



M A S T E R P L A N

2 0 0 8

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DENVER PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT,
NATURAL RESOURCES DIVISION

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January 2009

Dear Denver Residents and Regional Partners:

In June 2006 I invited a cross-section of regional leaders to bring their best critical thinking to evaluate the management, funding, and future of Denver's renowned Mountain Park system. I want to thank them and the hundreds of other people who contributed to this long overdue Master Plan. Hard questions, rigorous research, and realistic strategies were critically needed in order to assess the Mountain Parks' importance to Denver residents and to create a long-term plan to sustain what comprises 70% of the Denver Parks and Recreation system.

I posed a number of questions to the Advisory Group. How do we both protect the Parks and promote them? How do we celebrate and utilize that which makes them remarkable? How do five counties work together to have our respective systems of parks and open spaces complement each other and fully serve the thousands of regional and local visitors?

Research for the Plan reaffirmed the high value to and heavy use of the Denver Mountain Parks by Denver residents, even though the regional context of the Parks has changed dramatically since Denver made its first purchase of Genesee Park in 1912. Denver is now surrounded by other cities and counties that have purchased thousands of acres of open space for their own residents. Front Range residents and tourists visit all of these open space parks in heavy numbers. Denver must continue to be a leader in what has become a regional, reciprocal open space system, protecting invaluable natural resources and scenic beauty while providing recreation to all.

Denver Mountain Parks continue to be a source of civic pride, unmatched experience, and national recognition. Where else can you see a bison calf, marmots in the tundra of Summit Lake, Buffalo Bill's saddle; or picnic by Bear Creek and hear a concert at Red Rocks all in a single day trip? This thoughtful Plan provides a sound and sustainable approach to managing Denver Mountain Parks, ensuring that this tremendous asset thrives another 100 years.

Sincerely,

John W. Hickenlooper
Mayor

January 12, 2009

Letter from the Denver Parks and Recreation Manager:

The extensive research done for this Plan reaffirms that Denver's investment in what would become a 14,000-acre Mountain Park system was a smart one. The City was decades ahead in safeguarding public access to the foothills and mountains while, simultaneously, preserving important environmental resources. As the Plan points out, it is important for the department to pay close attention to the management of the Denver Mountain Parks. A majority of Denver residents say that they value and visit their Mountain Parks as much, if not more, than traditional recreation facilities in town. But the issue is not to pit one part of the park system against another. Every portion of Denver's extensive park and recreation system serves different and equally important needs and audiences.

Today our Mountain Parks are Denver's contribution to a regional and reciprocal open space system stretching the entire length of the Front Range. Denver residents are heavy users of all these county and city open space systems. The challenge to Denver and to the Parks and Recreation Department is how to more equitably support this historic and significant portion of the park system through both lean and flush economic times. It is time to reinvest in the Mountain Parks with a fairer share of city resources, renewed and new partnerships, and innovation.

"Equality of opportunity" was the impetus expressed 90 years ago when starting the Mountain Park system. It resonates as much today. The Plan has received strong endorsements from, among others, its regional partners, Inter-Neighborhood Cooperation (INC), The Park People, and the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board. As Manager of Denver Parks and Recreation, I would like to thank the many civic leaders, stakeholders, and park users who worked for 18 months to create this thoughtful plan.

Kevin Patterson, Manager
Denver Parks and Recreation

Letter from the Denver Mountain Parks Foundation

In 1904, Denver's visionary Mayor Speer blended public generosity and civic spirit with governmental capacity and resolve to create a magnificent system of urban parks. Furthermore, he and other business leaders knew this was a city with unique potential because of its Front Range backdrop.

This "gateway to the mountains" would make Colorado more attractive to tourists than Switzerland itself. In 1911, the Joint Committee of the Mountain Park Project reported on a year-long study assessing the need, feasibility and means for establishing a Denver Mountain Park.

Economics really made the case to the voters. They understood that the attraction of a mountain park experience for travelers would also give them cause to linger. A mere ½ mill additional property tax would make this dream real as well as mean more money to the economy of this fledgling burg.

For 42 years, the Mountain Parks Commission oversaw the acquisition of Federal land, gifts and bequests of property from individuals, and the building of roadways, shelters, way stations and recreational venues. The system became "worth 100 times its cost." It not only served to make our mountains accessible but gave Denver an exalted reputation for vision and progressive city planning.

We now also can celebrate our Mountain Parks legacy in the context of what we have become: a metropolitan region spanning from Boulder to Castle Rock, from Aurora to Floyd Hill. We join other neighboring municipalities in their commitment to open and natural areas for all the things people need: places to play, exercise, learn, relax, be together, be alone.

Unfortunate changes made in the 1950s left Mountain Parks impecunious, and have eventually necessitated this Master Planning effort. Denver now is reacquainting itself with the *raison d'être* of this bold park system. Through the efforts of Denver's Parks and Recreation Department, the Denver Mountain Parks Foundation, and Mundus Bishop Design, the early rationale for creating the Mountain Parks can be revisited, appreciated and expanded to meet current needs.

Denver has reawakened to its need to get back into this game in this new century and apply that in action. This Master Plan should finally provide the tools to move from "conceive" to "achieve."

W. Bart Berger, Founder and
President of the Denver Mountain Parks Foundation

Letter from the Mountain Parks Advisory Group

We are the fifty-person Mountain Parks Advisory Group representing Denver residents, recreation users, economic development, natural resource management, historic preservation, mountain communities, and elected officials from Denver, Jefferson County, Douglas County, and Clear Creek County. We took the task of asking hard questions and pursuing all ideas for the Mountain Parks seriously. Through research we discovered that misconceptions and misinformation about Mountain Parks abound, leaving the system underfunded and unrecognized.

Do Denver residents value and use Denver Mountain Parks? Yes, in droves. Surveys showed that at least 68% of Denver households visit a typical (excluding Red Rocks) Denver Mountain Park at least once a year. That's up to 400,000 Denver residents. Add regional visitors and visits to Red Rocks, Buffalo Bill, and Mt. Evans, and you have up to 3 million visitors a year. Denver decision-makers need to acknowledge how important this huge, irreplaceable asset is to the people of Denver and to the City.

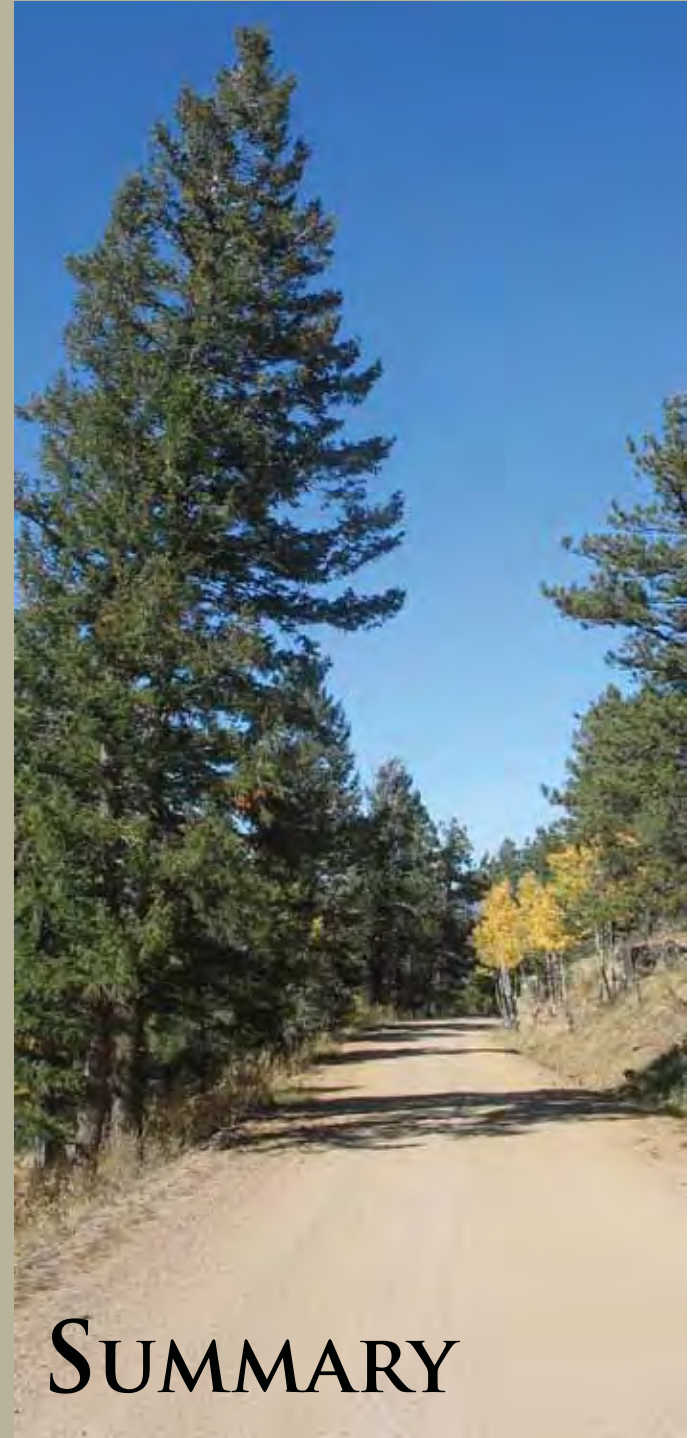
What about having another entity manage the system? Use of the Mountain Parks as well as other open space parks is absolutely reciprocal. In other words, other open space providers already serve Denver residents, and want Denver to be an equal partner in this regional system. We learned, too, that deed restrictions and Charter protection would make a sale close to impossible for 95% of the parks. The Mountain Parks are Denver's to protect and to manage.

Of course, Denver must continue searching out additional revenues and partnerships for the Mountain Parks, as well as for the rest of the park system. The Master Plan addresses those funding strategies, plus ideas to get more Denver kids into the mountains, protect the rich diversity of wildlife and landscape, and ensure that the parks meet the needs of visitors through marketing and communication. The Plan sets out the values and direction for the coming decades. Even if the first steps implemented from this Plan must be modest during these difficult economic times, Denver's long-term commitment to its Mountain Parks can and should be highly vocal, visible, and fair.

On behalf of the entire Advisory Group,

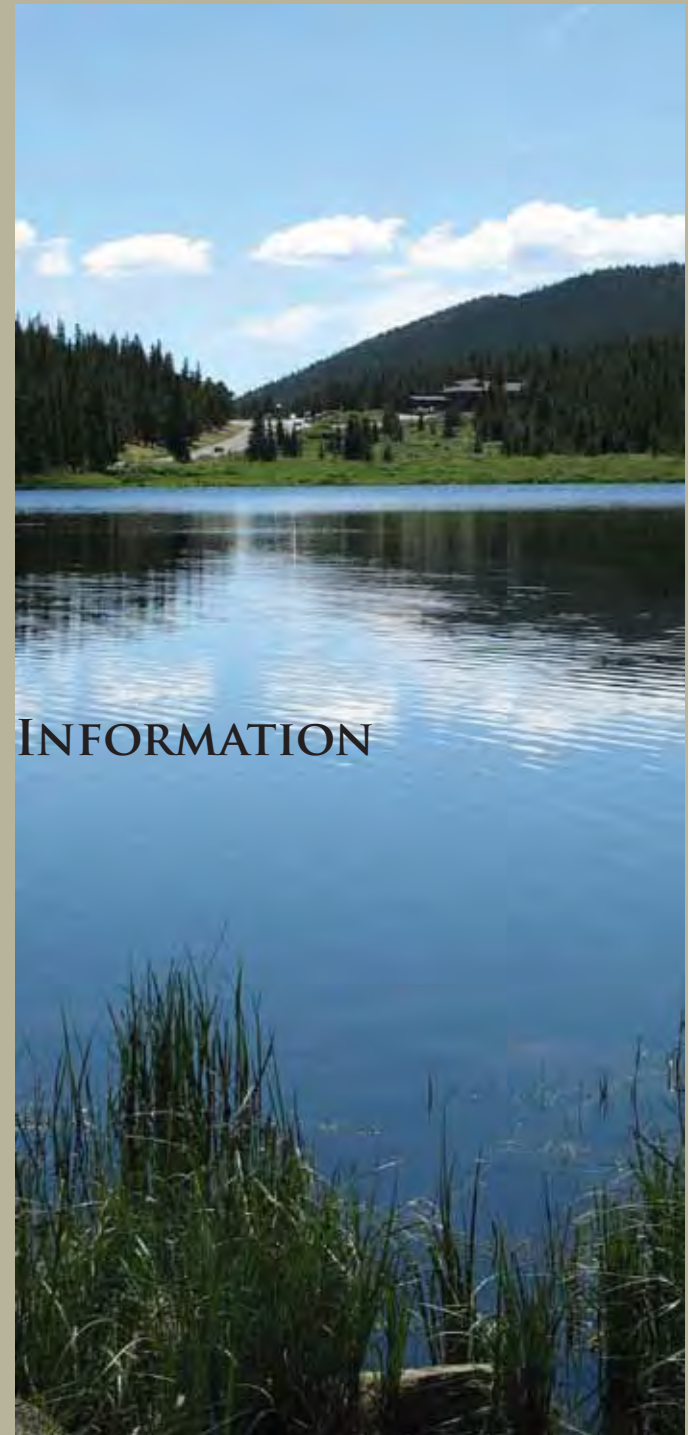
Councilwoman Peggy Lehmann and Landri Taylor, Co-Chairs

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



APPENDICES

- A. COST ESTIMATES
- B. TRAIL MAPS
- C. CHARTER AND DEED INFORMATION



APPENDIX A: COST ESTIMATES

The following cost summaries outline the anticipated costs associated with improving and upgrading the Denver Mountain Parks system as recommended in the Master Plan. The cost estimates are presented alphabetically, by park name. Following the cost tables for the individual parks is an overall cost associated with system-wide improvements that are recommended for signing and wayfinding.

Bell Park				1. Protection of Natural Resources	2. Basic Infrastruc- ture Repairs	3. New park improvements	4. Vision
Type of Work:	Unit	Quantity	Unit Cost				
MP/Natural Resource Plan	EA	1		\$30,000			
Forest Thinning	LS	1	\$50,000.00	\$50,000			
Revegetation	SF	321,750	\$1.50	\$482,625			
Site Improvements	SF	71,500	\$4.00		\$100,000	\$186,000	
Road/parking Improve- ments	LF	6,500	\$60.00			\$390,000	
New trail	LF	7,000	\$5,000.00			\$35,000	
Trailhead Kiosk	EA	1	\$5,000.00			\$5,000	
Subtotals				\$562,625	\$100,000	\$616,000	

Bergen Park				1. Protection of Natural Resources	2. Basic Infrastruc- ture Repairs	3. New park improvements	4. Vision
Type of Work:	Unit	Quantity	Unit Cost				
MP/Natural Resource Plan	LS	1	\$30,000.00	\$30,000			
Revegetation	SF	92,400	\$1.50	\$138,600			
Multi-use / Mtn Biking Trails	LF	1,800	\$5.00		\$9,000		
Site Improvements	SF	39,600	\$4.00		\$58,400	\$100,000	
Trailhead Kiosk	EA	2	\$5,000.00			\$10,000	
Subtotals				\$168,600	\$58,400	\$110,000	
Trailhead Kiosk	EA	1	\$5,000.00			\$5,000	
Subtotals				\$562,625	\$100,000	\$616,000	

Corwina Park				1. Protection of Natural Resources	2. Basic Infrastruc- ture Repairs	3. New park improvements	4. Vision
Type of Work:	Unit	Quantity	Unit Cost				
MP/Natural Resource Plan	LS	1	\$30,000.00	\$30,000			
Revegetation	SF	49,200	\$1.50	\$73,800			
Hiking Trail restoration	LF	6,500	\$3.00		\$19,500		
Multi-use / Mtn Biking Trails	LF	11,200	\$5.00		\$56,000		
Site Improvements	SF	73,800	\$4.00		\$95,000	\$200,200	
New Interpretive Kiosk	EA	1	\$5,000.00			\$5,000	
Subtotals				\$103,800	\$170,500	\$205,200	

Cub Creek Park				1. Protection of Natural Resources	2. Basic Infrastruc- ture Repairs	3. New park improvements	4. Vision
Type of Work:	Unit	Quantity	Unit Cost				
MP/Natural Resource Plan	LS	1	\$30,000.00	\$30,000			
Stream Edge Improve-ments	LF	1,650	\$500.00	\$500			
Revegetation	SF	132,750	\$1.50	\$199,125			
Site Improvements	SF	162,250	\$4.00		\$249,000	\$400,000	
Road Improvements	LF	8,500	\$60.00		\$210,000	\$300,000	
New Trails	LF	2,640	\$5.00			\$13,200	
New Interpretive Kiosk	EA	1	\$5,000.00			\$5,000	
New park shelter	EA	1	\$50,000.00			\$50,000	
Subtotals				\$229,625	\$459,000	\$768,200	

Daniels Park				1. Protection of Natural Resources	2. Basic Infrastruc- ture Repairs	3. New park improvements	4. Vision
Type of Work:	Unit	Quantity	Unit Cost				
MP/Natural Resource Plan	LS	1	\$30,000.00	\$30,000			
Forest Thinning	LS		\$15,000.00	\$15,000			
New internal trail	LF	7,000	\$5.00			\$35,000	
New Interpretive Kiosk	EA	1	\$5,000.00			\$5,000	
Restored historic ranch	LS	1					\$2,000,000?
Subtotals				\$45,000		\$40,000	\$2,000,000

Dedisse Park				1. Protection of Natural Resources	2. Basic Infrastruc- ture Repairs	3. New park improvements	4. Vision
Type of Work:	Unit	Quantity	Unit Cost				
MP/Natural Resource Plan	LS	1	\$30,000.00	\$30,000			
Revegetation	SF	145,200	\$1.50	\$217,800			
Site Improvements	SF	217,800	\$4.00		\$400,000	\$471,200	
Road Improvements	LF	8,200	\$60.00		\$300,000	\$192,000	
New Hiking Trails	LF	4,000	\$5.00			\$20,000	
New Interpretive Kiosk	EA	2	\$5,000.00			\$10,000	
Subtotals				\$247,800	\$700,000	\$693,200	

Echo Lake Park				1. Protection of Natural Resources	2. Basic Infrastruc- ture Repairs	3. New park improvements	4. Vision
Type of Work:	Unit	Quantity	Unit Cost				
MP/Natural Resource Plan	LS	1	\$30,000.00	\$30,000			
Stream Edge Improve-ments	LF	2,250	\$500.00	\$1,125,000			
Revegetation	SF	338,000	\$1.50	\$507,000			
Site Improvements	SF	338,000	\$4.00		\$552,000	\$800,000	
Road Improvements	LF	14,500	\$60.00		\$470,000	\$400,000	
New hiking trails	LF	8,000	\$5.00			\$40,000	
New Interpretive Kiosk	EA	4	\$5,000.00			\$20,000	
Easement/acquisition	LS		\$25,000.00				\$25,000
Lodge Upgrade	LS	1	\$2,000,000.00				\$2,000,000
Subtotals				\$1,662,000	\$1,022,000	\$1,260,000	\$2,025,000

Fillius Park				1. Protection of Natural Resources	2. Basic Infrastruc- ture Repairs	3. New park improvements	4. Vision
Type of Work:	Unit	Quantity	Unit Cost				
MP/Natural Resource Plan	LS	1	\$30,000.00	\$30,000			
Revegetation	SF	576,800	\$1.50	\$865,200			
Hiking Trail restoration	LF	2,500	\$3.00	\$7,500			
Site Improvements	SF	247,200	\$4.00		\$388,800	\$600,000	
Road Improvements	LF	6,200	\$60.00		\$200,000	\$172,000	
New Hiking Trails	LF	1,800	\$5.00			\$9,000	
New Interpretive Kiosk	EA	1	\$5,000.00			\$5,000	
Subtotals				\$902,700	\$588,800	\$786,000	

Genesee Park				1. Protection of Natural Resources	2. Basic Infrastructure Repairs	3. New park improvements	4. Vision
Type of Work:	Unit	Quantity	Unit Cost				
MP/Natural Resource Plan	LS	1	\$30,000.00	\$30,000			
Forest Thinning	LS	1	\$50,000.00	\$50,000			
Revegetation	SF	1,231,100	\$1.50	\$1,846,650			
Hiking Trail restoration	LF	30,300	\$3.00		\$90,900		
Site Improvements	SF	662,900	\$4.00		\$2,651,600		
Road Improvements	LF	36,000	\$60.00		\$2,160,000		
Trailhead	EA	5	\$5,000.00			\$25,000	
New Hiking Trails	LF	8,800	\$3.00			\$26,400	
Buffalo Overlook	EA	1	\$400,000.00				\$400,000
Lodge Upgrade	LS	1	\$2,000,000.00				\$2,000,000
Subtotals				\$1,926,650	\$4,902,500	\$51,400	\$2,400,000

Katherine Craig Park (CCC Camp associated with Genesee)				1. Protection of Natural Resources	2. Basic Infrastructure Repairs	3. New park improvements	4. Vision
Type of Work:	Unit	Quantity	Unit Cost				
MP/Natural Resource Plan	LS	1	\$30,000.00	\$30,000			
Forest Thinning	LS	1	\$15,000.00	\$15,000			
Revegetation	LS						
Subtotals				\$45,000			
Note: improvements depend upon Master Plan recommendations (such as utility upgrades)							

Little Park				1. Protection of Natural Resources	2. Basic Infrastructure Repairs	3. New park improvements	4. Vision
Type of Work:	Unit	Quantity	Unit Cost				
MP/Natural Resource Plan	LS	1	\$30,000.00	\$30,000			
Stream Edge Improvements	LF	700	\$500.00	\$35,000			
Forest Thinning	LS	1	\$50,000.00	\$50,000			
Revegetation	SF	36,500	\$1.50	\$54,750			
Site Improvements	SF	36,500	\$4.00		\$146,000		
Road Improvements	LF	1,500	\$60.00		\$90,000		
New Interpretive Kiosk	EA	1	\$5,000.00			\$5,000	
New bridge	EA	1	\$40,000.00				\$40,000
New Trails	LF	6,000	\$5.00				\$30,000
Subtotals				\$169,750	\$236,000	\$5,000	\$70,000

Lookout Mountain Park				1. Protection of Natural Resources	2. Basic Infrastructure Repairs	3. New park improve- ments	4. Vision
Type of Work:	Unit	Quantity	Unit Cost				
MP/Natural Resource Plan	LS	1	\$30,000.00	\$30,000			
Revegetation	SF	89,200	\$1.50	\$133,800			
Hiking Trail restoration	LF	1,900	\$3.00	\$5,700			
Site Improvements	SF	133,800	\$4.00		\$535,200		
Road Improvements	LF	10,500	\$60.00		\$630,000		
New Interpretive Kiosk	EA	1	\$5,000.00			\$5,000	
New Buffalo Bill Museum	LS	1	\$20,000,000.00				\$20,000,000
Subtotals				\$169,500	\$1,165,200	\$5,000	\$20,000,000

Newton Park (1. Protection of Natural Resources	2. Basic Infrastructure Repairs	3. New park improvements	4. Vision
Type of Work:	Unit	Quantity	Unit Cost				
MP/Natural Resource Plan	LS	1	\$30,000.00	\$30,000			
Forest Thinning	LS	1	\$50,000.00	\$50,000			
Site Improvements	SF	213,000	\$4.00		\$852,000		
Road Improvements	LF	1,200	\$60.00		\$72,000		
New Interpretive Kiosk	EA	1	\$5,000.00			\$5,000	
New Hiking Trails	LF	5,280	\$5.00			\$26,400	
Outdoor Ed Facilities for Day Camp	LS	1	\$8,000,000.00				\$8,000,000
New Restrooms	LS	1	\$450,000.00				\$450,000
Subtotals				\$70,000	\$924,000	\$431,400	\$8,450,000

Note: expansion depends upon Newton Park Master Plan recommendations

Legend:

EA = each
LS = lump sum
LF = linear feet
SF = square foot

All estimates were taken from measurements of aerial photographs and current unit prices and are subject to more detailed planning and measurements.

- #1 Protection of Natural Resources includes: MP/Natural Resource Plan, forest thinning, revegetation
- #2 Basic infrastructure repairs includes: repair of existing, i.e. closure of social trails, trail restoration, site furnishings, roofs
- #3 Minimal new improvements includes: new trails, new shelters and site furnishings, new kiosks
- #4 Vision includes very broad estimates for potential new, major facilities (i.e. outdoor ed center at Newton, etc.)

O'Fallon Park				1. Protection of Natural Resources	2. Basic Infrastructure Repairs	3. New park improvements	4. Vision
Type of Work:	Unit	Quantity	Unit Cost				
MP/Natural Resource Plan	LS	1	\$30,000.00	\$30,000			
Stream Edge Improvements	LF	1,550	\$500.00	\$775,000			
Forest Thinning	LS	1	\$50,000.00	\$50,000			
Revegetation	SF	160,000	\$1.50	\$240,000			
Hiking Trail restoration	LF	24,200	\$3.00		\$72,600		
Site Improvements	SF	120,000	\$4.00		\$200,000	\$280,000	
Road Improvements	LF	4,100	\$60.00		\$146,000	\$100,000	
New Interpretive Kiosk	EA	2	\$5,000.00			\$10,000	
Multi-use / Mtn Biking Trails	LF	9,300	\$5.00			\$46,500	
Park Shelter	LS	1	\$50,000.00			\$50,000	
acquisition							tbd
Subtotals				\$1,095,000	\$418,600	\$486,500	

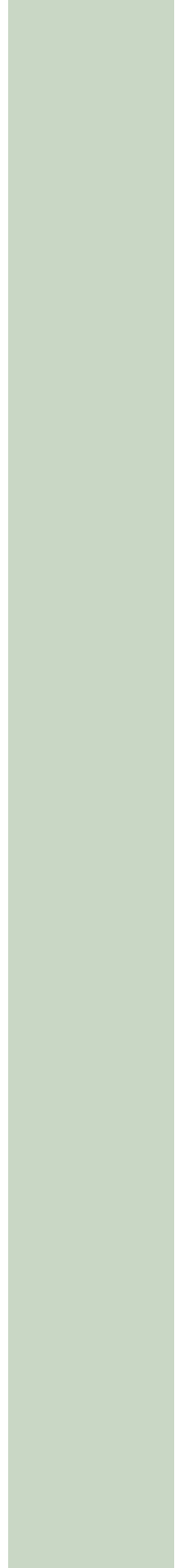
Pence Park				1. Protection of Natural Resources	2. Basic Infrastructure Repairs	3. New park improvements	4. Vision
Type of Work:	Unit	Quantity	Unit Cost				
MP/Natural Resource Plan	LS	1	\$30,000.00	\$30,000			
Forest Thinning	LS	1	\$50,000.00	\$50,000			
Revegetation	SF	47,200	\$1.50	\$70,800			
Hiking Trail restoration	LF	4,700	\$3.00		\$14,100		
Multi-use / Mtn Biking Trails	LF	3,000	\$5.00			\$15,000	
Site Improvements	SF	70,800	\$4.00		\$183,000	\$100,000	
Road Improvements	LF	1,600	\$60.00		\$36,000	\$60,000	
Trailhead Kiosk	EA	1	\$5,000.00			\$5,000	
New Shelter	LS	1	\$50,000.00			\$50,000	
Subtotals				\$150,800	\$233,100	\$230,000	

Red Rocks Park				1. Protection of Natural Resources	2. Basic Infrastructure Repairs	3. New park improvements	4. Vision
Type of Work:	Unit	Quantity	Unit Cost				
MP/Natural Resource Plan	LS	1	\$30,000.00	\$30,000			
Revegetation	SF	43,560	\$1.50	\$65,340			
Hiking Trail restoration	LF	4,800	\$3.00		\$14,440		
Subtotals				\$95,340	\$14,440		

Summit Lake Park				1. Protection of Natural Resources	2. Basic Infrastructure Repairs	3. New park improvements	4. Vision
Type of Work:	Unit	Quantity	Unit Cost				
MP/Natural Resource Plan	LS	1	\$30,000.00	\$30,000			
Revegetation	SF	75,000	\$1.50	\$112,500			
Hiking Trail restoration	LF	3,200	\$3.00		\$9,600		
Site Improvements	SF	25,000	\$4.00		\$50,000	\$50,000	
Road/parking Improve- ments	LF	2,500	\$60.00		\$90,000	\$60,000	
New trailhead kiosk	EA	1	\$5,000.00			\$5,000	
Subtotals				\$142,500	\$149,600	\$115,000	

				1. Protection of Natural Resources	2. Basic Infrastructure Repairs	3. New park improve- ments	4. Vision
Type of Work:	Unit	Quantity	Unit Cost				
Conservation/Wilderness Areas							
Individual natural resource inventory and guideline		10	\$30,000	\$300,000			
System-wide Historic Structure Health and Safety Upgrades CIP and SHS Inventory							
Historic Building Rehabilitation		1	\$2,000,000		\$2,000,000		
Historic Shelter Rehabilitation		1	\$1,000,000		\$1,000,000		
Historic Restroom Rehabilitation		1	\$1,000,000		\$1,000,000		
Subtotals					\$4,000,000		

System-wide Maps and Signage				1. Protection of Natural Resources	2. Basic Infrastructure Repairs	3. New park improve- ments	4. Vision
Type of Work:	Unit	Quantity	Unit Cost				
Wayfinding Signage							
Entry signs		17	\$8,000.00			\$136,000	
Road Directional Signage		34	\$3,000.00			\$102,000	
System map and brochure			\$15,000.00			\$15,000	
Individual park and trail maps							
Graphics / Art Direction		1	\$30,000.00			\$30,000	
Subtotal						\$293,000	
GRAND TOTALS				\$8,086,690	\$15,142,140	\$6,095,900	\$30 million+



APPENDIX B.: TRAIL MAPS



Proposed Trails in Red Rocks Park

LEGEND:

	ROAD
	EXISTING TRAIL - MULTI-USE
	EXISTING TRAIL - HIKE ONLY
	PROPOSED TRAIL - M-USE
	PROPOSED TRAIL - HIKE ONLY

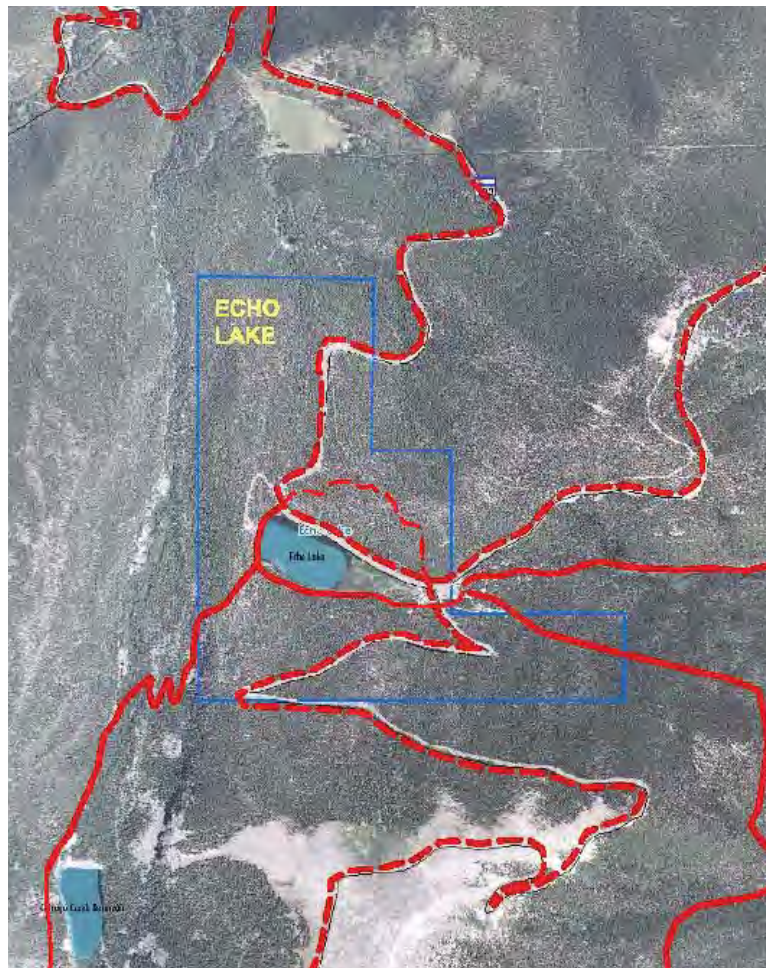
The following maps delineate new trails that are recommended to be added to the Mountain Park system to improve recreational and outdoor experiences. Existing trails that are recommended for infrastructure improvement are also included. The trail maps include both multiple-use trails and hiking-only trails.

The trail maps are diagrammatic only and are not drawn to scale. The orientation of the trail maps is generally with north at the top of the map. The trail maps are not intended for use for measurements or for recreational use.

The trail maps are presented in the same order as they appear in the main document, beginning with the Stars, followed by the Hearts, and finishing with the Picnic Parks. Trail maps are included for Red Rocks Park, Lookout Mountain Park, Echo Lake Park, Summit Lake Park, Genesee Park, Dedisse Park, Newton Park, Little Park, Corwina, O’Fallon and Pence Parks, Bell and Cub Creek Parks, Fillius Park, and Bergen Park.



Proposed Trails in Lookout Mountain Park



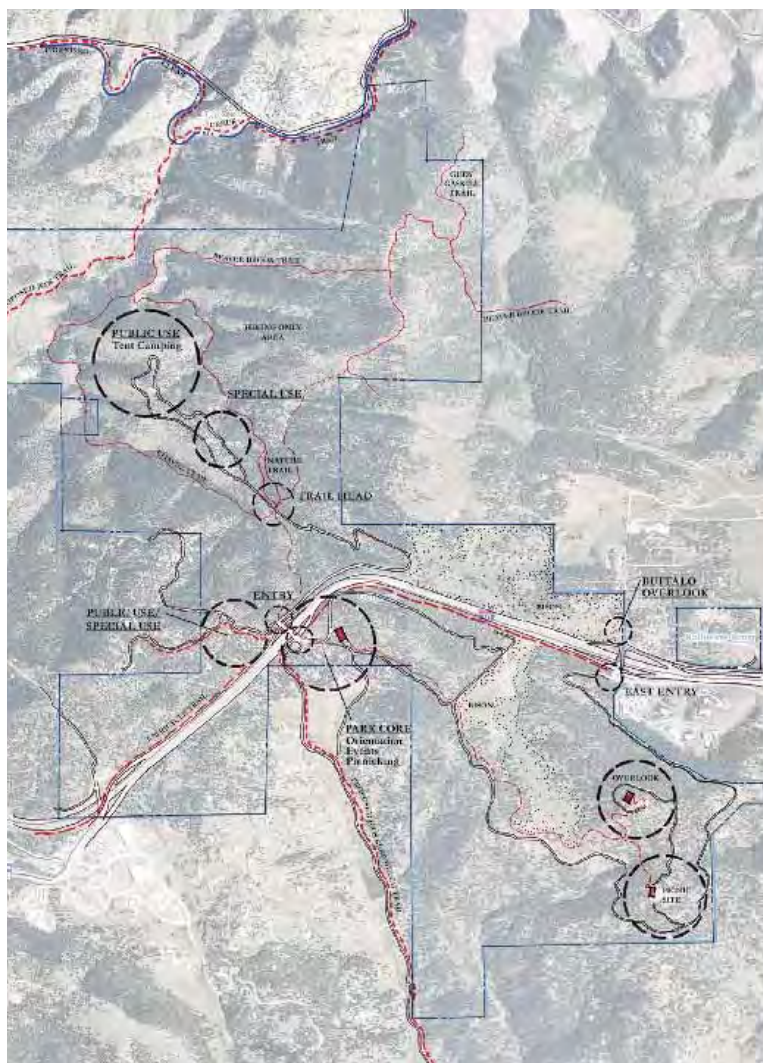
Proposed Trails in Echo Lake Park

LEGEND:

- ROAD
- EXISTING TRAIL - MULTI-USE
- EXISTING TRAIL - HIKE ONLY
- PROPOSED TRAIL - M-USE
- PROPOSED TRAIL - HIKE ONLY



Proposed Trails in Summit Lake Park



Proposed Trails in Genesee Park

LEGEND:

- ROAD
- EXISTING TRAIL - MULTI-USE
- EXISTING TRAIL - HIKE ONLY
- PROPOSED TRAIL - M-USE
- PROPOSED TRAIL - HIKE ONLY



Proposed Trails in Dedisse Park



Proposed Trails in Newton Park

LEGEND:

- ROAD
- EXISTING TRAIL - MULTI-USE
- EXISTING TRAIL - HIKE ONLY
- PROPOSED TRAIL - M-USE
- PROPOSED TRAIL - HIKE ONLY



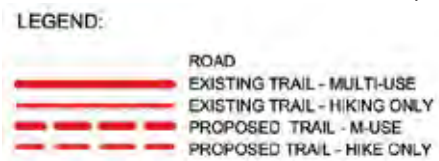
Proposed Trails in Little Park



Proposed Trails in Corwina, O'Fallon, and Pence Parks



Proposed Trails in Bell and Cub Creek Parks





Proposed Trails in Fillius and Bergen Parks

LEGEND:

- ROAD
- EXISTING TRAIL - MULTI-USE
- EXISTING TRAIL - HIKING ONLY
- PROPOSED TRAIL - M-USE
- PROPOSED TRAIL - HIKE ONLY

APPENDIX C.: CITY CHARTER AND DEED RESTRICTIONS

Summary

City Charter: Applies to 14,052 acres of Mountain Parks
(Winter Park excepted) § 2.4.5 Sale and leasing of parks.

“Without the approval of a majority of those registered electors voting in an election held by the City and County of Denver, no park or portion of any park belonging to the City as of December 31, 1955, shall be sold or leased at any time, and no land acquired by the City after December 31, 1955, that is designated a park by ordinance shall be sold or leased at any time, provided, however, that property in parks may be leased for park purposes to concessionaires, to charitable or nonprofit organizations, orto governmental jurisdictions. All such leases shall require the approval of Council as provided for in Article III of this Charter. No land acquired by the City after December 31, 1955, shall be deemed a park unless specifically designated a park by ordinance.”

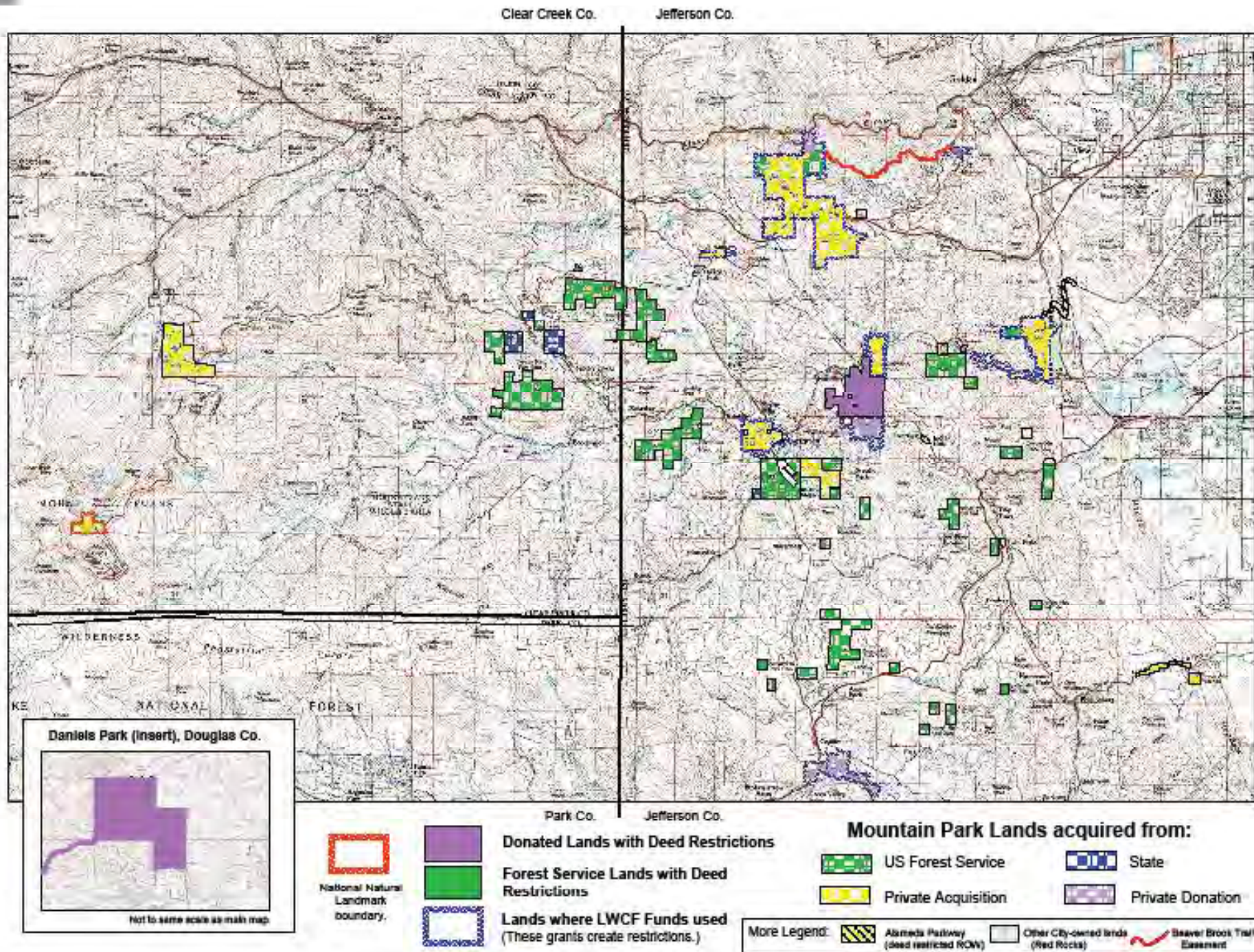
(Charter 1960, A4.5; amended May 17, 1955; amended May 17, 1983; amended August 19, 1996)

Land and Water Conservation Fund; 4,704 acres, of which only 400 acres overlap with the Forest Service lands listed on page c-3

Federal legislation was passed in 1964 to assist with acquisition, planning, and development of recreational properties: “With vigorous bipartisan support in both Houses of Congress, the bill was passed and signed into law on September 3, 1964, as Public Law 88- 578, 16 U.S.C. 4601-4. The Act established a funding source for both Federal acquisition of park and recreation lands and matching grants to state and local governments for recreation planning, acquisition and development. It set requirements for state planning and provided a formula for allocating annual LWCF appropriations to the States and Territories.”

Parks in which improvements were made using grants from the federal Land & Water Conservation Fund are subject to “provision of Section 6(f)(3) of the Act that requires all property acquired or developed with LWCF assistance be maintained perpetually in public outdoor recreation use. Consistent enforcement over the years has ensured permanency of LWCF’s contributions to the national recreation estate.”

Quoted from <http://www.nps.gov/ncrc/programs/lwcf/history.html>, retrieved 8/27/07, emphasis in original.



USDA Forest Service Lands:

All lands acquired from the US Forest Service are subject to a reverter clause. The deeds state:

“TO HAVE AND TO HOLD the land for public park purposes, subject to all the restrictions, conditions, reservations, purposes and reversion in said Act expressed.” Exception is made for mineral rights and access and for ditch/canal rights.

The Act of 1914 referred to states:

“Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the Secretary of the Interior is hereby authorized to sell and convey to the city and county of Denver, a municipal corporation in the State of Colorado, for public park purposes, and for the use and benefit of said city and county, the following described land, or so much thereof as said city and county may desire, to wit: [legal description of optioned lands follows...]

Sec.2. That the conveyance shall be made of the said lands to said city and county of Denver by the Secretary of the Interior upon payment by the said city and county for the said land, or such portions thereof as it may select, at the rate of \$1.25 per acre, and patent to hold for public park purposes, and that there shall be excepted from the sale hereby authorized any lands which at the date of the approval of this Act shall be covered by a valid, existing, bona fide right or claim initiated under the laws of the United States: *Provided*, That this exception shall not continue to apply to any particular tract of land unless the claimant continues to comply with the law under which the claim or right was initiated: *Provided*, That there shall be reserved to the United States all oil, coal, and other mineral deposits that may be found in the lands so granted and all necessary use of the land for extracting same: *Provided further*, That said city and county shall not have the right to sell or convey the land herein granted, or any part thereof, or to devote the same to any other purpose than as before described, and that if the said lands shall be used for any purpose than public park purposes the same, or such parts thereof so used, shall revert to the United States.”

This restriction applies to the following:

Bell	120 acres out of 480
Bergen Peak	all 520 acres
Berrian Mtn.	all 520 acres
Birch Hill	all 160 acres
Cub Creek	509 acres out of 549
Double Header Mtn.	all 40 acres
Elephant Butte	all 665 acres
Fenders	all 40 acres
Flying J	all 80 acres
Genesee	280 out of 2,413 acres
Hicks Mtn	all 840 acres
Hobbs Peak	all 40 acres
Legault Mtn.	all 160 acres
Little	360 out of 400 acres
Mt. Falcon	all 80 acres
Mt. Judge	200 out of 360 acres
Mt. Lindo	all 160 acres
North Turkey Creek	all 40 acres
Pence Mtn.	all 560 acres
Pence Park	40 out of 320 acres
Red Rocks	80 out of 640 acres
Snyder Mtn.	40 out of 240 acres
Stanley	all 80 acres
Strain Gulch	all 40 acres
Turkey Creek	40 out of 61 acres
W. Jefferson School	all 80 acres
Yegge Peak	all 40 acres

For a total of 5,814 acres. Some parcels are lots the exact size of which is not known. Total FS patents add up to 5,802.49 acres.

