

FRIENDS OF FOSSIL RIDGE SLIDE SHOW

Slides

1. High ridge; Henry Mtn in background
2. Brush Creek, tributary to S. Lottis Creek
3. Elk grazing in early winter on s. side of Fossil Ridge
4. Horses resting on Fossil Ridge Trail
5. View from Fairview Peak: Fairview Lake, Union Park, Taylor Park and Continental Divide

Speech

INTRODUCTION: Welcome to the Friends of Fossil Ridge slide show. We hope to impress you with the beauty of Fossil Ridge and to inform so you may do your part to help protect this important land.

WHAT IS FOSSIL RIDGE?

1964 Wilderness Act: Congress instructed USFS to study all lands for potential wilderness characteristics.

2. Early 1970s: USFS identified Fossil Ridge in RARE-1 (Roadless Area Review and Evaluation) as 90,000-acre wilderness. Entire national study rejected.

Late 1970s: USFS re-studied in RARE-II; major compromise with decrease of acreage to about 50,000 acres. USFS recommended against designation because of alleged mineral values.

3. 1979: US Senate passed a bill including Fossil Ridge as Wilderness.

1980: Final bill included Fossil as WSA; USFS instructed to study again.

October, 1982: USFS released another study; again, non-wilderness recommendation.

4. Fall, 1984: Congress again included Fossil, with amended boundaries, in wilderness bill. Bill killed by water rights dispute.

5. Today, Fossil Ridge remains a Congressionally-designated WSA, to be protected until US Congress decides.

WHERE IS FOSSIL RIDGE?

6. Map of WSA
7. View from NeverSink, Phelps Ranch, 6 miles west of Gunnison, looking east
8. View from Doyleville, 20 miles east of Gunnison, looking north
6. Heart of Gunnison: Surrounded by Gunnison, Parlin, Ohio City, Pitkin, Tincup, Taylor Park, Taylor River and Almont.
7. Visible from US 50 entering Gunnison from the west,
8. and from the east, and on the way up and down CO Highway 135.

WHAT ARE THE THREATS?

9. Old mine in FR
10. Climax Glory Hole above Leadville
11. Fossil Ridge high altitude limestone
12. Crystal clear Boulder Creek flowing through bed of limestone
9. Mining: In the old days, a few miners worked small shafts with picks and shovels. Today, mining is different:
10. Climax, Colorado's largest mine, a major source of molybdenum. FR may contain some low-grade uranium. But Uranium exists in much higher quantities and can be mined more easily in other areas, such as northwest New Mexico and Arizona.
11. Fossil Ridge has some high quality limestone, more valuable than the common limestones used on roads. But this same limestone contains the fossils, which could be destroyed by mining. Because most limestone is above timberline, an open-pit limestone mine would be visible from a long distance. Limestone abundant elsewhere, especially east of Mississippi River. Unlikely to mine here because of expense.
Same goes for other minerals: Too expensive to mine here due to high altitude and long transportation over Continental Divide.
12. Water quality is a primary impact of mining operations. Fossil Ridge has abundant clean waters.

13. Bandora Gold mine near Silverton polluting S. Mineral Creek

13. But most mines have polluted surface streams and rivers. Climax pollutes the drinking water supply of the City of Denver.

14. South side of FR viewed from Parlin

14. Another threat is an inappropriate compromise, devised by Senator William Armstrong. Would cut out most of southern side of FR. Armstrong was trying to allow motorcycles and mining while still appearing to protect the land. However, this compromise destroys the integrity of the wilderness and would open some of the most sensitive and valuable areas up to harmful development. The Friends of Fossil Ridge strongly opposes this compromise.

15. Cameron Creek

15. Other compromises are more acceptable, such as the elimination of Cameron Creek on the north side of Fossil Ridge, because it is largely private property. Also, the 1970s RARE processes already eliminated the least wild lands from the study area.

16. Motorcycle sign at Summerville Trailhead, along Taylor Road

16. The Friends of FR do not oppose use of motorcycles on public lands, but motorcycles do not belong above treeline on tundra. Because the Forest Service is encouraging this inappropriate use, motorcycles loom as the single greatest immediate threat to Fossil Ridge. The USFS is encouraging motorcycles into this Wilderness Study Area through this sign at the Summerville Trailhead on the Taylor Road, and

17. Zoning map from GMUG National Forest Plan

17. ...through the zoning it imposed in its 50-year plan which designates all FR trails for motorized recreation.

This is bad because:

- Packs of 40 or more
- Harm to trails
- Observations of motorcycles on tundra. (Tundra regrows at a very slowly, if ever. ORV's cause serious erosion. Barry Goldwater said ORVs are Japan's way of getting even with the US.)

18. Elk in dense timber in FR

18. Timber cutting: Some proposed in 50-year plan, though no sales imminent. There are many better places to get trees, including Spring Creek just a few miles north of FR. In Gunnison basin, harsh environment makes for small, slow-growing trees.

WHY WILDERNESS?

19. Person and horse on fossiliferous limestone

19. First wilderness attribute the obvious: Sea fossils above timberline.

20. Mill Lake and Fairview Peak

20. (describe)

21. Fairview Lake

21. (describe)

22. Crystal Lake, at foot of Henry Mountain

22. (describe)

23. Henry Lake, at foot of Henry Mountain

23. Henry Lake is the largest in FR; a nine-mile hike in from Taylor Road

24. Summerville Trail, near Taylor Road

24. Easy access: Two main trails begin at paved Taylor Road; Gold Creek a two-wheel-drive up to three trailheads, then short hikes to four lakes.

