

Old bunkers used for a Camp Hale shooting range. USDA Forest Service photo by Brenda Yankoviak.

## Camp Hale-Continental Divide National Monument

Camp Hale-Continental Divide National Monument serves as a living testament to a pivotal moment in America's military history. These peaks and valleys forged the elite soldiers of the famed 10th Mountain Division—the Army's first and only mountain infantry division—which helped free Europe from the grip of Nazi control in World War II. The area is also foundational to preserving and interpreting the story of 10th Mountain Division veterans who, after their return from World War II, applied the skills they learned in the Camp Hale and Tenmile Range area to help establish America's skiing and outdoor recreation industry.

The area lies along the Continental Divide in north-central Colorado and is also revered by the Ute peoples and is treasured for its stunning geological features, abundant recreation opportunities, and rare wildlife and plants. The Antiquities Act of 1906 grants the President the authority to designate national monuments in order to protect "objects of historic or scientific interest." Camp Hale-Continental Divide National Monument is the 13th Forest Service national monument.

The 53,804-acre monument is located on the White River National Forest in Eagle and Summit Counties, Colorado.

### Preserving U.S. Military History

At its height, Camp Hale sprawled across nearly 1,500 acres and contained 1,000 buildings, including 245 barracks that could house more than 15,000 soldiers. The camp included parade grounds, a hospital, gunnery ranges, a combat range, ski hills, stockade, motor pool, railyards, and an extensive road and bridge network.

Camp Hale and its surroundings in the Tenmile Range were used to train the 10th Mountain Division, the 38th Regimental Combat Team, the 99th Infantry Battalion, and others in mountain and winter warfare.



The U.S. Army's 10th Mountain Division in full winter gear in the mountains above Camp Hale. Colorado Snow Sports Museum and Hall of Fame photo.

The 10th Mountain Division soldiers trained in mountain warfare techniques including mountain climbing, alpine and nordic skiing, cold-weather survival, and various weapons and ordnance deployment. The 10th Mountain Division deployed three army regiments during World War II, including to the Battle of Riva Ridge in the northern Italian Apennine Mountains; the battle involved a daring assault that required soldiers to scale a 1,500-foot cliff during the dark of night and defeat five elite German divisions in the final months of the war.

In the late 1950s, the Central Intelligence Agency trained various special mission teams at Camp Hale, including nearly 170 Tibetans for operations in China against the communist government.

### **The Roots of the Ski Industry**

After the 10th Mountain Division returned from World War II, veterans continued to practice the skills learned in the Camp Hale and Tenmile Range area. Many of them helped establish America's skiing industry. Veterans of the 10th Mountain Division founded or managed more than 60 ski resorts upon their return from deployment, some in the same mountains where they had trained.

Other veterans from Camp Hale would go on to become trailblazers in conservation and outdoor education and recreation: David Brower was the first executive director of the Sierra Club; Paul Petzoldt founded the National Outdoor Leadership School; and Fritz Benedict founded the 10th Mountain Division Hut Association, which manages a network of 30 mountain huts for backcountry skiers, mountain bikers, and hikers, including 3 in the monument.



The slopes where the elite 10th Mountain Division trained for winter warfare in World War II now provide exceptional winter recreation opportunities. USDA Forest Service photo by Corey Myers.

### **Sacred Lands for Tribal Nations**

The Camp Hale and Tenmile Range area is also rich in ancient human history. The area bears the marks of centuries of habitation by Indigenous peoples who have called the region home since time immemorial and who referred to this area of the Rocky Mountains as *Káava'avichi*—meaning “mountains laying down.” Forced from much of their homelands when precious minerals were discovered, their history serves as a stark reminder that the United States’ commitment to its highest ideals of democracy, liberty, and equality has too often been imperfect, particularly for Tribal Nations and Indigenous peoples.

For thousands of years, the Ute people traveled to the Pando Valley when winter snows melted as part of an annual migration circuit to hunt game and collect medicinal plants. The area also served as an important transportation corridor for those traveling to sacred hot springs in Glenwood Springs, and the traditional Ute trail lies under the road that runs along the Eagle River today.

Evidence of these ancient occupants is found at hundreds of sites, including lithic scatters, a high-elevation prehistoric camp, and stone circles where projectile points and prehistoric tools have been found. Burial sites of historic connection to the Ute Tribes—and of importance to them today—can also be found in the area, with funerary objects and the remains of ancestral peoples who lived in the area thousands of years ago. One such site holds the 8,000-year-old remains of an ancient Ute, believed by some to have been a person of great stature in the Ute community. Some of the objects of cultural importance to the Ute Tribes are sensitive, rare, or vulnerable to vandalism and theft; therefore, revealing their specific names and locations could pose a danger to the objects.

### **Rare Natural Resources**

The monument’s high peaks and alpine valleys contain rare and fragile alpine tundra ecosystems that include species that are uniquely adapted to high altitudes such as the ice grass, found only in ephemeral pools caused by snowmelt among boulders and high-altitude lakes.

The area provides vital habitat corridors for the federally listed Canada lynx and is home for the

boreal toad, Colorado's only alpine species of toad and a Forest Service sensitive species. Spruce and McCullough Creeks hold populations of green lineage Colorado River cutthroat trout, also a Forest Service sensitive species.