PARKS AT A GLANCE

DENVER MOUNTAIN PARKS FACTS

- 14,141 acres of parks
- 22 developed parks
- 24 conservation/wilderness areas
- 4 counties: Clear Creek, Douglas, Jefferson, Grand
- 70% of Denver Park and Recreation's 20,000-acre system
- 1% of the department's operating budget and 3% of its capital budget (2007)
- 68% of Denver residents visit a DMP at least once a year (Game Plan Survey)
- Open space preserved beginning in 1912
- Genesee Park first (1912) and largest park (2,413 acres)
- Genesee Outdoor Experiential Center
- Colorow Point smallest park (0.5 acres)
- Highest city park in the USA: Summit Lake (13,000 feet)
- Two bison herds, related to the last herds at Yellowstone National Park
- Two of the metro area's top ten tourist attractions: Buffalo Bill's Grave & Museum and Red Rocks Park & Amphitheatre
- Major parks and scenic roads listed on the National Register of Historic Places
- Bear Creek watershed and headwaters
- Evergreen Golf Course and historic Keys on the Green Clubhouse
- Gifts and food year-round at Pahaska Tepee and Red Rocks, and summers at Echo Lake Lodge
- RV and tent camping Chief Hosa Campground
- Permitted group events at historic Chief Hosa Lodge and Newton Park
- Highly intact Mt. Morrison Civilian Conservation Corps camp
- Internationally known personal collection of William "Buffalo Bill" Cody and American West
- Dedicated funding, 0.5 of a mill levy from 1912 to 1956
- Initial 1914 Plan by nationally known landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.
- Distinguished architects and landscape architects: J.J. Benedict, Burnham Hoyt, S.R. DeBoer, E. Mann, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.

CLEAR CREEK COUNTY	TYPE	ACRES
Echo Lake	Park	616.3
Summit Lake	Park	161.83
Forsberg	Conservation	1.91
Hicks Mountain	Conservation	840
Mt. Judge	Conservation	360
Pence Mountain	Conservation	560
Snyder Mountain	Conservation	240
Total acres in Clear Creek		2780.04
JEFFERSON COUNTY	TYPE	ACRES
Bell	Park	480
Bergen	Park	25.431
Colorow Point	Park	0.537
Corwina	Park	297.82
Cub Creek and Dillon	Park	549.14
Dedisse	Park	420.42
Deer Creek	Park	89.7
Fillius	Park	107.674
Genesee	Park	2412.72
Katherine Craig	Park	56
Little	Park	400.34
Lookout Mountain	Park	66.11
Newton	Park	431
O'Fallon	Park	860
Pence	Park	320
Red Rocks	Park	804.19
Starbuck	Park	11.13
Turkey Creek	Park	61
Bear Creek Canyon	Conservation	130
Bergen Peak	Conservation	520
Berrian Mountain	Conservation	520
Birch Hill	Conservation	160
Double Header Mountain	Conservation	40
Elephant Butte	Conservation	665.1
Fenders	Conservation	40
Flying 'J'	Conservation	80
Hobbs Peak	Conservation	40
Legault Mountain	Conservation	160
Mt. Falcon	Conservation	160
Mt. Lindo	Conservation	80
N. Turkey Creek	Conservation	40
Old Cemetery Ground	Conservation	0.185
Parmalee Gulch	Conservation	2.88
Stanley Park	Conservation	80
Strain Gulch	Conservation	40
W. Jefferson School	Conservation	80
Yegge Peak	Conservation	40
Total acres in Jefferson County		10271.377
DOUGLAS COUNTY: Daniels Park	Park	1000.65
GRAND COUNTY: Winter Park	Ski Resort	88.9
Total acreage		14,141

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Denver Mountain Parks Master Plan is a strategic plan that examines the value of the Mountain Parks to the people of Denver; provides sustainable management strategies for the funding, marketing, and protection of the currently underfunded system; and proposes both large and small improvements for the next 5-20+ years, to take this system of parks to a level of quality commensurate with its international status.

BACKGROUND

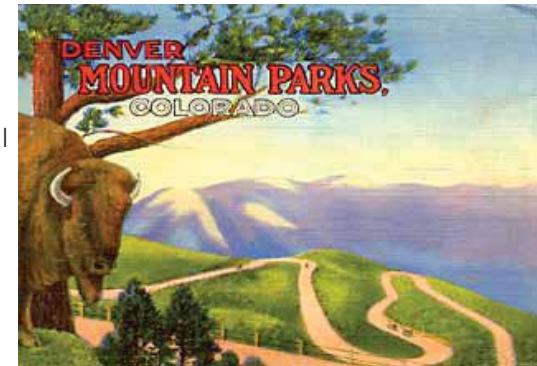
Denver residents love their parks, one of the most diverse, expansive, and historic park and recreation systems in the West. In the early 1900s when Mayor Robert Speer and his civic colleagues crafted their bold “City Beautiful” vision of parks and parkways throughout Denver, they set on an equally aggressive campaign to acquire and develop the other “half” of the park system: the Denver Mountain Parks (DMP). Decades ahead of other Colorado counties and cities, Denver created a mountain open space system outside of the city itself, safeguarded from development and accessible to all Denver citizens. The Mountain Parks were an extension of the City Beautiful parks in town, intended to provide an equitable mountain experience for everyone and not just the privileged. The result is a comprehensive system of 22 accessible mountain parks and 24 less or inaccessible conservation areas that totals more than 14,000 acres in Clear Creek, Douglas, Grand, and Jefferson Counties.

“The Mountain Parks idea in Denver is equality of opportunity....”

Denver Municipal Facts
Vol. 1 #15 May 17, 1913

The DMP system is unrivaled in its spectacular settings and variety of outdoor experiences. In this municipal park system visitors can find bison, an international ski resort, an alpine lake 13,000 feet above sea level, and Red Rocks Park and Amphitheatre, carved out of 200-foot high red-rock monoliths. Starting in 1912, Denver acquired land for its scenic beauty, natural resources, views, and recreation. The

system stretches over five life zones from near the peak of Mt. Evans (with a 10,000-year-old fen and plants found nowhere else outside the Arctic Circle) to the oak woodlands of Daniels Park in Douglas County. Even the bison are unusual; their lineage traces to the last herd in Yellowstone National Park.



Renowned architects and landscape architects designed the roads, buildings, and stone structures that give the parks their character. This Master Plan updates the work of the nationally known landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., of Massachusetts, who completed the initial 1914 plan. Today, the DMP are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

With the exception of Winter Park in Grand County, all of the parks are officially designated parkland; none can be sold without approval by a majority of Denver voters. In addition, close to 93% of the parks must maintain their purpose as public parks because of additional deed restrictions. The DMP system was sustained by a dedicated 0.5 mill levy, passed by Denver voters in 1912, until City Council retired the levy in 1956. The Mountain Park Board that had provided oversight also was disbanded and the system became one of the many maintenance districts in the department, competing with city-wide operating and capital needs.

The funding and, consequently, the condition of the DMP began to slip over time. Denver’s funding for the Mountain Parks is approximately 1/3 of what other counties and cities are spending on their open space and mountain systems. DMP receives 1% of the Parks and Recreation operating budget and 3% of its capital budget

despite its size and complexity. The result has been a decline in the condition of the infrastructure (from social trails to deteriorating roofs and picnic tables), degradation of the natural resources, crowded parks, and few visitor services. As of 2008, DMP has a lone ranger and no printed maps.

Context has changed as well from 1912.

Ninety years ago

Denver had a population of more than 200,000 residents while the other counties averaged 14,000 residents each. Denver was providing the only public mountain parks for all the Front Range counties. Today the open space and mountain park systems are regional and reciprocal in use, whether being used by people or wildlife. From the 1960s through today, dedicated sales taxes and mill levies have been passed creating extensive open space and mountain park systems managed by many Colorado counties and cities. Most DMP visitorship is similar to what is experienced by other county open space parks. Around 1/3 of the users are from the local county, 1/3 are from the City and County of Denver, and the final 1/3 are from the other surrounding cities and from out of state. Denver now is one partner of many in a complex regional open space system.

Since the mill levy was retired, elected officials and others have questioned whether Denver should own or manage the DMP, in effect, also questioning whether the DMP are used and valued by Denver residents. These difficult questions were prompted by funding competition and the lack of current data about the DMP. In fact, the DMP were not included in the 2007 \$500 million Better Denver Bond, with the expectation that this Master Plan would answer those longstanding questions and make recommendations about the future of the DMP. In 2006, with funding from a Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) Planning Grant, the Denver Mountain Parks Foundation, and City capital funds, Denver Parks and Recreation began the

The Plan and its recommendations are based on the four DPR Game Plan values that drive the Parks and Recreation Department: equity, sustainability, engagement, and economic soundness.

18-month process to research and craft recommendations for the DMP with a comprehensive Denver Mountain Parks Master Plan.

The DMP Master Plan is heavily research-based. The process was expansive, with public outreach in four counties, extensive research and surveys, and oversight by a 50-member Advisory Group of regional civic leaders. More than 800 1:1 interviews with park users, a 1,500 person generalizable survey of Denver adults, focus groups, and other research tools analyzed current use patterns and values held by Denver residents. Experts from around the region were invited to Roundtable Work Sessions on funding, marketing/communication, and recreation. The website continually posted information on the planning and invited comments through a related blog. See <http://denvermountainparks.org>. The Plan is broadly divided into three sections that cover research findings; management recommendations (ownership, funding, communication, and protection); and physical and programmatic system-wide and individual park recommendations.

KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

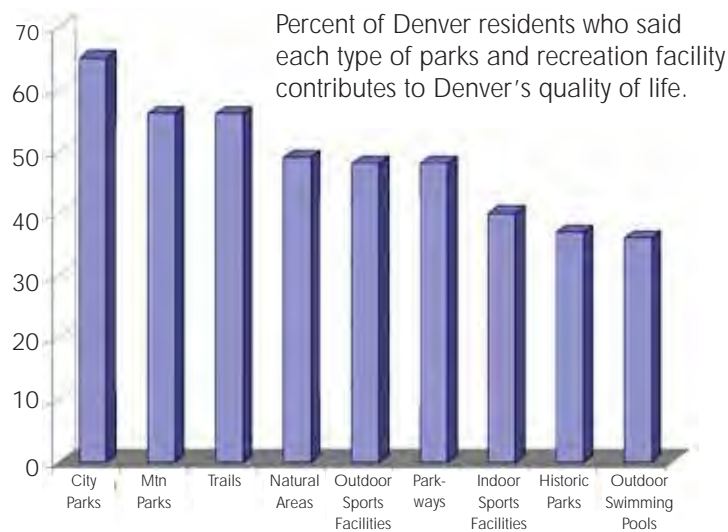
Do Denver residents use and value the DMP? According to research, the reply is a resounding yes. Research showed that lack of information and many misperceptions exist about the Mountain Parks, especially about users. The DMP are heavily used. Statistically valid surveys showed that 68% of Denver residents visit a typical (excluding Red Rocks and Winter Park) DMP at least once each year. Add visits from other non-Denver



WOW Camping Program at Genesee Park

users to the traditional DMP and the regional and tourist visitors to Red Rocks and Buffalo Bill, and total visitorship to the entire system is more than two million people annually. O'Fallon Park alone can have more than 1,000 people clustered around Bear Creek on a hot weekend, and Lookout Mountain, with its picnic area, Pahaska Tepee, and Buffalo Bill attractions, hosts close to 500,000 visitors from around the world every year.

Surveys also showed that 78% of Denver residents considered the DMP important to their quality of life, even more so than some other segments of the park and recreation system. Denver residents echoed the founders' words in expressing why Denver Mountain Parks are important to them and to the city: quality of life (primarily recreation and health), visionary protection of natural resources, and civic pride.



Source: 2003 Game Plan General Survey of Denver residents

The key benefits and values provided by the DMP continually expressed by park users and summarized by the Advisory Group are:

1. Play and Refuge

Denver should ensure that all residents, not just those who can afford it, have access to the mountains for play and refuge. Given its large population base, Denver should proactively protect land for its residents' quality of life.

2. Protection

Denver should continue helping to protect natural resources—water, wildlife, views, forests and meadows, mountaintops—that are essential to the future of the region. Denver Mountain Parks are Greenprint Denver in action since 1912.

3. Wonder

Denver should ensure that every city adult and child experiences the wonder of nature, in both urban and mountain environments. Connecting people, especially kids, to nature produces quantifiable physical, educational and social benefits.

4. Stewardship

Denver should be a vigilant steward of this economic benefit and public asset, caring for these irreplaceable mountain lands and natural resources for today and for the future. They are a source of civic pride as well as revenue.

5. Partnership

Denver should be a full partner with the other counties and cities to provide this regional open space system. Because Denver Mountain Parks have evolved into an integral part of a regional recreational resource, it is more important than ever before to see them in that larger context.

6. Celebration

Denver should protect and celebrate the western history expressed throughout the DMP. The DMP contain some of the most important historical and cultural attractions in the region.

Research also affirmed their longstanding economic value, particularly in terms of tourism, business location decisions, and direct revenues to Denver. Winter Park contributes \$2.2 million a year to the Parks and Recreation capital fund, and bison sales almost cover the cost of the herd. Red Rocks and Buffalo Bill Grave and Museum attract more than a million visitors from around the world each year and consistently rank in the top ten tourist attractions in the metro area.

Trend and user research analyzed DMP's established recreation niche in the region. Based on the parks' natural resources, site design, and historic use, DMP have a unique role in the region in accommodating highly social activities from large family reunions at a picnic park to a geology class at Red Rocks. At the same time, less-visited backcountry hiking trails offer a quiet way to escape the crowd. As visitors repeated in interview after interview, the parks have something for everyone. Even so, recreation trends shift, and the Plan outlines criteria to research and evaluate any recreation activities or sports. Rock-climbing, geo-caching, and family camping exemplify three new uses identified in the Plan for further study.



Ropes Course at Genesee Park

KEY MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Ownership

Even if highly valued and used, is there a more efficient way to manage the DMP? Would it be better for different agencies to manage them? Should Denver sell them? A significant goal of this Plan was to vigorously research and pursue all options for the DMP. Research showed that Denver voters are unlikely to approve sale of any park land and think that a sale of DMP would be short-sighted. Charter and deed restrictions also essentially make sale extremely difficult, if not impossible. For example, the 5,800 acres purchased from the USDA Forest Service in 1914 would revert to them at no cost if Denver no longer managed them as parks.

Other agencies show little interest in taking over responsibility and management of the DMP, primarily because Denver residents also heavily use their open space systems. The regional perspective of the DMP is that Denver was the visionary leader in acquiring public open space and maintains that responsibility to its citizens (as well as the region) today. It costs money to take care of the DMP, whoever manages them. As of 2008, Denver spends around \$70/acre, approximately 25-35% of what is spent on other open space systems in the area. The counties where DMP are located definitely acknowledge the value that these parks provide their communities. For years many allied agencies, such as Jefferson County, Douglas County, and Evergreen Park and Recreation District, have invested in DMP through trails, roads, a lake house, and other amenities that they funded and built on Denver land.

The hope and expectation expressed by the Advisory Group and allied agencies is that Denver fund its fair share of the regional partnership, while collaborating wherever possible. Consequently, the Master Plan calls for Denver to keep the management and increase its reinvestment in the Denver Mountain Parks in order to bring them up to a quality comparable to other open space parks in the region, and to enhance the system's unique, historic facilities to a national level of quality.

Funding and Partnerships

The Plan calls for a responsible “quilt” of short- and long-term funding and partnership strategies that realistically respond to today’s economic instability and shrinking city budgets. It will take time and partnerships to build the funding bases and gain momentum. The quilt outlines three primary strategies.



1. A Bigger Share of City Resources. A first step is for Denver to increase its commitment to the DMP from existing capital and operating funds, not only to repair an aging system and provide basic services to visitors, but to reaffirm the City commitment to the regional open space partnership. Although difficult to do in a tight economy, the context for this shift is encouraging. The major needs of many of the urban parks will be addressed by the \$93 million share of the Better Denver Bond and ongoing capital mill levy passed in 2007. Consequently, the Plan recommends increasing the DMP share of the annual \$8-9 million Capital Improvement Fund (\$2.2 million of which is contributed by DMP from the Winter Park Ski Resort) from an average \$200,000/year to at least \$1 million/year.

Just as strongly, the Advisory Group, as well as the Plan’s Funding Roundtable, strongly recommended researching and building the collaboration needed for dedicated funding in the future. If Denver’s 1912-1956 0.5 mill levy were in place in 2008, it would yield \$4.2 million annually. The options for dedicated funding vary, including a potential regional funding mechanism including most Front-Range counties (such as the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District). Other

options include dedicated funding for the entire Parks and Recreation system. Any dedicated funding options require building credibility, collaboration, and an advocacy base.

2. Building Capacity and Partnerships. Longstanding and new partnerships position the DMP very positively. The newly formed Denver Mountain Parks Foundation already has contributed to the costs of this Plan. The City supports the growth of the Foundation into a major fundraiser and advocate for the DMP. Other existing, but limited, partnerships and volunteer efforts that have benefited DMP over time have untapped potential that can only grow with more staff time and attention from Denver. Joint projects with Douglas, Jefferson, and Clear Creek Counties are underway for improvements on DMP land. Projects and plans have begun or will start soon with partners such as the Denver Museum of Nature and Science, the Evergreen Nature Center, Denver Public Schools, the University of Colorado Architecture and Planning Division, Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado, Trout Unlimited, and the Beckwourth Mt. Club. Friends of Red Rocks is a model for an expanded volunteer effort.

3. New Opportunities. The revenue-producing pieces within the DMP, such as Red Rocks Amphitheatre or Winter Park, have their current revenues already earmarked. But the potential is great for additional revenues from these DMP icons, such as increased events, donation programs, or fees earmarked for the DMP system. The DMP also have the kind of compelling history, character, and imagery that could be captured through merchandising of books, clothes, and posters.

Despite the Charter and deed restrictions, each part of the DMP system was assessed for its current integrity, context, and possible market value. A couple of parks were identified to study for new revenue options that meet legal constraints and public approval, including one 40-acre conservation parcel surrounded by the quarry in Morrison.

Communications and Marketing

Funding and partnership strategies depend upon an informed and engaged public, and the research overwhelmingly revealed that awareness and knowledge of the DMP is extremely low. One survey showed that 60% of the people being surveyed in a DMP did not realize that it was a Denver park. Consequently, increased communication, education, and marketing (such as branding the DMP with a new logo) are priorities.



Evergreen Lake in Dedisse Park

Protection

The DMP are a major Denver asset, and policies and guidelines to protect that asset are critical to the system's future. The Plan offers strategies for protection of the natural, cultural, and historic resources responsible for the DMP's uniqueness. For example, a separate set of Design Guidelines will accompany the Plan to ensure that repairs and new construction continue the design legacy.

In summary, key early Management Recommendations are to:

- ▶ Increase awareness of the DMP and improve the visitors' experience through communication and marketing materials.
- ▶ Increase the Denver Mountain Parks' share of the yearly capital budget, with a minimal \$1 million share of the annual Capital Improvement Fund (CIP), and increase operating funds when supported by the economy.
- ▶ Expand existing partnerships and volunteer projects with other counties and with other partners, especially with the Denver Mountain Parks Foundation.
- ▶ Build on the entertainment and entrepreneurial opportunities in the system at places such as Red Rocks, the concessions in historic lodges, or Winter Park.
- ▶ Build a Mountain Parks Division within the department when feasible to increase awareness, visibility, and ability to focus on the complexity and regional nature of the system.
- ▶ Create Natural Resource Management Plans for each park to develop site specific strategies for natural resource restoration and protection, recreation, and volunteerism.
- ▶ Create and adopt the DMP Design Guidelines to protect and build on the character and legacy of the system's designed buildings, structures, and landscapes.



New logo designed by national artist Michael Schwab.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS: PLACES AND PROGRAMS

The Master Plan has natural, cultural, and recreation recommendations that are both physical and programmatic for the system as a whole as well as for each major park or area. To organize this complex system, the Master Plan breaks the DMP system into four equally important tiers:

- ▶ **The “Stars”** are the world-renowned attractions of Red Rocks Park and Amphitheatre, Buffalo Bill Grave and Museum on Lookout Mountain, Summit and Echo Lake Parks on Mt. Evans, and Winter Park Ski Resort. Millions of visitors come yearly from around the world. As Denver residents said over and over when surveyed, when your friends visit Denver from the Midwest, you take them here.
- ▶ **The “Hearts”** of the system are the large, special parks of Genesee, Daniels, Newton, and Dedisse. These parks feature special facilities, bison herds, historic lodges, and ranches. They have tremendous potential for future enhancements and new programs to draw more families from the city into the mountains and to connect kids to nature.

- ▶ **The “Picnic Parks”** are the series of early parks all along Bear Creek (and other smaller creeks), such as Little, Corwina/O’Fallon/Pence, Turkey Creek, Deer Creek, Cub Creek, and Bell Parks. As the most heavily used informal parks, these picnic parks would benefit from more shelters, trails, amenities, and restoration.
- ▶ **The Conservation/Wilderness Areas** are the 24 primarily inaccessible tracts purchased to protect natural features such as rock faces or peaks, views, wildlife habitat, and watersheds. Most of these areas are surrounded by private land and continue to serve their purpose well. Some warrant more protection as the population grows, while others, if access were available, could provide limited recreation.

Most urgent is the need to restore, repair, and protect the deteriorating park facilities and underlying natural resources. As in the urban portion of the DPR system, sustainability and responsibility are DMP priorities and principles. Repair and restore the existing system first and ensure that it remains at high quality. Many of the historic lodges and shelters need extensive work, for example, but their beauty and design are National Park Service quality, putting Denver on the national map.

The Plan also calls for a cautious but parallel effort to add cost-effective basic improvements in the DMP: ADA access; marketing and maps; additional rangers; new hiking trails within parks and regional multi-use trail connections; and new park amenities. These improvements would respond to today’s needs and bring DMP to a level comparable with neighboring open space parks.

And, finally, vision. The DMP system can position itself for the next 100 years with new programs and new facilities that capitalize on its unique character and niche. At this point, the Plan suggests some concepts to extend the DMP vision into the future, “conversation starters” without even cost estimates. New amenities and programs

need to take advantage of, but not diminish, the valuable natural and cultural resources that are at the heart of the DMP system. They must be maintained, and they must be financially sustainable. Consequently, these larger plans need more thought work—feasibility and marketing research—and solid funding.

Detailed cost estimates are in the Plan's Appendix. The Funding Section in Chapter 3 outlines the operations staff levels needed to maintain the system. In summary, the capital priorities are:

1. Protect natural resources. Restoring and protecting the forests, habitat, and water is the highest priority. Strategies include forest thinning, stream bank restoration, revegetation, and individual park Natural Resource Management Plans. Close to \$8 million is estimated for work.

2. Repair and restore existing parks and facilities. The SHF System-wide Assessment of facilities identified basic health and safety repairs needed for the major structures in the DMP. In addition, buildings, roads, trails, park furniture, and signs all need basic repairs beyond safety. Cost estimates for these core repairs of built resources are \$15 million and, depending upon partnerships and momentum, could take as long as 10 years.

3. Improve and expand facilities to meet current, basic recreational needs. Examples include improved ADA accessibility; new internal hiking trails and regional trail connections; amenities such as new picnic tables or shelters; and improved visitor services and safety (maps, signage, rangers, educators). Cost estimates for adding new basic amenities and visitor services are a minimum of \$6 million.



4. Expand the vision. With vision tempered by feasibility, DMP has tremendous untapped potential to connect people of all ages with both nature and a taste of the American West. Exploration of new uses, major restorations, and the addition of new facilities in parks such as Genesee, Newton, Echo Lake, Daniels, and Lookout Mountain could elevate DMP to a previously unknown level of quality and experience. The Plan recommends months of visioning, feasibility studies, and partnership-building critical to plan and build for tomorrow.

Finally, how do we get more people from Denver to the DMP and, especially, into the less crowded parks? New and expanded programs and facilities will mutually benefit everyone wanting to connect people to the mountains, whether for health, knowledge, or recreation. But access and transit are critical. With its partners, Denver must find ways for everyone to be able to reach the Mountain Parks using a variety of means from light-rail and buses with bike racks to even a new railway up the mountain. DMP could become the outdoor experience away from home for all ages.

CONCLUSION

The City and County of Denver was a national leader when it acquired and safeguarded a system of parks, roads, trails, and wilderness areas in the foothills and mountains outside of Denver in the early 1900s. Today, it is one city of many providing its share of a complex, regional open space system. Decades of underfunding and minimum staffing have left the DMP behind in this regional system, with deteriorating conditions and few services for visitors. Yet its spectacular settings, from Mt. Evans to the historic Daniels Park ranch, its internationally known cultural attractions, and its beautiful buildings and landscapes are unmatched.

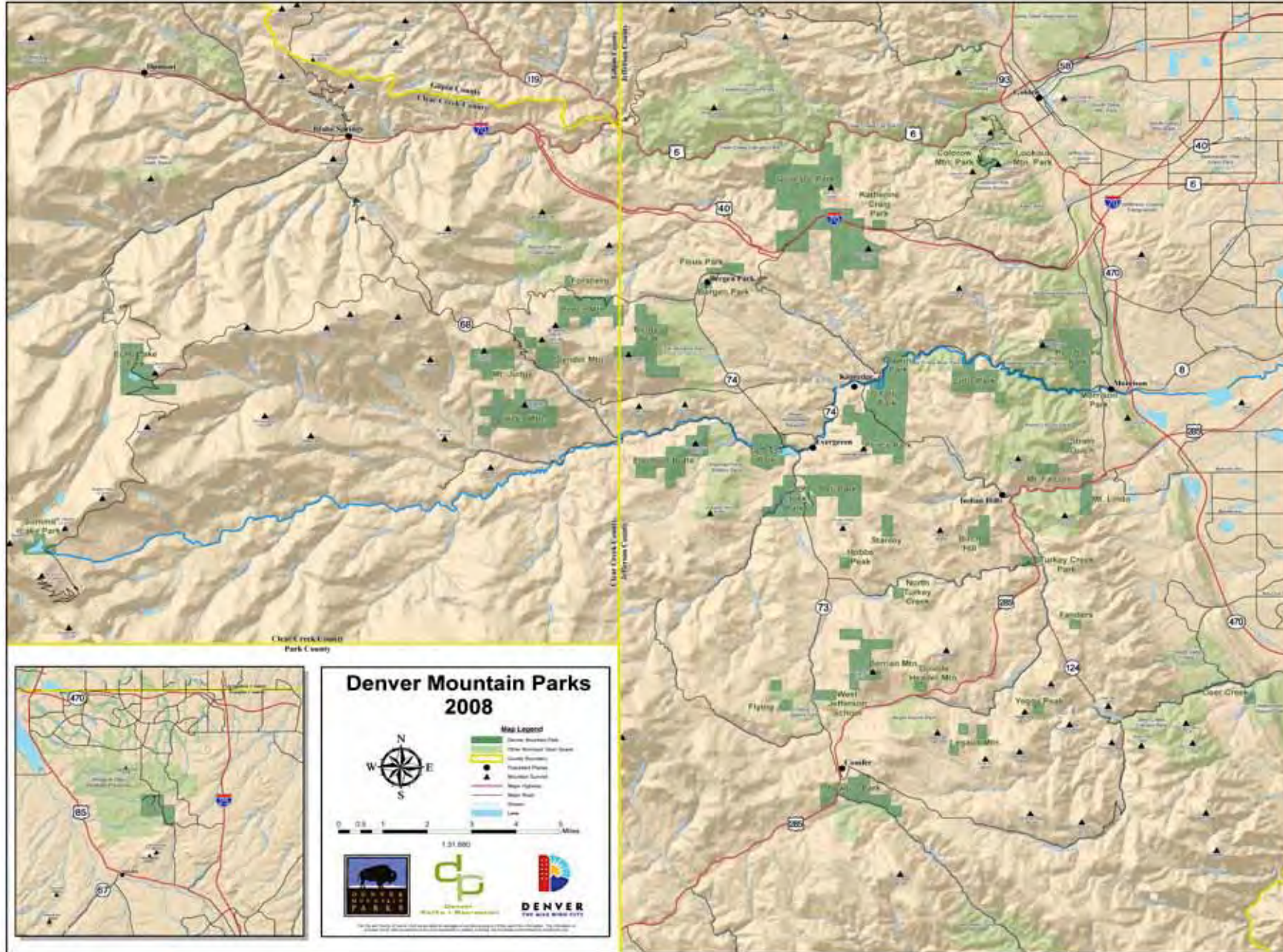
In this planning process, Denver residents and civic leaders, as well as regional partners, reaffirmed the importance of the Denver Mountain Parks to them and to the city. An increased commitment from Denver to this important part of Denver's Park and Recreation system and the strategies outlined in this Plan can restore this historic system to world-class quality.

For more information on the plan or Denver Mountain Parks, see <http://denvergov.org> or <http://denvermountainparks.org> or

Denver Parks and Recreation, Natural Resources
201 West Colfax, Suite 605
Denver, CO 80202
720-913-0651



Winter Park



Denver Mountain Parks System Map

CHAPTER 1 BACKGROUND





Lookout Mountain Park, © Mike Strunk

CHAPTER 1 BACKGROUND



Red Rocks Amphitheatre

“Denver needs a Mountain Park for 1913. Every year that it is delayed, it means money lost to the merchants of Denver. There is no reason why this magnificent section of peaks, parks and canyons should not be open to tourists by June 1st, 1913”

—Letter from John Brisben Walker to FL Olmsted, Jr.,
October 24, 1912

1.A. INTRODUCTION

In the early 1900s Denver Mayor Robert Speer and his civic colleagues crafted and then aggressively built their bold vision for a “City Beautiful” Denver. Speer’s plan spurred the City and County of Denver on a decades-long goal to provide its residents with miles of beautiful tree-lined streets, lush parks and parkways, views to the mountains, and, beyond the city’s limits, what would become a grand 14,141-acre Mountain Park system. They believed that

Mountain Parks were as key to quality of life and economic advantage as the neighborhood park, that what makes living in Denver a priceless privilege are those spectacular mountains just fifteen miles from the Capitol.

What an unforgivable irony, civic leaders noted, it would be to lose the priceless beauty of the mountains to development or be denied recreational access. A Denver Mountain Parks (DMP) system would ensure equity and access for everyone living in Denver (as well as for

the sought-after tourists) and not just for the owners of mountain property.

The result was a Mountain Park system based on a 1914 plan for a chain of parks that eventually stretched from Winter Park Ski Resort in Grand County to the 1,000-acre historic Daniels Park ranch in Douglas County. In between is Clear Creek County with Echo Lake and Summit Lake Parks, the latter being the highest city park in the United States, located at 13,000 feet, just below the Mt. Evans summit. The core of the system, built first, is the historic Lariat Loop of connected roads, trails, and parks in Jefferson County.

The Mountain Parks are known for their creeks, lakes, and back country, for their preservation of wildlife, watersheds, and important rural features, and for their distinctive historic buildings, those stone shelters, well houses, and lodges built between 1912 and 1940.



Picnic Shelter at Bergen Park

More than two million people visit the Denver Mountain Parks yearly. On a summer Saturday at Lookout Mountain picnic area, you can hear up to ten different languages spoken.

1.B. NEED FOR A MASTER PLAN

Any plan from 1914 needs updating. In fact, all public facilities need periodic renovation and assessment against contemporary needs. Denver's fifty-year strategy for its parks and recreation system—the 2003 *DPR Game Plan*—clearly called for a new vision for the Denver Mountain Parks system.

The *Game Plan* itself devoted only four pages to this 14,141-acre system (70% of the entire DPR system) that spans four counties and 95 years of history. Coverage was sparse primarily because of persistent and difficult questions about the Mountain Parks that were beyond the *Game Plan's* scope. This updated Denver Mountain Parks Master Plan fills that gap, answering those longstanding questions with a vision for the future.

What, for example, is DMP's recreational niche today in a mountain world filled with buzzing interstates, hamlets turned into towns, and changing Denver demographics? In 1920, the metro area had 300,000 residents, 85% of whom lived in Denver. The Colorado Demography Office projects almost 3 million people living in the six counties comprising the Metro Area by 2015, only 20% of whom will live in Denver. What new amenities will be needed by this expanding population, and who should provide them?

Today Denver is no longer the sole provider of mountain recreation. Douglas, Jefferson, Clear Creek, and Boulder Counties together own more than 200,000 acres of public open space, serving both recreational and preservation needs. It's estimated almost 70% of Denver residents visit a typical DMP at least once a year, but they are heavy users of these other open space parks as well. In turn, residents from across the six-county metro region are visiting DMP along with all the open space systems. How does Denver fit into a regional recreational open space system?

Context has changed as well. Some DMP, such as Dedisse, Bergen, or Fillius in Evergreen, are surrounded by development. And parks that required an all-day excursion in the past can be reached in less than 30 minutes from downtown Denver.



Picnickers at Dedisse Park

After the 1912 mill levy was retired in 1956, funding for the Mountain Parks slipped as they competed with urban projects and repairs, and improvements lagged. In addition to caring for the existing resources, the Master Plan proposes new facilities, trails, and programs that meet today's needs and carry the system into the future. This Master Plan also provides the management strategies to meet contemporary needs and to protect the priceless character, resources, and design that make each park special and memorable.

The *Game Plan* also acknowledged the decades old debate of whether Denver even should spend tax dollars on parks located outside of the City and County of Denver. That question was raised even in 1912 when voters were asked to support a mill levy for the ambitious (and to some, audacious) plan to build and maintain a system of roads and parks in the foothills for Denver residents.



Winter, Echo Lake Park

City officials were leery, but voters responded by passing the mill levy by a comfortable margin. Would voters today? Are the Mountain Parks considered vital enough to the City and to residents today to warrant public expenditure at a level comparable to other open space systems?

For some civic leaders, those questions had enough weight to bump the DMP off the November 2007 "Better Denver" Infrastructure Bond ballot, and to defer improvements until this plan answered those questions about the importance of the Mountain Parks for Denver and the role of regional collaboration.

"Undoubtedly the three chief things to be accomplished are: first, the provision of a system of first-class roads.... second, the protection of at least the more important parts of that scenery.... third, the opening to the public for general use of sufficient areas...."

—Frederick Law Olmsted, Junior
July 17, 1912 letter to the Denver Board of Park Commissioners

1.C. THE PLANNING PROCESS

The Denver Mountain Parks Master Plan is funded by a 2006 Great Outdoors Colorado Planning Grant, the Denver Mountain Parks Foundation, and 2006 City Capital Improvement Funds. A fifty-member Advisory Group was invited by Mayor John Hickenlooper to provide community insight, process oversight, and review of the final plan, and was co-chaired by City Councilwoman Peggy Lehmann and civic leader Landri Taylor.

The Advisory Group included elected officials, civic leaders, and staff from the four counties. Three special Roundtable workshops, which included Advisory Group members plus invited experts, were held to elicit ideas on Recreation, on Funding, and on Marketing/Communications. Mountain park tours were offered to the Advisory Group as well as to City Council members.

Gathering input from Denver and regional users, neighbors, stakeholder groups, and non-users is a challenge for a park system that covers four counties. Consequently, the primary tool to reach Denver and regional users was the 800-person intensive individual interview process done between August 2006 and July 2007 throughout the Denver Mountain Park system. That data built upon ongoing survey work done by Colorado State Parks and Jefferson County. In addition, a number of questions in the 2002 DPR Game Plan survey of the general public in Denver were directed at the mountain park system. Jefferson County Open Space and Denver Parks and Recreation also conducted individual surveys through both park systems during the summer of 2001.

In addition, a well publicized community meeting was held in Douglas County in August 2007 and a joint Jefferson County Open Space and Denver Mountain Parks community open house was held at Red Rocks Amphitheatre in October 2007. The team met with Clear Creek County officials and residents also in October. Two more focused public workshops were held on the future of Lookout Mountain Park and the Buffalo Bill Museum in 2008.

Individual meetings or comments were sought from organizations with specific interests, such as rock climbing or fishing groups. Information on the master plan was posted on the website at <http://denvermountainparks.org> and readers were invited to submit comments or to use the Mountain Parks blog.

As with all master plan processes, presentations and reviews were made to the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, City Council Public Amenities Committee, Inter-Neighborhood Cooperation (INC, representing registered Denver neighborhoods), and other interested organizations. The goal was to gather a broad spectrum of input among users and non-users, Denver residents and residents of other counties, the general public, and special interest groups.



Bison in Daniels Park

1.D. PRINCIPLES, VISION AND GOALS

An important task for an Advisory Group is establishing the guiding principles for the content of the Plan and for the process. The Denver Mountain Parks Master Plan will be an addendum to the *DPR Game Plan* and embodies the four values that drive the department's overall planning:

- ▶ A sustainable environment
- ▶ Equity of resources
- ▶ Sound Economics
- ▶ Engagement

In addition, the Master Plan Advisory Group endorsed overarching principles and goals for the Denver Mountain Parks based upon the Game Plan values:

- ▶ Refuge - Equity
Denver should ensure that all residents, not just those who can afford it, have access to a mountain refuge from the city. Given its large population base, Denver should proactively protect land for its residents' use.



Chief Hosa Lodge

- ▶ Protection - Sustainability
Denver should continue protecting the natural resources—water, wildlife, views, forests and meadows, mountaintops—that are essential to the future of the region. Denver Mountain Parks are Greenprint Denver in action since 1912.
- ▶ Wonder - Engagement
Denver should ensure that every city adult and child experiences the wonder of nature, in both the urban and mountain environments. Connecting kids to nature produces quantifiable physical, educational, and social benefits.
- ▶ Stewardship - Sound Economics, Sustainability
Denver should be a vigilant steward of this economic benefit and public asset, caring for these irreplaceable mountain lands and natural resources for today and for the future.

- ▶ **Partnership** - Sound economics, Engagement, Equity
Denver should be a full partner with the other counties and cities to provide this regional open space system. Because Denver Mountain Parks have evolved into an integral part of a regional recreational resource, it is more important than ever before to see them in that larger context.
- ▶ **Celebration** - Sound economics, Engagement, Equity
Denver should protect and celebrate its story of rich western history expressed throughout the Mountain Parks. Denver Mountain Parks contain some of the most important historical and cultural attractions in the region for residents and tourists.



*October 2007 Open House at Red Rocks Park,
hosted jointly with Jefferson County Open Space*

1.E. THE SYSTEM

The far-flung Denver Mountain Park system is complex. It stretches across five ecosystems from close to the summit of Mt. Evans to the Douglas County foothills and was acquired over seven decades. Its roster includes internationally known icons, such as Red Rocks, Mt. Evans, the Buffalo Bill Grave and Museum, and large popular parks such as Genesee or Evergreen Lake/Dedisse in Evergreen. Highly social parks, like O'Fallon Park along Bear Creek, have been family picnic destinations for four generations and can generate up to 1,000 visitors and traffic jams on a June weekend. Other conservation areas are not publicly accessible; few people realize that they

were purchased to protect views, forests, and water. The diversity makes it difficult to describe the DMP in a few phrases or to organize recommendations and the parks in a simplistic manner.

Consequently, for purposes of this Master Plan and its implementation, the Mountain Parks system is organized into four equally important but different tiers, based on their visitors, uses, geography, and historic integrity. The similarities within a category help craft recommendations both for new directions in uses and recreation and for stewardship and protection. Just as critical is the importance of Denver Mountain Parks as an overall system. It was envisioned and built and can be experienced as an interconnected system of related parks. Recommendations will begin with the system as a whole followed by recommendations for each tier of parks.

Described in more detail in Chapter 4, the four broad tiers of Denver Mountain Parks are:

- ▶ **The Stars:** the internationally known parks of Red Rocks, Echo and Summit Lake Parks (Mt. Evans), Lookout Mountain Park (Buffalo Bill Grave and Museum), and Winter Park Ski Resort.
- ▶ **The Hearts of the System:** the large special parks such as Daniels, Genesee, Dedisse, Newton.
- ▶ **Picnic Parks:** the many small to large parks located along Bear Creek, and those that create gateways to the mountains.
- ▶ **Conservation/Wilderness Parks:** the undeveloped and often inaccessible parcels valued for preservation of views and resources, with potentially limited recreation.

The level of legal protection that all Denver parks have is unusual compared to other municipal and county systems. The original land-owners and civic leaders who together crafted the DMP system were concerned that these parks and their beauty be protected forever from development. By City Charter, all designated Denver parks require a majority of Denver voters to approve any potential sale or lease.

In addition, more than 90% of DMP land has additional deed restrictions, often requiring the land to remain public park land. Despite these restrictions, each park or parcel in the DMP system was evaluated in the Master Plan for any dramatic change in role, original integrity, or recreational value. In the Master Plan process, many difficult questions were researched and options were explored.

CONCLUSION

Conversations from the early 20th century led to a 1914 acquisition plan for Denver Mountain Parks. Change over the last 90 years—regional collaboration, funding mechanisms, recreational uses, urban growth, new open space systems, and access issues—all call for a new look at the Denver Mountain Parks. The primary questions addressed in the Master Plan include:

- ▶ “How are the DMP used and valued by Denver residents and other visitors?”
- ▶ “How can they best serve Denver residents as a recreational, cultural, and natural resource?”
- ▶ “How can we best protect the significant natural, cultural, and historic resources while accommodating recreation?”
- ▶ “How can Denver residents and newer partners fund and sustain this legacy for its survival into the future?”

By asking and answering these questions, this Master Plan will chart the way for the Denver Mountain Parks in time for their 2013 centennial and beyond.

DENVER MOUNTAIN PARKS AT A GLANCE

- ▶ 14,141 acres total
- ▶ 10,271 acres in Jefferson County
- ▶ 1,001 acres in Douglas County
- ▶ 2,780 acres in Clear Creek County
- ▶ 89 acres in Grand County
- ▶ 22 accessible (developed) parks
- ▶ 24 conservation/wilderness areas
- ▶ Bison herds: Daniels and Genesee Parks
- ▶ 2007 operating budget: \$780,000
- ▶ 2007 capital budget: \$200,000



Postcard of Buffalo Bill's Grave

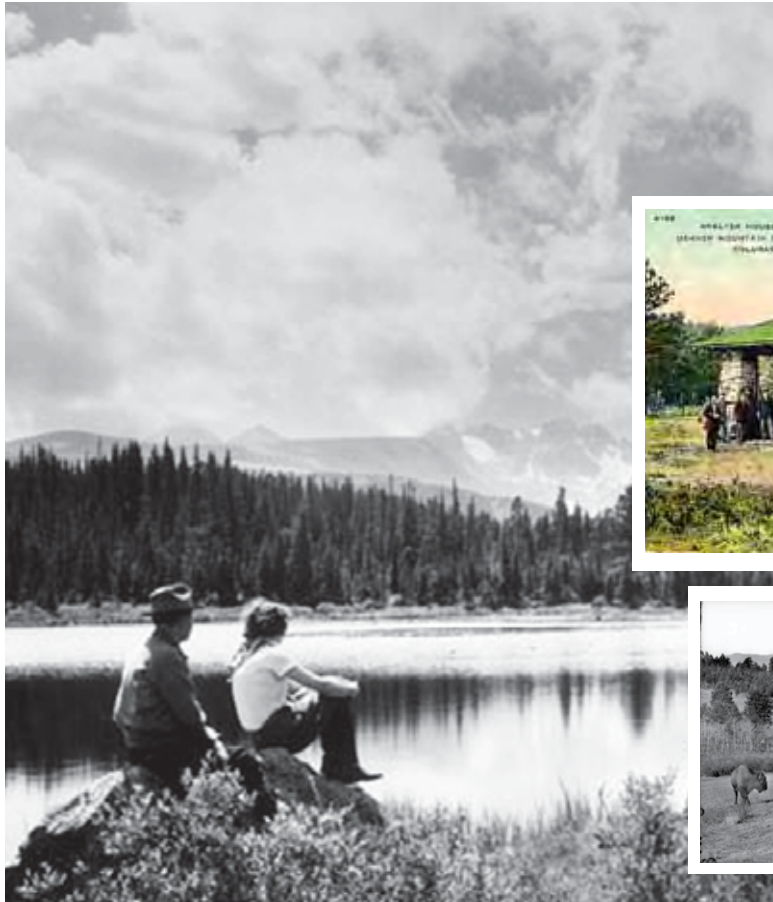
CHAPTER 2 CONTEXT & CHANGE





Red Rocks Park

CHAPTER 2 CONTEXT AND CHANGE



Echo Lake Park

“A Mountain Park for Denver will be the first step, and, perhaps, the greatest step, in the great movement of making our mountains available for the people. We believe the Mountain Park should be more than a picnic place; it should be a summer home for the people of Denver, and indeed for the tourists of the nation.”

—Warwick Downing, 1911

2.A. HISTORY OF THE DENVER MOUNTAIN PARKS

The “City Beautiful” pavilions and malls of the World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893 held in Chicago influenced how cities would be built across the country for decades and caught the imagination of Robert Speer, who became Denver’s Mayor in 1904. Mayor Speer immediately put vision into action, including the bold idea to extend Denver’s parkways (via Alameda Parkway and Colfax Avenue) right up into the mountains so that Denver residents and tourists alike could experience the beauty and recreation found in the foothills.



