



Resource Protection

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Scout
Trinity
Sam

Equestrian Staff

Rohan
Starlight
Duke
Beauty

2020 Highlights

- ★ *Rangers and deputies ensured visitor safety and provided community assistance during the CalWood and Four Mile Canyon fires.*
- ★ *Rangers and deputies implemented an array of public health orders for the first time.*
- ★ *5 seasonal park rangers hired and trained during the pandemic.*
- ★ *The department's first bilingual park ranger joined the resource protection team.*
- ★ *Hessie shuttle ridership posted records numbers during the pandemic; redirecting over 900 vehicles in a single day.*
- ★ *800 parking citations and warnings issued at county trailheads.*
- ★ *Staff completed 9130 hours of patrol on 5630 miles of trail.*
- ★ *Rangers and deputies responded to over 1100 incidents on open space lands.*
- ★ *K9 SAR teams responded to 53 calls for service across the state.*





An Unusual Year for Resource Protection

John Muir’s iconic words, “The mountains are calling and I must go...” were certainly a call to action for many Boulder County residents during 2020! The resource protection team was called to the mountains of Boulder County as well, but what we found was a very different pandemic landscape. In a typical non-pandemic year, resource protection is busy patrolling parks and trailheads; responding to emergencies; enforcing regulations; training volunteers; hosting Junior Ranger events; and implementing the Lefthand Outdoor Challenge program. In 2020, the pandemic forced us to sideline many of our outreach, volunteer, and training programs and focus our attention on trailhead management, parking enforcement, and emergency response activities.

The pandemic sparked a 40 percent increase in visitation countywide when compared to 2019. However, during the early months of the pandemic, visitor use increased by over 100 percent at many popular trailheads. Consequently, record numbers of visitors overwhelmed trailheads, parking lots, and adjacent county roads. The resource protection team mitigated many parking issues with the utilization of overflow parking areas, increased staffing, temporary signs, and variable message boards. Resource protection also worked closely with the education and outreach team to deploy youth corps leaders as trailhead ambassadors at the most impacted locations. This strategy was a key component of our COVID response.

Being tasked with enforcing public health orders was also a very challenging aspect of our pandemic response. Enforcing outdoor masking requirements, social distancing, and directional trail use was a taxing aspect of the county’s COVID policies. On a good day, rangers spoke with handful of people without face coverings on the trail while on a bad day, they contacted dozens at each trailhead. As the pandemic continued to accelerate, the stress on rangers, deputies, and vulnerable park visitors increased significantly due to concerns about unmasked trail users and crowded parking areas.

The pandemic also had a number of impacts on the resource protection team that manifested themselves beyond trailheads and parking lots. Ranger outreach efforts including Junior Ranger Adventures, National Night Out, family hikes for Spanish speakers, and the Left Hand Outdoor Challenge were canceled. Nonetheless, this temporary pause will allow the team time to brainstorm new programs and efforts that increase participant diversity and community-wide engagement. Similarly, team building activities, trainings, conferences, co-patrols, and other engagement opportunities were limited, leaving many rangers and deputies feeling disconnected from their coworkers and the department. However, a number countywide incidents like the Calwood Fire allowed the resource protection team to work with one another, partner agencies, and the community to showcase our skillful response, incredible training, affinity for collaboration, and dedication to resource protection, visitor safety, and public engagement.

