

November 2014

VISTAS



ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK

Courtesy Photo by Ann Schonlau

Wilderness, Wildlife, Wonder

The park's Centennial is off and running. Kick off events were held in September with events scheduled over the next year. Thanks to the communities of Grand Lake and Estes Park for holding many of the upcoming events. The celebration will culminate on September 4, 2015, with a formal rededication of the park. More information on the Centennial is included in this edition of Vistas.

It's hard to believe that just a little over a year ago, the region experienced the flooding of September 2013. We have celebrated with our communities as they have come back, while recognizing that much still needs to be done. The Colorado Department of Transportation has done a great job getting the roads leading to Estes Park fixed, both temporarily and permanently.

Here at the park, we're also making progress on flood recovery projects. The big news is that the repairs to Old Fall River Road have been completed. We expect to open the road as scheduled next summer for the 4th of July weekend. Our focus in the backcountry was getting many of the stream crossings repaired. An update on trails work is included in this edition.

The National Park Service is proposing to increase entrance and camping fees to cover increased costs of things like the visitor shuttle system, operating and maintaining campgrounds, and various needed repairs to park facilities. Since 1996, your fees have paid for many of the improvements here at Rocky.

On January 26, 2015, Rocky will turn 100 years old. An anniversary provides the opportunity to honor the rich past of the park, celebrate the present (visitors still come for the same reasons they did 100 years ago!), and inspire future generations to become stewards of this special place.

Come join us for the celebration!

Fee Free Days in the Park for 2015

Mark Your Calendars!

- * January 19 Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- * February 14-16 Presidents' Day Weekend
- * April 18-19 First Weekend of National Park Week
- * August 25 National Park Service Birthday
- * September 26 National Public Lands Day
- * November 11 Veterans Day



Ranger Marilyn Irwin teaches children about bighorn sheep. NPS Photo

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@Rockynps

#rmnp



Park Website www.nps.gov/romo

General Park Information 970-586-1206

Trail Ridge Road Recorded Status Line 970-586-1222



It was a pleasure for Rocky to host former National Park Service Director Robert Stanton as he kicked off the Centennial Speaker Series at Rocky in early October.

NPS Photo

In this issue...

Page 2

- Fee Free Days in the Park for 2015
- Follow us on Social Media

Page 3

- Endovalley Road Reopens in Rocky, Old Fall River Road is Expected to Open to Vehicles Next Fourth of July Weekend

Page 4

- Extensive Repairs Completed on Flood Damaged Trails in Rocky

Page 5

- Public Input Requested on Reroutes and Repairs to Flood Damaged Trails in Rocky

Page 6

- Winter Pile Burning Operations

Page 7

- NPS Partnerships Receives Environmental Leadership Award for Early Warning System to Protect Rocky Mountain National Park

Page 8

- Rocky's 100th Anniversary Celebrates a Busy Fall

Page 10

- Eagle Rock School, Alpine Hotshots Form Bond Through Unique Fire-Training Program

Page 13

- Proposed Changes in Entrance and Camping Fees

Page 15

- Park Visitation Surpasses Three Million

Endovalley Road Reopens in Rocky Old Fall River Road is Expected to Open to Vehicles Next Fourth of July Weekend

Roughly one-half mile of the Endovalley Road reopened to vehicles on October 17. This area, along with Old Fall River Road, suffered extensive damages during last year's flood. Currently, there is no trail access in the Alluvial Fan area from either the east or west parking areas as those trails were destroyed. If walking or hiking off road or trail in flood-damaged areas use caution and check area signs, the park website, or ask a ranger for information and safety tips.

Endovalley Road is closed to vehicles past the west Alluvial Fan parking lot. As of November 1, leashed pets and bikes are only allowed from the west Alluvial Fan parking lot to the gate at the base of Old Fall River Road.

