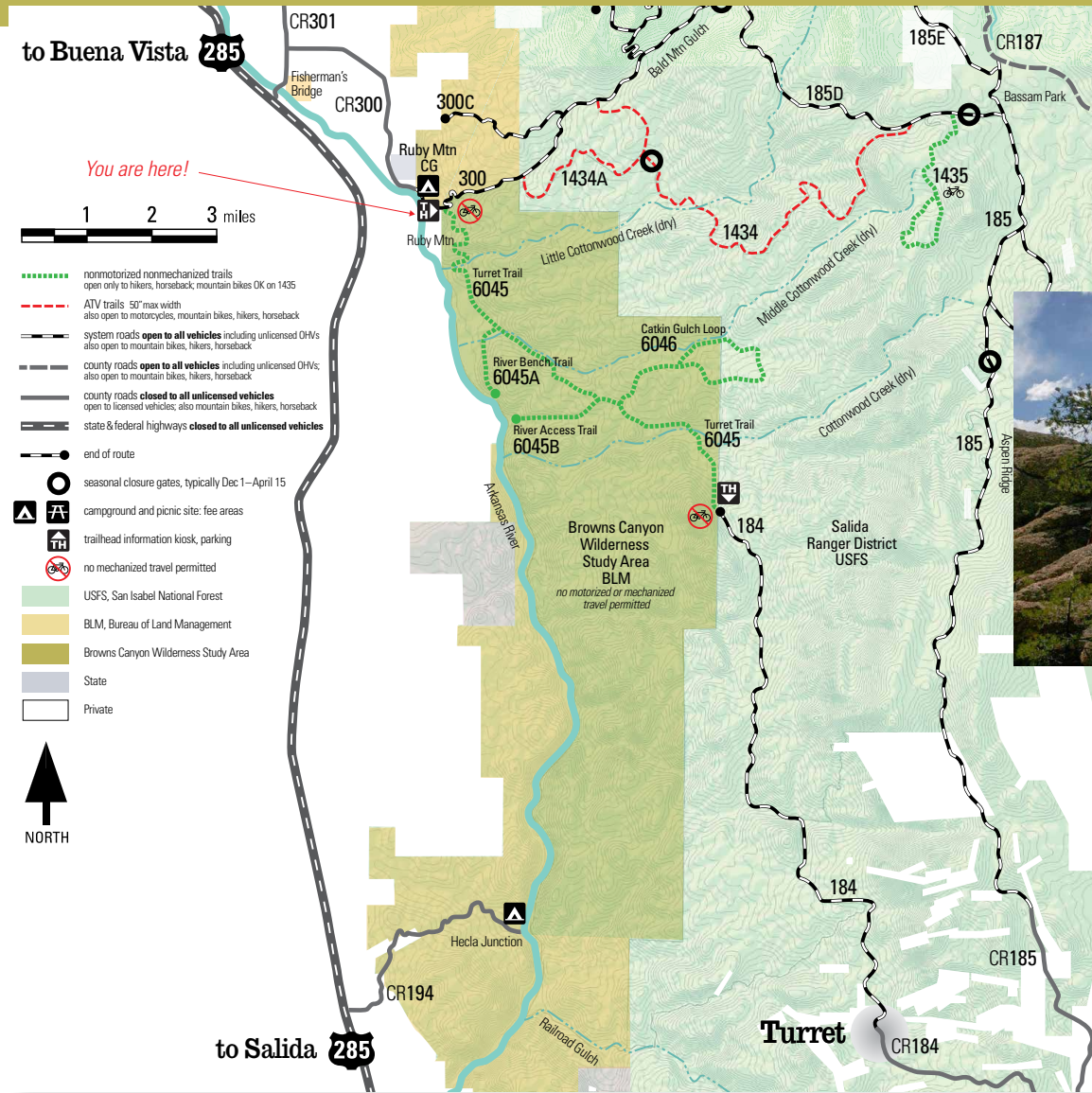


Browns Canyon Wilderness Study Area

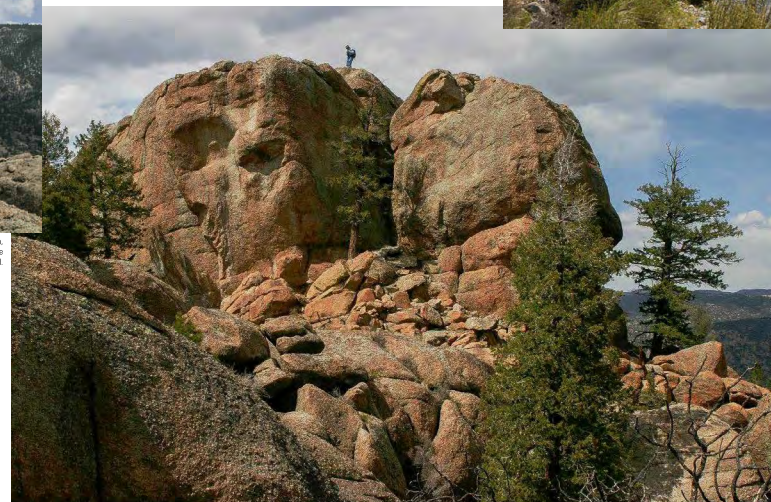


The **6,614 acre Browns Canyon Wilderness Study Area** WSA was surveyed in 1980 and designated in 1993. The Bureau of Land Management's 27 million acres of National Conservation Lands include Wilderness Areas, National Monuments and Conservation Areas. Mostly in the western U.S., WSAs are large, undisturbed areas which may be considered candidates for Congressional designation under the **1964 Wilderness Act**. Of the 530 current BLM WSAs, 54 are in Colorado.

At **7,600'–9,000'** elevation, the WSA's smooth **granitic outcrops** and pitted **limestone** are markedly different from the glaciated 14,000' peaks of the Continental Divide across the Arkansas Valley. In the rain shadow and snow shadow of the Divide, the WSA is drier, with **sparse snowpack**, **no permanent streams** and few springs. Hardy **pinon** and **ponderosa pine**, **juniper**, **aspen** and dense brush survive in dry watercourses. **Elk**, **mule deer** and **bighorn sheep**, and predators such as **mountain lion**, **bobcat**, **coyote** and **black bear** thrive here, in spite of water scarcity. Wildlife rely on the **Arkansas River**, just outside WSA boundaries, managed jointly by BLM and the State of Colorado as the **Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area**. The most rafted **whitewater** river in the US, the Arkansas River is also the state's premier cold-water fishery, recently designated as **Gold Medal Waters**.



Little evidence remains of limited mining attempted here c1880–1920. The Calumet Mining District to the east spurred construction of the short-lived **narrow gauge railroad** down Railroad Gulch south of the WSA to transport ore to the Salida smelter via the Denver & Rio Grande RR. No private lands lie within the WSA, although a few private parcels are adjacent. One primitive route, the **Turret Trail**, and several spur trails traverse the northern section and are open and passable only to foot and horse travel.



All photographs by Alan Robinson, except where otherwise indicated.

Browns Canyon Wilderness Study Area access
 Ten miles of trails and the Ruby Mountain Trailhead provide direct access on the north end of the WSA. A southern entry is at the terminus of the 4WD Turret Road which dead-ends at the WSA. Rafters and kayakers may enter from the Arkansas River's east bank but few designated trails lead from the river.



Enjoy and take care of the WSA!



tread lightly!

Travel and recreate with minimum impact.

Respect the environment and the rights of others.

Educate yourself, plan and prepare before you go.

