



BFTA NEWS

President's Corner



By Larry Fariss, BFTA President

Out of The Ashes...Our Crown Jewels!

Our beloved forest was ravaged by fire and floods this past summer. The disaster we feared the most hit on June 11th as a fire storm descended upon us. Heavy rains followed in July and August further ripping the landscape. Many Black Forest trail Association (BFTA) members were affected either directly or indirectly as they lost homes and property or have friends and neighbors who are facing great difficulty in coping with the disaster. We on the BFTA Board wish to express our sorrow for all who lost homes or property and stand by our members and neighbors as we all join together to rebuild the forest.

Unfortunately, Black Forest's parks and trails were not spared from Mother Nature's wrath. Many residents consider these treasured assets to be the "crown jewels" of the forest! Here is a breakdown of park damages as documented in the Black Forest Fire Burn Assessment conducted by El Paso County Parks and Recreation Department:

Black Forest Regional Park

95.53% (271.44 acres) of the park was affected by the fire as follows; 12.56 acres (4.41%) are characterized as unburned; 100.55 acres (35.28%) are characterized as low burn; 168.68 acres

(59.19%) are characterized as moderately burned; 2.21 acres (0.78%) are characterized as severely burned. The active use area is generally characterized as low or unburned, with damage to railroad tie retention walls, split rail fencing and drainage ways. The northern and eastern portion of the park is characterized as severely burned. The trail system within the park was significantly impacted by the fire. The before / after photo on the right is a photo taken by BFTA board member Hank Hoover of a very unique tree in BFRP that was killed by the fire. Hank had been visiting this



tree many times over the years watching it grow, and now die.

Black Forest Section 16

57.91% (69.49 acres) of the property was affected by the fire as follows; 50.08 acres (41.73%) are characterized as unburned; 10.74 acres (8.95%) are characterized as moderately burned;

0.00 acres (0.00%) are characterized as severely burned. The trailhead and southern portion is generally characterized as low or unburned. The western and northern portion is characterized as moderately burned. The eastern portion is characterized as severely burned. No structures were damaged, but some fencing and signs will need to be replaced.

Black Forest Section 16 was damaged but has been reopened to the public.

Pineries Open Space

90.72% (967.99 acres) of the open space was affected by the fire as follows; 99.01 acres

(9.28%) are characterized as unburned; 361.21 acres (33.85%) are characterized as low burn;

The Pineries, although devastated, has not been opened to the public, and its losses are not felt - yet.

473.21 acres (44.35%) are characterized as moderately burned; 133.57 acres (12.52%) are characterized as severely burned. The active use area is generally characterized as low or unburned, although several outbuildings and a coral were destroyed. The northern area is characterized as moderately and severely burned. The eastern and southern area are characterized as low/unburned or severely burned. Several areas of old growth ponderosa pine forest were moderately to severely burned. Of note, the Snipe Creek drainage way sustained

moderate to significant damage on forested embankments.

What does this mean to trail users? The fire affected 29.12 miles of trail within the Black Forest burn area. Of the affected trails, 4.59 miles (15.76%) is characterized as severely burned; 9.94 miles (34.13%) is characterized as moderately burned; 14.59 miles (50.10%) is characterized as low/unburned. The Black Forest Regional Park was hit the hardest. Major work needs to be done before this park's trails will be fully open. Section 16 is in far better shape and thanks to the County, is already open for our trail community. The Pineries, although devastated, had not yet been opened to the public, and its losses are not felt--- yet. The fact is the future of all of Black Forest's parks, trails and open spaces is in serious jeopardy as county officials struggle with the reality of funding repairs for trails and facilities let alone developing new infrastructures like the long coveted Pineries Open Space.

The El Paso County Parks Department's Burn Assessment has quantified the costs of repairing our Black Forest Parks and making them safe for use. Here is how that breaks out:

- Black Forest Regional Park: \$1,341,191 - \$1,572,491

- Soil Stabilization/Flood Prevention: \$513,000 - \$735,300
- Hazard Tree Removal: \$295,440
- Trail Restoration: \$521,443
- Active Use Area: \$20,308
- Black Forest Section 16: \$51,030 - \$65,330
- Soil Stabilization/Flood Prevention: \$33,000 - \$47,300
- Trail Restoration: \$5,720
- Hazard Tree Removal: \$12,310
- Pineries Open Space: \$2,391,744 - \$3,180,844
- Soil Stabilization/Flood Prevention: \$1,821,000 - \$2,610,100
- Hazard Tree Removal: \$295,440
- Active Use Area: \$275,304

