

**North Trail Study Area Plan  
Interests Public Workshop 1  
Boulder Fire Training Center  
6/24/2015**

**Attendance**

Steve Armstead  
Heather Bergman  
Juliet Bonnell  
Mark Gershman

Frances Hartogh  
Alycia Knutson  
Annie McFarland  
Katy Waechter

Deryn Wagner  
Katie Waller  
Phil Yates

25 members of the public were in attendance.

**Introduction**

Frances Hartogh, member of Open Space Board of Trustees, welcomed the participants and thanked them for coming to the workshop. She explained that the newly finished Inventory and Assessment Report provides in-depth information regarding the current conditions of North Trail Study Area (North TSA) resources. The Open Space Board of Trustees is involved in the public process of the North TSA plan in order to have a comprehensive understanding of what is happening on the ground and fully consider the implications of their decision on visitors. She encouraged everyone to spread the word of the public process to their family and friends and to come to the next meeting on Saturday, June 27, at the Calvary Church.

Steve Armstead, environmental planner with Open Space and Mountain Parks (OSMP), stated that the North TSA process guides how OSMP assesses its goals and mission, while giving context to management plans and decisions. OSMP staff is working to best accommodate all the interests within the North TSA system. He explained the goal of the North TSA process is to improve visitors' experiences and increase sustainability of trails while conserving natural, agricultural and cultural resources. There are four stages of the North TSA process: inventory and assessment, interests and issues, draft plan development and plan acceptance. OSMP recently completed the inventory and assessment phase, and created the Inventory and Assessment Report to share their findings. The report, as well as other resources, can be found at the [OSMP North TSA website](#). The process recently entered the interests and issues phase, which addresses the "why" and will include expert panels on applicable topics. The third stage is draft plan development, in which OSMP staff will collaborate with the public to assess the "how" of trying to solve the issues identified in the first two steps. After this step is complete, the draft plan will be presented to the Open Space Board of Trustees for approval and taken to City Council for acceptance. The plan approval process will start in early 2016.

There are multiple ways for members of the public to stay involved throughout the North TSA process. OSMP will hold another public interests meeting on Saturday, June 27, and more public meetings later in the process. Mr. Armstead stressed the importance of public participation and noted that providing input during meetings is not the only way to participate. Members of the public can also provide input via [www.inspireboulder.com](http://www.inspireboulder.com) or [www.northtsa.org](http://www.northtsa.org), or interact with OSMP staff in the North TSA. To stay up-to-date throughout the process, interested parties can sign up for the OSMP newsletter at <https://bouldercolorado.gov/osmp/north-tsa-email-list>.

## **Summary of Inventory Report**

### *Recreational Resources*

Annie McFarland, Visitor Access Coordinator at OSMP, summarized the recreational resources identified in the Inventory Report. She explained that visitors to the North TSA have increased substantially over the past twenty years, with North TSA visitation representing one-fifth of total visitation to OSMP land with only 13% of the trails in the system. The areas with the highest concentrated use are Wonderland Lake and Boulder Valley Ranch. Most visitors to the North TSA come by foot (50%), which is quite different from the total visitors of OSMP, with 57% arriving by car system-wide. Most visitors to the North TSA reported coming simply to experience the unique landscape, while others identified hiking, running, biking, horseback riding, and other activities as what draws them to the area.

Ms. McFarland explained that the inventory reported that over half of the North TSA trails are in good or very good condition, with conditions trending down starting in 2007 and further declining after the flood. Most of the issues with trail conditions have to do with erosion or braiding, especially around Boulder Valley Ranch. She also stated that there are over 36 miles of undesigned trails in the North TSA, which are a byproduct of bad trail conditions or provide connections not currently available with designated trails. Many of these undesigned trails are located parallel to designated trails. However, other areas such as Joder Ranch also have a significant amount. Throughout the assessment process, many participants identified a need for more trail connections, both within existing North TSA trails and with other trail systems. Most of the trail connection recommendations from the community requested a way to connect northern resources to southern resources.

