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Ribbon Cutting Celebrates Restoration of Timber Creek Campground Amphitheater in Rocky Mountain National Park

Timber Creek Campground Amphitheater on the west side of Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP) welcomed visitors to free ranger-led programs this season after significant repairs and upgrades took place this year, thanks to a \$25,000 gift from Rocky Mountain Conservancy. A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held on August 14 to celebrate the improvements, which allowed for the return of ranger-led evening programs that have been on hold since 2020.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic and the East Troublesome Fire, the amphitheater welcomed visitors each summer to learn from park rangers about wildlife, ecology, and the park's history. When the East Troublesome fire hit Rocky in the fall of 2020, 22 beds of seasonal housing burned, forcing park staff to commute from as far as Winter Park—an hour away. Long travel times, coupled with the pandemic, brought most Timber Creek Campground evening programs to a halt for four summers. In that time, the amphitheater saw little use and regular upkeep declined, eventually contributing to Rocky Mountain National Park's \$233 million maintenance backlog. While seasonal staff housing was being rebuilt, Rocky Mountain Conservancy stepped in to move repairs to the amphitheater forward.

"From their inception in national park campgrounds, these ranger-led programs are at the heart of the National Park Service's mission," said RMNP Superintendent Gary Ingram. "Due to Rocky Mountain Conservancy's support and the work of dedicated and talented park staff, we were able to complete this project at a faster pace than if we were to go at it alone."

The recent repairs and upgrades include:

- Replacing lights, fixtures, outlets, and 130 feet of rotted walkway handrails
- Repairing sections of the retaining wall, stage rockwork, capstone mortar, and rotted purlins
- Repainting accessible parking spaces, visitor seating, and restrooms
- Installing a steel fire ring
- Repairing rodent damage in support buildings

The work, completed by RMNP Facilities and Interpretation teams, ensures visitor safety, accessibility, and readiness for new programming. In 2026, the teams will also purchase and install new A/V equipment at the amphitheater.

Chris Berry, agent for Simcha Rudolph's Charitable Fund whose donation made the repairs possible, added:

"Education is so important and is such a key part of the National Park Service mission, and Simcha would be proud to support such a project where families and individuals can come together to learn more about Rocky Mountain National Park."

With the amphitheater restored, Friday and Saturday night ranger programs returned this summer, engaging 120-130 visitors each weekend in the heart of the park's mission to inspire, educate, and connect people with the natural world.

The Conservancy's funding ensured that these repairs happened now—before small issues became costly future challenges—while giving visitors and rangers alike a safe, vibrant gathering space to share the park's stories for years to come.

About Rocky Mountain Conservancy

Rocky Mountain Conservancy is the official nonprofit partner of Rocky Mountain National Park, supporting projects that preserve the park's natural and cultural resources and connect people to its wonders through education and stewardship. Learn more at www.RMConservancy.org.

Photo Caption: Rocky Mountain National Park staff and Rocky Mountain Conservancy staff and board members alongside donor Chris Berry attended a ribbon cutting for RMNP's Timber Creek Amphitheater restoration.

From Left to Right: Brian Ross, RMC Past President; Estee River Murdock, RMC Executive Director; Caleb Waters, RMNP Deputy Superintendent; Walt Borneman, RMC President; Gary Ingram, RMNP Superintendent; Chris Berry; **RMNP Colorado District Interpreter Kristi Nielson**; RMNP CO River District Facility Supervisor Keith Stephens

