



COLORADO MOUNTAIN CLUB

BACKPACKING SECTION



BACKCOUNTRY CACHE

A Newsletter for Members of CMC Backpacking Section

February 2026

CHAIR'S CORNER - Louise Campbell-Blair



Several BPX Members are already thinking about summer backpacking and sending in requests for trips. Thank you and keep them coming. Your BPX Trip Leaders will be gathering for the **BPX Trip Leader Summit on March 19** to discuss plans for the year, so this is a great time to let us know where you want to go.

And now for the **BIG NEWS!** We're shaking things up for this year's BPX Member Summit — and yes, that means we're ditching the PowerPoints and heading **OUTSIDE** where we belong.

Welcome to '**BPX Tents & Tastes**' at CMC Basecamp on **Saturday June 6**. Here's what's on the agenda:

☐ **Tour of Tents**

A handful of BPX Members will show off their dialed-in systems — from ultralight ninja setups to comfy campground castles. You'll get to peek inside, ask questions, and steal their best ideas. Lightweight, regular, full-glamp... it's all fair game.

☐ **Elevate Your Meals Workshop**

Then we turn up the heat with Chef Corso who'll share fast, easy, ridiculously tasty recipes to level up your outdoor eats. Less fuss. More flavor. Zero sad trail meals.

But here's the deal — this only works with **YOU**.

Want to show off your setup and be part of the Tour of Tents? Each approved volunteer will get a special appreciation gift. Shoot us an email (cmcbpx@gmail.com) and say you're in! We'll follow up with the details.

BPX Tents & Tastes Registration

But you can already start planning for the upcoming season before then! We will send out an email with the **2026 BPX Trips Catalog** on **May 1**. And stay tuned to the CMC Website--BPX Trip Leaders have already posted some summer trips, so 'read all about them'.

Stay connected with us – we love hearing from you on our socials and at cmcbpx@gmail.com.

7th ANNUAL BPX TRIP LEADER SUMMIT - March 19

Open to all Active and Prospective BPX Trip Leaders. Get tips for leading successful trips, share stories over food and drinks, and learn about the upcoming season's trips. Which one will you lead? How many will you be leading? Join in person at the CMC Basecamp or via Zoom.

Register

BPX EDUCATIONAL EVENTS

Learn How to Navigate with CalTopo

Thu, Feb 26 06:30 to 08:00 PM

Getting lost is very uncomfortable at the least, and terrifying at the worst. The good news is that this can be avoided. Learn how to navigate with CalTopo and be safe in the backcountry. This training is geared towards trip participants as well as Trip Leaders. In it we will cover how to import a GPS Track from the trip leader into your smartphone, then how to follow that Track while recording your Route while in the field. Plus more! Registration opens on January 20 at 7AM.

Register

WATCH PREVIOUS EVENTS

CMC Trip Leader and Instructor, Wayne Howell, explores the essential skills and systems that make winter trips not just possible, but enjoyable—including how to stay warm, build effective shelter and sleep systems, and fuel your body with smart winter nutrition. This session breaks it down into practical, approachable pieces, helping you gain a new appreciation for snowy landscapes and crisp nights, and inspiring you to take the next step and truly embrace the wonder of winter.



Joys and Wonder

Winter Backpacking



Dan Schweissing, CMC Trip Leader and Instructor, shares the inside scoop on reserving a 10th Mountain Division hut, assembling a strong leadership team, and navigating CMC scheduling, reimbursement, and trip activation. He also presents effective strategies for communicating with participants, managing sign-ups and waitlists, coordinating transportation and food, and preparing for changing weather and avalanche conditions.

WINTER BACKPACKING WITHOUT TENTS An Expert's Guide to Hut Trips



BPX TIPS OF THE MONTH

Are Satellite Messenger Devices Soon to Be Extinct?

