



BLACK FOREST TRAILS ASSOCIATION NEWS

President's Corner Keeping Black Forest 'Cool'



Greetings Black Forest trails users and another Happy New Year to you! My new year's resolution is to keep Black Forest cool. I love that word – cool. It dates back to my youth and is still used by kids these days. What cool means to me is a nice place to live with friendly, helpful neighbors, plenty of healthy outdoor activities and no McDonalds or paved sidewalks. I'm sure we've all seen the changing demographic in the Forest but we have a long history of a cool place to live. So let's keep it that way.

We have another great newsletter for you with several guest articles this time. Among them, Judy Van Ahlefeldt provides another on BFTA history lesson and Keith Henry updates us on his trail ventures. I hope you enjoy it and please contact me if you have anything you think our members need to hear. It's been a productive year for BFTA completing the Red Tail Ranch connectors and establishing our presence on a trail along Vollmer Road that will connect the developments on south Vollmer to Section 16 and beyond. Except someone took down the sign shown in my picture and has not returned it. That's not cool.

I know we have a lot of connector trails that cut through private property that were established with verbal agreements years, and probably owners, ago. This year I'd like to revisit these trails to ensure you're still cool with the agreement and try to establish a formal easement. So if you're one of these property owners please contact me to discuss. Community trails increase property value and security. There's been some changes in our county parks leadership with Todd Marts moving up as Director of Community Services and Theresa Odello replacing him as Recreation/Cultural Services Manager. Congratulations to both on your well-deserved promotions and BFTA looks forward to working with you to keep things cool here.

Another Black Forest stalwart is Terry Stokka who spoke at our July members' meeting. Terry leads the Friends of the Black Forest group that you should be aware of. He's fighting to keep Black Forest cool too so please join his group on FaceBook – lots of good community information.

We recently met with the Trails and Open Space Coalition (TOSC). Susan Davies and Aaron Rogers are strong allies that add weight to our positions. And Susan has agreed to be our guest speaker at our July member's meeting at the Black Forest Brewery. Did I say free beer to attendees?!!!

Note we'll again be participating in the Great America Clean up this Spring. BFTA will be leading at Section 16. Black Forest Regional Park and the Palmer Divide Trail. As always, we'll need your help.

And we also need your help serving your community by taking a leadership position in BFTA. Several board members will be stepping down and we'll need someone new to step up. I'd like to create healthy turnover in BFTA so you're not stuck in a position for more than two years. That's cool. Our board meetings are open to the public and held at the Black Forest Community Center on the second Wednesday of the month starting at 630 PM. I strive to finish before closing time.

So let's all continue to keep Black Forest cool. Feel free to contact me at president.bfta@gmail.com with your thoughts, issues and ideas. And look for me and my (not so) little brown puppy on the trails. All the best in 2022!

Sincerely, Rich Mock
President BFTA

The Potato Doc Joins BFTA

By John Wallace



Greetings fellow walkers and riders. My name is John Wallace and I have recently joined the BFTA board as an at large representative. I have been a member since I moved to Black Forest in 2017 and live in the Falcon Forest area close to Black Forest Regional Park. Most of my trail time is walking in BFRP with my dog Lucy but I plan on fixing up my old mountain bike to cover some of the longer trails in the forest. I am a retired Agricultural Research Scientist and farmer with a background in soil science and irrigation management mostly for potatoes. My childhood was in a remarkably rural area on Long Island 23 miles from New York City where I walked the fields and woods behind our home from an early age. Over the years I have lived in New York, Montana, Saudi Arabia, Colorado, Idaho, Washington, Wisconsin, Nebraska, England, Colorado, Oregon, and Colorado. I

have hiked in all those places but I most love the front range of the Rockies for its diversity of ecology, and dry, sunny weather. I fully support the BFTA mission of interconnecting community trails so each of us can access the beautiful natural areas around us without always having to drive. I am a firm believer in leave no trace access to nature and will work to educate the astonishing number of new trail users in the forest on proper etiquette regarding multi use trails, permitted access across private property, doggie bags left as trail markers and similar issues. See you on the trail!

New Trail In Redtail Ranch!

