Trappers Lake is the second largest natural lake in Colorado located at the head of the White River on the Meeker District of the White River National Forest. It sits in a large basin surrounded by volcanic cliffs of the Flat Top Mesa. The lake is three hundred acres in size with crystal clear water filled with native Yellowstone Cutthroat trout. Surrounding the lake are rolling benches covered with Engelmann spruce and open meadows. I can still remember on a crisp, clear and quiet fall morning how the lake reflected the background of the surrounding cliffs. However for all its beauty and undeveloped wilderness character Trappers Lake was vulnerable to development from the time the National Forest System was established until the area was finally included in the Flat Top Wilderness Area in 1972.

In 1919, a young Forest Service landscape architect by the name of Arthur Carhart, a lifelong advocate for wilderness preservation, was sent to Trappers Lake to plan a summer home development. Summer home developments had been the rage during that period. After inventorying the area he saw how special Trappers Lake was and recommended that the lake and its surroundings be preserved in its natural state with no man made developments. His rationale was one of the early concepts of the protection of wild places in the wilderness preservation system that was created by Congress some 45 years later. The story that has since been told is that his recommendation was accepted.

Like Arthur, I was also a boy from Iowa, going to Iowa State University and majoring in landscape architecture. Arthur was the first graduate of that program. From my courses I knew of Arthur and his recommendations for protection of the Boundary Water Canoe Area in Minnesota.

Continued on page 3
Not often does our NMFSH Board get a chance to be together in person, but when we do it is a great opportunity to share our ideas, reflect, adjust, and focus. That is exactly what we did a couple weeks ago. A dozen of us spent two days together and were able to devote quality time to aligning ourselves and the work that lies ahead for us in the next year or so. The Chief was able to attend part of our meeting and after a briefing of what we are doing and what our plans are, he indicated that he was “more excited about the Museum than he has ever been.”

We spent our first day working on how we can build stronger relationships and connections with supporters. We agreed to shorten our mission statement to be more concise and effective in communicating what and who we are. It now is simply stated “To share the rich history and story of America’s Conservation Legacy”. This is what we are about and this is who we are. The Forest Service is and has been the cornerstone of that “Conservation Legacy” ever since Theodore Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot created the organization in 1905. We believe that by using stories, lessons, and history we can not only sustain the heritage, but also strengthen the appreciation of our Nation’s public lands throughout the country.

As we worked through a revision of the strategic plan, we agreed that the time is right to complete what we have set out to do. It is our intention to be ready for construction of our National Conservation Legacy and Education Center by the fall of 2018. That is just over eighteen months from now. I believe we have the capability to do this and I think we will never have more energy and commitment than we have right now to do this. I know it will be difficult, but it is certainly not impossible. We need to believe that we can do it and we need to do it now. We have been in the starting gate too long and it is time for action. Our strategic plan lays out what we have to do, but it will be our Board, our committees, our supporters, our partners, and you, our members, who will make this happen.

To quote Forrest Gump: “And that’s all I have to say about that.”
I was not aware of his recommendation to leave Trappers Lake in its natural state. I came to the White River National Forest and Trappers Lake in 1959. I headed up a survey crew of possible recreation opportunities for the Outdoor Recreation Resource Review Commission, a nationwide inventory. I hiked and rode horseback around Trappers Lake and into what was then the Flat Top Primitive Area.

While I spent two summers on the inventory, my mind wasn’t on wilderness or saving wilderness. I was focused on getting a job with the Forest Service. In 1961 I was hired by the White River National Forest as its first landscape architect. One of my first jobs was to redesign the existing campground at Maroon Lake. Like Trappers Lake, it was a special place visited by thousands of visitors, even back in 1961. When I visited, a road ran to the end of the lake. Vehicles were lined up bumper to bumper along the shore. People had their lawn chairs on the eroded shoreline and the alpine meadow showed the wear of exposed soil. I recommended removing the road and locating parking away from the lake and out of sight. That was approved and the road removed.

My next major design job was Trappers Lake. My orders were to do a master plan for the lake which would include a resort with a marina, a campground and access roads. The existing resort below the lake and a Forest Service campground had been there since the early 1900s. The resort owner had been pressing the Forest Service to allow a new resort on the lake.

The White River National Forest 1959 map showed Trappers Lake to be outside of the Flat Top Primitive Area. Being in the general management zone, it was available to be developed in a way that it would have made the area ineligible for wilderness designation in later years. At the time the area got very little public use, mainly fishermen and hunters. It is so isolated that it was difficult to get to. A Colorado Game and Fish hatchery and a small cabin existed along the lake shore. The cove next to the cabin was an excellent place for a resort and marina.
I had concerns. I had struggled with what to do with the development that had affected Maroon Lake. It’s as scenic as Trappers Lake. A resort or any development on the lake would degrade this special place. We turned our attention to finding a campground location. During our hiking we came on a large bench above the lake and to the west. The area looked feasible to put in a sizable recreation site but less desirable for a resort. From the site you could walk out to a wonderful vista of Trappers Lake and the Flat Top’s cliffs.