Patrol and Enforcement Summery

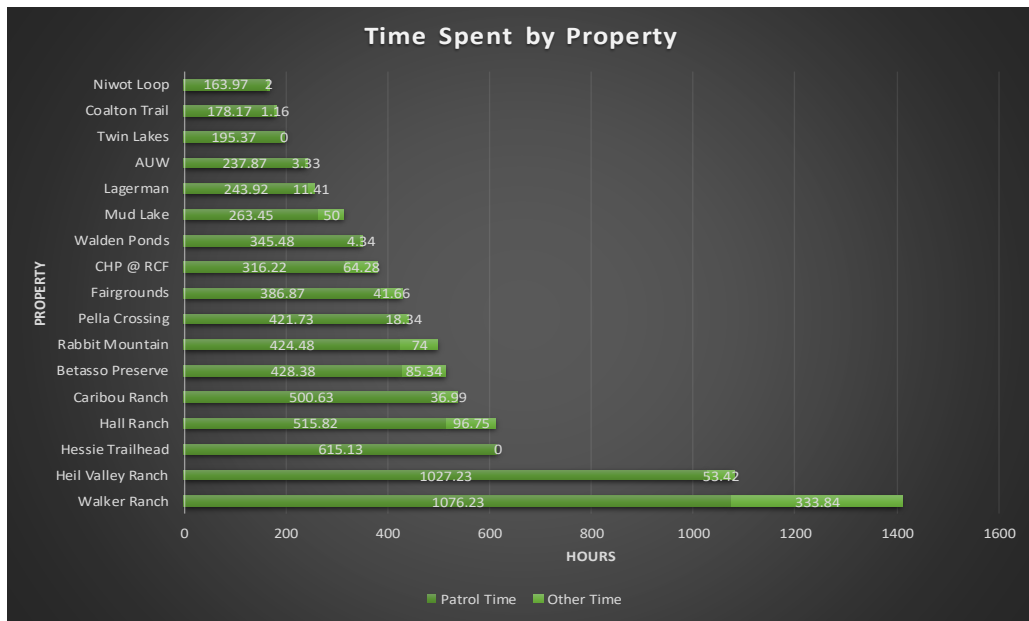


Figure 1. Patrol and other time reported by rangers and deputies at open space parks and properties.



Figure 2. Rules and regulation violations as reported by rangers and deputies at open space parks and properties.

Patrol and Enforcement Summery



Figure 3. Top 5 violations reported by rangers and deputies on open space parks and properties.

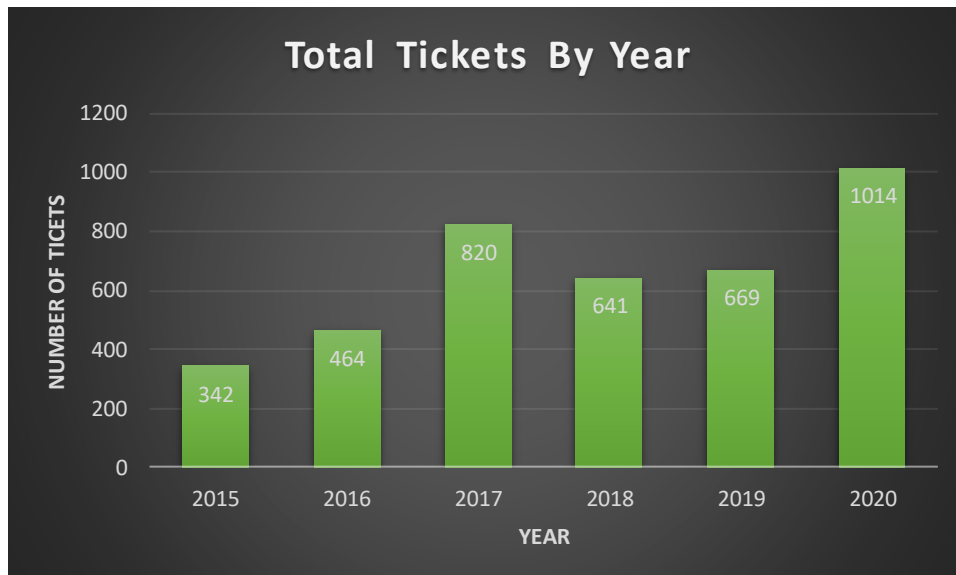


Figure 4. Total number of citations issued by rangers and deputies on open space parks and properties from 2015 through 2020.

BCSO Calls for Service

The Boulder County Sheriff's Office (BCSO) continues to be a committed, supportive, and collaborative partner with parks and open space. In addition to the four park deputies and a park sergeant assigned to the resource protection team, BCSO provides hundreds of hours of additional park patrol, dispatching services, park visitor management, wildfire mitigation and response, animal control services, and search and rescue coordination. The calls noted below represent incidents on parks and open space lands requiring a case report number. Citations and warnings generated on open space lands by non-park deputies are not included in this report.