By Larry Farris



BFTA is proud to announce that a mile of trail has been installed in the recently opened Red Tail Ranch development. The new trail connects Ward Lane to Vollmer Road. The trail is 3 feet wide and transits the utility right of ways along Ward Lane and Sanctuary Pine Drive. Like all trails sponsored by BFTA it is designed for non-motorized traffic only. Specifically designed for walking, jogging, mountain bike rides and horseback riding, this trail furthers BFTA stated mission to connect neighborhoods in Black Forest.

The trail came about with some close cooperation between a very proactive developer and BFTA. Red Tail Ranch has actually deeded the trail right of way to BFTA. This was instrumental as the trail crosses the edge of over 10 lots that are now privately owned. BFTA has subsequently worked closely with the new Home Owners Association leadership to ensure the newly installed trail was safe and esthetically pleasing.

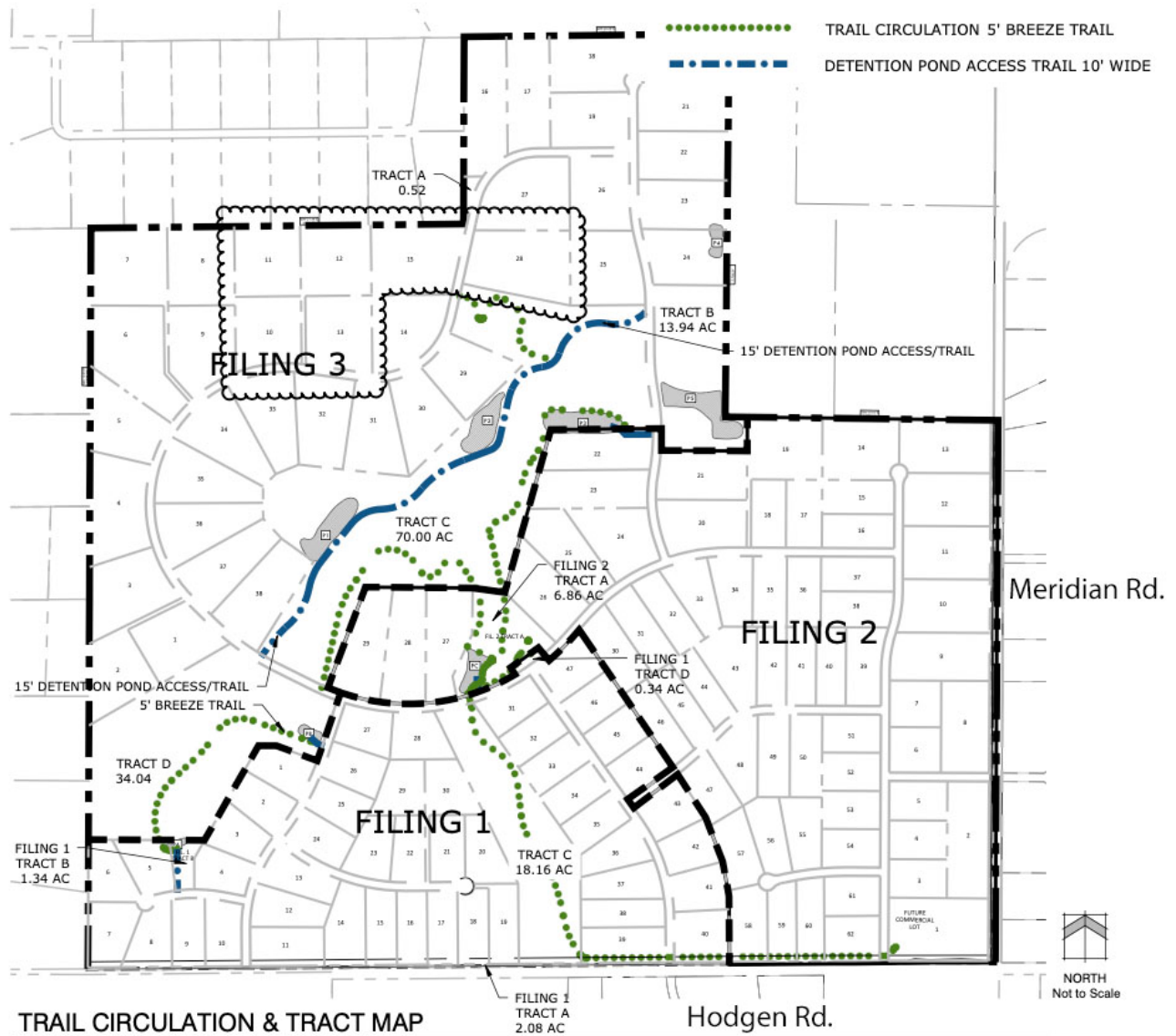
Future plans are to relink Meadow Glen Lane and Forest Heights Circle so that the neighbors to the North and West can also enjoy this new trail system. Longer term plans are to tie the Red Tail Trail into the Pineries and Section 16 utilizing County Trails targeted for completion in 2025. This has been a perfect example of how developers can insure their future home owners have access to the quality outdoor environment we have in Black Forest. Please notify us if you possess property that you would like to see a trail cross to link our great network of dirt roads. Makes for a great walk for you and your neighbors!