### *Natural Resources*

Mark Gershman, Environmental Planning Supervisor at OSMP, summarized the assessment of natural resources within the North TSA. He explained that there are many high-quality habitats within the North TSA; these are areas of high biodiversity, critical wildlife habitats, and unfragmented habitat blocks. There are five conservation targets within the North TSA, all of which meet specific needs as identified by local or state agencies. These natural resource targets include mixedgrass prairie mosaic, xeric tallgrass prairie, wetlands and riparian areas, upland shrubs and exposed rocks and cliffs. While some of these habitats are larger or more visible than others, they all foster focal species that are unique and important to the North TSA.

Mr. Gershman explained that in order to define these areas, OSMP staff looked at a variety of habitat sustainability indices. Some of the identified habitats are requirements for focal species. Staff also analyzed in what ways human activities influence these species and used this information to develop habitat suitability maps. Mr. Gershman expressed that this level of analysis is necessary because it is sometimes challenging to see impacts of humans on the ecological needs of habitat systems.

### *Cultural Resources*

Katy Waechter, Cultural Resource Technician at OSMP, explained the cultural resources important to the North TSA as identified in the Inventory and Assessment Report. There are two fossil formations within the North TSA, which represent the paleontology resources. The North TSA is also home to a few aboriginal archaeology sites, such as the Teegarden Wall, whose locations cannot be made public. Most of the cultural resources in the area are classified as historical archaeology or historical structures and objects, such as the Lee Hill Lime Kiln or the Old Cobalt Mine. Ms. Waechter explained that these significant resources still shape the characteristics of the North TSA today.

### *Agricultural Resources*

Steve Armstead provided a summary of the agricultural resources in the North TSA. Compared to other TSAs, almost half the acres in the North TSA are used for some sort of agricultural operation. Some of these operations are of statewide importance, due to their specific uses and unique qualities. Almost 2,500

acres within the North TSA have been identified as operations or lands with statewide importance. There are also areas of local importance, which is determined by Boulder County and includes resources relevant to surrounding communities. Currently, there are 26 leased agricultural operations within the North TSA, ranging in size from 19 to 1,365 acres. Most of these are cattle grazing or hay production operations, with one organic farm producing vegetables, sheep and hay.

Mr. Armstead explained that there are additional properties within the North TSA that have the potential to serve as grassbanks. Some of these areas are currently under-leased, and could help disburse stress on the land from cattle grazing. There are also important habitats within some leased lands, such as irrigated hayfields that accommodate bobolink songbirds. OSMP works with the lessees in these areas to ensure that the needs of the agricultural operations and the natural resources are met.

### **Questions and Answers**

Mr. Armstead opened the floor to questions from the public. The questions and responses are below.

*How much of North TSA land is owned by OSMP?*

Everything in the map in dark brown is what OSMP owns or jointly owns and is responsible for managing. There are also a few properties that OSMP does not own, but manages. Properties that are shaded on the map are conservation easements. While OSMP does not technically own these properties, the department is instrumental in their management.

*Is the cow on Joder Ranch a historical resource?*

No, it is not a documented historical resource, but it is old!

*Are undesignated trails graded for quality or potential usefulness? Some of them seem to have signs that lead visitors to think they are designated.*

No. In the past, OSMP has rated undesignated trails based on level of wear. The most recent round of assessments did not take this into account and did not rate these trails by their worthiness for designation. The signs by undesignated trails are an attempt to create structure clarifying what is going on and what is allowed in the area. OSMP is currently working to clearly define designated and undesignated trails.

*What percentage of this area is under management by a public agency?*

The North TSA includes 7,701 acres of OSMP managed lands. Other public lands in the area, totaling 6,994.36 acres, are not part of the North TSA Plan. Of these additional 6,994.26 acres, Boulder County Federal Land owns 2,656.76 acres, Boulder County Open Space owns 3,249.59 acres, City of Boulder Parks and Recreation owns 1,076.69 acres and Longmont Open Space owns 11.32 acres.

*Are there plans to collaborate with other agencies on the North TSA?*

Yes, OSMP is in discussion with Boulder County in order to better understand their interests. Boulder Parks and Recreation manages Boulder Reservoir, so there is a consistent stream of communication in that regard. OSMP also meets with the State of Colorado, the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) and the people that manage the Lefthand Creek Master Plan.

