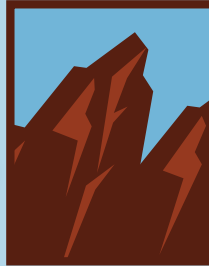


the **RED ROCK RAG**



FRIENDS OF
RED ROCK CANYON

President's Report

Volume 28
Issue #1

 <https://www.facebook.com/friendsofredrockcanyon>

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We are all very lucky to have Red Rock Canyon in our back yard. It is one of the best examples of the wildland-urban interface. Around our planet, the human population is growing and taking more of the natural land and habitat from animals and plants. Around the world, cities are researching how to protect their habitat and natural environment. Creating a safe and sustainable boundary between people and flora & fauna is one of the struggles of modern civilization. Our Red Rock Canyon Open Space is one of the best examples of a city and its population working to create an interface that supports the habitats of wild animals and the needs of people to recreate and enjoy nature.

The Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department of Colorado Springs has done a good job over the last decade to improve and harden the infrastructure of parks and trails for the increasing heavy use of mountain bikes, electric bikes, hikers, runners, dog walkers and nature-lovers.

City government struggles with tax funding of park/trail maintenance. On a very limited basis, the city allows volunteers to help, but it is not enough. We can see the problems of trash, overcrowding, risky behavior on trails, dog poop and lack of trail maintenance.



Going forward, how can we as citizens help? Where can we be most effective in preserving a sustainable wildland-urban interface in Red Rock Canyon and the forests, meadows and natural land around us?

Here are some ideas:

- Get outside and enjoy the natural beauty around us. Be sensitive to the needs of the plants and animals. Stay on trails and do not walk in

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www.redrockcanyonopenspace.org

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protected natural environments.

- Do your part in picking up trash left behind by others. Be generous with your time, energy and humbleness to help nature's creatures and other people who want to enjoy beauty.
- Educate people who are not protecting our public land and diminishing the enjoyment of your time in nature.
- Communicate with the people in power, sharing both support for their commitment to protect our parks but also expressing your

concerns when you see things that are not right. The Parks Department staff need your help monitoring our parks and need your ideas for how to make things better.

If you can make time in your life, volunteering is also a good thing to do. Sometimes it's working for the city, sometimes it's helping the Friends groups. It feels good to give back AND you meet great people.

Scenic Colorado Cleans Highway 24 by Red Rock Canyon Open Space

Trash pickup along US 24 is a regular service of Scenic Colorado. Scenic Colorado has been doing this for over 20 years, all volunteers. The mission of Scenic Colorado is to preserve and enhance the visual environment and aesthetic character of the communities and countrysides of Colorado.

One of the projects is to perform trash pickup along a mile of US 24 stretching from marker 299 where US 24 crosses Manitou Avenue to marker 300 by Red Rock Canyon Open Space and beyond a few hundred yards. It is part of the Adopt a Highway program of the Colorado Department of Transportation.

The amount of trash can fill several bags every few months. The variety of trash reflects the

disregard of too many careless drivers ignoring the visual environment and extending their consuming culture. It is too common to pick up fast food cans, bottles, and papers as well as beer cartons, shirts, shoes, blankets and hats. The range of trash extends to car parts, golf balls, cell phones, medical masks and gloves, pill containers, and construction materials and equipment.

Once the trash is collected, CDOT is notified to pick up the orange bags. CDOT will also pick up larger items left along the roadside. Friends of Red Rock Canyon Open Space have been a big help in reducing the litter.

If you would like to help please let Larry Barrett know at Scenic Colorado at 719-964-0825 or barrettlarry@comcast.net



Talk and Walk

A topical visit then a stroll in Red Rock Canyon OS. The Friends are hoping to restart Talk and Walk events. These are likely to start around 5:30 pm on a weeknight at the pavilion and last 1 1/2 hours.

The theme will relate to a specific aspect of the Open Space. Geology, history, birds and nature are potential topics.

We will send out an email advertising these walks, especially to members.

RSVP will be required to keep attendance under about 20.

What's Happening with E-bikes in RRC

In February 2025 the City passed a new ordinance defining Class I E-bikes as non-motorized vehicles to avoid the prohibitions against motorized vehicles in the TOPS ordinance and authorize the use of Class I E-bikes on City park properties and trails. However, several City properties, including Red Rock Canyon Open Space, have conservation easements held by Palmer Land Conservancy that restrict motorized uses and exclude E-bikes.