Old Fall River Road is expected to open to vehicles in the summer of 2015. Normally the road is open from the fourth of July to early October. Stay tuned for information on a ribbon cutting celebration early next summer! Old Fall River Road is a historic dirt road built between 1913 and 1920. Due to the winding, narrow nature of the road, the scenic 9.4-mile route is one-way. It follows the steep slope of Mount Chapin's south face.

The Federal Highway Administration funded this project through the Emergency Relief for Federally Owned Roads (ERFO) program.



Endovalley Road looking east-bound, showing post-flood road repairs. NPS Photo



Endovalley Road looking west-bound after this section of the road was destroyed by the flood. NPS Photo

Extensive Repairs Completed on Flood Damaged Trails in Rocky

Rocky Mountain National Park's forty-three member trails crew employees worked thousands of hours on mostly flood damaged trails and bridges this year. Throughout the season they welcomed assistance from two members of the Arches National Park Trail Crew, Student Conservation Association Interns, the Larimer County Youth Conservation Corps, two crews from the Rocky Mountain Conservancy-Conservation Corps, and a National Emergency Grant Crew (funded through a grant awarded to the State of Colorado). All involved were an integral part of Rocky's trails flood recovery efforts and continue Rocky's streak of accomplishing a great deal of work, in a short summer season, to a high degree of quality. Volunteers for the trails program played a prominent role this year as well, with over 9,120 volunteer hours put toward trails and flood recovery repairs!

Work focused mainly on the repair or replacement of many of the park's backcountry bridges, repair of tread work and retaining walls, repairs to picnic areas, and preparing for the replacement of the Ouzel Falls Bridge next summer. The program kicked off the season with work on flood recovery efforts in Tuxedo Park, Cow Creek, Meeker Park, Sandbeach Trail, Wild Basin Trail, Lily Lake, Fern Lake Trail, Sprague Lake, the Sprague Lake Picnic Area and the Ouzel Falls Bridge area.

Both the Lightning Bridge replacement on Longs Peak and the Ouzel Falls Bridge replacement in Wild Basin will require helicopter flights to deliver heavy bridge material as well as backhaul damaged material out of the areas. These bridge replacements are ongoing.

A total of 13 backcountry bridges were replaced in 2014, for a total of 294 linear feet! They include:

North Fork:

- Bridal Veil Bridge
- West Creek Bridge
- Fox Creek Bridge
- North Fork Ranger Cabin Bridge
- Halfway Campsite Bridge
- Aspen Meadows Bridge
- Lost Meadows Group Site Bridge

Bear Lake Corridor:

- Glacier Gorge Campsite Bridge
- Boulder Brook Bridge
- Odessa Bridge



New Odessa Bridge NPS Photo

Roaring River:

- Golden Banner Bridge

Wild Basin:

- Hunter's Creek Bridges
- Replacement of bridge between Calypso Cascades and Ouzel Falls

The sign shop also contributed numerous hours manufacturing flood warning signs and partnered with the Wilderness Crew to install them.

Public Input Requested on Reroutes and Repairs to Flood Damaged Trails in Rocky

Rocky Mountain National Park is considering reroutes and repairs to several trails that were heavily damaged or lost during the September 2013 flood. Flooding not only washed away the travel surface in some locations, but also structures such as culverts, water bars, and bridges. Saturated soils on hillsides failed, causing landslides that destroyed entire trail segments. Trails that received the most substantial damage require extensive repairs or rerouting.



Damage to the Twin Sisters Trail from the September 2013 Flood

NPS Photo

The purpose of this proposed project is to identify potential travel routes while protecting natural and cultural resources and preserving wilderness character. Damaged trails proposed for reroutes or repairs include: Alluvial Fan, Lawn Lake, Ypsilon Lake, Twin Sisters, and Aspen Brook. All of these trails currently remain open to the public, but portions of the trails and bridges have been washed out by flooding and landslides or are badly damaged. Social trails have developed in some locations around the damaged or missing trail segments, which can lead to soil erosion and vegetation damage over time.