Winsome Ranch Provides a Welcome Trail Expansion for Black Forest!

By Larry Farris

On 30 April 2021, Black Forest Trails Board Members Rich Mock, Cheryl Pixley, Nancy Reinhardt, and Larry Fariss met with ProTerra developers Joe Desjardins and Charlie Willams to conduct a walkthrough of the trail system planned for the Winsome Ranch Development Northwest of Meridian and Hodgen Roads. They are planning a trail along the West Kiowa Creek shown in green (6 ft) and a larger access road trail that is shown in blue (10 ft) in the map on the next page.

The trail will be open to the public for hiking, biking and horse riding with the opening hoped for by Summer 2022. The development is 800 acres total going north into the trees with 146 lots and almost 150 acres set aside as open space. Board Members hiked on the marked trails which follows the creek and it looks to be a very promising addition to Black Forest Trails.



BFTA thereafter submitted the following input, on behalf of our members, to the El Paso County Planning Board:

El Paso County Planning Board
May 2021

13

Black Forest Trails Association (BFTA) sincerely appreciates the inclusion of a trails system in the initial proposal submitted by the developers of Winsome Ranch. The integration of trails early in the design makes it easier to adjust to landowners' needs and will undoubtedly add value to the future resident's lifestyle. Outdoor living is a leading reason people cite for moving to Colorado, and Black Forest in particular.

BFTA has one suggestion that we feel will enhance the already excellent proposal. Please, consider enjoining the trails along the main Kiowa Creek drainage in a "loop" instead of dead

ending along the natural features. Studies have shown that users have greater experience and are more likely to use a loop trail versus an “out and back” trail. Our experience has also shown that trail users “vote with their feet” and will incorporate the actual roadway into their route to accomplish a loop walk. This can lead to safety issues with cars. Better to accommodate them with a prepared surface off the roadway. This could be accomplished with a single track trail within the right of way of planned roadways to connect them with one another. Specifically we suggest creating a single track trail from the currently planned Kiowa Creek Trail intersection with Twinkling Star Lane, turning left to follow the Western side of Twinkling Star Lane North to the intersection with the maintenance road that passes along the Northern and Eastern banks of Kiowa Creek to its intersection with Winsome Way. Then create another short single track trail turning left to follow the North side of Winsome Way to close the loop with the intersection of the planned Kiowa Creek Trail. This will keep users off the road surface and allow them to enjoy and safely complete their trail experience.

Again, we applaud the developer’s effort in setting aside a significant portion of the land for green space, and trail development, and will continue to provide support as the project moves through the planning and development process. We consider this their agents Joe DesJardin and Charlie Williams to be among the very best we have worked with!

Please include us on the distribution list for future updates.

Thank you!

Sincerely,

Black Forest Trails Association Board

Trails Yesterday - Trails Today - Trails Tomorrow

Connecting our Community - An Endangered Idea?