Lookout Mountain Park Shelter

Denver may have been built on the high plains, but Mayor Speer, John Brisben Walker, and other civic leaders saw it as both the “Paris on the

Platte” and the “Switzerland of the Rockies.” The Denver Real Estate Exchange, Chamber of Commerce, and Motor Club all formed the Mountain Parks Committee. Their report began *“A Mountain Park for Denver will be the first step, and perhaps, the greatest step, in the great movement of making our mountains available for the people.”*



Genesee Park

By 1912, this body, acting on Denver’s behalf, had hired the Olmsted Brothers Landscape Architects of Brookline, MA, to develop a plan. Olmsted Jr., and his assistant, surveyed the mountains by horseback. The 1914 Plan by Olmsted is a thorough but unassuming collection of letters and reports with lists of parcels to purchase and pages of sensible political and funding advice.

Olmsted's 4.5' x 8' linen map, showing more than 41,000 proposed acres, clearly details the scale and vision of this historic municipal project. Denver eventually purchased approximately 8,000 acres in Jefferson County identified in the plan. Lands were selected to protect scenic views, to provide public enjoyment of the mountains, to preserve forests increasingly subject to logging, and to ensure the "freedom of the people for picnic grounds" as more and more mountain acres entered private control.

In May 1912, Denver residents voted to tax themselves, with a one-half mill levy, to support the new park system then far outside the City. A homeowner with a home assessed at \$3,000 would be taxed 50 cents a year. The State of Colorado passed in April 1913 an Act allowing the City to acquire land outside its corporate boundaries for park purposes. It was followed by legislation of the U.S. Congress, passed in August 1914, permitting Denver to acquire USDA Forest Service lands for park use. Negotiations with the Forest Service for acquisition of more than 7,000 acres of lands offered by them at \$1.25 per acre resulted in the addition of 5,800 acres of new parkland over a period of several years.

During the first decade of the Denver Mountain Parks, the mill levy funds were used primarily on acquiring land, building the roads necessary to make the people's new parks accessible, and basic park improvements such as the iconic stone shelters. Better roads were an early priority. Between 1913 and the early 1920s, Denver built or assisted the construction of the Lariat Trail and Lookout Mountain Road and its extension to Bergen Park, as well as the Bear Creek Canyon Road. Close to home, Denver also helped complete roads to Golden and Morrison.

By the 1920s cars had choked the initial circle drive, and additional "loops" were constructed. The road network expanded into Clear Creek County when the Squaw Pass highway from Bergen Park was extended first to Echo Lake, then on to Summit Lake just below the Mt. Evans summit. The road was later improved to Idaho Springs. A 1930s map of the system printed by the Denver Motor Club clocked the shortest day drive at 35 miles although one Circle Drive extended more than 143 miles.

In its first decades, visitors who came by automobile often made a day of the "loops," refilling their radiators with water from the stone well houses built in many of the parks. An exotic spring house, featuring a thatched roof, was built at the curve of one of the Lariat Trail's sharpest hairpin turns. Other visitors took a train up Clear Creek Canyon, disembarked and packed up the Beaver Brook Trail to stay overnight at Chief Hosa Campground, returning the next day.



View of the "Snowy Range" from Genesee Mountain

Large tour cars regularly went up Lookout Mountain and to other parks carrying visitors who had taken the trolley from Denver. Others hiked up Chimney Gulch from Golden. Visiting the Mountain Parks was a day's adventure.

In 1918, Denver and Colorado Congressmen lobbied to have the Mount Evans area declared a National Park (as an addition to the Rocky Mountain National Park). Although the effort looked promising initially, the USDA Forest Service balked, preferring to manage the area themselves. That has led to a long-time partnership between Denver Mountain Parks and the United States Forest Service on Mount Evans. A fee to visit Summit Lake, as well as the Mount Evans summit, was initiated in 1997. Proceeds go directly to recreational improvements and enhanced daily operations, including a percentage share to DMP for improvements at Summit Lake Park.

Protection of natural resources and scenic views also drove many decisions including the early efforts to buy Genesee Park in 1912 to prevent large scale logging of the trees. Denver established a game preserve at Genesee Park in 1914, and bison and elk were obtained from Yellowstone National Park to stock the preserve. A second bison herd was established at Daniels Park in the 1930s.

The DMP are known for their striking historic shelters, lodges, and well houses, many of which were designed by local architect Jules Jacques Benoit Benedict. Benedict was known for his rustic style using indigenous materials such as stone and logs. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) built other distinctive structures in the 1930s. These early parks and major roads were added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1990 and 1995.

One of the most popular Denver Mountain Parks is Lookout Mountain Park. Close to 25,000 people joined the funeral procession up the mountain in 1917 when Buffalo Bill Cody was buried there. The extensive personal collection from his life and Wild West Show was exhibited in Pahaska Tepee until a new museum was built in 1979. Close to half a million visitors from around the world trek to the grave site every year.

The Evergreen valley in Dedisse Park was dammed and flooded in 1926, creating Evergreen Lake. Denver built its mountain golf course just south of the lake. In 1928, Denver acquired the famous "Park of the Red Rocks" and began building scenic roads in what is now Denver's best known mountain park, Red Rocks Park. The following year, the Indian Concession House, now known as the Trading Post, was designed by prominent Denver architect Wilbert R. Rosche in the Pueblo Revival style and built on a ridge in the park.

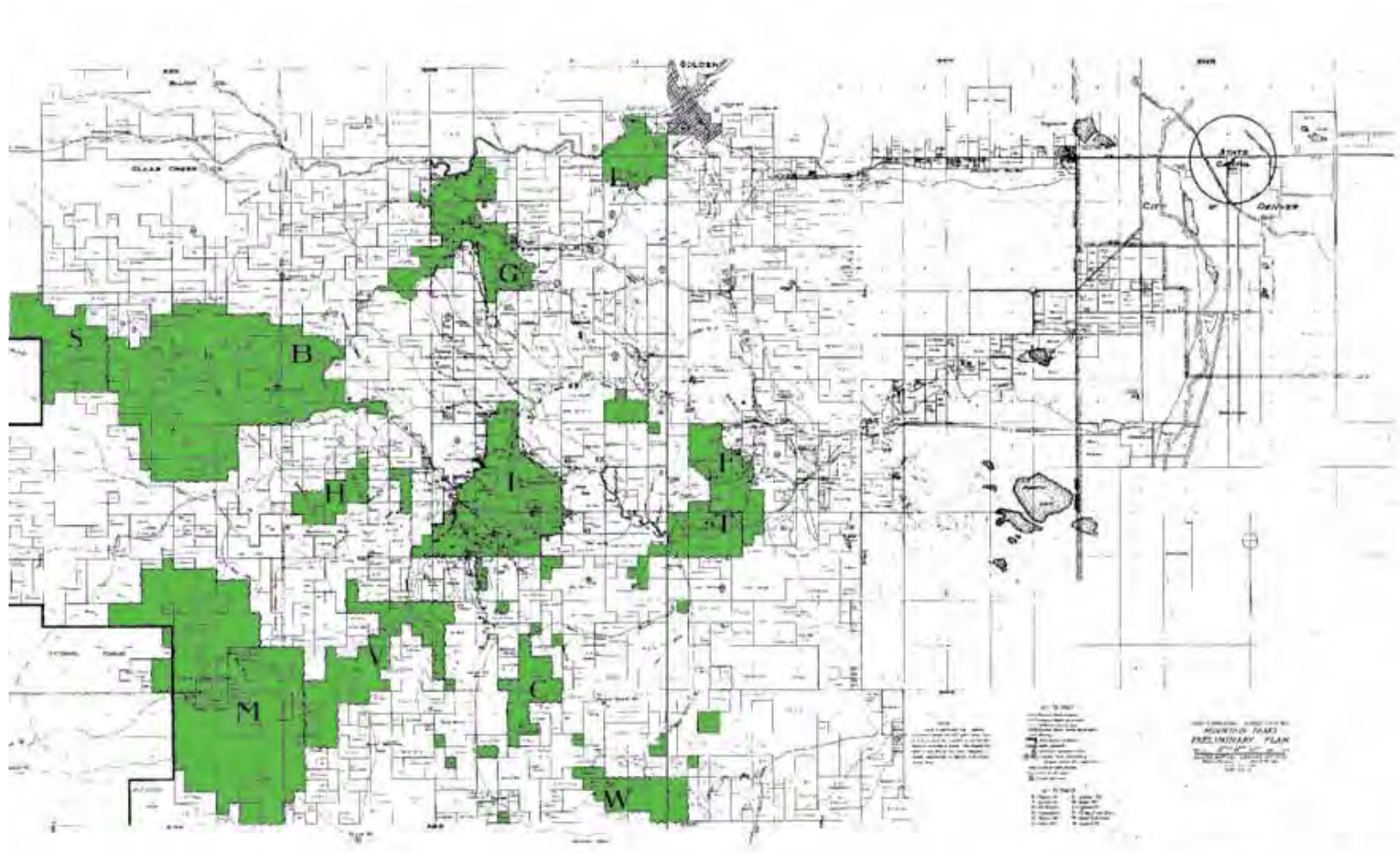
By 1928, Denver had acquired more than 12,500 acres of parkland in three counties, and the industrious acquisition phase was over. The early years of the Depression brought a slower pace to the Mountain Parks, as policy makers and citizens focused on matters of employment and survival. Even then, plans were in the works for a



Red Rocks Trading Post, or "Pueblo"

grand amphitheatre at Red Rocks Park, made possible by the advent of New Deal work programs: the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC).

In 1935, three CCC camps were established in the Mountain Parks, and in 1936, work began on the long-awaited Amphitheatre. Between 1936 and 1941, men from camps at Morrison and Genesee, many of whom were veterans, worked on the Amphitheatre as well as on road and parking improvements in Red Rocks and other Mountain Parks. They also built stone and log picnic shelters at Genesee and Dedisse Parks, as well as toilets, picnic tables, trails, and bridges.



The 41,000 acres identified by Olmsted for acquisition are in green.

Mountain Parks
Preliminary Plan
Olmsted Brothers
1914

The 1914 Olmsted Plan



Family Picnic in Bear Creek Canyon

The CCC also accomplished many erosion control and reforestation projects for the Mountain Parks.

In the late 1930s, O'Fallon Park in Bear Creek Canyon was donated, Daniels Park was expanded, and Newton Park and Winter Park (Grand County) were acquired.

Winter Park Ski Resort, which opened in 1939-1940, was the last major purchase. Parks Manager George Cranmer envisioned a full spectrum of winter recreational venues in the DMP with the acquisition of the informal ski area that existed near the West Portal of the Moffat Tunnel in Grand County. The United States Forest Service granted a Special Use Permit for 6,400 acres by the Portal, and the City traded city-owned land in Parshall to acquire 88.9 acres adjacent to the permit area. Working with the Arlberg Club and Colorado Mountain Club, Cranmer garnered enough funds and volunteers to build a tow and clear slopes. Winter Park had trouble competing with other private ski resorts and in 2003 Denver, through the Winter

Park Recreation Association, which manages the area for the City, entered into a long-term agreement with Intrawest Corporation until 2078. Intrawest guarantees a portion of the resort's proceeds for the Parks and Recreation capital improvement fund.

Other smaller expansions were made to several existing parks, bringing the total acreage of the Mountain Parks to 14,141 at the present time. In 1941, with the departure of the CCC, Denver took possession of the Amphitheatre and the two surviving CCC camps. The Morrison camp is currently used as the DMP administrative headquarters. It is one of the last remaining intact CCC camps in the country.

With the termination of the mill levy in 1956, funding for the Mountain Parks, now derived from the City's general operating and capital funds, became substantially reduced. When the city division of Theatres and Arenas was formed in the 1950s, the management and revenues from Red Rocks shifted from Parks and Recreation to this new division. Growth of Denver and surrounding suburbs between 1945 and 1965 prompted increasing use of the Mountain Parks. In 1982, the operations budget for the Mountain Park system, already strained, was cut by 50%.

Interstate 70 construction up Mt. Vernon Canyon in essence severed Highway 40, breaking the continuous loop between Lookout Mountain and Genesee Park and splitting Genesee Park itself into two sections. The 1970s saw the passage of ballot issues in Jefferson County that created the dedicated funding and mechanism for that County to eventually acquire, by 2007, 51,000 acres of open space. Many of these parcels were originally identified in the 1914 Olmsted Plan. Douglas County followed suit, acquiring more than 11,000 acres to date, with more acreage under easements.

2.B. PARK USERS

To understand today's uses and users in Denver Mountain Parks for this plan, a number of research sources were used. Research done by Colorado State Parks and the recreation industry provides information about recreation trends, economic benefits, and travel that can apply to Denver Mountain Parks. In addition, results from Jefferson County Open Space's regular surveys of the users within their system provide insight and information about Denver residents and the Mountain Parks. Finally, specific market surveys that provided a quantity of information about Denver Parks and their users and non-users included:

- ▶ Denver and Jefferson County Joint In-House Surveys. 2001 "saturation" interviews/surveys done in 5 Denver Mountain Parks and 4 Jefferson County Open Space Parks;
- ▶ Game Plan Leisure Vision/ETC surveys. 2002. Random print and phone generalizable survey of 1,500 Denver residents about Denver Parks and Recreation for the department's master plan, with specific questions about use, value, and perceptions of the DMP. (95% confidence that the results were within 2.7% of what would be found with the general population);
- ▶ DMP Master Plan Marketing Support Surveys. 2006-2007. Individual interviews of 800 DMP users, covering every park in the system over a period of 12 months;
- ▶ DMP Marketing Support Stakeholder Surveys. 2006. In-depth survey of civic leaders
- ▶ DMP BarnhartUSA Focus Groups. 2008. Two focus groups consisting of Denver residents, to test perceptions and awareness of the DMP.

Uses. In many ways, the most popular activities have remained constant over time: socializing with friends, solitude, getting away from the city, being close to nature, picnicking, hiking, and fishing. Other sports have grown over time, some with large constituencies like mountain bicycling and others with fewer but devoted fans, such as rock climbing, geo-caching, hang-gliding, or tree-climbing. As the trails and parks get more crowded, conflicts have arisen among user groups. Denver and Jefferson County, in particular, each try to address ways to provide balance and avoid conflicts. With some exceptions, internal DMP trails are for hiking only.



Bear Creek Canyon

Although picnics, fishing, and hiking continue to draw most visitors, other improvements accommodate new recreation trends. Parks and Recreation manages an intensive ropes challenge course on the north side of Genesee Park and the Wonderful Outdoor World nonprofit takes hundreds of urban kids for their first camping experience in Genesee Park. Newton Park attracts large picnics and events, offering active recreation amenities such as ball fields. Additional funding could enable DMP to respond to other recreational requests, such as rock climbing or new connections to multi-use regional trails.

Users. The research done over the past ten years shows that the use in DMP, as well as the open space parks of Douglas, Jefferson, and Boulder Counties, is regional. For example, although it varies by park, overall the visitorship in both Jefferson and Denver mountain parks is around 1/3 Denver residents, 1/3 Jefferson County residents, and 1/3 from other Front Range counties, out-of-state, and even from out of the country.¹



W.O.W. Outdoor Program for Teens, Genesee Park

Use by Denver residents is heavy in all Front-Range open space systems, including their own. Game Plan generalizable surveys showed that almost 70% of Denver residents visited a typical DMP, such as Genesee, O'Fallon, or Bergen, at least once in the past year. Close to 56% indicated that the DMP also were a major contributor to their quality of life. The Game Plan survey showed, in fact, that many Denver residents use and value the Mountain Parks more than in-town recreation centers or pools. Only city parks exceeded Mountain Park's use in percentage and as a major contributor to quality of life.

With some exceptions, the demographics of Denver residents who use the Mountain Parks reflect the overall population of Denver. The Marketing Support surveys indicate a marked difference in two areas; surveys indicate less than 2% of residents surveyed in the Mountain Parks were African-Americans compared with an overall Denver African-American population of 11%. Mountain Parks visitors represent a greater proportion of Hispanic residents and residents with middle to lower incomes. Recreation research shows, not surprisingly, that residents in higher income brackets have more recreational opportunities available to them and travel farther.

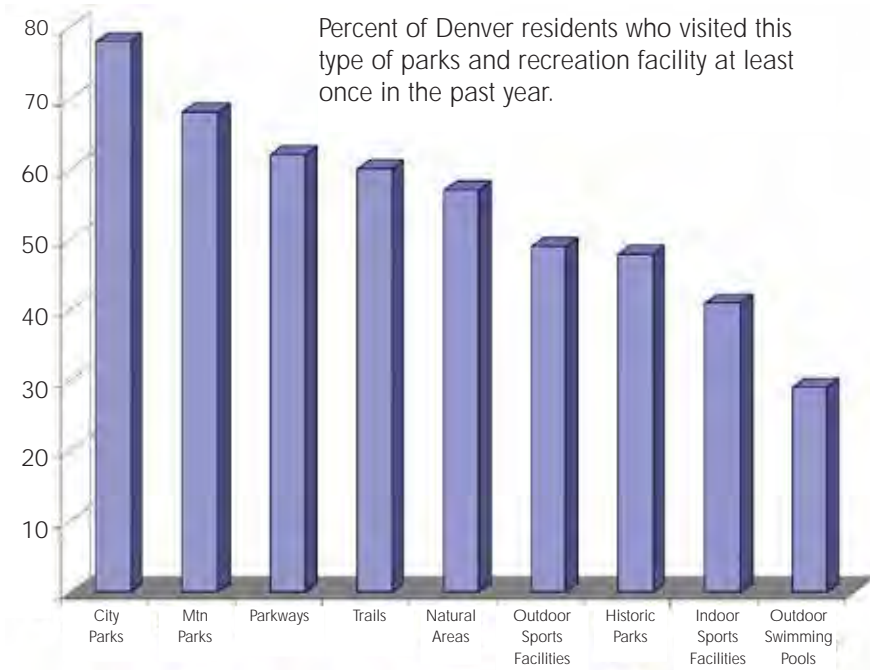
The conversations and research for this Master Plan reinforced three findings. First, activities and people are crowded into some parks while others are less known, quieter, and could handle more use. In 2006, Jefferson County Open Space produced a booklet to encourage visitors to find these "little known jewels" of all the public land providers in the County. Those regional planning efforts in the provision of different types of amenities and in marketing need to be continued.

Second, even if use were more evenly distributed, with the population growth in the Front Range and the leisure time that will be available to the retiring baby boomers, the Front Range and foothills communities may need more public open space in the mountains than currently exists. Existing acquisition and easement programs are vital.

And, finally, things obviously have changed since 1920 when Denver was the only provider of mountain open space and the city had 85% of the Front-Range population. Today, Denver is one provider of many in a regional open space system that serves millions of people.

"Denver should own and manage the current system of Mountain Parks in perpetuity. City of Denver funding of Denver Mountain Parks is key to their preservation, improvement, beauty, and usefulness."

—Letter to Mayor Hickenlooper from Inter-Neighborhood Cooperation (INC), 10/20/08.



Source: 2003 Game Plan General Survey of Denver Residents

“When children have satisfying experiences in the world nearby, they are motivated to explore further; and with each feature of the environment that they come to understand and each challenge that they overcome, they build greater levels of environmental knowledge and personal competence.”

—Louise Chawla, in *Learning to Love the Natural World Enough to Protect It*, 2006

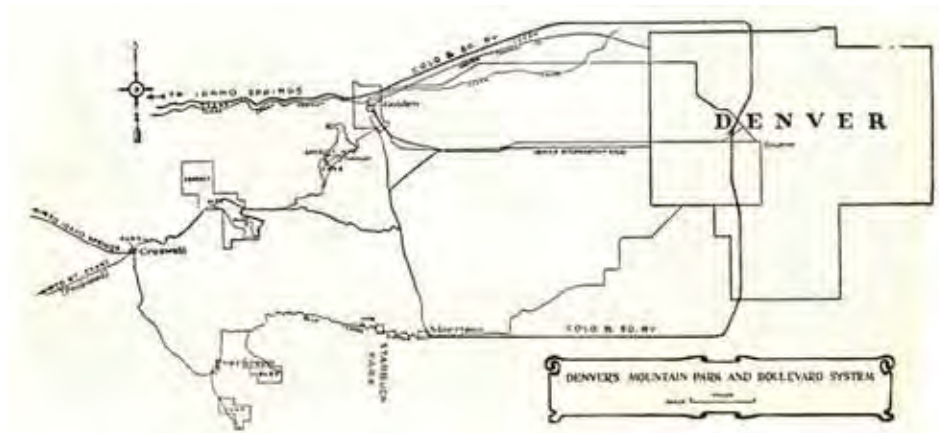


Picnic Shelter at Fillius Park

2.C. THE VALUES THAT PROMPTED THE SYSTEM²

Why did Denver create the Mountain Park system early in its history and is it valued by residents today? In many ways, the values that Mayor Speer, civic leaders, and Denver businessmen expressed in their campaign for a DMP system remain constant today. A difference may be that their reasoning in 1912 was expressed in the exaggerated prose of the day while today those benefits and values can be measured and quantified. The current Denver Mountain Parks Advisory Group of 50 regional civic leaders echoed the past in summarizing the primary purpose and benefit of the Mountain Parks as one of "health." By that, they meant:

- ▶ the environmental health of the mountains and their watersheds, wildlife habitat, and forests,
- ▶ the physical, social, and mental health of area residents, and
- ▶ the economic health of Denver itself and the region.



The Scenic Loop, circa 1914

Environmental Health

Even before Olmsted completed his Plan for the DMP, Denver leaders learned that a timber company was about to purchase and strip Genesee Mountain of its trees and began efforts to acquire the mountain in 1911-1912. The creation of the DMP followed or paralleled the formation of the U.S.D.A. Forest Service and the National Park Service which, on a federal level, were working to acquire and manage natural resources, scenic beauty, pristine lands, and watersheds. Research has shown that there is a longstanding strong correlation between outdoor recreation participation and environmental attitudes.

As economic scholar John Crompton wrote, protecting water and protecting nature are almost synonymous. More than 1/3 of the world's largest cities get most of their drinking water directly from protected lands and watersheds. Parks and undeveloped land increase infiltration, filter pollutants, and reduce sedimentation. In 1997, New York City invested almost \$1.5 billion to acquire land and easements in hydrologically sensitive areas near its reservoirs. The Denver area is partially dependent upon the South Platte River watershed, including tributaries such as Bear Creek with its source on Mt. Evans.

Recent economic research has questioned the traditional argument that can pit environmental goals and savings against the perceived economic gains of development. More than 98 "cost of community services studies" have shown that for every \$1 million received in revenues from residential development, the costs in perpetuity to serve that community from public taxes were \$1.16 million. Open space preservation can save community long-term expenses.

Physical, Social, and Mental Health

Current research fueling the initiative to get people (especially children) physically active, outdoors, and connected to their natural environment can point to quantifiable benefits and improvements. Getting kids and adults into the DMP or other mountain open spaces is the culmination of getting everyone outdoors and connected to nature first in the city, in your own backyard. Programs such as "Active

Living by Design” are monitoring the success of their efforts to get people moving and outdoors through incentive programs and actual physical improvements to neighborhoods. Denver Public Schools and the Museum of Nature and Science have collaborated for years through their WEB program intended to give every third grader a day in Genesee Park.

The Center for Disease Control has found that improving places to be active can result in a 25% increase in exercise time. And many studies have made the association (from simply looking out a window in a hospital to hiking a trail) between experiencing nature and improved health. Hospital stay times decrease, problematic behaviors of emotionally disturbed individuals decrease, and test scores increase with exposure to the natural world.

Economic Health

Planners and developers have long recognized the important economic benefits of parks and open space. One of the key qualities for a city to attract new business, new residents, and tourists is the city’s attractiveness and physical attributes, especially parks. For Denver, the proximity to the mountains and their recreational opportunities is one of the top reasons for relocation to the metropolitan area. Research of small-business owners who relocated to Colorado within the past five years indicated that “quality of life” was their main reason for location and that “parks” were considered most important. The mountain parks owned by Denver and the adjacent counties are a major contribution to Denver’s image and a draw for relocation. To the nation, Denver is synonymous with mountains.

In Colorado, outdoor recreation and tourism are billion dollar businesses. Denver has always seen itself as a tourist destination and attracting tourists and retirees today are considered the new clean growth industry in America.

The Denver Metro Convention and Visitor Bureau estimated that tourists spent \$2.6 billion in Denver in 2006. The DMP includes two of the metro area’s “top ten” tourist attractions: Red Rocks Park and Amphitheatre and the Buffalo Bill Grave and Museum on Lookout Mountain. Buffalo Bill’s Grave draws more than half a million visitors a year from around the world. Research shows, too, that visitors to a regional park spend an average of \$65 within 50 miles of the destination for each trip. Spending isn’t limited to the place itself. Commodities like gasoline, food, maps, and equipment are purchased at home.



Fishing at Echo Lake Park

DMP also has untapped potential to attract the increasing number of tourists seeking a “heritage” experience by restoring and increasing accessibility to the distinctive historic shelters and sites such as the Buffalo Bill Museum or the Civilian Conservation Corps camp in Morrison. Both local and international visitors are seeking destinations that have physical beauty and character and are authentically connected to the history of a place.

A final important and growing tourist group is the 55 million people with a disability in the United States, who have leisure time and income and seek comparable access and experiences. Greater accessibility in the Mountain Parks, as well as the city parks, is urgent.



Mayor Speer at Bear Creek

Simply as an asset and investment for Denver, the DMP represent more than 14,000 acres of protected land remarkable for its scenery, geology, water, wildlife habitat, and proximity to Denver. Large, significant parcels, such as the open space purchased by the City of Arvada recently, sold for \$100,000 per acre.

Conclusion

As Colorado's Front Range has grown over the decades, the value of the DMP system also has grown. Today, its benefits relate to environmental, personal, and economic health, the triple foundation for sustainability. The DMP continue to serve Denver's broad population, especially those middle and less-than-middle class households that do not venture deeper into the mountains. Many DMP are crowded with Denver residents on a hot summer day, doing what they have for decades: escaping the heat with friends, picnicking, fishing, hiking, relaxing.

Other dramatic Mountain Parks like Red Rocks or the Mt. Evans lakes are traditional stops for visitors to the region. Many of the Denver goals—connecting kids to nature and getting them outdoors; environmental stewardship; and recreation for all—are shared by other cities and counties in the metropolitan area. The uses, users, and natural resource management today clearly are regional and will require planning, funding, and programmatic collaboration.

In hindsight, the 1912 move to acquire and develop the Denver Mountain Parks primarily for their scenic and recreational qualities may qualify as Denver's earliest and boldest environmental initiative, the first Greenprint Denver strategic step. The social, mental, and physical health gained from recreation is critical, especially in an electronic age. The Mountain Parks address all three foundations of sustainability—economic, environmental, and social.

ENDNOTES

Notes: When Jefferson County Open Space began purchasing land in the 1970s for preservation, they acquired a number of parcels identified in 1914 Olmsted Plan.

¹The 2006-2007 Marketing Support interviews indicated that the visitor base to Denver Mountain Parks may be expanding even more to people coming from Adams and Arapahoe Counties. The population base to fund and manage this regional open space system could be expanded to include the users from across the six-county area.

²The sources used for this section include: John Crompton's *Community Benefits and Repositioning*; Crompton's *Proximate Principle*; The Trust for Public Lands' *The Health Benefits of Parks*, *The Economic Benefits of Land Conservation*; Price Waterhouse Coopers' market assessments for Colorado State Parks, CSU, Longwoods' 2006 Studies for Denver, and the City and County of Denver's GIS services.



W.O.W. participants and counselor in program at
Genesee Park

“Evidence suggests that children and adults benefit so much from contact with nature that land conservation can now be viewed as a public health strategy.”

—Richard Louv and Dr. Howard Frumkin



Visitor to the Pahaska Tepee, Lookout Mountain Park

ONE DAY IN
DENVER'S ^{NEW} MOUNTAIN
PARKS

CHAPTER 3 MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS





Summit Lake Park

CHAPTER 3 MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS



The goal for Denver Mountain Parks is to manage the system in the most sustainable way, ensuring that it thrives and survives into the next 100 years and continues to be an economic, recreational, and environmental resource for Denver residents.

O'Fallon Park

“We should maintain Denver’s interest in mountain lands and Colorado’s natural beauty.”

—Focus group participant 2008

3.A. FUNDING AND ORGANIZATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Like any public park or open space, the Denver Mountain Parks system generates quantifiable economic benefits to Denver and the region. It also generates tangible and intangible benefits increasing the quality of life for Denver residents and the nationwide appeal of the city itself. Parks also have a cost to the public and this chapter focuses on those costs and on a quilt of funding, partnership, and organizational strategies that meet the contemporary context for DMP.

The Need

The Mountain Park system has many similarities to Denver’s urban park system that impact the integrity of the physical infrastructure in the parks: significant, historical structures in need of improvement; an extensive internal park road system; degraded landscapes and social trails; noxious weeds; few visitor and ranger services; large public events; and the demands of heavy use. The system has some decidedly unique demands and attractions as well. The two bison herds, one at Daniels Park and the other at Genesee Mountain, require on-site caretaking and herd management. In three counties, Mountain Park employees cover 40 to 75 miles/day doing trash removal from the crowded Mountain Parks during the summer. Natural resource protection issues, like timber thinning, fire management, and wildlife management, are critical.

Capital Needs

The funding needs are great. More than fifty years of deferred maintenance and a small share of the department’s operating budget have resulted in the slow and obvious decay of the physical system. Parks are riddled with social trails; some rustic restrooms are more than 70 years old; picnic tables and park signs are in poor shape; and many picnic areas are compacted and degraded with overuse. The historic structures lack fire suppressant systems and accessible restrooms, and have decaying timber walls.

The yearly average of \$200,000 in capital funding for DMP only begins to cover these essential needs. Consequently, the Six-Year Capital Needs Assessment updated every year for Mountain Parks traditionally is 98% health and safety improvements only, and rarely includes new features or significant upgrades. More than \$10 million alone in structural and safety architectural needs for the major Mountain Parks facilities were identified in the 2001 DMP District-wide Needs Assessment, which was partially funded by the Colorado Historical Society's State Historical Fund.

This Master Plan recommends system-wide and individual park infrastructure repairs and improvements needed in addition to the \$12 million in facility needs already identified. The priorities are the most pressing basic repairs to the existing system, such as repair of roads, trails, amenities, natural resource restoration and protection. An important upgrade needed throughout the system is increasing the accessibility for the more than 55 million Americans defined today as a "person with a disability" and for an aging population. *The cost estimate for the basic restoration of natural resources and repair of existing built facilities is a minimum of \$23 million. Approximately \$8 million of that is for natural resource restoration.*

After repair and restoration is the addition of basic improvements, such as new trails, signage, or smaller park amenities, costing a minimum of \$6 million. These improvements bring DMP up to par with neighboring open space parks. In the third tier of recommendations are the major renovations and new facilities—the visionary pieces for the future—that need more study before cost estimates can even be completed.

With major improvements, the historic lodges, such as Echo Lake and Pahaska Tepee, have the potential to draw dramatically more heritage tourists, those visitors interested in the unique historic and natural resources. Heritage tourists expect a quality of facility and level of service similar to the National Park Service's Visitor Centers. A new Buffalo Bill Museum and restored Pahaska Tepee could attract thousands of international visitors.



Pahaska Tepee in Lookout Mountain Park

The Plan calls for more discussion and feasibility research for major future changes. It is difficult to put a price tag on the future, but some of the potential projects include:

- ▶ restoration and adaptive use of the Morrison CCC Camp for public use and possible new revenues,
- ▶ life-long learning camp built at Newton Park, including overnight facilities and new ropes course,
- ▶ more visitor services at Genesee Park,
- ▶ new museum for Buffalo Bill and restoration of Pahaska Tepee and the gravesite,
- ▶ building a new Balarat Outdoor School for DPS on Mountain Parks,
- ▶ conservation easements,
- ▶ acquisition of inholdings in Cub Creek Park,
- ▶ new youth and family programs throughout the parks, and
- ▶ new family campground and campground programs.

Operating Needs

Denver Mountain Parks has a full time staff of ten employees (one of whom is the ranger) with three or four additional seasonal employees each summer. Their responsibilities cover maintenance of some of the busiest mountain parks in the state spread across three counties; care of two bison herds and an elk herd; natural resource protection such as mountain pine beetle management, noxious weed control; and visitor assistance. Other Parks and Recreation staff provide oversight and services for planning, construction, and finances.



Park Ranger

The Mountain Parks superintendent traditionally has sought to leverage this short staffing through grants and partnerships. For example, each summer DMP has successfully competed for Americorps National Civilian Community Corps. These crews work at no cost to the City. In addition, cooperative management agreements with Jefferson County and Douglas County for fire and safety needs and some maintenance have increased efficiencies for everyone. Even so, the staff is stretched, and Denver Mountain Parks have a level of wear and tear not evident in other county open space parks.

The DMP operating budget (excluding Buffalo Bill Museum) translates into approximately \$71 an acre, which is between 25% and 35% of the average budget that Jefferson County, Douglas County, Boulder County, and the City of Boulder have for their comparable mountain and foothills parks. In addition to ongoing management and maintenance, the most obvious difference between Denver and other open space systems is what Denver does not provide. Only one ranger covers the extensive system and spends many summer Sunday mornings managing traffic congestion at O'Fallon Park along Bear Creek. *DMP currently has no educators, no volunteer program, no marketing, no interpretation, no map makers, and in fact, no printed maps. See the box on page 43 for a comparison of system funding.*

Funding History and Context

Mountain Park funding issues are both political and economic, and can be contentious. They also have regional influences and regional impacts. Consequently, it's helpful to outline the history of funding for Denver Mountain Parks, its current funding level within the City, and the growing importance of regional partnerships.

With 14,000 acres, Mountain Parks represents 70% of Denver Park and Recreation's total 20,000-acre system. In contrast, its 2007 operating budget represented 1% of the department's overall operating budget of \$70,652,000 and 3% of the department's \$11,000,000 capital improvement budget. DMP are funded at \$71/acre; urban parks at \$5,000/acre. Even with the obvious differences between the infrastructure of mountain parks and of urban parks, DMP consistently has not been receiving an equitable and needed portion of the department and city's budget.

Until fifty years ago, Denver Mountain Parks were seen as a citywide asset that warranted a dedicated funding stream. With a substantial majority, Denver voters approved a Charter Amendment in 1912, enabling Denver City Council to establish a one-half mill levy dedicated to the acquisition, development, and maintenance of the Mountain Park system. For the average homeowner, with a \$3,000 home, that translated to \$0.50 a year.

PARKS INVENTORY HIGHLIGHTS

- ▶ 2 bison herds (24 animals each)
- ▶ 9 historic stone picnic shelters
- ▶ 4 large group picnic shelters
- ▶ 5 informal baseball fields
- ▶ 1 Challenge ropes course
- ▶ 4 historic buildings run by concessionaires
- ▶ 1 Jacques Benedict stone lodge managed by DPR
- ▶ 20 miles of hiking trails
- ▶ 20 additional miles of multi-use trails
- ▶ 12 miles of fencing
- ▶ 21 miles of park roads
- ▶ 3 montane and alpine lakes
- ▶ Buffalo Bill Museum & Grave
- ▶ Red Rocks Amphitheatre
- ▶ 3 historic CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) camp sites, with one remaining intact



View of Denver from Genesee Mountain



Newton Park

“Neighbors and long-time partners, the relationship of Denver and Jefferson County has matured into mutual respect and cooperation. We are ready to lend appropriate assistance....to advance the vision set forth in your master plan.”

—Letter to Mayor Hickenlooper from the Jefferson County Board of Commissioners, October 21, 2008

For 44 years Mountain Parks had the dedicated funding mechanism. Then, in 1956, City Council retired that mill levy at a time when city staff and elected officials were moving towards more professional city governance and more control of city affairs. Funding for Mountain Parks began competing (poorly) with neighborhood projects and a budget set by a City Council naturally most receptive to their local district priorities. Funding and conditions in the Mountain Parks began their slide downward. The political context remains much the same now, 52 years later, with the City's preference against dedicated funds and for control to appropriate General and Capital Funds with flexibility.

Regional Contributions. Partnerships and regional cooperation, too, always have been core to the DMP. To leverage its mountain park funds, just as in the early years of the mountain park development, Denver continues to work closely with the State, other Counties, and agencies in joint ventures, efforts at management efficiencies, and funding. Both the State and Jefferson County, for example, not only substantially helped to fund the initial roads, but continue to maintain the State and County highways that pass through several of the parks. Douglas County and Denver recently announced a partnership in which Douglas County will invest approximately six million dollars in Daniels Park road and trail improvements. Through intergovernmental agreements, the Colorado State Forest Service provides professional forest management services, and Jefferson County Open Space built and now maintains approximately twenty miles of regional trails on Mountain Park property.

That legacy of cooperation, dependent upon ongoing mutually respectful relationships, is even more critical today as public funding tightens and some Mountain Parks grow more locally important as communities surround them. New neighbors and partners are working with Denver. The residents of Evergreen today tax themselves for an Evergreen Park and Recreation District (EPRD). Among other



Early brochure



Ropes course at Genesee Park

projects, the EPRD funded and manages the popular Evergreen Lake House Center and boardwalk located in Denver's Dedisse Park, which are used by Denver, as well as local, residents. Denver, in partnership with the USDA Forest Service, receives 19% of the fees charged to access the recreational resources on Mt. Evans. Those funds are dedicated to improve daily maintenance and operations, and for capital improvements at Summit Lake Park.

EXAMPLE OF AN INDIVIDUAL PARK'S INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS

Type of Work: Bell Park	Unit	Quantity	Unit Cost	1. Protection of Natural Resources	2. Basic Infrastructure Repairs	3. New, park improvements
MP/Natural Resource Plan	EA	1		\$30,000.00		
Forest Thinning	LS	1	\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00		
Revegetation	SF	321,750	\$1.50	\$482,625.00		
Site Improvements	SF	71,500	\$4.00		\$100,000.00	\$186,000.00
Road/parking Improvements	LF	6,500	\$60.00			\$390,000.00
New trail	LF	7,000	\$5,000.00			\$35,000.00
Trailhead Kiosk	EA	1	\$5,000.00			\$5,000.00
Sub Totals				\$562,625.00	\$100,000.00	\$616,000.00

An important new partner is the Denver Mountain Parks Foundation, founded by civic leaders in 2004. Their initial project, for example, was to help fund this Master Plan and launch a website with Denver Mountain Parks historic information.

Revenues from DMP. The icons in the DMP system also generate significant revenues directly to the City. For decades two of Denver's Mountain Parks have been among the top ten tourist attractions in the metropolitan area: Red Rocks Amphitheatre and Park and Buffalo Bill's Grave and Museum on Lookout Mountain. Winter Park Ski Area in Grand County attracts visitors from across the country year-round.

In the 1950s with the creation of the Division of Theatres and Arenas (T&A), management of Red Rocks Amphitheatre switched from Parks and Recreation to this new department. Although T&A has directly contributed to some improvement projects at Red Rocks over the years, all concert revenues are dedicated to T&A. Those revenues, in fact, help to subsidize other facilities, such as Denver Center for the Performing Arts. Clearly Red Rocks Amphitheatre could be an additional source of revenue for Denver Mountain Parks, but until other parts of the T&A system are more self-sustaining, contributions to the

DMP cannot be provided at the loss of any revenues to T&A. Any new revenues for the DMP most likely would be from new entrepreneurial partnerships between the departments and new events or fees at Red Rocks that could be dedicated to the park system.

Buffalo Bill Museum charges a modest admission fee and all of its revenues, averaging \$125,000 a year, go to the General Fund. It receives, in turn, around \$300,000 a year in operating funds. For decades concessionaires have provided services at Echo Lake Lodge on Mt. Evans during the summer, year-round at the Pahaska Tepee next to Buffalo Bill's grave, and at Chief Hosa Lodge and Campground. Echo Lake Lodge, for example, generated \$37,000 for Denver in 2007. These revenues have gone directly into Denver's General Fund. Today a portion of Pahaska Tepee revenues go into the dedicated Lookout Mountain Fund, averaging \$65,000/year, and can be used for capital or operating needs for the Buffalo Bill Museum and Gravesite. As of 2009, revenues from Chief Hosa Lodge and Campground go into a city-wide park facility special revenue fund which is shared by other park facilities, but can be used directly for Chief Hosa improvements. Yearly bison sales enable the bison herds to be close to self-sustaining, and modest revenues—\$8,000 in 2007—are generated by picnic site permits.

Denver purchased and opened the Winter Park Ski Resort in 1939-1940. In 2003, Denver began a long-term lease agreement (until 2078) with IntraWest Corporation guaranteeing the DPR department \$2.2 million/year for capital needs. The formula for that revenue changes to a guaranteed 3% of the gross proceeds over \$33 million in 2012, which is anticipated to exceed current revenue. Those funds are for the overall Parks and Recreation capital needs and are not earmarked back to Mountain Parks.

Current Situation. After five decades without dedicated funding or a commensurate share of the department's capital and operating budgets, the DMP have found themselves serving thousands more visitors with deteriorating facilities and services. Even the ongoing support from partners and other Counties can only supplement Denver's basic responsibility and efforts. Also, the DMP generate both large and small amounts of revenue to Denver, but the only funds earmarked for Parks and Recreation are the Winter Park CIP funds and the only funds earmarked at all for DMP are the Lookout Mountain Special Revenues.

Finally, Parks and Recreation received over \$93 million in capital improvement funds from the 2007 Better Denver Infrastructure Bond issue. A number of urban projects were cut from the initial list and the entire Denver Mountain Park system was left out. A parallel mill levy for capital projects also passed which can be used for DMP projects as well as urban ones. Disagreement about the management, funding, and future of the DMP contributed to the cut, and the decision was made to let this Master Plan research and address those core issues. Chapters 1 and 2 summarized the research for this Plan that answered those questions by revealing that:

- ▶ a strong level of use, interest, and value is held by Denver citizens for the DMP,
- ▶ Denver is one partner of many in a regional open space system and should bear its share of financial responsibility, and
- ▶ DMP are well-protected by City Charter and deed against sale or change in use. Mountain Parks are here to stay and a sustainable long-term plan is essential for their survival.

COMPARISONS WITH THE CITY OF BOULDER OPEN SPACE AND MOUNTAIN PARKS DEPARTMENT

Boulder was selected for comparison because it is a city managing a mountain park system rather than a county-wide open space agency. Any comparison must be interpreted with some caution, as it is difficult to compare the indirect services and staffing reflected in each budget. That said, the City of Boulder has a 40,000-acre open space system with many similarities to Denver, with parcels located both inside the city and outside in the County, and even including land in Jefferson County. A separate Boulder County Open Space system is funded and managed by a different entity. Close to 40% of the City of Boulder's open space is leased agricultural lands. Both Boulder's and Boulder County's open space systems are funded by citizen ballot initiatives that ensure dedicated funding.

The City of Boulder's 2007 Open Space and Mountain Parks budget was \$8.2 million. The program anticipates an increase from 70 to 90 full time staff by 2009. Staffing includes educators, rangers, volunteer managers, wildlife and natural resource scientists. In comparison, Denver Mountain Park's \$800,000 operating budget covers its 10 full time employees and materials. No scientists, interpreters, additional rangers provide services in DMP. However, Parks and Recreation also dedicates, from a different budget, funding for 80% of a planner's time and 20% of the Natural Resource Director's time. Both Denver Mountain Parks and the City of Boulder's Open Space Department receive financial, legal, and administrative support from the cities above their base budgets.



DPR Outdoor Recreation at Echo Lake Park

“You learn everything from your kids. I’ve lived in Denver my whole life but didn’t know about the Mountain Parks until my son visited Genesee Park with his third grade class. Now we go all the time.”

—Michelle Madrid-Montoya

*“What’s Next for Mountain Parks?
While no one is disputing the beauty of the land or the benefit of having it in public ownership, it’s an appropriate time for a public discussion about park use, how to pay for management of the land, and even who should own each of the parcels.”*

*Denver Post Editorial
8/24/07*

3.A. FUNDING QUILT: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUSTAINABILITY

The Denver Mountain Parks may campaign for a larger share of the City pot, but the pot itself is shrinking. Decreases in Denver sales tax revenues and the overall city budget, combined with an economic slump nationwide, are forcing cuts rather than expansions. Therefore, patience, innovation, and a variety or quilt of options is necessary.

The Master Plan Funding Roundtable, comprised of Advisory Group members and outside experts such as the Trust for Public Lands, worked to evaluate funding opportunities for the Mountain Park system from both internal (City) and external (partnerships, entrepreneurial, regional) sources.

To lay a base for economic sustainability for the DMP, the following guiding principles and specific long- and short-term strategies are proposed. They reinforce the principles and direction of other City plans, such as the DPR Game Plan, the Denver Comprehensive Plan, and Greenprint Denver Plan and are based

upon these documented findings:

- ▶ A strong public willingness exists today based on values held by Denver citizens to fund and protect the Mountain Parks, natural open space, and the environment. The land, forests, watersheds, and other natural resources protected in the DMP constitute an early and visionary expression of Greenprint Denver’s comprehensive sustainability goals.
- ▶ Inadequate funding is short-sighted. Urban and mountain parks have always been an economic draw for Denver and the region. The DMP’s ability to generate revenue, whether through tourism, concessions, or entertainment, depends upon a high quality resource and experience.
- ▶ Both short- and long-term strategies are needed.



