

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determination for individual properties and districts. See instruction in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Fern Lake Trail

other names/site number 5LR.10920

2. Location

street & number Rocky Mountain National Park (ROMO) [N/A] not for publication

city or town Estes Park [N/A] vicinity

state Colorado code CO county Larimer code 069 zip code 80517

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this [X] nomination [] request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property [X] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant [] nationally [] statewide [X] locally. ([] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ State Historic Preservation Officer _____ Date _____

Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Colorado Historical Society
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria.
([] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

- entered in the National Register
[] See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
[] See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register
- other, explain _____
[] See continuation sheet.

Fern Lake Trail
Name of Property

Larimer County/ Colorado
County/State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not count previously listed resources.)

Contributing Noncontributing

0	0	buildings
0	0	sites
1	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing.

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Rocky Mountain National Park Multiple Property Listing
Historic Park Landscapes In National and State Parks Multiple Property Listing

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Function

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/ outdoor recreation
LANDSCAPE/ park
TRANSPORTATION/ pedestrian-related

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/ outdoor recreation
LANDSCAPE/ park
TRANSPORTATION/ pedestrian-related

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

NO STYLE

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation _____
walls _____
roof _____
other EARTH
WOOD
STONE

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Fern Lake Trail
Name of Property

Larimer County/ Colorado
County/State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography
(Cite the books, articles and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

ENTERTAINMENT/ RECREATION
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
POLITICS/ GOVERNMENT

Periods of Significance

1906-1954

Significant Dates

1933-1938

Significant Person(s)

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above).
N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

National Park Service
Estes Park Protective & Improvement Assoc.
Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)
Public Works Administration (PWA)

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:
Colorado Historical Society
Rocky Mountain National Park

Fern Lake Trail
Name of Property

Larimer County/ Colorado
County/State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property less than one

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1.
Zone Easting Northing
2.
Zone Easting Northing
3.
Zone Easting Northing
4.
Zone Easting Northing [x] See continuation sheet- page 8

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Sierra Standish, contract position (RMNP contacts- Dr. Bill Butler and Cheri Yost)
organization Rocky Mountain National Park date 22 September 2004
street & number 1000 Highway 36 telephone (970) 586-1332
city or town Estes Park state Colorado zip code 80517

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Rocky Mountain National Park, U.S. Department of the Interior
street & number 1000 Highway 36 telephone (970) 586-1332
city or town Estes Park state Colorado zip code 80517

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Continuation Sheet****United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

Fern Lake Trail, Larimer County/ Colorado
Rocky Mountain National Park MPS

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Historic Park Landscapes in
National & State Parks MPS

DESCRIPTION

Location: East side of Rocky Mountain National Park, trail runs from Moraine Park to Fern Lake.

Setting: Begins in glacially-carved meadow, ascends through pine forest, and approaches the Continental Divide

Materials: Earth, rock, log/wood.

Destination: Fern Lake, Odessa Lake

Trail length: 4.8 miles

Trail width: ranging from 2 to 4 feet

Significant built features: Dry laid rock walls, log stringer bridge, log and rock water bars, causeway, Fern Lake Patrol Cabin (Listed on the National Register 1/29/1988)

Significant natural features: Arch Rocks, view along the Big Thompson River, The Pool, Fern Falls, Marguerite Falls, Fern Lake, Odessa Lake

Built: Used as early as 1889; first complete route established by 1906

Alterations: Bridge at The Pool repeatedly replaced; alignment adjusted in 1914, again before 1927, and again in the 1930s (1933, 1936-1938)

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Fern Lake Trail, Larimer County/ Colorado
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Section number 8 Page 2
Historic Park Landscapes in
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SIGNIFICANCE

Fern Lake Trail is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C, meeting the registration requirements set forth in the *Rocky Mountain National Park Multiple Property Listing*. Under Criterion A, the trail is eligible in the area of Entertainment/ Recreation for its association with the early resort industry and tourism in the Estes Park region with a period of significance starting in 1906 and ending in 1954, a date in keeping with the National Register criteria. Also under Criterion A it is significant in the area of Politics/Government for the involvement of 1930s federal relief agencies, specifically the Public Works Administration (PWA) and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), the period of significance being 1933-1938. In addition, the Fern Lake Trail is eligible under Criterion C in the area of Landscape Architecture; the trail design reflects National Park Service (NPS) Naturalistic Design of the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s.

The Fern Lake Trail also reflects the national trends described in Linda Flint McClelland's *Historic Park Landscapes in National and State Parks Multiple Property Listing*. In this second context, the trail is eligible under Criterion A in the area of Entertainment/Recreation for its connection to the 20th century movement to develop national parks for public enjoyment, as well in the area of Politics/Government for the principles and practices of park landscape design used by the park in PWA and CCC projects. The trail is also eligible under Criterion C in the area of Landscape Architecture for a design that reflects NPS Naturalistic Design of the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s.

