



Blue Lakes Trailhead Closure Order FAQs

Ouray Ranger District

Closure Dates: June 2 – August 2025

Q: Are there other ways to access the Blue Lakes since the primary trailhead is closed?

A: Yes. Visitors can access the Blue Lakes via Yankee Boy Basin and Blue Lakes Pass by doing an out-and-back hike. Visitors should be aware that this is a very different experience than accessing from the Blue Lakes Trailhead. Access to this area requires 4WD, a high clearance vehicle and some technical driving skills, depending on how far you drive up the road. The hike from the Upper Yankee Boy parking area and bathroom to Lower Blue Lake is approximately 9.5 miles round trip. It includes a 3,000-foot descent into the Blue Lakes Basin, followed by a 3,000-foot ascent to return and complete the route. Visitors should expect more primitive trail conditions with a high degree of exposure along the trail. Visitors should also be aware that parking is limited in this area. Please do not park along the road or on alpine vegetation.

Q: Can users still access Blaine Basin?

A: Users can still access Blaine Basin from either County Road 5 or from the Dallas Trailhead off County Road 17.

Q: Will the parking area be bigger now? What sort of improvements are being made?

A: The parking lot will occupy the existing footprint of the current parking area. The new parking area will have improved drainage, one new double vault restroom in a new location and delineated parking spaces for visitors. This will help improve the parking experience for visitors and provide better access to and from the trailhead.

Q: What uses is the closure area limited to?

A: All uses, including hiking, are not allowed within the closure area.

Q: Can I access Blue Lakes from Dallas Trail?

A: No, the area closure includes 1.6 miles of the Dallas Trail (#200) from the junction with Wilson Creek Trail (#202) and the junction with NFR 851.1.

Q: When will the new permit system be in place?

A: We are currently working with Recreation.gov to develop the details and logistics for the permit system. We do not have a hard implementation date currently. The earliest we anticipate it beginning would be for the 2026 season.

Q: When will the Blue Lakes area close, and for how long?

A: The temporary closure begins June 2, 2025, and is expected to last through August 2025. The area will reopen as soon as it is safe to access.

Q: Why is the Blue Lakes area closing?

A: The closure is necessary for trailhead construction and restoration efforts as part of the Blue Lakes Visitor Use Management Plan. The goal is to improve visitor experiences and ensure the long-term sustainability of the site's natural resources.

Q: What improvements are being made?

A: Projects during the closure include:

- Reconstructing the trailhead parking area
- Installing two new vault restrooms
- Adding kiosks, signage, and interpretive panels

- Cataloging invasive plants
- Developing designated camping areas
- Restoring social trails and impacted sites

Q: Who is funding the improvements?

A: The project is funded by the Great American Outdoors Act (GAOA).

Q: Which trails will be affected by the closure?

A: The closure includes the Blue Lakes Trailhead, accessed from County Road 7, and extends to the Mount Sneffels Wilderness boundary. Portions of the Dallas and Wilson Creek trails, adjacent to the trailhead, will also be closed.

Q: How will restoration areas be protected during construction?

A: Temporary fences will be installed to preserve restored areas.

Q: Where can I get updates on the closure?

A: For more details, visit

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/r02/gmug/projects/61979>.