Dilapidated picnic table at Bergen Park

Short-Term: The Funding Quilt

In the short term, a creative funding and organizational quilt needs to be put in place to stop degradation of the historic, cultural, and natural resources, improve visitor experience, and generate more revenue. These immediate strategies and recommendations, described in detail below, are composed of a mix of:

- ▶ A Bigger Share of City Resources
- ▶ Building Capacity within the City and Denver Mountain Parks Foundation
- ▶ Partnerships
- ▶ New Opportunities

Short-Term 1. A Bigger Share of Existing City Resources.

Goal: Allocate a more equitable and sustainable portion of capital and operating funds for the Mountain Parks. For the Master Plan,

The Trust for Public Lands (TPL) evaluated a number of existing funding sources within the City, which were discussed and analyzed by the Master Plan Advisory Group. The Seat Tax, for example, is not available until 2024 for other capital purposes. The existing lodging tax funds, already heavily spoken for the City's Metro Convention and Visitors Bureau, marketing, and debt service on special revenue bonds are even decreasing.

Although parks within the DMP system generate between \$8 and \$9 million a year to Denver, the DMP function with a little over \$1 million a year in operating and capital for the system. TPL and the Advisory Group strongly recommend substantially more City operating and capital funds budgeted for the Mountain Parks each year. In terms of capital funds, that can include a greater share of the Winter Park funds, the Conservation Trust Funds, the new mill levy, or the general Capital Improvement Fund. Although in most ways it doesn't matter which fund is used since they are all pooled together, the \$2.2 million/year Winter Park funds symbolically are important because they come from the Mountain Parks system. Because the passage of the 2007 Bond earmarked \$93 million for DPR, easing the capital funding demand for the urban park system, the Master Plan calls for a substantially larger share of the yearly capital budget to be devoted to the Mountain Parks.

Existing Resources Recommendations

- A. Denver Mountain Parks should receive a minimum of \$1 million a year in capital funds.
- B. Any increases in revenues from Winter Park that result from a change in the Winter Park lease formula in 2011 should be dedicated to the DMP.
- C. DMP should increase its share of operating funds each year to provide improved visitor services (such as rangers or maps) and ability to maintain and restore the natural resources and facilities.

Short-Term 2. Building capacity within the City and the Denver Mountain Parks Foundation (DMPF).

Goal: Provide the City and the Foundation with additional resources to help each increase its ability to implement the Master Plan. The Denver Mountain Parks Foundation (DMPF) was founded in 2004 with the Mayor's positive support and a mission "to restore the historical integrity, relevance, quality and appreciation for Denver's Mountain Parks system; to advocate for it and ensure its future as a recreational, educational and open space resource for the city of Denver: its citizens, neighbors, and visitors." One of its first actions was to fund the market research necessary for the Master Plan. The potential effectiveness of a nonprofit, non-city partner for Denver Mountain Parks cannot be underestimated. It can work as an advocate for the system as well as provide a private arm that can raise money through merchandising, special programs, gift campaigns, and corporate partnerships.

As a young foundation, the DMPF will be building Board capacity, abilities, and priorities for their role in the DMP. Parks and Recreation needs to support the DMPF as it does the other Denver park conservancies and foundations. Within the City and department, the Mountain Parks also need greater visibility and a voice. It's a unique part of the park system, with its specialized land management and needs for regional partnership, fund-raising, and marketing.

Capacity Building Recommendations

- A. The Foundation and City should revise and expand their existing Memorandum of Understanding to define and clarify future roles for both in terms of implementing the Master Plan, fund-raising, merchandising, and advocacy.
- B. DPR needs to support the Foundation's efforts to build its organizational and fund-raising capacity.
- C. DPR should create a specific Division within Parks for DMP that gives it greater visibility and outside fund-raising abilities, and acknowledges its uniqueness and complexity.

"SHOULD DENVER SELL ITS MOUNTAIN PARKS?"

This has been asked by elected officials and newspaper editors off and on since 1956 when the mill levy for the Mountain Parks disappeared. This Master Plan unequivocally argues that Denver should not divest itself of such an invaluable asset even if it could.

Myth Busting:

Even if this plan called for "sale," that would be legally impossible for virtually all of the Mountain Parks. A major portion of the land was purchased from the U.S. Forest Service and would revert to it as a cashless transaction. Most parcels that were purchased or donated have deed restrictions or reverter clauses. Even without these hurdles, Denver residents would have to vote to approve any sale or lease because, like all designated parks, the DMP are protected by City Charter. See Deed Map in the Appendix.

Short-Term 3. Regional Partnerships.

Goal: Strengthen Denver's legacy of intergovernmental and agency partnerships, acknowledging the DMP's multiple roles today as Denver resource, regional resource, and community resource. As noted already, Denver has long worked closely with federal, State, County, and local governments to acquire, build, and maintain Denver's Mountain Parks since their inception. Funding, natural resource and wildlife management, new amenities, fire and safety, trail planning, and construction are just a few of the ongoing cooperative ventures. Newer partnerships, such as one with the nonprofit Lariat Loop Heritage Alliance, have increased marketing and visibility for the Mountain Parks. What has changed over the last few decades, heightening the need today for increased cooperation, is the incredible growth of surrounding communities. Some of Denver's Mountain Parks now play dual roles, both as regional open space attractions and as local, community parks.



O'Fallon Park entrance on busy summer weekend

Evergreen, for example, had a population of 500 permanent (and 5,000 summer) residents in 1925 when people were picnicking at Bergen Park, built at the crossroads of three dusty roads. Today, the Evergreen area and the Evergreen Park and Recreation District (EPRD) boast 41,000 residents. Within EPRD are 4,700 acres of Denver parks, 3,200 acres of Jefferson County Open Space parks, and 80 acres of EPRD parks. When EPRD recently purchased property and completed a Master Plan for their signature park, Buchanan Park, the planning encompassed ideas for the adjacent Bergen Park. A new internal trail, funded by EPRD, will connect the parks.

Parkland, of course, also generates direct and indirect benefits to the communities in which it is located. Parkland and, in particular, open space lands, increase property values not only adjacent to the park but the vicinity. Some modest sales taxes from Pahaska Tepee and Red Rocks events go to the Jefferson County. The individual interviews done for the Master Plan indicated that many residents living near Denver Mountain Parks appreciate the role that these parks play in their daily lives and in their property values and would consider helping to support the parks.

Partnership Recommendations

- A. Build on the history of partnership with Evergreen area residents to create a more mutually beneficial relationship, including possible community volunteer programs, cooperative maintenance, joint programming, and possible voter approved help with funding new Denver Mountain Park amenities.
- B. Commit City funds to implement Denver's share of the Master Plan for Daniels Park, a result of the partnership recently legalized between Douglas County and the City and County of Denver.
- C. Aggressively pursue joint ventures and grant opportunities with all partners, including conservation easements sought in Clear Creek County or regional trail opportunities in Jefferson County.
- D. Commit City funds to significant joint projects, i.e., the Buffalo Herd Overlook, an initiative led by Lariat Loop Heritage Alliance, or construction of new parking and amenities with USDA Forest Service at Summit Lake to improve visitor experiences and protect resources.
- E. Explore options for local residents to support their "community" Denver Mountain Parks, either in-kind or financially.

Short-term 4. New Opportunities: Increased Programs, Partners, and Entrepreneurial Efforts.

Goal: Innovatively increase revenues and meet contemporary recreation and tourism needs, while honoring the integrity of the historic mountain park system. Denver Mountain Parks has the potential of garnering and increasing revenues from many of its sites. The system already includes two of the top ten tourist attractions in the area (Red Rocks and Buffalo Bill), a ski resort, concessionaires, a campground, and permitted historic structures. Parts of the system already are designed and managed to raise City revenues. With shrinking City budgets and aging infrastructure, cities across the country are

searching harder for even more avenues in which to provide public recreation opportunities while increasing revenues.

Public sentiment and definitions regarding potential commercialization of public parks and open spaces can vary widely and are strongly felt. Consequently, the Master Plan team proposed the following five overall strategies and context for entrepreneurship, which were endorsed by the majority of the Advisory Group members.

First, the DMP system should be allowed to develop any new ventures, such as events, corporate partnerships, programs, naming, and merchandising, that protect the natural and historic resource base and meet all City policies. Second, a priority is increased fees, programs, or opportunities from Red Rocks or Winter Park directed specifically to the Denver Mountain Parks. Third, reinvestment in the resource base is key. Facilities must be of the highest quality, highest character, and authenticity to attract more visitors and increase revenues. This is especially important for historic attractions such as Buffalo Bill, Echo Lake Lodge, or Chief Hosa Lodge. Fourth, staff must be dedicated to work closely with Theatres and Arenas, the Denver Mountain Parks Foundation, and other partners in any efforts to increase revenues. Finally, a new emphasis on marketing and partnerships will be necessary for the success of these efforts.

New Opportunities Recommendations

- A. Research and implement potential new revenues from Red Rocks, such as an increase in Facility Use Fees from Red Rocks events, or new events that can generate funds for the DMP and from Winter Park, such as a ski lift ticket donation.
- B. Create a strategy and partnership packet, with DMPF, for corporate partnerships. Actively search for funds to increase youth visits to the DMP Parks and produce interpretive materials.
- C. Create and implement a marketing plan.
- D. Assess the few DMP parcels that may no longer maintain their original integrity, context, or serve their original purpose

WILLING TO PAY?

"Would you be willing to pay for the use of mountain parks, trails, and open space? (2006 Marketing Support surveys)"

Residence	Yes	For some	No
Denver	38%	28%	28%
Jefferson	35%	30%	28%
Douglas	36%	34%	23%

(e. g. Strain Gulch, Starbuck, Forsberg) and consider legal options for them including new uses, sale, lease or partnership (if not restricted by deed or Charter).

- E. Complete a Master Plan for Buffalo Bill and Lookout Mountain that includes a new governance model for the museum.
- F. Research new concessionaire options.
- G. Expand the existing vigorous program of applying for grants and other outside funding.
- H. Continue building innovative public/private partnerships, such as with the Lariat Loop Heritage Alliance.

Long-term: Dedicated Funding

Following patterns across the country and in Colorado of dedicated funding for regional open space, future sustainability for Denver Mountain Parks may require a locally or regionally dedicated funding stream. The City and County of Denver is one of only two counties in the Front Range that does not have a dedicated funding source for the acquisition, care of, and amenities for natural open space.

As of 2007, Colorado had 160 successful parks and open space funding tax initiatives. As noted above, the dedicated funding for Denver Mountain Parks was stopped in the mid-1950s and political sentiment in Denver remains cautious and competitive in terms of any ballot issues or dedicated funding.

Nevertheless, the experts in open space funding for this Master Plan, the nonprofit The Trust for Public Lands (TPL), as well as many of the Master Plan Advisory Group civic leaders, agreed that some sort of dedicated funding in the future would ensure the viability of the Mountain Parks. It would also bring Denver more fully into the regional open space partnership and strengthen natural resource management at a regional scale.

ENTREPRENEURIAL BRAINSTORM

- ▶ Rent bicycles and snow shoes
- ▶ Increase parking fees at Red Rocks and earmark difference for DMP
- ▶ Develop new visitor amenity, such as the funicular
- ▶ Let Winter Park yearly ski pass purchasers add \$1 for Denver Mountain Parks
- ▶ Create and sell Denver Mountain Parks dinnerware, t-shirts, posters, and postcards

Regional Funding Mechanisms

Any regional mechanism will take time and collaboration to research and to implement. Several models exist with some similarities to the Colorado Front Range situation. Most regional open space and park systems are at a county scale in large counties, such as Los Angeles County, Pima County in Arizona, King County in Washington, or the Colorado examples such as Douglas County.

In the Los Angeles area, the public beaches, for example, are funded and managed by a mix of county/regional funding and municipalities. A county-wide Los Angeles Mountain Recreation and Conservation Authority, working with individual cities, has issued a number of general obligation bonds to improve the regional beaches and parks.

For the Colorado Front Range, access and management may be more key than distance. DMP are not within the City and County of Denver, but the distance that Denver residents travel to reach the Mountain Parks is similar if not shorter than larger park systems, such

as Phoenix with its desert parks. For Denver, Jefferson, Douglas, Clear Creek, and Boulder Counties, the reality is that the visitorship is far beyond the residency of these counties alone; visitors come from the seven major Front Range counties, and a regional approach may extend to eastern counties as well. Any future dedicated funding source for Denver Mountain Parks will require a concerted effort over time to build the argument and the coalitions necessary.

Scenarios for future dedicated funding include:

- ▶ initiatives that extend existing multi-county funding streams (such as the stadium sales tax) but earmark them for regional open space;
- ▶ initiatives that distinguish Denver's overall park and open space system and earmark dedicated funding toward the whole system (as in cities such as Minneapolis);
- ▶ initiatives that earmark City funds for regional components of Denver Parks and Recreation, such as natural open space along the rivers in the city as well as the Mountain Parks;
- ▶ initiatives modeled on the regional Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD), which began in 1989 and has been renewed twice at the ballot, dedicating a one-tenth of 1% sales tax to regional cultural and historical attractions. The SCFD, which geographically follows the RTD District, acknowledges that programs and places, from small ballet troupes to the regional icons such as the Denver Zoo, serve and benefit a regional audience. A regional open space district could be created with this model. Regional funding mechanisms could treat the regional natural resources—natural open space systems, water, and wildlife—in a similar way.

However, both the Master Plan Advisory Group and TPL believe that regional mechanisms are only in very early discussions and may face some opposition. Regional partners suggested that regional funding discussions are more likely when Denver demonstrates an increased and sustained commitment to its Mountain Park system. Until then, the regional voters and elected officials are more apt to support their own local initiatives.

Building a Long-term Funding Mechanism Recommendations

- A. Denver should increase its funding level and commitment to Denver Mountain Parks at a cost per acre level similar to that of other regional open space providers.
- B. Denver should continue to nurture existing, and build new, partnerships and communication avenues with other counties and recreation districts.
- C. Denver should continue, in collaboration with its neighboring jurisdictions, to research the feasibility of a regional funding mechanism.

CONCLUSION

Denver residents use and value their historic Denver Mountain Parks, as well as the parks provided by Douglas, Jefferson, and Clear Creek counties and special districts such as Evergreen Park & Recreation District. As a full partner in this regional open space system that serves hundreds of thousands of people, Denver needs to apply the DPR Game Plan values of equity, sound economics, engagement, and sustainability to the Denver Mountain Parks, beginning with a more appropriate share of existing resources.



Friends of Red Rocks volunteer clean-up day



Stapleton Braille Trail in Genesee Park

FOCUS GROUPS

What: Two diverse focus groups held in 2008 to test awareness of Denver Mountain Parks, importance to residents, and effectiveness of key marketing messages.

Surprise! When asked what they know about Denver Mountain Parks, people were clueless. Twelve out of thirteen people said they had never “heard of them.” But, when shown a map, everyone came alive. Stories of Red Rocks on a Saturday morning, fishing at Echo Lake, or just a hike. What was the group’s main recommendation? “Let people know they exist.”

Why did they use Mountain Parks? Like them? The two top reasons (out of 7) selected were for “quality of life” (primarily recreation) and “protection of natural resources.” “When I go to the mountains, it’s a mental shift.” “It speaks to Denver’s character to protect beauty and land.”

Did it matter to them that the parks were owned by Denver? For some, not at all. For most, though, they said that it was good and unique for a city, Denver, to care about the beauty of all Colorado and to have such vision for its citizens. “I think it’s excellent that Denver owns and operates mountain parks. It expands my perception of the park system.”

The group was excited to learn that all the Denver parks are protected by Charter and their vote. “It’s like a weird sense of entitlement... We all have this piece of something, but didn’t know it. It makes me proud.” “Wow, I have a say in what happens to these parks?”



*New logo for
Denver Mountain Parks,
by artist Michael Schwab*

**3.B. MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS
RECOMMENDATIONS**

No highway sign marks the entrance to Little Park near Idledale. When surveyed, a Denver resident says that he and his wife would visit Denver Mountain Parks if they only had any idea where they are.

The fourth generation of a southwest Denver family continues their yearly tradition of picnicking at O’Fallon Park on Father’s Day, but is surprised to learn that it is a Denver Mountain Park. Mountain Parks visitors looking for park maps to help them plan their visit are simply out of luck. With an operating budget that barely covers trash pick-up and with some Mountain Parks already bursting at their seams on a summer weekend, it’s not surprising that marketing and interpretive materials are nonexistent.

Yet marketing is essential and a critical first step for the Mountain Parks. Marketing and communication materials ensure that Denver knows what its constituents are seeking in terms of a Mountain Park experience and amenities, that Denver is providing and caring for what residents value, and that visitors have the information they need to make their experience enjoyable.

Marketing also is a key factor in building financial and political support. With a park system that was safeguarded from development almost 100 years ago, those parks and their protection can easily be taken for granted today.

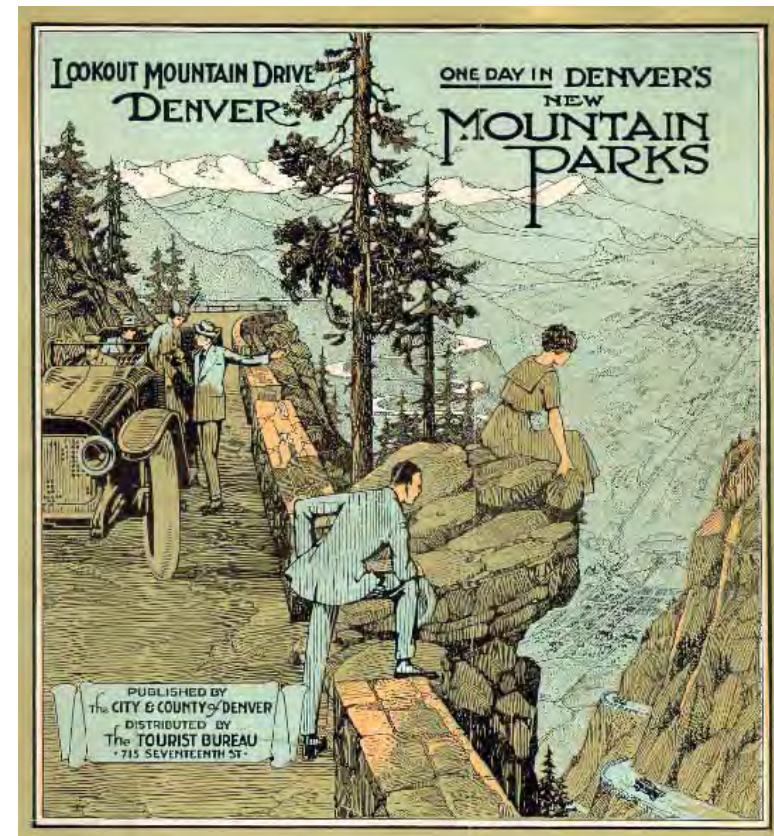
With a strong marketing presence, Denver residents can recognize and appreciate Denver’s foresight in safeguarding watersheds and natural resources and in providing accessible recreation to all. Marketing helps to provide the data that City decision-makers need in making budgetary decisions. Marketing builds pride of ownership as it reminds people of Denver’s early civic leadership.

Extensive public research between 2002 and 2007 of Denver residents, Denver Mountain Park visitors, and regional open space visitors all reaffirm the overwhelming need for marketing and communications materials. Among other things, the results revealed that:

- ▶ around 68% of Denver residents visit traditional DMP each year but also visit other open space systems, such as Jefferson County's, as frequently,
- ▶ Denver decision makers do not hear from their constituents about the Mountain Parks despite the fact that they regularly use them,
- ▶ Denver residents, as well as regional open space users, highly value the acquisition and protection of open space,
- ▶ many people are unaware where the Mountain Parks are located or what features they have,
- ▶ many visitors within the parks themselves often do not realize that they are in a Denver park,
- ▶ awareness of the Mountain Parks as a whole has dropped over many years,
- ▶ people may be aware of individual parks, such as Genesee or Echo Lake, but do not realize that they are part of a designed, cohesive system, and
- ▶ current marketing promotes a few individual sites but not the overall system.

Despite these challenges, as Chapter 2 detailed, both visitors and the general Denver public value the existence of public open space and Mountain Parks for recreational opportunities, as well as for natural resource protection.

A wide and well documented recognition of the value of the Mountain Parks will help the system to gain the advocacy and funding necessary for maintenance and improvements. It also enhances the visitors' experience, from the moment at home that they start "re-



Early tourist brochure inviting people to the Mountain Parks

searching" a trip, to the drive, and finally, to the experience within the park.

Consequently, the goal is for Denver to provide an ongoing marketing program, with supporting high quality communications and interpretive materials, to build a greater awareness of the Denver Mountain Parks and to improve the visitor's experience.

Marketing and Communications Plan

The sheer number of existing and potential audiences—Denver residents, Denver decision-makers, regional users, and tourists—makes marketing the Denver Mountain Parks complex.

A Marketing and Communications Plan and initial products were developed for the Master Plan by professional marketing consultants, analyzed and expanded by the Master Plan Advisory Group, and reviewed by two smaller Marketing Roundtable workshops that included Advisory Board members and outside experts.

The overall goal for the Marketing Plan was to “develop awareness of the Denver Mountain Parks system and its value to the Denver community to establish the civic support required to create community ownership and for adequate future operating and capital funding.” The specific objectives are to:

- ▶ create awareness of the Denver Mountain Parks system, and the value it brings to the city and residents of Denver as our mountain backyard.
- ▶ develop an awareness that the Mountain Parks system is owned by the city/residents and is a unique part of the Denver Parks and Recreation system.
- ▶ create awareness of the role that the Denver Mountain Parks system plays in the greater context of preserving regional undeveloped green space for quality of life, ecological protection, watershed value, and scenic backdrop.

The key Marketing and Communications recommendations

- A. Develop the organizational capacity to implement the Marketing and Communications Plan, such as adequate staffing, fund-raising, and creation of an ongoing Marketing Committee.
- B. Complete (and replicate on a systematic basis in the future) the market research needed to gain a current, in-depth understanding of Denver residents’ attitudes about the DMP through existing and new benchmark research.

DID YOU KNOW?

“Did you know that Denver owns 14,000 acres of mountain parks and trails...?”

40% yes
60% no

—2006-07 Marketing Support Survey

- C. Develop an identity for the Mountain Parks system: clear message, positioning, and visual identity.
- D. Implement effective and targeted communications to increase awareness among key audiences, such as media coverage, promotional programs and events. Initial audiences are Denver decision-makers and Denver constituents.
- E. Develop, with the Denver Mountain Parks Foundation and concessionaires, a high quality merchandising program as a source of revenue and community awareness.
- F. Design a system of effective interpretive and communications materials for Mountain Parks visitors and the public, such as signage, maps, brochures, programs, and other tools.
- G. Develop effective, ongoing communication with civic leaders about the value and opportunities within the Mountain Parks through materials, data, tours, meetings, and the active participation of the Foundation and Advisory Group.

3.C. GUIDELINES

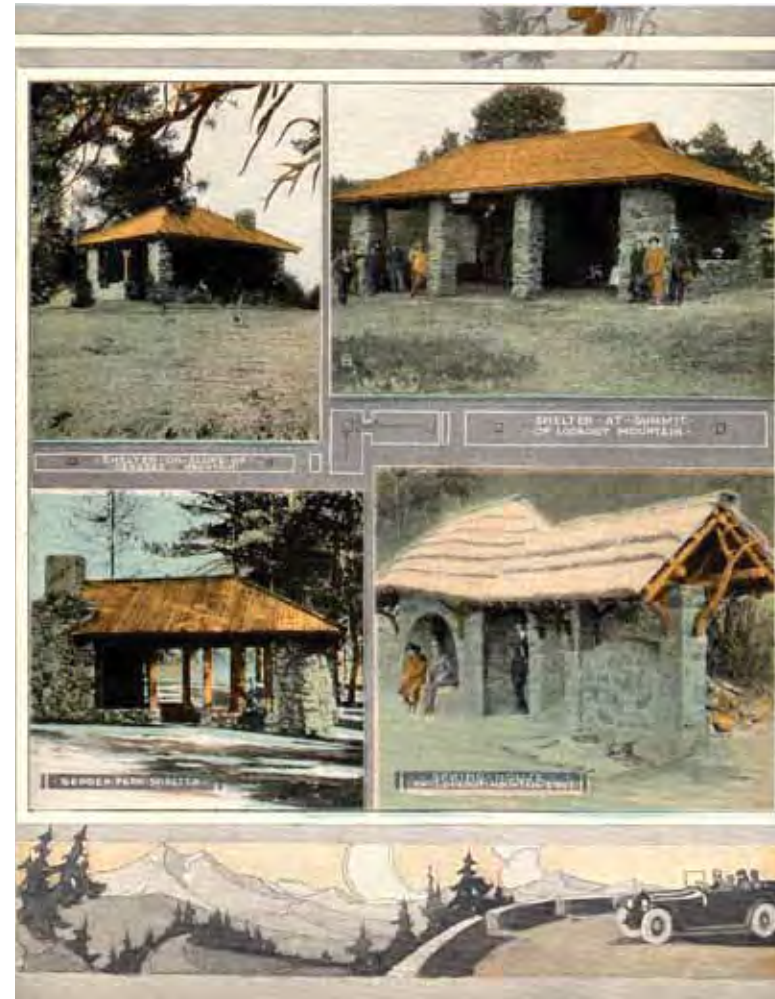
Design Guidelines

Published separately, the Design Guidelines provide a framework to identify and detail the specific physical characteristics of the Mountain Park system that individually and collectively create the DMP design character. The structures, buildings and park settings of the DMP have a distinctive style and experience that provides a cohesive character and aesthetic for the whole system. That character is derived from the rustic naturalistic design of its earliest features, such as its stone shelters and buildings, connecting roads, and picnic sites. The Guidelines describe the high quality design and craftsmanship executed in the original features and outline methods for how to continue this tradition in the rehabilitation of parks and facilities and in new construction.

The purpose of the Design Guidelines is to provide guidance in the design and implementation of the repair and rehabilitation of existing features, buildings and sites, as well as new construction of park facilities. They are intended for Denver Parks and Recreation staff as well as for other agencies and organizations, consultants, and contractors involved in the design, repair, construction, and maintenance, or in the review of such for all of the Denver Mountain Parks' facilities and sites. If the Mountain Park system becomes designated as a Local Landmark, the Guidelines would be used to review major proposed changes to facilities.

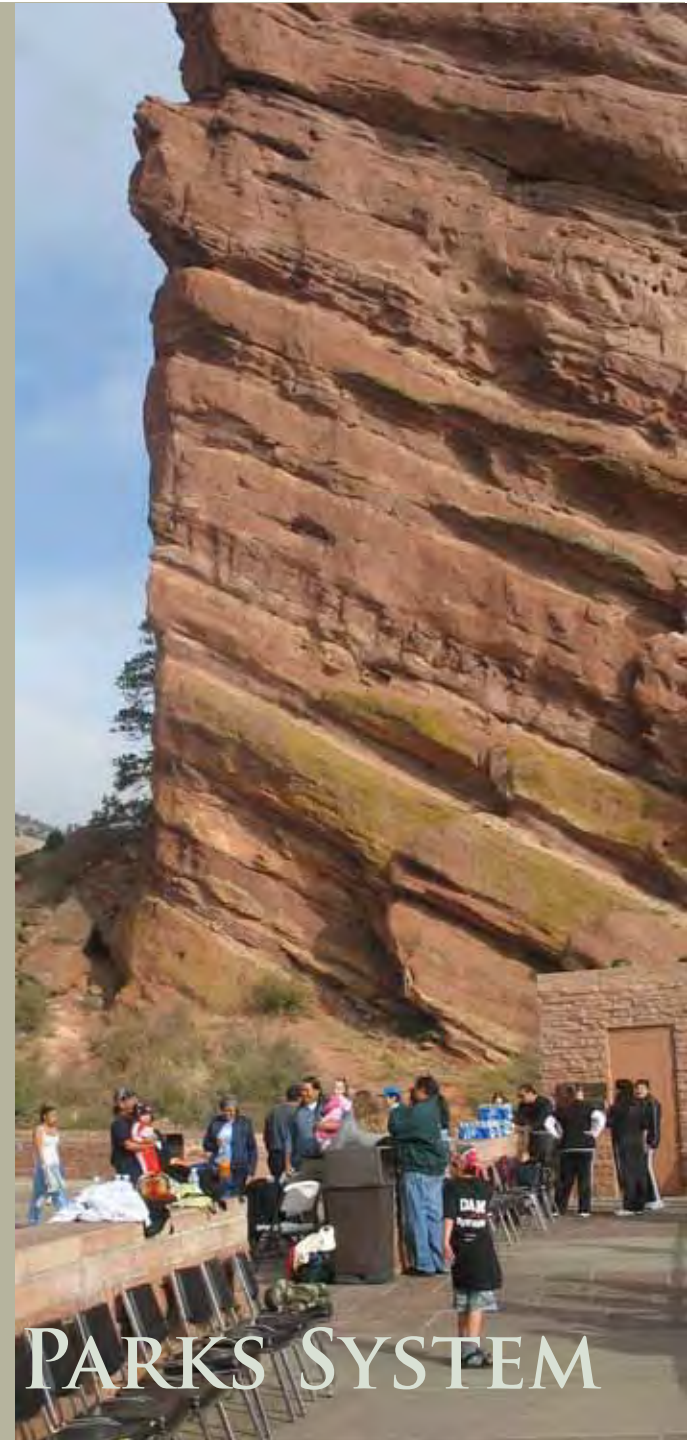
Natural Resource Guidelines

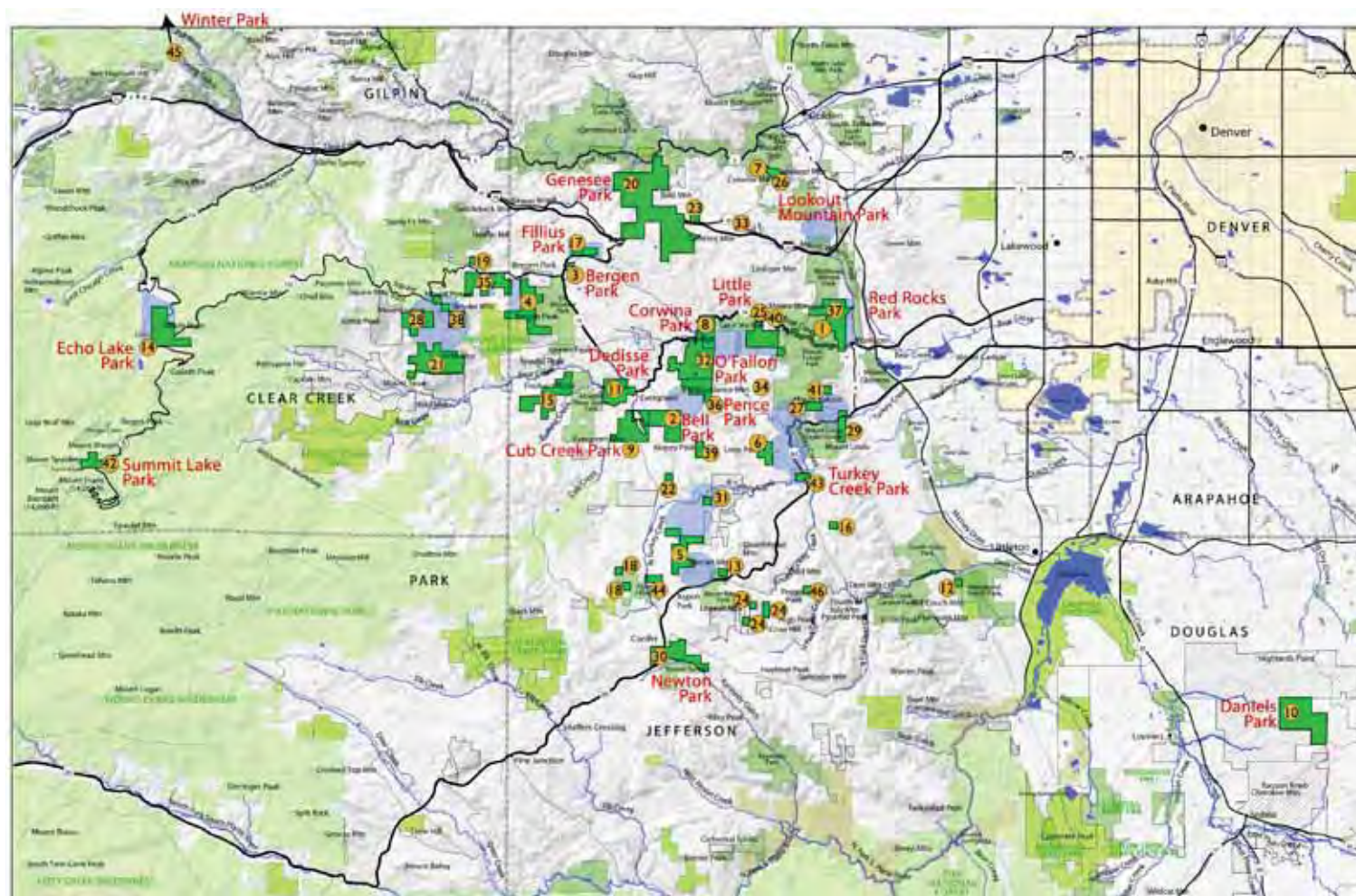
Unlike the Design Guidelines, the Master Plan recommends individual park Natural Resource Plans be completed. Chapter 4 also includes specific strategies for each park or parcel.



CHAPTER 4

THE DENVER MOUNTAIN PARKS SYSTEM





Denver Mountain Parks

Legend

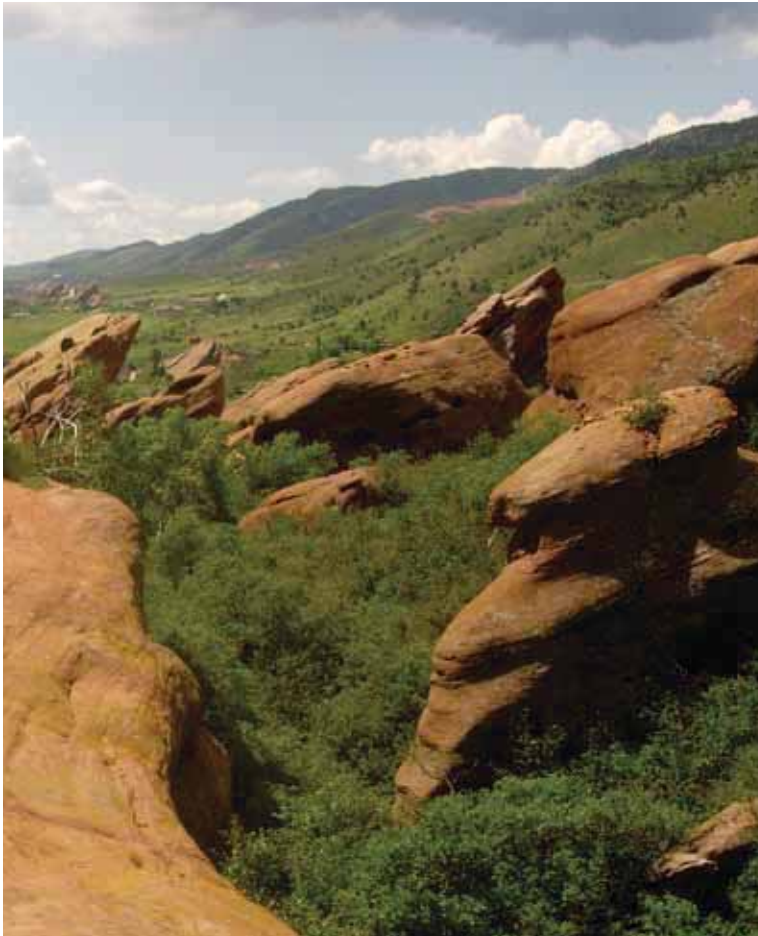
- State & Federal Highway
- County Road
- River
- Stream
- Lake
- County Line Boundary
- Wilderness Boundary Line
- Open Space & Parks
- Federal Lands
- State Lands
- County Lands
- Denver Mountain Parks
- Land Threats
- Private Lands with Protection
- Proposed Conservation Easement

- | | | | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|
| 1 Bear Creek Canyon | 12 Deer Creek | 23 Katherine Craig Park | 34 Parnalus Gulch Park | 45 Winter Park |
| 2 Bell Park | 13 Double Header Mt. | 24 Legault Mountain | 35 Pence Mountain | 46 Yegge Peak |
| 3 Bergen Park | 14 Echo Lake Park | 25 Lookout Mountain Park | 36 Pence Park | |
| 4 Bergen Peak | 15 Elephant Butte | 26 Mount Falcon | 37 Red Rocks Park | |
| 5 Berrian Mountain | 16 Flanders | 27 Mount Judge | 38 Snyder Mountain | |
| 6 Birch Hill | 17 Filius Park | 28 Mount Lindo | 39 Stanley Park | |
| 7 Colorow Point Park | 18 Flying J Ranch | 29 North Turkey Creek | 40 Starbuck Park | |
| 8 Corvina Park | 19 Forsberg Park | 30 O'Fallon Park | 41 Strain Gulch | |
| 9 Cub Creek Park | 20 Genesee Park | 31 Old Cemetery Grounds | 42 Summit Lake | |
| 10 Daniels Park | 21 Hicks Mountain | | 43 Turkey Creek Park | |
| 11 Dedisse Park | 22 Hobbs Peak | | 44 West Jefferson School | |



The Denver Mountain Parks System

CHAPTER 4 THE DENVER MOUNTAIN PARKS SYSTEM



Red Rocks Park

“The Denver Mountain Park system cannot be considered alone as a recreation area, for it is so linked up with government recreation areas and mountain resorts that the visitor might spend weeks in exploring this great play region without having exhausted its capabilities for giving enjoyment.”

—*The Mountain Parks*, Denver Municipal Facts, April & May 1920.

4.A. SYSTEMWIDE RECOMMENDATIONS

Recreation Recommendations

Background

Today, those who visit the Denver Mountain Parks (DMP) represent a broad cross section of people in demographics, where they reside, and how far they travel to enjoy these mountain lands. Visitors to the Mountain Parks are cosmopolitan—a true mix of cultures and languages. With the exception of African-Americans being under-represented, the Mountain Parks reflect the same diversity of age and ethnicity as occurs at Denver’s urban parks. Although visitors to the Mountain Parks represent the spectrum, many come from low to middle income households.

Typically one third of those who visit either a Denver Mountain Park or another county open space park are Denver residents. Another third reside in the county in which the park is located. The last third are visitors from other counties along the Front Range, visitors from other parts of the state and nation, and international visitors. Together, mountain open space lands owned by Denver, Jefferson County, Douglas County, and Clear Creek County are used reciprocally. Together, they are a regional Front Range open space system where each county provides its own lands and facilities for the enjoyment of its own residents, recognizing that these lands are also enjoyed by all visitors.

The goal for Denver Mountain Parks is to provide the amenities and programs that take advantage of but do not diminish the valuable natural and cultural resources and that meet today’s recreation needs and desire to connect kids with nature.

FRONT RANGE GROWTH

The Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) projects growth in the Front Range to increase by 38%, which will result in the region's population increasing from 2.3 million in 2000 to more than 3.2 million people by the year 2020.

The population of the City and County of Denver is projected to increase by nearly 132,000 residents (or by more than 25%) during the next 20 years, reaching 657,000 persons. As communities get built closer and closer to Denver Mountain Parks, the search for local active recreation sites intensifies.



Patrick House, Genesee Park



Family outing at Echo Lake Park, summer 2007

Important qualities of the DMP, according to park visitors, are:

- ▶ a family-friendly environment
- ▶ the beauty of the natural scenery
- ▶ trails

—Marketing Support Survey, 2007

The DMP offer an incredible range of opportunities just minutes from downtown Denver: everything from hiking through a high plains prairie as bison graze nearby, to picnicking next to a foothills stream, to listening to a popular band in a world renowned outdoor amphitheatre. Many visitors enjoy unique qualities that can only be experienced in a specific Mountain Park such as the amphitheatre and sandstone formations at Red Rocks Park or the panoramic view of Daniels Park and the living history of Buffalo Bill's Museum and Grave. The solitude of the Mountain Parks and the opportunity to experience bird and wildlife habitat draw many users. Hiking, walking and running on more than 40 miles of trails, of which 20 miles are hiking only trails, is the single most popular recreation activity. Complementing Denver's trails are the adjacent open space lands of Jefferson, Clear Creek, and Douglas County that offer many miles of multiple use trails where mountain biking is an important activity.

Mountain meadows, stream edges, rustic shelters, and scenic waysides are popular sites for picnicking, making this the second most popular recreation activity in the DMP after hiking. Picnicking in groups and with family is a longstanding tradition in the picnic parks. Some families have returned to the same sites each year for 20 or 30 years.

Challenges and Opportunities

As the population increases, the demand for natural places that enrich the spirit and exercise the body intensifies. Having these parks close to home becomes even more valuable as gas prices increase and respect for the environment becomes mainstream. This is especially true for Denver residents who cannot afford trips deeper into the mountains. This variety of experiences is exhilarating, but it also presents special challenges to Denver. The problem facing all providers of parks and open spaces is how to offer the highest quality recreational experience for visitors, while protecting these significant lands and facilities for future generations.

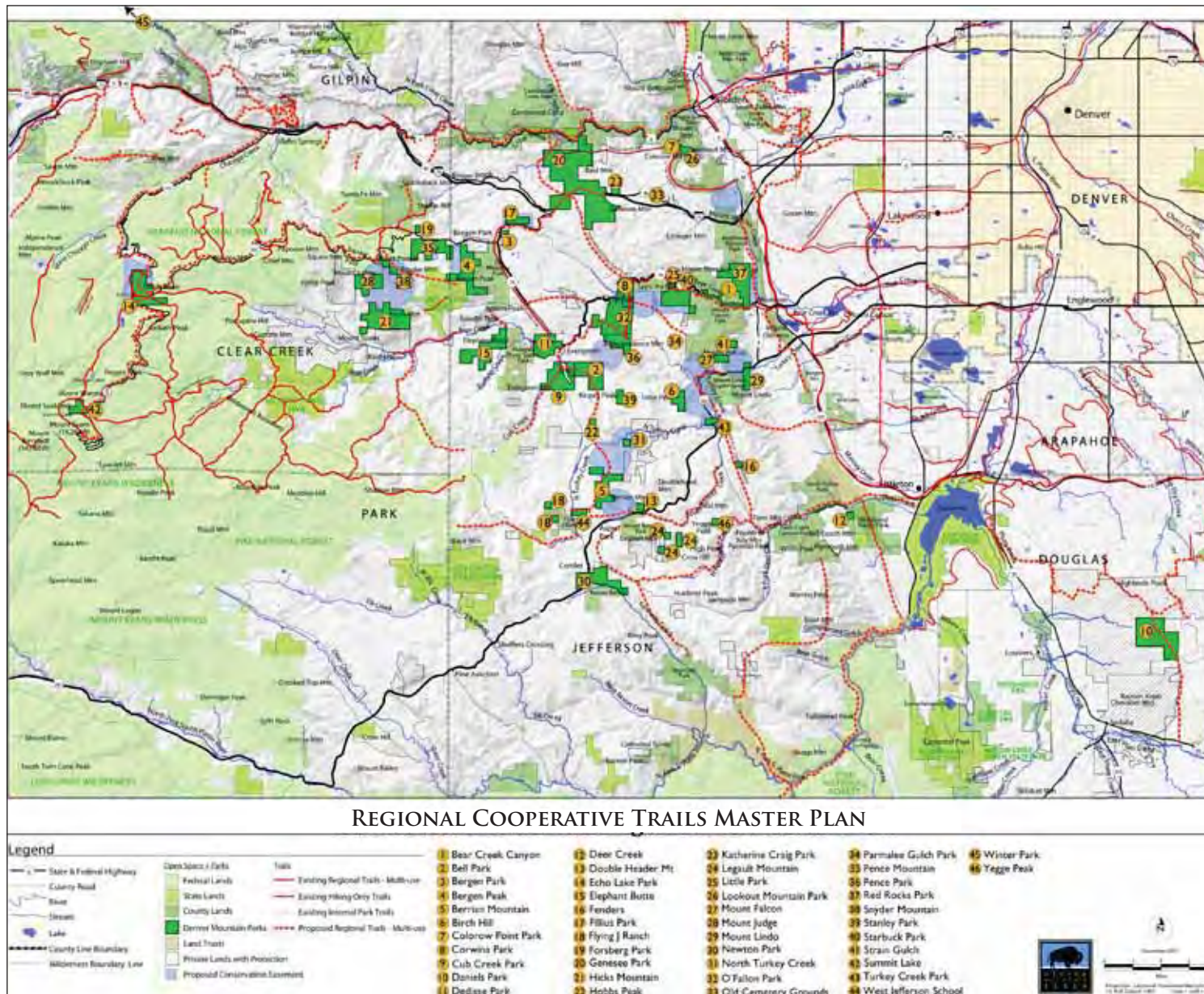
USERS

- ▶ More than two million people visit Denver Mountain Parks each year, including Red Rocks.
- ▶ One third of visitors reside in Denver, another third in the county, and the last third come from across the state and nation.
- ▶ International visitors travel from all corners of the world to visit Summit and Echo Lake Parks, Red Rocks, Winter Park, and Buffalo Bill Museum and Grave.

