

SOLITUDE MONITORING PROTOCOL

1. **Purpose.** To collect data for the USFS on the experience of solitude along the following trails (see attached maps) and from occupied campsites along such trails.

Holy Cross Wilderness

- Missouri Lakes Trail
- Mount of the Holy Cross Trail

Eagles Nest Wilderness

- Pitkin Trail
- Upper Piney Trail
- Cataract Loop Trail
- Surprise Lake, Upper Cataract-Mirror Lake Trail

2. **Data Collection Period.** May 25 to September 30, 2025. For each trail we need data from a total of at least:
 - Three weekdays (Monday through Thursday) and
 - Three weekend days (Friday through Sunday)
3. **Selection of Hikes.** To start, pick your own trail, day, and time period. Please sign up on the following spreadsheet: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1IzPJUtgm-1u9IPwac-SdMBt2cRSETX-1NxbN-uYoJ5c/edit?usp=sharing>
4. **Duration of Monitoring Hikes:** Minimum of four hours. Ideally, full extent of trails (see attached maps) so that you reach the most heavily used campsite areas.
5. **Data Collection Form.** Record the data on each monitoring hike you do on the Solitude Monitoring Form attached. Print out the form yourself or get blank copies at the Dillon or Minturn Ranger Station (please contact the people below prior to coming in so they can print the forms). You can drop off your completed forms at either office or email a photo of them directly to Mark Steinbrecher (for Eagle County), mark.steinbrecher@usda.gov or Matt Barnes (for Summit County), Matthew.Barnes2@usda.gov
6. **Traveling Encounters Form.** The upper half of the Form includes basic information about you and your monitoring hike. For “Management Area” and “Monitoring Area Name” just provide the name of trail you are doing.

In the “Day Use” section, record both the number of groups and the total number of individuals encountered. An easy way to record this is, for example: if you encounter five hikers in a party, a solo hiker, and then two hikers you would write “5, 1, 2.” This single notation system records you encountered three groups and a total of 8 hikers. Total the total number of days users at the end of the Day Use section.

Only record users you encounter within the Wilderness boundaries. If you come across the same people, count them again as long as there is at least 15 minutes between your two encounters.

Use the same technique for “Overnight Use”. If people have backpacks or are at a campsite with a tent, you can assume they are overnight users.

In the following section “Total Group Encounters” just list the total of the number of Day Users Groups, Overnight User Groups, and then the total of both such groups. Do not report here the number of total individuals in all such groups.

7. **Camp Encounters Form.** Use the left side of this section of the Form to record the number of occupied (at least by a tent) campsites you see from the trail. Number them sequentially – e.g., Campsite #1, 2,” etc. For each campsite, briefly describe the rough location and the number of tents at the campsite.

If you are comfortable doing so, visit each such campsite and note in the middle column the number of campsites you can see or hear from that campsite. Then move to the next campsite and do the same (even if you have already counted them). This helps the USFS determine how much solitude each campsite has. If you do not feel comfortable visiting a campsite, just estimate how many other campsites could likely be seen or heard from that campsite.

8. **Combining a Monitoring Hike with a Patrol.** You can either combine a Monitoring hike with a normal ESWA patrol or not – your choice. If you do not combine it with a patrol, you can (but don’t have to) wear your ESWA uniform. If you do combine a monitoring hike with a patrol, wear your uniform and separately record and report the usual data in the usual way (ESWA website) in addition to recording the (somewhat different) data on the Monitoring Solitude Form and submitting that form as discussed above. Even if you elect not to do a monitoring hike as a patrol, it will count as one of your four required patrols.
9. **Contacts if Questions.** If you have questions, you can contact either:

Eagle-Holy Cross Ranger District

Mike Beach:	970-471-3505 michael.beach@usda.gov
Mark Steinbrecher	970-401-1291 Mark.Steinbrecher@usda.gov
Mike Browning	303-408-0995 Mfbrowning1952@gmail.com

Dillon Ranger District

Tyler Kirkpatrick: 970-412-8974
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Matt Barnes 970-389-6797
Matthew.Barnes2@usda.gov

THANKS FOR HELPING THE USFS WITH THIS IMPORTANT PROJECT