The park is considering several options for each trail, including constructing short detours around damaged or missing trail segments or constructing longer trails. Also under consideration is allowing continued use of social trails and implementing minor improvements. Restoration of existing trails is not always feasible at some locations. Complete trail closure is also an option that may be considered for some trails. Trail segments abandoned due to reroutes or closure would be restored to natural conditions through active replanting or natural revegetation.

An environmental assessment will be prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to provide a decision-making framework that analyzes a reasonable range of alternatives to meet project objectives, evaluates issues and impacts on park resources and values, and identifies mitigation measures to lessen the degree or extent of these impacts.

Park staff encourage public participation throughout the planning process. There will be two opportunities to comment formally on the project – one starting now during initial project scoping and again following release of the environmental assessment. The park will be hosting a meeting about the proposed project. The meeting will be held on **Tuesday, November 18, from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.** at the Estes Valley Library – Hondius Room

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located at 335 East Elkhorn Avenue in Estes Park. This will be an opportunity to express ideas, concerns, and recommendations about alternative actions and have questions answered. There will be a short presentation at 5:30 p.m., and park staff will be available to answer questions until 7:00 p.m.; however, the public is invited to visit at any point during the scheduled time to review materials and provide written comments.

Comments received during the scoping period will be used to help define the issues and concerns to be addressed in the environmental assessment, while also assisting with analyzing the different alternatives.

Comments must be received in writing by close of business on December 8, 2014. Comments can be submitted at the public open house described above or online by visiting:
<http://parkplanning.nps.gov/romo> look for “Reroutes and Repairs to Flood Damaged Trails.”

Comments may also be sent to the following mailing address:

Superintendent
Rocky Mountain National Park
Estes Park, CO 80517

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment – including your personal identifying information – may be made publicly available at any time. Although you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee we will be able to do so.

If you have questions about the project, please call the park’s Information Office at (970) 586-1206.

Winter Pile Burning Operations

Fire managers at Rocky Mountain National Park plan to take advantage of potential upcoming winter weather conditions to burn piles of slash. Approximately 1,200 existing piles are from several hazard fuels and hazard tree mitigation projects; most are located on the east side of the park. Slash has been cut and piled by park fire crews and contractors during the last two years. More than 700 piles were burned last year.

When fighting the Fern Lake Fire in 2013, firefighters were able to take advantage of previous and existing prescribed fire and hazardous fuels treatment areas that provided a buffer between the fire and Estes Park. Prior hazard fuels projects were instrumental in stopping the fire from jumping Bear Lake Road. Because of the reduced fuel loading in treated areas and the fire lines that had already been created in some locations, firefighters had options to directly and safely attack the fire if it moved to those locations.

Pile burning operations will only begin when conditions allow. The piles are located in a variety of locations on the east side of the park including but not limited to areas north of Glacier Basin Campground on Emerald Mountain, the north slope of Deer Mountain, the Lily Lake area, Bear Lake, along Wild Basin Road and power line, Beaver Mountain and in the Pontiac Administrative area on the west side of the park.

Safety factors, weather conditions, air quality and environmental regulations are continually monitored as a part of any fire management operation.



NPS Photo



NPS Partnerships Receives Environmental Leadership Award for Early Warning System to Protect Rocky Mountain National Park

The NPS Air Resources Division (ARD), Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP), along with federal, state, university, and agricultural partners, received a State of Colorado Environmental Leadership Award October 2, 2014. The award recognized partnership efforts to develop and pilot an Early Warning System to help protect RMNP from excess nitrogen deposition. The Early Warning System is designed to advise Colorado agricultural producers when to voluntarily avoid high nitrogen-emitting activities, such as manure handling and crop fertilizing, during specific weather events that could readily transport nitrogen into RMNP.