*How are the comments on Inspire Boulder going to be used?*

Inspire Boulder will be open for new comments through July 12. Past comments are available in the compendium of the Inventory and Assessment Report. On the OSMP website, all past comments are available for public viewing. These comments will be used to create scenarios later in the North TSA process.

*Are certain feedback formats weighed differently than others?*

No. All comments are considered no matter the manner in which they were collected. Due to the characteristics of certain formats, public workshops and Inspire Boulder offer a more immediate opportunity to share and interact with staff.

*Is there going to be public involvement throughout the North TSA planning process?*

Yes. There was public involvement in the assessment phase, as well as the interests phase occurring right now. Community members will also have an opportunity to share their input after OSMP staff develops scenarios. OSMP is looking to gather as much public opinion as possible throughout the entire process.

*What are the biggest issues within the North TSA and what can be done to help?*

This is a question that OSMP is exploring throughout the current process. Public feedback from this meeting, as well as other forums, will help to define an answer. OSMP is working to figure out where there are opportunities to further protect resources as well as to improve the visitor experience.

*What percentage of land in the North TSA is closed to public access? What percentage of this land is reserved for wildlife conservation?*

These numbers are included in the Inventory and Assessment Report.

*Does OSMP have a target for how much of the North TSA is accessible to the public?*

No, the amount of space open to the public in the future all depends on the North TSA process. OSMP manages the land in the best way possible to accomplish the necessary goals.

*Some of the public comments received so far have been proposing new trails, but it seems as though the current trails are not being maintained properly. How is OSMP receiving these suggestions?*

There is a lot of work to be done to maintain the system. OSMP will have to work to figure out how to improve visitor experiences while maintaining what is currently open.

### **Group Discussion**

Heather Bergman of Peak Facilitation Group explained that OSMP staff is looking to compile interests rather than positions. Positions describe what someone wants or needs, while an interest explains why they want or need it. If OSMP were to only assess participants' positions, the final result would be distributive, rather than integrative, and a lot of people would not get what they want. Assessing the "why" of what visitors want will enable OSMP to meet the needs of a diverse community, allowing for more win/win opportunities.

In order to gather this information from the assembled members of the community, Ms. Bergman led a group discussion to identify positions and the interests behind them. Participants were asked to identify their interests in the North TSA as well as where these interests intersect. Below is a summary of these comments.

Interest	Position	Intersections
Improved Visitor Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stack trails to create multiple recreation options.</li> <li>• Create loop trails to maximize variability.</li> <li>• Allow users to create their own experiences.</li> <li>• Disperse users quickly.</li> <li>• Maintain existing trails to enable safer experiences for visitors.</li> <li>• Maintain trails, especially at crossings and intersections.</li> <li>• Maintain current trails and build better ones.</li> <li>• Assess the reason for the creation of undesignated trails.</li> <li>• Look to Europe for trail designs to minimize user conflict.</li> <li>• Create more sustainable trails.</li> <li>• Design trails to minimize user conflict.</li> <li>• Consider research stating new trail designs do not require additional space.</li> <li>• Find creative ways to make up for OSMP’s lack of resources to create better trails.</li> <li>• Consider assessing fees to offset lack of OSMP resources.</li> <li>• Improve the balance of activities on multi-use trails.</li> <li>• Maintain ways for visitors to feel connected to nature.</li> <li>• Designate more trails for solitude/quiet hikers and observers.</li> <li>• Create more diverse experiences within North TSA.</li> <li>• Allow visitors an opportunity to sit and view nature.</li> <li>• Increase benches, possibly using Sage Trail as a model.</li> <li>• Create quiet areas to rest and view wildlife.</li> <li>• Open more OSMP land for recreational opportunities.</li> <li>• Create more Voice and Sight trails.</li> <li>• Maintain Voice and Sight opportunities as they are important for fitness.</li> <li>• Separate dog access, as some visitors find them irritating.</li> <li>• Maintain solitude of North TSA.</li> <li>• Expand programs for stargazing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased safety</li> <li>• Increased education and understanding</li> <li>• Balance of recreation and natural resources</li> <li>• Decreased visitor conflict</li> <li>• Improved access and accessibility</li> <li>• Conservation of natural resources</li> </ul>
Conservation of Natural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect natural resources from dogs as they disturb water.</li> <li>• Offer context of management decisions.</li> <li>• Preserve unique resources, species and ecosystems.</li> <li>• Protect endangered species from non-native species and human interactions.</li> <li>• Minimize light pollution to benefit stargazers.</li> <li>• Avoid habitat fragmentation to maintain natural value.</li> <li>• Preserve natural resources for future generations.</li> <li>• Allow rare and common species to thrive.</li> <li>• Prevent spread of invasive species by keeping unfragmented habitat intact.</li> <li>• Mitigate spread of non-native or undesirable seeds by explaining impacts to visitors and getting them to take seeds off their socks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased education and understanding</li> <li>• Balance of recreation and natural resources</li> <li>• Honoring community values and commitments</li> </ul>

