



The Front Range Climbing Stewards Upper Dream Canyon Project Report

July 1st, 2018



-AREA OVERVIEW-

The Boulder Climbing Community (BCC) and the US Forest Service, Boulder Ranger District of the Roosevelt/Arapahoe National Forest (USFS) have partnered to develop a stewardship project at Upper Dream Canyon, 10 miles outside of Boulder, CO. This area is particularly noteworthy because the parking area for accessing the canyon is also one of very few dispersed camping opportunities within minutes' drive to the City of Boulder. Because of this and the opportunities for recreation this area sees an incredible amount of visitation.

The parking area and the trailhead are often crowded in summer months with day and multi-day users and the reasons for visitation are diverse. Climbing, hiking, sunbathing are common day use activities in the canyon with limited social trails on this steep terrain. The dispersed camping at the trailhead provides for a unique opportunity close to the Front Range urban populous where visitors can camp for 14 days under a perpetual fire ban. The aforementioned user groups are joined here by people enjoying the opportunity to camp for free relatively close to the city. Additionally, there are many parcels of private land holdings throughout the area and the USFS trailhead is nestled between two tracts of private land and many homes are close by. This all produces a unique dynamic at the trailhead/campground where parking, trash, human waste, fire hazards and private land all compound the issue of poorly designed social trails in steep terrain.

BCC has partnered with the Boulder Ranger District, *Peak to Peak Forrest Watch*, various neighborhood groups and local/national businesses to steward the area in hopes of resolving some persistent issues in this beautiful area. A campground clean-up was hosted to restore strategic campsites near the trailhead and dissuade campfires. A seasonal latrine was installed to mitigate the amount of human waste near the campground/climbing areas. An informational Kiosk was installed to orient users to sustainable practices. And a plan was designed to address the impacts of users traveling down the main trail to the bottom of the canyon (to Dream Dome/Oceanic Wall).

The rock climbing at Upper Dream Canyon consists of 183 routes on 16 rock walls located in the upper reaches of the canyon. The climbing in the canyon has been established since the 1970's with a majority of the development taking place in the 80's and 90's and includes both "traditional" and "sport" styles of climbs. Two of the most climbed walls are Oceanic Wall and Dream Dome. Both are accessed via the most casual path heading down into the canyon. These walls are home to some of the most popular routes in the canyon and have been highlighted in local and national media.

There are a handful of access trails to the climbing in the canyon. The trail to Oceanic Wall is also the preferred trail for users other than climbers who look to visit the canyon bottom because it's moderate steepness and exposure. This well-developed and published social trail (undesigned by USFS) starts approximately 50 ft down the road from the parking area and follows alongside a private property boundary for the majority of its length. The trail passes within 90 ft of a private residence in direct sight of the house. Afterwards the trail drops down into a riparian zone with a permanent spring and approximates the private land closely before returning into USFS land near the canyon bottom.

-2018 PROJECT SYNOPSIS-

The BCC and USFS have collaborated to address the issues presented by recreational users of this area. This is a multi-year collaboration that involves cleaning up the campsites near the trailhead, building an informational kiosk at the trailhead, providing a seasonal portable latrine at the parking area and performing extensive trailwork and restoration throughout the area. The strategy is that yearly stewardship events will be hosted to maintain the campground/kiosk, BCC will manage and fund the seasonal latrine and BCC's Front Range Climbing Steward (FRCS) Program will perform the trail restoration.

-2018 PROJECT OUTCOMES (BY OBJECTIVE)-

2018 Campsite restoration & Informational kiosk objectives:

Project partners held a stewardship event on Saturday June 2nd (**fig 1**).

The event took place early in the season in order to clean up the camping area and install the informational kiosk before summer season began. This event was well attended with 21 volunteers providing over 105 hours of labor. 4 staff from BCC and 3 from USFS participated for 44 hours, of professional labor. Volunteers included individuals from the climbing community, industry partners as well as neighbors from the area.



Figure 1 - Participants in the 2018 stewardship event

Objectives of this event were to clean up trash from past campers, restore persistent tent sites USFS has deemed undesirable, eliminate and restore all fire rings in the area and install the informational kiosk (fig 2). Three large bags of trash were removed as well as an abandoned kitchen table and cooler. Tent sites were restored by de-compacting the soils, seeding and bringing in and burying large obstacle rocks to make the pads less desirable for setting up a camp (fig 3). 17 Fire rings were dismantled and the areas restored by removing the ash/coins, de-compacting the soils and transplanting native plants from the area. A 4'x7' kiosk was installed with LNT information, camping regulations and pertinent site information (fig 4). A portion of a conservation grant from the Access Fund funded the kiosk.



Figure 2 – restoration of campsite and fire ring



Figure 3 - restoring undesired campsites/tent areas



Figure 4 - Installing informational kiosk

2018 Seasonal Latrine objective:

A portable latrine was organized, located and maintained at the trailhead by the BCC from May 15th to October 15th (fig 5). A portion of a conservation grant from the Access Fund funded the cost of the latrine. The latrine was pumped weekly as well as maintained throughout the season by volunteers who checked on it weekly. An estimate of 1,500 gallons of human waste were kept out of the watershed as part of this project.

2018 Oceanic Wall access trail improvements objective:

The BCC's professional trail work program, FRCS, performed 20 days of trail work and restoration in May and June of 2018 by a crew of four full time trail builders and 44 different volunteers. See appendix A for total hours of labor. The un-designated trail was rerouted away from the riparian zone and the tread was hardened with stone steps and platforms (fig 6). Large stone structures were constructed to support the tread and eliminate erosion in the steep terrain (fig 7). The



Figure 5 - Seasonal Latrine

riparian area where the trail was removed were restored to their original character and significant obstacles were put in place to discourage traffic through the area. **Appendix B** highlights the technical project metrics of this phase of the project. **Appendix C** includes more before/after photos of the technical stone work completed during this phase.



Figure 6 - New tread alignment (before)



Figure 6 - New tread alignment (after)



Figure 7 - Retaining structure near S Boulder Creek

-APPENDIX A-

Oceanic Wall Access Trail Project Work Totals	
Project days:	20
Total Project paid labor hours:	713
Total Project Admin hours:	43.5
Total Volunteer labor hours:	336
Total Hours:	1092.5

-APPENDIX B-

outcome	amount	unit
Trail Improved	176	L FT
Rock Step Constructed	69	#
Retaining Wall/Structure Constructed	394	SQ FT
Rubble Wall/Structure Constructed	155	SQ FT
Staging areas constructed	101	SQ FT
Aggregate Backfill	241	CU FT
Restoration Completed	104	SQ FT
Move Rock by Hand	325	#
Rock Quarrying Performed	263	CU FT

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







