

**North Trail Study Area Plan
Interests Public Workshop 2
Cavalry Bible Church
6/27/2015**

Attendance

Steve Armstead
Heather Bergman
Juliet Bonnell
Frances Boulding

Molly Davis
Julie Johnson
Annie McFarland
Katie Waller

11 members of the public were in attendance.

Introduction

Molly Davis, member of Open Space Board of Trustees, welcomed the participants and thanked them for coming to the workshop. She explained that the Open Space Board of Trustees is involved in the public process of the North Trail Study Area (North TSA) Plan to have a comprehensive understanding of what is happening on the ground and to encourage public participation. The feedback at these meetings is very useful to the board in making an informed decision regarding the future of the North TSA. She encouraged everyone to spread the word of the public process to their families and friends and to stay involved throughout each phase.

Steve Armstead, environmental planner with Open Space and Mountain Parks (OSMP), stated that the North TSA process guides how OSMP assesses goals and its 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 is currently in 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. 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 or 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 and Assessment 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 undesignated 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 undesignated 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

Steve Armstead 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, which represent specific grassland conservation needs as identified by the Grassland Ecosystem Management Plan and other special natural resources specific to the North TSA. 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. Armstead 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. Armstead 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

Julie Johnson, Cultural Resource Program Coordinator at OSMP, explained the cultural resources important to the North TSA as identified in the Inventory 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. Johnson explained that these significant resources still shape the characteristics of the North TSA today.

Agricultural Resources

Julie Johnson provided a summary of the agricultural resources in 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.

Ms. Johnson 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

Has OSMP mapped areas of invasive species concern?

Yes. Each of the conservation targets has been identified and mapped. If there is a specific site of concern, please share this information with OSMP.

Could prescriptive grazing help to better manage thistle and yellow clover in Boulder Valley Ranch?

Yes. OSMP uses prescriptive grazing to assist with the control of invasive plants. Most thistles are problematic and part of control efforts; however, some are native and not invasive. OSMP does its best to manage non-native species. Recently thistles have been hard to control due to the moisture after the 2013 flood and this past spring. It is difficult to identify all areas of concern, as the plant is abundant. Yellow clover is also hard to manage since it is so widespread. OSMP typically chooses to invest its resources into management prescriptions with the most effective and efficient outcomes, which may sometimes include prescriptive grazing.

How are braided trails present in North TSA?

Most of the braided trails are parallel to existing trails. Braiding is only recorded and reported if it is longer than 30 feet.

Are all undesignated trails mapped?

All undesignated trails are recorded, but different types are used to evaluate different problems. Braiding is not mapped as an undesignated trail as it is instead used as a gauge of trail condition. Undesignated trails separate from trail braiding are mapped.

Where can members of the public read the Inventory and Assessment Report?

The report is available online, as well as at all OSMP offices. It will be available at the library or other locations in the future. Please sign up for the OSMP newsletter to know if/when this occurs. The report is also available for purchase for \$80.00, which covers the cost of printing.

Has there been a discussion of connecting Wonderland Trail to Sanitas Trail?

OSMP is still assessing trail connections outside North TSA boundaries and will come up with possible solutions after gathering more information.

What was not completed in the Inventory Report that still needs to be finished?

The report serves as a solid foundation in reaching the goals of North TSA. OSMP could spend years gathering data, but at some point it is necessary to synthesize the large pool of information that is available and take action. Members of the public or other organizations are more than welcome to share additional data, information, or positions throughout the entire North TSA process.

Is OSMP working to make the maps from the Inventory and Assessment Report easier to print?

Most of these maps are incredibly detailed and become hard to interpret or relate when viewed on a small scale. OSMP is working on making information from the report available on Google Earth. However, there are certain types of information that do not translate well into easy sharing and printing.

Is there a way for the public to share information with OSMP that is not included in the Inventory and Assessment Report?

Yes, please send all applicable information to OSMP via email, mail or in person.

Is there a list of species of concern in the Inventory and Assessment Report?

There is information on rare plant species in the appendix. Information about species of concern is analyzed more heavily in the Grassland Plan, but some of that information is included in the Inventory and Assessment Report. BCNA.org also has a list of species that used to be in the North TSA, but are no longer present.

How much of North TSA land is categorized as wetlands? When entering Boulder Valley Ranch, there is a wetland that appears to be decreasing in size due to cattails.

Roughly 7 percent of North TSA acreage is categorized as wetlands or riparian areas. This includes streams (both seasonal and year-round) that come out of the foothills, reservoirs, and manmade and natural ponds. The history and management of water for agriculture in the area have created wetland and riparian habitats that sustain native species.

How do new federal administrative regulations affect wetlands in the North TSA?

OSMP is typically always in compliance with federal wetland regulations.

What can OSMP do to deter visitors from creating social trails?

OSMP has and will continue to explore many options to slow or stop the creation of social trails. Some of the possible actions include increasing education, improving signage, constructing fences, enacting regulatory closures and offering designated trail alternatives. OSMP is also collaborating with Leave No Trace to identify other effective methods of deterrence.

