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News Release

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Snowmass Area Seasonal Closures in Effect for Elk Calving

Snowmass Village, Colo. – May 26, 2017 – The White River National Forest, Snowmass Village Animal Services and Colorado Parks and Wildlife remind the public to be aware of the annual closure of the Two Creeks to West Buttermilk area to protect critical elk calving habitat.

“This annual closure gives cow elk solitude and free-range to raise their young,” stated Phil Nyland, Wildlife Biologist. “Disturbance caused by humans and dogs is very stressful to elk giving birth or nursing calves. Disturbance may also lead elk to abandon their calves.”

Cow elk that are recovering from winter have high energy demands. Elk have chosen to return to the Two Creeks – West Buttermilk area every year because the area offers the water, food and seclusion they need to forage and nurse without being startled or disrupted. This closure protects critical habitat during the primary calving season in May and June.

These trails are closed until June 21:

- * Tom Blake Trail: Closed April 25 until June 21
- * Anaerobic Nightmare Trail, Sequel: Closed April 25 until June 21
- * Government Trail #1980: Closed May 15 until June 21

“Even though wildlife don't appear to be stressed by human encounters, it doesn't mean they aren't taking a major hit on their stored nutritional resources,” stated Kurtis Tesch, Colorado Department of Parks and Wildlife. “Those resources, this time of year especially, are a necessity to ensure survival of their newborn young. We all live in this valley because we enjoy nature and the wildlife it provides. Let's help ensure those attractions live on forever.”

Wildlife monitoring cameras have shown hikers and cyclists recreating in the closed area. Please be advised that violating the closure could result in a fine. This video, with footage from wildlife monitoring cameras, illustrates the importance of the closure: <https://youtu.be/J8GMnXhKpyU> .

There are many alternative areas to recreate and many trails are open. Suggested alternative trails during the closure include the Highline/Lowline Trails, Rim Trail South, Sky Mountain Park, Rim Trail North and Seven Star Trail, Sam's Knob and Alpine Springs, Ditch Trail, West Government Trail and Elk Camp work roads. For other trail suggestions, or more information on this seasonal closure, contact the Aspen-Sopris Ranger District at 970-963-2266.

