

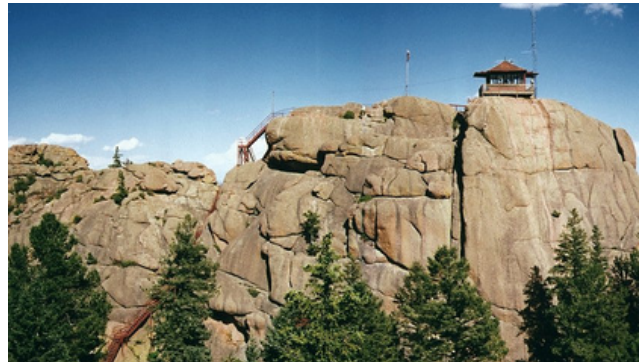


DEVILS HEAD AREA RECREATION STRATEGY

**Project Management Plan &
Stakeholder Engagement Process**

About the Devils Head Area

Devils Head Fire Lookout, the last of the four original Front Range Fire Lookout towers in continuous use, is over 50 years old and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The lookout tower may be open to public visitation when staffed, typically late-May through early-September. The Devils Head Trail (#611) begins at the picnic area adjacent to Devils Head Campground and ends at Devils Head Lookout Tower. This 1.4-mile-long non-motorized trail gains 865 feet in elevation as it climbs to the tower base. Along the way, the Zinn Trail (#615) also provides a short spur route leading to a rocky overlook.



At over 9,700 feet in elevation, the lookout tower provides panoramic views of the Rampart Range and surrounding areas, making the trek one of the more popular trails on the South Platte Ranger District. Over 25,000 people hike the trail annually. Devils Head is part of the Rampart Range Recreation Area which also provides a unique setting for off-highway vehicle enthusiasts to enjoy a variety of riding experiences on routes open to ATV's and motorcycles. Designated dispersed and developed camping opportunities are also found along some of the area's roadways.

Devils Head Mountain is located in Douglas County, and is visible from metropolitan areas north to Denver and south to Castle Rock. The mountain is the highest point of the Rampart Range and is home to a variety of plant and animal species. Given the setting which includes unique geology, a mixed conifer forest (Douglas-fir, ponderosa pine, limber pine, and lodgepole pine) as well as aspen, the area also contains streams, sensitive plants, and other important habitat qualities important for wildlife species such as nesting raptors, bats, bears, mountain lion, and other native fauna.



The Devils Head geology is unique compared to most other South Platte locations due to the highly featured, fine grained granite outcrop. Devil's Head contains countless steep walls rising from a maze of spires, ridges and valleys in contrast to the more typical slabby character of the many granite domes found throughout adjacent areas.

The site is historically significant for its long association with fire protection efforts of the US Forest Service. In 1907 the newly created Forest Service planned seven principal lookouts along the Front Range of the Rockies between New Mexico and Wyoming. Devils Head was the first of only four lookouts that were eventually established. The site has been in continuous use since 1912 and is the last full-time lookout in Colorado. In addition, Devils Head was the duty station of the first female fire lookout in America.

**READ INFORMATION ON ITS [HISTORY](#) [PDF 1.6 MB] AND
VIEW THE [TIMELINE](#) [JPEG 2.2 MB].**

Why is a recreation strategy needed for the Devils Head Area?

The Devils Head area has become increasingly popular as visitors seek opportunities for a variety of recreation activities in the area. The US Forest Service would like to create positive experiences for visitors from the time they start trip planning to the moment they arrive on site. Because the area is receiving increased visitation, it's an opportune time for the agency to evaluate recreation and use in the area, and to update planning guidance related to visitor experiences, resource protection, and facilities.

For example, the fire lookout was originally designed as an administrative site, yet visitors have come to enjoy learning about the history of the tower and experiencing views from top. However, with increased use to the area, there are concerns for public safety, and managers are seeing degraded resource conditions along the trails.

A recreation strategy & toolkit would help create a sustainable vision for recreation and access in the area and would provide a variety of strategies and management tools that could be implemented to address resource issues and recreation opportunities in the area.



What is a Recreation Strategy?