To allow E-bikes on the conservation easement properties, the City must make a formal request to Palmer Land Conservancy to amend the conservation easements. Palmer will then undertake a formal evaluation process to ensure the most positive outcome for each individual conservation easement property. As of March 2026, the City has not made a formal request to Palmer and therefore use of E-bikes in Red Rock Canyon Open Space is still prohibited.



In approximately April 2025, our Board of Directors sent out a survey to our members and supporters to gauge your opinions on E-bikes in Red Rock Canyon Open Space. We received over 40 detailed and thoughtful responses. After removing members' identifying information, we forwarded the survey responses to Palmer to use in their formal evaluation process.

We do not know when the City will make a formal request to allow E-bikes in Red Rock Canyon. We will continue to monitor the situation. In the meanwhile, **there are signs at every trailhead prohibiting E-bikes.**

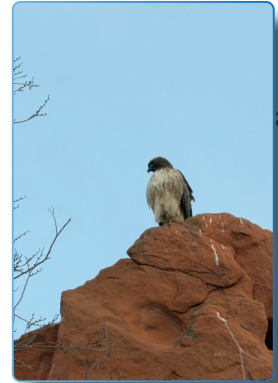
The Ponds of Red Rock Canyon Open Space

The condition of the two ponds in Red Rock Canyon Open Space continues to be a focus of the Friend's board and its Pond Subcommittee. Persistent drought has resulted in a progressive decrease in water levels in the ponds as they are dependent on surface water alone for filling. As the water levels in the two ponds have dropped, particularly in the Pavilion Pond, ugly, muddy pond bottom has been exposed and the beautiful westward view across the pond to Pikes Peak has lost its magic. FoRRC has started working with the park ranger on ideas for Pavilion Pond rehabilitation and beautification. We are exploring possibilities for preserving and enhancing water availability during these times of drought.

On a recent visit to the ponds, a fellow Friends of Red Rock Canyon board member had these observations:

On a spring-like day at the end of February, Pavilion Pond (the upper pond next to the pavilion) held clear, ice-free water. This was a seemingly miraculous change from last fall when the pond appeared to be a toxic, black soup. A group of preschoolers patrolled the area periodically crouching to, as their teacher explained, "collect data."

The ever-present pigeons were cooing in the rocks above, a couple of Canada Geese passed by and Belted Kingfisher made a brief visit.



Because of recent dry years and a lack of a dependable water source, the pond is reduced to a fraction of its original size and surrounded by an uninviting shoreline. Yet, the pond survives. On closer inspection, in the northwest corner near the dam were at least two hundred, bright orange fish swimming just below the surface. Koi, domesticated carp, are considered by some to symbolize perseverance and good fortune.

Healthy and attractive ponds are important to Red Rock Canyon Open Space for beauty and ambience as well as providing support for wildlife and contributing to regional water management. We plan to continue our efforts to restore these valuable but degraded assets.



The pond from years ago vs. the pond of today

Confessions of a Poop Bag Packer

I used to be like you. Hiking along a favorite trail I inevitably come upon a blue, green, black plastic bag, knotted at the top and placed next to the treadway—approximately yesterday. And I'd wonder, "why go to the trouble of grabbing that aromatic, mushy heap with only a thin plastic bag between it and your bare hand and then, after the worst is done, just leave it there?" And then, I'd just leave it there.

However, one fine, summer morning hiking back along the south shore trail of Twin Lakes I came upon one of those items about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from the trailhead—and passed it by. A bit later a dogless trail runner passed me, carrying that very bag. I thanked him and he said, "it was there yesterday so I figured I needed to bring it out." This changed my life.

I came to accept that it's beyond our understanding why these bags are left along the trail. It just happens. My wife once broke into tears when we found 2 bags on a trail on top of Independence Pass. What we do know is that these items are meant to be brought to the nearest disposal bin. Like running a mile, the effort

is painful but the final feeling of accomplishment is transcendent!

Often these opportunities are present in close proximity to the trailhead—start there. Soon, you'll be looking to extend your range. And finally, quantity counts! This shouldn't be competitive, but so far, I'm at four at one time and over two miles distance. Six bags, more miles, I think it's doable! Pro tip: bring along a bread bag in case you need to double up.

Sure, anyone can pick up an energy bar wrapper, water bottle or paper cup. But, it's level up being the first grab on a poop bag! The look on your companions' faces—priceless! Call me a dreamer but this just might be the first sport that qualifies for both the Summer and Winter Olympics.



Summer Volunteer Work Projects in RRC

The city has proposed new policies and training procedures for people leading volunteers in parks and open spaces. A city ranger must be present if work is to be done on trails. Cleaning of parking lots, corridor clearing and weed management can only be done by special trained certified crew leaders. Some Friends and bike groups are objecting to portions of the proposed new policies.

