



## Notes from the Board

### IPWA Members & Friends of the Indian Peaks/James Peak Wilderness Areas

Welcome to our July 2015 newsletter.

Lots of activity during June! We held a successful volunteer training day early in the month and were lucky to have great weather for the event. Our grants committee did an excellent job in reviewing applications for grants and these were finalized and awarded this past month as well. We also completed the first phase of updating our public facing web site so now members of the public can review trail conditions as reported by our volunteers. In addition, we are also monitoring the status of the proposed Eldora Ski expansion plans and discussions between the Forest Service and other interested parties.

All in all, an exciting month.

Keep it Wild!

### IPWA Web Site: Access to Trail Conditions

#### Public Access to Trail Conditions for Indian Peaks/James Peak Wilderness

Our main public facing web site now has access to summary trips reports! This means that members of the public now have access to summary level information provided by the IPWA volunteers including:

- \* Date of Hike
- \* Trailhead Start
- \* Destination
- \* Trail Condition
- \* Trail Information

This is the first phase of a pilot program to determine if providing this level of information is useful to individuals who are interested in hiking and exploring the Indian Peaks and James Peak Wilderness Areas. Our goal in providing this detail is to assist the public in understanding the conditions of trails as they explore our wonderful wilderness areas, and of course to make sure that they are prepared for the conditions that they may face on the trails (particularly with regards to wearing appropriate footwear given the muddy conditions on a number of the trails).

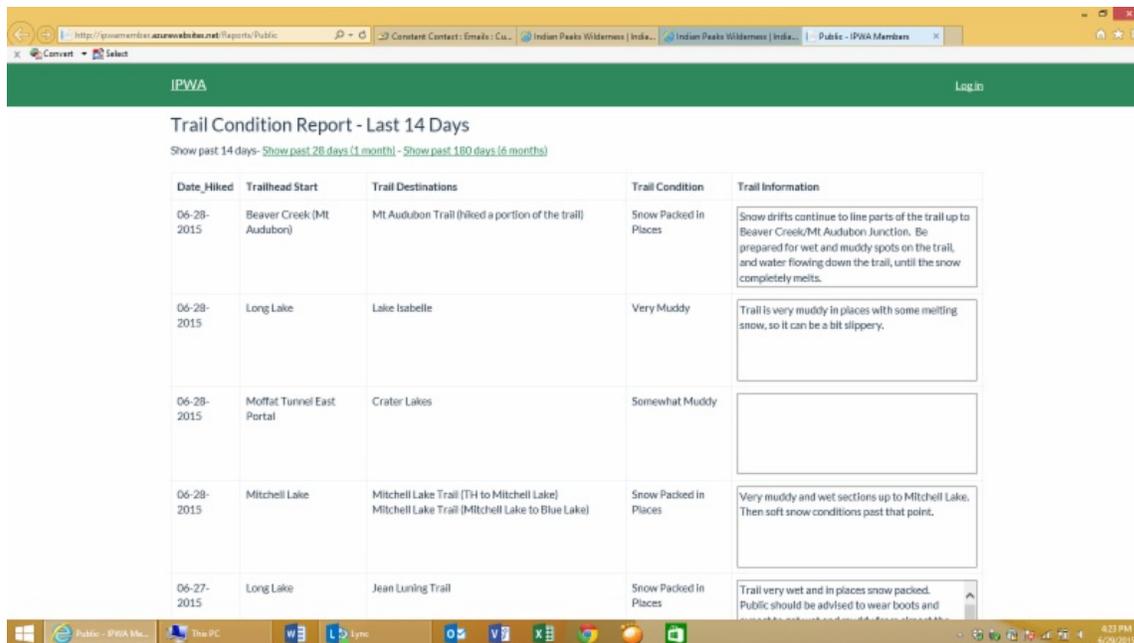
Members of the public simply can go to our (1) main web site, and (2) 'click' on the trail conditions link shown below, to get access to (3) Trail conditions summary report information.

