



Colorado High Trails

FOURTH QUARTER 2024

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COHVCO Club of the Year



Alpine Tunnel Palisade

Multi-Year Project is Completed

Greetings from the Ute Pass Iron Goats (UPIG). We are a small Four Wheel Drive club in Woodland Park, Colorado. You may know us from our adoption of the Chinaman Gulch trail since our beginning in 2001.

Stepping way back in time 144 years ago, in 1880, the Denver South Park & Pacific (DSP & P) Railroad was constructing their railroad west to get the gold. Remember that in 1859 the gold rush started in Colorado, and this discovery flooded the west with new settlers and miners. The railroads followed close behind to capture this new market.

As the DSP & P new tracks progressed westward from Denver one branch went to Leadville over Boreas Pass and Fremont Pass. The other branch headed further south to Gunnison and towards Crested Butte. But instead of going over the continental divide at Altman Pass they chose to tunnel under it. The Alpine Tunnel became an engineering marvel of its day. 1771' long at an elevation of 11,524'.

Work began in January 1880. Crews typically numbered 350-450 at a time. They started from both ends and met in the middle! They imported 500,000 board feet of redwood for shoring inside the tunnel. The first train through the tunnel was in July of 1882.

On the west side of the tunnel were several stone retaining walls to support the track. The largest is known as the Palisade Wall. It is 452' long, 32' high and 4' thick. It is built from hand cut granite stones and uses no mortar.

The winter snow proved to be a costly problem in keeping the trains running. The route was often closed. The last train through the tunnel was in November of 1910. The tracks were soon scrapped, and the route fell into neglect.



The Mile Hi Jeep Club in the 1960's cleared off the rocks from the Alpine Tunnel Road and restored the old Williams Gulch Water Tank. That tank only survives today thanks to the efforts of Mile-Hi. The Palisade Wall is within the Alpine Tunnel National Historic District which was established in 1996. It is a 13 mile by long 200' wide area between the old ghost towns of Hancock and Quartz.

In 2016 a snow avalanche destroyed a 50' section of the Palisade Wall near the west portal of the Alpine Tunnel closing motorized access for the past 8 years.





Starting in 2019 our club assisted the National Forest Foundation (NFF) with grant applications to the Colorado Parks and Wildlife OHV fund with CORE and UPIG as Sponsors, and to History Colorado.

Three applications were made to the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA). Gunnison National Forest submitted one and we submitted one through Colorado Off Highway Vehicle Coalition and another through National Off Highway Vehicle Coalition.

Skipping ahead, eventually we did receive:

CPW OHV Grant for \$100,000 for Rock Scaling

GOAO Grant for \$50,00 for Engineering

GAOA grant for \$500,000 for Reconstruction

History Colorado Grant for \$250,000 for Reconstruction

Polaris grant thru NFF of \$25,000 for Reconstruction

Rock scaling began in June of 2022 to create a safer work site. Stone fabrication was finished by September of 2023. The mason sourced rocks from the same quarry site at the Williams Pass Road as originally done in 1880. Williams Pass was closed during this time due to the hazardous work being done. About 70 boulders were split with traditional rock feathers and shaped into wall and cap stones.

Reconstruction of the road and wall began on June 18th of 2024 and was finished by September 5th.

The closure order for the road is now lifted. The road is once again open for motorized travel, the first time since the 2015 season.

