

NCTR Newsletter – August 2009

Ride Reports

July 25, 2009 – Buckhorn Canyon Jeep Roads by Dan Moore

I recall seeing an old NCTR logo with a jeep depicted on it, so I didn't feel too bad leading my planned trip in my jeep. Why a jeep and not the bike? Last October I tore my ACL and had reconstructive surgery in November. After 6+ months of rehab, I began riding again. On my fourth ride out this year, I injured my knee again. Not as serious this time, but a bone contusion in the joint. Once again, I'm off of the bike again, but for only six weeks this time. The trip went on as scheduled with the following participants:

Ted Bendalow – KLR650
Steve Papenfuss – KTM620
Andy Young – KLX250S
Dan Moore – Jeep TJ

I would like to welcome Andy to the club as new member. He's a novice trail rider, well prepared and did just fine on these easy to intermediate roads.

We met at the Stove Prairie School and covered Old Flowers Road in good time. I sent the riders on a spur road so that I could get ahead of them. That way there wasn't too much separation between us and they didn't have to wait too long. I did notice that the road had detoured around the big mud pit that I got stuck in a couple of years back:



Monument Gulch road followed. Upon reaching Buckhorn Canyon Road, I pointed Ted and Steve to the Greer Road area — had them go in there to get “lost” — they ended doing a few loops passing the same log a couple of times and popped out up top on the switchbacks just below Pennock Pass. The plan was so that Andy and I could get a head start up West White Pine Mountain.

Andy quickly got ahead of me, but I ended up finding him just below the saddle, tuckered out and admitting that he couldn't go on further — the terrain was just too rough. Great effort and no problem. He hopped in the jeep and we made it to the summit. Ted and Steve hadn't made it to the top yet, but it wasn't long until we heard their bikes. In the meantime, Andy and I searched for and found the geocache placed at this summit: [‘To mistaken crab.’](#)

When Ted and Steve summited, they mentioned that it was a tough climb. It was particularly challenging on the big bikes — they both had a good sweat going. They cooled off with some cold drinks that I had brought in a cooler and we took a lunch break. Andy picked up his bike on the way back down and we met up outside of the ranger station.

The clouds were beginning to move in and we decided to call it a day — a dusty 10 miles and we were back out on the hardtop.


[My track](#)

Rainbow Trail and Environs by Keith Kolb

I decided this past week to ride one of my favorite trails that I put off for several years, the Rainbow Trail, the rainbow trail spans the distance from Monarch Pass to the Great Sand Dunes and makes a great two day ride if you have shuttle chase vehicle to meet with gas, and do a camp out at Haden creek. Now this is not for the faint at heart, there is a lot of side hill drop offs so if you have a phobia of riding with drop offs then rule this one off, there are plenty of rocks, water crossings and scenery, by the way did I mention ROCKS, the farther you go south on the Rainbow there are miles of baby head rocks but take your time and you will have fun. Yesterday I did the segment from highway 285 southeast on the rainbow to Haden Creek, this section is 33 miles, if you start at Hayden creek and go to 285 you can then head north on 285 (if you have a plated motorcycle) to Poncha Springs for gas then back up 285 to the Rainbow back to Haden for about a 75 mile round trip day, but remember this is not for beginners and for advanced riders. Have fun riding and be safe.

2009 Cucharas River Enduro Race Report by Zak Smith



Extremely rocky trails and dry made for a very tough enduro. 

After the first two races of the 2009 Rocky Mountain Enduro Circuit (RMEC), I was feeling pretty good. Caprock wasn't technical at all, but had relentless trees. Pine Ridge was cold, soggy, and muddy, but the trails were good and fun with some hill climbs thrown in. Those two enduros would do nothing to prepare me for the physical and technical challenge of the Cucharas River Enduro.

The Cucharas River Enduro is held about 17 miles East of Walsenburg, which itself is about 50 miles north of the New Mexico Border, in Colorado, off I-25. Local altitude is 6000' and the forecast was for a high around 80. I couldn't find much information about what conditions to expect at this enduro, other than a short video of one section from a couple years back. Several years ago, there was an ISDE qualifier at the same location. I'd just re-started my summer running schedule, so I figured I'd be in good shape, and I was feeling pretty good about my riding. Anyway, I packed up all my enduro gear, including my winter camping stuff, and set off. On the way down, I picked up "tdoshi9" (Thumpertalk) in Fountain, since he had posted about sharing a ride, and I had an extra slot on my trailer.



The trail started deceptively easy and fast.



Soon rocks became the rule.