Emma, our park ranger, has not had time to arrange projects with the few newly qualified volunteer leaders. So, as of right now, no volunteer work projects are planned for Red Rock Canyon this summer. We will send out an email when we know more information.

Application to Rename The White Acres Trail to Honor Don Ellis has been Submitted to the Parks Department

Frequent readers of the Red Rock Rag will recall numerous articles about our efforts over the last 4 years to rename the White Acres Trail to honor Don Ellis. Don was one of the early pioneers who had the vision that Red Rock Canyon could be a jewel in Colorado Springs park system. Without Don's efforts there might not have been a Red Rock Canyon for the public to enjoy. Don died on November 9, 2018 of a fast-moving cancer.

Despite early assurances from Parks Department staff that the trail could be renamed, bureaucratic red tape slowed down the process. Eventually we were told that the City needed a formal policy and procedure, which then took another two years to draft and pass. There is now a new policy

effective 12/15/2025:

AMENITIES AND TRAILS NAMING REQUEST
POLICY:ADM-18

This policy provides guidance for requests from the public to name park amenities and trails within parks or open spaces belonging to the Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department. The policy sets out guiding principles to follow when reviewing a naming request and the procedures that an applicant must follow. The Board of Directors of Red Rock Canyon submitted their application around the end of January 2026 and now we are waiting, again, for the Parks Department to approve our application. Hopefully, the wait is almost over.

FoRRC Website

The Friends of Red Rock Canyon (FORCC) website (<https://redrockcanyonopenspace.org/>) is our primary method of providing information to our members and to the public. The site averages around 3000 visits a month by people from all over the world. It was created in 2013 through open source software and has not been modified since then. Although still in use today, the site is a dinosaur in terms of internet and website technology. It is difficult to maintain and manage by people not versed in computer coding and other website intricacies, such as your Board of Directors (BOD).

We are considering modernizing/ improving our website. This may be an expensive and time-consuming process

and your BOD takes the use of FORRC funds very seriously. The website does not sell anything or produce any income other than the occasional donation, but in the final analysis we decided the effort is worth it because of the high exposure our website receives and the information it provides. FORCC is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation and always appreciates donations which helps pay for expenses, such as the new website. We look forward to serving you in the future with the best interests of Red Rock Canyon always in the forefront of our mission.

If you have website design skills and are interested in volunteering for this project, please let us know.



Benches along the Contemplative Trail in Red Rock Canyon

When Red Rock Canyon Open Space became public, more than 20 years ago, trails like the Contemplative Trail were built for access next to the red rock fins. A series of benches were contributed to the Open Space from the “Garden of the Goddesses”, a group formed to support the Open Space. Besides having the benches built and installed, they contributed to the Friends of Red Rock Canyon- a fund to continue maintenance on the log benches.

The Friends continued to maintain the benches by periodically lightly sanding, adding layers of polyurethane, waterproofing the wood and working on the concrete foundations. Over 20 years later we now are involved in replacing some of the benches which show signs of rot and are not able to support those using the bench.

Working with the City of Colorado Springs, a few years ago the City instructed us that we, The Friends of Red Rock Canyon, would be the organization responsible for keeping up the benches in Red Rock Canyon. Last summer we replaced our first bench, the Overlook bench off the Contemplative Trail.



Volunteers removed the old bench which was severely deteriorated and replaced the bench with a new bench made by Colorado Springs Sawmill at Penrose, also known as Colorado Rock-n-Logs, Inc, run by Mitchell Dillman. Besides being a well made bench, Colorado Rock-n-Logs gave a discounted price, like a donation, to the Friends of Red Rock Canyon. (Thank you!).

We, the Friends of Red Rock Canyon, continue to maintain the older benches. We have identified that the next bench to replace will be the one off the top of the Contemplative Trails, on the Sand Canyon Trail. Work will be done this year to remove and install a new bench at this spot.

Our work on benches supports a safe place to sit and enjoy and take a break from a hike. We do not choose to erase graffiti, but do lightly sand the benches before applying the outdoor wood treatments. Though we do not endorse anyone writing on the benches, our attitude is to maintain a safe sitting spot. And of course, we are happy the graffiti is only appearing on the benches, not the rocks or trees which make Red Rock Canyon a great place to enjoy our western nature.

Billboard Across Highway 24 entrance to Red Rock Canyon, Will become an Electronic Message Display Billboard

Last fall, the Friends of Red Rock Canyon Board of Directors learned of a proposal before El Paso County Commissioners to allow the existing Billboard on the westbound lanes of Highway 24 to become Electronic. We were against this proposal for many reasons, including it not fitting into the recreational experiences Red Rock Canyon offers for people. We wrote a letter to the County Commissioners opposing the Electronic Billboard. We also sent an email letter to our members and supporters with a link for public comment.

