

NICHE NEWS

Fall 2019

The Nederland Interagency Council for Homeless Encampments (NICHE) is a collaborative organization with shared responsibilities that foster public health and safety through care for the vulnerable, stewardship of natural resources, and respect for the needs of the mountain community.

Proposed legislation would support outreach to homeless campers throughout Colorado

- ◆ The work of NICHE has been highlighted as such a success, that a bill is making its way through the Colorado State Capitol, to promote this model.
- ◆ State Senator and Majority Leader Steven Fenberg took the lead to ensure that a bill supporting "Homeless Outreach Programs to Reduce Wildfire Risk" would be drafted. With bi-partisan lead support, it has been approved by committee and will be presented formally on the first day of the Senate session.
- ◆ The current draft creates a state working group to review best practices for outreach and education toward homeless campers, particularly in wildland-urban interface areas. Furthermore, it establishes \$95,000 in annual grant funding that groups like NICHE can compete for, to work together to address the many issues that come with homeless camping.
- ◆ The bill's draft language will not be posted until January 8, but it has been discussed on KGNU, Colorado Public Radio's Colorado Matters, and in the Denver Post. If you're interested in this bill, please contact your state legislators.
- ◆ NICHE has a web presence! Check it out at www.p2phhs.org/niche



Members of the Boulder County Sheriff's Office Inmate Crew install buck and rail fencing in the West Magnolia area. Earlier this year, the Boulder Ranger District entered into a five-year agreement which will put the crew to work on National Forest lands in the Boulder area.

Putting human services within reach

2019 was our second year working with Claudia Schaufli as the Summer Homeless Advocate. With financial support from Boulder County Community Services, she was able to increase her hours this year, and sought out homeless campers from mid-April to mid-October. Between those extra hours, a higher homeless population, more familiarity with the community, and deeper trust, we were able to contact 318 campers on the spectrum of homelessness. Of those, we were able to connect 94 people to various services, including 10 to stable housing, 24 to public health (including an incident where we helped BoCo Public Health contain a hepatitis outbreak), 9 to mental health, 23 to child and family support, and 7 to disability support. We were able to connect 9 people to Boulder County Coordinated Entry, which arranged a way for us to help people pre-register over the phone.

There were considerably more folks camping in the mountains this year. More people were living in RVs, vans, and camper trailers. We saw more mental illness and more violence between campers. Accordingly we were very thankful for law enforcement collaboration. The good news, however, starts with trash not being quite the problem it has been in past years, partly because of the Forest Service's collaboration with the Boulder County Sheriff's Office Inmate Crew, partly because the County has provided us with vouchers to clean up campsites; but we also have many examples of the homeless community helping each other clean up. We also saw very little wildlife interaction, so that people and animals were safer. Folks regularly got water at the church, so we didn't hear of a single incident of illness from Giardia.

As well, we saw much less fire danger. There were many abandoned campfires, but only one escaped its fire ring in any serious capacity. (That was in a common illegal camping area, and the Nederland Fire Department caught it at ¼ acre.) Early wet weather helped a lot; preventative efforts of installing metal rings and dismantling misplaced rock rings was key; and the coordinated messaging around fire bans was fantastic. We also believe our 300+ conversations, backed up by printed information, deeply impacted community safety.

Thanks to Boulder County Community Services, we look forward to continuing our work in 2020! -Hansen Wendlandt



Successful Stewardship Days on the Boulder Ranger District - thank you to everyone who volunteered!



Before (left) and after (right) pictures of campsite and road decommissioning work completed on Peewink Mountain Road during the Peewink Stewardship Day in 2019.



The Boulder Ranger District would like to thank the 99 volunteers who supported this year's Stewardship Days and contributed a record 727 hours of service to the Roosevelt National Forest, leaving behind a cleaner, more resilient landscape for all to enjoy.

Notable restoration and stewardship projects included:

- *Peewink Stewardship Day* – area residents and recreation crews dismantled 27 rock fire rings. Heavy machinery was used to obliterate 19 campsites, place 1,217' of natural vehicle barriers, and decommission 25,461 square feet of unauthorized routes.
- *Forest Road 321 Stewardship Day* – area residents and recreation crews dismantled 6 rock fire rings. Heavy machinery was used to obliterate 3 campsites, place 450' of natural vehicle barriers, and decommission 7,311 square feet of unauthorized routes.
- *West Magnolia Stewardship Day* – assistance from the Boulder County Sheriff's Office Inmate work crew removing rock fire rings and installing 22 new metal fire rings at the designated campsites.
- *Sugarloaf Area Stewardship Day* – local residents from the Sugarloaf area, members of Off-Roaders of Colorado (OSCO) and recreation crews dismantling 27 fire rings, blocking off and slashing 27 dispersed camping sites, and installing 130 feet of buck-n-rail fencing to block off unauthorized routes.
- *Front Range Trailhead Stewardship Day* – dismantling 30 rock fire rings, decommissioning 24 campsites, and building of 180' of buck-n-rail fencing to prevent damage to natural resources from unauthorized vehicle travel.
- *Switzerland Trail Stewardship Day* - dismantling 26 rock fire rings, decommissioning 19 campsites, and building of 120' of buck-n-rail fencing to prevent damage to natural resources from unauthorized vehicle travel.
- *Rocky Point Road Stewardship Day* – area residents dismantled 12 rock fire rings, decommissioning 7 campsites, and placing approximately 50 feet of natural barriers.
- *Ruby Gulch Stewardship Day* – area residents dismantled 13 rock fire rings, decommissioning 12 campsites, and placing approximately 30 feet of natural barriers.

West Magnolia Camping Site Review published

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