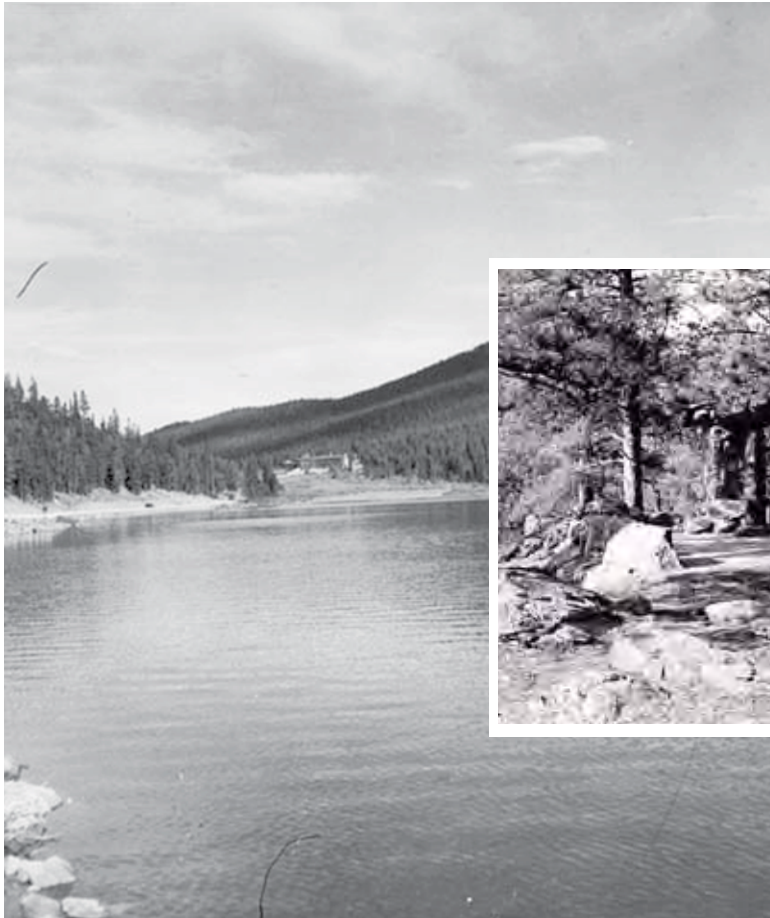
What diminishes the recreational experience in the DMP is the condition of the parks. Many of the system's roads, picnic sites, shelters, and trails have changed little since the 1940s. Park facilities that support recreation have been minimally upgraded since the loss of the mill levy funding in the 1950s (see Chapter 3, Funding and Organizational Recommendations). Many restrooms and picnic tables are run down. Additional shelters and amenities are needed. Partnerships with other agencies have allowed new improvements, but the entire system is in need of infrastructure upgrades to bring the parks to a standard of care that is consistent with today's recreational expectations.

Connecting Kids to Nature

Opportunities to expose more people of all ages, but especially children, to the mountain parks are a priority. As Richard Louv argued in his groundbreaking book *Last Child in the Woods*, a direct link exists between the restorative powers of nature and the health and welfare of our current and future generations. Research has established the benefits of contact with nature. Providing more opportunities for wildlife viewing, fishing, camping, exploring, geocaching, and survival skills are needed. New facilities for lifelong learning, youth camps, overnight programs, leadership programs, and partnerships with Denver Public Schools or interested nonprofits should be explored. Additional picnic sites, trails, access to streams and lakes, and improvements to existing facilities are also needed in the picnic parks to continue to provide the settings that encourage interaction with nature.



The Regional Trails Plan for the Denver Mountain Parks System



Echo Lake Park, circa 1940s, courtesy DPL-WHC

“Then comes Echo Lake, lying serenely quiet at the foot of Mt. Evans, 10,600 feet above sea level. On the shores of Echo Lake is Echo Lake Lodge, a delightful place to stop for rest and refreshments. It is a favorite place to spend the night for those who want to see the glories of a sunrise from the top of Mt. Evans. Ten miles farther up this lofty mountain road is Summit Lake, 12,740 feet high, in a glacier-scooped hollow on the side of Mt. Evans.”

—DMP brochure text, 1940s



Dedisse Park Shelter

Trails

Trail use, particularly by those wanting to hike, bike, and run, is on the rise. The DMP are already popular for hiking only trails that offer breathtaking scenery and solitude. The rigorous Beaver Brook Trail in the Clear Creek corridor was built by Denver in 1917 in conjunction with the Colorado Mountain Club. More miles of hiking trails, with access to picnic sites and parking, and special destinations like Chief Hosa Lodge, are needed to meet the growing demand. DMP

also are a key player in the regional open space system and demand for multiple use trails. Mountain biking is steadily increasing. The management and design of many adjacent open space lands have made them better suited to support mountain biking. But where possible, DMP can provide critical links in a multi-use regional trail, such as the proposed I-70 corridor.

Accessibility and New Uses

DMP need to accommodate the aging population and increasing number of people with disabilities. All the facilities need to be evaluated and upgraded to be accessible. Also, requests for new or expanded recreational activities in Denver Mountain Parks are made periodically, such as for camping, rock climbing, dogs off leash areas, more mountain biking, and even community facilities.

Each request should be evaluated against criteria (page 66) to determine the appropriateness and viability of a new activity (is this a sport or activity to stay) as well as its compatibility with the character of the specific park and protection of its historical, cultural, or natural resources. Potential rock climbing areas, for example, currently have no public access to them. But if access were acquired, the areas first would be studied for impacts on raptors before any new

BEHAVIORAL MAPPING STUDIES

During the summer of 2007 observers spent time in the mountain parks documenting behavior of park users. Observations included type of use (hiking, picnicking, fishing, etc.), specific areas of use, and size of groups. By speaking with park users when possible, observers were able to identify languages, dress and customs, and residency.

- ▶ Weekend users outnumber weekday users by more than 2 to 1, and picnicking is the number one weekend activity.
- ▶ Mountain Parks users are family oriented, and represent many different ethnicities and ages.
- ▶ Many parks have loyal generational followings of Denver residents. Park users noted that they have been coming to the park for 30 years.
- ▶ Most users to the parks use a small area of the parks.
- ▶ The same areas tend to be used on weekends and on weekdays.
- ▶ Park users generally prefer to be close to the water, and in the shade.
- ▶ Picnickers will choose picnic areas within 100 feet of their car whenever possible.



LEGEND:

● Visitor Group

PARK USES

Picnic	72	Active Sports	0
Hike	23	Wildlife Viewing	8
Bike	0	Other	0
Fish	61		

Approximately 164
visitors in the park

Behavioral mapping at Echo Lake, one summer day 2007

uses were approved. Other existing facilities, such as RV camping at Chief Hosa or Newton ballfields, need to be reevaluated in today's context.

Celebrating Heritage

The legacy of the mountain parks as an early scenic mountain park system with rustic shelters and buildings and breathtaking views offers a rare heritage that is highly valued, especially by tourists from other parts of the country and world. Denver residents traditionally take their visiting friends and relatives up the mountain roads to Red Rocks



Girls biking in O'Fallon Park, Summer 2007

Park, Lookout Mountain, and Echo Lake on Mt. Evans. Upgrading these historic and iconic places to be of the highest quality and most authentic experience is essential in continuing the legacy of Denver's "Switzerland of the Rockies."

Systemwide Recommendations

- A. Upgrade the system's physical infrastructure to better connect residents and tourists (especially families) with nature, and to provide basic amenities and an improved recreational experience.

REGIONAL TRAILS MASTER PLAN

Denver Mountain Parks are open lands within the larger open space networks of the four counties in which they are located. The goal of the Regional Trails Master Plan is to provide direction on the best points of connection that are envisioned on DMP lands. Final alignments will need close collaboration with the trail planners from the other counties.

- ▶ Upgrade existing park facilities including roads, trails, picnic areas, and parking to improve the visitor experience and to provide settings that encourage interaction with nature.
 - ▶ Provide more restroom facilities where needed. Integrate new restrooms with existing picnic and trail sites and ensure that they comply with Design Guidelines.
 - ▶ Continue implementing the 2001 DMP District-Wide Needs Assessment in upgrading historic facilities for recreation use.
- B. Connect kids of all ages with nature by creating additional facilities for youth camps, lifelong learning centers, overnight programs, and leadership programs at those parks that can best accommodate these facilities.
 - ▶ Evaluate adding park facilities for youth camps and overnight programs at certain parks, such as Newton Park, Genesee, and Katherine Craig Park.
 - ▶ Consider developing a new Denver Public Schools overnight outdoor experience in the DMP for elementary school age children. Balarat, the DPS current outdoor lab located in Boulder County, then could be used for a new program serving middle and high school students. Balarat's access and remoteness can be a difficulty for younger children and some families.

CONNECT KIDS WITH NATURE

- ▶ Expand Park facilities for youth camps
- ▶ Expand overnight programs
- ▶ Create leadership opportunities



Family outing in O'Fallon Park



Family picnic at Genesee Park

“When an Easterner thinks of Denver, the thought is linked inseparably with the grandeur of the Rocky Mountains. Located within twenty miles of Denver, but hitherto inaccessible except by road and trail, it’s a climax of scenic beauty—mountains and plains—unsurpassed in America or Europe. At present it has little, if any commercial value: improved by making it easily accessible, its value will run into millions of dollars annually.”

—What the Mountain Parks Mean for Denver, The City of Denver, 1913.

- C. Provide recreational experiences that complement Denver's urban park experiences and are compatible with the character of Denver Mountain Parks, that meet the needs of Denver residents and visitors, and that contribute to the regional recreational and open space system of the Denver Front Range.

- ▶ Develop new hiking trails for those individual parks where trails have been lost or where appropriate.
- ▶ Develop new picnic sites with possible new shelters where appropriate.
- ▶ Develop controlled access to streams and lakes.
- ▶ Use criteria to evaluate new recreational uses or proposed changes in recreation use for their compatibility with the unique character of the Mountain Park settings. Research potential new sites.
- ▶ Use criteria to evaluate certain existing recreational uses for their compatibility with their Mountain Park setting. Evaluate according to the criteria, determining if the use is the highest and best use for its setting, and whether it is sensitive to the system's natural, cultural, and scenic resources. (p 66)
- ▶ Work with regional partners to plan for and acquire access to appropriate DMP Conservation/Wilderness areas that could provide limited recreation.



*Touring the Mountain Parks,
from a 1920 guidebook*



Hikers on the Trading Post Trail, Red Rocks Park

- D. Provide regional trail connections to adjacent open space lands by adding new multiple-use trails and work with other agencies to implement the regional trail system.
- ▶ Develop multiple use trails to connect the DMP to the regional open space system.
 - ▶ Work with local groups to implement the I-70 Bike Trail, a multiple use trail, in Genesee Park along U.S. I-70.

- E. Create a wayfinding system for the DMP to clearly identify parks and park facilities and to provide direction on access points, associated facilities, and rules and regulations.
- ▶ Provide a comprehensive system that includes signs, brochures, trail and park maps, and web site information.
 - ▶ Identify, through signage and maps, designated trails, trail-heads, picnic sites, and associated parking in the parks.
 - ▶ Direct visitors to underused sites to alleviate overuse.

- F. Provide a high quality experience for visitors and expand tourism opportunities by rehabilitating the historic park shelters, lodges, and structures to offer an authentic Mountain Park setting.
- ▶ Research and enhance all the historic sites, starting with Buffalo Bill Grave and Museum. Analyze their uses, seasons, roles as 'gateways,' and interpretive experiences to highlight their ability to celebrate the American West.

RECREATION EVALUATION CRITERIA

1. Are the type of use, level of activity, and location consistent with the mission and goals? Are there any land restrictions or legalities that restrict or prohibit the use?
2. Is there a demonstrated demand for the use within Denver Mountain Parks?
3. Is the use compatible with the system and the park's existing recreation experiences?
4. Are there additional or elevated safety concerns? Are staffing and management levels adequate to meet the maintenance and operations for the type of use, level of activity, or location?
5. Does the type of use, level of activity, or location have significant impact on the natural resources, cultural/historic resources, or character of the park?



Echo Lake, Summer 2007

“Westward along the mountain tops the highway winds on gentle grades, through well-kept public camp and picnic grounds, through a great municipal game preserve containing herds of buffalo (bison), elk and deer. One of the many branch highways leads past lovely mountain lakes above timberline and to the summit of Mt. Evans, 14,259 feet high. The main circle road descends to Bear Creek, where, at Evergreen, within thirty miles of Denver, but in the heart of the Rockies, the city has built a municipal golf course and a large lake.”

—DMP brochure text, 1940s



Chief Hosa Lodge

“The [Denver Mountain Park] road system entices the motorist, but the real outdoor enthusiast will be found on the trail, footing it merrily in mountain boots and khaki, alive to the whisper and stir of little creatures, the penciled chipmunk or chattering gray squirrel, the birds of shy habits. The trail system is being extended each year, for the city government desires to foment hiking clubs with their experienced leaders, their rules on pack and garb and their knowledge of wood lore.”

—Denver’s Mountain Parks, *What the City Has Done in Five Years to Bring Wilderness Charm to the Masses*, Denver Municipal Facts, April 1918.

Cultural Resources Recommendations

Background

Cultural resources are the important features in the Denver Mountain Parks that were created by people or associated with history. Ranging from early roads built on original Native American trails to the Red Rocks Amphitheatre, they are key to the parks’ character, design appeal, and ability to convey the history and story of Denver and the West. Vestiges of Native American and early settlers’ influence on the land remain in the form of early routes, trails and roads, and structures.

In Genesee Park, the 1860 Patrick House and its outbuildings, currently used for park staff housing and park maintenance, were originally built as a wayside along a toll road. Colorow Point, named for Chief Colorow, is the smallest DMP park site at 0.537 acres. Its setting high on an escarpment overlooking the foothills of Golden is thought to have been a sacred site for area tribes. It’s likely that other important archaeological remnants such as sacred sites also remain.



Dedisse Park Bridge

Roads continue to be important. In 1912, Denver commissioned the renowned landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. from Brookline, Massachusetts, to plan and design an extensive Mountain Park system in the nearby Colorado foothills. Olmsted proposed setting aside 41,000 acres of state, federal, and private lands for their scenic and natural beauty, to be preserved from development. His strongest proposal was the “provision of a system of first-class roads,” to connect these lands and make them accessible to the people. Olmsted’s road designs followed the principles of naturalistic landscapes made popular by his father, and were in keeping with his design philosophy of the “curative power of natural scenery.”



Red Rocks Park

“Constructed between 1912 and 1941, the Denver Mountain Parks are a rural park and parkway system . . . parks interconnected by scenic drives. . . planned and designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., nationally recognized landscape architect; S.R. DeBoer, Denver landscape architect; and Jules Jacques Benedict and Burnham Hoyt, prominent Denver architects. The unique linkage of mountain parks and scenic drives preserved scenic and recreational mountain resources, expanded the vision of parks and parkways, and set the stage for regional open space planning in Colorado.”

—National Register of Historic Places nomination

Olmsted planned the scenic drive through Genesee Park and the curving road up Lookout Mountain—the Lariat Trail built by ‘Cement’ Bill Williams. Over the next several years, Denver built or assisted with building roads from Denver to Golden and Morrison, the Bear Creek Canyon Road, and roads to Bergen Park and to Squaw Pass. The Mountain Park loops were designed to be experienced by car, with careful road alignments designed to capture the incredible views and scenery.

While Denver was completing its first class system of mountain roads, it also was building shelters and buildings. Between 1914 and 1918, many stone shelters, park buildings, well houses and

monuments were completed. Several of these structures were designed by Jules Jacques Benois Benedict, one of Denver’s foremost architects, including the prominent Chief Hosa Lodge at Genesee Park. Benedict’s other work included the Washington Park Boat House in Denver, and the summer White House on Mount Falcon for President Wilson, which was never built. The designers used indigenous materials and simple forms to integrate structures with the natural setting. Each structure was crafted to take advantage of its setting, to capitalize on views and sight lines, and to



Chief Hosa Lodge, Genesee Park

respect natural features. They were built with fine workmanship and attention to detail.

During the 1930s and early 1940s, the State Parks Division of the National Park Service (NPS) oversaw extensive work in the DMP done by young men from around the country in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and local men in the Works Progress Administration (WPA) program. The NPS landscape architects and architects created a general development plan for the DMP and master plans for nine parks. The CCC workers lived in special camps built for them, including the main Morrison Camp near Red Rocks and the camps at Genesee Park (now Katherine Craig) and Chief Hosa. The Morrison Camp



Civilian Conservation Corps workers constructing shelter at Dedisse Park

remains almost intact. The shelters, trails, and roads built by the CCC and WPA convey the NPS design ideals of carefully siting structures into the dominant natural and scenic character, naturalistic principles of landscape design, use of native materials, and a focus on landscape preservation and harmonization of built features.

Their most significant work was the remarkable construction of the Red Rocks Amphitheatre, designed by renowned Denver architect Burnham Hoyt. Patterned after Europe's finest outdoor amphitheatres, Hoyt designed his theater to work with the site, in a slightly

asymmetrical form with a sweeping upward arc that afforded breath-taking views and wonderful acoustics. Using indigenous materials including Colorado sandstone from Lyons, Hoyt exemplified the practices of naturalistic design. In 2003, a new visitor center was completed in Burnham Hoyt's originally envisioned, but never built, agora at the top of the historic amphitheatre.

In addition to Red Rocks Amphitheatre, the roads, distinctive lodges, and shelters built between 1912 and the 1940s are recognized as nationally and locally important. Nine of the Denver Mountain Parks

and the most prominent scenic drives are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Red Rocks, too, is joined by the Mt. Evans road and the Buffalo Bill grave and Pahaska Tepee in attracting more than a million visitors from around the world each year. These cultural resources make Denver Mountain Parks special and different and are the basis of their appeal to heritage tourists.

Challenges and Opportunities

The Mountain Parks include more than 20 architecturally significant and historically important structures ranging from small stone well houses to stone and timber lodges. In addition to the well known structures are the many roads, picnic sites, and trails that are original park features.

A major challenge for Denver is to adequately maintain, enhance, and market these historic assets for both Denver residents and tourists.

It requires consistent reinvestment over time. The return to the City is in the experiences the parks provide as well as the economic benefit from the growing tourism sector. The 2001 DMP District-Wide Needs Assessment analyzed most of the major structures and features and provides recommendations for their protection and improvement. The assessment identified approximately \$12 million in needed improvements for just the structures, for their immediate stabilization and critical life safety compliance. As of 2008, \$2 million worth of that work had been completed. One outstanding key recommendation is to develop site master plans for 14 Mountain Parks to guide their stabilization and improvement. Funding for this level of planning has not been allocated, and improvements to the parks have continued on an as-needed basis.

How to repair and build new structures in ways that are compatible with these historic resources also is a challenge. For example, restoration of existing structures requires attention to scale and materials. Consequently, Design Guidelines for the DMP were developed as part of this Master Plan and exist as a separate report. See Chapter 3 for a short summary of those Guidelines.



Girls skiing near Genesee Park

Systemwide Recommendations

- A. Preserve historic features and structures including original roads, trails, structures, and buildings.
 - ▶ Continue implementing the 2001 DMP District-Wide Needs Assessment through immediate stabilization measures and by restoring and rehabilitating significant features and structures.
 - ▶ Conduct archaeological investigations and/or historic research as a regular part of the planning, design, and construction process.
- B. Complete a system-wide assessment and plan of potential uses and roles for all of the major historic lodges and structures, including the Morrison CCC Camp, the Patrick House, and the Daniels Park ranch buildings.
- C. Rehabilitate the architecturally significant structures for their highest and best uses, referring to DMP Design Guidelines.



Lariat Trail

Capitalize on these buildings' unique architecture, setting, and fabulous views. Analyze and study conceptual ideas, such as:

- ▶ rehabilitating Chief Hosa Lodge, the Trading Post, or Pahaska Tepee and their grounds as the gateway to the Mountain Parks system or to have greater interpretive roles.
 - ▶ rehabilitating Pahaska Tepee at Lookout Mountain Park as part of the greater enhancement of the Buffalo Bill Museum and Grave.
 - ▶ rehabilitating Echo Lake Lodge at Echo Lake Park for expanded uses.
 - ▶ assessing and rehabilitating the historic ranch buildings at Daniels Park for public access.
- ▶ assessing and rehabilitating the historic Morrison CCC camp.
 - ▶ analyzing and assessing the integrity and role of Katherine Craig CCC Camp and plan for nonprofit or City use.
- D. Rehabilitate the park stone houses and their settings for continued use as park shelters and picnic sites.
- E. Assure that new construction and enhancements of existing features do not diminish the design integrity and legacy of the system.
- ▶ Follow the Denver Mountain Park Design Guidelines for all projects and refer to the historical written and graphic archives.
 - ▶ Pursue Denver Historic Landmark Commission designation for the system.



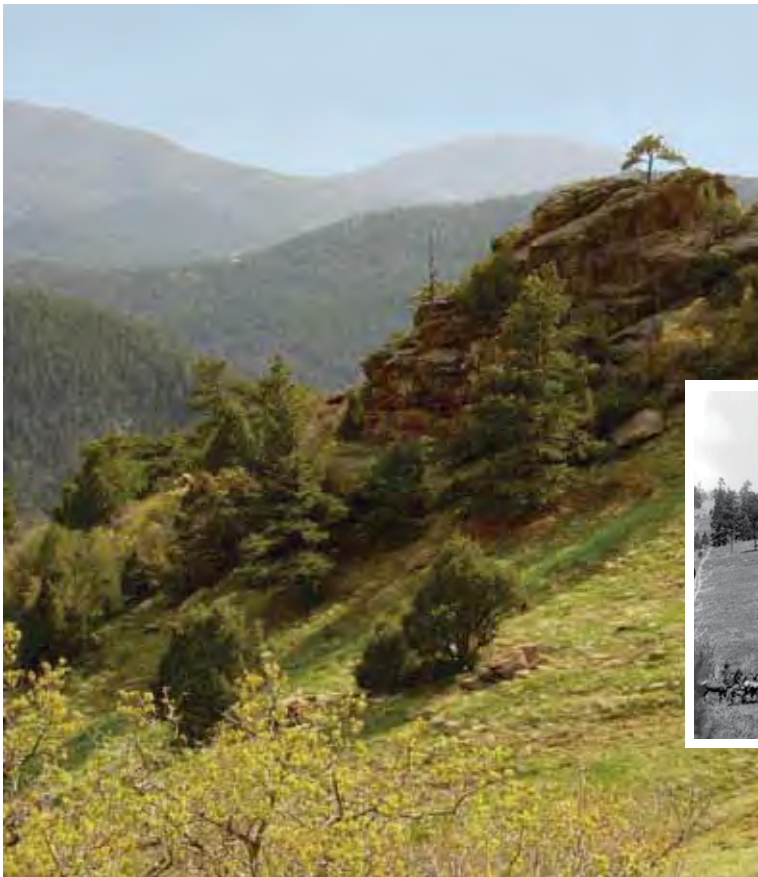
Summit Lake Park



Genesee Park



Snyder Mountain Tract



Mount Falcon Tract

The goal for Denver Mountain Parks is to protect and manage the incredible natural resources found in the park system in a regional, sustainable approach that provides public access and recreation while not harming the resources.

Natural Resources Recommendations

Background

The DMP system is a microcosm of Colorado's ecosystems. The DMP begin as low as 5,700 feet above sea level at Deer Creek Canyon. Daniels Park, at 6,600 feet, is a rocky mesa of Gambel's oak and mixed prairie grassland. The system rises to a high alpine cirque at an elevation of 12,830 feet at Summit Lake Park. Summit Lake is, in fact, the highest city park in the nation and the headwaters of Bear Creek. In between, all of Colorado's ecosystems are represented — plains-foothills transition zone, foothills zone, montane zone, subalpine zone, and alpine zone.



Elk in Genesee Park

The dramatic Pennsylvanian and Permian sandstone formations of Red Rocks Park are probably the best known. Rising to the west, most lands are underlain by Precambrian metamorphosed sedimentary and volcanic rocks of early and middle Proterozoic age. In valley bottoms,aternary deposits of alluvial sand and gravel and colluvium (sediment deposits at the bottom of slopes) have accumulated on top of bedrock.

The Front Range foothills landscape where most of the parks are located is dissected by streams that tumble through sinuous canyons. The major streams that flow through the parks are Clear Creek, Beaver Brook, Bear Creek, Cub Creek, Little Cub Creek, North and South Turkey Creek, and Deer Creek. These streams and the land that encompasses their watersheds are critical in providing water and ensuring water quality for Denver's Front Range communities. All of these streams ultimately reach the South Platte River.



Bear Creek in O'Fallon Park

With such diversity in elevation and life zones throughout the Mountain Parks, there is an equally diverse range of vegetation and biological communities. The lower elevations where plains-foothills transition zone occurs in places such as Daniels and Red Rocks parks are characterized by open grasslands on lower slopes, mesa tops interspersed with shrublands, and plains riparian communities in stream corridors. Between 8,000 and 10,000 feet in elevation, the mixed pine forests of the montane zone occur. Ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir communities dominate lower slopes. As elevations rise, monotypic lodgepole pine forests with patches of Engelmann spruce, blue spruce, and subalpine fir occur. Higher elevation ridges are dominated by limber and bristlecone pine. Large, contiguous stands of aspen dominate north-facing slopes and valleys with abundant moisture, while open meadows can be full of wildflowers.

Above 10,000 feet, the moisture-rich subalpine zone begins, with stands of Engelmann spruce and subalpine fir that are broken by lush wet meadows and rocky slopes. The primeval forests typically include an understory of shrubs including willow thickets, shrubby cinquefoil,

red-berried elder, bush honeysuckle, and thimbleberry. Meadows, wetland bogs, and forest openings include a diverse array of colorful wildflowers. At the upper end of the subalpine zone, forests give way to limber and bristlecone pine on rocky, windswept slopes just below timberline, at about 11,000 feet. Above timberline, the alpine zone supports a rich array of vegetation that survives extreme conditions and short growing season. Rocky soils are interspersed with alpine tundra—a diverse mix of low-lying grasses, perennial sedges, wildflowers, and mosses.

The varied DMP landscapes are critical for their important habitat for mammals (such as deer, elk, mountain lion, black bear, and mountain goat), for fisheries, and for raptors. Important wetlands, riparian areas and wet meadow communities, old growth forests, rare or significant plant communities, and cliff habitats occur throughout the system.

Challenges and Opportunities

Early Denver leaders set aside the DMP to protect their scenic beauty for future generations. This action protected the system's significant natural resources and important habitat. Their environmental role for the region is as important as the recreational experience. Watershed protection, as only one example, is key to the quality and quantity of drinking water for Denver. In many ways, the creation of DMP is the earliest Greenprint Denver environmental action in the City's history. The visionary move to protect lands close to Denver from development and industry even predates the nationwide open space movement by decades.

The challenge today, with impacts such as urban growth, climate change, and recreation demands, is how to protect these resources for today and the future while providing recreational access.

Over the years, management of the natural resources in the DMP has included forest management, wildfire control including thinning for fire mitigation and beetle control, weed control, bison and elk management, and stream control. With a small staff and limited resources, DMP has managed the system's natural resources through partnerships with the other counties, USDA Forest Service, National Park Service, Colorado State Forest Service, Colorado Division of Wildlife, Department of Agriculture, Colorado State Parks Land and Water Conservation Funds, and eight Fire Departments. Obviously wildlife and natural resource issues don't recognize political boundaries.

Many of the heavily wooded DMP have a Forest Management Plan (FMP) in place, most of which were completed by the Colorado State Forest Service in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The mountain pine beetle epidemic is expected to reach the DMP, resulting in extensive areas of dead lodgepole pine followed by patchy forests and a period of regrowth.

Long-term issues that threaten ecosystems and habitat include social trails and trampling (particularly in riparian areas), unauthorized vehicle use, illegal dumping, encroachment from neighboring prop-

DENVER MOUNTAIN PARKS SELECTED NATURAL RESOURCE PARTNERS

Federal Agencies

USDA Forest Service: fee collection agreement for Summit Lake Park

National Park Service: National Natural Landmark designation for Summit Lake

NCCC Americorps: work teams since 1994

State Agencies

Colorado State Forest Service; agreements for: wildfire technical and administrative services
forest management services including grant requests

Colorado State Parks; Land and Water Conservation Funds

Division of Wildlife: ongoing wildlife issues

Department of Agriculture; State Vet, Brand Board, noxious weed control

Local Agencies

Jefferson County Open Space

Douglas County

Clear Creek County Open Space

Evergreen Park and Recreation District

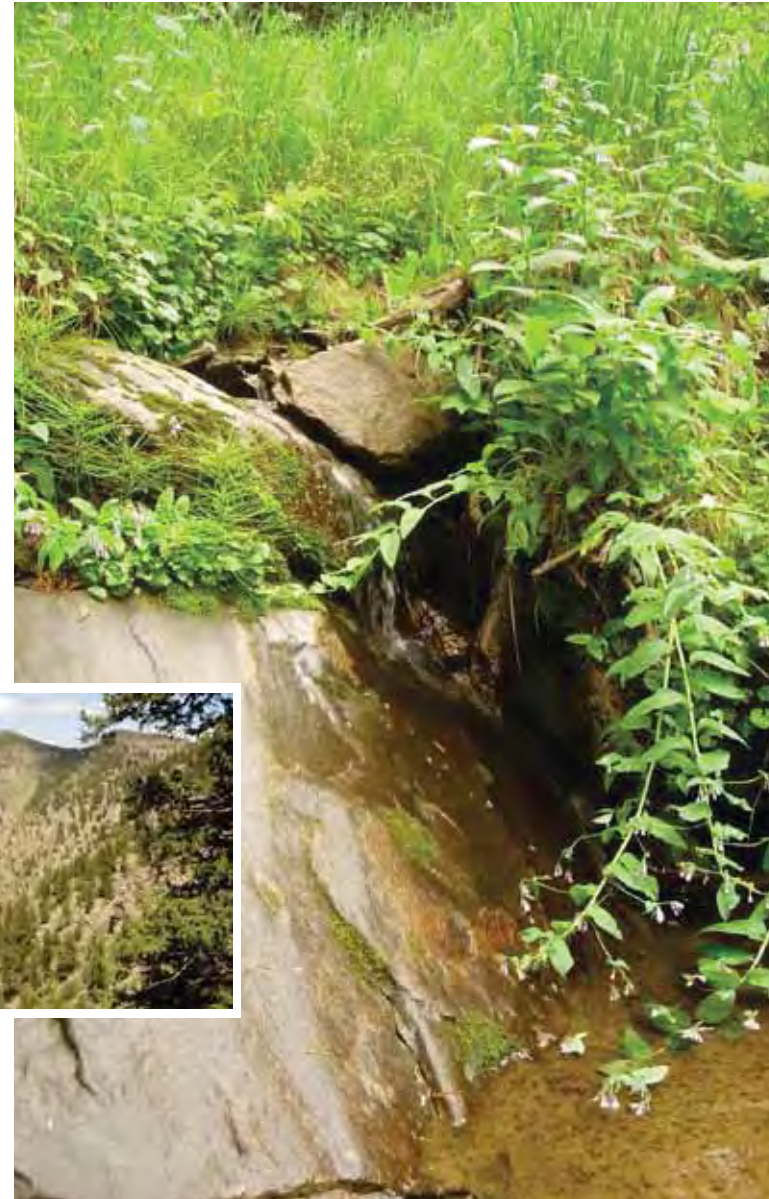
Evergreen Metropolitan District

erties, damaged fencing, unnecessary fencing or other barriers for wildlife, erosion, noxious weeds, forest health issues, and incompatible use of neighboring properties.

Denver also lags behind other open space providers in the creation of the tools needed to manage the system's natural resources, such as a comprehensive baseline inventory for the entire system and system-wide and individual natural resource plans for each park.

Natural Resources Recommendations

- A. Protect important riparian habitat including wetlands, wet meadows, and riparian communities. Recognize that users enjoy physical access to water, and that any habitat protection should include designated areas where access is appropriate.
 - ▶ Implement measures to reduce the impacts of public use, particularly social trails, on riparian habitat areas.
 - ▶ Identify areas that are appropriate for public use and areas that should be protected as riparian habitat areas.
 - ▶ Create and install a system to mark and identify the boundaries of the DMP.
- B. Create an interagency collaboration to restore Bear Creek. Bear Creek is a critical stream corridor, designated Important Bird Area, and watershed that provides drinking water, protects significant aquatic and riparian habitat, and offers a unique scenic resource.
- C. Close social trails and restore vegetation.
 - ▶ Identify and close problematic social trails that damage sensitive areas, cause significant erosion, or contribute to the expansion of social trails.
 - ▶ Where appropriate, design and designate new sustainable trails in order to close social trails.
 - ▶ Manually obliterate the trail tread while revegetating the area with native species.
 - ▶ Carefully place signage and obstacles where access or crowds are a problem.



Genesee Park

Pence Mountain Tract

- D. Incorporate natural resource protection strategies in system-wide and individual park improvements.
 - ▶ Design and build recreational and site improvements that can better accommodate heavy recreational use (such as constructed access to the creeks and fencing of protected areas).
 - ▶ Evaluate any proposed new recreational use or facility against its impact on the natural resources, or on the significance and integrity of those resources.
 - ▶ When new uses or facilities are proposed, closely assess the specific areas that would be affected, documenting any sensitive resources. For example, a rare plant or wetland survey may be necessary to help determine the appropriate location of a trail, structure, or other facility, while raptor surveys may be needed to inform decisions about proposed uses (such as rock climbing).
- E. Conduct a comprehensive baseline inventory for the entire system.
 - ▶ Build on the work developed through the master planning process.
 - ▶ Continue inventories as projects are developed in individual parks.
 - ▶ Create and continually update a GIS system to document the baseline inventories, including the work of the master plan.
- F. Develop an ongoing resource management planning approach to assist in protecting the resources.
 - ▶ Develop specific resource management plans for individual parks or by areas with similar resources (or system-wide) to clearly articulate resource management goals and identify specific management actions and tools to achieve them.



View from Summit Lake Park

- ▶ Develop project-specific studies to further identify significant resources in the parks and to respond to specific plans or proposals.
 - ▶ Develop monitoring protocols to track the effectiveness of management actions (such as weed control or social trail restoration) and a process to evaluate the results of the monitoring and to guide and plan subsequent actions.
- G. Develop and document an integrated weed management strategy for the entire DMP system that builds on past successes while providing a framework to respond to future challenges.
 - ▶ Use an integrated biological, mechanical, and chemical approach, prescribed fire, and any other appropriate tools.
 - ▶ Continue ongoing weed monitoring and collaborative relationships with the Colorado Department of Agriculture, County Weed and Pest Management Program.

NOTABLE NATURAL RESOURCES

Geologically diverse:

- ▶ Summit Lake lies at the base of a cirque carved into the hard granite of Mount Evans by glacial activity.
- ▶ Daniels Park encompasses a mesa top capped with light-colored sandstone layers of the Denver Formation, 65 million years in age.
- ▶ The Fountain Formation at Red Rocks Park is 300 million years old, next to Precambrian basement rocks more than 1.7 billion years old.

Diverse ecological zones:

- ▶ Summit Lake Park, located above timberline at 12,830 feet (below the summit of Mount Evans), is the only DMP located in the alpine zone.
- ▶ Echo Lake Park, located at 10,600 feet, is the only DMP within the subalpine zone, although the upper portions of Hicks Mountain and Snyder Mountain also show characteristics of this zone.
- ▶ Most of the parks occur in foothills and montane forests and riparian habitats ranging from 6,000 to 9,000 feet in elevation.

A variety of wetlands:

- ▶ The alpine wetlands around Summit Lake include soil hummocks dominated by willows and sedges and several species of mosses and ferns (CNHP 2007); they form the headwaters of Bear Creek.
- ▶ Echo Lake is in the Chicago Creek drainage, a tributary to Clear Creek. The 10,000-year-old subalpine wetland (fen) at Echo Lake Park is an important feature dominated by willows and sedges.
- ▶ Montane wetlands at the west end of Evergreen Lake provide important habitat for waterfowl and marsh birds.

Biological diversity:

- ▶ Echo Lake Park also has high biodiversity significance with occurrence of globally vulnerable plant species (reflected moonwort, Mingan's moonwort, and western moonwort) and communities (montane woodlands).
- ▶ Within Red Rocks Park, the landscape ranges from plains riparian to mixed shrublands and scattered ponderosa pine or aspen trees.
- ▶ Bergen Peak provides a good example of a lodgepole pine forest.
- ▶ Old-growth ponderosa pine occurs in Bergen, Bell, and Genesee Parks. Berrian Mountain shows diverse montane zone communities.



Hobbs Peak Tract



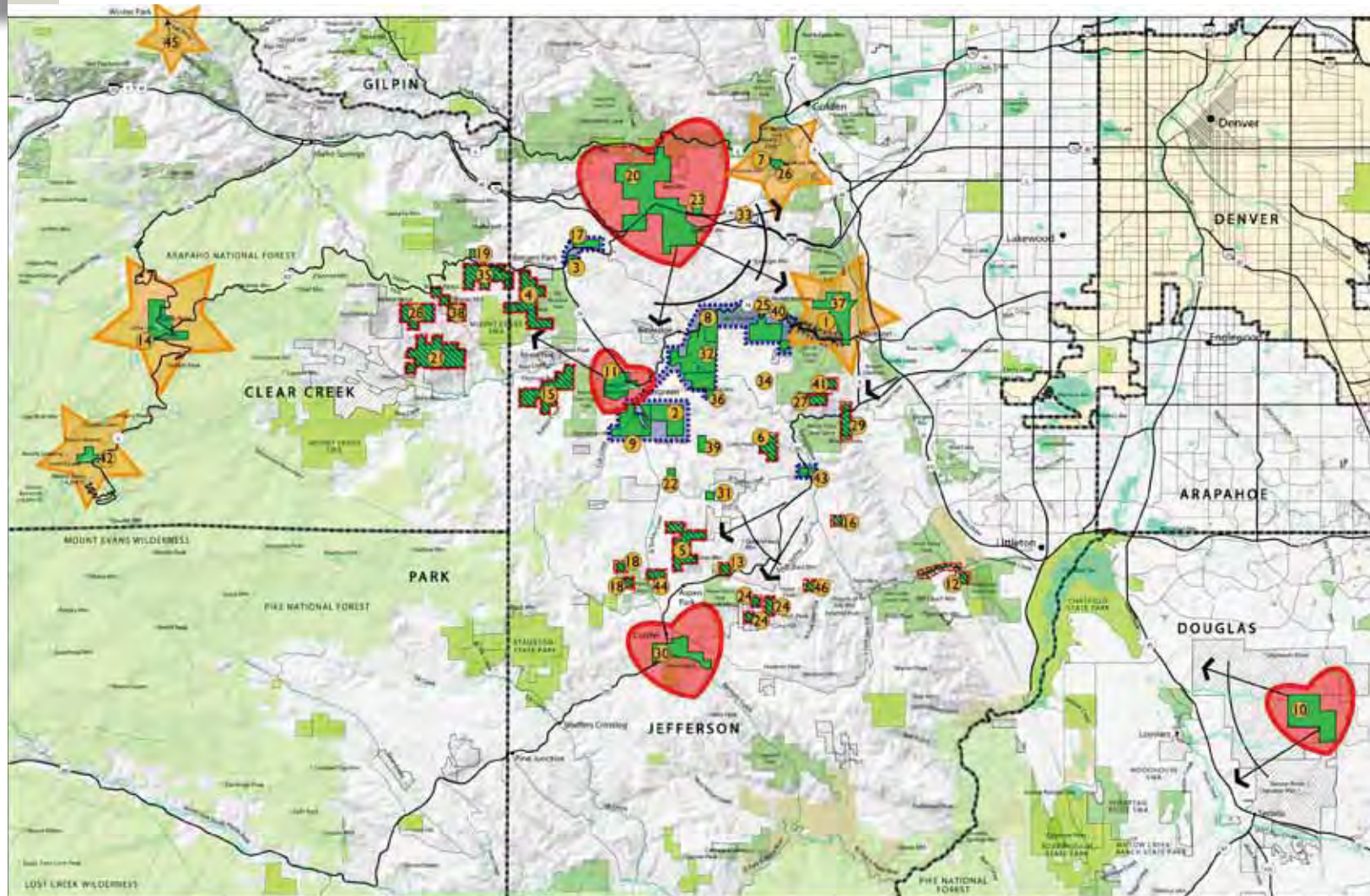
Columbine at Newton Park

- H. Continue proactive monitoring and stewardship of forest resources to minimize wildfire risk and proactively manage forest health.
 - ▶ Work with the Colorado State Forest Service to update Forest Management Plans for individual parks.
 - ▶ Consider incorporating forest management goals into a comprehensive, system-wide planning tool. Continue to develop collaborative relationships with counties, local fire districts, Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest, and other partners to coordinate forest management goals and implementation efforts.
- I. Continue efforts to improve wildlife habitat and reduce conflict between wildlife and humans.
 - ▶ Manage litter problems in the parks by removing open waste containers and replacing or re-configuring them to be bearproof or resistant to wildlife.
 - ▶ Phase out the elk enclosure in Genesee Park, which interferes with wild elk migration, in collaboration with the Colorado Department of Wildlife (CDOW).
 - ▶ Continue improving streams for fish habitat.
 - ▶ Inventory and study raptor populations at accessible, good quality rock outcrops that may have future potential for rock climbing.
- J. Develop and maintain collaborative relationships with other agencies and organizations that have a mutual interest in the management of natural resources in the Denver Mountain Parks. These relationships are important for sharing management experience, identifying unique opportunities to improve service or reduce costs, leveraging outside resources (i.e., volunteers or grant funding) and implementing projects of regional interest.



View from Daniels Park

- ▶ Key partners include Jefferson County Open Space, Clear Creek County Open Space, Douglas County Open Space, Evergreen Park and Recreation, Highlands Ranch Metro District Open Space, and Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest. Other partners include the State Forest Service, Department of Agriculture, and Division of Wildlife, local fire districts; conservation organizations, and many others.



PARK TIERS FOR THE DENVER MOUNTAIN PARKS VISION

Legend

- State & Federal Highway
- County Road
- River
- Stream
- Lake
- County Line Boundary
- Wilderness Boundary
- Open Space Parks
- Federal Lands
- State Lands
- County Lands
- Denver Mountain Parks
- Land Trusts
- Private Lands with Protection
- Park Hierarchy
- Star Parks
- Heart Parks
- Picnic Park
- Open Space / Wilderness Parks
- Prominent Viewshed

- | | | | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|
| 1 Bear Creek Canyon | 12 Deer Creek | 23 Katherine Craig Park | 34 Parmalee Gulch Park | 45 Winter Park |
| 2 Bell Park | 13 Double Header Mt. | 24 Legault Mountain | 35 Pence Mountain | 46 Yegge Peak |
| 3 Bergen Park | 14 Echo Lake Park | 25 Little Park | 36 Pence Park | |
| 4 Bergen Peak | 15 Elephant Butte | 26 Lookout Mountain Park | 37 Red Rocks Park | |
| 5 Berrian Mountain | 16 Fenders | 27 Mount Falcon | 38 Snyder Mountain | |
| 6 Birch Hill | 17 Fillist Park | 28 Mount Judge | 39 Stanley Park | |
| 7 Colorow Point Park | 18 Flying J Ranch | 29 Mount Lindo | 40 Starbuck Park | |
| 8 Corwin Park | 19 Forsberg Park | 30 Newton Park | 41 Strain Gulch | |
| 9 Cub Creek Park | 20 Genesee Park | 31 North Turkey Creek | 42 Summit Lake | |
| 10 Daniels Park | 21 Hicks Mountain | 32 O'Fallon Park | 43 Turkey Creek Park | |
| 11 Dedisse Park | 22 Hobbs Peak | 33 Old Cemetery Grounds | 44 West Jefferson School | |



December 2007



4.B THE PLACES: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL PARKS



Lookout Mountain Park



O'Fallon Park

Dedisse Park

"The system is unique in that the creation of it is the first instance on record of an American city establishing a Park and camping grounds twenty to thirty miles beyond its own borders. Denver has brought her own Mountain scenery to her own doors."

—Denver and Her Mountain Parks, circa 1918-20

At first glance it may appear that the Denver Mountain Parks are unrelated parcels scattered across four counties. But the reality is that the individual parks comprise a cohesive system of significant lands connected by watersheds, forests, sensitive ecosystems, trails, and scenic drives. Each park has its own distinct character, but the system as a whole shares an audience, uses, geography, character, and historic integrity. These similarities offer a way of organizing the parks into four tiers, for ease in providing recommendations and for better understanding the role that each park plays in the larger system.

