The Front Range Climbing Stewards

Castle Rock Overlook Project Report

(PLATT-ROGERS MEMORIAL OPEN SPACE OVERLOOK PROJECT IRFP# 2020-19)

July 3rd, 2019

Figure 1 - eroded and braided hillside of the area

-OVERVIEW-

The Boulder Climbing Community's (BCC) Front Range Climbing Stewards Program (FRCS) has completed a five and a half week project in collaboration with Boulder County Parks and Open Space (BCPOS) in the Platt-Rogers Memorial Open Space at what is collectively referred to as Castle Rock. BCPOS worked with FRCS to determine project objectives and scope to address the impacts of climbers and other recreationists on the relatively steep hillside across S. Boulder Creek from Castle Rock Proper. This hillside is used by climbers to access rock climbs on

this side of the creek as well as people interested in accessing a notable overlook vista of the Castle Rock formation. There are 31 established and documented technical rock climbs in the immediate area and a handful of popular bouldering problems that are accessed by a social trail that starts on the other side of the bridge below the Castle Rock formation. Funding for this project was provided by BCPOS, and the BCC with the support from REI, Colorado, The Colorado Mountain Club and The Access Fund.

-PROJECT SYNOPSIS-

The social trails that access this area located immediately above S. Boulder Creek are braided and heavily eroded **(figure 1)**. BCPOS and FRCS agreed upon a strategy of restoring the primary social trail in-place by hardening the surface of the trail with natural rock. Stone in the immediate area was arranged and built to accommodate the use while preventing erosion and discouraging trail braiding. Attention was paid to how precipitation and humans erode the area and the design of the structures look to offset these factors.

Due to the incline of the slope the stone in the immediate area was not enough to build sufficient structure for this purpose. Rock from a quarry approximately 200 ft to the NW was quarried into suitable size and shape (**figure 2)** and transported **(figure 3)** to the worksites on the trail.