For upwards of 110 years, Fern Lake and its neighbor just to the southwest, Odessa Lake, have exercised magnetic charm upon mountain visitors. The lakes' sustained popularity explains why so many groups can claim a role in the development of the Fern Lake Trail. Fern Lake and Odessa Lake are the perfect distance from the Moraine Park trailhead: the trail offers a relatively strenuous round trip for most hikers, horseback riders, and skiers. Along the way, the visitor is hailed by Arch Rocks (sometimes known as "Balanced Rock"), The Pool on the Big Thompson River, by Fern Falls and then—though not featured on the modern trail alignment—by Marguerite Falls. Fern Lake makes an attractive destination, with fish for the fishermen and views toward the Continental Divide. Those who crave a little more adventure can continue on about one mile to Odessa Lake, where they are rewarded with a slightly larger lake that glimmers just below timberline and reflects Notchtop and Flattop Mountains in its surface.

Historical Background

As early as 1889 fishermen were tramping through the flat, forested stretch from Moraine Park (then known as Willow Park) back to "The Pool," a wide spot in the Big Thompson River. By the early 1900s hikers had blazed a route past The Pool and all the way up to Fern Lake. In 1906, Dr. William J. Workman received a permit from the Forest Service to build next to the lake; he soon after built a lodge, propagated fish, and took out a grazing permit—all of which suggests that a useable tourist route crossed the 3.8 miles from Moraine Park to Fern Lake.

In the following decades, other members of the local resort industry invested their resources in the Fern Lake Trail. Between 1907 and 1912, the Estes Park Protective and Improvement Association (EPPIA) improved the trail and built a new horse bridge at The Pool. Despite this new work, lodge owners banded together in 1914 to build a new trail. They aimed to maintain a 10% grade on the steep part (between The Pool and Fern Lake) and to go near "the falls," meaning either Fern or Marguerite falls. The new trail included switchbacks: by 1920, the superintendent of the newly formed Rocky Mountain National Park reported that tourists cut corners on the Fern Lake Trail, which was "in

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Fern Lake Trail, Larimer County/ Colorado
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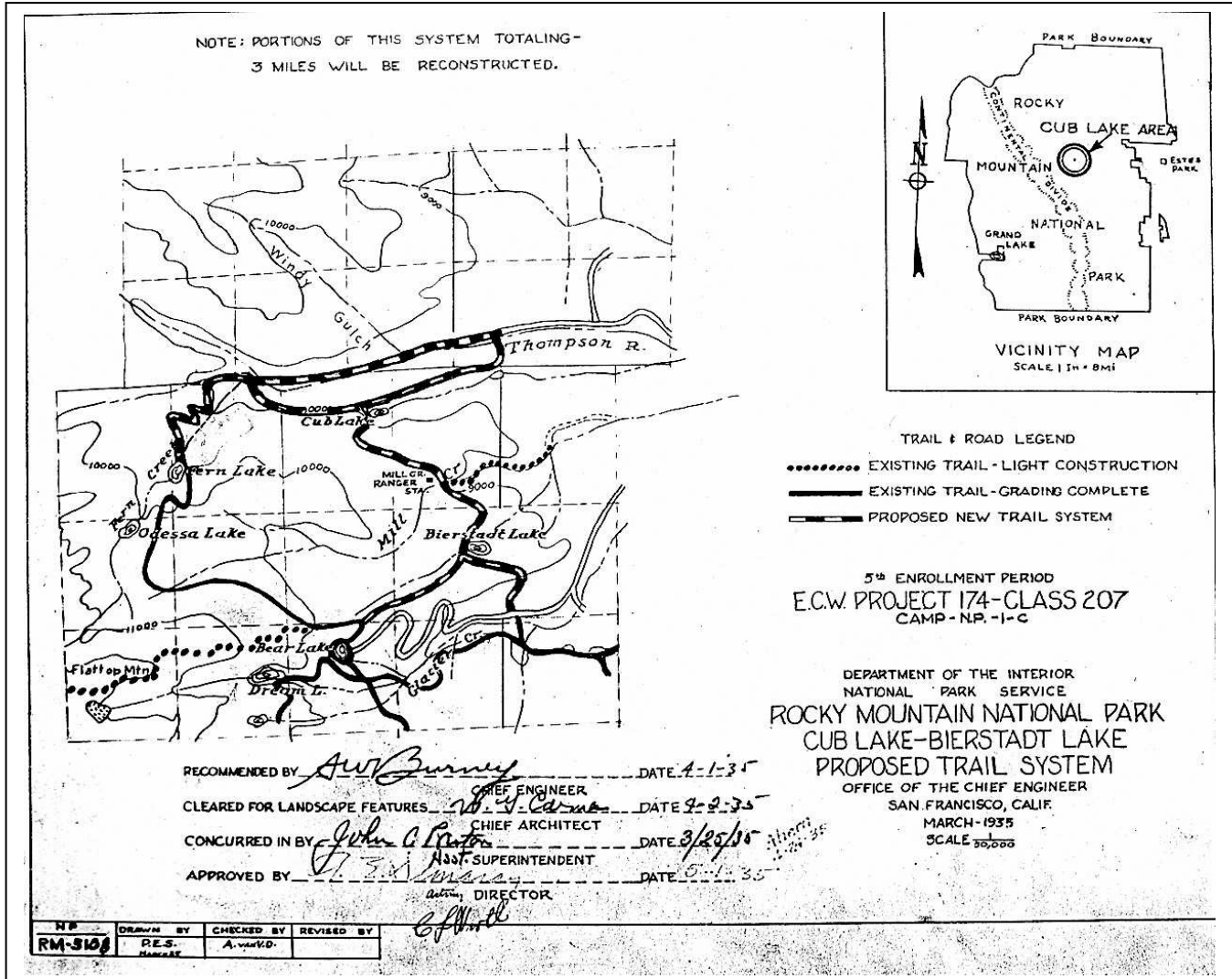