(1) [www.indianpeakswilderness.org](http://www.indianpeakswilderness.org)

(2) Trail conditions icon



### (3) Trail conditions summary reports



Date_Hiked	Trailhead Start	Trail Destinations	Trail Condition	Trail Information
06-28-2015	Beaver Creek (Mt Audubon)	Mt Audubon Trail (hiked a portion of the trail)	Snow Packed in Places	Snow drifts continue to line parts of the trail up to Beaver Creek/Mt Audubon Junction. Be prepared for wet and muddy spots on the trail, and water flowing down the trail, until the snow completely melts.
06-28-2015	Long Lake	Lake Isabelle	Very Muddy	Trail is very muddy in places with some melting snow, so it can be a bit slippery.
06-28-2015	Moffat Tunnel East Portal	Crater Lakes	Somewhat Muddy	
06-28-2015	Mitchell Lake	Mitchell Lake Trail (TH to Mitchell Lake) Mitchell Lake Trail (Mitchell Lake to Blue Lake)	Snow Packed in Places	Very muddy and wet sections up to Mitchell Lake. Then soft snow conditions past that point.
06-27-2015	Long Lake	Jean Luning Trail	Snow Packed in Places	Trail very wet and in places snow packed. Public should be advised to wear boots and

## IPWA Training Day

### IPWA Volunteer Training : June 13

We had an absolutely fantastic day for our annual training event held on Saturday June 13. A very special 'thank you' to all the volunteers and Forest Service employees who helped plan the training, coordinate the day's events, lead training sessions, help feed everyone attending, manage our uniform distributions and last and not least ensure folks had a good time! We had more than 125 volunteers/Forest Service employees attend our training session, including 25 new members to our group. In addition, we welcomed our two new Wilderness Internship Ranger Program volunteers to our organization (funded as a result of your generous donations!). Elliot Levey and Jason Farrell are now well on their way to having a great summer experience and it was a pleasure to have them both attend our training!



(left to right: Elliott Levey (intern), Stuart Dodd (IPWA Board Chair)  
Michael Anderson, (USFS Resource Specialist), Jason Farrel (intern)

## IPWA Research Grants

### 2015 Grants Awarded

Our grants committee did an outstanding job in reviewing a number of applications for our Joyce Gellhorn and David Paddon research grants from the IPWA. As one of our three key components to aid us in achieving our mission of 'helping preserve and protect the Indian Peaks and James

*Peaks Wilderness Areas* (research and education, hiking patrols, and trail projects) it is always exciting to have such wonderful research projects to review and assist in financing. A very special thanks to all those individuals who contributed dollars specifically for these programs. We are very much aware of the importance of your contributions, and we strive to make sure we are meeting your expectations in how we fund these projects. Below are the projects which have been generously funded as a result of your contributions:

**Aidan Beers - First year PhD student under Katie Suding**

The heterogeneous terrain of the alpine area creates a complex climate system where changes are difficult to predict. In mountainous areas, temperature fluctuations at the land surface can vary greatly from those of the atmosphere, depending on the area's aspect, relief, and vegetation cover. It is critical that research address how wildlife is affected by the landscape and to develop models to predict the ways in which different aspects of the environment foster habitat for species of conservation concern. Aidan has been gathering valuable information on the winter activities of pikas and how those activities are regulated by surround geographical variability. Aidan works in the Niwot Ridge area and in the IPW. He has implanted transponders in pikas and has laid out antennae that track radio-tagged pikas' territorial travel throughout the year. Combining telemetric data with the topography of the area will allow Aidan to determine the characteristics of suitable pika habitats as well as to predict the extent of pika populations.

**Amy Churchill - 4th year PhD student under Bill Bowman.**

Amy's research focuses on the response of alpine meadow ecosystems to human-induced nitrogen deposition. She is interested in how plants and soils hold onto nitrogen in ecosystems that historically have had extremely low nitrogen levels but now receive high levels of nitrogen from the environment. Plants can control ecosystem responses through plant uptake of nitrogen, and the eventual release of nitrogen over the course of the growing season, therefore making these results valuable in predicting future conditions in the alpine. Amy is attempting to address two main questions: 1) Do different alpine meadows require different amounts of nitrogen to cause change, and 2) do plants in different alpine meadows respond the same way to increased nitrogen. She works mainly in the Fraser Experimental Forest which is surrounded on three sides by wilderness.

**Spencer Holtz - Undergraduate student under Chris Ray**

Spencer is interested in studying the effect of climate change on pika losses. He will complete his work at the Niwot Ridge pika study site. Spencer wants to identify pikas using unique genetic markers as "trackers" to determine how the pika community is repopulated. He will develop techniques that can be used to predict the ability of pikas to disperse and recolonize in the presence of increasingly variable climatic conditions. This work falls within the larger body of work predicting the effects of climate change on the persistence of climate sensitive species like the American pika.