Location	Call Type
Anne U. White Trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vicious Dog at Large • Vicious Dog Attack
Bald Mountain Scenic Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vehicle Trespass
Betasso Preserve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Found Item
BC Fairgrounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harassment • Suspicious Behavior • Careless Driving • Dog bites • Firearm Theft • Property Theft • Domestic Dispute
Boulder Canyon Trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missing and Endangered Person
Coal Creek Trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lost Property •
Dry Creek Trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Found Property (camp)
Flagg Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possession of Controlled Substances • Welfare Check • Possession of Firearm
Hall Ranch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report of Shallow Grave • Medical Assist
Harney Lastoka	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motorized Vehicle/Off Trail
Heil Ranch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vicious Dogs at Large • Lost Property • Verbal Disturbance • Vehicle Trespass
Kenosha Ponds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Burglary

Location	Call Type
Lagerman Reservoir	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Camping • Welfare Check/Suicide • Indecent Exposure • Welfare Check/Suicide • Fireworks
LOBO Trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Found Property
Legion Hill Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revoked Driver's License • Medical Assist
Mountainview Egg Farm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arson
Nelson Road and 65 th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DUI/Crash
Niwot Loop Trail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Littering/Dumping
Oxford Road and 63 rd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Felony Criminal Mischief
Pella Crossing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fictitious License Plate
Ron Stewart Preserve at Rabbit Mountain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welfare Check
Carolyn Holmberg Preserve at Rock Creek Farm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agency Assist/SWAT Call • Sick Wildlife • Welfare Check/Vehicle Crash • Medical Assist
Twin Lakes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dog Bites • Juvenile Assault • Lost Property • Dog Attack • Reckless Endangerment/Firearm
Steamboat Mountain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vandalism
Sugarloaf Mountain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illegal Hunting
Walker Ranch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rescue • Abandoned Vehicle •
Walden Ponds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical Assist



2020 Highlights: Hessie Trailhead Shuttle

The mountains called and over 17,000 visitors responded to the Hessie Trailhead in 2020. Due to the short recreational season and statewide pandemic restrictions, many mountain trailheads saw dramatic increases in use for short periods of time forcing land managers, rangers, and deputies to make dramatic changes in their traditional patrol and enforcement programs and the Hessie trailhead was no exception.



Although the Hessie shuttle did not begin operations until July 3, law enforcement staff from the Boulder County Sheriff’s Office, City of Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks, and Boulder County Parks & Open Space began actively managing parking in early April. This included the utilization of a weekend roadside check-point staffed by a deputy and a ranger. The checkpoint managed vehicle access to the area ensuring that parking was limited to designated parking sites at trailheads, along 4th of July Road, and in the Town of Eldora.

When shuttle operations resumed on July 3, visitors stopped at the roadside checkpoint were directed to park at Nederland High School and ride one of the 4 shuttles to the Hessie Trailhead. Visitors hoping to park at the 4th of July trailhead could wait at the high school for parking spots to open up. On several occasions, hopeful hikers waited upwards of 3 hours at the high school for an available parking spot.

While data was difficult to collect at the roadside checkpoint, deputies and rangers reported contacting and turning away over 900 vehicles on Monday, September 7. Trailheads counters and checkpoint counts indicate that August and September were the busiest months at the Hessie and 4th of July Trailheads. This data is mirrored by trailhead counter data at the Hessie Trailhead as well as shuttle ridership. From July 3 to October 4, 8,171 visitors utilized the Hessie Shuttle accounting for 47.8 percent of all visitors to the

Vehicle Contacts at Nederland Highschool Roadblock

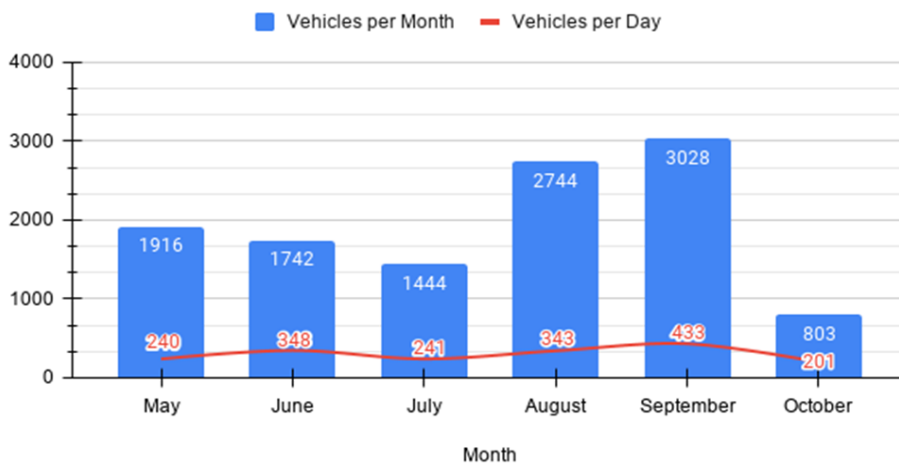


Figure 5. The average number of vehicles contacted at the Hessie roadside checkpoint per day from May to October 2020.