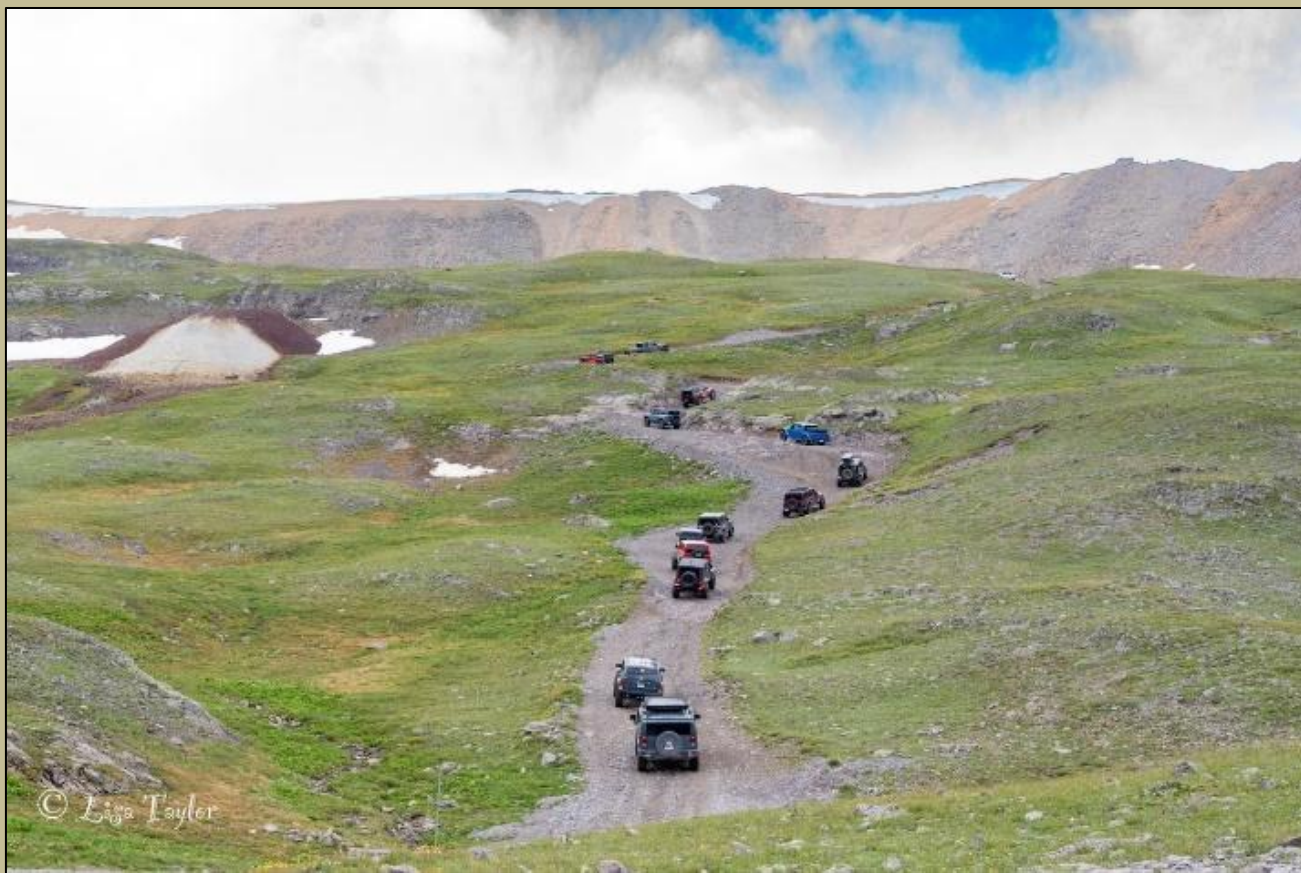


Creepers Jeepers

In the High Country

On July 20th, 17 rigs from the Creeper Jeepers Gang in Durango hit the high-country trails – Imogene and Ophir. Mariah led the group with Joe as a mid-gunner and Lisa Taylor as a tail gunner. The large group was made up of experienced and new-to-the-area members, many of whom had never been on the Imogene trail before. The mixed group allowed an opportunity for new members to test their skills with assistance, when needed, from the more experienced members, such as Kevin Heckman. The comradery and the chance to get to know one another lent to the overall great experience of the trip.





The group was primarily Jeeps, but a few Broncos joined the fun, plus a Hummer H3. The group took time to enjoy the scenery and explore the Red Mountain Pass overlook and Old Tomboy Mine on the Telluride side. After completing Imogene at 4 pm, half of the group headed back home on the highway, while the rest of the group followed Mariah over Ophir Pass. We ended the day in Silverton.

Eight hours of being on trails was a great way to enjoy the beautiful country, learn new techniques, meet new members, and connect with everyone!

