



- Collin Stewart/Special to the Vail Daily



- Maureen Perryman/Special to the Vail Daily

Hidden Gems

The Hidden Gems hikes are part of the Hidden Gems Wilderness Campaign. The campaign is a grassroots effort to expand and protect designated wilderness in and around the White River National Forest. It is led by the Wilderness Workshop, the Colorado Mountain Club, The Wilderness Society and the Colorado Environmental Coalition.

Hidden Gems hikes remote Vail Valley lakes

Final Vial Valley hike of the season goes to Ragged Lake and Lost Lake on Red Table Mountain

COLLIN STEWART
SPECIAL TO THE VAIL DAILY
VAIL, CO COLORADO,

VAIL VALLEY, Colorado — This Saturday the Hidden Gems Wilderness campaign will lead the final Vail Valley hike of its summer series to Ragged Lake and Lost Lake on Red Table Mountain.

This is a moderate, seven-mile roundtrip hike with 1500 feet of elevation gain, and is mostly off-trail. These remote lakes rest under the rugged cirques on the north side of Red Table Mountain.

This hike is sponsored by our local Ferdinand Hayden Trout Unlimited group, an organization dedicated to conserving, protecting, and restoring North America's coldwater fisheries and their watersheds. To sign up for this free hike or others to Hidden Gems proposal areas, visit www.whiteriverwild.org and click on hikes/events.

Red Table Mountain extends for 18 miles and in places rises 5,000 feet above the valley floor. The Hidden Gems is proposing the majority of this maroon-rock wild-land as wilderness.

Along with Red Table Mountain, the Hidden Gems Wilderness Campaign is championing major new wilderness additions on the White River National Forest and nearby Bureau of Land Management lands in Summit, Eagle, Gunnison and Pitkin counties. The proposal will create several brand-new, stand-alone wilderness areas, such as Red Table Mountain, and significantly enlarge the existing ones. The campaign aims to introduce legislation to Congress in October that will finalize the wilderness protection.

The White River National Forest, stretching from Vail Pass to Parachute, comprises a landscape of national importance. It's the country's most visited national forest, and along with nearby Bureau of Land Management lands it straddles an ecologically vital portion of the Upper Colorado River watershed. These public lands contain a critical stretch of a continentwide wildlife migration corridor, and provide core habitat for Colorado's recently reintroduced lynx population.

Most of the existing designated wilderness in Colorado is of the high-elevation, "rock and ice" variety. Still left unprotected are the areas targeted in the Hidden Gems Campaign, which exist at the more ecologically diverse middle elevations and provide habitat for imperiled species.

Wilderness designation is the strongest, most permanent protection for untamed landscapes on public lands, ensuring the opportunity for future generations to experience the wild solitude found in these places today.

To learn more, visit www.whiteriverwild.org or contact Eagle County Campaign Coordinator, Susie Kincade, 970-328-5472, susiek@whiteriverwild.org.