

In Memory of

Kathi Walsleben Beck

Prineville Hotshot, age 24

Tamera Jean Bickett

Prineville Hotshot, age 25

Scott Alan Blecha

Prineville Hotshot, age 27

Levi Brinkley

Prineville Hotshot, age 22

Robert E. Browning, Jr.

Helitack Crew, age 27

Douglas Michael Dunbar

Prineville Hotshot, age 22

Terri Ann Hagan

Prineville Hotshot, age 28

Bonnie Jean Holtby

Prineville Hotshot, age 21

Rob Johnson

Prineville Hotshot, age 26

Jon R. Kelso

Prineville Hotshot, age 27

Don Mackey

Missoula Smokejumper, age 34

Roger Roth

McCall Smokejumper, age 30

Jim Thrash

McCall Smokejumper, age 44

Richard Kent Tyler

Helitack Crew, age 33

Storm King Mountain Memorial Trail

We will never forget ...

BLM

COLORADO



History

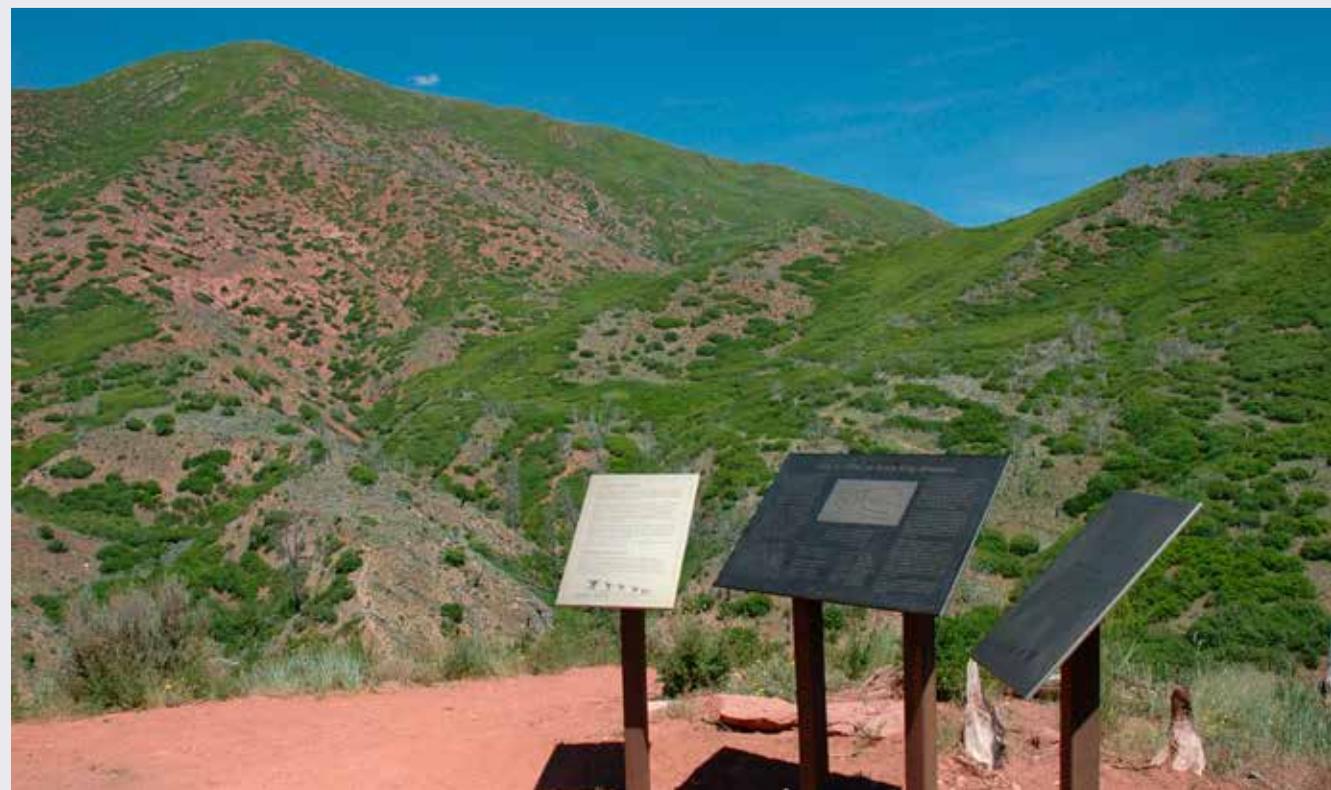
During a year of drought and record high temperatures, lightning ignited a small fire on Storm King Mountain on July 2. The fire, burning in several trees, was reported the next day and was named the South Canyon Fire due to its proximity to the South Canyon Exit off I-70. It was one of more than 40 fires reported to Grand Junction Dispatch at the time, several of which were immediately threatening public safety and structures. Fires were prioritized and fought with available resources. At 6:30 p.m. on July 4, firefighters reassigned from other fires assessed the South Canyon Fire from the base of Storm King. They determined they could not reach the fire before dark and would return the next morning. The fire had grown to 11 acres.