The area also provides habitat for mountain goat, moose, bighorn sheep, Rocky Mountain elk, mule deer, black bear, mountain lion, bobcat, bald eagle, white-tailed ptarmigan, hoary bat, olive-sided flycatcher, Pacific marten, pygmy shrew, boreal owl, and northern goshawk, and many others.

Waterfalls descend the slopes, including Continental Falls, Mohawk Basin Falls, and McCullough Gulch Falls. There are also several unique geological features including the Spruce Creek rock glacier, and a geologically significant cave formation that provides a rare, three-dimensional look at the internal geometry of ancient exposed Pennsylvanian algal mounds as well as unusual gravity-driven tectonics.



The Tenmile Range in the Camp Hale-Continental Divide National Monument includes high peaks and alpine valleys that contain fragile ecosystems with species adapted to high altitudes. Ecostock photo by Jon Mullen.

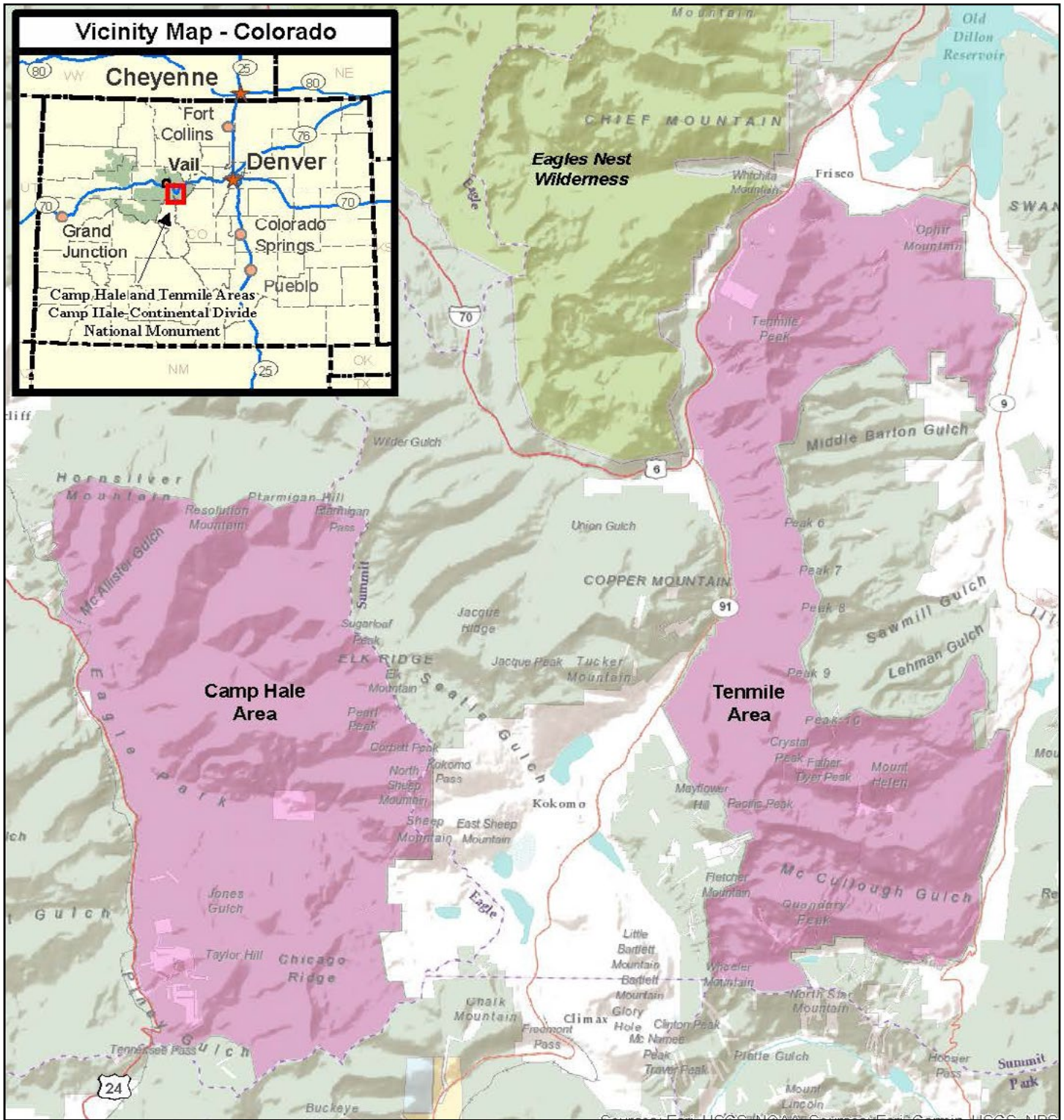
## World-Class Outdoor Recreation

The monument area is well known for its outstanding recreation opportunities, including backcountry skiing, snowmobiling, hiking, and camping.

The Tenmile Range includes part of the Continental Divide National Scenic Trail and 10 peaks over 13,000 feet in elevation. The highest is Quandary Peak, which at 14,265 feet is one of Colorado's iconic and most visited "Fourteeners." The monument will continue to be a popular recreation area.



The Camp Hale-Continental Divide National Monument offers world-renowned winter recreation opportunities, including snowmobiling. National Forest Foundation photo by Emily Olsen.



Map of the new Camp Hale-Continental Divide National Monument on the White River National Forest in Colorado. The pink areas of the map denote the monument boundaries.