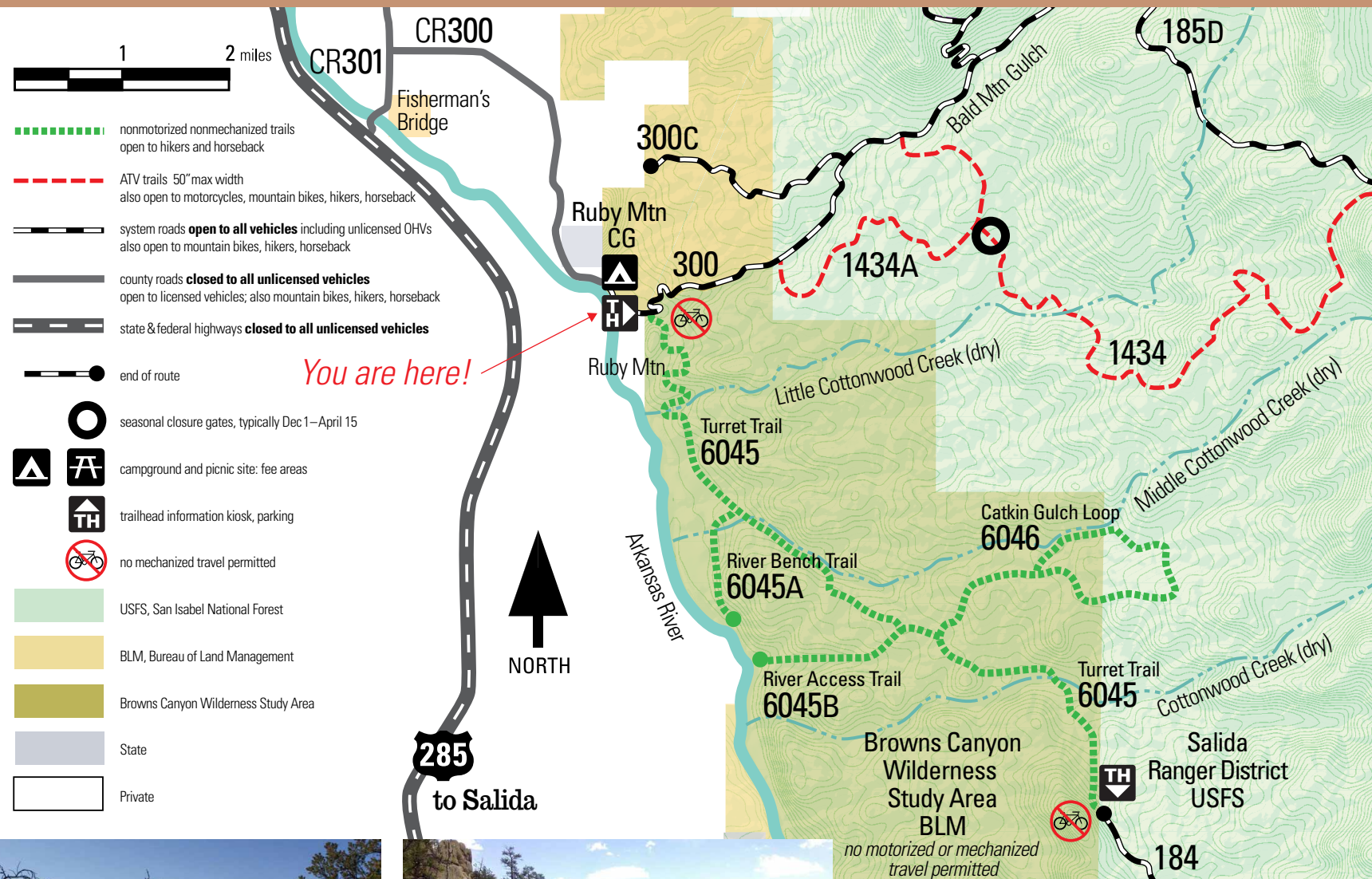
Avoid streams, meadows, ponds, muddy roads and trails, steep hillsides, wildlife and livestock.

Discover the rewards of responsible recreation.

