

Colorado's 14ers need \$24 million in trail improvements

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(Photo: Stephen Meyers/The Coloradoan)

Colorado's famed 14,000-foot peaks have paid a price for their popularity among hikers.

A price to the tune of \$24 million, so says a Colorado nonprofit organization.

The Colorado Fourteeners Initiative on Tuesday released its first-ever report card on the condition of trails on the state's fourteeners, the report saying \$24 million is needed for future work to repair damaged hiking paths.

The Denver-based nonprofit spent three years evaluating trails on 39 of Colorado's 54 fourteeners for sustainability and the extent of erosion and trail widening, assigning each a letter grade. The report card suggests that the growing number of hikers in recent decades has resulted in more trail degradation.

Grays and Torreys Peaks, near Denver, earned a D, and Mount Bierstadt, another popular fourteener close to Denver, earned an F. Together, the three peaks, along with fellow close-to-Denver peaks, Mount Evans and Quandary Peak, see about 100,000 annual hiker use days, CFI says, and are projected to need more than \$6.3 million in trail repairs for long-term sustainability.

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Longs Peak was not one of the fourteeners analyzed, as the popular trail to the 14,259-foot-tall summit is managed by the National Park Service.

The CFI report concluded that 26 trails planned by the Forest Service and built by Colorado Fourteeners Initiative or similar nonprofit would cost \$6 million to restore.

In addition, 16 user-created routes — commonly called social trails — that have never been formally planned or built are estimated to require an additional \$18 million in new trail construction.

"Twenty years after CFI's founding, about half of the peaks still have no formally planned route, while many that do are in poor condition and in need of significant improvements," said Lloyd F. Athearn, executive director of Colorado Fourteeners Initiative, in a press release.

Details on the report card can be found at www.14ers.org/stay-informed/colorado-14ers-statewide-report-card (<http://www.14ers.org/stay-informed/colorado-14ers-statewide-report-card>).

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The Colorado Fourteeners Initiative report card

Planned summit routes

Blanca Peak & Ellingwood Point: A

North Maroon Peak: A

Pyramid Peak: A-

Mount Harvard: A-

Humboldt Peak: A-

Windom and Sunlight Peaks: B+

Mount Yale: B

Mount Evans (Chicago Lakes, Summit Lake): B

Tabeguache Peak: B

Capitol Peak: B

Crestone Peak and Needle: B

Mount Massive (East Slopes): B-

Huron Peak: B-

Mount Bross: C+

Mount Massive (North Halfmoon Creek): C+

Quandary Peak (East Slopes): C+

Mount Democrat: C

La Plata Peak (Northwest Ridge): C

Mount of the Holy Cross (Halfmoon Pass): C

Mount Sneffels: C-

Uncompahgre Peak: C-

Mounts Belford and Oxford: C-

Wetterhorn Peak: D+

Grays and Torreys Peaks: D

Missouri Mountain: D-

Mount Bierstadt: F

Unplanned summit routes

Mount Elbert (Black Cloud): C

Quandary Peak (Blue Lakes): C

Mount Princeton: C-

Handies Peak (Grizzly Gulch): C-

Mount of the Holy Cross (Notch Mountain): C-

Mount Antero: D+

Handies Peak (American Basin): C-

Mount Lindsey: D-

Mount Elbert (North): F

Mount Evans (Guanella Pass): F

Mount Shavano: F

Redcloud Peak: F

La Plata Peak (Winfield Southwest Ridge): F

Moutn Columbia: F

Mount Elbert (East Slopes): F

Snowmass Mountain: F

Peaks yet to be inventoried:

Castle and Conundrum Peaks

El Diente Peak

Mount Eolus and North Eolus

Kit Carson Peak and Challenger Point

Mounts Lincoln and Cameron

Maroon Peak

Pikes Peak

San Luis Peak

Mount Sherman

Sunshine Peak

Tabeguache Peak

Mount Wilson

Wilson Peak

Peaks that will not be inventoried:

Culebra Peak: Entirely on private land

Little Bear Peak: Too hazardous to maintain

Longs Peak: Maintained by National Park Service

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