The four broad tiers of the Denver Mountain Parks are:

The Stars

Red Rocks, Lookout Mountain, Echo Lake, Summit Lake, and Winter Park

The earts

Genesee, Dedisse, Newton, and Daniels

The Picnic Parks

Little, Corwina/O'Fallon/Pence (along Bear Creek), Bell and Cub Creek (along those creeks), Fillius, Bergen, and Turkey Creek

Conservation/Wilderness Areas

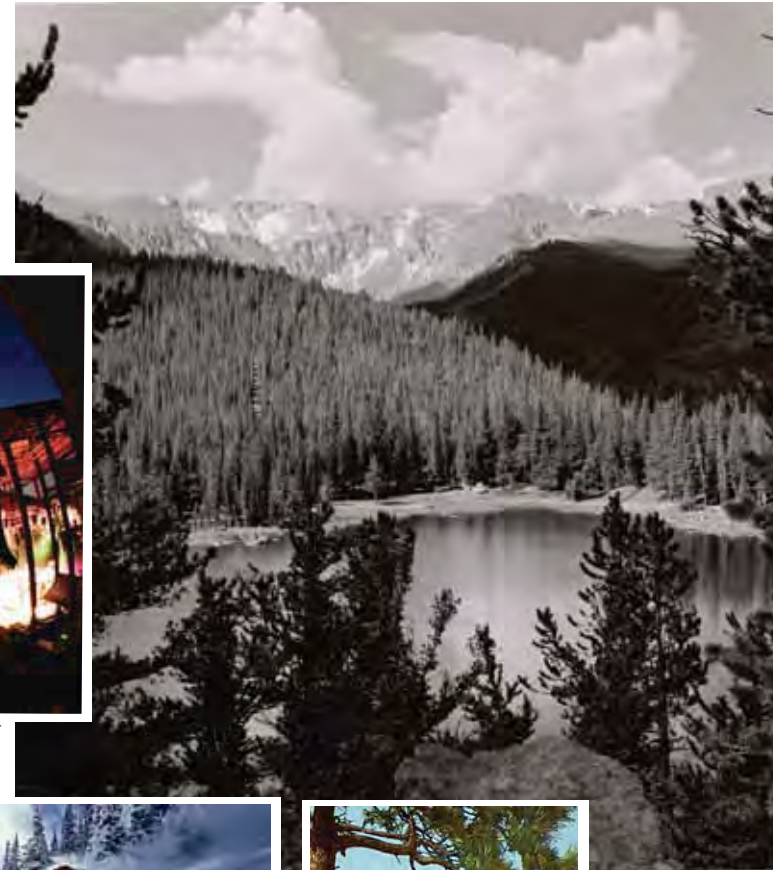
The 24 undeveloped parcels, initially set aside for their resource value, often surrounded by private property with no access, and with the potential of offering some limited recreation in the future. (Listed on page 148.)

4.B.I. THE STARS

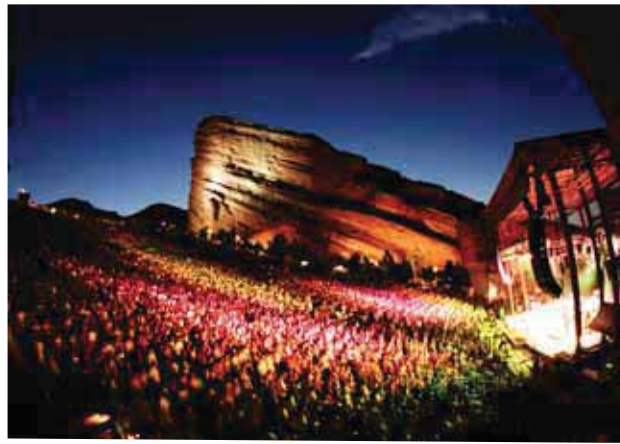
Many of Colorado's most significant landscapes are within the Denver Mountain Parks system. The uplifted sandstone ridges of Red Rocks Park, the steep world-class powder slopes of Winter Park, the resting place of Buffalo Bill, and the high mountain lakes and peaks of Mount Evans are icons of the American West, and all are part of the Denver Mountain Park system.

These iconic landscapes draw more than two million visitors to Denver and the region each year, who often travel thousands of miles to experience the Old West Hollywood style at the Buffalo Bill Museum and Grave at Lookout Mountain Park or peer across the top of Red Rocks Amphitheatre for a panoramic view of Denver. The Stars are those parks within the system that attract the largest crowds, offer the most stunning experiences, suffer the greatest impacts to their natural and cultural resources, and generate the most income. The Stars are:

- ▶ **Red Rocks Park**
- ▶ **Lookout Mountain Park with Buffalo Bill Grave and Museum**
- ▶ **Echo Lake Park Mt. Evans**
- ▶ **Summit Lake Park Mt. Evans**
- ▶ **Winter Park Ski Resort**



Echo Lake Park



Red Rocks Park

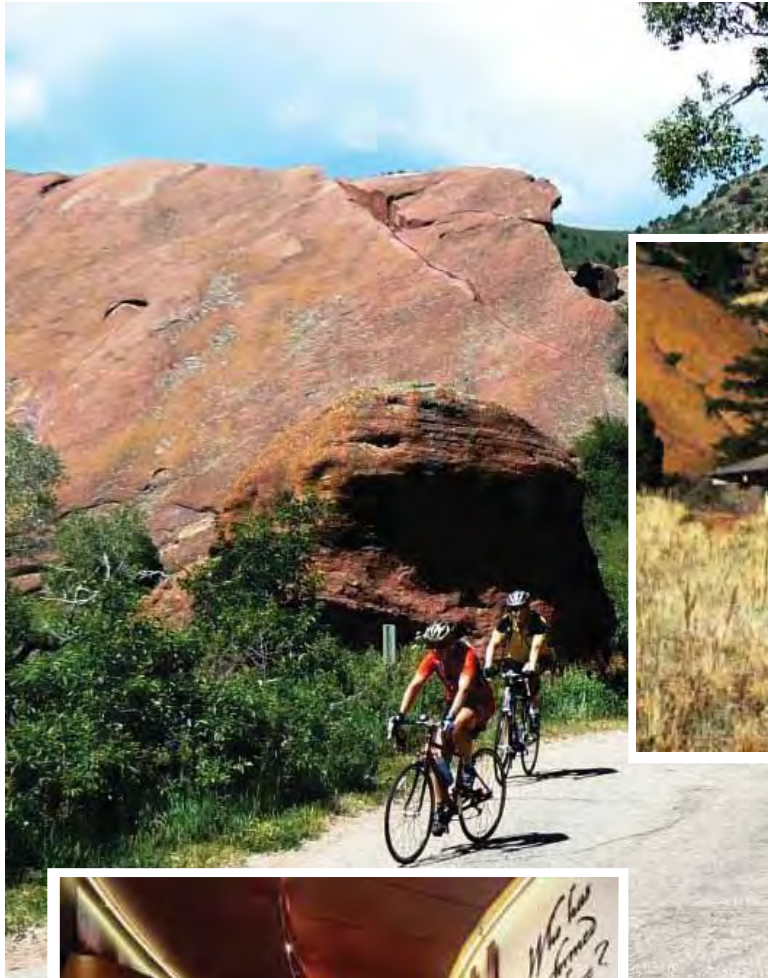


Winter Park Ski Resort



Lookout Mountain Park

RED ROCKS PARK

**Background**

Just minutes from downtown Denver, colossal rock outcrops rise dramatically from the rolling high plains prairie. These tilted red sandstone formations are Red Rocks Park, the most famous of the Denver Mountain Parks. Created eons ago by the deposition of material and the upheaval of earth, Red Rocks Park is a special place of geologic, historic, cultural, and scenic value.

*Red Rocks Park Picnic Shelter*

The park's namesake geologic formations are ancient structures composed of sediments laid down 300 million years ago. Over time rivers and inland seas flowed over the sedimentary deposits. About 65 million years ago an immense surge pushed these ancient beds of rock upward, lifting and tilting them. Torrential streams, caused by the glacial melting and heavy rains of the Pleistocene Ice Age two to three million years ago,

incised the landforms. Millions of years ago a very different kind of wildlife roamed the area—the giant dinosaurs *Apatosaurus*, *Stegosaurus*, and *Triceratops*. Later inhabitants included Native Americans, explorers, settlers, and miners.

Once known as the Garden of the Angels (and later, of the Titans), Red Rocks Park attracted the attention of Denver businessman John Brisben Walker early in the 20th century. Walker enhanced this tourist destination with a funicular railway and carriage roads and trails through the rock outcrops. In 1928 Denver bought this Park of the Red Rocks' and immediately began building miles of scenic roads and contemplating a huge amphitheatre. The scenic roads capitalized on the park's natural features, providing spectacular views.

*Visitor Center*

In 1931, Denver built the Indian Concession House, designed by W.R. Rosche in the Pueblo Revival style and now known as the Trading Post.

Although Red Rocks Park is relatively small at 804 acres, its interface between the great plains and the Rocky Mountain foothills creates a very diverse mix of biological communities, ranging from plains riparian to shrublands. In the spring and summer, the park's lower elevations support grasslands with showy flowers like Indian paintbrush and penstemon. Some of these grasslands are on the Rocky Flats Alluvium, one of Colorado's oldest land surfaces. Plains riparian vegetation dominates stream corridors and includes plains and narrowleaf cottonwood, wild plum, box elder, hawthorn, and chokecherry. Juniper and ponderosa pine are interspersed with shrublands of Gambel's oak, mountain mahogany and skunkbush.

The Park's best known feature is the world famous Red Rocks Amphitheatre that lies in the naturally formed bowl between Creation and Ship Rocks. Composed of a sweeping upward arc of wood-edged seats and built of simple indigenous materials, Red Rocks Amphitheatre is a great work of art carefully integrated with its natural setting. Red Rocks Amphitheatre is the master work of Denver architect Burnham Hoyt. Beginning in 1936 and progressing for five years, hundreds of men from the Morrison and Genesee Camps of the Civilian Conservation Corps and local Works Progress Administration men toiled to complete this masterpiece. In 2003, a new visitor center completed Burnham Hoyt's originally envisioned agora at the top of the historic amphitheatre.

More than one million people visit Red Rocks Park each year. The world-renowned acoustics and breathtaking setting of the Red Rocks Amphitheatre attract most of these patrons. Each year, dozens of concerts and shows offer a wide variety in entertainment and attract a broad mix of people. The new visitor center offers a gift shop, restaurant, meeting rooms, and exhibits that highlight the park's musical history, natural history, and its development. The Trading Post, just south of the amphitheatre, is also popular and has recently become one of Colorado's State Welcome Centers. In addition

to concerts, the Amphitheatre is heavily used by geology classes, runners zig-zagging up the steps and rows of seats, photographers, international tourists, and special events by reservation.

Picnicking and hiking were once favorite activities at Red Rocks Park. The Geologic Marker site (rehabilitated in 1996) offers a wonderful overlook with a panoramic view of Denver and the eastern plains, and a small picnic site with a simple shelter. A few trails exist in the park including the Red Rocks Trail that connects with Matthews/Winters Park and Dinosaur Ridge, and the 1.4-mile Trading Post hiking trail that traverses the park's spectacular rock formations and natural valleys. The historic scenic roads are a favorite route for bicyclists.



Challenges and Opportunities

Red Rocks Park's iconic natural setting offers an outdoor experience that is without parallel. The spectacular rock formations and world famous Amphitheatre attract local, state-wide, national and international visitors. Most visit the Amphitheatre or the Trading Post, and a few picnic and hike. The frequency of events at the Amphitheatre at times limits the use of the remainder of the park. The success of the Amphitheatre and the new Visitor Center has required a number of improvements for ADA accessibility, and new water, sewer, and drainage infrastructure. These improvements, coupled with large numbers of people traversing the landscape during Amphitheatre

RED ROCKS TREASURES

- ▶ Red Rocks Amphitheatre
- ▶ Indian Concession Building/
Red Rocks Trading Post
- ▶ Geologic Marker Site
- ▶ More than one million visitors each year
- ▶ 2 miles of trails



Red Rocks Park Trails



Red Rocks Amphitheatre

“The dramatic monolithic rock formations in Red Rocks Park are prime examples of the Pennsylvanian and Permian rocks of the Fountain formation that were upturned during the most recent mountain-building event in the Rocky Mountains. Rising to the west, most of the Denver Mountain Parks are underlain by Precambrian metamorphosed sedimentary and volcanic rocks of early and middle Proterozoic age. In the valley bottoms, Quaternary deposits of alluvial sand and gravel and colluvium (sediment deposits at the bottom of slopes) have accumulated on top of the bedrock.”

events, have brought in noxious weeds and created new social trails. Together, these are increasing erosion and impairing water quality.

Red Rocks Park is an irreplaceable historic and natural icon. Denver Parks is currently working with the National Park Service on nominating the park as a National Historic Landmark to recognize its national and international significance. This designation will recognize all of the park's significant features including the scenic roads, the Morrison Civilian Conservation Corps camp, and of course, the Red Rocks Amphitheatre.

A major challenge for Red Rocks is how to respond to the demand for increased events and activities in the Amphitheatre and Park while preserving the sensitive landscape. Unlike irrigated bluegrass parks in town, the native landscape in Red Rocks and the DMP cannot survive intense use.

Red Rocks Park Recommendations

- A. Close the social trails between the scenic roads and the Amphitheatre that are damaging the meadows, causing erosion, and generating noxious weeds.
 - ▶ Close the problematic social trails, manually obliterate the trail tread and revegetate the area with native species; add signage and carefully placed obstacles to prevent use during revegetation.
 - ▶ Work closely with Theatres & Arenas (T&A) to balance the needs of amphitheatre with protection of the park, i.e., protection of the landscape.
- B. Work with T&A to create funding opportunities for improvements and stewardship of Red Rocks and the other DMP.
 - ▶ Consider increasing the facility use fee at events to generate additional revenue for DMP improvements.
- C. Complete the National Historic Landmark Designation nomination.
 - ▶ Consider tapping into the Welcome Center audience for donations towards the park.
 - ▶ Work with T&A to explore special concerts or events that could be fund-raisers for the park itself.
- D. Work with T&A to create comprehensive Event Guidelines for permitted use of the park or for Amphitheatre activities that impact the park.



*Mt. Morrison Civilian Conservation Corps
Blacksmith Shop*

- E. Designate the City's recent acquisitions of land adjacent to Red Rocks as parkland.
- F. Expand Red Rocks Park's role as a draw for visitors seeking historic and cultural experiences by expanding its appeal to a broader audience.
 - ▶ Attract heritage tourism visitors who appreciate the cultural heritage and artistic qualities of Red Rocks.
 - ▶ Offer additional exhibits on the DMP at the Visitor Center and at the Trading Post.



Red Rocks Trading Post, early 1930s

- G. Upgrade existing infrastructure at the Trading Post according to the 1995 Red Rocks Park Master Plan.
 - ▶ Modify the vehicular circulation, parking and drop-off to improve access and to showcase the architecture of the Trading Post.
 - ▶ Rehabilitate the outdoor terrace for more consistent community use.
- H. Improve Morrison Park roads and park circulation including access points, internal roads, parking areas, and stream access.
 - ▶ Complete the rehabilitation of the native plant garden north of the Trading Post.
 - ▶ Improve the aesthetics and access to the Trading Post Trail.
 - ▶ Improve the ingress and egress and visibility from the Town of Morrison to Morrison Park.
 - ▶ Reconfigure parking areas for aesthetics and improved use.
 - ▶ Upgrade the existing picnic areas, possibly with a new shelter, trailheads, and associated parking.
 - ▶ Work with the Town of Morrison and Jefferson County on Bear Creek improvements and trail connections.
- I. Consider new uses for the Mt. Morrison Civilian Conservation Corps camp, working with the Town of Morrison. This camp is considered one of a few remaining camps in the United States with this degree of integrity and completeness.
 - ▶ Continue the program of stabilizing and restoring the CCC buildings and site.
 - ▶ Analyze the site for its best and highest use and role in heritage tourism or as a public destination.
- J. Rehabilitate and provide ongoing maintenance for the popular Trading Post Hiking Trail.
 - ▶ Repair the trail surface through the ravine near the Trading Post, and provide clear access points.
- K. Work with partners on the Mt. Vernon Creek Trail, Bear Creek Trail, and the connection to Dinosaur Ridge across Highway 93.
- L. Support the efforts of the Friends of Red Rocks in their ongoing stewardship and advocacy efforts for the park.

LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN PARK

- ▶ Buffalo Bill Museum and Grave Site
- ▶ Pahaska Tepee
- ▶ Lariat Trail
- ▶ Lookout Mountain Shelter
- ▶ Panoramic views
- ▶ More than one million visitors each year



Bicyclist climbing the Lariat Trail

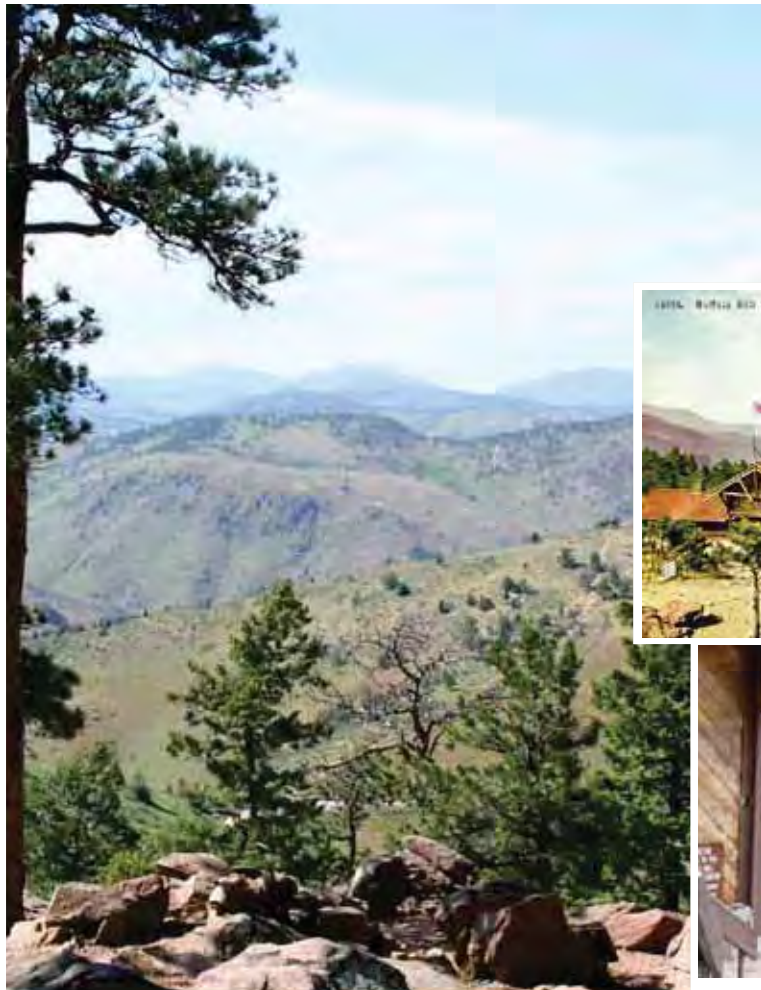


View from Lookout Mountain Park



Clear Creek from Colorow Point, Lookout Mountain Park

LOOKOUT MOUNTAIN PARK WITH THE BUFFALO BILL MUSEUM AND GRAVE

*View northwest from Lookout Mountain Park***Background**

Lookout Mountain Park has it all – a panoramic view stretching from the Continental Divide to downtown Denver, acres of wooded foothills, the grave and historic collection of western legend Buffalo Bill, mountain meadows, a distinctive stone shelter, a twisting scenic mountain road, and the Beaver Brook Trail. The area is divided into a picnic area to the west below the summit and the Buffalo Bill “campus” to the east with Pahaska Tepee and Buffalo Bill Museum and Grave.



Even before Buffalo Bill fell in love with the mountain top, Denver leaders recognized its scenic beauty and spectacular setting. In 1915, they set aside 66 acres of forested foothills and steep escarpments as a key resting spot along the Lookout Mountain Drive (later renamed the Lariat Trail). Spectacular vistas are still breathtaking along this twisting mountain boulevard, designed by Olmsted and built by Cement Bill Williams in 1913.

Stone pillars at the base in Golden mark the entry to the Denver Mountain Parks.

Since its opening in 1921, Pahaska Tepee has embodied the romantic nature of the great American West. Until the 1970s when a new museum was built, Pahaska displayed the Buffalo Bill collection organized after Cody was buried on the summit in 1917. The rustic building of native log

and stone wraps partially around the gravesite, and its low profile blends compatibly with the foothills landscape while still maintaining a grand presence. It originally housed a curio shop, soda fountain, and a formal dining room. Today a concessionaire runs a small restaurant and large gift shop year round. A large parking lot takes up the rest of the site.

A striking native stone picnic shelter, designed by architects W.E. and A.A. Fischer and built in 1913, sits west of the summit on a rolling hill overlooking the Continental Divide and surrounded by mountain meadows. The foothills landscape is primarily an open ponderosa pine forest with an understory of native and introduced grasses and native shrubs such as mountain mahogany. Steep north-facing slopes are dominated by Douglas-fir forest.

Surrounded to the north, east, and west by Jefferson County Open Space, Lookout Mountain Park plays a key role in this larger network of contiguous public lands. The park is entirely within the extensive Deadman Gulch Potential Conservation Area and has high biodiversity significance. Its grassland communities support occurrences of a rare (G2) butterfly and other diverse butterfly occurrences. Jefferson County Open Space's Nature Center and lands abut Lookout Mountain Park.

The spectacular scenery and serene setting at the summit of Lookout Mountain and its one-of-a-kind attractions draw crowds year-round. A recent analysis estimated that more than 0.5 million people visited the Grave in 2006 and around 60,000 pay the modest admission fee to visit the museum. The challenging, steep uphill climb on the Lariat Trail lures hundreds of bicyclists in all kinds of weather.

Challenges and Opportunities

Lookout Mountain Park is an international attraction that greets visitors with a massive asphalt parking lot, poorly arranged site, a run-down historic building, and a small museum that houses a spectacular collection. Barely visible from above, the museum building doesn't offer an inviting experience and it interrupts the view to and from the historically and architecturally significant Pahaska Tepee. The existing museum building, at just 7,000 square feet, is too small to accommodate the needs of the museum. Denver finds itself having to turn away important new pieces for the Buffalo Bill collection.

A new site arrangement is needed to showcase Pahaska Tepee and to rehabilitate the significant site. New uses compatible with this very important building should be explored. More public use and an



Original interior restaurant at Pahaska Tepee

entry into the Buffalo Bill gravesite are possibilities. The entire park is suffering from long-term degradation, and restoration of the landscape is needed.

Lookout Mountain and especially the Buffalo Bill Grave and Museum and Pahaska Tepee, have the potential to become one of Denver's premiere tourist attractions. Every aspect of the campus needs evaluation, from access and entry experiences to the quality of the exhibit space. Probably no other cultural institution owned by Denver attracts as diverse and passionate a crowd as Buffalo Bill. The historic and architecturally distinctive Pahaska Tepee lodge draws steady crowds year-round for its gifts and rustic restaurant but lacks accessible restrooms and is run down.

Its status as a totally city-run museum, without a fund-raising Board, also limits the Buffalo Bill Museum's ability to grow. Building the capacity to enhance this park and its internationally known facilities and museum collection are a priority of this Master Plan. It is unmatched in the American West.

Lookout Mountain Park Recommendations

- A. Protect and restore the significant natural landscape of Lookout Mountain Park.
 - ▶ Develop site-appropriate measures to protect significant natural resources and habitat from concentrated public use areas. Identify areas that are appropriate for public use and areas that should be protected.



Pahaska Tepee deck

- ▶ Consider prioritizing the closing of littered and trampled picnic areas for revegetation.
 - ▶ Remove diseased or dying trees along the Lariat Trail.
 - ▶ Create a management plan for the park that protects the natural resources within the park and that is compatible with the best management practices on the adjacent open space parcels.
- B. Use conservation easements, trail easements and acquisition to protect Lookout Mountain Park and its larger open space network.
 - ▶ Work with adjacent property owners to acquire land or to obtain conservation easements for those properties that benefit the park.
 - C. Recognize the iconic role that Lookout Mountain Park plays within the Mountain Park system and comprehensively plan for its next 100 years.
 - ▶ Work with a Museum Advisory Committee to develop a vision for the Grave and Museum for the next 100 years.
 - ▶ Undertake a comprehensive rehabilitation of the physical setting of the Buffalo Bill Grave and Museum and Pahaska Tepee, to upgrade its appearance and better accommodate visitors.
 - ▶ Create a visitor experience and identity that begins before one arrives at the entry drive and that continues through a visit to the Grave and Museum.
 - ▶ Rehabilitate Pahaska Tepee and evaluate potential other uses for the building.
 - ▶ Consider building a new museum building that meets the needs of the Museum including archival storage, exhibit space, office space, meeting space, and gift shop.
 - ▶ Create an authentic and high quality experience that attracts visitors who will care for the park's natural and historic resources.
 - ▶ Build the organizational capacity to create and sustain a new museum and campus through a new private-public governance model and fund-raising Board of Directors.



Lookout Mountain Park

- D. Develop a comprehensive site master plan for Lookout Mountain Park that accommodates all users and both the picnic site and the Grave and Museum site. Provide improved parking and picnic sites, restrooms, and an experiential park trail to connect the two sites.
 - ▶ Improve vehicular ingress and egress from the Lariat Trail.
 - ▶ Rehabilitate the Lookout Mountain Shelter and meadows for continued use as a picnic site. Reconfigure the parking area for aesthetics and improved use.
- E. Create a wayfinding system to clearly indicate designated trails, trailheads, and associated parking.
 - ▶ Identify, through signage and maps, designated trails in the parks, while also closing, obliterating, and revegetating social trails.
 - ▶ Identify and close problematic social trails including:
 - ▶ between picnic area and Buffalo Bill complex parking lot,
 - ▶ between Buffalo Bill entrance and grave site, and
 - ▶ between Buffalo Bill parking lot and Wildcat Point.

ECHO LAKE PARK



Echo Lake Park - 2007 visitors

“The United States Forestry Service has made a survey for a twenty-seven mile skyline drive to the summit of Mount Evans, 14,260 feet in elevation. In its rugged grandeur this great peak rivals Longs Peak in the Rocky Mountain National Park.”

—Denver’s Mountain Parks. What The City Has Done in Five Years to Bring Wilderness Charm to the Masses, Denver Municipal Facts, April 1918.

Background

When Denver began building the Squaw Pass Road in 1918, they envisioned a ‘skyline drive to the summit of Mount Evans.’ The City also acquired Echo and Summit Lakes in the hope that this ‘scenic wonderland without peer’ would become the gateway to a new national park that the City was proposing to Congress. The ‘Denver National Park’ was never designated, but the move forged a long-term relationship between Denver and the United States Forest Service to build the highway to the peak.



The 616-acre Echo Lake Park has a natural lake at 10,600 feet in the valley at the base of Goliath Peak surrounded by a thick spruce-fir forest. A steep portion of the park lies across Highway 103.

Echo Lake is the only Mountain Park within the subalpine zone. Its eastern edges are characterized by a large complex of subalpine wetland and

shrub riparian vegetation. Portions of this wetland may be a 10,000-year-old fen—a sensitive and irreplaceable resource. The lake is part of the Echo Lake Potential Conservation Area and has high biodiversity significance for its rare and globally vulnerable subalpine plants, including reflected moonwort, Mingan’s moonwort, and western moonwort.



Echo Lake Lodge gift shop

The Municipal Lodge at Echo Lake, a log building completed in 1927, sits majestically on the eastern shore of the lake overlooking a spectacular subalpine setting. Echo Lake Lodge was designed for visiting overnight guests, complete with sleeping rooms, a fireplace lounge, and dining room. Today, the lodge serves as a seasonal gift shop and restaurant with lodging only for the concessionaire and employees.

The Echo Lake Shelter, a granite rubble stone structure, was built in 1924 to face the lake and future lodge. To the north of the shelter is the Echo Lake Concession Stand of similar construction built in 1924 to rent skates and sell food. Areas not trampled by continued use also have an understory of shrubs such as willow thickets, shrubby cinquefoil, red-berried elder, bush honeysuckle, and thimbleberry.

Echo Lake Park attracts a broad cultural cross-section of visitors picnicking, fishing, sightseeing, walking, and hiking. An accessible trail loops around Echo Lake and connects to the lodge and its parking lot. Trails from the parking lot and back side of the lake lead to backcountry access into the Chicago Lakes area with a route up Mount Evans.

Challenges and Opportunities

Echo Lake's natural and cultural resources are threatened by use and long-deferred improvements. With the lodge, lake and subalpine setting within an hour of Denver, Echo Lake is one of the most popular Mountain Parks. However, the heavy, concentrated use at the picnic sites and the lake edge degrades the natural resources and diminishes the visitor experience. The accessible loop around the lake shares the road at this point. Unclear and inadequate parking along the lake also contributes to the problem.

Rehabilitation of its historic features, including picnic sites, stone shelters, roads, and parking areas is key to maintaining the authentic rustic setting that draws so many international visitors and local Denverites. Upgrading Echo Lake Lodge could include feasibility studies to look at expanded seasons and uses. The Mountain Parks have few ADA accessible recreational experiences, and Echo Lake Park offers an environment around the Lake in the lower portions of the park to expand these types of experiences. Visitors of all abilities welcome the stop to eat and shop in the timeless character of the Lodge. Additional picnic areas and trails also may be needed to accommodate growing crowds. To avoid the encroaching private development that has impacted other Mountain Parks, collaboration with the United States Forest Service to acquire or safeguard a buffer around the park is important.



Echo Lake



Echo Lake Lodge, historic interior

ECHO LAKE

- ▶ 616 acres
- ▶ Elevation -10,600 feet
- ▶ Significant for occurrences of rare and globally vulnerable subalpine plants: reflected moonwort, Mingan's moonwort, and western moonwort.

*Echo Lake Lodge**Echo Lake*



Subalpine wetlands at Echo Lake

ECHO LAKE RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. Protect and restore Echo Lake by protecting its significant vegetation including its subalpine riparian vegetation and wetlands, particularly the fen on its eastern edge.
 - ▶ Develop site-appropriate measures to protect wetland riparian habitat from concentrated public use areas. Identify areas that are appropriate for public use and areas that should be protected.
 - ▶ Designate areas where access to the lake is appropriate, recognizing that many visitors enjoy physical access to water.
 - ▶ Develop designated picnic sites and points of access to Echo Lake.

- B. Rehabilitate Echo Lake Park's historic stone structures, historic picnic sites, and connections to Echo Lake and the Chicago Basin.
 - ▶ Continue implementing the 2001 DMP District-wide Needs Assessment recommendations in upgrading historic facilities for recreation use.



Echo Lake Shelter

- C. Use conservation easements, trail easements and acquisition to protect Echo Lake Park.
 - ▶ Work with adjacent property owners to acquire land or obtain conservation easements for those properties that benefit Echo Lake Park. These parcels include an inholding between Mountain Parks land and USFS land.
- D. Rehabilitate Echo Lake Lodge to protect its architectural and historical character, upgrade its appearance, and better accommodate its visitors.
 - ▶ Study the feasibility of a new recreation role for the Lodge, including winterization for expanded seasons, overnight accommodations, etc.
- E. Upgrade Echo Lake Park's physical infrastructure, including vehicular access, picnicking, and trails into and around the Echo Lake picnic site.
 - ▶ Undertake a comprehensive rehabilitation of the exterior setting of the Echo Lake Lodge including its connection to Echo Lake.
 - ▶ Rehabilitate Echo Lake Lodge highlighting its historical and architectural significance.
 - ▶ Create a stronger marketing program.
 - ▶ Develop a comprehensive site master plan for Echo Lake Park to address vehicular ingress and egress, parking along Highway 103, picnicking, hiking, trail access, and lake access.
 - ▶ Undertake a comprehensive rehabilitation of the entire picnic site through revegetation measures including restoring native vegetation, and by defining clear circulation routes.
 - ▶ Reconfigure parking areas for aesthetics and improved use.
- F. Develop a new hiking only trail in Echo Lake Park on the east side of Highway 103.
 - ▶ Connect to the Echo Lake picnic site and improve Highway 103 to provide a safe pedestrian crossing between the trail and the picnic site.



Summit Lake

SUMMIT LAKE PARK



Summit Lake Shelter

“Mount Evans is the natural western limit of the Denver system of Mountain Parks and boulevards, and...an automobile drive will be completed to its summit—an unusual achievement. This drive will extend Westward from...Denver, and, by an easy climb, it will rise to a point overlooking a chain of mountain lakes 14,000 feet above sea level. Mount Evans is also known as the sentinel of Denver’s Mountain Parks.”

—Denver and Her Mountain Parks, circa 1918-20

Background

From east to west, Denver’s Mountain Park system showcases the region’s geologic history and includes all of the Colorado major life zones. At 12,830 feet in elevation, Summit Lake Park is the highest of the Mountain Parks and one of the most scenic and unique. It is nestled at the bottom of a high alpine cirque, located about one half mile north and 1,300 feet below the summit of Mount Evans, and is the only Denver Mountain Park in the alpine zone.



King's Crown

Situated above timberline, Summit Lake Park supports a rare array of alpine vegetation that survives the extreme conditions and short growing season. Some plants are only found here and within the Arctic Circle. Rocky soils are interspersed with alpine tundra—a diverse mix of low-lying grasses, perennial sedges, wildflowers, and mosses.

Common and noticeable wildlife species at the park are the yellow-bellied marmot, pika, and mountain goat.

Other common mammals include bighorn sheep, several species of vole, and weasel. Common bird species include white-tailed ptarmigan, water pipit, and rosy finch.

Summit Lake Park is only accessible from late spring until early autumn along the Mount Evans Road that begins at Echo Lake Lodge. The park is entirely surrounded by Arapaho National Forest lands. Except for the Mount Evans Road corridor, these lands are designated as Mount Evans Wilderness. Visitors first pass through a USFS entry station, and anyone planning to stop along the road, at Summit Lake or at Mount Evans Summit, pays a fee to the USFS. Denver receives a share of those fees for Summit Lake improvements and operations.

SUMMIT LAKE

- ▶ 162 acres
- ▶ 12,830 feet in elevation
- ▶ On Mount Evans Road
- ▶ Bighorn Sheep, Mountain Goats and White-tailed Ptarmigan



Alpine tundra at Summit Lake



Mountain goats near Summit Lake

“One of the most scenic. . .trips is that to Squaw Pass, elevation 9,800 feet. It is approximately ten and one-half miles from Bergen Park by road. Where it ends, the Pike National Forest commences. The United States Forest Service will continue this road three miles westward during the summer. Its destination is Echo Lake. . . This will be the first link in the Mount Evans drive. From Squaw Pass a steep trail leads up Squaw Mountain to Window Ledge from which the plains, Pikes Peak and the entire Mount Evans group is visible. Experienced travelers class it as the most beautiful viewpoint in the Mountain Parks system.”

—The Mountain Parks, By Car and Camera. Denver Municipal Facts, April & May, 1920.

The most striking feature of the park is Summit Lake and its alpine wetlands. A small stone structure sits in a gradually sloping alpine meadow on the lake's eastern edge, offering a welcome refuge from what can be wild, windy weather. The stone rubble shelter was built in 1926, two years after Denver acquired the 160 acres surrounding the lake. The rugged wildness of Mount Evans and the Chicago Lakes Basin makes it popular for wilderness hiking opportunities. Summit Lake is connected to Echo Lake by a hiking trail that follows the Chicago Lakes Basin, located primarily in the Arapaho National Forest.

Challenges and Opportunities

Summit Lake Park protects some of most important natural resources and habitat within the DMP system and is designated a National Natural Landmark. Nestled in the Arapaho Forest, Summit Lake offers a remote natural experience for its visitors.

The goal is to preserve this unique experience for future generations through resource protection and through the development of appropriate site improvements that allow visitors reasonable access. Site improvements that direct visitors to the shelter and restrooms and along established trails are needed to protect the lake and fragile landscape. Improvements should be of the highest quality, reaffirming the DMP rustic naturalistic design style, especially subordinating built elements to nature, the views, and topography. Carefully siting parking, trails, restrooms, and other visitor facilities is key in protecting Summit Lake for the future.

Summit Lake Park Recommendations

- A. Protect Summit Lake and its alpine wetlands and rocky talus.
 - ▶ Develop site-appropriate measures to protect the alpine wetlands around Summit Lake by limiting public access.
 - ▶ Clearly identify areas that are appropriate for public use and areas that should be protected. Recognizing that many visitors enjoy physical access to water, habitat protection efforts should include designated areas where access to the lakeshore is appropriate.
- B. Identify and close problematic social trails that damage wetland or alpine tundra.
 - ▶ Identify, through signage and maps, designated trails in the park, while also closing, obliterating, and revegetating social trails.
 - ▶ Manually obliterate the trail tread and revegetate the area with native species; add signage and carefully placed obstacles to prevent use during revegetation.
- C. Improve Visitor Access and Experience
 - ▶ Develop a comprehensive site master plan for Summit Lake Park to address vehicular egress and ingress, as well as hiking, trail access, and lake access.
 - ▶ Reconfigure the parking area for aesthetics and improved use.
 - ▶ Add interpretive materials and accessible amenities in the park, including access to the Chicago Basin overlook.



Winter Park

WINTER PARK SKI RESORT

*Denver's winter playground***Background**

As a world-class ski resort attracting visitors from around the world, Winter Park Ski Resort is probably the most unusual Denver Mountain Park. Set at the base of the Continental Divide in the Fraser Valley in Grand County, Winter Park has a vast terrain across three interconnected mountains and an alpine bowl. The ski area offers more than 134 designated runs on 2,886 acres, and runs the important National Sports Center for the Disabled. As with all the mountain parks, Winter Park Ski Resort offers close access to Denver.

Although not a designated park, Winter Park Ski Resort base is on city-owned land purchased by Denver in 1939-1940. Parks Manager George Cranmer envisioned the Winter Park area offering a full spectrum of winter activities within the DMP system. For years, the West Portal of the Moffat Tunnel had been a popular destination for early skiing enthusiasts. Cranmer negotiated a Special Use Permit with the USFS for 6,400 acres at the Portal in order to build new trails and lifts. Denver traded City land near Parshall for another 88.9 acres adjacent to the permitted area for a base.

Working with the Arlberg Club and the Colorado Mountain Club, Cranmer successfully raised the funds and gathered enough volunteers to clear slopes and build a tow. More than 10,000 people attended its grand opening on January 28, 1940. Thousands of kids and families have ridden the Winter Park Ski Train from Union Depot in downtown Denver to the West Portal. In the past two decades, considerable development at the base has added new hotels and summer attractions, such as golf and alpine slides.

The Winter Park Ski Association is Denver's nonprofit arm that oversees Winter Park. Today Winter Park Ski Resort is managed through a long-term lease (through 2078) between the City & County of Denver and IntraWest Corporation. This partnership allows IntraWest

to operate, invest in, and develop the city-owned ski resort and provides Parks and Recreation with more than \$2 million annually in payments to Parks and Recreation. Through the Winter Park Trust Fund, these dollars are spent on capital park and recreation projects across the city including approximately \$200,000 a year for Mountain Parks improvements. As of 2012, this amount is expected to increase, as Denver will receive an annual payment equal to \$2 million plus three percent of gross revenue over \$33 million subject to cash flow.

In addition to funding, the partnership between Denver and Winter Park extends to programs such as Winter Park's Youth Ski Club and the ski area's support of Denver's Learn to Ski Program. In 2007, Winter Park donated 1000 lift tickets to Denver, who made them available to Parks and Recreation and local nonprofit groups to allow children the opportunity to pursue these outdoor sports. Winter Park also is home to the U.S. National Sports Center for the Disabled and known for its special programs on the slopes. Although Winter Park is best known for its winter sports, it also offers a varied program of summer activities including chair lift rides, rock climbing (on walls), an alpine slide, and miniature golf.

Challenges and Opportunities

Winter Park and its special programs have a unique, fee and revenue based niche in the DMP system and importance to the city and region as a whole. The resort also provides a funding source that could be used to support the Mountain Park system directly. Most notably, Winter Park offers the opportunity to expand the palette of activities that Denver offers to its youth in both the winter and the summer.

There is the opportunity to strengthen the partnership between Winter Park and Denver to provide even more winter sports opportunities and to add new programs through the City's Recreation Program. Garnering a greater share of the City's yearly CIP funds (which include the Winter Park funds) for DMP is a major recommendation in this Plan and symbolically important, because one major source comes from what was planned as the DMP winter playland.

Winter Park Recommendations

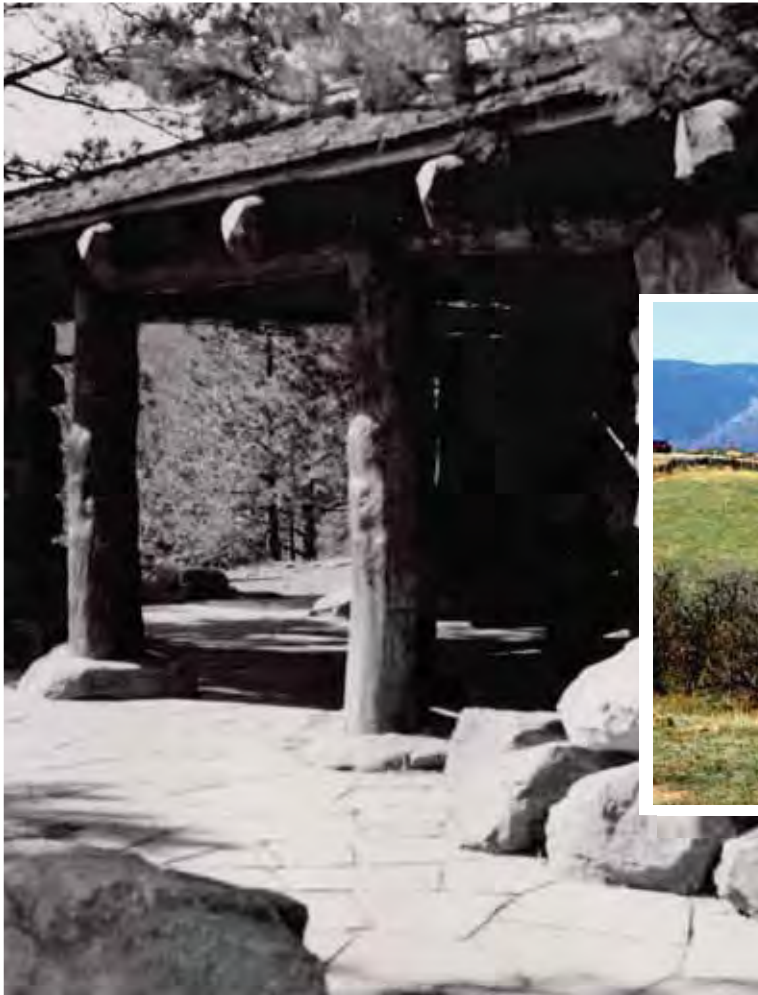
- A. Research and implement potential new revenues from Winter Park to support the Denver Mountain Park system.
 - ▶ Collaborate with Winter Park on potential voluntary programs, such as personal contributions added to lift tickets, that could generate additional funds for the DMP system.
 - ▶ Dedicate any increases resulting from the 2012 shift in revenue formula to Mountain Parks improvements.



View of ski runs at Winter Park

- B. Expand programs and partnerships between Denver and Winter Park Ski Resort to benefit Denver youth.
 - ▶ Expand donations from Winter Park, such as the ski ticket donation, to summer-time activities to encourage nonprofits and families to experience Winter Park year-round.
 - ▶ Expand winter and summer programs offered by Denver to provide more opportunities for youth, seniors and families to participate in outdoor activities.

4.B.II THE HEARTS

*Dedisse Park Stone Shelter*

The Hearts of the Denver Mountain Parks system are large special parks that exhibit their own individualistic characteristics and provide unique settings with special experiences.

The Hearts are the core of the Mountain Park system. Each Heart has its own distinct natural setting, such as the forested hillsides and open meadows of Genesee Park and the high plains prairie of Daniels Park where bison related to the Yellowstone herds of the late 19th century still graze.

*Daniels Park*

Each Heart offers a distinct recreational experience, from the large group picnic sites in secluded Newton Park to a ropes course in Genesee Park.

Beautiful, rustic buildings and shelters are integral to each of the Hearts, such

as the remarkable rustic shelter at Dedisse Park, built by the Civilian Conservation Corps overlooking Evergreen Lake.

The Hearts are:

Genesee Park (and Catherine Craig)

Dedisse Park

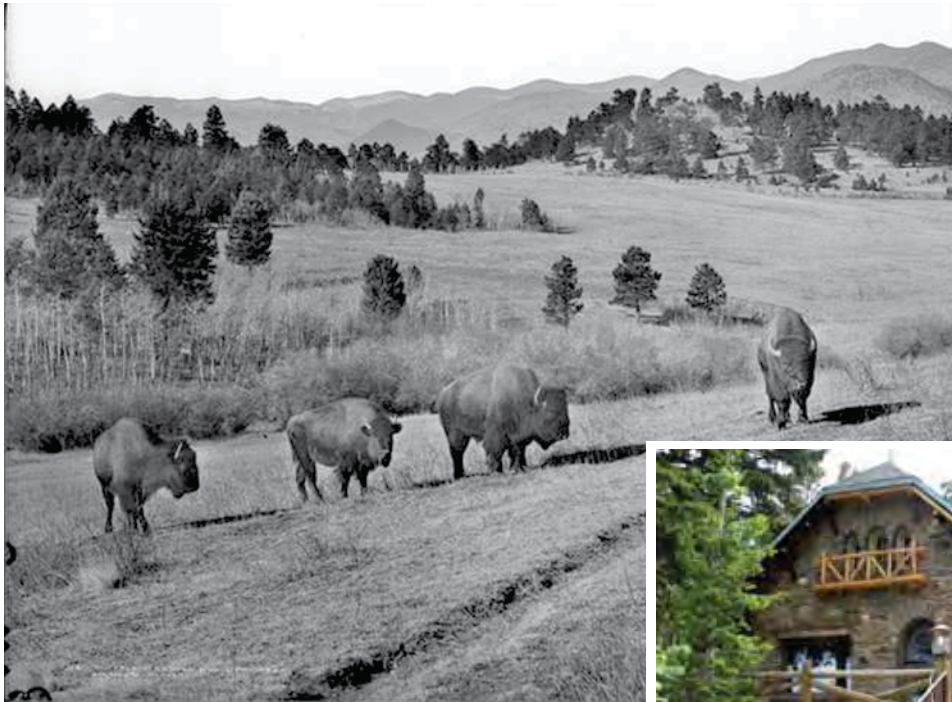
Newton Park

Daniels Park



View of Centennial Cone from Lookout Mountain Park

GENESEE PARK

*Bison in Genesee Park**Chief Hosa Lodge*

“A letter received by Fred C. Steinhauer, Superintendent of Parks, from the Secretary of the Interior, Washington D.C. notifies him of the transfer from the Yellowstone National Park, for Genesee Mountain Park of 25 elk, also 25 elk for parks across the state. Besides this allotment of 50 elk, the Denver City Park will receive six elk and two male buffalo, making a total of 16 elk and 17 buffalo in City Park.”