On July 5, seven BLM firefighters hiked 3 ½ hours to the fire and began building fireline to contain the fire. They requested a 20-person crew and another engine crew, but

none were available. That evening eight smokejumpers parachuted to the top of the fire and continued building a fireline. The fire burned actively, growing to 50 acres and overrunning the earlier fireline.

On July 6, more firefighters arrived, including more smokejumpers, a local helitack crew and the Prineville Hot Shots, bringing the total number of firefighters working the fire to 50. By 4 p.m., a combination of explosive conditions existed. The fire had burned under the oakbrush, drying but not burning the oakbrush. Winds shifted and strengthened due to an approaching cold front. The fire blew up. Between 4:14 and 4:18 the fire spotted below the crew on the west flank of the fire. The fire burned from the bottom of the draw to the ridgeline in two minutes, overtaking 12 firefighters. Two more firefighters who had been working a helispot attempted to escape but were overcome trying to outrun the fire. The remaining 36 firefighters escaped out the east drainage or sought a safety zone and deployed their fire shelters.

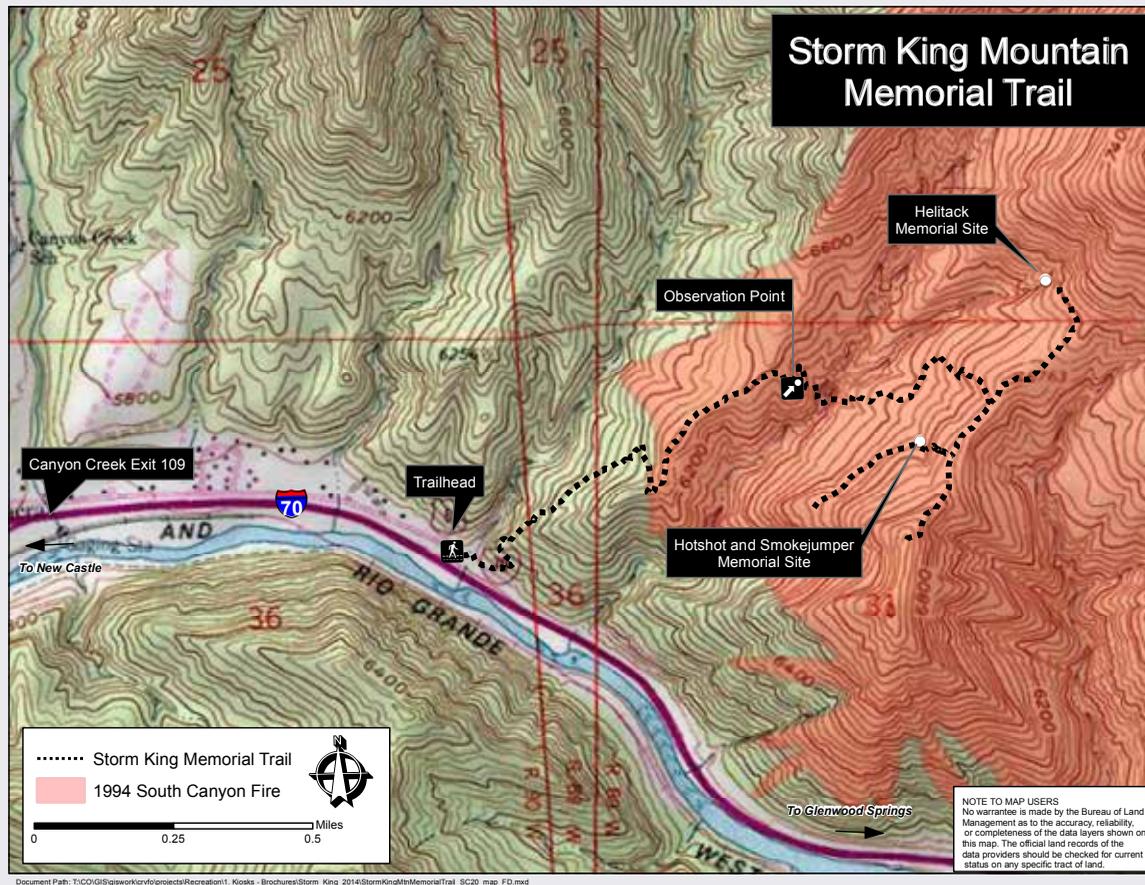
BLM/CO/GI-14/005



The South Canyon Fire changed wildland firefighting. Today, risk to firefighters is more strongly considered before firefighters are asked to take action. Firefighters are encouraged to question a proposed plan or action to increase safety, understanding and effectiveness. Better communication within and between various levels of firefighting is emphasized – among firefighters on the ground; between firefighters on the ground and fire managers; and among local, state and federal agencies.

Storm King Mountain Memorial Trail

The Storm King Mountain Memorial Trail was established after the South Canyon Fire as a tribute to the 14 firefighters who lost their lives on Storm King Mountain the afternoon of July 6, 1994. It ensures we will never forget the Storm King 14 and offers the



