

Hidden Gems summer hikes series under way

Hikes are part of wilderness campaign

Sun staff

Hidden Gems wilderness campaign volunteers are leading hikes in the Colorado backcountry to give people a chance to explore areas that have been proposed for wilderness designation.

The Hidden Gems Wilderness Campaign is a grassroots effort to expand protected wilderness areas in the White River National Forest. It is led by four wilderness groups, including the Wilderness Workshop, the Colorado Mountain Club, The Wilderness Society and the Colorado Environmental Coalition.

Hikes are planned from Summit County to far western Colorado. Go to www.whiteriverwild.org and click on hikes/events to see the full calendar of hikes and locales, and to register to take part in the hikes.

The hikes planned for the Carbondale area and the Roaring Fork Valley include:

Saturday, June 20, Crystal River/Gallo Hill — A moderately strenuous ascent out of the Crystal Valley into the existing Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness, passing through these two proposed wilderness additions en route.

Saturday, June 27, Woods Lake — This relatively easy ramble in the upper Frying-

pan Valley starts at Woods Lake (the actual lake) and traverses the proposed wilderness addition of the same name to Eagle Lake, just inside the Holy Cross Wilderness.

Friday-Saturday, June 26-27, Red Table — A long ascent up the Ruedi Overlook Trail to a flat campsite and 360-degree views from the top of this long, little-visited ridge that's one of the flagships of the Hidden Gems proposal.

Sunday, July 5, Thompson Creek headwaters — An exploration of the remote yet surprisingly gentle terrain of the Thompson Creek headwaters, southwest of Carbondale; this loop entails some bushwhacking and makes for a fairly long day.

Tuesday, July 7, Hay Park — A repeat performance of last year's popular full-moon hike up the Thomas Lakes Trail, at the northern base of Mt. Sopris.

Sunday, July 12, Basalt Mountain — A hike up Seven Castles Creek in the Fryingpan Valley.

Wednesday, July 15, Thompson Creek headwaters — Same as the July 5 hike.

Sunday, July 19, Huntsman Ridge — A fairly steep-ascent ending with panoramic views. Be prepared to bushwhack down to loop back to the trailhead.



Hikers traversing Huntsman Ridge, near McClure Pass, on one of last summer's Hidden Gems outings. This Saturday the Hidden Gems Hike Series will explore the Placita Trail, near Redstone. Photo by Aron Ralston

Saturday, July 25, Hunter Creek — A fairly easy ramble past the popular lunch-ride loop of lower Hunter Creek into the less-frequented terrain that is proposed to be added to the Hunter-Fryingpan Wilderness.

Sunday, Aug. 2, Red Table — A steady ascent on the Ruedi Overlook Trail leading to a forested shoulder of Red Table with views of the reservoir.

Saturday, Aug. 8, Treasure Mountain — A challenging ascent of a rugged, hard-to-

access thirteener that's proposed to be added to the existing Raggeds Wilderness, near Marble.

Saturday, Aug. 22, Ruby Lakes — The hike to Petroleum Lake and the string of lakes above it is fairly easy, and the rugged alpine scenery — almost all of it above tree-line — is phenomenal. (High-clearance four-wheel-drive vehicles needed; if you have one, let trip leader know.)