Part 2

by Judy von Ahlefeldt



Part 1 of BFTA Winter 2021 Newsletter “All Connected” reviewed the history of how the vision of a determined group of citizens, who wanted to partner with County Planning and County Parks for the future of Black Forest, formed a trails advocacy group that is now the [501(c)(3) Black Forest Trails Association over 40 years ago. (scan the QR code on the left to download the Winter 2021 newsletter).

County planning for the overall Black Forest Area was formalized in 1974 as the Black Forest Preservation Plan. It was created by citizens, developer’s and County Planners as a stakeholder-based Small Area Plan, adopted by the El Paso County Planning Commission, and which guided the County Commissioners decisions from 1974 until the updated plan 1987 Black Forest Preservation Plan (BFPP) was adopted.

In 1999 a formal Trails Addendum was added to the Preservation Plan. Both the 1987 BFPP, and the Trails Addendum were part of the County's Master Plan until this year. After a two year outsourced effort by Houseal Lavign Consultants in Chicago, IL "Your El Paso" was adopted by the El Paso County Planning Commission in May of 2021. El Paso County Commissioners have never adopted any Master Plans - they choose use them as optional guidance.

The new 2021 County Master Plan is an electronic 600 MB full color, large format double-sided

document which does not recognize the nearly half century of work that went into the Small Area Plans (like both editions of the Black Forest Preservation Plan, and plans for other areas) which enumerated the vision of citizens for their communities at a local scale in so many ways.



A family enjoys a walk on a Black Forest gravel road which connects neighborhoods accessed by BFTA trails in 2010. A cool choice!

So while the Vision for trails that "Connect Our Community" (the BFTA slogan during the 1990s and early 2000's) is functionally the same as it was 40+ years ago with local trails also connecting to area Regional Trails (the Regional Trails have really only been around for 15 years or less except in some older County Parks) is that the County context has changed.

There is now no direct or detailed support from County Planning, there are now challenges from ever-closer urban users, negative resource impacts on trails from heavy use, and County Parks ever-struggling for funding and staff has few resources to support citizen initiatives.

So - to keep Black Forest a "cool" place to be it is going to take more determination, more effort and greater participation than ever from BFTA members and BFTA leadership to continue to pursue the "Trails Yesterday - Trails Today - Trails Tomorrow - All Connected" Goal.

Black Forest and its neighboring rural residential communities are facing challenges on all fronts - housing density, aggressive Metropolitan Districts, possible annexations which seek higher densities, increasing and faster traffic (these facts merely underscore the need for non-motorized trails of all types) and gated communities which only look after themselves but do not contribute to the larger vision of a user-friendly landscape

We all need to support efforts to be sure the trails that BFTA has now by verbal permission, which cross private land can continue into the future as connectors of gravel roads which can appropriately connect the larger community as a very "cool" cooperative amenity available to those who call Black Forest home.

Spruce Mountain Trail

By Andy Meng

If you haven't yet hiked the nearby Spruce Mountain Trail, you're in for a treat. This trail, only about a 20 minute drive from the Black Forest, is a great loop trail with scenic vistas, hiking through meadows and trees alike.

Highlights

The Spruce Mountain Trail gently switchbacks up Spruce Mountain through a ponderosa pine and Douglas fir forest up to fabulous rocky overlooks and a loop around the fairly-flat, forested mountaintop. The first lookout offers breathtaking views of Greenland Open Space, surrounding buttes, Pikes Peak, the Palmer Divide, Carpenter Creek and thousands of acres of protected open space. There are plenty of opportunities to gaze off rocky lookouts, ridges and meadows from over 8 miles of trails. Bring your camera. For variety, descend on the service road, hike the loop to the west, and hike back along the Eagle Pass trail.

Trail Rating

There are 8.5 miles of trails, so extended or varied routes may be chosen. Staying low on the easy Eagle Pass Trail will take you along the edges of forests and meadows. Moderately easy hikes to the upper loop will take you on a gentle climb through shady forests to a wide and gentle trail that circles the top of the mountain. Small children have been known to hike it well, but keep an eye on them at the rocky lookouts! Ice and snow can build up on the shaded trails on the northern climb. The east end of the Service Road that Descends Spruce Mountain can be difficult, since it is steep and usually quite rutted. The western loop of the Eagle Pass Trail and the Service Road are moderately easy.

