



## Forest Service News Release

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### From Dispersed to Designated

#### Camping Changes for the Crested Butte Valley

Camping is one of the best ways to experience Crested Butte's beautiful scenery and is a quintessential Colorado activity. However, if you are planning to visit Crested Butte, Colorado this summer expect to see some changes as dispersed camping is switched to designated camping in the areas surrounding Crested Butte. Over the years Crested Butte has gained significant popularity as an outdoor recreation destination, and unfortunately the impacts from unregulated dispersed camping have led to extensive resource damage across the Gunnison National Forest surrounding Crested Butte. The switch to designated camping is the successful culmination of partnership efforts focused on improving Crested Butte's backcountry by adopting a plan that will preserve the landscape while simultaneously improving user experience. Designated campsites are a win-win for land managers and campers alike. By designating sites it allows land managers to isolate the impacts from camping to specific and sustainable locations, while still providing users with the remote and isolated feel of backcountry dispersed camping.

These changes hope to reverse impacts that include a proliferation of dead and bare ground where there was once wild grasses and flowers, escaped campfires, development of non-system routes, and sanitation problems. The Forest Service attempted to curtail these impacts in the past through confusing travel management restrictions that allowed campers to set up anywhere, so long as their vehicles remained within 300 feet, 30 feet, or 0 feet from motorized routes, depending on each drainage. In the end these efforts did not reduce the damage being done to the landscape. In 2019, after robust public engagement, the Forest Service received unanimous support from the Gunnison Valley's Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Recreation (STOR) Committee along with overwhelmingly supportive public comments to move forward with a plan to designate specific campsites in the six major drainages surrounding Crested Butte. As a result, beginning spring 2021 camping in the Slate River Rd # 734 and Washington Gulch Rd # 811 areas will be allowed only in designated sites. Throughout the summer and fall of 2021 this same regulation will be rolled out across five additional areas: Kebler pass Rd #12, Lake Irwin Rd # 826, Brush Creek Rd # 738, Cement Creek Rd #740, and Gothic Rd #317, with the goal of having 211 valley wide sites designated come spring 2022.

#### Who is doing the work?

In an effort to partner with local organizations the United States Forest Service (USFS) Gunnison Ranger District partnered with the Crested Butte Conservation Corps (CBCC) to help with the installation of the infrastructure for the designated sites. The CBCC is entering its fifth

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summer season this year and was founded on the idea of creating a more sustainable backcountry experience for users in the Crested Butte valley. From trail work to education/outreach to campsite clean up the CBCC does a bit of everything and they were honored to take on the work required to designate campsites on behalf of the USFS. The designated camping plan fits perfectly with the CBCC's goal of improving user experience by creating a more sustainable backcountry. The USFS also partnered with the Gunnison Valley Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Recreation (STOR) committee to help fund the designated camping project. The STOR committee showed overwhelming support for the project and pledged to match all funds put forth by the USFS up to \$150,000. STOR received the funding to support this project through the Gunnison County Stewardship Fund which is supported by the National Forest Foundation. Thanks to the efforts of these organizations the designated camping project will help to ensure a sustainable future for both recreational camping and natural beauty in Crested Buttes backcountry.

### **What does this mean for campers?**

This management change will govern all roadside vehicle and tent camping for the above-mentioned areas. This may come as a big change to those who have camped around Crested Butte in the past, but campers will no longer be able to pull off the road wherever they want and set up a campsite. Instead campers will be required to camp in designated sites only. Campers can expect to see new signage along the roadside directing them toward camping areas, camping information, and notifying them when no camping areas lie ahead. The shift to designated camping might mean that the ability to find a place to camp will be more limited than it has been in the past. If you are coming to Crested Butte for the weekend during peak summer season or for any holiday over the summer be sure that you have a backup plan in the event that all the designated sites are full. This might include being prepared to drive and stay further away from Crested Butte, reserving a campsite at one of the many established campgrounds in the greater Crested Butte/Gunnison Valley, reserving a room at a hotel, or booking a VRBO.

### **What will a designated site look like?**

Sites will be designated by the presence of a two-foot-tall 6inX6in post. Attached to the post will be a camping symbol along with an associated site number. Also present at designated sites will be permanent metal fire rings. If you are camped in an area that does not have both of these items, you are camped illegally.

### **Besides camping at designated sites what other regulations should campers adhere to?**



*Example of a designated campsite post*

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- All sites are first come first serve, if a site is occupied please look for another site
- Sites are limited to two vehicles per site
- Fires are only permitted in the established metal fire rings
- Campers are responsible for knowing any local fire restrictions and only burning when it is allowed
- Extinguish all fires so they are cold to the touch
- No stay can exceed 14 days
- No site saving- it is illegal to leave property unattended for more than 24 hours
- Pack out all trash including human waste
- Do not leave garbage or food unattended, it attracts wildlife. This is bad for people and animals.
- Stay on designated routes, no off-road vehicle travel



*Permanent Metal Fire Ring*

### **When should campers expect to see these changes?**

Spring 2021. The installation of infrastructure required to designate sites began in the fall of 2020 and was completed in the Slate River Rd #734 and Washington Gulch Rd #811 areas. All camping in these two drainages will be allowed only at designated sites as soon as the snow melts in the spring of 2021. Camping in the other four areas will still be dispersed at that time. However, campers should expect to see the designated camping regulation rolled out to the remaining four drainages during the summer and fall of 2021 and the spring of 2022. The following is a rough timeline of when campers can expect to see sites designated in the remaining drainages:

Kebler Pass, Lake Irwin, and Brush Creek- August 2021\*

Cement Creek – October 2021\*

Gothic Rd- June 2022\*

\*dates are subject to change and will depend on when the proper infrastructure has been installed. For the latest information on the progress of the designated camping project please call the Gunnison Ranger District office 970-641-0471 or email [operations@cbmba.org](mailto:operations@cbmba.org).

**Delta, Colorado, XXXX XX, XXXX, — The Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison (GMUG) National Forests**

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