



MEDIA CONTACT:

Emily Olsen
National Forest Foundation
720-219-0682
eolsen@nationalforests.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

THE GUNNISON COUNTY STEWARDSHIP FUND LAUNCHES WITH LOCAL TRAILHEAD IMPROVEMENTS

West Maroon Trailhead Project Moves Forward Thanks to Community Partnership

CRESTED BUTTE, Colorado –October 11, 2018– Visitors traveling to the West Maroon Pass Trailhead outside of Crested Butte will soon arrive to a welcome change. In October, crews installed a new restroom at the popular trailhead.

Local community leaders and land managers first envisioned the Trailhead project after trash, human waste, and other impacts reached a critical level in the past year. Popularity of the East Fork/West Maroon Pass Trail, accessed from the Town of Crested Butte has been steadily growing in recent years.

The Trailhead offers spectacular opportunities to day hike to West Maroon Pass or hike between Crested Butte and Aspen, and managers expect pressure from users to continue to increase. Now, thanks to the newly launched **Gunnison County Stewardship Fund**, spearheaded by leaders from local government, businesses and the nonprofit community, the Trailhead is receiving much-needed investment.

The West Maroon project is the first project implemented through the Fund. The National Forest Foundation is managing the Fund in close coordination with the Gunnison Ranger District of the U.S. Forest Service and local contributors. The Fund will support stewardship of the Gunnison National Forest through annual grants to local nonprofit organizations and contracts to local businesses for on-the-ground recreation and forest health projects.

Contributors include local government entities and businesses, as well as outfitters and guides such as Three Rivers Resort, a premier guiding company based in Almont. Gunnison County, the Gunnison County Metropolitan Recreation Board, the Town of Crested Butte, and the

National Forest Foundation generously provided pilot funding for the West Maroon Pass Trailhead Improvement Project.

Stakeholders who helped make the Trailhead Project possible offered the following sentiments:

“This project affirms once again the remarkable commitment Gunnison County communities have to their public lands,” said Matt McCombs, District Ranger for the Gunnison Ranger District. “This effort was 100% community funded and driven. I can’t wait to see what we tackle next.”

“This project is a great example of what can be accomplished when a broad base of different public land users come together for a common cause for the benefit of all who recreate in Gunnison County. I’m excited to be working with the National Forest Foundation to create the Gunnison County Stewardship Fund and what that means for the future of responsible recreation in our Valley,” said Phil Chamberland, Gunnison County Commissioner.

“We are very excited that the Gunnison Metropolitan Recreation District could play a pivotal role in a project that will serve so many people using our backcountry while reducing their impacts,” said Ian Billick, Gunnison County Metropolitan Recreation Board.

“The National Forest Foundation is proud to partner with local government leaders, businesses and nonprofit organizations to launch the Gunnison County Stewardship Fund. The West Maroon Pass Trailhead Project is only the first of many important projects that will improve the recreational experiences on the lands in this community,” said Mary Mitsos, NFF President & CEO.

The partners look forward to expanding the Fund’s impact in future years. Local businesses and residents interested in getting involved or contributing to the Fund are encouraged to contact Emily Olsen, Colorado Program Manager for the National Forest Foundation at eolsen@nationalforests.org.

###

About the National Forest Foundation

The National Forest Foundation promotes the enhancement and public enjoyment of the 193-million-acre National Forest System. By directly engaging Americans and leveraging private and public funding, the NFF improves forest health and Americans’ outdoor experiences. The NFF’s programs inform millions of Americans about the importance of these treasured landscapes. Each year, the NFF restores fish and wildlife habitat, plants trees in areas affected by fires, insects and disease, improves recreational opportunities, and enables communities to steward their National Forests and Grasslands. Learn more at www.nationalforests.org.