Race Prep and the Start Queue

I was number 47C, so my start time was 8:47. In the morning, I got dressed - wearing Sidi Crossfires, Asterisk knee braces, Thor chest protector, my Leatt neck brace, Arai, and then Klim pants and riding jersey. I loaded my camelback up with about 60 ounces of water, my tool bag, some shop towels in case I needed to clean my goggles at some point, and then I stuck my "tuning screwdriver" in my pants pocket, along with some chap stick and eye drops for my contacts. The conditions were extremely dry and dusty and I was worried about fouling my contacts with the very fine dust that tended to hang in the air.

Race - Start and First Lap

After the dead-engine start (made easier with "the button"), the trail started as a burned-in path on high-plains grass: fast and flowing. I took the lead from the gate over 47A and 47B (both Senior-C), riding at a quick pace. I slowed down a little when I remembered we were simply on a short 3-mile transit to the first "restart!" Oh well. After about a mile in, it started to get rocky, and I thought, "Ok, this is getting interesting." Pretty soon, I caught up with the minute ahead of me and it became clear that this trail was not going to be nice and flowing: it was going to be really gnarly. We were riding over rock, up over rocks, down rocks. Are you getting the feeling that rocks were everywhere? This terrain was technical and slow-going. I started to see riders waiting on the trail, in-line to hit an obstacle or just taking a breather. Finally, we made it to the restart, and we had a few minutes to spare. The thought still lingered that perhaps we had just had to get through a rocky transit section to get to a more manageable test section.

But that was not to be. After the restart there was a very short respite before the rocks continued, and got worse. Soon, there were bikes backed up. Riders would swap places as one would get stock, stall, or have to stop, and the other would pass, only to be re-passed again when he got stuck. We rode over places where the ground was just hard rock; we rode over rock gardens; we rode through deceptive rocky switchbacks between flowing dirt sections. Whenever you came up to a spot and saw a bunch of bikes, it was inevitably a hard hill-climb with some people stuck halfway up, creating a choke point.



Even before the first test started, some riders started to have problems.



The combination of the 250 and the Rekluse proved to work great on this super-rocky terrain, including the steep obstacles and hill-climbs with very little run-up. Usually starting in second gear, the 250 would just emit a low-pitched growl as I deliberately crawled up and over the hills and boulders, modulated by the Rekluse. Although I had a couple tip-overs thus far, my first spectacular crash was going up a steep, rocky off-camber hill that took me by surprise. I slowed due to a stuck rider in my path up ahead, and fell down the steep side of the hill. My bike fell over beyond 90 degrees (wheels above handlebars) and I flew over the top, did a roll, and came to rest just past a bush. I had to scramble at least 10 feet back up vertically to get back to the bike! In these situations, a little body english applied to the bike to re-orient it to continue helps a lot, and I was able to ride the bike up the remaining part of the hill without issue. As would become a pattern, after wrestling with the bike and making the hill, I needed a break, so I sat on the bike and sucked some water from my camelback.

Each approx 20-mile lap (on the C loop) was made of two test sections, with transit sections in between (and at the beginning and end). The first test was about 10 miles and the second test was about 5 miles in length. I made it through the first test, and hoped for some relief, but within a few hundred yards of the checkpoint, the transit got extremely hard and we hit the "crux" of the route: an extremely steep section on rock (with surrounding boulders) that went down probably twenty feet in big steps and around a corner in maybe 25 or 30 feet of distance. There were several riders waiting to go down, two or three in process, and another couple recovering at the bottom. This was so steep most riders I saw were just walking their bikes down, very slowly. A fall here would be painful and hard to recover from.




Very steep abrupt rock/hills were common.



After this crux section, we were back to extremely rocky sections interspersed with dry, rocky dirt trail. This eventually led us to the first river crossing. On the forums, a big deal was made about these water crossings. At the first crossing, there was a course worker directing riders to a manageable line. I watched a couple go through and it seemed fine: just aim at the route arrow and motor through. It calf-deep and the bottom was pretty stable. I rode through without issue and the water felt good cooling me down. The C route turned right, and we had another water crossing. This one was split in that first you had to cross to an island, then ride along the island for 20 yards, and the finish the river crossing. The first one looked kind of intimidating, but I just aimed for the biggest rut on the far side and rode through, the continued along the island, and just went right through the other side. The far crossing was rocky and had a rock or a hole in the middle, so some "foot paddling" was usually required to keep going.

The second test started shortly after. It was very similar in composition to the first test-- make that extremely rocky, with hard and slow technical sections. About halfway through the last test, the route snaked past the camping area, so it was deceiving that in that you thought you were at the end, but you really had about 3 more miles left to go.




This super steep descent was the crux of the course. 