The NPS is collaborating with Colorado agricultural producers to voluntarily reduce their ammonia emissions through use of science-based best management practices. The collaboration includes research, monitoring, outreach, and development of the Early Warning System (www.rmwarningsystem.com). Partners with the NPS ARD and RMNP that also received the environmental leadership award for this system included: Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, Colorado State University, Colorado Livestock Association, Colorado Corn Growers Association, Colorado Wheat Growers Association.

Over 25 years of scientific research indicates that atmospheric nitrogen deposition in RMNP is approximately 15 times greater than the natural background deposition rate. Three-quarters of the park has high elevation ecosystems, including alpine tundra, that are especially susceptible to impacts from excess nitrogen deposited by rain or snow. About half of the excess nitrogen comes from nitrogen oxides (NOx) emitted by fossil fuel use by automobiles and industry, the other half comes from sources of ammonia, the largest source category being agriculture.

Through a Memorandum of Understanding, RMNP with assistance from NPS ARD, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency developed and are working collaboratively to implement a 2007 RMNP Nitrogen Deposition Reduction Plan (NDRP). While the NDRP will also help improve park visibility and ozone conditions, its focus is to reduce the ecological impacts of excess nitrogen through reducing nitrogen deposition by approximately 50% (to 1.5 kg/ha/yr) over 25 years by 2032. An effective Early Warning System may assist in achieving this long term goal and help to preserve and protect RMNP for future generations.



RMNP, NPS Air Resources Division, Colorado Public Health Environment, EPA, & Colorado Agriculture groups recognized for the Colorado Environmental Leadership Award. NPS Photo

Rocky's 100th Anniversary Celebrates a Busy Fall!

“I have lived to see the realization of a great dream come true. It means great things for Colorado and for the nation. There is nothing more inspiring than the vast chains of mountain which are connected in the Rocky Mountain National Park; there is nothing more beautiful.”

These words, originally stated by Enos Mills at the Dedication of Rocky Mountain National Park on September 4, 1915, were heard yet again at the launch of the year-long celebration of the Rocky Mountain National Park Centennial. The kick-off events, held at Hidden Valley on September 3 and Holzwarth Historic Site on September 4, provided a fun combination of music, food, historical activities, and special presentations to over 750 park visitors and staff. Kurtis Kelly, from the Estes Valley Library, honored the past through his stirring portrayal of Enos Mills.



*US Representative Jared Polis addresses the park's east side Centennial Kick-off Event
Courtesy Photo by Ann Schonlau*

Superintendent Vaughn Baker celebrated the present of the park with updates on current projects and initiatives, and youth representatives from Eagle Rock School and from Middle Park High School exemplified the passion and motivation of the park's future stewards with presentations highlighting their experiences with the park. Members of the Estes Park and Grand Lake Woman's Clubs attended as hostesses for the events, just as they

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Courtesy Photo by Ann Schonlau



Interpretive Rangers Chelsea Hernandez and Cynthia Langguth share details from the past with visitors. NPS Photo

in both the ScotFest Parade in Estes Park and the Constitution Week Parade in Grand Lake. Photography and painting exhibitions by local artists, special presentations on topics from geology to Enos Mills, and fun specialty events like the Trappers Wild Game Culinary Affair and Wilderness, Wildlife, and Wonder Halloween rounded out the schedule with fun and interesting ways to reconnect and celebrate with the park.

did in 1915, and served cookies and homemade ice cream. Cowboy Brad Fitch performed the official 100th Anniversary song, rangers on horseback greeted visitors to the events, and interpretive rangers and volunteers transported attendees back in time with information about milestone events from the past 100 years. Overall, both events set a festive tone for the next year of exciting events.

Centennial events continued through the fall with a variety of offerings. The Rocky Mountain Centennial Float made appearances



Grand Lake Mayor Judy Burke addresses the Centennial Kick-off crowd on the west side of the park. NPS Photo



Cowboy Brad Fitch performing the official 100th Anniversary song. NPS Photo



Peggy Mann also entertained the crowd on the west side during the event. NPS Photo

100th Anniversary activities will continue throughout the holiday season and winter. The Rocky Mountain National Park website provides full details on 100th Anniversary initiatives, products, and events. Be sure to check in on a regular basis for the most up-to-date offerings.