Trail Length

It is about 5.5 miles from Spruce Mountain Road parking lot, around the Upper Loop, and a roundtrip back. You can add on another couple of miles to include the meadows and beautifully forested Eagle Ridge on the west side of Eagle Pass Trail and the Service Road.



Trail Surface

Natural; some rock; gradual climb on north side with switchbacks. The upper (eastern) part of the Service Road is steep and often rutted.

Users

Hikers, horseback riders, mountain bikers, and pets on leash can use the trail.

Amenities

The parking lot accommodates cars and light trucks only. Sorry, there is no room for horse trailers here. Trailers may be parked at the large Spruce Meadows Trailhead along Noe Road to the northeast, adding a couple of miles in each direction to your ride. One port-a-potty is available. There is no water available at

this site. Water is available at stock ponds along the Spruce Meadows Trail and at the nearby Greenland Open Space Trailhead.

Location

13415 Spruce Mountain Road, Larkspur, CO

From I-25, take the Greenland Exit (167) to the west and travel $\frac{1}{4}$ mile west on Greenland Road and $\frac{1}{2}$ mile south. Bypass the Greenland Trailhead and continue right on the main gravel road (Noe Road) over two sets of railroad tracks. (If you have a horse trailer or very large vehicle, park at the Spruce meadows parking lot on your left and take the 2-mile trail to Spruce Mountain.) Cars can continue another mile west to Spruce Mountain Road. Take a left and head south for about one mile to the parking area on your right. Remember, cars and light trucks only may park here.

Or, cars can take the Larkspur Exit and travel about six miles south along Spruce Mountain Road and the entrance will be on your right.

We Encourage You To Consider Our Sponsors

SERVING BLACK FOREST AND THE
PIKES PEAK REGION FOR 20 YEARS




Cheryl Pixley
Realtor®, ABR, CRS, CDPE
495-9295
www.BlackForestHomes.com

RE/MAX
advantage




JEREMY ISAAC
BROKER/OWNER
CIRCAGROUP.COM
(719) 231-9043
9475 BRIAR VILLAGE PT. #325
COLORADO SPRINGS 80920



CIRCA
REAL ESTATE
GROUP

WE'RE PROUD TO SUPPORT
THE TRAILS OUR FAMILY LOVES
AND USES IN BLACK FOREST!



Exclusively Equine Chiropractic and Dentistry
www.horsevetdentist.com

EquineEventPhoto.com



Trail Stewardship

By Trails and Open Space Coalition



Mud, ice and wind! That is how trail users can describe current conditions on many westside, foothills and mountain trails right now. The recent snowstorm has kickstarted the annual “freeze-thaw” cycle that creates muddy trails. The best way to protect trails when they are muddy is to avoid them and stick to dry trails. While on muddy trails, it is best to walk/ride in the middle of the trail to prevent erosion. The same is true for icy conditions. Strap on those traction devices, grab some hiking poles and go gently down the middle of the trail. Your efforts will save fragile plants and wildlife habitats along trails.

Users are also seeing more wind damage and downed trees lately.

Since the major hurricane wind event that happened in mid-December, there has been 4 more high wind warning events to hit our area. Each windstorm brings down more branches and weakened trees. Be mindful of tree damage on trails, report major wind related issues to GoCOS! and pack your patience with you on your adventures, it takes a while to clean up from historical wind events.

Thanks to our friends at the Trails and Open Space Coalition for sharing this important information.

Black Forest Trails Association
P.O. Box 88041
Colorado Springs CO 80908

BFTA Membership

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. The Black Forest Trails Association is a non-profit organization under IRS Code Section 501(c)(3). Donations are fully deductible to the extent permitted by tax law.

There are 4 tiers of BFTA membership (Dues are tax deductible):

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

Membership runs from April 1 to March 31, so if you become a member or renew now, your membership will be good through March 31, 2023. We use DonorBox, which is easy and secure, to accept online payments, or you can print out an application and mail your payment via US Postal service – either option can be completed via our website at <https://www.blackforesttrails.org/membership.html>