



Forest floor restoration working, closures lifted in Cameron Peak & East Troublesome burn scars

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LARIMER COUNTY, Colo. -- In Colorado's high country, there's an ongoing effort to restore the forest floor.

"Doing the important work that we need to do to get these trails back open to the public," said Matt Cowan, wilderness and trails manager in the Canyon Lakes ranger district.

Aerial mulch drops are happening in several areas devastated by last year's wildfires.

The mulch is a post-fire, large scale treatment that helps to reseed the forest and reduce erosion and debris flows to protect life, property and water quality.

"We've had our source water intake on the Poudre River turned off for about 40 days this summer period because the water quality was too poor to treat," said Sean Chambers, water and sewer director for the City of Greeley. "You just get a lot of rapid runoff and you get debris and tremendous sediment and ash. Across northern Colorado, more than one million people are impacted by the East Troublesome fire burn area."

In the Cameron Peak burn scar, in addition to the water shed, volunteers are working to restore a series of trails damaged by the fire.

"There's still hazardous trees that are around," Cowan said. "There's high risks of rockslides and falls as well as those flash flood events that we can get. One of the biggest things that we worry about with folks that are out here, are those flash flood events that are going to continue to occur, especially in those areas with high to moderate burn severity. It's a really good idea to watch the weather. Try to stay out of the high country before those afternoon monsoonal rains come in."

As forest visitors make plans to visit areas near active or past fire burned areas, they should expect to find a changed landscape, with the potential for site specific closures, as well as potential hazards. While hazards have been reduced, threats from flash floods, debris flows, and hazard trees still exist.

Visitors should be aware of conditions and restrictions in place throughout the forests and grassland, as well as acknowledging personal responsibility that comes with using national forest system lands.

In 2020, 400,000 acres of critical watershed was impacted by wildfires between the Cameron Peak and the East Troublesome fires alone.

Aerial mulching is expensive, reserved only for areas of high severity burn that are most receptive to the positive impacts mulch can have in rebuilding soils.

Source: <https://www.thedenverchannel.com/news/local-news/forest-floor-restoration-working-closures-lifted-in-cameron-peak-east-troublesome-burn-scars>