Location and Contact Information

Manitou Experimental Forest is administered by the USDA Forest Service Rocky Mountain Research Station (RMRS) and jointly managed by RMRS and the Pikes Peak Ranger District of the Pike National Forest.

To reach Manitou Experimental Forest's headquarters, take US-24 west out of Colorado Springs to Woodland Park (24 miles). In Woodland Park, turn right onto CO-67 and proceed for eight miles to CR-79 (also known as Spruce Road and FS-347). Turn right onto CR-79 and proceed a short distance to the red sandstone building labeled "Office."

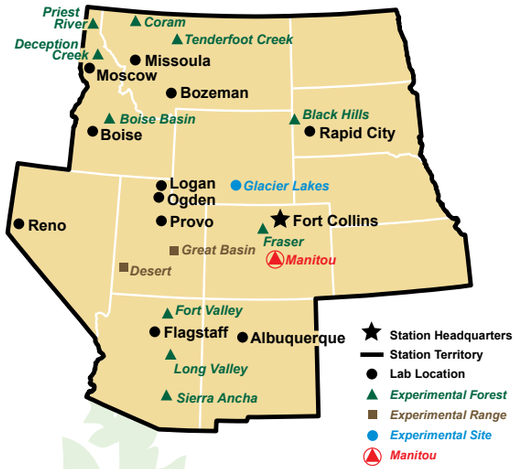
For more information:

Rocky Mountain Research Station
Manitou Experimental Forest
232 County Road 79
Woodland Park, CO 80863
719-687-3034

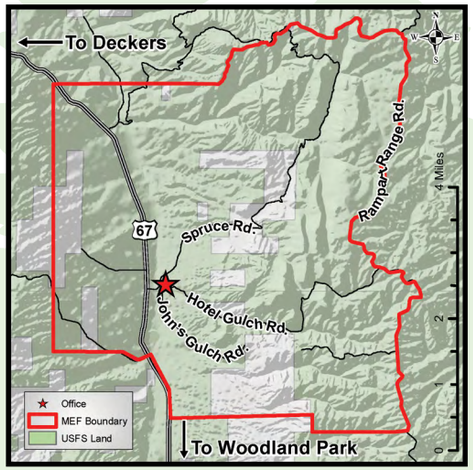
www.fs.usda.gov/manitou

The Manitou Experimental Forest Observatory measures forest emissions. (Photo: NCAR)

Map of the Rocky Mountain Research Station



Map of Manitou Experimental Forest



Front panel photo: Peter Brown, Rocky Mountain Tree-Ring Research

Rocky Mountain Research Station

The Rocky Mountain Research Station (RMRS) is one of seven units within U.S. Forest Service Research and Development – the most extensive natural resources research organization in the world. RMRS maintains 12 field laboratories throughout a 12-state territory encompassing parts of the Great Basin, Southwest, Rocky Mountains and the Great Plains.

RMRS administers and conducts research on 14 Experimental Forests and Ranges (EF&R) in seven states. The U.S. Forest Service's EF&R network represents many of the ecosystem types found in the United States and Puerto Rico. Most EF&Rs contain significant acreage and many encompass large experimental study sites that are used to examine the effects of operational-scale treatments such as prescribed burning and forest thinning. RMRS also oversees activities on several hundred Research Natural Areas, which have been set aside to conduct research while conserving biological diversity.

For more information:

Rocky Mountain Research Station
240 West Prospect Road
Fort Collins, CO 80526-2098
970-498-1100

www.fs.fed.us/rmrs
www.twitter.com/usfs_rmrs/

USDA United States Department of Agriculture

Manitou Experimental Forest

Providing scientific information on Colorado Front Range ponderosa pine forests since 1936

Forest Service Rocky Mountain Research Station

Part of a Nationwide Natural Resource Research Network

Established in 1936, Manitou Experimental Forest is a part of the U.S. Forest Service's Experimental Forest and Range (EF&R) system. The EF&R system, which was created in 1908, is a nationwide network of 80 designated places that are used for short- and long-term natural resource research.

