Baculite Mesa, Pueblo, Colorado

Date: Saturday, October 23, 2021 **Time**: 8:30am

Joint Trip with Colorado Mineral Society. Limit 25 FMC people.

Trip Leader: Brian Walko, C: 303.931.4283, Email: earthextractions@gmail.com

Meeting Place & Time: Meet at the site at 8:30am, near the intersection of CO Hwy 47 and Baculite Mesa Road (Lat: 38°17'38.39"N, Long: 104°33'22.09"W).

Directions: From Denver, drive south on I-25 to **Exit 101** (SH50 Canon City Exit/ CO Hwy 47) and turn east (left). Go 3.5 miles east on CO Hwy 47 past Troy Ave exit to the next road intersection called Baculite Mesa Road and turn north (left). Go north on Baculite Mesa Road for approximately 3 miles. You will go past the "no collecting without permission" sign and across a yellow cattle guard in the dirt road to a small gray building with a turn-around parking area where the field trip leader will be waiting. The distance from Boulder to the meeting location is about 135 miles (2 hours 15 minutes).

Logistics: Easy to moderate difficulty level. Hiking around the buttes and drainages, which are about ¼ to ½-mile from parking area, will be required to find specimens. Many specimens can be found lying on the ground or eroding out of the drainages. High desert conditions, elevation ~5,200 feet. No bathroom facilities onsite, but restrooms are available at the gas station at the Troy Ave exit on CO Hwy 47. The trip may be cut short if it starts to rain heavily, because the clay soil is very slippery and the road gets really muddy.

What to bring: Bring plenty of water, lunch, sunscreen, insect repellent, hat, eye protection, gloves, rock pick, shovel, screwdrivers, and a bucket/backpack and packing materials for delicate specimens. The landowner indicated that heavy long pants and boots should be worn because of the potential of rattlesnakes, scorpions, and cactus in the collecting areas.

What to Collect: Baculite Mesa is known for fossils of baculites (straight ammonites). The baculite (*Baculites scotti*) is a now-extinct sea creature that lived during the late Cretaceous Period. The shell of the baculite is preserved only as a thin white layer visible at the top and bottom of the specimen. The shell was filled with mud at the death of the specimen as it lay on the muddy sea bottom.

Many other invertebrate fossils can be found here including ammonites (extinct mollusks), gastropods, nautiloids, scaphites, inoceramus (extinct clams), and various pelecypods (snails). The fossils can be found either on surface floating freely in the Pierre Shale or in very hard concretions. Safety glasses and a small sledge hammer are needed when cracking open concretions. Some fossils may be found with the mother of pearl shell still intact, so special care should be taken to preserve those delicate specimens, if found. Ammonites and clams can have a fluorescent calcite coating on them.

Geology: During the Cretaceous Period (69 to 80 million years ago), the western U.S. was covered by an inland sea commonly referred to as the Pierre Seaway. The rock layer formed from this period is known as the Pierre Shale.