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Trail Stewardship from an App: CMC's New Recreation Impact Monitoring System (RIMS) Mobile App

A new way to volunteer and keep your social distance! Using the CMC RIMS mobile application, hikers, cyclists and other outdoor recreationists can report issues and collect data for local land managers while maintaining Safer-at-Home protocols.

Last summer, the Colorado Mountain Club (CMC) launched a new mobile app and monitoring system to help public land managers collect data on trails and recreation facilities. CMC RIMS (Recreation Impact Monitoring System) is crowd-sourcing information from volunteers on trail conditions, dispersed campsite proliferation, visitor use and more to enhance stewardship efforts and public land planning initiatives. The mobile app collects GPS info, photos and field reports so that agencies, counties, and municipalities can prioritize projects and get a better sense of how recreation use and natural resource impacts overlap.

“After years of managing trail projects and working on public land planning, we realized the agencies don’t have a well-consolidated source of information on recreation issues and maintenance needs to guide their work,” said Julie Mach, CMC Conservation Director. “The agencies are so under-staffed they cannot even get out on the ground to identify issues, so volunteers and recreationists are a great resource to collect data while they are out hiking, riding or camping. We are excited to bring all of this information into one place and improve the efficiency of data-driven decision making.”

CMC has partnered with the CANA Foundation to build the app with input from the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, local stewardship organizations, and a variety of stakeholders involved in the Chaffee County Envision project. These groups prioritized four modules for the 2019 launch: Trail Assessments; Campsite Inventory; Signs & Facilities Assessment; and Visitor Use Monitoring. In 2020, CMC is also adding a reporting feature where volunteers can log trash pick-up and other stewardship activities. Now, as we follow our Safer-at-Home protocols, is a perfect time to capture use of Colorado’s recreational resources, the activities that people are taking part in, and the impacts that you are seeing. The CMC RIMS app puts the “power of data collection” in the hands of the public.

RIMS is data-driven – the more people who enter data into the app, the more information will be available to make good resource management decisions. Every assessment collected in the app has a chance to make a difference. To date, over 425 volunteers have completed more than 1,900 assessments using the CMC RIMS mobile app. The app can be used on any Apple or Android mobile device, including smartphones and tablets, and works offline to facilitate data collection in remote backcountry settings. Participants or organizations interested in using the app can attend a training online – details at www.cmc.org/app.

For more information about how land managers can access the data, contact Julie Mach at conservation@cmc.org

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The Colorado Mountain Club is a non-profit organization dedicated to outdoor recreation, conservation, and education. Founded in 1912, the CMC acts as a gateway to the mountains for novices and experts alike, offering over 3,000 year-round activities, events, and schools centered on outdoor recreation for its 7,000 members. The Colorado Mountain Club helps individuals maximize living in an outdoor playground and connects people with other adventure-loving outdoor enthusiasts creating a tight-knit community of responsible outdoor enthusiasts.

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