T-Mobile recently came out with a new satellite messaging service, “T-Satellite”, in partnership with Starlink (Elon Musk). It is an add-on for T-Mobile users, and a standalone service of \$10/month for non-T-Mobile users. It is available on every “newish” phone, regardless of your primary provider. Service is supplied by more than 650 low-orbit satellites working basically as cell towers in space.

Backcountry testing by Nathan Pipenberg of Backpacker found it to work very well. When you lose regular cell service, in just a few seconds the satellite service kicks in, allowing you to communicate via your regular messaging apps. For the person receiving the message, it looks just like a regular message--they can read and reply to it without ever knowing it came via satellite. For newer phones, T-Satellite supports adventure and weather apps like AccuWeather, Google Maps, Gai GPS, and Trailforks. You can even use WhatsApp for calls.

Testing from multiple locations without cell service, Nathan found that messaging, photo-sharing, and location all worked with no issues. He observed that on average, messages were sent in 10-15 seconds, and even photos were sent in a few seconds. In comparison, a Garmin InReach Mini 3 Plus can send text messages in about 30 seconds and images in about a minute. Like other satellite services, however, anything that blocks the sky can slow down transmissions.

Other phone-based satellite services like Apple, Google, and Verizon require you to manually activate the satellite service each time you lose cell coverage, and you must point your phone until it finds a satellite and then move with it. T-Satellite automatically connects, and you don't have to point your phone. It also is faster at finding a satellite connection and then better at maintaining it. (Apple's service is currently still free).

There are still some drawbacks to consider, however, before ditching your dedicated messenger device:

Battery Usage. Compared to having a strong cell signal, Nathan's phone used about twice as much battery power with satellite service. As with other cell-based satellite services, T-Satellite is not available in airplane mode, so phones burn energy searching for both cell and satellite signals. A Garmin Mini 3, on the other hand, will last at least 2 weeks with tracking every 10 minutes.

Even a single bar of cell service, while often not enough to reliably send or receive a text, will prevent the satellite from engaging. This is a fairly common occurrence on a backpacking trip and can be a serious problem in an emergency. The issue is actually with phone manufactures, and T-Mobile has asked them to have a simple “on-off” option. Until then, dedicated satellite messenger devices are significantly more reliable.

Reference: Pipenberg, Nathan. “Is T-Mobile's New Satellite Service the End of the Dedicated Satellite Messenger?”. Backpacker, 7 Jan. 2026, <https://www.backpacker.com/gear/t-satellite-backpacking-test/>

Mapping Apps Commonly Used by CMC Trip Leaders and Instructors When Investigating Snow and Avalanche Condition for Trails and Getting There

Online Resources Commonly Used by CMC Trip Leaders and Instructors When Investigating Snow and Avalanche Conditions, for Trails and Getting There

Most have desktop *and* app available ❄️ X = notably good ❄️ All have social media REM 1.8.25

SERVICE	Trail Maps	Snow Depth	Road Conditions	Weather Forecast	Snow Forecast	Avalanche conditions	Slope Angle Map	Push Alerts	Premium / 2026
AllTrails	X			X					\$36/yr
CAIC		X		X	X	X		X	Free but can donate
Aspect Avy <small>App only</small>	X					X	X	X	Free
Open Snow	Ski resorts / focus	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	\$50/yr basic
National Weather Service (USA)				X	X			X	NA
OnX Backcountry	X	X		X	X	X	X		\$30/100/yr
CoTrex (CO land managers)	X			X		X			Free but can donate
GaiaGPS	X	X		X	X	X	X		\$60/yr 3 mo. free CMC member
CalTopo	X	X		X	X	X	X		\$20 app \$100 desktop
Go I-70 (state)			X					X	NA
CO 511 (private) <small>App only</small>			X						Free but can donate

Courtesy Robbie Monsma

TREAD LIGHTLY

Sustainability, Recycling, Leave No Trace

CLOSED: Seasonal Wildlife Closures at multiple parks Feb 1- July 31

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO is one of the seven principals of Leave No Trace. Each year seasonal wildlife closures protect species at sensitive times in their life cycles during the months of February through July. Protect the wildlife you love. Respect seasonal wildlife closures. Do your research and know before you go.



