

Building a Sustainable Future for Colorado's Beloved Fourteeners

FIND YOUR FOURTEENER CAMPAIGN

A Sustainable Path Forward

With 54 peaks in Colorado above 14,000 feet, 48 of which span across six of the state's National Forests, the opportunities to feel like you're touching the sky are almost endless.

Generations ago, adventurous men and women risked life and limb for the right to stand on the highest peaks in the Rocky Mountains. Those lucky explorers were fortunate to experience the unique and special landscapes above treeline, the high elevation lakes, the rugged yet delicate alpine vegetation, and the highly adapted wildlife that are able to thrive in these rocky mountain conditions.

While times (and gear) have changed over the years, the desire to conquer and experience Colorado's iconic peaks hasn't.

Acknowledging the Rogue Paths

In those early days when people first began climbing these sky-scraping peaks, Colorado had about half a million residents. Now, half that many people hike to the summit of the state's Fourteeners every year. Thanks to railroad and vehicle access on Pikes Peak, nearly a million more people reach the summit of this most popular of Colorado's Fourteeners each year.

And, as the number of visitors to Fourteeners continues to climb, the impacts to trails and fragile high-alpine ecosystems have outpaced the Forest Service and existing partners' abilities to maintain the access needed for sustainable use.

Hikers will often take short-cuts on the way to peak summits, which over time leads to networks of user-created social trails.

These 'rogue' trails are not properly designed and impact the alpine plant communities, denude landscapes, create significant gullies and erosion, and ultimately disrupt watershed and ecosystem function.

Emily Olsen • eolsen@nationalforests.org | nationalforests.org/fourteener

Treasured Landscapes, Unforgettable Experiences   



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Restoring a *Treasured Landscape*

The NFF's Find Your Fourteener campaign aims to increase the pace and scale of trail improvements and ecosystem restoration on Colorado's Fourteeners through:

- developing new partnerships and funding,
- building local capacity, and
- increasing the pace and scale of on-the-ground trail improvement projects.

Improving trails on Colorado's Fourteeners is not a new idea; groups including the Colorado Fourteeners Initiative (CFI), the Rocky Mountain Field Institute, Colorado-based youth corps, and many other conservation and volunteer organizations have been involved with these trails for decades.

In 2015, CFI released a "Colorado Fourteeners Report Card" that rated Fourteener trail and ecosystem conditions, determining that more than \$24 million in baseline investments are needed to create sustainable routes to the summits of all of Colorado's Fourteeners.

Using the Report Card as a basis, these groups are now coming together, along with the NFF, to more strategically address the needs of Fourteeners state-wide and to build collaborative approaches to tackle individual peak needs.

Traversing a Sustainable Path Forward

As the desire to summit Fourteeners across Colorado increases, so does the need to work together to restore and protect these special places.

The NFF's Find Your Fourteener campaign is a long-term, collaborative effort to ensure that these iconic peaks remain healthy, accessible and inviting for decades to come.