Gas and Second Lap

As I pulled through the last checkpoint and made my way to the gas area, I was totally beat. The route had been physically brutal. I was exhausted from the constant pounding from going over all the rocks and man-handling the bike (and picking it up). First I gassed up the bike, using almost two gallons (which is impressive for only 20 miles!), and then walked over to my camp to get more water. After chugging a bunch of ice-cold water, I filled my camelback with Gatorade, orange juice, and water, split evenly. The 100-oz bladder almost didn't fit back into my camelback pack; I had to really jam it in there. I had felt like my front tire was bouncing off rocks instead of staying planted, so I aired them down to 14/20. This seemed to help on the second lap. After taking maybe 10 minutes to get somewhat refreshed, I headed out again. I had about 10 minutes to get to the first start control, and it was unlikely that I'd make it there on time.

My strategy for the second lap was simply survival. There was no sense in going fast if I was going to crash, and I knew that every time I picked the bike up I lost precious energy. So I was physically beat. Mentally, I knew how hard the different sections were and where the hardest "crux" of the course was. I also knew roughly where the different sections were based on odometer mileage. As I came up to the first start control, I was running late and just waved through. This was a pattern for the entire race: I would be behind schedule all the time after mile 3 (the start of the very first test).



Do this a few times and you'll be physically done. 

My memory of the first lap was like this: rock, rock, rock, hill, rocky, big hill, rock. In reality, I was surprised there was so much easier track the second time through. I guess we tend to remember the hardest parts and ignore the parts that were not punishing. This time around, it seemed like there were fewer riders out there, and fewer pile-ups. However, the abrupt, steep, hard hills still had riders all around and in various stages of getting stuck and un-stuck. It was more common to see riders standing next to their bike with a spinning rear wheel trying to push it up a rock face. My strategy was the same: try to get a good approach, point the bike straight, and just left the 250/Rekluse growl up the hill. It worked awesome. I even passed some stuck guys who had trials tires in the rear: I think the Rekluse makes up for that advantage. It low rpms, it keeps the traction dialed basically perfectly in these tricky situations.

I made it through the first test, then came to the insane descent. As I was waiting, the guy ahead of my fell over and his bike fell on him hard, on the rocks. As I was setting my bike down to go help him, he wriggled free and was able to make it down. I walked my KTM down very slow, to not make any mistakes, and then I had to take a break at the bottom. The guy who crashed had his helmet off and was taking a rest under a tree; I offered him water and others asked if he was OK. Wrestling a bike down over rocks takes it out of you, especially after several hours of doing the same, and falling just makes it worse.



Here's another awkward spot.



Once I had taken a little break and drank a bunch of water, I kept going, through the rocky singletrack and rock gardens and boulders, to the water crossings. At the first, there was a guy pushing his bike out of the river and then incessantly kicking it trying to get it going. I went across without incident, then followed the C-route split, and came up to the final river: the crossing with the mid-stream island.

Knowing I was tired and lacked arm strength at this point in the race, I was nervous about getting across, so I nailed it and zipped across the water. I carried too much speed up onto the island and I was about to fly over! I managed to get the bike down, but that resulted in my flying over the bike and into the river on the other side. As I splashed I knew I was in for the full treatment, as my head went underwater and I closed my eyes and mouth through instinct. I really wasn't expecting that. Immediately, I rolled over and tried to stand up and climb out, but the current made me hesitate and basically get on all fours to crawl out. Immediately, I picked up the bike and made sure it would start. After a couple minutes of getting readjusted, I headed to the last water crossing and went in. About halfway through I hit the "hole" and had to paddle my feet on the rocks, and just slowly motor through. A guy was totally stuck in the mud rut on the right, so I took the left rut and just motored through, although I did bog down a bit. Once through and on clear dry ground, I had to stop. My goggles were soaked with water and mud, and my boots each had about five pounds of water. So I drained my boots and did my best to fix my goggles- the shop towel I had in my camelback was totally soaked, so I just tried to "dab" off the mud and wave them around until they dried-- the air was warm and dry so this was pretty quick.



I flew over my bike, off the island, and into the river. You can see my feet sticking up out of the water and my bike up on the island on the right.



Taking off, I was now pleasantly cool since I was soaked to the bone. Again, I was waved right through the start control since I was now at least 40 minutes late. The last test was simply pure survival riding, and I took it easy not wanting to crash. By the time I got towards the end, my camelback was again dry - I had drank 100 oz of fluid in a couple hours. As I rolled up to the last checkpoint, I was just dead exhausted, but really glad I had been able to survive and finish the enduro. The header pipe on my KTM was totally smashed, the cumulative damage of over a half-dozen rock hits.

I rode over to our camp, and I was greeted by the other two riders just sitting around having a drink. I'm thinking, "What? Was I *that* slow? Damn!" It turns out they had both had to bail due to a flat tire and blistering problems.

Club Info

Trail Clearing & Updates, and Sound Testing Results By Gene Iley, Jr.