Education Specialist Holly Nickel (far left) with Eagle Rock students who spoke at the east side Centennial Kick-off Event regarding their summer experience with Rocky. NPS Photo

Eagle Rock School, Alpine Hotshots Form Bond Through Unique Fire-Training Program

“Punctuality shows respect.” “Train like you fight.” “Crew cohesion is important.” These are just some of the life lessons that students from the alternative residential high school in Estes Park, Colorado, learned during a five-week class on wildland fire. Simply called “Fire!,” the program, now in its second year, joined six students from Eagle Rock school with Alpine Hotshots and ecologists from Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP) and the Continental Divide Research Learning Center (CDRLC).

An existing relationship between the school, RMNP and hotshot crew and the student’s enthusiasm is what sparked the idea for the “Fire!” program. In May 2011, Rafael Mcleod graduated and then joined the crew for a season. Vidal Carrillo became a hotshot in 2012, while still a student.

Carrillo continues to work on the seasonal crew while now working on his undergraduate degree at Colorado State University. His enthusiasm is part of what sparked the idea for the “Fire!” program. Ben Baldwin, ecologist at the CDRLC, and Alpine Hotshot Superintendent Paul Cerda discussed opportunities with Eagle Rock School when they came up with the idea for the pilot program.

“After Vidal and Rafael’s success as members of the hotshot crew, we knew several kids were interested in wildland fire,” Cerda said. “Ben and I decided we needed to build on that, partly as an opportunity for diversity recruiting.”

Baldwin approached Eagle Rock School with the idea to develop the pilot course for citizen fire science, similar to other citizen science programs offered through the CDRLC. While the initial idea was to put the students through a 40-hour basic wildland fire course (S-130, S-190, I-100 and L-180), to certify them as wildland firefighters, Cerda and Baldwin quickly realized lectures were not going to be the best learning environment for these students.

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“These are students who were not going to get much out of sitting in the classroom,” Cerda said. “They are used to more experiential learning through a hands-on approach. That’s also why we incorporated the physical training standards as part of the curriculum.”

This year, CDRLC staff member Holly Nickel used her expertise in education and curriculum development to refine and develop materials for this course.

“Four of the key principles in fire—safety, physical training, fire ecology, and fire suppression—were the goals of the new fire curriculum,” Nickel said.

Instructors challenged students to memorize and tie in 10’s (standard firefighting orders) and 18’s (watchout situations) that incorporate safety into each daily lesson. Students also tested in the fire fit challenge, which includes running a mile and a half, and maximizing the number of pushups, sit-ups and pull-ups they can do in three minutes during their first week of class. They were tested again on the last day for the physical training aspect of the class.

Students spent time in the field with park Forester Brain Verhulst to learn about tree health, and park Ecologist Scott Esser, to learn about succession and fire’s effect on ecosystems.

Instructors and students spent many hours at the sand table, a large sandbox with props, working out scenarios and applying what they learned about fire suppression. Students also spent a day acting out a fire field scenario with Cerda and Alpine Hotshot Captain Mark Mendonca. Dressed in full personal protective equipment, the students gathered tools and hiked into a simulated “fire” area, received a briefing and dug fire lines. They used their designated escape route to a deployment zone, where each student deployed a practice fire shelter. A debriefing back at the school assessed what they learned.

“The students learned more in this course than just the science of wildland firefighting,” Baldwin said. “They learned about the hotshot’s core values of safety, duty, respect and integrity. They learned about hard work, team work and personal development. And they learned the importance of physical fitness.”

Seventeen-year-old Franco Casas of Los Angeles said he was inspired to take the class by Carrillo’s experience with the Alpine Hotshots.