BPX WINTER TRIPS

Not ready to store your camping gear for the winter just yet? Wayne Howell has 2 BPX winter trips--no crowds, no bugs,

no bears; just a cozy night beneath the winter sky for a true cold-season adventure.

Dates / Registration Date	Difficulty	Trip
Mar 25-26 Wed-Thu	Easy	Lost Lake from Hessie TH (Roosevelt National Forest)
Apr 2-3 Thu-Fri / Mar 2	Moderate	Wind River Basin from East Portal TH (RMNP)

Continue to check the CMC Website since Leaders add trips throughout the season.

DENVER BACKPACKING SCHOOL

Registration Opens March 1!

Every year, the Denver Group's Basic Backpacking Course introduces scores of hikers to the art and science of backpacking in the Rockies. Find more info [here](#).

In this school, you'll learn everything from gear to trip planning. We have modules on food, pack weight, navigation, weather, what to wear, and more. After the lectures and field day, students are eligible to sign up for three trips in which they can practice their skills.

The lectures run in June on weeknights. Trips occur late June through September. We recommend students take Wilderness Trekking School first, but it is not a requirement.

This school is super fun. Students and instructors make lifelong friends here. It's a great way to prep for a lifetime of backpacking in Colorado, with the CMC and on your own.

Questions? Email the directors at cmcbackpacker@gmail.com.

SCHOOLS

Note: CMC has received approval from A3 (American Avalanche Association) as a Recognized Provider Network, with alignment to A3's risk management practices and confirmation that volunteer and professional instructors are using the AIARE curriculum. To become a certified AIARE instructor takes about 4 years and continuing annual education. CMC certified instructors are: Uwe Sartori (Denver), Ken Yaphe (Denver), Kristin Buckland (PPG), and Jill Yarger (Boulder Group).

DENVER	
DAY HIKER SCHOOL	More info here
CPR/AED FOR OUTDOOR ENTHUSIASTSTS	Mar 5
INTRO TO HIKING SAFETY	Mar 25
WILDERNESS TREKKING SCHOOL	Starts April 7
WILDERNESS SURVIVAL SCHOOL	Starts May 14
BACKCOUNTRY INCIDENT MANAGEMENT SCHOOL	May 30 Aug 8 Sep 12

PIKES PEAK	
AIARE AVALANCHE RESCUE	Mar 8
WILDERNESS FUNDAMENTALS	Starts May 11 Sep 14
LAND NAVIGATION	Starts Jun 1 Sep 28
INTRO TO BACKPACKING	Starts Jun 17 Aug 5

NORTHERN COLORADO	
AIARE L1	Starts Feb 27
MOUNTAIN HIKING COURSE	Starts March 9
BACKCOUNTRY INCIDENT MANAGEMENT SCHOOL	Jul 25

BOULDER	
BACKCOUNTRY INCIDENT MANAGEMENT SCHOOL	Aug 29

STATE	
WILDERNESS FIRST AID/FIRST RESPONDER*	Multiple Offerings - Check CMC Website here
TRIP LEADER SCHOOL	More Info here
TRIP LEADER SCHOOL SCENARIOS	Boulder Denver Pikes Peak Western Slope
AIARE AVALANCHE RESCUE	Feb 21 Feb 22
AIARE L1	Starts Mar 6 Mar 13 Apr 10
AVALANCHE AWARE HYBRID COURSE FOR CMC LEADERSHIP	More Info here

*In collaboration with CMC Youth Programs, childcare will be offered for the Wilderness First Aid Certification Course on Feb 21 for kids 6 and up. More info [here](#).

Continue to check the CMC Website for additional courses.

CMC Backpacking Section Supports Leave No Trace

[View BPX Calendar](#)



The Colorado Mountain Club

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