A recreation strategy is a roadmap for providing recreation opportunities and improving visitor use management. Through initial public engagement and collaboration with stakeholders, the goals for the recreation strategy are to:

VISION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a vision (desired conditions) for recreational opportunities, improved resource protection, and maintaining facilities in the Devils Head Area
DEFINE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define visitor activities, facilities and services, and resource conditions that align with the vision
DEVELOP INDICATORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select indicators to assess current and desired conditions for visitor experiences and resources
DEVELOP TOOLKIT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a toolkit (menu of options) of adaptive management strategies for the Devils Head Area to inform a flexible, conditions-based, durable management plan for years to come
INCLUDE STRATEGIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include strategies to manage visitor use and protect natural and cultural resources
INFORM DESIGNS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify key changes to trails or facilities in the area to inform future design concepts
INFORM NEPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inform a proposed action that may be utilized to initiate environmental analysis, and to seek funding opportunities for project implementation
EXPLORE PARTNERSHIPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore partnership opportunities with interested stakeholders



Process Guidance: Visitor Use Management Framework

The recreation strategy will follow process guidance outlined in the Visitor Use Management Framework, as developed by the Interagency Visitor Use Management Council. The purpose of this framework is to provide cohesive guidance for managing visitor use on federally managed lands and waters. The framework is a flexible planning process for visitor use management that will be incorporated into the existing US Forest Service planning and decision-making processes.

Overview of the Visitor Use Management Framework



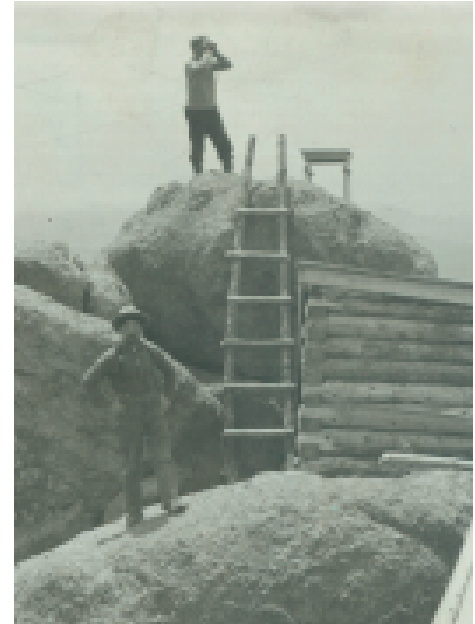
Source: <https://visitorusemanagement.nps.gov/>

How will the future of the Devils Head compare to the past use?

PAST

Early in the Twentieth Century, the Forest Service selected Devils Head as one of the four principal fire lookouts built along the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains between New Mexico and Wyoming.

A primitive lookout was first constructed at the site in 1912, which was later replaced by a more permanent structure in 1919 then subsequently redeveloped and replaced by the current structure in 1951. From the vantage point atop Devils Head mountain, lookout personnel can spot fires up to 75 miles away. This site has been in continuous use since 1912 and today remains as the last full-time fire lookout in Colorado.



In the later part of the Twentieth Century the area surrounding the Devils Head lookout tower along Rampart Range Road became a popular destination for OHV use, hiking, picnicking, camping and rock-climbing.

The trek to the Devils Head outcrop and up to the lookout tower grew in popularity as more people visited the area.

PRESENT

In the first decades of the Twenty-First Century, the amount of use has significantly increased, resulting in congested parking and trail use leading to concerns for visitor safety, resource damage and sanitation. Popular activities in the area include hiking, rock climbing, history, viewing scenery and plants and wildlife. While hiking continues to be popular, rock climbing has also grown in popularity. **The Forest Service is inviting input from stakeholders and the public to inform what recreation opportunities and management of the Devils Head area will look like in the future.**

FUTURE

The fire lookout function of the site is currently still in use, meaning that access and activities will need to be managed in a way that allows Forest Service personnel to continue safely working in the tower. **Working together, this visioning process will help shape available recreation opportunities for the next generation of forest visitors.**

What guides management of the lands and uses at the Devils Head trail and surrounding area?



Management of the Devils Head area is guided by federal law, agency policy, and local direction. The Pike and San Isabel National Forests Land and Resource Management Plan, completed in 1984, identifies the local management direction, or emphasis for each area of the Forest, consistent with relevant policy and law. The Devils Head area is divided between two management areas.

