

“First Day” CPW Hike Event The Old Midland RR Grade Area V1.1

Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area

Date: Wednesday, 1 January 2025

Meeting Location/Start Time: Midland Railroad Grade parking area 1.3 miles north of the Collegiate Peaks Overlook/Picnic Area east of Johnson Village **at 9:30 AM. See the detailed directions below.**

Event Fee: There is no fee for the event.

Destination: Loop hike in the area of the **Old Midland Railroad Grade** and Forest Service Road #376A, to the north and east of the parking area or, with heavier snow conditions, the railroad grade east of the parking area and connecting trails.

Distance: Approximately 4 miles maximum depending on the snow conditions

Elevation Gain: Approximately 600 feet maximum depending on the route

Approximate Time: Approximately 4 hours including breaks and lunch

Highlights: Beautiful mountain and rugged shallow canyon scenery with sweeping views of the Upper Arkansas Valley and the snow-capped Sawatch Mountains as well as the North Fourmile area.

Maps: USGS Buena Vista 7.5 Minute Quad, Trails Illustrated #129 (Buena Vista), Midland Bike Trail Flier

Event Description: A short fun day hike will be conducted in the scenic northern Fourmile Recreation Area in the area of the Old Midland Railroad Grade. The loop will be designed so that hiking will be done on the existing roads, trails, and major washes in the area – **little** cross-country foot travel will be done in deep snow. The route will be adjusted to the snow conditions on the day of the event. We plan to hike out to the north on a minor wash and intersect with Forest Service Road #376A, with sweeping views of the southern Upper Arkansas Valley, the southern Sawatch Range, and into the heart of the North Fourmile Recreation Area and Big Sandy Wash. We will also have fantastic close-up views of granitic cliffs, ledges, and boulder formations of the Arkansas Hills. We turn south on the first major wash prior to Big Sandy Wash and head south and west to climb out of the wash and wind our way up to a high overlook down into Big Sandy Wash from the top of the cliffs on the west side of the wash, where we have a great place for a lunch stop. Then, we head west and south up to beautiful views and winding trail through stunning boulders and ledges and on down through open forest and boulder outcrops back to the Midland RR Grade just a quarter mile east of the parking area where the hike began.

Special Conditions

- There could be snow and ice on the ground and amounts will dictate the route taken. Be prepared to walk in snow (bring snow gaiters and poles). Too much snow depth will cause us to have to cancel the event due to the wet conditions and energy needed to break deep snow.
- A fee **ONLY** if you want to stop at the Collegiate Peaks Overlook picnic fee site, either a daily or annual Colorado State Parks pass is required for each vehicle to use the picnic area or rest rooms. If you do not already have an annual pass, daily passes are available for purchase at the Collegiate Peaks Overlook for a fee of \$10.00.
- Pets are allowed in this area and should be on a leash or under direct command control – some of the trails/roads are shared with bicycles and vehicles

- For ages 10 and above

What to Bring

- Snow gaiters for lower leg and ankle protection from deeper snow
- Yak Trax (or similar light-duty ice trekking devices) if conditions are icy
- Picnic lunch
- Plenty to drink
- Snacks
- Comfortable waterproof hiking shoes – roads are gravel, trails have rock/ledge outcrops and washes are sandy and rocky in some spots
- Sunscreen
- Extra layering of clothing in case it starts cold or is windy, and a hat and gloves for protection
- Waterproof outerwear if there is a prediction for snow that day

Directions to Start Location: At the US 285/US 24 intersection just west of Johnson Village, turn east at the traffic light onto US 24 East/US 285 North and proceed 2.2 miles through Johnson Village, passing MP214, to the signed intersection for the Collegiate Peaks Overlook Recreation Site on the north side of the highway. Turn north onto the entrance road for the Recreation Site and proceed a short distance (0.1 mile) northwest to the recreation site. Before entering the site, Chaffee County Road #304 turns right and heads north. Follow this county road north for approximately 1.3 miles to the Fourmile Recreation Area sign (on the right) and large parking areas. This is the point at which the county road intersects with the Midland Railroad Grade and turns abruptly west onto it. Park in one of the parking areas and do not continue west on the county road or east on Forest Service Road #376A. This is a well-maintained gravel road to the parking area from the Collegiate Peaks Recreation Site.

Leader: Colorado Parks and Wildlife Volunteer Naturalist Bob Hickey

Reservations: Please contact the Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area State Park (AHRA) if you have any questions or problems. They may be reached at: (719)539-7289. To sign up for this hike, please utilize the link provided by AHRA for this hike on the hike schedule for this or any hike or the several CPW calendars. We look forward to having you along with us on this scenic and geologically interesting special First Day Hike.