—Elk for Mountain Park, Denver Municipal Facts.

Background

The formal opening of the Mountain Parks by the Denver Park Commission on August 27, 1913, included a visit to Genesee Mountain Park, where “an unobstructed view of mountain and plain” was had by all after a hour hike to the top of Genesee Mountain. This outing and the inclusion of Genesee Park in the ceremony was a sweet moment, because it had been the campaign to save Genesee Mountain that catalyzed the first acquisitions for the Mountain Park system. Denver began efforts to purchase most of the current Genesee Park as its first Mountain Park in 1912, in collaboration with a group of Denver businessmen, saving the pine forest from becoming a lumber source for a sawmill.

At 2,413 acres, Genesee Park is the largest Mountain Park, offering the greatest diversity of experiences in the system. Families can hold a reunion and picnic at the large Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) historic shelter and picnic area near the summit. Visitors can RV- or tent-camp overnight at Chief Hosa Campground. Kids can camp overnight in tents for the first time in their lives

and take home a new sleeping bag through the Wonderful Outdoor World (WOW) program. Hikers can forget the city is nearby on the rugged, historic Beaver Brook Trail.

At Chief Hosa Lodge, visitors can experience a major life event such as a wedding or bar mitzvah. Travelers can stop and see the bison herd along I-70, or venture to the top of Genesee Mountain where the panoramic view connecting mountain and plains is spectacular. Today, the bison herd of about 25 head is a well-known and highly appreciated landmark along Interstate 70.

TRAILS

Stapleton Drive Trailhead for three popular hiking trails: the Beaver Brook Trail, the Braille Trail, and the Chavez Trail.

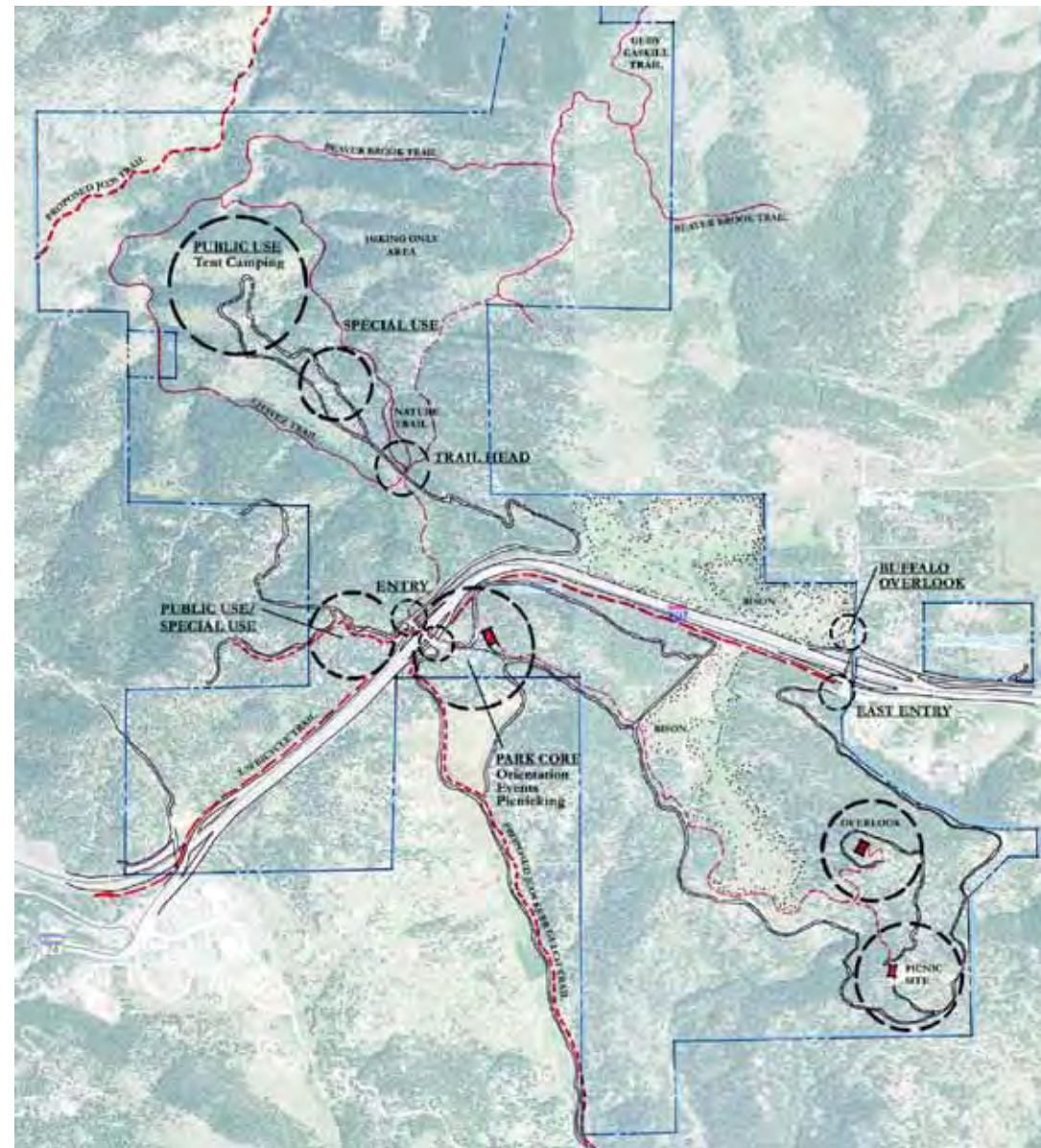
The Braille Trail is 6/10ths of a mile with interpretive signs in Braille and a waist-high guide wire designed for blind hikers.

The Beaver Brook Trail is an 8.75 mile long moderately difficult primitive hiking trail traversing the south slope of Clear Creek, from Genesee Park to Windy Saddle on Lookout Mountain.

The 2-mile-long Chavez Trail forms a 3.5 mile loop connecting with the Beaver Brook Trail.

LEGEND:

	ROAD
	EXISTING TRAIL - MULTI-USE
	EXISTING TRAIL - HIKE ONLY
	PROPOSED TRAIL - M-USE
	PROPOSED TRAIL - HIKE ONLY



Genesee Park Concepts for Study



Genesee Stone Shelter, built by the Civilian Conservation Corps

Genesee Park has an undulating character of rolling hillsides, mountain valleys, thick pine forests, and open grassy glades. Its topography reaches to 8,284 feet at the summit of Genesee Mountain, extends to 7,988 feet at a prominent point on the Park's north side, and meets Clear Creek Canyon at the Park's lowest point at 6,280 feet. Stands of old growth ponderosa that provide important habitat for wildlife and contribute to overall forest diversity are found in Genesee Park.

Challenges and Opportunities

Genesee Park is the gateway to the Denver Mountain Parks system. Its size and location close to the center of the system, its proximity to Denver, and its direct access to Interstate I-70 give Genesee Park a special prominence. Its role as an important conservation area and its broad offering of outdoor experiences for children and families make Genesee Park a center of activity for the Mountain Parks.

Because of its potential, Genesee Park warrants intensive program and site planning. For example, Chief Hosa Lodge has had many lives, from a rest stop with refreshments to wartime museum to today's use as a successful event center. The site also offers a spectacular orientation to the Mountain Parks where visitors could find information on trails and activities, get a cold beverage, or attend a special event. Camping, too, has always been a part of the Genesee experience, with the established tent and RV site adjacent to the lodge, the more informal campground with restrooms on the north side, and DPR tent camping on Stapleton Drive.

With the desire to encourage more Denver families and kids to have a first time mountain and camping experience, the existing campus and facilities need to be assessed to meet contemporary and future needs. For example, the immediacy of the Chief Hosa Campground with RVs detracts from the scenic qualities and beauty of the lodge yet provides a niche for wedding camping. The Challenge Course itself could benefit from associated facilities, such as Chief Hosa Lodge. The potential exists for new facilities and camping areas, for a new closer role between Katherine Craig and Genesee Park, and expansion or relocation of the Challenge Course.

BEAVER BROOK TRAIL

Genesee Park boasts “the first nature trail in Colorado,” the Beaver Brook Trail built in 1917.

In 1931, landscape architect M. Walter Pesman, horticulturist George W. Kelly, and naturalist Robert Niedrach reworked the Beaver Brook Trail, which was originally the Chimney Gulch trail, into an educational experience in the outdoors.

Pesman, who was a founder of the Denver Botanic Gardens, brought outdoor education to the Mountain Parks by improving the trail and adding “green and orange” labels describing the names and characteristics of trees and shrubs, and telling stories of the area’s history.

Genesee Park is ready for vision. The setting is in need of a facelift to improve its prominence and public role. New parking areas sensitively integrated with the natural setting, trail waysides and kiosks, and new trails can connect all of Genesee Park together. When no longer fenced for elk, the north slopes could provide more internal trails. The current informal pull-off to view the bison on Mt. Vernon Road could become a safer, pleasant opportunity to interpret the herd to the public.

Three new regional trails are proposed to connect Genesee Park with the larger regional open space system. One is the new multiple use trail, that will parallel I-70 on park property from the Park’s east entry to its western boundary. This link will allow bicyclists to ride a 60 km route from Golden to Bakerville without entering the highway. The other two regional trails are both multiple use trails that will provide key connections with Jefferson County Open Space’s regional trail system. One will connect to Kerr Gulch Road and extend through Genesee Park for a short distance. A second small, but equally important, connection is a multiple use trail on the Park’s northwestern edge that will provide a connection to the future Clear Creek regional trail.

Finally, to continue as a conservation area for both wildlife and natural areas, additional efforts are needed to protect the Park’s natural resources. The elk herd, which is descended from the original Yellowstone Park herd of 1913, is no longer exposed to the over-hunting that a century ago nearly drove the species to extinction. Elk are now one of the most common and prolific mammals in Colorado. A resident wild elk herd has also established itself throughout the mountain parks foothills environment, and the elk enclosure now creates a significant barrier for many wildlife species including wild elk, deer, mountain lion, and bears.

Genesee Park Recommendations

- A. Close the social trails within the Park that are damaging the hillside and causing erosion.
 - ▶ Close the problematic social trails, manually obliterate the trail tread and revegetate the area with native species; add signage and carefully placed obstacles to prevent use during revegetation.
 - ▶ Sell the elk, close the elk enclosure, and eliminate or modify fencing to allow for greater movement of wildlife and potential new internal trails.
- B. Protect the bison herd and its enclosure as important characteristics of Genesee Park.
- C. Define Genesee Park as the outdoor recreation and conservation hub of the Denver Mountain Parks system.
 - ▶ Complete a recreation, event, and facility plan for Genesee Park, including the role of Katherine Craig. Assess the following suggestions:
 - 1) Continue building partnerships with other youth providers to explore options for youth programs and facilities.
 - 2) Discuss improvements and future uses of Katherine Craig, currently under lease to the Colorado Girl Scouts.

- ▶ Better identify Genesee Park as a destination from I-70.
 - ▶ Provide clear access and upgrade facilities in the northern portion of the Genesee Park as a hiking hub.
- D. Develop a scenic overlook on Mount Vernon Road to safely view the bison herd and the spectacular view.
- ▶ Provide parking, walks, and interpretive signage. Develop the site to minimize intrusions on views, adjacent neighbors, and on the bison herd.
 - ▶ Provide access to the bison enclosure for DMP staff.
- E. Upgrade Genesee Park's physical infrastructure to accommodate picnicking and hiking.
- ▶ Upgrade existing park facilities including parking, picnic areas, and restrooms.
- F. Develop a new regional multi-use trail along the I-70 corridor within Genesee Park for bicycling, hiking, and equestrian use.
- ▶ Connect the Chief Hosa area with the new Buffalo Herd Overlook site.
 - ▶ Connect to the regional bicycle trail from downtown Denver to Clear Creek County.
- G. Connect to the regional trail system at Chief Hosa Lodge.
- ▶ Connect to the Jefferson County Open Space regional trail on Kerr Gulch Road.
- H. Create a hiking hub at Genesee Park by adding hiking only trails within the park.
- ▶ Develop a north-south trail to connect Chief Hosa Lodge with the northern portion of the park, particularly the northern parking area.

GENESEE PARK HISTORY

Genesee Park includes Stapleton Drive and Rainbow Hill park areas, the Chief Hosa Lodge and Campground, the Patrick House, and a stone shelter constructed in 1939 by the Civilian Conservation Corps. The Patrick House was a toll station in the park for collecting tolls from teams and stagecoaches at the onset of the gold rush. The Daughters of the American Revolution celebrate an annual, commemorative flag-raising on Flag Day at the summit of Genesee Mountain.



Flag Day at Genesee Mountain, 2008



Evergreen Lake in Dedisse Park

DEDISSE PARK

*Dedisse Park*

“At the junction with the Bear Creek road lies Dedisse Park, acquired by the city this year. A dam is to be thrown across Bear Creek at the lower end of this park and a sixty-five acre lake created where Denver’s residents and visitors may enjoy trout fishing, boating and camping.”

—*The Mountain Parks*, Denver Municipal Facts, April & May 1920

Background

In 1919, when Evergreen was already a favorite summer retreat, the City & County of Denver acquired the ranchlands of Dedisse Ranch as a site for Evergreen Lake. The city had begun this process in 1916 through a condemnation suit to acquire the ranch. These lands included the Bear Creek valley and spectacular views to the west towards Elephant Butte, Hicks Mountain, and Bergen Peak. These three peaks are protected as Denver Mountain Park Conservation/Wilderness areas.



The completion of the Bear Creek road in 1915 preceded the acquisition and laid the foundation for building park facilities.

By 1925, Denver had transformed the western valley of Dedisse Ranch into the 18-hole Evergreen Golf Course, complete with its Keys on the Greens clubhouse. By 1928, the eastern valley was flooded and the construction of the dam, the 65-acre Evergreen Lake, and the road along the lake were completed. The beauty of the lake

with its perfect reflection of the surrounding mountains was touted as enriching quaint downtown Evergreen.

Dedisse Park’s 420 acres are bisected by Upper Bear Creek road. Most of the acreage consists of forested ridges and open meadows in the foothills vegetation and habitat zone. The park is rich in ecological diversity and is dominated by mixed ponderosa pine forests with open grassy clearings and shrublands on south-facing slopes. During the 1930s, the area north of Upper Bear Creek Road was developed into a park by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Three picnicking sites and a stone and timber shelter were created. The sensitive siting of roads, structures, and overlooks was in keeping with the National Park Service’s rustic naturalistic design ethic.

The CCC stone shelter and overlook dominates the Park's most interesting and breathtaking setting. The log and stone shelter is beautifully integrated into the hillside overlooking Evergreen Lake. Today, the shelter site is regularly used by groups through Denver's reservation system.

Dedisse Park offers a broad mix of outdoor activities suited to all types of weather. Evergreen Park and Recreation (EPRD) built and manages the Lake House. The Evergreen Nature Center is a recent nonprofit effort providing programs and displays during the summer in the historic Warming House. Warmth and skates are still available during the winter. A concessionaire manages the Denver-owned 18-hole golf course and restaurant.

In the northern section of the park, permitted and nonpermitted picnic sites and twisting mountain roads offer opportunities to explore Dedisse Park's ecological diversity and solitude. Jefferson County Open Space's Pioneer Trail extends through the park connecting to the Evergreen community and looping around Evergreen Lake. The Dedisse Trail weaves through the western and northern portions of the Park, connecting to multiple use trails in Jefferson County's Alderfer-Three Sisters Park.

Challenges and Opportunities

Dedisse Park has some of the best designed and highest quality structures, roadwork, and woods and meadows. The Colorado State Forest Service has thinned and restored the ponderosa pine woodlands in Dedisse to the original wide forest spacing and interpreted that work through signage. It is a model Denver Mountain Park. At the same time, it is connected to wider, regional amenities through partnerships with EPRD and Jefferson County Open Space. As Evergreen grows, the popularity and programming of large events at the lake increases and trail use also grows, impacting the park. Preserving the natural and cultural resources in the face of increasing use, traffic, and growth is the major challenge at Dedisse. It is an issue facing both Denver Mountain Parks and EPRD.



Picnicking in Dedisse Park



Skaters on Evergreen Lake in Dedisse Park

Dedisse Park Recommendations

- A. Work with other agencies and organizations to restore Bear Creek. Bear Creek is a critical, diverse stream corridor that provides water to adjacent communities, protects significant aquatic and riparian habitat, and offers a unique scenic resource.
 - ▶ Pursue a multiple agency approach that includes local, state and federal agencies as well as other interested stakeholders.
- B. Close the social trails adjacent to the picnic sites that are damaging hillsides and causing erosion.
 - ▶ Close the problematic social trails, manually obliterate the trail tread and revegetate the area with native species; add signage and carefully placed obstacles to prevent use during revegetation.
 - ▶ Close the informal trail access point along Upper Bear Creek Road, opposite the Golf Course Clubhouse.
 - ▶ Investigate potential new picnic areas west of the lake to decrease informal, damaging picnic areas.
- C. Work with EPRD to coordinate the impact of large events on Dedisse Park and the Evergreen area surrounding the lake.
- D. Use conservation easements, trail easements, and acquisition to protect the parks.
 - ▶ Work with property owners with inholdings in Dedisse Park to acquire land or to obtain conservation easements.
- E. Rehabilitate the CCC designed and built parking and picnic sites and add restrooms.
 - ▶ Develop a comprehensive site master plan for the northern section of Dedisse Park.
 - ▶ Provide a hiking-only trail within the northern section of the park to connect the three picnic sites.
 - ▶ Provide for safe vehicular ingress and egress from Evergreen Parkway.
- F. Rehabilitate the Overlook Shelter and adjacent grassy meadows for continued use as a permitted picnic site.
 - ▶ Continue implementing the 2001 DMP District-wide Needs Assessment recommendations in upgrading historic facilities for recreation use.
- G. Work with the Evergreen Nature Center and EPRD to pursue joint recreation and environmental programming opportunities in Dedisse and at the lake.
- H. Continue efforts to make the Evergreen Golf Course more environmentally and financially sound.



Newton Park

NEWTON PARK

*Newton Park***Background**

Newton Park was the last park to join the DMP system. James Newton, the father of Luigi Newton (Denver mayor from 1945 to 1951), donated the park to the City through two transactions, one in 1939 and the other in 1962. It originally was the family ranch. Located 32 miles from downtown Denver on Foxton Road, just south of U.S. 285, Newton Park encompasses 424 acres in Jefferson County. It is the only Mountain Park that has controlled access and is available only by reservation.

Newton Park has three distinct valleys where large shelters, potable water, electricity, restrooms, and recreation areas offer private group retreats with spectacular views to the south. Rolling hills separate the valleys, and the northernmost hill rises to a craggy, unnamed peak on the Park's northwestern edge that is highly visible from U.S. 285. Each valley is a named picnic site, beginning with Juvenile at the north, Commissioner to the east in the center, and Stromberg farthest southeast.

*Group Shelter at Stromberg Picnic Site*

The sites are popular for family and company gatherings and for special events, especially on warm weekends in the spring, summer, and fall. Large grills, informal ballfields, volleyball courts, horseshoe pits, and fire pits offer all the basic amenities for these gatherings.

The design of the Newton Park shelters is clearly from the 1960s-1970s, giving Newton a distinctive character differing from the other DMP.

Challenges and Opportunities

Newton Park's three distinct valleys, each with a large group picnic site, spectacular views and open fields, offer the best opportunity in the DMP system for the addition of facilities for environmental education, leadership programs, and outdoor camps. Limited rock climbing may be possible. The participation of the DPR Recreation Division is critical to bringing groups to Newton Park, as they would provide transportation and programming.

Newton Park's role as a managed park where all of its use is permitted also offers an opportunity to expand the Recreation Division's successful Ropes Course program. Genesee Park, where the Ropes Course is currently located, provides a great location, close to downtown Denver, but its siting in the midst of Genesee Park's trail system is not as private as it should be. Newton Park offers an opportunity to create an additional site for a Ropes Course that could also be marketed to the south metropolitan area.

The Park is very popular during warm weekends, but has little use during the week. The park's setting and existing facilities offer a way to explore the foothills and the Mountain Parks through a broad range of activities including hiking, climbing, field sports, campfires, picnics, nature programs, and more. Although Newton Park has many facilities for more organized park activities, the Park does not have any trails, limiting the ability of users to explore the park's natural environment.

Physical improvements to the park's infrastructure are necessary, including improved access and parking, restrooms, and the addition of hiking trails, to provide an outdoor experience and to access potential rock climbing sites. The park is currently usable for the short-term as is, with the existing picnic shelter and fields for day trips and educational activities. Organized tent camping could also occur in the informal field for the short-term.

Although Newton Park is very popular for special events, most activities occur in or immediately adjacent to the picnic sites, and there are no park trails. A few social trails exist on the hillsides, but they

POPULAR FOR PICNICS

In the summers of 2006 and 2007, the three picnic sites at Newton Park welcomed more than 8,500 people, generating more than \$22,500 for the Mountain Park system. This exceeds the total reservations at Dedisse and Genesee Parks combined for the same period.

Weddings, graduation parties, family reunions, church services, and corporate events are among the gatherings taking place here, and many groups return year after year.



Ballfield at Newton Park

do not connect and are eroding the hillsides. Several natural routes exist for a new hiking only trail that could encourage users to explore Newton Park's flora and fauna and provide access to the ridges between the three picnic sites, where a spectacular view of the southern mountains rewards the climb. Parking areas are visually intrusive.

NEWTON PARK RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. Close the social trails adjacent to the three picnic sites that are damaging the hillsides and causing erosion.
 - ▶ Close the problematic social trails, manually obliterate the trail tread and revegetate the area with native species; add signage and carefully placed obstacles to prevent use during revegetation.
- B. Protect the peak and the park's natural environment as these lands provide critical open space and a striking scenic, undeveloped backdrop.
 - ▶ Continue to protect the craggy peak and the park parcel on the north side of US 285.
- C. Continue to manage Newton Park as a permitted facility on the weekends. Consider opening the park to informal day use if weekday permitted uses aren't developed.
- D. Expand Newton Park's role as a camp setting where Denver's mission of connecting people, especially kids, with nature can be realized.
 - ▶ Create an outdoor educational program through the Recreation Division to bring Denverites to explore the foothills and the Mountain Parks.
 - ▶ Transform a Newton area into a camp setting where day camps and overnight excursions can be held during the week. Study Newton as a potential site for a relocated DPS Outdoor Lab for elementary school children.

KIDS AND NATURE

A nationwide recognition exists that children are becoming more disconnected from the natural world despite growing research that links educational gains and mental, social, and physical health with that connection.

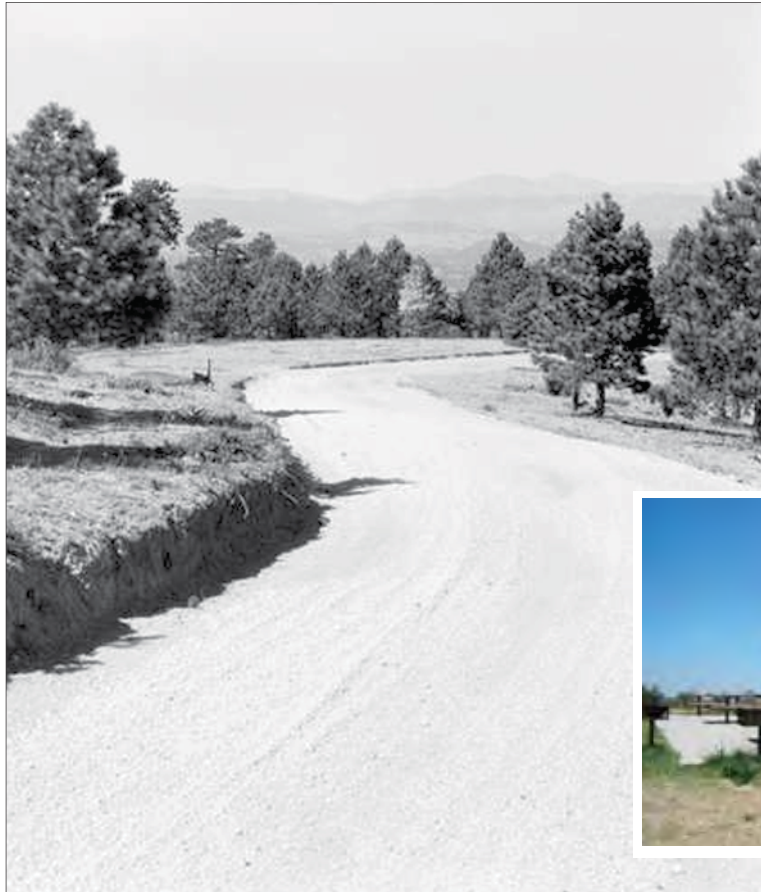
In many ways, Denver Mountain Parks can be the closest, most comfortable experience with wildlife and the Colorado mountains for Denver's kids and families and everyone in between.

- ▶ Upgrade existing infrastructure including:
 - 1) rehabilitating the existing group picnic shelters and shelter sites,
 - 2) providing an additional enclosed shelter,
 - 3) upgrading the restrooms, and
 - 4) improving site access and parking.
- ▶ Consider adding new cabins to accommodate overnight use, built in a manner that respects the character of the park.
- E. Add hiking only trails to explore Newton Park's hillsides, ravines, and craggy peak in a safe and manageable way.
 - ▶ Create a hiking only trail to climb up the hillside and onto the ridge between the Juvenile and Commissioner sites.
 - ▶ Create a hiking only trail to continue up the hillside, using switchbacks to gain access to the craggy peak. Areas of the peak could be used for bouldering and climbing for day camp activities.
- F. Consider more recreational opportunities for Newton Park, such as a ropes course, limited rock climbing, or cross-country skiing.



View from Daniels Park

DANIELS PARK



Daniels Park Road

“In 1927, Mr. Charles McAllister Wilcox donated 40 acres of what is now Daniels Park to Denver. Soon thereafter, Mrs. Florence Martin of Denver, who had received an inheritance from the wife of Major William C. Daniels, donated about 960 adjoining acres to the city, to be known as Daniels Park.”

—A *Colorado Taxpayer Report*, Vol VI, No. 6, November 30, 1979

Background

Daniels Park, the only Denver Mountain Park in Douglas County, is characterized by its unique sandstone ridge setting, historic ranch, bison herd, and spectacular view. A trip along Daniels Park Road offers a 100-mile view extending from Pike’s Peak to the Mummy Range near the Wyoming border. Views to the north capture downtown Denver and Denver International Airport.

A herd of bison roams the majority of Daniels Park’s upper elevations of mixed prairie grasslands and shrubby Gambel’s oak. Daniels Park Road traverses the top of the park’s high sandstone mesa along an elevation of approximately 6500 feet, connecting the park’s diverse features. Its alignment follows the original path of one of the first Colorado Territorial Roads, an 1850s wagon and stage road.



Daniels Park Shelter

A prominently placed stone shelter near the southern entrance was designed by J.J.B. Benedict. It overlooks the mesa landscape and is the one feature that easily identifies Daniels Park as a Denver Mountain Park.

The historic Florence Martin Ranch, designated as a Denver Landmark Historic District, currently accommodates park maintenance and is closed to the public. The Tall Bull Memorial in the north section of the park is reserved for Native Americans who use the site for ceremonies and activities. The Kit Carson Memorial marks the site of Carson’s last campfire in 1868.

Daniels Park is an important landscape within a larger regional open space system of 11,000 acres that protects the unique rimrock landscape that stretches from Sedalia to C470 in Highlands Ranch. The other open space parcels are private and public lands that include the Sanctuary Golf Course, immediately adjacent to Daniels Park on the south. To the west is The Backcountry, a private open space



The recently restored historic barn at the Florence Martin Ranch in Daniels Park

managed by Highlands Ranch. South of the park's undeveloped lands is the Cherokee Ranch, a historic ranch of 3,000 acres protected by a conservation easement that will preserve its open lands in perpetuity.

Daniels Park's 1,000 acres is split into two parcels by Daniels Park Road and the mesa rim. Below the mesa rim is a dramatic landscape of canyons, low mesas, and hills covered with dense Gambel's oak, ponderosa pine, and an understory of grasses and forbs. On the mesa top is a rolling mixed prairie grassland that is characteristic of the Colorado Front Range lowlands. Prairie grasses are interspersed with clusters of Gambel's oak along the east-facing drainages, and an extensive prairie dog colony is evident. The park

provides wildlife habitat that attracts many birds, including redtailed hawks and songbirds.

The 2006 Daniels Park Master Plan recommended the realignment and paving of Daniels Park Road to discourage unnecessary vehicular traffic through the park and to reduce erosion, dust, and sediment. The plan recommends improving park facilities including parking, park trails, and picnic sites. Work began in 2008 on the new road alignment and trails, a \$6 million project funded by Douglas County.

Challenges and Opportunities

Daniels Park is the core natural area within a broader, regional complex of protected open space and wildlife habitat in Douglas County. The park offers an accessible rimrock setting that is not only unusual in its immediate area, but is also unusual along the Front Range. Daniels Park's breathtaking scenery, role in the broader open space system, and diversity of park components (historic homestead, bison herd, memorial space) offer a unique experience. Lack of funding has prevented major restoration of the historic ranch and its potential reuse, interpretation, and access to the public.

Its location between growing suburban neighborhoods is generating a higher volume of fast-moving traffic and requests for more recreational use in the park. Views east from the park are now blocked by houses. Visitors are interested in more interpretation and access (such as pull-offs) to the bison and trails. A regional trail connection is under construction, but interest also exists in the development of internal trails. Those trails would require an interagency alignment and additional funding. Other park issues include vegetation trampling and social trails in concentrated public use areas. Party activity is a problem, as seen in the litter and broken glass.

Daniels Park Recommendations

- A. Protect the unique character of Daniels Park by preserving its significant natural, cultural, and scenic resources.
 - ▶ Preserve and protect the park's unique mesa environment through careful siting of new improvements and through natural area restoration. Protect the park's significant natural resources including the open mixed grassland prairie above the mesa rim and the canyons below.
 - ▶ Preserve the open, expansive view that is unique to Daniels Park.
 - ▶ Work with adjacent landowners to ensure that the designated open space lands remain so in perpetuity.
 - ▶ Protect the unique cultural resources within Daniels Park including its historic patterns, buildings and features. Implement the recommendations in the 2001 DMP District-wide Needs Assessment.

CHEROKEE FIRE

On October 29, 2003, the Cherokee Fire burned the western portions of Daniels Park at and below the mesa rim (as well as most of the landscape to the west of the park). Numerous burned pine trees dominate the landscape (providing good habitat for some bird species). The Gambel's oak communities that were burned are showing robust regrowth.

- B. Use the recommendations in the DMP Design Guidelines in the implementation of the Daniels Park Master Plan.
- C. Work with other Douglas County agencies, other local organizations, and adjacent private property owners to preserve the open lands that surround Daniels Park.
- D. Consider public access to the historic Florence Martin Ranch.
 - ▶ Consider developing a public use for the historic barn, house and garden, and the reconstructed gazebo.
 - ▶ Develop a comprehensive site plan for the core of the historic ranch for public access.
 - ▶ Continue the rehabilitation of the historic buildings and the historic landscape of the Martin Ranch. Implement the recommendations in the 2001 DMP District-wide Needs Assessment.
- E. Continue working with the Tall Bull Council to ensure that the Council Memorial area has high quality natural and built resources.
- F. Work with other agencies, organizations, and private property owners to create trails in and around Daniels Park.
 - ▶ Study possible alignments for an internal trail to connect park facilities and to offer more access to the park.

PICNIC PARKS

Bear Creek Picnic Parks

- ▶ Little Park
- ▶ Corwina, O'Fallon and Pence Parks
- ▶ Bell and Cub Creek Parks

Gateway Picnic Parks

- ▶ Fillius Park
- ▶ Bergen Park
- ▶ Turkey Creek Park



Corwina Park Shelter



Picnickers along Bear Creek

4.B.III THE PICNIC PARKS



Bear Creek in O'Fallon Park

The sky-line drive over Lookout Mountain drops ultimately into the cañon of Bear Creek, a famous trout stream, along which several of Denver's millionaires have built summer homes. Shelters, fire-places, comfort stations and picnic grounds, provided with pure mountain water, occur at convenient intervals.

—DMP brochure text, 1940s

In the early 1900s Denver began the task of building scenic drives through the foothills to access the mountain peaks and popular flowing streams just west of the city. With the growing popularity of the car, groups could venture out for the day, and Denver moved to acquire parkland along Bear Creek, Deer Creek, Turkey Creek, and Cub Creek. Denver also acquired parklands along the route to the Mt. Evans area. These were resting spots for picnicking, stops to fill a radiator, and gateways to the mountain beyond.

The curving, scenic drive of Highway 74 connects Morrison to Evergreen, providing access to some of the earliest and busiest Mountain Parks: Little, Corwina, O'Fallon, and Pence Parks. Cub and Bell Creek Parks are just south of Evergreen on the Bear Creek tributaries of Cub Creek and Little Cub Creek.

One of the more scenic routes was the road through steep mountain terrain to Mount Evans. Before reaching Squaw Pass Road (Highway 103), the early road extended through wooded hillsides in and north of Evergreen. Another route traveled southwesterly from Denver, turning west to follow North Turkey Creek. Along each of these roads, Denver built a picnic park as a gateway to western scenery. Along the northern route, the first picnic park was Fillius Park. Just a few miles to the west was Bergen Park, situated at the beginning of the long uphill journey to Squaw Pass and the Mount Evans area. Along the southern road, Turkey Creek Park served as the gateway.

The Picnic Parks are organized as the:

Bear Creek Area Parks:

**ittle Park
orwina/ ' allon/Pence Parks
ell and ub reek Parks**

The Gateway Parks:

**illius Park
ergen Park
urkey reek Park**

POTENTIAL CONSERVATION AREA

Little Park is within a CN P Potential Conservation Area. The steep canyons and ridges in the southern portions of the park are vegetated with Douglas-fir communities on north-facing slopes and ponderosa pine mountain mahogany shrub communities on south-facing slopes. The quality of this pine-scrub association has warranted its designation as a CN P Potential Conservation Area.



Little Park in the 1930s



Trail recommendations for Little Park

LITTLE PARK



Little Park

Background

The 400 acres of Little Park, acquired in 1917, comprise the first mountain park encountered along the Bear Creek road west of Idledale. To the east of Little Park is Mount Falcon Park and to its west is Lair o' the Bear Park, both owned and managed by Jefferson County Open Space.

With its low meadows immediately adjacent to Bear Creek and its unique octagonal-roofed well house built in 1919, Little Park

continues to offer a secluded serene spot for a day by the creek. South of Bear Creek, Little Park is characterized by steep canyons and ridges covered with ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir forests, open shrublands, and prominent rock outcrops.

This landscape is highly valued for its natural resources that continue into Mount Falcon Park to the south and east, designated as a natural area by Jefferson County Open Space.

This value is also recognized by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP), which designated this area as a Potential Conservation Area for ponderosa pine and scrub woodland communities, located primarily on the upper slopes of the park.

In the mid-1930s, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) built a striking stone and log bridge crossing Bear Creek in a spot where many automobiles had forded Bear Creek. The foot bridge connected to two and a half miles of hiking trails built by the CCC for visitors to experience the steep mixed evergreen forest. The bridge was destroyed by a flood shortly after it was built, but remnants of the trail to the top of the peak where a "sweeping view over the hogback to Denver and the plains" still exists.



2007 Senior Day Care

*Little Park*

Challenges and Opportunities

The relationship between Little Park and Bear Creek Road has changed over the years. Little Park was originally immediately adjacent to Bear Creek Road. Today, Bear Creek Canyon Road is located several feet higher than the park, and the park entrance is skewed at an odd angle to the road. No highway sign marks the entrance. Visibility of Little Park and access into the park are challenging. Despite that, Little Park has a growing use as a parking area and trailhead for the multi-use trails in the adjacent Jefferson County Lair o' the Bear open space park. Crowding has become an issue on weekends.

Little Park retains its original park-like qualities: it's a quiet park, set close to Bear Creek's flowing waters and is close to downtown Denver. Most of the Park's original facilities remain, and it could easily be improved and upgraded for additional use for picnicking and stream

access. Little Park's setting offers park experiences that are similar to those that are hugely popular at O'Fallon Park. Without a bridge to cross the creek, however, no trail access exists to the rugged south side of the creek. With a few key improvements Little Park could offer an alternative site, relieving some of the overuse that occurs at O'Fallon Park. Safe ingress and egress from Highway 74, Bear Creek Canyon Road, is essential.

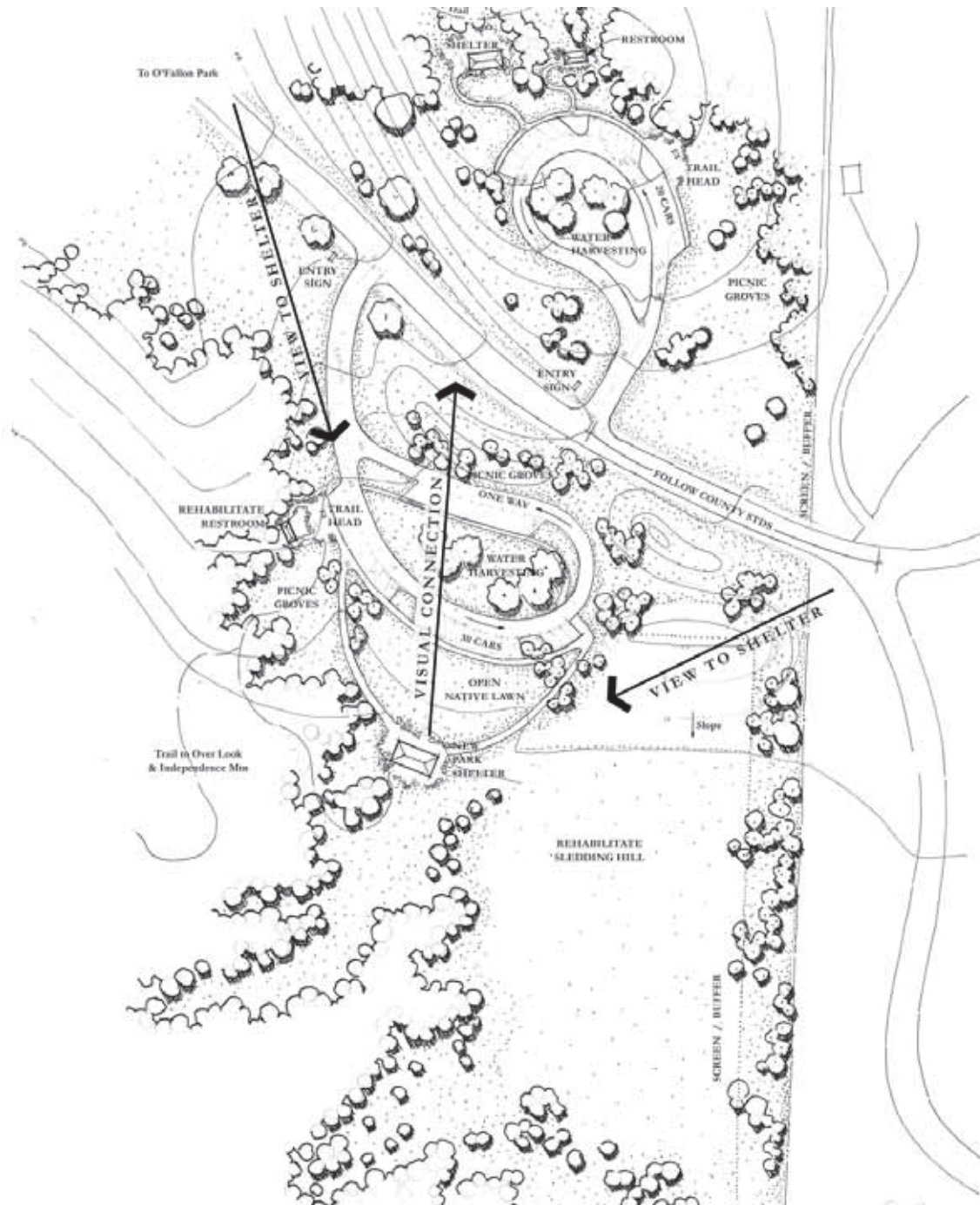
This role could greatly benefit the entire Denver Mountain Park system. Little Park also offers the opportunity to create additional accessible experiences with its fairly flat landscape and access to adjacent Lair o' the Bear Park. Planning for Little Park needs input from Jefferson County because the two parks impact each other.

Little Park Recommendations

- A. Develop a Management Plan for Little Park's natural resources to protect its critically important habitat and significant plant communities.
 - ▶ Little Park encompasses much of the Little Park Potential Conservation Area, as defined by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP). The park is a great example of ponderosa pine communities, including mountain mahogany, and foothills ponderosa pine scrub woodlands. Management practices should include measures to protect these plant communities, including prescribed fire to enhance natural succession.
 - ▶ Work with other agencies and organizations to restore Bear Creek.
- B. Protect and restore riparian habitat in Little Park through appropriate site improvements that balance human use with the protection of the riparian habitat.
 - ▶ Identify areas that are appropriate for public use and areas that should be protected. Expand opportunities for fishing.
 - ▶ Restore the stream edges and broad open meadows of the park's lower elevations.
- C. Work with adjacent landowners to protect the steep canyons and ridges of the ponderosa pine/scrub woodlands that are included in the CNHP Potential Conservation Area.
 - ▶ Consider protecting the natural resources on surrounding private properties through conservation easements.
- D. Upgrade Little Park's physical infrastructure.
 - ▶ Upgrade existing park facilities including improved parking, picnic areas, and restrooms.
- E. Improve Little Park's roads and park circulation including access points, internal roads, parking areas, and stream access.
 - ▶ Develop a comprehensive site master plan for Little Park to address safe vehicular ingress and egress from Highway 74, defined parking, and improved picnic sites, restrooms, and access to park trails and the regional Bear Creek Trail.
 - ▶ Reconfigure the parking area so that it is integrated with the rustic setting.
 - ▶ Rehabilitate the historic stone well house for use as a shelter.
- F. Restore the original hiking trail for hiking and stream access.
 - ▶ Connect the original hiking only trail to the parking area.
 - ▶ Consider rebuilding a bridge crossing near the location of the original bridge.
- G. Collaborate with Jefferson County on all Little Park improvements to acknowledge the regional and cooperative nature of Little and Lair o' the Bear Parks.



Trail Recommendations for Corwina, O'Fallon
and Pence Parks



Pence Park Concepts for Study

CORWINA, O'FALLON AND PENCE PARKS



O'Fallon Park

“Our family has come to O’Fallon Park each year for over 30 years for our annual Memorial Day picnic.”

—Denver resident interviewed at O’Fallon Park, summer 2007

Background

The three Mountain Parks of Corwina, O’Fallon, and Pence Park embody the quintessential characteristics of the Denver Mountain Parks system—flowing water in natural creeks, backcountry forests, shaded picnic sites (big and small), and challenging trails. They also share boundaries, users, and acres of natural resources.



Martin J. O’Fallon’s 1938 donation of 860 acres is one of the last major additions to the DMP system. This donation connected Corwina Park on the creek with Pence Park to the south. Together the three parks comprise 1,487 acres of contiguous parcels. Most of the park acreage is open space that protects and sustains the natural resources including wetlands, riparian forest, open meadows, watershed, and evergreen forests. Except for Pence, the parks are directly on Bear Creek, attracting hundreds of weekend visitors.

O’Fallon and Corwina Parks each have beautiful, distinct stone structures that define their character. An iconic stone fireplace (missing its roof) is strategically sited to be seen from Bear Creek Canyon road and commemorates Mr. O’Fallon.

A rustic stone rubble shelter on the southern hillside of the creek characterizes Corwina Park. Both parks also have developed picnic sites that are immediately adjacent to Bear Creek.

The land for Corwina Park was acquired in 1916 and its stone shelter was built in 1918. Corwina Park is a wonderfully wooded, small picnic park with an intimate scale. The park straddles Bear Creek and Highway 74, with small developed picnic areas on each side—Lower Corwina is the downstream park on the north side of

Bear Creek Canyon road, and Upper Corwina is just upstream on the south.

Located astride Dix Saddle on Myers Gulch Road, the land for Pence Park, originally known as Dixie Park, was acquired in 1914. In 1937, a picnic site, a hiking trail, and Denver's first sled run were built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). A beautifully crafted hiking trail to Independence Mountain was built by the CCC in 1939. Denver and Jefferson County Open Space completed a multi-use trail segment from Pence through O'Fallon and Corwina to Lair o' the Bear in the 2002.