“(The) class gave me a different perspective. I thought all fires were bad, and you just put them out. But then we learned about fire in the ecosystem,” he said.



Eagle Rock students taking part in the "Fire!" program. NPS Photo

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Casas, who said opportunities are rare back in his LA home neighborhood, wants to pursue becoming a hotshot. “It’s a dangerous job, but it’s challenging,” he said. “They train like they fight (fires), and it’s always safety first.”

For 19-year-old Jeremy Coles, the course taught him a lot about what it means to be a leader. “Working with the Alpine Hotshots encouraged me to be more on top of my game with life skills and working as a team, being a leader to contribute to make class smooth,” said Coles. “Meeting people from RMNP opened up doors for my future.”

The mixture of classroom teaching, field exercises and hands-on science kept the students engaged. Student Valentina Ramirez, who is from the same East LA neighborhood as Cerda, said the class went well beyond her expectations. “I just thought we’d hear from (hotshots) about their experience,” she said. “I didn’t know we’d get to use their tools, and even the fire shelter. I didn’t know how dangerous firefighting was. I definitely have a greater appreciation for what firefighters do.”

For Eagle Rock Instructor Anderson, “Fire!” is a great example of the opportunities Eagle Rock has with Rocky Mountain National Park. “It’s good for diversity, and the internships and experiences for many of the students have been life-changing,” he said.

Eagle Rock School was founded on a vision that a school could improve the lives of young people by promoting community, integrity and citizenship. The school targets students who have not been successful in more traditional settings and also offers adults professional development opportunities to help strengthen schools both locally and nationally. The American Honda Education Corporation was founded as a nonprofit corporation in February 1991, and funds Eagle Rock School.



Alpine Hotshots with Rafael McCleod (far right), Eagle Rock Alum. Wallow Fire Alpine, AZ 2011

NPS Photo

Proposed Changes in Entrance and Camping Fees

Rocky Mountain National Park is proposing a change in its current entrance fees. Because of Rocky's proximity to the populated Colorado Front Range, the park is proposing to add a single day pass to the existing option of fees. This "Day Use Pass" would remain at \$20 while the weekly pass would increase to \$30 for those visitors who intend to enjoy the park for multiple days. The park is proposing that the annual park pass increase to \$50 and eventually increase to \$60 by 2017.

"A sizable portion of Rocky Mountain National Park's visitation is one day in length," said Vaughn Baker, park superintendent. "Currently, all visitors who do not opt for an annual pass purchase a single entry pass that is valid for seven days. As an alternative to the seven day pass, we are proposing to add a single day pass to the park's option of fees."



New picnic pavilion at Harbison Meadow NPS Photo

While basic operations of the park are funded by direct appropriations from Congress, the fee program is intended to provide for various enhancements to visitor services and facilities. The fee program helps provide a margin of excellence for the visitor experience.

The Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act (FLREA) is the legislation under which the park currently collects entrance and amenity fees. This law allows parks to retain 80 percent of the fees collected for use on projects that directly benefit visitors. The remaining 20 percent is distributed throughout the National Park System. Since the beginning of FLREA and its predecessor program Fee Demo, the park has spent over \$66 million in repairs, renovations, improvements and resource restoration.

People notice! Ninety percent of surveyed park visitors have continually expressed support for this program. Some of the projects funded through these fees at Rocky Mountain National Park include:

- **Shuttles** - The park's visitor shuttle bus system transports an average of 460,000 visitors annually throughout the Bear Lake Road corridor and to and from Estes Park. In recent years, annual operating costs and a move toward "greening the fleet" that improves fuel efficiency and a reduction in emissions and noise, has increased transit program costs. These costs are offset through revenue generated from fees.



New Clean Air Bus NPS Photo

- **Camping** - A multi-year project is ongoing to completely renovate all restroom facilities throughout the park's campgrounds.