The western portion of the project area is designated Management Area(MA)-2B, which emphasizes rural and roaded-natural recreation activities, including motorized and non-motorized forms of recreation. The eastern portion of the project area is designated MA-7D, which emphasizes wood fiber production for products other than sawtimber (such as fuelwood, poles, etc.), as well as providing for the management of recreation activities.

Recreation activities within the project area are also administered through other, more specific decisions such as the Rampart Range Recreation Area Motorized Roads and Trails Plan. In addition, pursuant to Forest level special orders; camping and parking are limited to designated sites only. Annual administrative and mud season closures exist for area roads and trails. Proper food and trash storage is required, and a seasonal raptor closure is enforced to prevent conflicts with wildlife.

In addition to the recreation opportunities the area is known for, administrative use of the fire lookout tower which is expected to continue in the near term at the site, and as such will be incorporated into the strategy.

How will this effort relate to existing plans?

The recreation strategy and toolkit, as developed through a collaborative process, will help to inform future management of this popular area. In order to change how an area is managed, the Forest Service must determine the needs within the area, propose an action to address those needs, and may request public input on that action before finalizing the management activity. As a component of this recreation strategy, the Forest Service is inviting early participation from stakeholders and the public at large to help inform what the needs may be in the area (the recreation assessment), and once identified, how to best address them.

Once complete, the Forest Service will adapt the **recreation assessment and toolkit** into a proposed action, and then plan to receive additional feedback through a formal NEPA process. The proposed action may contain some or all of the toolkit pieces and may include additional management proposals required by law, policy and direction. For example, if the Forest Service decides the future needs of the area would be better met by designating the entire Devils Head area as MA-2B to emphasize rural and roaded-natural recreation opportunities (instead of the portion currently designated MA-7B), a Forest Plan amendment could be proposed.



What will be included in the Devils Head Area Recreation Strategy?

The US Forest Service has preliminarily identified the types of activities and resources that will be considered in the Devils Head Area Recreation Strategy (what is in scope), and other activities or resource that will be outside the scope of this undertaking. The two lists are provided below.

