all accessible by maintained Park trails. Campers are required to set up camp in the immediate vicinity of the metal arrowhead markers at individual sites. Camping is limited to no more than 7 people in a party and 3 nights at each campsite. These sites are located in areas that are more readily able to withstand the wear and tear of camping and may be changed from year to year to allow for restoration.

GROUP CAMPSITES -- Groups of 8 to 20 people may camp at special group sites or may divide up into individual parties and camp in the same drainage or area. Organized groups must not be at the same

designated campsites (other than a group site) or in the same cross country zone. Check with the Backcountry Office for additional information. All groups are reminded that Park visitors seek the backcountry to find the solitude and tranquility it has to offer.

CROSS-COUNTRY ZONES -- These are areas available on a limited basis for backpackers familiar with low-impact, leave-no-trace style of camping. They are below treeline, have no developed campsites, no developed trails, no privies, and are not as accessible as areas in the Park near maintained trails. They are, therefore, less frequently traveled, and parties using the zones are advised to take with them some emergency supplies and a well stocked first aid kit. At least one person in the party should be skillful with map and compass. More hiking time should be allowed for these areas as dense forest, undergrowth and downed wood can make travel difficult.

Choice of campsite is left to the party, but must be:

- * Within the cross-country zone boundaries.
- * At least 100 feet away from any water source.
- * Out of sight and sound of any other party.
- * Moved at least one mile each day.
- * In one zone no more than two nights.
- * Limited to no more than 7 people in a party.

Horses and fires are NOT permitted in cross-country zones. Maps of the cross-country zones are available at ranger stations and at the Backcountry Office.

Leave no trace of your visit to the wilderness, not even footprints.



SPECIAL USES -- Permits are required for the following special uses of the backcountry. Please refer to the separate information sheets available upon request.

- * WINTER BACKCOUNTRY CAMPING -- generally in effect October through May, depending on snow cover.
- * TECHNICAL CLIMBING AND BIVOUACS
- * HORSES -- must remain on designated trails.
- * FISHING -- Colorado fishing license is required.

The Wilderness Ethic



"Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine into the flowers.

The winds will blow their freshness into you, the storms their energy, while cares drop off like autumn leaves."

John Muir, 1896

People are temporary visitors to the wilderness and should leave no permanent imprint. Let the forces of nature continue to dominate the landscape. Nature will perpetuate and replenish itself if given a chance. Tread lightly on the scene and be gentle with meadow, streamside, lakeside and alpine tundra. Plants above treeline are especially fragile; once damaged, they may not recover in our lifetime.

Here are a few things which will go a long way toward protecting the backcountry areas.

LEARN TO GO LIGHT -- This is largely a matter of acquiring wilderness skills, of learning to be at home in the wilderness rather than in an elaborate camp. Quite a bit of equipment that goes into the mountains is burdensome, harmful to the wilderness, or simply annoying to other people seeking peace and solitude. Anything that is obtrusive or that can be used to modify the terrain should be left at the roadhead.

PROTECT THE WATER -- Water should be purified before use. Soap and other sources of pollution lower the quality of water.

- * Camp no closer than 100 feet from a water source.
- * Carry washing water away from source so the soil can act as a filter for soapsuds.
- * Dispose of scraps of food and fish entrails in the brush for biological recycling.

WILDERNESS SANITATION -- There are only a few privies located in the backcountry at designated campsites, thus making the disposal of waste and refuse an important part of the wilderness experience. If you handle sanitation properly, you will leave the land clean and attractive for yourself and others to enjoy.

For disposal of human wastes where privies are not available, select a spot at least 100 feet away from any water source and dig a hole about 6 inches deep, preserving the sod if possible. Use of a small lightweight trowel is suggested. After use fill the hole with loose soil topped with the sod, and nature will do the rest.

As for other refuse, CARRY IT OUT. This includes cans, bottles, plastic bags, and tinfoil. If you carry it in, you can carry it out.



FIREWOOD CONSERVATION -- Wood fires are permitted only in the provided metal fire rings. Trees grow slowly at high elevations, so use small fires.

- * Burn only dead and down wood.
- * Let fires burn out to ashes if attended, or douse with water if leaving the site.
- * Remove all unburned litter such as tinfoil and carry it out.
- * Leave rocks where the glaciers deposited them. Fire-blackened rocks or rocks removed from their natural setting disturb the scene.
- * Where metal fire rings are not provided, campers must use stoves. The use of stoves whenever possible helps maintain the natural setting.

TRAILS -- Staying on the trails minimizes your impact. Shortcutting not only damages the fragile vegetation, but also quickly leads to water erosion that often washes out whole sections of trail.

DOGS AND OTHER PETS -- It is illegal to take dogs or other pets on the trails. Native wildlife often shies away from areas used by dogs, thus preventing the close observation hoped for by most backpackers. Barking and sanitation are often disturbing to other hikers and campers. Dogs and dog tracks destroy the aesthetic experience.

SOLITUDE -- Among the important backpacking values are the natural sounds - whether it is a babbling brook, a singing bird, or a whispering pine.

- * Travel in small parties.
- * Leave your pets at home.
- * Avoid unnecessary noises.

