

NEWS RELEASE



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PARTNERS ANNOUNCE OPENING OF LINCOLN-DEMOCRAT "14ER" TRAIL ACCESS IN PARK COUNTY

FAIRPLAY, Colo., May 29, 2009 – After four years of cooperative efforts, the Mosquito Range Heritage Initiative (MRHI), Colorado Mountain Club, Colorado Fourteeners Initiative, private land owners, Town of Alma and the U.S. Forest Service-South Park District announce a conditional June 1 opening of the "14er" trail from Kite Lake to Mounts Lincoln and Democrat.

Based on trail work completed to-date, private land owners have agreed to a conditional summer 2009 access to Mounts Lincoln and Democrat. Only the approved access route from the Kite Lake trailhead is open. The agreement includes continued efforts to educate hikers about potential mountain dangers and the need to respect private property.

"This is a trial opening," emphasizes Cara Doyle, MRHI Executive Director. "Continued future legal access to these two popular Park County peaks will hinge on hikers' respect for private property and willingness to stay on the designated and signed trail. If people do not stay on this designated trail, we could lose this privilege."

The lease between the Town of Alma and the private land owners can be retracted if hikers stray off the approved route or if private property is vandalized. It is important that hikers stay on the signed trail and keep away from all mining-related structures.

The process has been long and complicated to obtain safe, legal hiking access through the maze of private mining claims on these extremely popular peaks. Located in the Mosquito Range, these three peaks are "Fourteeners," mountains over 14,000 feet. Trail design, environmental assessments, and signage were completed in 2007, followed by 2008 trail construction by several of the access partnership groups. About 3,900 acres of the trail are leased from two private mining claim owners by the Town of Alma. Work will continue in 2009 to further sign and delineate the hiking route.

Although hiking routes on the slopes of Mt. Bross could be opened under the same signage and route conditions, access to the true summit may never be possible. Many of the landowners on Mt. Bross cannot be contacted or are unwilling to allow public access. All of the property owners must be in agreement, or legal public access is not possible.

Private landowners caution that with hundreds of mining claims on the mountains there is no way to know where all the tunnels and prospect holes might be. This creates dangerous conditions for hikers who stray from approved trails. Tunnels or "stopes" are so near the surface that plant roots growing on the surface can be seen on the ceiling of the passageway. The potential for a cave-in is very high.

add one—PARTNERS ANNOUNCE OPENING

Mounts Lincoln, Democrat, and Bross were closed by private land owners in 2005, citing liability concerns about potentially collapsing open mine shafts and vandalism. Colorado House Bill 1049 extended liability protections of Colorado's Recreational Use Statute to owners of private land where "attractive nuisances" such as abandoned mines exist.

There are many on-going trail projects, hiking opportunities, social events and education programs. For more information on how you can be involved go to: www.mrhi.org, www.cmc.org, www.14ers.org.

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