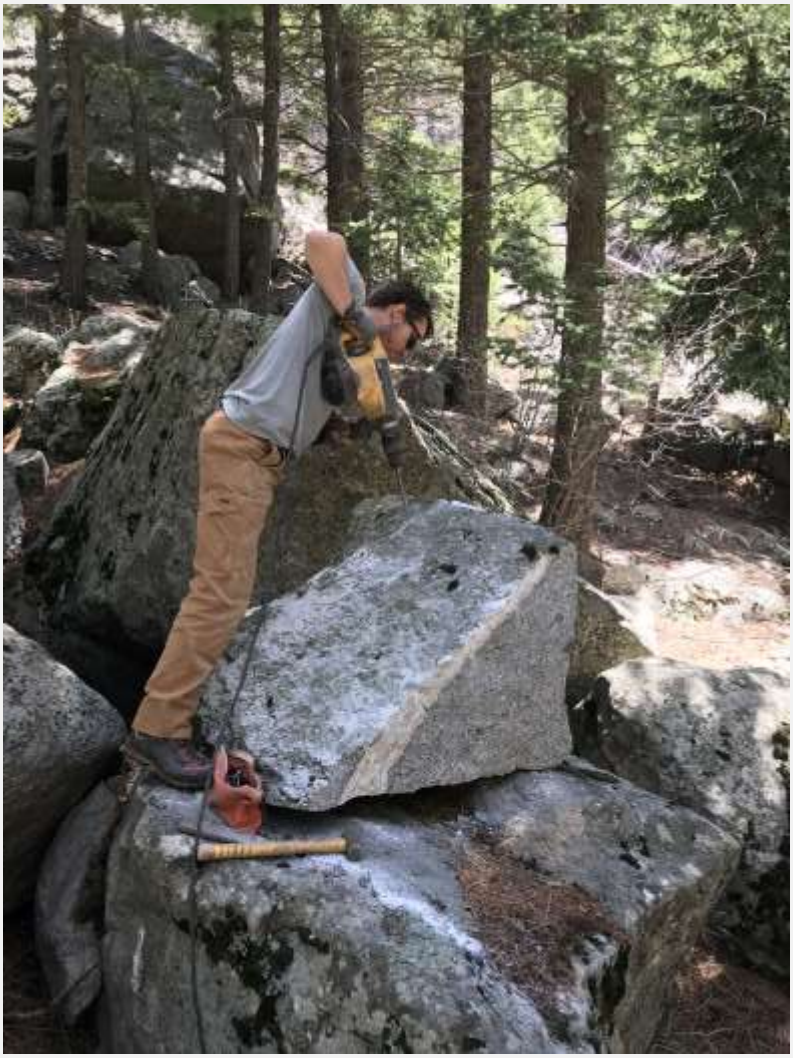

Figure 2 - FRCS crewmember quarrying nearby natural stone

The FRCS crew of 3 to 5 trained trail builders who specialize in stonework. Initiated the plan according to the above strategy and lead the work to complete the objectives. They coordinated the quarrying, transportation and construction of the stone material into one solid and sustainable path directing the foot traffic through the area. Additionally, the FRCS performed restoration of the affected hillside, closing off social trails in the area and promoting future passive restoration. The labor and planning and development hours for this project can be found in **Appendix A.**

One significant parameter attached to this project was that the initial trail section that is seen from the bridge be unobvious in nature so as to not attract more users to the area. The idea being that those who have already chosen to travel in the area will naturally find the coherent path to follow but that the existence of some classic and obvious man-made structure would instead attract more users to the area. This was accomplished throughout the entirety of the project with a building style that mimics the erratic nature of rock talus instead of the classic stonework that you may find at a trailhead or park. This approach was particularly used at the beginning of the trail where it is most visible from the road **(figure 4)**.

Along with the main access trail there also exists minor offshoots trails that climbers use when climbing the rock face where the trail passes. Part of the focus of the project was to harden separate and minimal arteries of the main

trail to ensure that this use not congest and divert the traffic on the primary trail. This can generally be understood as side access trails and staging areas much like picnic sites off of a main trail but in this steep terrain involve significant retaining structure and considerable stone steps. These structures were also built in an erratic style resembling the natural surroundings **(figure 5).**

Throughout the 19 day project volunteers from the community were utilized with the dual goals of increasing the productivity of the labor force and educating the public on the importance of stewardship of our public lands. Community volunteers were recruited by BCC and involved individuals as well as organized groups. The FRCS crew organized, trained and supervised labor to fulfil the objectives of the project safely. Each volunteer filled out and signed liability waivers from both BCPOS and the BCC. Please see the number of volunteer days and total volunteer hours in **Appendix A**. We strongly appreciate the support of the many dedicated individuals and organizations who participated in this project. Organizations like Rab Equipment, Longmont Climbing Collective, Google Inc.'s Googlersgive Program and Movement Climbing & Fitness were instrumental in bringing many volunteers to this project.

-PROJECT OUTCOMES-

BCPOS and the BCC set an expectation of a quantity of metrics constructed as part of this project. In total these expectations were: In the end, 137 linear feet of trail and 437 ft2 of retaining structure was constructed while 677 ft2 of natural area was restored as part of this project. Please see the full Work Metrics section in **Appendix B** and additional before/after photos in **Appendix C.**

This 19 day work session was able to exceed the expectations set for this season but there is still much work to be done. Approximately 500 linear feet of trail still needs to be hardened with a considerable amount of supporting structure and restoration completed. In entirety, this is a multi-year project that will depend on available funds and field time to complete. The BCC is dedicated to the completion of this project and eagerly anticipates working with BCPOS and our many community partners to do so.

Figure 3 - Volunteers from Rab transporting the stone material

Figure 4 - Eroded slope above creek bed (Before)

Figure 4 - Erratic, yet functional steps/structure at start of trail (After)

-APPENDIX A: Hours

Labor Type	Hours
Volunteer	439
FRCS paid labor	798.5
FRCS planning	36

-APPENDIX B: Complete Work Metrics

Project Outcome	amount	unit
Trail improved	137	linear ft
Rock Steps	84	#
Retaining Structure	437	sq ft
Rubble structure	73	sq ft
Staging area constructed	93	sq ft
Aggregate rock fill/Crush	212	cu ft
Rock restauration/rip rap	144	sq ft
Restauration	677	sq ft
Significant Rocks moved by hand	443	#
Significant Rocks moved by rigging	6	#
Rock quarrying	236	cu ft
Transplants planted	4	#

Figure 5 - Belay staging areas constructed at the base of climbs

-APPENDIX C: Before and After photos of the structures constructed

Eroded Trail/Streamside slope - Before

Eroded Trail/Streamside slope - After

Eroded Trail; Section A - Before

Restored Trail; Section A - After

Eroded Trail; Section B - Before

Restored Trail; Section B - After

Eroded Trail; Section C - Before

Restored Trail; Section C - After