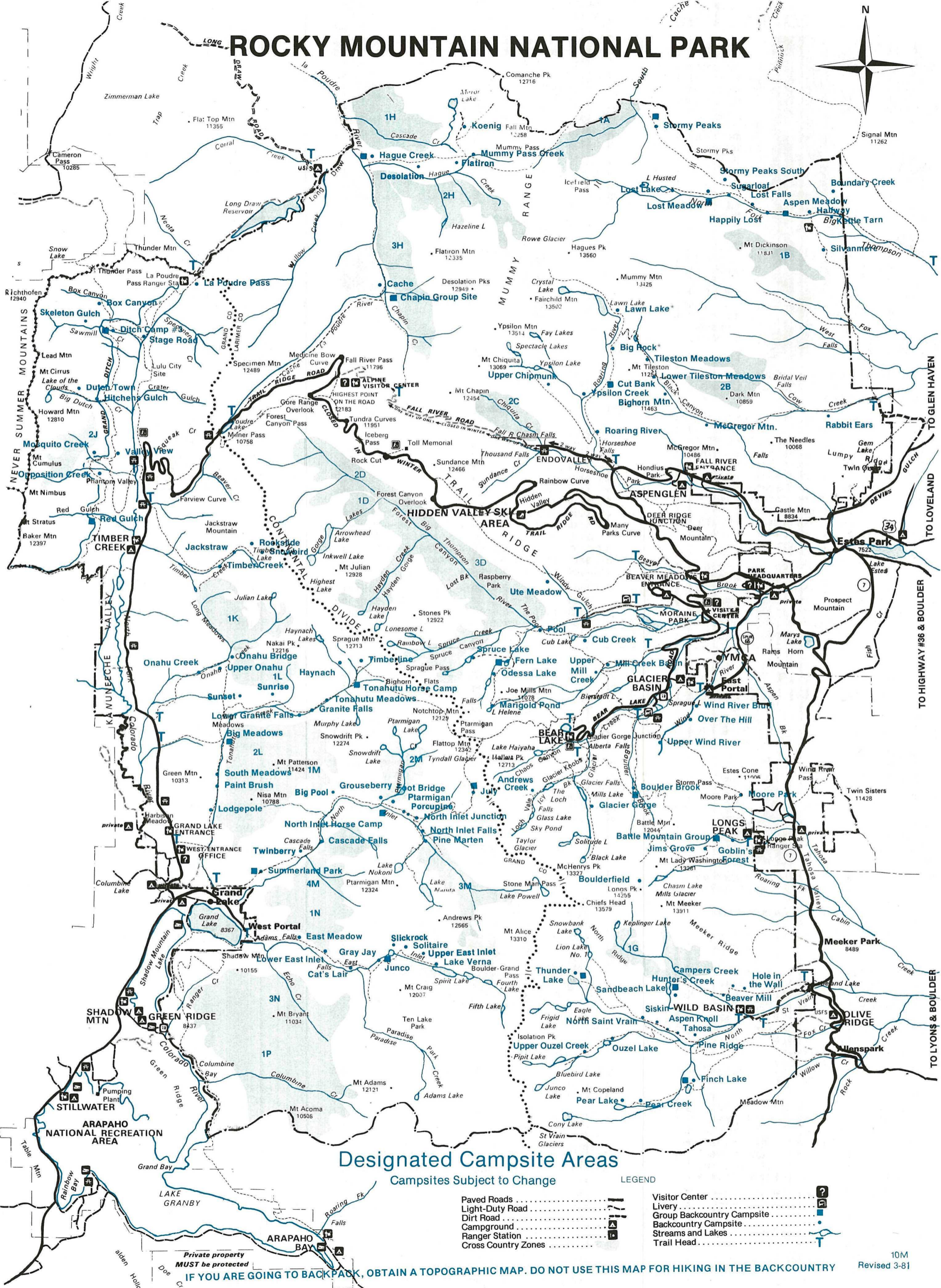
HAZARDS -- The mountainous backcountry environment contains many hazards not commonly encountered. A few of these are: slipping on snowfields, falling into turbulent streams, mountain climbing without proper experience or equipment, continuing to travel in violent lightning, wind or snow storms, and encountering wildlife. Any of these can cause serious injury and ruin your backpack trip, so PLAN AHEAD, BE PREPARED, BE CAREFUL, AND, IF IN DOUBT, ASK A RANGER.



THE MOUNTAINS DON'T CARE!

DO NOT USE THIS MAP FOR HIKING IN THE BACKCOUNTRY. It is recommended that you obtain topographical maps for use in the backcountry. They can be obtained at the Park information centers in person, or you may write to the Map Section, U.S. Geological Survey, Denver Federal Center, Denver, Colorado 80225. Trail guides and a Park topographic map are available from the Rocky Mountain Nature Association, Inc., Rocky Mountain National Park, Estes Park, Colorado 80517. Write for a free publications list.

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Private property MUST be protected

IF YOU ARE GOING TO BACKPACK, OBTAIN A TOPOGRAPHIC MAP. DO NOT USE THIS MAP FOR HIKING IN THE BACKCOUNTRY