



Center for Snow and Avalanche Studies

www.snowstudies.org

CSAS Mission Statement

The Center for Snow and Avalanche Studies enhances the interdisciplinary investigation of the alpine snow system's behavior and role in human/environment relationships by offering resources – people, information, and facilities – for field-based research and education.

Code of the Basin

The CSAS's staff, our hosted researchers and their assistants, our hosted field camp students, and our other visitors are unusually privileged to have a public lands venue like Senator Beck Basin to work and learn in. With this unique resource, the CSAS is able to fulfill the Mission stated above. We enjoy that privilege at the pleasure of the US Forest Service and our Ouray Ranger District, their staff, and the managers of the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forest Supervisor's Office, who monitor and manage our use of the Basin through a Special Use Permit.

In addition to the USFS's oversight of our activities, we also elect to self-impose our own standards of ethical and safe use of the Basin by instituting and requesting your compliance with a **Code of the Basin**. This Code is designed to preserve the natural resource, reduce the inherent hazards of working or visiting this environment, and maintain the best possible relationships with other users of the Basin. Please read and consider this Code carefully and don't hesitate to request clarification of points which are not completely clear to you, based on your own experience working and traveling in mountain environments. These are presented in no particular order of importance – every point is important!

- Above all else, users of the Senator Beck Basin (SBB) must recognize that they are working, learning, and traveling in inherently dangerous mountain terrain. Natural hazards such as avalanches, lightning, severe weather, cold, heat, water, cliffs, and other features deserve just as much respect and attention in Senator Beck Basin as they would in any other remote mountain setting. Neither the proximity of the Basin to Highway 550, the presence of our research and monitoring infrastructure, the presence of other people, or even the presence of CSAS staff should provide SBB users with the slightest sense that they can relax their alertness to those hazards or that an incident, of even the most minor nature, is any more acceptable in SBB than it would be 30 miles from the road! Put another way, no incident, no matter how minor, is acceptable to the CSAS. As users of SBB, we all must strive for a perfect safety record and be exemplars of responsible mountain decision making.
- Given the above, every excursion into SBB should be undertaken with sufficient gear to mitigate the landscape and weather hazards of the season. During snow season, full avalanche safety gear for every member of a party is mandatory until conditions warrant relaxing that requirement. Sufficient personal clothing to endure prolonged exposure to severe winter weather is essential in order to not become a burden to or disrupt the scientific purpose of an excursion. In non-snow months sufficient clothing to comfortably endure sudden severe weather and potential hypothermia-inducing conditions is mandatory. Carrying a minor repair kit, a whistle, and an assortment of any other '10 essential' items you prefer is simply good mountain practice at all times of the year.
- Please park next to Hwy 550 with consideration for snow plow drivers, other users, and your safety.

- By our very nature, as users of SBB, many of us may often be tempted to allow our desire to ‘get the data’ to supercede our best judgement in the face of natural and human conditions. However, safety must be our first priority!! This means monitoring the weather and time of day, and preserving a sufficient margin of daylight for a safe exit from the Basin in the event of an incident, gear failure, or other contingency (including dealing with another party’s problems, as good Samaritans). It means recognizing our own physical condition and not underestimating our fatigue, or the fatigue of a member of our party. It means not overestimating the physical or athletic skills within the party, in the face of current travel conditions. It means never believing that there is absolutely no alternative to “finishing today”, or that “I’ll never have this chance again” ... it’s never true, and there is always tomorrow. Most mountain accidents are the consequence of a multiplicity of the factors above, and the failure of an individual or group to recognize and act on those “failures of perception” before an incident can occur. As SBB users, the CSAS encourages you to always hedge your bet by conservative decision making! No data are worth the stress of a near-incident, let alone actual injury or death.
- In all seasons, as users of SBB we are obliged to make a genuine, extra effort to minimize our physical and visual impacts on the Basin, the approaches to the Basin, and to others who share the Basin with us. The CSAS requests that no dogs or other pets be taken into the Basin, in any season. Being “quiet users” is a courtesy to others and to wildlife, and it vastly improves your chances of actually seeing wildlife when groups minimize their audio output. To the extent that it’s possible, SBB users should avoid defecating in the Red Mountain Pass backcountry – try to do your business in town! In any event, please never leave paper waste behind. Not only be extra vigilant about your own litter (Ziplocs, zip ties, flagging, notebook paper, etc.), we hope SBB users will also carry out the litter of others that they may encounter. When walking on dry ground, SBB users must make their best judgment on whether to disperse their impact by varying their route through the woods or tundra, or to use an established game or other trail, or to walk on exposed rock surfaces, to avoid impacting plants and soils. If and as possible, SBB users will avoid leaving obvious bootprints in mud or wet areas, or other evidence that they have passed, in order to preserve the comparative remoteness of SBB for other hikers who may enjoy feeling as if they are ‘the first’ to walk through the Basin (which has no official trail). Finally, when designing an experimental plot or other installation, the CSAS and SBB users will strive for minimal visual and physical impacts by choosing the appropriate materials, colors of materials, use of materials, and by designing signage so that the plot will not become or look like litter itself, or look haphazard and sloppy, or excessively disturb a site with signage or physical impacts, like trampling. Our goal in SBB is to conduct “top science” without damaging the subject of study or unnecessarily diminishing the experience of others in the Basin. We are proud of our top-notch infrastructure and plots and of the appearance of quality science that they convey.
- In the unlikely event that you do observe bad behavior by members of the public or other SBB users, it would be unwise and inevitably very unpleasant for you to take it upon yourself to intervene, and certainly not as an agent of the CSAS or US Forest Service. We ask that you do not intervene or confront bad actors. Instead, simply observe their behavior, perhaps take photographs (if that will not escalate the situation), perhaps attempt to identify vehicles parked at the highway that are associated with the bad actors, and then report what you have seen to the CSAS.
- As fellow travelers with other citizen users of public lands, the CSAS’s encourages SBB users to treat other visitors to SBB with extra courtesy. We do not project a “KEEP OUT” attitude! Rather, the CSAS has adopted a proactive, positive approach to explaining our presence in the basin, hoping to help others to understand what the infrastructure is there for, what we are doing on field days, and how they can contribute to the work. We encourage you to do the same, by taking the time to be engaging and forthcoming about your own work with those who are curious, explaining what it means, and how they can most helpfully behave around your site or project. Our positive approach has been 100% effective, to date, and we have an enthusiastic following of locals who are not only interested in but also quite protective of the SBB Study Area, on our behalf. A single ‘bad’ encounter between a SBB researcher and a member of the public would damage that hard-won support.