25. Scientists on raft on Henry Lake, w. equipment

25. Scientific research: WSC professor studied aquatic biology in Henry Lake; fossils of great value to science of Paleontology

26. Backpacking class in FR

26. Education: Geology field camps and trips by WSC and Univ of Minnesota; used by WSC ski team for cross-country running; WSC backpacking trips.

27. Pitkin Town Hall

28. General recreation values high: Economic importance to Pitkin (here, Town Hall) and all other communities of Gunnison County.

28. Hiking the Fossil Ridge trail

28. The Town Councils of Pitkin and Crested Butte have endorsed wilderness because of importance to tourism. Tourism the lifeflood of our economy.

29. Fisherman at Lamphier Lake

29. Fishing: here at Lamphier Lake. Second only to skiing as prime generator of recreation dollars

30 Fishing at Henry Lake

31. Creek and caught fish

32 Hunters in snow on Shaw Ridge

32 Hunting: Hunting and fishing bring \$1 billion to Colorado each year. Three outfitters take clients into Fossil Ridge regularly. Their customers often complain about the motorcycles.

33. Horses and flowers

33. Many of the outfitters' customers just come to enjoy the delights of the land

34. Sleeping fisherman

34. Some just come to relax.

35. Meadow in Crystal Creek

35. Wildlife: About 1000 elk use FR for migration and calving. Crystal Creek excellent habitat for calving.

36. Deer in winter below FR

36. The CO DOW said that the game management unit which includes FR generates \$2 million/year in economic activity by hunters and that FR is critical to the management of that area.

37. Bighorn sheep on Lottis Creek

37. Fossil Ridge also has a population of bighorn sheep and about two dozen mountain goats.

38. Horse-drawn wagon on Phelps Ranch

38. Ranching: Still an important culture to Gunnison County. This is one of the few places you can still see horse-drawn carts for feeding cattle

39. Hayfield in Quartz Creek

39. Conflicts between wilderness and ranching are minimal. In FR, they are none. The area is roadless and ranchers already use horses only to access grazing allotments. Roadless conditions prevent poaching.

40. Lamphier Basin and Fossil Ridge

40. Water quantity: Alpine areas act as catch basins, holding vast quantities of water. High altitude areas like FR account for just 2% of Colorado's land, yet they supply 26% of Colorado's water. Fossil Ridge's 11 lakes are prime storage areas.

41. Creek and flowers

41. Water quality: Clean and pure waters flow out of Fossil Ridge to the Taylor River and Quartz Creek drainages, supplying the underground and surface waters for much of Gunnison County. This clean water is essential to the resort communities and ranching industry surrounding the area. Wilderness designation is the best way to protect this clean, abundant water.

42. Looking over Crystal Basin from the ridge

42. Views: Spectacular in every direction of four big mountain ranges. 22 of Colorado's 54 peaks over 14,000 feet are visible. Hikers can walk gentle, rolling tundra for twenty miles without going below timberline.

43. Collecting fossils

43. And at their feet, hikers can find 300 million year old sea fossils now lying at 12,000 feet.

44. Old cabin in FR

44. History: Several old cabins and small mines add a sense of history to the place.

45. Trails signs

45. Roadless: USFS has declared that Fossil Ridge is extremely wild, easily qualifying as a potential wilderness. USFS, though, has not recommended in favor of wilderness as a concession to the mining and motorcycle interests.

CONCLUSION:

46. High mountains and valleys

47. Protection of Fossil Ridge as a part of the National Wilderness Preservation System is important to the economy of Gunnison County...

47. Horseback rider 47. ...The 55,000-acre-area now contributes significant non-motorized recreation opportunities which can co-exist. Eliminating these established uses through the development of a mine or a motorcycle mecca could harm water quality, reduce the outfitters' horse-packing business, deplete the fish and wildlife populations, decrease opportunities for science and education and drive hikers elsewhere.
48. Tarn above Henry Lake 48. In contrast, wilderness designation will provide long-term benefits which will not consume the land and its life.
49. Flowers 49. Fossil Ridge is the heart of the Gunnison country. Any alteration of Fossil Ridge affects the beauty of Gunnison.
50. Columbines 50. Please join us in writing Congress to demand preservation of Fossil Ridge. Request an immediate end to motorized off-road-vehicle use. Be sure to mention the importance of ample water to wilderness.
51. Henry Mountain 51. Please join the Friends of Fossil Ridge. \$20 (12 for student/low income)
52. Henry Mountain from Crystal Creek 52. Tell your friends about Fossil Ridge. If you know of any organizations that might like to see this show, please tell us about them.

Thank you for attending. I can now answer any questions.

EXTRA SLIDES

67-70: Union Park, site of proposed NECO dam. #70 is mouth of Lottis Canyon, proposed dam site.

74-78: Motorcycle slides:

- 74. Fossil Ridge trail near Gold Creek campground
- 75. Motorcycle ruts in Fossil Ridge trail
- 76. Water flowing down a trail in ruts
- 77. Motorcycles in Oh-Be-Joyful
- 78. USFS motorcycle in USFS truck