Both letters gave details opposing the proposed Electronic Billboard for the following reasons:

- The Electronic Billboard across from the entrance, will be seen by people coming to Red Rock Canyon, using Red Rock Canyon for outdoor activities, and leaving Red Rock Canyon. The lighted, flashy billboard will be noticed. Electronic Display Billboards are designed to be noticed for advertisements.
- The property is unincorporated land completely surrounded by the cities of Colorado Springs and Manitou Springs. Both cities do NOT allow Electronic Billboards. The Electronic Billboard will not be in harmony with the character of the neighboring cities, showing no respect for the signage rules of these adjoining communities.
- When Red Rock Canyon was purchased by the City for Open Space, at least 2 existing billboard leases by the entrance to Red Rock Canyon were purchased by the City. After the existing leases for advertisements expired, the City took the billboards down.
- An Electronic Billboard distracts attention of drivers and could cause vehicle-vehicle and animal-vehicle collisions, and is a safety hazard.



Many deer, racoon, bear, mountain lion, fox and more cross Highway 24 to get water from Fountain Creek.

- The Red Rock Canyon entrance marks an important transition from urban areas to wild and natural areas. Electronic Billboards are designed to be noticed and do not fit into a wild and natural area.

Over 50 Public Comments, in opposition, were submitted before the September 2025 meeting. Several people showed up at the meeting urging the El Paso County Commissioners to reject this proposal for an Electronic Billboard. Lamar Advertising (Billboards) spoke of their support for the Electronic Billboard and their support of Red Rock Canyon, stating the new Electronic Billboard would not be flashy or a distraction. The billboard would not change over rapidly, and it would only show several different billboard displays in about a minute. No moving videos. No flashy lights. They explained that this would allow them to have just one billboard instead of six different billboards.

The County Commissioners voted to allow it.

We can only hope the new Electronic Billboard will not be a distraction.

Membership Form for Friends of Red Rock Canyon

Name: _____ Home Phone: _____

Address: _____ Work Phone: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Email Address: _____

Newsletter Delivery Preference: Via email (full-color, recommended) Via postal mail

Yes, I want to join Friends of Red Rock Canyon for the coming year

Individual/Family membership (\$15) Organization / Business membership (\$30)

I would like to help even more with a contribution of \$ _____.

I would like to be involved in volunteer efforts Please describe your interest:

Please mail this membership for
with your check to:

Friends of Red Rock Canyon

PO Box 6754

Colorado Springs, CO 80904-6754

Illegal Camps in Open Space

As the weather improves we have noticed an increased presence of illegal camps in the open space. As a reminder, there is no camping allowed in any City of Colorado Springs parks. Given the fire danger that often accompanies such camps, we encourage our park visitors to report any camps to the City.

The best method to ensure reports are routed to the right parties is to use the **GoCOS!** phone app at <https://coloradosprings.gov/DownloadGoCOS>



You can either create an account to track the status of your reports, or report anonymously. After you have the app downloaded, you click the blue “Start Request” button. Next, you need to choose a topic for your report, and you want to select “Illegal Homeless Camps” (you can scroll down for it or just use the search box to find it). Then proceed by pressing the “Make Request” button, and optionally upload a photo of the camp. Lastly, use the embedded map to pinpoint the location of the camp (this is very important to ensure a proper response). That’s it!

The Red Rock Rag

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**MEMBERSHIP
RENEWAL DATE**

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Vice President: Joel Newmiller
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Treasurer: David Valier
Webmaster: Dan Downs



Glenn Pressman
Charlie Paterson
Mike Crissey
Jenny Montague

Friends of Red Rock Canyon Annual Meeting

It's time to get involved

Our long time board of directors has been a special group of committed people. If you have been a user of Red Rock Canyon, you have seen many of the improvements the City and FoRRC board have accomplished in the last few years. But there is more to do.

Our board needs new people to begin to replace board members wanting to retire after years of work. It requires about 3-4 hours a month with an

occasional workday in the park.

If you like this newsletter and the community role that FoRRC has played over the years and you want it to continue, please consider being on the FoRRC board. [call Shanti for more information and an interview. (719)321-5354]

FoRRC Annual Meeting

Tuesday, JUNE 9, 2026

6:00 PM Tuesday at the Manitou Arts Center 515 Manitou Avenue



friends@RedRockCanyonOpenSpace.org



www.RedRockCanyonOpenSpace.org



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