Interest	Position	Intersections
Improved Access and Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider assessing fees to offset lack of OSMP resources.</li> <li>• Originate bike trails from residential areas so that bikers don't need to travel in cars to get to trails.</li> <li>• Originate recreational opportunities from residential areas so that visitors can spend less time in cars, traveling to trails.</li> <li>• Enable people to take buses to/from trailheads to increase access and reduce time spent driving in cars.</li> <li>• Develop access for cross-country skiing without driving.</li> <li>• Create more Voice &amp; Sight (V&amp;S) trails so that visitors can walk to them without having to travel in cars.</li> <li>• Expand Voice and Sight trails to match population growth.</li> <li>• Designate parking specifically for horse trailers.</li> <li>• Separate trail usage by direction, days or types.</li> <li>• Allow visitors opportunities to sit and view nature.</li> <li>• Designate more trails for solitude/quiet hikers and observers.</li> <li>• Stack trails to create multiple recreation options.</li> <li>• Utilize signage to encourage respect and etiquette.</li> <li>• Do not decrease access, like at Douby Draw.</li> <li>• Remind visitors the value of appreciating both recreational uses and preservation of habitat to sustain natural resources.</li> <li>• Expand programs for stargazing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decreased visitor conflict</li> <li>• Increased safety</li> <li>• Improved visitor experience</li> <li>• Increased education and understanding</li> </ul>
Honoring Community Values and Commitments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage a broad representation of the community.</li> <li>• Increase accessibility for underrepresented populations.</li> <li>• Promote stewardship in underrepresented communities.</li> <li>• Enrich lives of underrepresented communities.</li> <li>• Integrate underrepresented populations.</li> <li>• Limit GMO crops on city land.</li> <li>• Promote organic farming on North TSA leased land.</li> <li>• Equally regulate all visitor groups.</li> <li>• Preserve natural resources for future generations.</li> <li>• Equally consider and engage all visitor groups.</li> <li>• Balance recreation with the preservation of resources.</li> <li>• Allow for recreation and preservation of natural resources in different places.</li> <li>• Remind visitors the value of appreciating both recreational uses and preservation of habitat to sustain natural resources.</li> <li>• Provide sustainable habitat for native species.</li> <li>• Increase stewardship among North TSA visitors.</li> <li>• Promote area history, especially that of Joder Ranch.</li> <li>• Discourage the use of headphones.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved visitor experience</li> <li>• Decreased visitor conflict</li> <li>• Conservation of natural resources</li> <li>• Improved access and accessibility</li> <li>• Balance of recreation and natural resources</li> </ul>
Increased Education and Understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain context and impacts of management decisions.</li> <li>• Promote rule compliance through education.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Balance of recreation and natural resources</li> <li>• Decreased visitor conflict</li> </ul>

