

Hikers damaging some of Colorado's best 14ers

Forty-two of Colorado's 54 fourteeners could be in jeopardy due to hikers abusing some peaks - endangering trails. 9NEWS at 6 a.m. 06/08/15.

Colleen Ferreira, KUSA 7:28 a.m. MDT June 8, 2015



KUSA - Forty-two of Colorado's 54 fourteeners could be in jeopardy due to hikers abusing some peaks - endangering trails, according to the nonprofit Colorado 14ers Initiative.

The [14er Report Card](http://www.5280.com/news/magazine/2015/05/fourteeners-check) article (<http://www.5280.com/news/magazine/2015/05/fourteeners-check>) in June's 5280 Magazine sparked a discussion and a worry about Colorado's greatest peaks. The [Colorado 14er Initiative](http://www.14ers.org/) (<http://www.14ers.org/>) is releasing their official 14er Report Card this week. The report will talk about the problems each peak faces due to avid hikers and tourists constantly climbing them.

(Photo: Colorado 14ers Initiative)



[5280](http://www.5280.com)

[Fourteeners Check-Up](http://www.5280.com/news/magazine/2015/05/fourteeners-check)

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Ralph Bradt, a ranger for Grays and Torreys peaks since 1990, says some 14ers are not in good shape and are getting worse.

He said the worst damage is on Grays and Torreys peaks and Mount Bierstadt.



Mt. Bierstadt (Photo: Colorado 14ers Initiative)

Bierstadt is less than an hour-and-a-half away from Denver, so it's popular for beginning 14er hikers. Bradt says the trail used to be 18-inches wide, and now, it's around 30-inches wide because people are hiking in large groups. In those large groups, Bradt says they spread out and don't follow the trail, walking around the path on the grass and vegetation.

Bradt says if hikers don't start respecting the trail, it's questionable if the mountain can sustain this kind of use in the future. The way to solve it, Bradt says, is for hikers to follow the trail and keep their dogs on a leash.

Bill Jackson, a district ranger in Dillon for the US Forest Service, is also seeing the problem around Quandary Peak. Jackson says some novice hikers have caused new, unofficial trails to form. Jackson says more often than not, hikers don't anticipate Colorado's ever-changing weather, so he'll see hikers speed down the mountain after bad weather presents itself, not paying attention to the trail in place.



Hiking a 14er (Photo: Colorado 14ers Initiative)

Jackson says because of altitude and weather, people need to prepare themselves for the trail in place and follow the trail that's out there.

Quandary Peak has volunteers that are educating visitors about environmental ethic while climbing.

Colorado 14er Initiative says it will cost \$24 million to repair and possibly reconstruct about 42 Colorado 14ers, and of that, \$6.3 million will go towards fixing the five peaks closest to Denver.

They know it's no easy task, but the group says they are constantly gaining an audience to help support the repairs.

They encourage regular hikers and visitors to donate to protect and repair the peaks. Donate here: <http://bit.ly/1lxJ504>. (<http://bit.ly/1lxJ504>)

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