Are humans allowed to walk in Research and Natural Areas (NAs)? Can there be more restrictions regarding these areas to protect natural resources?

Yes, currently visitors may walk through NAs and it is also possible to put in place resource protection closures.

Since not all visitor interest groups are present at this meeting, is it possible to hold another on the same topic with a broader audience?

Scheduling and organizing public meetings requires a significant amount of OSMP resources. Scheduling another meeting on this same topic may not be possible due to a lack of resources and required adherence to the timeline. There will be more public meetings throughout the process and all available information can be reviewed on the OSMP website.

How does OSMP consider information not available for public review, such as that submitted by private citizens and organizations like Open Boulder?

Anyone is encouraged to share any information with OSMP throughout the North TSA planning process. Many group members who have submitted information also attend public meetings and have clarified their positions and interests through these discussions. Positions are not inherently bad and may serve as potential solutions in the future. OSMP equally evaluates all information, regardless of the organization or the manner of submission.

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"> • Create trails that are not uphill on steep roads. • Design trails that maintain good conditions over time. • Design trails with sustainable surfaces. • Avoid concrete or pavement on trails. • Designate specific areas of existing trails for quiet use. • Design trails with consideration for human impacts. • Improve damaged trails before constructing new ones. • Repair damaged trails that limit access around Lime Kiln. • Create long-distance, sustainable, loop trails. • Connect Wonderland Lake to East Ridge and Dakota Ridge Trails with underpasses through wildlife corridors. • Design future trails similar those at Green Briar. • Maintain quietness of North TSA. • Designate some trails for quiet uses. • Designate quiet areas for bird watching or meditation. • Allow areas for visitors to sit and enjoy the landscape. • Allow more places to walk on the earth. • Encourage visitors to turn off electronic devices. • Design specific areas of existing trails for quiet use. • Separate quiet trails from multi-use trails. • Place more garbage cans along trails and at trailheads. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased safety • Conservation of natural resources • Improved Connectivity • Improved access and accessibility • Decreased visitor conflict
Conservation of Natural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase lazuli bunting population in natural habitats. • Maintain unfragmented critical habitats and grasslands. • Increase unfragmented habitats for wildlife. • Close social trails in large habitat blocks. • Maintain integrity of large habitats. • Explain the importance of natural resource preservation. • Place signs around great horned owl habitats. • Use pamphlets to educate visitors about natural resources. • Tighten restrictions on creating trails in NAs. • Deter visitors from walking off-trail in NAs. • Decrease invasive or undesirable species next to trails. • Limit human use of North TSA to daylight hours. • Limit human use of North TSA in wildlife corridors. • Limit access to certain areas of concern by day or time. • Improve damaged trails before constructing new ones. • Preserve wildlife in spite of human and dog presence. • Create long distance, sustainable, loop trails. • Do not create additional Voice and Sight trails. • Do not create additional mountain biking trails. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased education and understanding • Increased safety • Improved visitor experience • Decreased visitor conflict

Interest	Position	Intersections
Improved Access and Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect Wonderland Lake to East Ridge and Dakota Ridge Trails with underpasses through wildlife corridors. • Allow more places to walk on the earth. • Designate some trails for quiet uses. • Designate quiet areas for bird watching or meditation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved connectivity • Improved visitor experience • Decreased visitor conflict
Honoring Community Values and Commitments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain cultural value of Joder Ranch. • Emphasize ranching and farming heritage. • Manage OSMP lands for future generations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation of natural resources • Increased education and understanding
Increased Education and Understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate to visitors that they must pick up their trash. • Use pamphlets to increase visitor knowledge. • Explain the importance of natural resource preservation. • Focus on education to increase rule compliance. • Place signs around great horned owl habitats. • Use QR codes instead of brochures to share information. • Use signage to encourage larger groups to be respectful. • Clarify context of why no dogs are allowed on some trails. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved visitor experience • Conservation of natural resources • Decreased visitor conflict
Improved Connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect Twin Lakes to Cottonwood Trail. • Create long-distance, sustainable, loop trails. • Connect Wonderland Lake to East Ridge and Dakota Ridge Trails with underpasses through wildlife corridors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased safety • Conservation of natural resources • Improved visitor experience
Increased Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect Twin Lakes to Cottonwood Trail. • Avoid Jay Road when creating trail connections. • Improve damaged trails before constructing new ones. • Connect Wonderland Lake to East Ridge and Dakota Ridge Trails with underpasses through wildlife corridors. • Do not create additional Voice & Sight trails. • Do not create additional mountain biking trails. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved visitor experience • Conservation of natural resources • Decreased visitor conflict • Improved connectivity
Decreased Visitor Conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit large groups utilizing North TSA for events. • Use signage to encourage larger groups to be respectful. • Do not create additional Voice & Sight trails. • Do not create additional mountain biking trails. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased education and understanding • Conservation of natural resources