I took my boss to the area and we walked the resort and campground locations. I told him I recommended against the resort but for the campground. The last thing I did was walk him out to the overlook we had discovered and he was sold.

The resort was not approved, but the campground construction started soon afterward, about 1964. I later learned that Arthur Carhart was upset when he saw the plan for a resort and campground on Trappers Lake. That plan was a colored presentation on an easel to show the public what kind of recreation planning the Forest Service was doing. I was unsuccessful in contacting Arthur Carhart to explain, however the incident perked my interest in his writings. I combed the Forest Service files and found his report on Trappers Lake, and another report on Mount Evans. I also read some of his books about National Forest issues. Arthur’s report on Mount Evans and his writings indicate he was a landscape architect and true to his profession.

In the Mount Evans report he described the emergence of the automobile and the need to provide public opportunities to be able to drive to and enjoy the great outdoors. He even advocated for a tramway to the top of the mountain so the people of Denver could enjoy it. His philosophy was not to discourage development but to do it in such a way that the inherent values of the forest were not destroyed. Years later I found that he was also an advocate of privatizing recreation development on public lands, such as ski areas. He could have advocated for the cabins but there was, in his mind, a higher use for Trappers Lake, and rightly so.

The appropriate and lasting decision was finally made.

**SAVING TRAPPERS LAKE (continued)**

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**About The Author**

The author, Jim Hagemeier spent over 35 years with the US Forest Service in a variety of positions. He started in fire as a smokejumper, then hired full time as a landscape architect. He then became a district ranger, forest resource staff, deputy forest supervisor and director of planning in both the Eastern and Northern Region. Jim now resides in Missoula, Montana.
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Nan Keiser Christianson

Nan retired (or thought she retired) from the Forest Service after a 38-year career in
which she started as a geologist on the Idaho Panhandle NF. She served in minerals,
recreation, NEPA planning, lands, wilderness, community development & partnerships,
fire administration & restoration, public & governmental affairs, & law enforcement staff
positions on the Gallatin NF & Bitterroot NFs, as a District Ranger and Deputy Forest Sup
on the Bitterroot, in State & Private Forestry in the Northern & Intermountain Regions,
as an Assistant Station Director for the Rocky Mountain Research Station, as Acting
Director of Grey Towers National Historic Site and Acting Deputy Regional Forester
in the Rocky Mountain Region, then as Deputy Regional Forester in the Intermountain
Region. She is now working part-time as a rehired annuitant for the Business Operations – Human Resources group.
In the end, she had the opportunity to work as a Line Officer at the District, Forest, Region & Station, and WO-
Detached levels and in all three natural resource branches of the agency: NFS, S&PF, and R&D. She was actively
engaged in wildland fire risk mitigation, suppression, and community engagement throughout her career. Nan retired
to her small farm along the Bitterroot River in Montana that serves as her ‘base camp’ for gardening, riding her horse,
hiking extensively, cross-country skiing, traveling, writing, and volunteering in her communities of interests and
place. She is active in Trout Unlimited, the Performing Arts, Community & Tourism Development, local Agriculture,
and her strategic planning & facilitation consulting firm.

Richard C. (Rich) Stem

Rich retired in 2007 from the Deputy Regional Forester position in the Rocky Mountain
Region. Before that he was a Regional Director in the Northeast Region with responsibility
for resource management from 1999 until 2002. He was Deputy Forest Supervisor on the
Willamette National Forest in Oregon from 1996 until 1999. He was Mt. Saint Helens
Incident Commander after the main blast in 1980. He worked in numerous forester
positions before that in Montana and Oregon. Rich began his Forest Service career in
Montana. He was in the U. S. Air Force’s Strategic Air Command from 1969 until 1973.
Rich is an experienced and highly respected professional forester with 28 years of
resource management experience in government organizations. He is recognized as a
versatile leader with the ability to develop and lead diverse external and governmental teams and organizations. He
has broad experience in program management including engineering, biology, geology, archeology, construction,
finance, administration and logistics, as well as developing external partnerships and conflict resolution. Additionally,
he has extensive experience with the ICS system and it’s utilization on catastrophic events and restoration.
He presently does consulting work and lives in Alder, MT with his wife Karen. He also currently serves on the Board
of the NAFSR.
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