**Melinda Markin - First year PhD student under Erin Tripp**

Melinda is interested in the effect of climate change on endemic alpine plants in Colorado, particularly in the IPW. She is studying the genetic diversity of the alpine primrose and the mountain avens. Melinda will use a new and powerful analytical tool to document the genetic (DNA) variation of 800 plant samples to identify important gene elements that are required to allow plants to adapt to impending changes in the climate.

**Margaret Mitter McCormick - First year PhD student under Erin Tripp**

Elevation is one of the major determinants of plant species' ranges in the Rocky Mountains and most plant species are fairly restricted in their elevational range. Margaret plans to investigate the adaptability of the yellow stonecrop herb that has a fairly wide elevational range in Colorado. She wants to examine the variability of certain genes that may influence the adaptability of stonecrop to environmental changes linked to different elevations. Several genes have already been identified that demonstrate variability throughout the stonecrops growing range.

**Teal Potter - PhD Candidate under Bill Bowman**

Teal is continuing her study of factors influencing the vulnerability of Rocky Mountain alpine regions to exotic plant invasion's capacity to alter nutrient cycling and out-compete native species. Exotic plant observations in the alpine are rare, but the factors that have prevented invasion have been completely defined. While higher human traffic in the alpine is considered one of the potential causes, changing environmental conditions are also considered a strong possibility. Teal will investigate whether invasive species establish better in the alpine under predicted warmer temperatures and elevated nitrogen availability. To evaluate the potential of high elevation invasion as well as test potential influences of environmental change, she will survey exotic species along roadsides and two temperature + nitrogen manipulations.

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## Eldora Ski Area Expansion Update

### IPWA Update

We've been monitoring the recent news from the Forest Service on the draft plans for expansion of the Eldora ski area. This is an issue that is important to many and as a Board we are opposed to the expansion plans as currently drafted. For those who desire more information on the project, the following link will provide information as presented by the Forest Service (which is in favor of the expansion plans):

<http://www.eldoraeis.com/>

For those who would like to receive another perspective, the following link will take you to the Middle Creek Boulder coalition (which is opposed to the expansion plans):

<http://www.middlebouldercreekcoalition.org/>

We will continue to monitor this proposal and provide updates as they are available.

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## Trail Projects

### IPWA Partnering with Wildlands Restoration Volunteers (WRV)

There are upcoming trail projects in the Brainard Lake Recreation Area and trail maintenance training opportunities in cooperation with Wildlands Restoration Volunteers (WRV). August 15 - 16 and September 26 are joint project days where IPWA will be sponsoring food. For additional information go to WLRV.org. To register as an IPWA volunteer please contact [jamie@wlr.org](mailto:jamie@wlr.org).

#### Trail projects:

- July 18 & 19, two-day trail building project with overnight option and single day option for IPWA volunteers. Brainard Mitchell Lake Trail Connector - Part 1.
- August 15 & 16, two-day trail building project with overnight option and single day option for IPWA volunteers. Brainard Mitchell Lake Trail Connector - Part 2.
- September 26, one-day trail building project. Brainard Mitchell Lake Trail Connector - Part 3.

#### Training opportunities:

- July 13, Advanced rock work training will take place in Eldorado Canyon State Park.
- July 25, Basic trail skills training, Brainard Lake Rec. Area
- August 1, Advanced trail skills training, Brainard Lake Rec. Area
- August 8 & 9, Crew leader training, Eldorado Canyon State Park. Details are TBD.

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## Volunteer's Voice

### Notes from our volunteers

This month we'll be starting a section of our newsletter with notes/comments from our volunteers. For this first month, we have some words from Delia - a brand new volunteer who was making her first patrol up in the Brainard Lake Area earlier this month. If other volunteers are interested in contributing to this section, please send your comments and/or pictures to [hikers@indianpeakswilderness.org](mailto:hikers@indianpeakswilderness.org).

*"Volunteering at Indian Peak Wilderness means a lot to me. I am proud to contribute to the preservation of our wilderness and helping people develop consciousness about its value. Walking among the pine trees, wildflowers and the rocks, I am reminded how wonderful it will be for future generations to be able to enjoy, understand and appreciate our country's treasures. I was lucky to taste the volunteer's work on my first hike/patrol with my mentor: trail work, helping people with directions and surprisingly how all eyes are on you in "the uniform." It all made sense!" (Delia, 6/30/15)*



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Indian Peaks Wilderness Alliance | [hikers@indianpeakswilderness.org](mailto:hikers@indianpeakswilderness.org) |

[www.indianpeakswilderness.org](http://www.indianpeakswilderness.org)