Challenges and Opportunities

O'Fallon Park is a very popular picnic destination, where social tradition and its easy stream access, numerous picnic sites, and network of hiking trails can attract more than 1,000 people on a warm weekend day. This level of use, particularly adjacent to and across the stream, is fragmenting sensitive wildlife habitat and deteriorating the stream and stream edges, creating erosion on adjacent slopes. Corwina faces similar impacts to the stream.

Social trails crisscross meadows and hillsides. Vertical trails extend into the hillsides above picnic sites, braided trails follow Bear Creek, and direct shortcuts connect to the designated hiking trails. Although some of the designated trails are signed, in general there is no clear indication which trails are official. The lack of clear wayfinding diminishes the usability of each park and contributes to the creation of new social trails.

In contrast, Pence Park has little use and is probably the least known of the three parks. Additional amenities and marketing could increase the popularity of this park.

Corwina, O'Fallon and Pence Parks Recommendations

- A. Manage the three parks as one natural resource area by creating a comprehensive and holistic management plan to preserve and protect the significant natural resources of the three parks.
 - ▶ Work with other agencies and organizations to restore Bear Creek.
 - ▶ Protect and restore riparian habitat in Corwina and O'Fallon Parks through appropriate site improvements such as designated parking, picnic sites, and points of access to Bear Creek. Identify areas that are appropriate for public use and areas that should be protected as riparian habitat areas.
 - ▶ Protect fishing access to Bear Creek in Corwina and O'Fallon Parks.



Social trails and erosion at Corwina Park

- B. Close the social trails adjacent to picnic sites in the three parks that are damaging the hillside and causing erosion.

- ▶ Close the problematic social trails, manually obliterate the trail tread and revegetate the area with native species, add signage and prevent access during revegetation.



Picnicking along Bear Creek

- C. Use conservation easements and acquisition to protect the Parks.

- ▶ Work with adjacent property owners at O'Fallon Park to acquire land or to obtain conservation easements for the land that bisects the northern edge of the park, the parcel immediately to the west of O'Fallon Park that connects to Parmalee Gulch Road, and the private inholding on Parmalee Gulch Road.
- ▶ Work with the property owner west of Pence Park to acquire a trail easement to access the upper portion of Independence Mountain.
- ▶ Consider obtaining a conservation easement to this land to protect Independence Mountain.

BEAR CREEK

The greater Bear Creek drainage has been nominated as an Important Bird Area (IBA), a designation that recognizes that a site provides essential habitat to one or more bird species during some portion of the year, including breeding season, migration, and/or winter.

- D. Rehabilitate Little, Corwina and O'Fallon Parks' historic stone structures, historic picnic sites, and connections to Bear Creek.
- ▶ Continue implementing the 2001 DMP District-wide Needs Assessment recommendations for upgrading historic facilities for recreation use.
- E. Upgrade Corwina Park's physical infrastructure, including both Upper and Lower Corwina.
- ▶ Address safe vehicular ingress and egress from Highway 74 into both Upper and Lower Corwina Park.
 - ▶ Upgrade existing park facilities including parking, picnic areas, and restrooms.
 - ▶ Add a park trail to connect the two sites.
- F. Improve the O'Fallon Park roads and park circulation including access points, internal roads, parking areas, and stream access.
- ▶ Improve the ingress and egress from Highway 74 to O'Fallon Park.
 - ▶ Reconfigure parking areas for aesthetics and improved use.
 - ▶ Upgrade the existing picnic areas with new shelters, trail-heads, and associated parking.

BEAR CREEK TRAIL

The regional Bear Creek Trail traverses the upper ridges and meadows of O'Fallon and Corwina Parks, connecting with the northeast corner of Pence Park. Bear Creek Trail is open to all users and is a popular regional trail destination for mountain bikers, hikers, and trail runners.

BEAR CREEK TRAIL

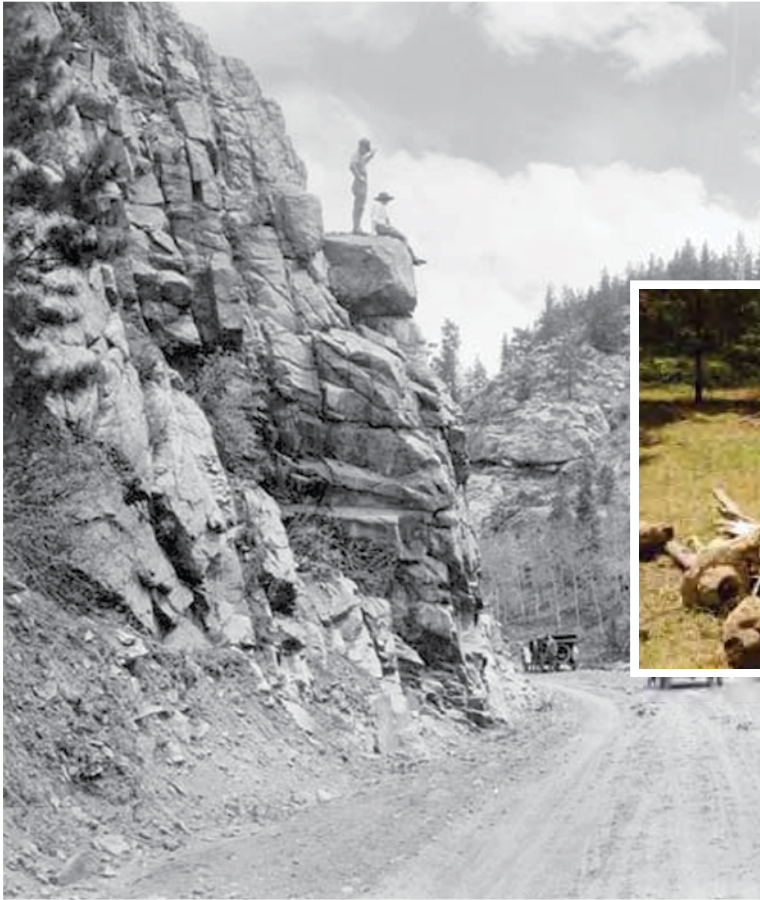
The regional Bear Creek Trail traverses the upper ridges and meadows of O'Fallon and Corwina Parks, connecting with the northeast corner of Pence Park. Bear Creek Trail is open to all users and is a popular regional trail destination for mountain bikers, hikers, and trail runners.

- G. Complete a Master Plan for Pence Park. Consider new picnic areas, shelters, trailheads and associated parking on the east and west sides of Myers Gulch Road.
 - ▶ Improve ingress and egress from Myers Gulch Road.
 - ▶ Reconfigure the existing picnic area in the western portion of the park, providing new amenities, such as a shelter, trailhead to Independence Mountain Trail, and a restroom.
- H. Restore and expand the Independence Mountain Trail in Pence Park as a hiking-only trail.
 - ▶ Work with the property owner west of Pence Park to acquire a trail easement to access the upper portion of Independence Mountain.
 - ▶ Restore the CCC built Independence Mountain Trail in Pence Park from the new picnic site to the top of the mountain.
- I. Develop trailheads at each park to access each park's internal trail system and the regional Bear Creek Trail.
- J. Collaborate with Jefferson County Open Space on all Corwina/O'Fallon/Pence Park improvements to acknowledge the regional and cooperative nature of those parks with Lair o'the Bear, which is managed by Jefferson County, and the Kittredge Playground, adjacent to O'Fallon.
 - ▶ Consider equestrian/hiking trails in some areas.



Concepts for Study at O'Fallon Park

BELL AND CUB CREEK PARKS



Cub Creek in the 1920s

“Since Bell and Cub Creek Parks, as now named, lie adjacent to one another, with no natural division, they should be considered as one park and developed as such.”

—*Bell and Cub Creek Parks Plan, The Master Plan* Denver Mountain Parks United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, coordinated by the Civilian Conservation Corps and the City and County of Denver, circa 1939.

Background

Upstream in the Bear Creek drainage are two Mountain Parks that sit quietly side by side protecting rolling ponderosa forests, mixed forested ridges, riparian habitat, and tributaries to Bear Creek. Bell Park is the eastern of the two Mountain Parks, consisting of 480 acres that frame the Little Cub Creek drainage. To its west is Cub Creek Park, a parcel of 549 acres of rolling forests that includes two prominent drainages, Cub Creek and Little Cub Creek.



Illegal dumping

Bell Park was set aside in 1915, and Cub Creek Park was acquired in 1922. In 1960, Denver dedicated 160 acres of Cub Creek Park to Frank C. Dillon. Together, these two Mountain Parks define the southern gateway into the Town of Evergreen.

Two major roads cross Cub Creek Park (Highway 73 and Brook Forest Road) and several graded dirt roads cross the park to access private land.

Bell and Cub Creek Parks share similar natural characteristics, including ponderosa pine forests and riparian communities along the creeks. Cub Creek Park's open ponderosa pine forests are interspersed with open meadows and a robust woody riparian community along Cub Creek. An open meadow near the center of the park supports a small wet meadow community. Cub Creek's picnic facilities are randomly placed tables and three prominent pull-offs for parking.

Bell Park supports Douglas-fir and lodgepole pine communities in the southeast corner of the park, and a narrow riparian community of limited woody vegetation and small wetland areas occurs along Little Cub Creek. Bell Park climbs steeply to wonderful views of the area and has no parking or recreation facilities. Although officially two distinct parks, they are managed as one open space.



Challenges and Opportunities

The diverse forested lands of Bell and Cub Creek Park that drain to two prominent tributaries to Bear Creek—Cub Creek and Little Cub Creek—offer the perfect setting for picnicking and its associated activities, such as informal games and short hikes. However, recreational use is limited in both parks.

Cub Creek Park offers limited picnicking along Brook Forest Road adjacent to Cub Creek, which are inaccessible during high water on the north side. Each park has several informal trails including some that extend into the surrounding residential area. No official trails exist in either park. Both parks are surrounded by residential subdivisions, and the delineation between private land and public park land is nonexistent. Cub Creek has several inholdings and a

waste transfer station that is under consideration as a composting site. Dumping and vandalism are problems at both parks.

Bell and Cub Creek Parks Recommendations

- A. Manage the two parks as one natural resource area by creating a comprehensive and holistic management plan to preserve and protect their significant natural resources.
 - ▶ Preserve and protect the natural resources of these two parks that provide a large tract of open space that is the visual gateway to downtown Evergreen, wildlife habitat in a developed forest setting, wetlands and wet meadows associated with small drainages, and riparian habitat.

- ▶ Acquire privately owned properties within Cub Creek Park.
 - ▶ Clean up, monitor, and manage both parks to eliminate illegal dumping. Collaborate with EPRD, homeowners' associations, and area schools for ongoing efforts.
 - ▶ Continue ongoing efforts and implement additional measures to manage litter to reduce the risk of conflicts with bears or other wildlife. Reconfigure trash cans or add bear-proof waste containers.
 - ▶ Control noxious weeds, particularly in wet meadow areas of Cub Creek Park.
- B. Protect and restore riparian habitat through appropriate site improvements.
- ▶ Develop site-appropriate measures to protect riparian habitat from concentrated public use areas. Identify areas that are appropriate for public use and areas that should be protected as riparian habitat.
 - ▶ Recognizing that many visitors enjoy physical access to water, any habitat protection efforts should also include designated areas where access to the stream is appropriate.
- C. Clearly identify Cub Creek and Bell Parks' boundaries to control illegal dumping, off-road vehicle use, and other unauthorized uses.
- ▶ Develop a boundary marking system that is compatible with the character of the DMP.
- D. Close the social trails that are damaging the hillside and causing erosion.
- ▶ Close the problematic social trails, manually obliterate the trail tread and revegetate the area with native species; add signage and carefully placed obstacles to prevent use during revegetation.
- E. Expand the role of Bell and Cub Creek as Bear Creek area picnic parks through appropriate improvements to vehicular access, picnic sites, and trails.
- ▶ Develop a comprehensive site master plan for the two parks. Address safe vehicular ingress and egress from the roads, the development of defined parking and improved picnic sites along Cub Creek, and trails.
 - ▶ Assess possible use of the northern section of Cub Creek Park for EPRD joint use.
- F. Work with Jefferson County Open Space and EPRD on regional trails along Cub Creek Road and Highway 73.



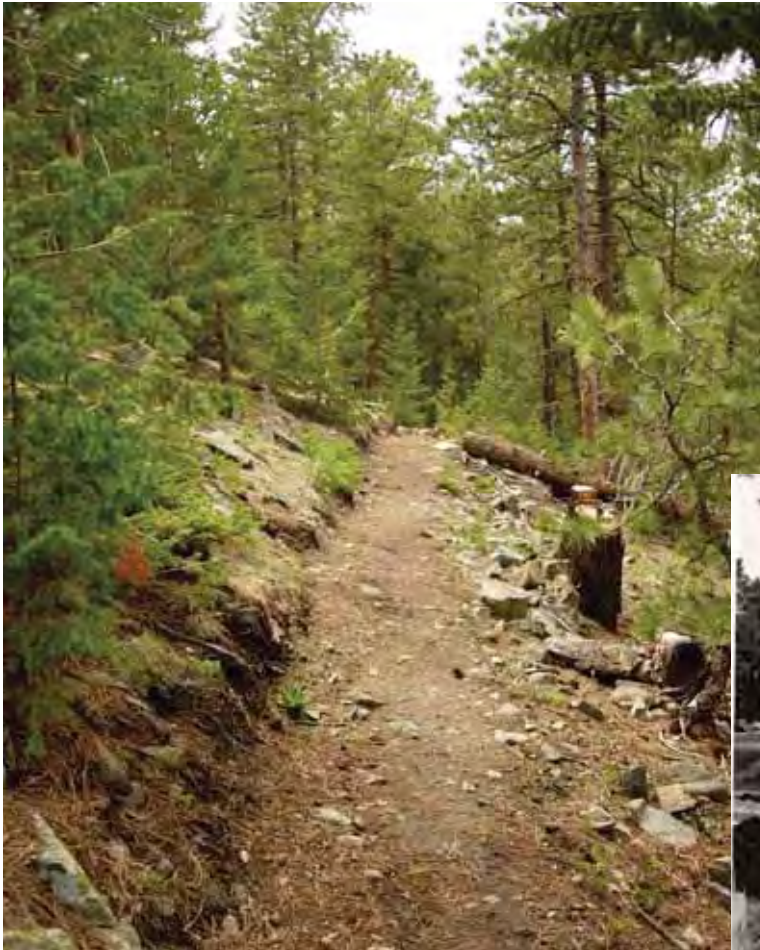
Trail Recommendations for Fillius and Bergen Parks



Historic shelter at Fillius Park, after restoration to original Benedict design completed in 2004



FILLIUS PARK



Trail at Fillius Park

“Forward thinking civic leaders correctly predicted that travel between Denver and the mountain areas to the west would be shortened by the advent of the automobile age, and that one-day roundtrip excursions to mountain park areas would soon become commonplace...”

—Denver’s Mountain Park System, A Colorado Taxpayer Report: Vol VI, No. 6, November 30, 1979.

Background

Located immediately adjacent to Highway 74 on the way to Squaw Pass and Evergreen, the 107-acre Fillius Park was one of the early resting spots along the scenic drives in the Denver foothills. The park was acquired by Denver in 1914 and named for a member of the Denver Park Board, Jacob Fillius.

A prominently placed and distinctive stone shelter designed by J.J.B. Benedict was built in 1918. The shelter openings are on its north facade, as it is oriented toward views of the Continental Divide. The refined detailing of the shelter makes it one of the most important structures in the Mountain Parks system. In 1937, the Civilian Conservation Corps built two looping park roads for picnicking. Portions followed the original Bergen Park Road and the Beaver Creek Wagon Trail. A short hiking trail extends from the northernmost of these roads continuing along the original Beaver Creek Wagon Trail.



The park is divided by the Soda Creek Road, with the stone well-house, shelter, and picnic area to the southeast, set among ponderosa pines with little shrub or herbaceous understory. The steeper west portion has a meadow, mown for playing, picnic areas, and dense ponderosas and Douglas-fir woods. The park provides elk and mule deer habitat and winter range.

Challenges and Opportunities

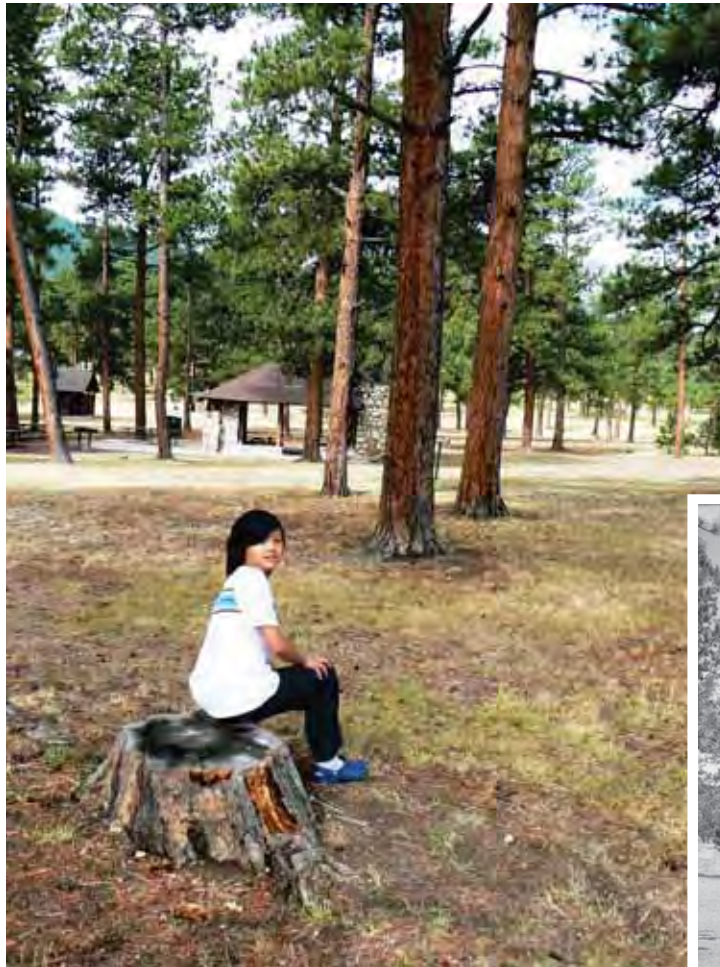
Fillius Park continues to be an important gateway to the Mountain Parks and is a charming picnic and hiking spot. However, the growing community of Evergreen that surrounds Fillius Park on three sides is encroaching on its rustic natural character, diminishing the views and park experience. The south park boundary, Evergreen Parkway is a major vehicular route into the Town of Evergreen, and its traffic noise and activity detracts from picnic spots at the Fillius Shelter and along the park loop road.

Soda Creek Road bisects the park, separating the two picnic areas. Few visitors know of the western portion, which has only a small sign.

Fillius Park deserves restoration as an important Gateway Picnic Park. The buffering of the park from development and ways to safely connect the two park sections are needed to keep Fillius a premiere picnic spot as it has been. Restoration of its open meadows, rehabilitation of its site elements including the park road, completing a hiking trail loop, and buffering of adjacent uses are key. Its rustic shelter, ponderosa pine forest, open meadows, and easy hiking trails are those elements that are most desirable by picnickers in the DMP.

Fillius Park Recommendations

- A. Rehabilitate the ponderosa pine forest and understory in the manicured portions of the park.
 - ▶ Consider alternate closing of the picnic sites to undertake extensive revegetation in areas that are trampled and eroded.
 - ▶ Develop site-appropriate measures to protect restored vegetation from concentrated public use areas.
- B. Use conservation easements to create a buffer around Fillius Park.
 - ▶ Work with adjacent property owners to obtain conservation easements for those private properties that surround Fillius Park.
- C. Close the social trails within the park that are damaging the forest and understory and causing erosion.
- D. Close the meadow on the western section and no longer mow because its plant community is highly diverse and has integrity.
- E. Reestablish Fillius Park as a gateway picnic spot.
 - ▶ Develop a comprehensive site master plan for Fillius Park that addresses safe vehicular ingress and egress, site rehabilitation, improved parking, restrooms, and a clear connection to the trail.
 - ▶ Rehabilitate the stone shelter picnic site and meadows for continued use as a picnic site. Reconfigure the parking area for aesthetics and improved use.
 - ▶ Create a naturalistic buffer or screen along Evergreen Parkway to improve the park experience.
- F. Develop an internal trail system within Fillius Park.
 - ▶ Clearly identify, through signage and maps, the Beaver Creek Wagon Trail, while also closing, obliterating, and revegetating social trails.
 - ▶ Develop a hiking-only trail loop within the park to connect the picnic sites with the Beaver Creek Wagon Trail.

BERGEN PARK*Bergen Park***Background**

At 25 acres, Bergen Park is one of the smaller mountain parks, but its open grasslands and mature ponderosa pine forest offer an exquisite wooded setting. Located at the base of the road to Squaw Pass at the crossroads of Highways 74 and 68, Bergen Park has served as a key resting spot and popular picnic ground since 1917. Built on land donated by Mr. Oscar N. Johnson in 1915, Bergen Park is consistently one of the most used mountain parks.

A striking stone shelter was built in 1917 in the center of the park. Built of white quartz and timber, the shelter is thought to have been designed by J.J.B. Benedict. A well house built of the same materials is located just south of the shelter. Bergen Parkway divides the park into two sections. A small monument commemorating the early settler Thomas C. Bergen is centered in the east section and an historic

stone restroom, no longer in use, lies just to the south of the monument. The northern boundary of the park is an RTD Park-n-Ride. The regional Jefferson County Pioneer Trail runs along the western edge of the park. Buchanan Park, owned and in the process of being developed by the EPRD, abuts Bergen Park to the south. Plans include an internal trail connecting Buchanan and Bergen Parks together.

On warm days, Bergen Park is filled with families and groups of friends enjoying picnics in its ponderosa pine forest, especially near the shelter and well house. According to the 2006 survey, Bergen Park is one

of the better known and used Denver Mountain Parks. Little activity takes place in the eastern section of the park.

*Early picnickers*

Bergen Park is located in a high wildlife quality area as determined by the Colorado Division of Wildlife, providing elk and mule deer habitat and winter range. The park serves the area's resident elk population as a winter concentration area, and is a refuge for herds crossing Highway 74.

Challenges and Opportunities

The context of Bergen Park, like Fillius, has changed dramatically in the past fifty years. Today Bergen Park is bisected by a local road, and roads define two of its edges. Commercial and residential development surround the park and traffic is steady. The EPRD serves almost 30,000 residents and owns less than 100 acres of parkland. Their new park, Buchanan Park, is in the process of being developed and will offer active recreation and a recreation center. Bergen Park remains a complement to this use but is impacted by growth. Today it truly is both an historic, regional picnic spot and a local community park.

Bergen Park still serves as an important public gateway to Squaw Pass Road. The relationship of Bergen Park to Buchanan Park offers an opportunity to partner with EPRD on physical connections, such as trails between the two parks and to access surrounding uses. At the same time, it will be important to balance the role that Bergen Park plays in protecting elk and mule deer habitat with providing traditional uses such as picnicking, especially for those needing a highly accessible park.

The arrangement of the park, between the two roads with the parking lot to the north, along with the joint use with Regional Transportation District (RTD), currently diminishes the park experience. Additional site issues include drainage that collects in the park, creating an ever expanding wet area and limiting picnic use. The quieter eastern area of the park could offer an opportunity to provide an additional picnic area and connecting trails. In many ways, Bergen Park also is the gateway to the Evergreen area and could provide opportunities to welcome visitors and interpret the area's history.



Bergen Park

Bergen Park Recommendations

- A. Protect Bergen Park as the gateway to Squaw Pass by protecting its important natural resources including its ponderosa pine forest and grasslands.
 - ▶ Preserve and protect the park's ponderosa pine forest that serves as open lands at the gateway and provides a view towards the west. Protect the forest as open space and do not increase development on the site.
 - ▶ Develop a plan for the rejuvenation of the ponderosa pine forest.
 - ▶ Do not allow active recreation.
- B. Manage Bergen Park as a Natural Resource Area and as a complement to the active recreation in the adjacent Buchanan Park.

- ▶ Create a comprehensive and holistic management plan to preserve and protect the park's significant natural resources.
 - ▶ Work with other agencies and organizations to create a safe wildlife crossing from Bergen Park to Jefferson County's Elk Meadow Park.
- D. Expand the role of Bergen as a Picnic Park through appropriate improvements to vehicular access and picnic sites.
- ▶ Develop a comprehensive site master plan for Bergen Park to improve safe vehicular ingress and egress from Bear Creek Parkway, and provide parking at the existing picnic area.
 - ▶ Consider developing an additional picnic area on the eastern section of the park to better accommodate numbers of users.
 - ▶ Rehabilitate the Bergen Park shelter and well house structures and settings for continued use as picnic sites.
- E. Collaborate with EPRD for an integrated internal trail and recreation use of both Bergen and Buchanan Park.
- ▶ Clearly identify designated trails, trailheads, and associated parking.
 - ▶ Clearly identify appropriate park use and consistent rules and regulations.
- F. Continue collaborating with EPRD to leverage the efforts of both agencies to provide passive recreation and natural resource protection.
- ▶ Starting with Bergen Park, investigate mutually beneficial cooperative maintenance programs, interpretive and volunteer programs.
 - ▶ Collaborate on joint recreation assessments.
 - ▶ Revise the existing Cooperative Agreement between EPRD and Denver to facilitate joint projects.



Wellhouse Picnic Shelter at Bergen Park



Turkey Creek Park

TURKEY CREEK PARK



Turkey Creek Park

Background

Turkey Creek Park is strategically sited where North Turkey Creek meets South Turkey Creek and where North Turkey Creek Road meets Parmalee Gulch Road. It is probably the least known of all the Denver Mountain Parks. Since its construction in 1927 as the southern gateway into North Turkey Creek Canyon as part of the southern loop to the DMP, Turkey Creek Park has been a quiet roadside park with a wonderful, highly accessible riparian setting.

Turkey Creek Park straddles North Turkey Creek Road. Its lower elevations are primarily along the North and South Turkey Creek riparian corridors that are characterized by narrowleaf cottonwood and an understory of willows, grasses, and sedges. This riparian habitat dominates the eastern portion of the park. The park's higher elevations, primarily west of the highway, consist of the steep hillsides above North Turkey Creek Canyon. These hillsides are dominated by ponderosa pine and shrubland communities.

An informal picnic area, with parking, picnic tables, and a restroom, is located adjacent to the riparian corridors under the canopy of mature cottonwood trees.

Challenges and Opportunities

Turkey Creek Park protects North Turkey Creek Canyon, providing an important view into the canyon and protecting its natural resources including the steep hillsides of ponderosa pine. The park setting, easy access to water, and its close location to Denver suggest expanding Turkey Creek Park's role as a key picnicking site. With its level access and stream accessibility, the park could be developed especially for visitors with disabilities.

Improvements to the park are necessary to bring it to a level of standard that exists in other Denver Mountain Parks. Needed improvements include a more formalized picnic area and improved ingress and egress from the highway. Social trails and erosion of stream banks are problems. Internal park trails linking parking areas with picnic sites and stream access are needed.

Also, the suburban community that surrounds the park is encroaching on its natural character, diminishing the park experience. Buffering adjacent uses would help protect and elevate Turkey Creek Park as one of the Mountain Parks' key picnic spots. In addition, the park boundaries are poorly defined, and dumping and other inappropriate activities are common.

Turkey Creek Park Recommendations

- A. Protect Turkey Creek Park as the gateway to Turkey Creek Canyon by protecting its important natural resources including its ponderosa pine forest and riparian corridors.
 - ▶ Preserve and protect the park's natural resources that serve as open lands at the mouth of the canyon. Protect the steep forested hillsides and riparian habitat associated with North Turkey Creek and South Turkey Creek.
- B. Protect riparian habitat through appropriate site improvements that provide stream access in appropriate locations.
 - ▶ Create a few designated areas for public access to the streams where it is appropriate. Protect important riparian habitat from concentrated public use and identify areas that are appropriate for access.
 - ▶ Identify and close problematic social trails that damage wetland or riparian vegetation, cause significant erosion, and contribute to a larger proliferation of social trails.
 - ▶ Manually obliterate the trail tread and revegetate the area with native species; add signage and carefully placed obstacles to prevent use during revegetation.
- C. Expand the role of Turkey Creek Park as an accessible Picnic Park through appropriate improvements to vehicular access and picnic sites, and by adding new picnic facilities.
 - ▶ Develop a comprehensive site master plan emphasizing the park's easy accessibility.



Picnic site at Turkey Creek Park

- ▶ Improve vehicular ingress and egress from North Turkey Creek Road, and develop a defined parking area and improved picnic sites along North Turkey Creek and South Turkey Creek.
 - ▶ Improve the park entry and reconfigure the parking areas for aesthetics and improved use.
 - ▶ Create a formal picnic site with a restroom and a park shelter.
 - ▶ Improve the existing informal picnic sites and develop a park trail to connect them.
- D. Clearly define Turkey Creek Park's boundaries to control illegal dumping, off-road vehicle uses and other unauthorized uses.
 - ▶ Implement the DMP boundary marking system to identify the park's boundaries, supporting enforcement efforts.

4.B.V. CONSERVATION/WILDERNESS PARKS



“The acquirement of mountain parks was for the purpose of assuring perpetually to the residents of Denver the sublime scenery of the Rockies, the preservation of native forests and having for all time a pleasure ground in the mountains for the thousands of annual visitors to the city easily accessible.”

—Brochure introducing the Mountain Parks, 1913.

Background

Some of the most scenic and important lands in the DMP system were purchased for their open space value and were intended never to be developed. The prominent mountaintops, forested ridges, steep slopes of dense mixed evergreen forests, rocky outcrops, and narrow riparian corridors of Denver’s conservation/wilderness parks provide critical wildlife habitat, watershed protection, and dramatic scenic backdrops. Most of the highly visible peaks and ridges along the main routes west, including US 285, Highways 73 and 74 through Evergreen, and US I-70, that are not dotted with houses today are Denver Mountain Parks. Most are surrounded by private land that was purchased over the decades, which, as a result, has cut off or limited public access today. They continue to fulfill their original role—to protect the natural and scenic character of the Denver foothills.



Pence Mountain Tract

Their permanent, protected role in the system was clearly intended. When Denver acquired land for these Mountain Parks, many deed restrictions were included in the transfer from government or private property to city ownership. For example, deed restrictions for more than 5,000 acres from USDA Forest Service Lands prohibit non-park activities or sale of the land—“that said city and county shall not have the right to sell or convey the land.” Other parks, such as those acquired from private ownership, restricted the land “for park and parkway purposes only.”

The protection of watershed and wildlife habitat is becoming increasingly important as the metropolitan region’s population grows and open space disappears. The Mountain Parks have land that contributes to the integrity of the region’s watersheds, notably Bear Creek, Clear Creek, and smaller tributaries, all of which eventually reach the Platte River.



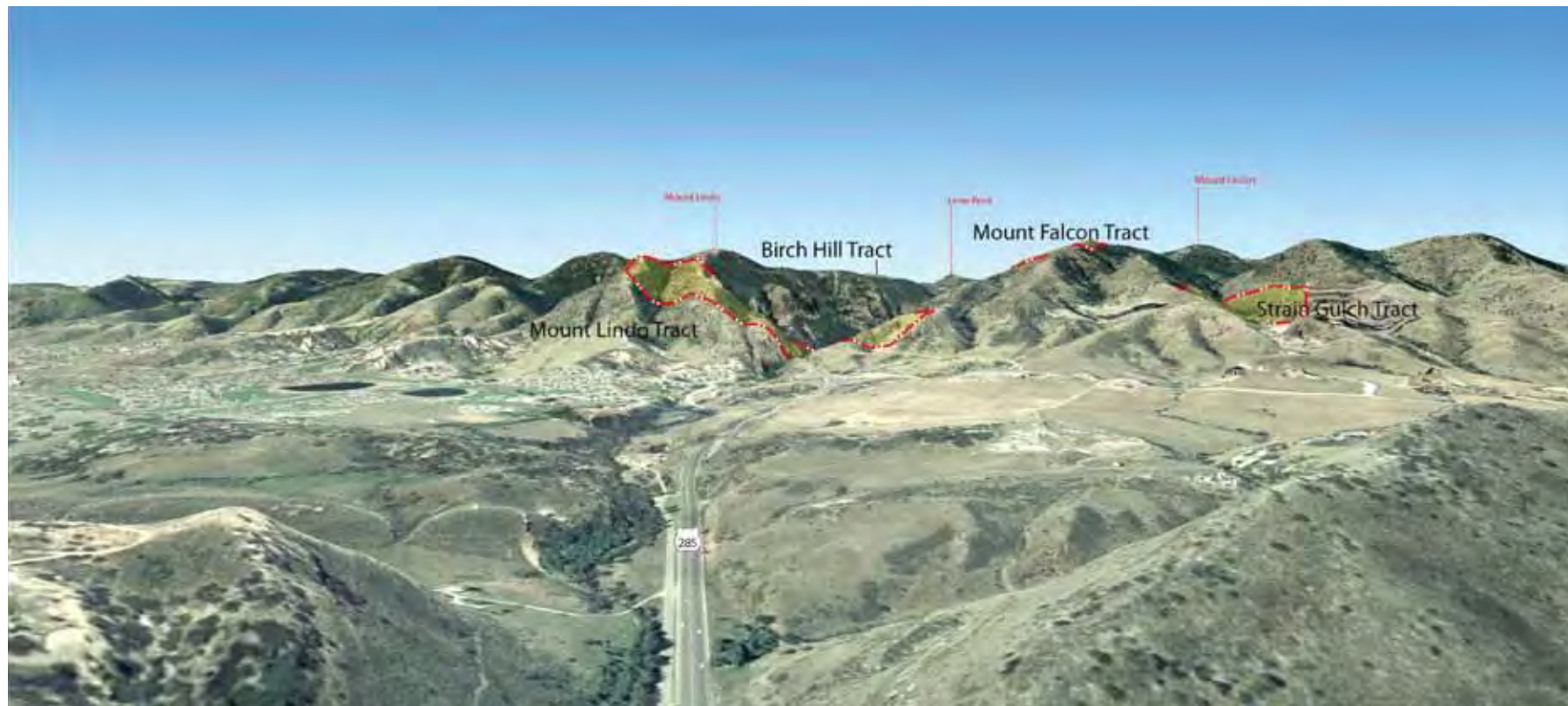
CONSERVATION / WILDERNESS AREAS

Bear Creek Canyon	Forsberg	Old Cemetery Ground
Bergen Peak	Hicks Mountain	Parmalee Gulch
Berrian Mountain	Robbs Peak	Pence Mountain
Birch Hill	Legault Mountain	Snyder Mountain
Double Header Mountain	Mount Falcon	Stanley Park
Elephant Butte	Mount Judge	Strain Gulch
Fenders	Mount Lindo	West Jefferson School
Flying J. Ranch	North Turkey Creek	Yegge Peak

View towards Evergreen Lake, Dedisse Park, Elephant Butte Tract, and Bergen Peak



View to Legault Mountain Tracts, Flying J Ranch Tract, West Jefferson School Tract, Berrian Mountain Tract, and Double Header Mountain Tract



View towards Mount Lindo Tract, Birch Hill Tract, Mount Falcon Tract, and Strain Gulch Tract

CLIFF HABITAT

Large, open cliffs and rock outcrops are critical nesting habitat for many bird species, particularly raptors. These types of habitats support nesting sites for golden eagle, prairie falcon, and peregrine falcon, as well as smaller birds such as cliff swallow and black swift.

Some of the more significant examples of cliff habitat in the Mountain Parks are:

- ▶ Snyder Mountain Tract
- ▶ Hicks Mountain Tract
- ▶ Mount Judge Tract overlooking the upper Bear Creek valley
- ▶ Elephant Butte Tract
- ▶ Mount Lindo Tract, and the southern portion of Deer Creek Park

Many of the mountain ridges and peaks originally set aside for scenic quality provide important cliff habitat, including Snyder Mountain, Hicks Mountain, Mount Judge, and the southern portion of Deer Creek Park. Mountain peaks, streams and forested hillsides of these parks offer critical habitat for elk, mule deer, black bear, mountain lion, and mountain goat. The dense, mixed forests of Berrian Mountain provide important mountain lion habitat. Deer Creek Canyon Park provides severe winter range for elk, and Bergen Peak, Berrian Mountain, and Elephant Butte Tract support production (breeding) areas for elk. Mount Judge and Hicks Mountain provide overall range for mountain goats. Some of these conservation/wilderness parcels may be small or appear fragmented across the map, but in fact they were carefully selected and acquired with purpose.

A few of the conservation/wilderness areas in the DMP system are contiguous with other developed DMP or other public lands. In some places, DMP have hiking trails and other public access that complements adjacent parks such as DMP's Bergen Peak adjacent to Jefferson County Open Space's Elk Meadow.

Challenges and Opportunities

The conservation/wilderness parks of the Denver Mountain Parks system have continually upheld the values that were essential to the founding of the system in 1912 to protect scenic resources for recreational, aesthetic, and environmental reasons, both for today and for the future. These parks were originally intended to be undeveloped lands in perpetuity. Their role in resource protection has become more important over the years, and as neighboring communities have grown, their role as a scenic background today is even more valuable.

These parcels face four primary challenges:

- ▶ Periodically they are threatened with sale, trade, or commercial use because of the lack of public understanding of their intended purposes and the legal protection they have.

- ▶ The Denver Mountain Parks system lacks natural resource management guidelines, basic inventories, and the staffing needed to monitor these areas.
- ▶ Problems such as vandalism, litter, dumping, and illegal cutting are increasing.
- ▶ As the population grows, a greater demand for recreation is being placed on open space, including these Conservation areas. Some Conservation/Wilderness areas may have the potential for new limited recreation uses and public access. However, they currently have no public access and have not been evaluated for impacts of recreation on the resources or budget implications. Access to these areas, if appropriate, will require regional cooperation and capital funding.

Conservation/Wilderness Park Recommendations

- A. Preserve the majority of Conservation/Wilderness Parks as undeveloped Mountain Park lands.
 - ▶ Preserve each park in its historic role as a scenic backdrop, as an important natural resource, or as both.
 - ▶ Identify and close problematic social trails within the Conservation/Wilderness parks. Manually obliterate the trail tread and revegetate the area with native species; add signage and carefully placed obstacles to prevent use during revegetation.
 - ▶ Engage private property owners, where their land abuts Denver's land, in an informal stewardship role.
- B. Manage similar or adjacent Conservation/Wilderness Parks as one natural resource unit by creating comprehensive management plans and system-wide policies to preserve and protect the significant natural resources.
 - ▶ Identify those parks that are contiguous to one another and/or that share natural resource issues or attributes such as significant wetlands or rock outcrops.

- ▶ Develop natural resource management plans for contiguous parcels, including other Denver Mountain Parks. Develop strategies to protect their shared natural resource attributes. Work with other open space agencies on lands that are contiguous.
- ▶ Develop natural resource policies for the Conservation/Wilderness Parks.
- C. Use conservation easements, trail easements, and acquisition to protect the parks.
 - ▶ Work with adjacent property owners to acquire land or to obtain conservation easements for those properties that buffer or protect the conservation/wilderness areas from encroaching development.
- D. Clearly define park boundaries to control illegal dumping, social trails, off-road vehicle use, and other unauthorized uses.
 - ▶ Develop a marking system that is compatible with the rustic character of the Denver Mountain Park System.
 - ▶ Add signage to clearly identify the conservation/wilderness parks as Denver Mountain Parks.
 - ▶ Collaborate with other agencies on trails adjacent to or through (if appropriate) conservation/wilderness areas.
- E. Evaluate potential new recreation uses.
 - ▶ Study potential new recreation uses, such as rock climbing or new trails, evaluating whether access could be acquired, budget implications, and the impact of the use on natural resources.
 - ▶ Collaborate with other agencies and stakeholders on developing and evaluating new recreation uses and, if appropriate, acquiring public access.



View from Birch Hill Tract



CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

DENVER MOUNTAIN PARK PRIORITIES AND FIRST STEPS	
Priority	2008-2009 FIRST STEP
Build financial sustainability for the system	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase the DMP share of the yearly capital funds from \$200,000 to at least \$1 million/year, starting with \$700,000 in the 2009 budget. 2. Increase Red Rocks Facility Use fees starting with the 2009 concert season, creating a Special Revenue Fund dedicated to DMP improvements.
Build partnerships	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work closely with the Denver Mountain Parks Foundation (DMPF) to create a joint five-year implementation strategy and to help fund some 2009 projects. 2. Expand the partnership with Evergreen Park and Recreation District, i.e. potential maintenance agreements, volunteer programs, and community needs assessments. 3. Build ongoing community advisory groups for marketing/communications and funding.
Increase opportunities for youth and families to experience the Denver Mountain Parks	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create the dialogue with partners, such as Denver Public Schools, Denver Museum of Nature and Science, James Beckwourth Club, Alpino, DMPF, Division of Wildlife, and with the business community for programs and facilities to draw more Denver people, especially kids and seniors, to the Mountain Parks.
Increase communications and marketing for the system	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Trademark and launch the new DMP logo. 2. Design and distribute a DMP system brochure and map. 3. Collaborate with Historic Denver on a Denver Mountain Parks Guide. 4. Improve the web site information.
Balance basic repairs of the existing parks and amenities with high profile improvements	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete a Buffalo Bill Grave and Museum/Lookout Mountain feasibility study and site plan, and build a Buffalo Bill Advisory Group/Board. 2. Concentrate on projects that are highly collaborative such as Summit Lake and the Buffalo Herd Overlook.
Protect the natural, cultural, and historic resources of the system.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete the natural inventory, guidelines, and site plans for Corwina/O'Fallon/Pence Parks. 2. Submit the National Historic Landmark designation for Red Rocks Park and Amphitheatre to the National Park Service in Washington, D.C.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION



Echo Lake Park

What is needed to take this world-renowned system of parks to a higher level of quality and ensure that all Denver residents get to experience their Mountain Parks?

A 2007 Denver Post editorial called for the Denver Mountain Parks Master Plan to answer some thoughtful longstanding questions. Do Denver residents use and value their Mountain Parks? Should the City own and manage these parks? Just as in 1912, some naysayers question Denver's role, but research and public input for this Plan overwhelmingly reinforce that the values that drove early Denver leaders to create the system are actually just as valid today, if not more so.

Denver residents absolutely want neighborhood parks, trails, and recreation facilities. They want mountain parks, too. In fact, mountain parks are used and valued more than many other park and recreation facilities. Even in difficult budget times, the answer does not lie in pitting Mountain Parks against city parks. Recreation,

escape from the city, and simply being in the mountains are key to the quality of life for Denverites. Denver residents are proud that their City created the Denver Mountain Parks. They also are appreciative, along with metro-wide residents, that Denver has protected natural resources and open space for the region for more than nine decades. Although Denver is no longer alone in providing and protecting mountain park land, Denver Mountain Parks remain an historic keystone in today's regional open space system.



Visitors at Dedisse Shelter

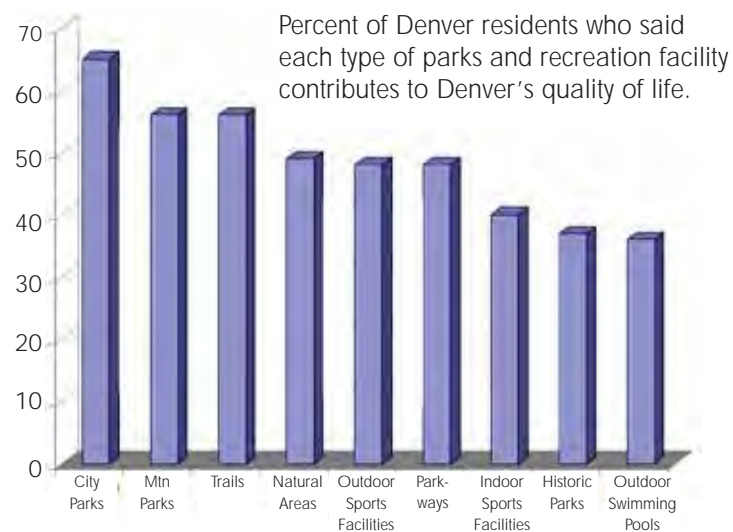
First steps in implementing this Master Plan must blend the building of an institutional ability to complete and maintain these improvements with the kicking off some highly successful, highly visible projects.

The Mountain Parks system traditionally lags in funding at a time of increasingly tight city budgets. Although the Denver Mountain Parks do have a special potential to generate partnerships, new programs,

and new revenues, it will take commitment, innovation, and collaboration to ensure the long term viability of the system. For credibility, momentum, and visible successes, internal funding must start to increase.

Momentum that has begun in communications and marketing (the new logo, brochure, and articles) must be sustained. Now that the Master Plan is completed and a direction established, the crucially important partnership with the Denver Mountain Parks Foundation must be nurtured and expanded.

The enthusiasm and relationships built between the counties and other agency partners through the Mountain Parks Advisory Group should be enhanced and not abandoned. It is a time of institution building, with adequate staffing, funding, and partnerships, to create the anchor for long-term sustainability and success. Just as it was written in 1913, "The Mountain Parks idea in Denver is equality of opportunity."



Source: 2003 Game Plan General Survey of Denver Residents



Wildflowers at Pence Mountain Park



Echo Lake Park