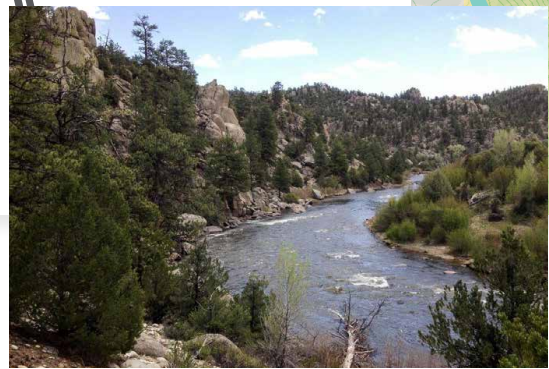
Further information contact BLM Royal Gorge Field Office in Canon City at **719 269.8500** or visit www.blm.gov/co



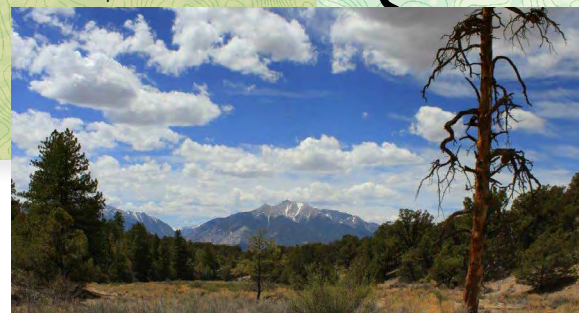
Browns Canyon WSA Northern Trails



The **Turret Trail 6045** en route to the Arkansas River at Little Cottonwood Creek is a steep but short 2-mile round trip introduction to the WSA with wide views of its northern half.



The 5.5-mile "in and out" hike along the gentle dead-end **River Bench Trail 6045A** provides a good sample of the northern WSA with an Arkansas River overlook.



The 11.5-mile **Catkin Gulch Loop 6046** round trip via the Turret Trail 6045 goes deep into the WSA for a fuller experience of its wilderness character.

Designated trails in Browns Canyon WSA are accessed from this trailhead. Signing is in place, but these trails may be difficult to follow. The **Nathrop USGS topographic map** or a **GPS device** is recommended. Consider taking a **digital photograph** of this panel's map to help guide you. Cell phone service is not reliable throughout this system. Review distances and estimated travel times (*below*) to plan a comfortable, safe trip.

If you have just a few hours, consider going to the river at the mouth of Little Cottonwood Creek. Leave the designated trail before it climbs out of the gulch and follow the dry creek bed to its junction with the river. Please **do not trespass on private property** north of the mouth or use unsigned trails. Do not return to the trailhead via the river – this is private land.

If you choose to hike on either 6045A or 6045B be aware that there is **no connecting trail** along the river and going off-trail is not recommended due to steep and rocky terrain.

Turret Trail to FR184 or **Catkin Gulch Loop** are beautiful but strenuous 11-mile hikes. These should be attempted with adequate preparation and confidence in all hikers' fitness. See sidebar for specifics.

Route distances and estimated hiking times

- Round trip to river at Little Cottonwood via 6045 2.7 miles, 2 hrs
 - Round trip to the river on 6045A 5.5 miles, 3 hrs
 - Round trip to the river on 6045B 9 miles, 4.5 hrs
 - Round trip including Catkin Gulch loop 11.5 miles, 5 hrs
 - Round trip RM TH to WSA Boundary/FR184 11 miles, 5 hrs
- Add ample time for stops on each route.*

Enjoy and protect the Browns Canyon Wilderness Study Area!



- Mid-summer travel can be very hot – plan time and distance accordingly.
- Take plenty of water, adequate footwear, clothing and rain gear.
- Stay on designated trails unless confident of cross-country hiking and navigation skills.
- Pack out all trash and dispose of human waste properly.
- Enjoy wildlife from a distance – never feed them.
- Rattlesnakes have been seen – be aware.
- Topographic map or GPS recommended.
- Consider taking a digital photo of this panel's map.
- Dogs must be under control.
- Download a GPS-compatible map to a smartphone at www.browncanyon.org/map or www.garna.org/friends-of-fourmile (internet connection required)