The total repair bill is staggering--- \$3.8 to \$4.8 million dollars! Where will these funds come from? The county will be hard pressed to even partially fund these repairs. In recent years El Paso County's funding of parks has dropped from \$19 million to \$3 million. That meager amount is for maintaining all county parks let alone repairing our damaged parks! Fortunately, a variety of partners and resources are available to potentially bridge that funding gap and assist with recovery of County Park's property. Here are the potential heroes who will aid us in recovering our "crown jewels"!

Nonprofit Organizations can provide technical assistance, project management and cost-sharing opportunities. Examples: Palmer Land Trust, Rocky Mountain Field Institute, and Mile High Youth Corps.

Grant Funding Organizations offer grant funds or partnering funds to preserve open spaces, provide educational opportunities, enhance quality of life, support community awareness and provide public service opportunities. Examples: Great Outdoors Colorado, Pikes Peak Community Foundation, and Coalition of the Upper South Platte.

Businesses could sponsor a project by providing funds, materials, equipment and volunteer appreciation items. Examples: Any business serving our Black Forest Community.

Resident Organizations are a great source for volunteers, fundraising and monitoring assistance. Their inclusion is important to ensuring the recovery process of the affected properties. Examples: Black Forest Trails Association, Neighborhood Home Owner Associations, Cathedral Pines Metropolitan District, Black forest Community Club and Black Forest Together.

Volunteers are an effective way to implement recovery projects. The majority of the recovery work requires large amounts of labor. Using volunteers is very cost effective as material, equipment and appreciation costs

are well below contracted costs for recovery projects. Volunteer projects also foster great relationships with the community and provide a unique educational experience. Examples: YOU!

Here's where you come in! The Black Forest community has a long history of active involvement in the long-term planning, management and maintenance of Black Forest Regional Park, Black Forest Section 16, and Pineries Open Space. First and foremost, I encourage each of you to help as much as you can by actively volunteering in work projects that benefit our parks. Furthermore, express your appreciation to any nonprofit/funding organization you belong to, or business you frequent, that helps in this great effort. Out of the ashes, if we work together, we can recover our "crown jewels"!

County Parks Advisory Board Retreat Held

By Judi Tobias

In November the El Paso County Parks Advisory Board held a retreat to help us identify the most urgent needs of our parks system. Most of the members of the Board were shocked to hear that the per capita amount that our County Parks received this past year amounted to about \$1.16 per person. There were a lot of suggestions as to how to improve that figure. One would be to set up a special district similar to the Pikes Peak Library District which gets a small amount from sales taxes each year.

Another item that was discussed was the disparity between our parks and those in Douglas County to our north. One new park that was pointed out as an example of how Douglas County keeps on creating new parks was the Lincoln Mountain Park which is on the west side of Highway 83 just north of County Line Road. Well, when you look at our parks budget as compared to that of Douglas County its easy to see why they have nicer parks.

Another area of concern for the Parks Advisory Board is the proposed wind farm just south of Calhan. As currently planned, the wind towers will visually impact the Paint Mines Park. In addition, it will cause noise that will detract from the Park's quiet atmosphere. The Parks Board passed the plan with changes that would delete the northwestern wind towers. At this point the planning commission is planning to hear objections from the Palmer Land Trust to the project.

Lincoln Mountain Open Space

By Judi Tobias

Douglas County's newest open space trail is Lincoln Mountain which opened this fall. It is only a couple of miles north of the El Paso County line on Jones Road, just west of Hwy. 83. The land was formerly a working cattle ranch. West Cherry Creek runs through the property.

The trail is basically a loop with little side trails from time to time. It's a really well defined and well –marked trail. Part of the trail follows the creek and goes through grasslands and there are some riparian areas. On the north end is a really pretty little area under some huge old willows where you can have a picnic or just take a break. Also, all along the trails are some nice, rustic wooden benches.

One interesting thing about the creek area is that it is the home to



the endangered Preble's Meadow Jumping Mouse. The center of the area is actually privately owned and is leased to Praying Hands Ranch. No trail use is allowed on that part of the Mountain.