2020 Highlights: K9 Search and Rescue Team

The pandemic touched all aspects of resource protection during 2020 including the K9 Search and Rescue (SAR) team. During the pandemic, search dogs were among the most critical first responders. With dramatic increases in park visitation as well as mental health and medical emergencies, SAR teams experienced a significant increase in calls and were confronted with operations in difficult environments. The 2020 SAR team included Ranger Jeff Hiebert, Ranger Cathy Bryarly, Deputy Katie Tkach, Deputy Kelly Fosler (Jefferson County Sherriff's Office), and volunteers with Search and Rescue Dogs of the United States (SARDUS). In total, the team responded to 53 calls for service including searches for lost and missing persons, law enforcement searches, evidence recovery, human remains identification, and open space closure violations. The team assisted with calls from many jurisdictions and partner agencies including Greeley PD, Aurora PD, Longmont PD, Boulder PD, Arvada PD, Lakewood PD, Jefferson County SO, Ft. Collins PD, Larimer County SO, and Nederland PD.

In addition to numerous calls for missing and suicidal persons, SAR teams experienced an increase in calls involving the elderly and those with dementia. Ranger Hiebert and volunteers responded to a missing 81-year old woman in Lakewood who was missing for 9-hours in 100-degree heat. The team was able to locate the woman within 40 minutes, just prior to sunset. Her husband credited the dog teams with saving her life as her disease had progressed to the point where she was non-communicative and unable care for herself.

Canine resources were also used in criminal investigations. Ranger Hiebert, Deputy Fosler, Ranger Bryarly and SARDUS volunteers were used to provide information to obtain a search warrants for vehicles used to move a dismembered body. Forensic evidence later confirmed the accuracy of the dog teams. Additionally, the dog teams alerted detectives to the presence of human remains in a refrigerator and bathroom in the subject's recently remodeled home. In another case, Deputy Tkach and a SARDUS volunteer searched for evidence in a carjacking that occurred on Flagstaff Road. A magazine from a handgun used in the carjacking was located in a cattail swamp near Kenosha Ponds by a canine.

Boulder County teams continue to train and work with SARDUS resources statewide and across the western United States. In 2020, SARDUS teams from Colorado were sent to South Dakota to look for a missing indigenous girl. This operation was featured in a national story about the increase of missing indigenous women from reservations. For more information about the K9 SAR program at Boulder County Parks & Open Space, contact



2020 Highlights: CalWood Fire Response

On Saturday October 17th the CalWood Fire ignited. It started as a call of smoke in the area of the Cal-Wood Nature Center. The fire quickly grew from one acre in size to a large, rapidly moving fire. Dry conditions and moderate winds pushed the fire east toward Heil Valley Ranch. It was a busy day and the park was almost full. Rangers converged on both Heil and Hall Ranch to begin the evacuation process. Both parks were nearly full and there was even a high school mountain bike club doing trail work at Heil. The Resource Protection Team was able to quickly work together and clear both parks of all visitors and volunteers.

With the fire approaching rapidly, the Ochs' family didn't have enough time to evacuate all their family members and livestock before the fire was near their complex. Rangers were notified of their need for assistance and responded to support their evacuation efforts. The fire was moving quicker than expected, forcing the Ochs' to flee their homes on foot with five horses and a donkey. There wasn't enough time to hook up the horse trailers during the evacuation, so rangers coordinated the use of emergency horse trailers brought in by other first responders near the main trailhead. Unfortunately, only four of the horses were able to be loaded.

Adam, the draft horse, and Ennis, the donkey was led past the trailers on foot by two members of the Ochs' family and attempted to make it to safety while being escorted out by emergency personnel. Flames approached the roadway ahead of the group and were visible through the thick smoke. Crews ahead of the group confirmed that fire was coming down the hillside and was threatening to cut off the only escape route, Geer Canyon Road. Rangers made the emergency decision to release Adam and Ennis and escort the Ochs' to safety. The following day, rangers and a firefighter were able to check on the property and found most of the infrastructure still standing, including Resident Ranger Kevin Grady's house! Additionally, Adam and Ennis were found at the Ochs' property thirsty and hungry but alive. A somewhat happy ending to a very dramatic event.



Resource Protection Annual Report

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RMRA Agency Member