Image courtesy of Rocky Mountain National Park
Emergency Conservation Work Project map, March 1935
(ECW developed into the Civilian Conservation Corps)

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the worst condition of any trail in the Park.” By the end of the 1920 summer season, workers had brought the trail into “passable” condition with the first 2.5 miles brought into “first class condition.”

In January 1923, the park completed a 500 foot ski course at Fern Lake and built a connector ski trail between Fern and Odessa lakes. The following winter, the ski trail stretched from the Moraine Park trailhead to Fern Lake, offering skiers an alternative to the hiking trail. Fern Lake had become a ski destination. The lodge, dubbed by trails historian William C. Ramaley as “the best known back-country resort in the whole of Rocky Mountain National Park,” enjoyed huge popularity and a relatively long tenure within the park. From 1916 to 1934, the Colorado Mountain Club made annual wintertime outings to Fern Lake, staying at the lodge and helping to build ski trails.

Other lodges also took advantage of their proximity to Fern Lake and the Fern Lake Trail. The Brinwood Hotel, situated near the modern day trailhead and accessible by motor car, opened its doors in 1911. The Brinwood would strive to provide “strictly modern” accommodations with hot water, indoor bathrooms, and guided tours of the trails. Meanwhile, the more modest resort known as the Forest Inn offered beds at The Pool. This primitive hotel and camp, opened before the park’s establishment in 1915, attracted a small amount of guests. The Forest Inn, like Fern Lake Lodge, was accessible only by trail.

In 1933, National Park Service (NPS) landscape architects prepared another reworking of the trail between Fern Lake and Odessa Lake as a Public Works Administration project. The section, which took more than \$5000 and three summers to complete, features some of the largest and most complex rock walls in the park and utilized Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) labor. Between 1936 and 1938, CCC workers rebuilt the rest of the trail from Moraine Park to Fern Lake. Since the 1930s, this construction has proved relatively sustainable; park trail crews have not needed to significantly change the trail’s alignment or rock walls.

In response to a growing mid-century perception that the hotels detracted from the Park’s natural scenery, the Park applied pressure to the privately owned lodges within its boundaries. The Forest Inn closed its doors at The Pool in 1951. That same year, the Fern Lake Lodge was granted a two-year contract extension, with the understanding that it would not be renewed again. Today the site of the Forest Inn is commemorated with a backcountry campsite by the same name. The Fern Lake area is a popular summertime destination for day hikers and backpackers.

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Fern Lake Trail, Larimer County/ Colorado
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McClelland, Linda Flint. *Building the National Parks: Historic Landscape Design and Construction*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998.

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GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

The trail is located entirely within Rocky Mountain National Park. Beginning at the west end of Moraine Park, the trail continues roughly west southwest to "The Pool," turns southwest toward Fern Lake, and continues in a southwesterly direction to Odessa Lake. The trail is 4.8 miles long. The boundary of this nomination extends a distance of 10 feet on either side from the centerline of the trail.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary includes the resource and associated features such as (but not limited to) footbridges, signs, rock walls, and bogwalks. Though landscape features are important to the experience of the visitor traversing the trail and may contribute to the overall integrity of the trail, they are not included in this nomination.

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National & State Parks MPS**PHOTOGRAPH LOG**

The following information pertains to photograph numbers 1-6 except as noted:

Name of Property: Fern Lake Trail
Location: Larimer County/ Colorado
Photographer: Sierra Standish
Date of Photographs: October 2003
Negatives: Rocky Mountain National Park

Photo No. Photographic Information

- 1 Arch Rocks, view to southwest.
- 2 Example of drilling to split the rock.
- 3 Dry laid rock wall, view to northeast.
- 4 View of Big Thompson River, view to west.
- 5 Dry laid rock wall/ buttress at the Pool, view to north.
- 6 Bridge at the Pool, view to northwest.