The trail goes uphill through scrub oak to the Lincoln Mountain mesa area. It's a pretty decent climb and the view from the top is lovely. The trail is about 4-5 miles long so it is a nice place to spend a morning or afternoon hiking or riding a bike or a horse, which is what we did.

The parking lot is adequate for several vehicles, even with horse trailers and is well-graveled so it shouldn't get muddy.

Everyone I've talked to who has been there really likes it. It's a great addition to the local open spaces.

Trails Further East

By Nancy Reinhardt

These two areas are untouched by the fire and you may be surprised how nice and diverse they are.

Palmer Divide Trail

The Palmer Divide trail is an El Paso County trail and is only partially completed. The 2 mile portion that runs through Woodlake subdivision can be accessed from the parking lot at Hodgen and Woodlake Rds (about 1/3 mile west of Eastonville Rd. It is road base and travels in meadow around Kiowa Creek. In the summer you might see Great Blue Heron or Canadian geese on the pond portion of Kiowa Creek (not too far from the parking lot). This trail eventually will travel west through Black Forest Reserve on the west side of Meridian Rd and will connect with the Sanctuary in the Pines and then to Section 16. Someday there will be a connection to the east which will go to Homestead Ranch Park.

There are signs which Woodlake subdivision has put up which say "Woodlake Non-motorized Trail" along the subdivision's equestrian easements. These trail segments connect to the Palmer Divide Trail but are a little hard to follow if you don't know where they go.

Homestead Ranch Park

To get here, if coming from Black Forest, take Meridian Road north to Murphy Rd. and go east, turn left on Eastonville Rd, turn right on Sweet Rd and go east. You will cross Elbert highway, jog to the south slightly where Sweet Rd picks back up and go east until you get to Gollihar. Turn left and follow it back until you see the sign for Homestead Ranch. There are a lot of good things about Homestead Ranch Park like restrooms, a playground, a pond, picnic pavilions and a nice 3 mile trail that goes from the bottom of the park up through forest to the top where there is a great view of the Front Range. The trail is rocky in spots. There is a windmill that works, with a water tank. It has a large parking lot with special areas for horse trailers.



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BFTA Membership

By Andy Meng

As you can see from the articles above, the Black Forest Trails Association is actively involved in supporting and advocating the development and maintenance of multi-use trails in the Black Forest. In the short time I've been involved with the BFTA, I have seen its influence on issues that are small (cleaning trash and debris from Black Forest parks and trails), medium (raising funds for, and building a toilet in section 16), and large (helping clean up after the Black Forest fire of June 2013). By supporting BFTA with your annual membership, you help provide the funding and support for a whole range of issues that affect Black Forest trails and the lifestyle we all want to protect.

There are 4 tiers of BFTA membership:

- 1) Individual / family (\$15 per year),
- 2) Business / club (\$30 per year),
- 3) Donor (\$50 per year)
- 4) Lifetime (\$150 one time).

New for 2013 – membership runs from April 1 to March 31. The board made this decision since trails activity starts picking up in April and we wanted to sync up membership with the trail use season. For those of you who paid dues for 2013, please note that your membership will run through March 31, 2014. We'll send out renewal notifications in early 2014. If you become a member, or renew **now**, your membership will run through March 31, 2015

We use PayPal, which is easy and secure, to accept online payments, or you can print out an application and mail your payment in via US Postal service – either option can be completed via our website at <http://www.blackforesttrails.org/joinrenew>

Did You Know?

- That your BFTA membership dues are tax deductible? Indeed they are since BFTA is a 501c3 non-profit .
- That the BFTA operates strictly through the efforts of volunteers? There are no paid positions on the BFTA. All funds are used to directly support the mission of the BFTA.
- That the board meets frequently throughout the year? Visit our website at www.blackforesttrails.org for dates and times of board meetings and other events. We welcome ALL members to our board meetings.



Black Forest Trails Association
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Did You Know?

By Cheryl Pixley

BFTA has adopted the Black Forest Section 16 Partnership Trail and the portions of Shoup Road and Herring Road that border Section 16. Twice a year, in the spring and the fall, we invite the community to join our members in a debris cleanup event designed to keep this very popular county parkland looking great! Please consider helping for an hour or two in 2014. It is a good opportunity for students to earn community service hours as well!

BFTA has also adopted the mile of Milam Road that runs through Black Forest Regional Park and it is currently in need of some attention. If you can help pick up light roadside trash in December or January, please call Cheryl at 495-9295.

