



SPANISH PEAKS WILDERNESS AREA

The Spanish Peaks Wilderness Area (SPWA) is a federally designated wilderness, consisting of 19,226 acres and 33 miles of trails, managed by the U.S. Forest Service/San Carlos Ranger District (USFS/SCRD) through its field office in La Veta. The secluded trails provide access to the West Peak at 13,623 feet and the East Peak at 12,708 feet. This pristine environment attracts locals and visitors looking for an experience in nature far from crowds.

WILDERNESS STEWARDSHIP

In 2018, the USFS/SCRD and La Veta Trails (LVT) formed the Spanish Peaks Wilderness Stewards (SPWS), a cadre of trained volunteers dedicated to the restoration and maintenance of Wilderness trails to protect the character and health of the SPWA. Our shared purpose has supported trail accessibility, community engagement, and growth of Wilderness stewardship capacity in the region.

SPWS crews perform three types of maintenance:

“Logging out” involves cutting trees that have fallen across the trail due to winter and wind events. The blowdown forces users to hike off the designated trail, which causes the erosion of adjacent soil and sensitive plants. Regular maintenance protects the wilderness character. The primary tools are crosscut and hand saws.

“Brushing” involves the removal of overhanging branches and saplings within the 8 x 10-foot trail corridor that impede trail users. The tools include loppers, pruners, and hand saws.

Annual maintenance involves SPWS addressing any new issues that may have emerged over the winter. The purpose is to keep trails clear.

SPWS MILESTONES

2018 – The SPWS was formed, and crews deployed to perform annual maintenance of the West Peak

Trail (2.5 miles) and Vista Trail (.5 miles), the most frequently used Wilderness trails. USFS/SCRD staff trained SPWS and supervised the work.

2019 – SPWS performed brushing and logging out of the Apishapa Trail (3.5 miles) under the supervision of the USFS/SCRD staff.

2020 – The USFS/SCRD certified four SPWS in crosscut saw operations based on First Aid/CPR training, a crosscut saw course, and a field evaluation.

2020 – LVT formed a partnership with the National Smokejumper Alliance to address the backlog of maintenance issues on the Wahatoya Trail (12-miles). Alan Wonders, a retired smokejumper and member of the NSA’s volunteer Wilderness trail crew, spent six nights on the trail scoping out the work, preparing a logistical plan, and clearing 187 trees by himself. Alan’s work paved the way for a larger crew to complete the maintenance in 2021.

2020 – USFS/SCRD staff trained an LVT Field Coordinator to use a data collection program on the condition of trails for LVT to develop more accurate maintenance plans. LVT purchased an Ipad Pro with a generous donation from the San Isabel Electric Association.

2021 – A crew of retired smokejumpers, including Alan, spent three nights on the Wahatoya Trail and removed the 23 trees too large for Alan to remove in 2020, plus 178 of new blowdown.

2021 – SPWS certified sawyers cleared 233 trees on two miles of the Schafer Trail (3.5 miles).



For more information about then SPWS, contact:

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