The idea for the trip came up in 2023, but timing and snow levels didn't allow for that to happen. Mariah put feelers out at the beginning of the 2024 season and had enough interest to set-up a run. It was a surprise to have so many members join and though we debated splitting the group in half due to the size, we ultimately ended up staying as one large group.

Between the weather (a bit overcast and rainy) and the timing, the trail was relatively quieter than usual, allowing the group to maneuver past a few others on the trail who graciously waited for the convoy to pass. Everyone had a great time and many of the new members are excited to come back into the area and drive some of the Alpine Loop trails. Hopefully, we will see you there!



Summer Stewardship

Two Annual Projects with Colorado 4x4 Girls

The Colorado 4x4 Girls are dedicated to stewardship and keeping public lands open.

In July, the Colorado 4x4 Girls, along with friends and family, volunteered with the Clear Creek Ranger District for their Kid's Cleanup on two of the club's adopted trails.

The annual Kid's Cleanup is put on by the club founder's youngest daughter, Carrah, who asks to do one each year for her birthday. The kids enjoyed a scavenger hunt, learning about plant species and the impact of trash on the environment. 8 bags of trash were removed, illegal fire rings were broken down, and the bird boxes on one of the trails were inspected and cleaned out.





In addition to the Kid's Cleanup, Colorado 4x4 Girls sponsored a trail stewardship project during Mile Hi Jeep Club's All-4-Fun event, in collaboration with Stay the Trail and the Forest Service. A muddy bog in the middle of the trail was addressed, as well as checking campsites and fire rings, removing trash, and creating drainage pathways in other problem areas. There were many volunteers and the trail was successfully repaired.

These ladies and volunteers are always willing to tackle projects big or small, ensuring trails remain open and natural beauty is preserved. By working together, we can make a difference and keep public lands public for future generations.

14erFest

Buena Vista, Colorado



14erFest is an annual mountain festival that integrates 4x4, running, hiking, mountain biking, and fly-fishing. Held on the last weekend each September, the event brings different recreation groups together in a block-party atmosphere.

Daily activities take advantage to close proximity of the mountains and forest roads & trails, and brings everyone back in the evenings for food, live music, and night-time festivities.

If you've not visited 14erFest, you're missing out on a good time! The Autumn weather and colored Aspens are worthwhile, alone! Mark your calendar for September 2025 and visit for a day or spend the entire weekend in Buena Vista!



Ute Pass Iron Goats

Colorado Off Highway Vehicle Coalition 2024 OHV Club of the Year

Congratulations, Chuck Severance (left) and Ute Pass Iron Goats (Woodland Park) on this distinguished recognition from COHVCO!



Other News & Events



Webpage update—New photos needed! Under the “CLUBS” tab on our webpage, each member club’s biography includes five to seven photos; we want to update with new photos from your latest activities. Send photos to webmaster@hightrails.org



Content call! We need your content for future editions of HIGH TRAILS—these can be from clubs or individual members alike!
--One page (or less) typed with 3-4 photos
--Describe who, when, where and what you experienced.



Congratulations, Colorado 4x4 Girls! The club was recognized by Arapahoe National Forest and featured with a photograph on the 2024 MVUM cover!

MEMBER CLUBS

West District

Creeper Jeepers Gang
Durango, Colorado

Grand Mesa Jeep Club
Grand Junction, Colorado

Western Slope 4Wheelers
Montrose, Colorado

The Wild Bunch
Montrose, Colorado

Eagle County 4x4
Eagle, Colorado

North District

Big Thompson 4Wheelers
Loveland, Colorado

Colorado 4x4 Girls
Denver, Colorado

Bighorn Jeep Club
Denver, Colorado

South District

Ute Pass Iron Goats
Woodland Park, Colorado

Colorado Four Wheelers
Colorado Springs, Colorado

Colorado Land Cruisers
Colorado Springs, Colorado

Colorado Springs Christian 4Wheelers
Colorado Springs, Colorado

Associate Members

Colorado Off Road Enterprise (CORE)
Buena Vista, Colorado

Stay the Trail Colorado
Denver, Colorado

ON THE COVER:
**Restoration of the Palisade
stonework (early Summer 2024)**





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