Work rides – June has been a very busy month as we have been clearing trails every weekend this month. There has been a larger than normal amount of deadfall to remove due to the beetle-kill trees starting to fall. We have had a great turn out of volunteers on 8 different work rides plus the Left Hand Canyon Cleanup with over 500 hours of NCTR time. Several of the volunteers are new members to our club. Thanks to all who have helped out!

May 9	Left Hand Canyon Cleanup	5 Volunteers
June 6	Snyder Creek	15 Volunteers
June 13	Radial Mountain	4 Volunteers
June 13	Red Feather Lakes	17 Volunteers
June 14	Donner Pass – Buckhorn Cyn	11 Volunteers
June 20	Grizzly-Helena	12 Volunteers
June 21	Grizzly-Helena	7 Volunteers
June 27	Snyder Creek and Jack Park	15 Volunteers
June 28	Percy Lake	7 Volunteers



Temporary Trail Closures:

NOTE: For this to make sense you will need a Routt National Forest – Parks Ranger District Motor Vehicle Use Map or MVUM.

Helena Trail Head – The Helena trail head at the far North end of the Grizzly Helena trail is closed due to flooding from a beaver dam. Before the Forest Service closed this section, it was turning into a real mess with riders trying to find ways through and around. The Parks District Staff are working on a solution to this and will be submitting a grant for dollars from the Colorado State OHV fund to fix this by means of a bridge, raised walk, turnpiking, or something. You can still ride the entire North section of this trail, but it must be accessed from the Lone Pine Creek trailhead.

Snyder Creek Trail Sections – The following sections of trail are closed due to timber operations in the area:

- 1) Trail 1226 north of FS road 106, from the intersection of 106 and 734 to the intersection of 106 and 190
- 2) Trail 1226, from the intersection of 106 and 190 to the intersection of the trail with Colorado Highway 125.
- 3) Trail 1226, from HWY 125 Eastward all the way to the intersection with trail 1227.

- 4) Trail 1226.1C from 190 to 732. This is the north or lower elevation portion what is referred to as "Motorcycle Hell".

Trail Openings ! – The good news here is that Trail 1227 is open from FS Road 755 all the way to the Ditch Trail (1228) and FS road 750. Also, sections of 1227 South of the Pines Campground are now open (they have been closed for several years). These trails are known as the Radial Mountain Trail System. Check the 2009 version of the MVUM for location of these trails (they are not on the 2007 version). If you have any questions contact Jon Myers at the Parks District in Walden at 970-723-8204 or Gene Iley at 970-215-6580.

Sound testing – We tested a bunch of bikes at Snyder Creek and I am happy to say we are getting quieter all the time! Results were:

2009 Yamaha WR450 – 94 decibels
2005 Honda 230F – 87 decibels
2003 Yamaha WR450 – 92 decibels
2004 KTM 300 EXC – 87 decibels
2002 KTM 200 EXC – 85 decibels
2003 KTM 450 EXC – 94 decibels
2006 KTM 450 EXC – 93 decibels
2005 KTM 300 EXC – 87 decibels
2007 Yamaha YZ450F (yes, it had a spark arrester) – 97 decibels

We do not have mandatory levels but simply request that our bikes be as quiet as possible, preferably 96 decibels or less. It seems to be working. The rider of the bike at 97 was a new member, so I took it real easy with the peer pressure but did suggest he might make it quieter, and he was very agreeable

Trailhead Sign In – Advice By Keith Kolb

When you see those sign in sheets at the beginning at trail heads, Please always sign in and put down your're motorcycle riding and don't say your bike riding. Another important point is fill in the comment box, writing good comments on single track trail. The reason I mention this is because I've seen some profane comments that I believe were written by our tree hugging friends to make us look bad. Also our tree hugging friends can say that we don't use the trails if we don't sign in, and they can make a case to close the trail. I will get off my soap box now.

Dual Sport Rides By Ted Bendelow

NCTR has decided to expand the range of riding experience to include dual sport activities. Eight rides have been scheduled for this year, plus Jeff Deeney's MOAR ride. The first was held in conjunction with the first Snyder Creek ride, with the dual sport ride based at Old Homestead, a rustic "resort" near Rand. That was the headquarters some years ago when enduros were run in the area. We can't say the first effort was a smashing success, as there were only two riders, but we had a great time, riding 170 miles on Saturday, encountering snow pack that stopped one route, but finding alternatives to complete the route. We had several interesting experiences with inaccurate forest service maps and ranchers that said the road through their property was closed, even though it showed as a public road on the maps. Some of the route was on county roads, the majority was on forest service trails, and some of that would have been a challenge to dirt bikes. I rode a KLR 650 and my buddy was on a BMW 650.

I cancelled the second Snyder Creek ride for lack of interest, though I did receive a contact from a potential new NCTR rider.