opportunity for reflection and learning. The trail sees hundreds of visitors throughout the season, including school groups, local residents and people visiting the area. Hundreds of firefighters also visit the site each year to pay tribute and participate in ‘staff rides’ where they walk in the shoes of the firefighters working the South Canyon Fire.

The trail is not for everyone. It is steep and includes some unstable footing. The trail allows visitors to experience what it is like for a firefighter hiking into a remote fire. Much of the trail is exposed, so it can be quite hot in the summer. It is not safe during lightning storms.

Be prepared for the weather and bring plenty of water. Please stay on the trail, and remember that it is open only to foot traffic.

Trail Guide

The trailhead is reached by taking the frontage road east from the Canyon Creek Exit (109) off I-70. The road ends at the trailhead.

0.5 miles – The first half mile of the 1.7 mile trail is quite steep as you hike through pinyon-juniper and Gambel’s oak.

0.6 miles – As you approach the ridge, notice the thick Gambel’s oak to your right (south). The firefighters on Storm King were building fireline through similar oakbrush. Once you reach the ridge, you have your first look at the South Canyon fire perimeter. From here it is an easy walk on the ridge to the overlook.

1.0 miles – The overlook includes a good view of the area where the firefighters were working and where the Storm King 14 perished. Interpretive signs help orient the visitor to the events of July 6, 1994.

1.0-1.6 miles – From the overlook, the trail takes a steep decline before beginning another steep climb. Notice the large tree trunks in the drainage, which are evidence of the vegetation that existed in the drainage before the South Canyon Fire.

1.6 miles – At the ridge, the trail splits. Following the right (south) fork for another 0.1 mile will take you to monuments to 12 hotshots and smokejumpers, which are just below the ridge facing west. Following the north (left) fork for 0.3 miles will take you to monuments to two helitack crew members.