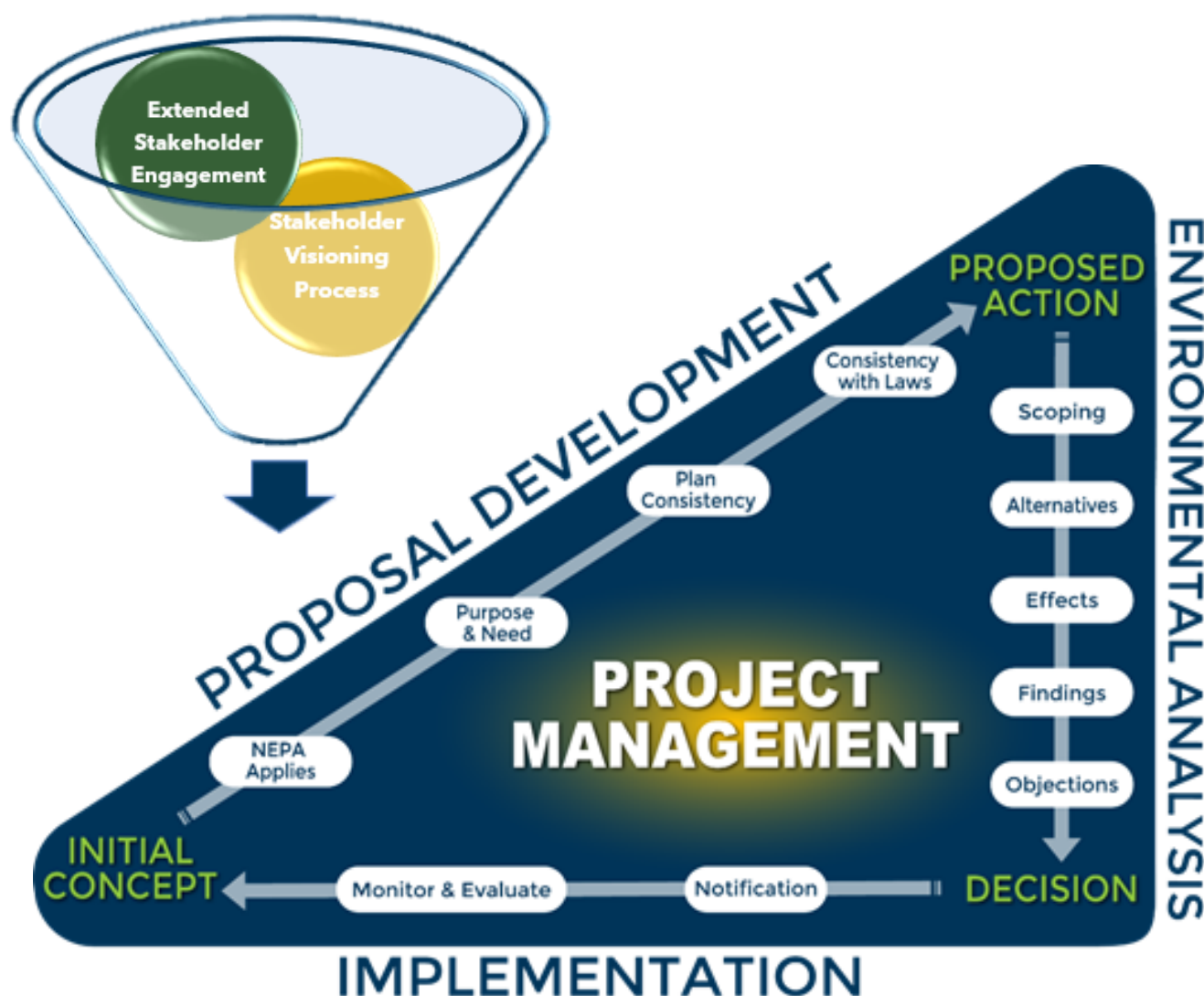
In scope	Out of scope
Fire lookout and administrative facilities	Motorized trails (other than the two listed)
Picnic area / visitor facilities	Target (recreational sport) shooting
Campground	Mining and rockhounding
Sanitation	
Parking	
NFS Road Access	
NFS Trail access <ul style="list-style-type: none">Non-motorized (611, 615)Motorized (627, 677)	
Climbing Activities	
Closure Orders	



PAGE 10 | SCOPE

How will this engagement effort inform the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process?

Before conducting any management activities, the US Forest Service must conduct scoping for a proposed action and assess the environmental effects of the action before conducting the management activity, per the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Once this visioning process is complete and the stakeholder engagement has occurred, ideas will be summarized and included in the recreation strategy and toolkit. The Forest Service may adopt the strategy and develop a proposed action for the NEPA process.



What is the Timeline?

The Devils Head Recreation Strategy development began summer 2020 with outreach efforts to learn what stakeholders value about the area. The input received will be used to describe the desired conditions for the visitor experience, the resources at risk, and the function of the site.



In winter of 2021 the US Forest Service interdisciplinary team and local stakeholders will develop a list of possible management actions to move the Devils Head area toward these desired conditions. Early in the year the team will ask stakeholders for input to further refine this “toolbox”. Ultimately, the Forest Service hopes to consider all of the input in developing a proposed action to initiate a formal planning process as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), with the goal of seeking funding, including potential grant opportunities, to then implement the management strategy.

Summer 2020

- Stakeholder Meetings / Visioning Sessions

Autumn 2020

- Extended Stakeholder Engagement

Winter 2021

- Develop toolkit of draft management strategies

Early 2021

- Stakeholder feedback on toolkit

Summer 2021

- Initiate planning and environmental analysis

Late 2021

- Consider funding sources / grants

How can I learn more?

Please provide your input and engage with other interested parties in the community at:

<https://devilshead.mindmixer.com/>

For more information, please contact South Platte Ranger District recreation staff at:

303.275.5610

Or Visit:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/psicc/recreation/camping-cabins/recarea/?recid=12410&actid=29>

Project Leadership & Support

The Devils Head Area Recreation Strategy is being developed and lead by the US Forest Service with technical support provided by the National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program.