Food storage locker at Timber Creek Campground NPS Photo

- **Picnicking** - A multi-year project is ongoing to replace old wooden picnic tables throughout the park with more sustainable concrete tables, significantly extending the life cycle replacement costs.

- **Hazard Tree Mitigation** - The park is among many areas along the Rocky Mountains where trees have been dying from a mountain pine beetle epidemic. Fee program funding has allowed for extensive mitigation of hazard trees in or near park facilities such as campgrounds, parking lots, road corridors, housing areas and visitor centers.



- **Hiking Trail Enhancements** - Forty-five trailhead kiosks and sign panels have been replaced as well as maintenance and replacement of hundreds of front country and backcountry signs. Sections of approximately 100 of the park's 350 miles of trails have been maintained and reconstructed including Flattop Mountain, Dream Lake, Black Lake, Wild Basin area trails, Longs Peak, North Fork, Lawn Lake, East Inlet, North Inlet, and the Alpine Ridge Trail. Fee program funding has also afforded opportunities for a variety of Youth Corps groups such as the Student Conservation Association, Rocky Mountain, Larimer County, Americorps, Ground Work Denver and others to assist with these trail projects.

Sign Maker Mick Richards places new and replacement signs in the backcountry. NPS Photo

Park staff are proposing that campground fees increase from \$20 a night to \$26 a night in 2016. Campground fees are based on comparable fees for similar services in nearby campgrounds.

Rocky Mountain National Park is a strong economic engine for the surrounding area. In 2012, more than 3.2 million park visitors contributed \$196 million to the local economy and supported 2,779 jobs related to tourism.

“We are committed to keeping Rocky Mountain National Park affordable and we also want to provide visitors with the best possible experience,” said Baker. “We feel that our proposed fee changes are still an incredible value when considering other family and recreational experiences one can enjoy. Plus, 80 percent of those funds stay right here in Rocky to benefit visitors. As we celebrate Rocky’s Centennial, these funds are critical as we move forward into the next one hundred years.”

Park staff are seeking feedback about the proposed fee schedule. **Please email comments to ROMO_Information@nps.gov by December 1, 2014.** The current park entrance fees have been in effect for the past nine years. The park’s annual pass increased in 2009. Feedback the park receives will help determine how and when a fee increase may be implemented.



New accessible comfort station at Aspenglen Campground.

NPS Photo

Park Visitation Surpasses Three Million

October visitation numbers are in at Rocky Mountain National Park. As expected, the park received high visitation due to beautiful fall weather and Trail Ridge Road remaining open until October 26 with only a few temporary closures. Visitation was 305,651 for the month which is a significant increase from the past five Octobers. Of course, it's a 361 percent increase from last October when flood damaged roads, chilly weather and the government shutdown greatly impacted visitation. Park visitation year-to-date is 3,263,804, the highest the park has ever received.

Determining visitation is a difficult and imprecise effort. Visitation statistics help park managers see overall trends. Fall visitation, particularly on weekends, continues to increase at Rocky Mountain National Park.

Park staff corrected public use statistics procedures for recreation and non-recreation visits beginning in 2012. Starting in 2012, traffic began being counted at Lumpy Ridge and Lily Lake on the park's east side; regression formulas rather than counters are used for the park's west side minor entrances; Hiker Shuttle riders and visitors who enter the park on horseback are counted as recreational visits; and Sun Valley Road, a county road across from the Kawuneeche Visitor Center, is no longer counted because this road is not administered by the park. Even with these changes, however, visitation stats are still reliably good estimates.

Many other national parks in the Rocky Mountain West have also seen increases in visitation this year. Rocky began its Centennial Celebration in September, which will continue through September of 2015. Other parks celebrating their Centennial Anniversaries experienced increases in visitation.



Courtesy Photo by Peter Biddle



Rocky Mountain National Park proudly recognizes the Rocky Mountain Conservancy as its official charitable partner.



The National Park Service proudly recognizes the National Park Foundation as its official charitable partner.