Interest	Position	Intersections
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain impacts of spreading seeds of undesirable species.</li> <li>• Tell visitors the impact of their decisions.</li> <li>• Utilize signage with positive reinforcement.</li> <li>• Educate visitors about visitor conflicts.</li> <li>• Find creative ways to offset lack of OSMP resources.</li> <li>• Encourage utilization of trails for their intended purpose, especially around Wonderland Lake.</li> <li>• Inform visitors about how invasive species spread, degrade native habitat, and impact bee/insect populations and native wildlife.</li> <li>• Inform visitors how to mitigate the spreading of seeds</li> <li>• Increase stewardship among North TSA visitors.</li> <li>• Utilize signage to encourage respect and etiquette.</li> <li>• Better communicate which trails are undesignated.</li> <li>• Utilize signs to explain closed trails and re-routed trails.</li> <li>• Increase OSMP presence to encourage better behavior.</li> <li>• Explain sounds of nature to decrease use of headphones.</li> <li>• Remind visitors the value of appreciating both recreational uses and preservation of habitat to sustain natural resources.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased safety</li> <li>• Conservation of natural resources</li> </ul>
Improved Connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connect Boulder to North TSA via trails or paths, without using roads.</li> <li>• Create trail from Orange Orchard to North TSA for a longer outdoor experience.</li> <li>• Connect Boulder to North TSA by extending bus routes to trailheads.</li> <li>• Create a multi-use trail connecting Boulder to Lyons.</li> <li>• Create access to North TSA from Niwot after Highway 36.</li> <li>• Originate recreational opportunities from residential areas.</li> <li>• Maintain ways for visitors to feel connected to nature.</li> <li>• Consider assessing fees to offset lack of OSMP resources.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved visitor experience</li> <li>• Increased safety</li> <li>• Improved access and accessibility</li> </ul>
Balance of Recreation and Natural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open more OSMP land for recreational opportunities.</li> <li>• Create more Voice and Sight trails to match expanding population.</li> <li>• Be cautious when reserving land for explicit uses.</li> <li>• Protect natural resources as they bring in visitors.</li> <li>• Create more sustainable trails.</li> <li>• Assess long-term sustainability of system in the context of increasing out-of-town visitors.</li> <li>• Utilize signage to encourage respect and etiquette.</li> <li>• Assess undesignated trails for impact on natural resources.</li> <li>• Better communicate which trails are undesignated.</li> <li>• Do not overburden OSMP staff or North TSA resources.</li> <li>• Designate trails for specific uses to minimize impact on natural resources.</li> <li>• Prevent spread of invasive species by keeping unfragmented habitat intact.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conservation of natural resources</li> <li>• Honoring community values and commitments</li> <li>• Increased education and understanding</li> </ul>

Interest	Position	Intersections
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remind visitors the value of appreciating both recreational uses and preservation of habitat to sustain natural resources.</li> </ul>	
Increased Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mitigate visitor conflicts.</li> <li>Design trails better.</li> <li>Separate trail usage by direction, days or types.</li> <li>Separate dogs from people and bikers.</li> <li>Maintain existing trails to enable safer experiences for visitors.</li> <li>Find creative ways to make up for OSMP’s lack of resources to maintain North TSA.</li> <li>Encourage utilization of trails for their intended purpose, especially around Wonderland Lake.</li> <li>Connect Boulder to North TSA without using roads.</li> <li>Do not consider road shoulders a substitute for bike paths.</li> <li>Supply more benches in the shade.</li> <li>Assess the impact of undesignated trails.</li> <li>Discourage the use of headphones.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved visitor experience</li> <li>Decreased visitor conflict</li> <li>Increased education and understanding</li> <li>Improved connectivity</li> </ul>
Decreased Visitor Conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disperse visitors quickly.</li> <li>Separate trail usage by direction, days or types.</li> <li>Separate dogs from people and bikers.</li> <li>Designate more trails for solitude/quiet hikers and observers.</li> <li>Utilize signage with positive reinforcement.</li> <li>Use signage to address visitor conflict on trails.</li> <li>Encourage utilization of trails for their intended purpose, especially around Wonderland Lake.</li> <li>Utilize signage to encourage respect and etiquette.</li> <li>Assess the reason for the creation of undesignated trails.</li> <li>Increase OSMP presence to encourage better behavior.</li> <li>Discourage headphones.</li> <li>Look to Europe for trail designs to minimize user conflict.</li> <li>Remind visitors the value of appreciating both recreational uses and preservation of habitat to sustain natural resources.</li> <li>Design trails to minimize user conflict.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased safety</li> <li>Improved visitor experience</li> <li>Increased education and understanding</li> </ul>