A Colorado Outdoor Laboratory

Covering 16,700 acres and located just 28 miles northwest of Colorado Springs, Manitou Experimental Forest is a heavily utilized Experimental Forest where scientists can learn and share their findings with others. The U.S. Forest Service has conducted much of this research in partnership with other federal agencies, academic institutions and non-governmental organizations, including the U.S. Geological Survey, four major Colorado universities and the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR).

The U.S. Forest Service and Colorado College have studied flammulated owls at Manitou for more than 30 years.

Why Ponderosa Pines are Important

Ponderosa pines are one of the most economically and ecologically important tree species in the western United States. They have the widest range of any pine species in North America, growing from Canada to Mexico and from the Great Plains to the West Coast. Ponderosa pines are drought-tolerant and fire-resistant, and are also an important timber species. Ponderosa pine forests serve as a home for many wildlife species, and human communities are often built within them as well.

Named for their heavy, "ponderous" wood, these trees can live for hundreds of years. With their long needles and orange-colored bark that can smell like vanilla or butterscotch, ponderosa pines are one of the most rugged, distinctive and iconic trees of the American West.

Past Research at Manitou

When Manitou was established in 1936, its research focused on range and watershed management. Range management research conducted through the late 1970s included studies on how to rehabilitate abandoned croplands and how to optimize cattle grazing while maintaining range health. Watershed studies examined water runoff and soil erosion, particularly in response to grazing and logging.

In the late 1970s, the research emphasis began to shift to the ecology and management of ponderosa pine-dominated forests. Research topics since then have included ponderosa pine seed production and regeneration, the effects of tree spacing on forest growth and yield, and the characteristics of old-growth stands. Researchers also began a long-term study on flammulated owls.

Current Research at Manitou

Today, research at Manitou is focused on gaining an even deeper understanding of ponderosa pine ecology and management. Studies are underway to examine the effects of natural disturbances such as fire, insects and disease, and the effects of forest management activities, specifically those aimed at reducing severe wildfire risk. Atmospheric scientists are examining the effects of forest emissions on climate and air quality.

"Land of Many Uses"

As part of Pike National Forest, Manitou is a perfect example of a multi-use property, with uses that include scientific research, timber production and a variety of outdoor recreational activities. While some recreation is allowed at Manitou, visitors should be careful to not disturb the vegetation, wildlife and research sites they encounter. Please remain on designated roads and trails and respect all research equipment.

Research Facilities

Manitou's research facilities include a large lodge for holding meetings and lodging researchers, along with other housing buildings, an office and several garages/workshops. All but one of these buildings was built between 1937 and 1939 out of sandstone from nearby Missouri Gulch quarry.

Manitou Experimental Forest Lodge

Manitou Experimental Forest: Important Dates

1870s: Dr. William Bell ("the Father of Manitou Springs") and Colorado Springs founder William Jackson Palmer purchase land in an area known as Manitou Park. Bell develops the area's first resort, which includes a hotel, golf course, swimming pool, bowling alley, reservoir (Manitou Lake), and horse racetrack.

1906: Bell and Palmer donate more than 10,000 acres of their Manitou Park property to Colorado College to create its School of Forestry.

1936: Following the closure of Colorado College's School of Forestry, ownership of the property passes to the U.S. Forest Service. The property is augmented with other lands and is named the Manitou Experimental Forest.

1937-1939: As part of President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal plan to combat the Great Depression, the Works Progress Administration builds six buildings from locally quarried sandstone and the Civilian Conservation Corps plants more than half a million trees at Manitou.

1970s-present: Manitou's research emphasis shifts toward the ecology and management of ponderosa pine-dominated forests.

1998: Several of Manitou's buildings are named to the National Register of Historic Places.

2002: The Hayman Fire, the largest wildfire in Colorado's recorded history, burns more than 1,000 acres of the Manitou Experimental Forest. Recently completed tree-thinning efforts help slow the fire's spread. In the years that follow, researchers study the short- and long-term effects of this wildfire.