

**North Trail Study Area (NTSA) Plan
Assessment Public Meeting 1
East Boulder Recreation Center
5/2/2015**

ATTENDANCE

Steve Armstead
Jayne Basford
Heather Bergman
Josh Bilbao

Molly Davis
Rachele Difebbo
Alyssa Frideres
Mark Gershman

Katie Waller
Phil Yates

There were approximately 20 members of the public in attendance.

INTRODUCTION

Molly Davis, a member of the Open Space Board of Trustees, welcomed the public and explained that the board is dedicated to utilizing public input gathered at these meetings when reporting to the City Council. She encouraged the public to stay involved in the entirety of the North Trail Study Area (NTSA) process as community input is important.

Steve Armstead, a planner with Open Space and Mountain Parks (OSMP), explained the goal of the NTSA process is to improve visitors' experiences and increase sustainability of trails while conserving natural, agricultural and cultural resources. The West TSA was completed recently, and the NTSA will continue the Trail Study Area process. There are four stages of the NTSA process: inventory and assessment, interests and issues, draft plan development and plan acceptance. OSMP is currently in the inventory and assessment stage, which assesses the "what" of identifying current conditions and management practices. The next stage is interests and issues, 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 NTSA process. OSMP will hold another public assessment meeting on Wednesday, May 6, 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 or www.northtsa.org, or interact with OSMP staff in the North TSA. To stay informed throughout the process, members of the public can sign up for the OSMP newsletter at <https://bouldercolorado.gov/osmp/north-tsa-email-list>.

QUESTIONS/ANSWERS

Mr. Armstead addressed a few frequently asked questions regarding the NTSA process; these questions and the associated responses are below. Following the FAQs, Mr. Armstead answered questions from the participants in the meeting. Responses to these questions are also below. Additionally, some participants wrote questions down on comment cards and answers to these questions are below as well.

Is the North TSA process similar to the West TSA process?

The North TSA process does not have a collaborative group like the West TSA process did. The NTSA is a broad and inclusive process designed to generate many opportunities for public input. We are also looking to reach different groups within the community.

Are outcomes predetermined?

No. OSMP staff need your help in identifying issues with current conditions and management practices within the NTSA. We want to improve the area for all visitors.

What is happening with the Joder property?

The process of opening the Joder interim trail is currently underway. The NTSA will not revisit the decision that there will be an interim trail. It will instead focus on evaluating the long-term role of the Joder property and the interim trail.

What is the community role in developing and selecting preferred scenarios?

OSMP needs public input in combining and manipulating the pieces of the alternative scenarios. This will ensure that all options have been explored and the proper pieces come together to accomplish the mission of the NTSA process.

Is the Joder trail happening?

Yes. The interim trail needs some work and still needs proper permits and permissions before it is opened to the public.

Will the finished product have the flexibility to connect with other resources both in and out of the plan area?

The NTSA process is specifically focused on the land contained in the area since OSMP has varying degrees of management authority over this land. OSMP can work with other land management agencies and property owners to develop partnerships and create connections between resources.

Will each planning phase have meetings like today?

Yes. Public workshops will also occur during the interests and issues phase and the draft plan development phase. The plan acceptance phase will include public hearings with the Open Space Board of Trustees and potentially with City Council instead of public workshops.

Are there particular bird areas that might benefit from signage urging a quiet and gentle presence?

There are areas within the NTSA that are important habitats for a variety of birds. One of the outcomes that could be discussed in the interests and issues phase is whether any special protection measures or educational measures should be considered and why. The Inventory and Assessment Report will contain information about the wildlife in the NTSA.

Much of NTSA has no trail access. Why?

There are a number of different reasons that could contribute to areas in the NTSA not currently having trail access. Many lands within the NTSA are agricultural properties and less compatible with trails while other properties are not adjacent or connected to other OSMP properties so that a trail connection could be made. Additionally, keeping trails away from areas with high natural resource value is important in maintaining adequate wildlife habitat. An outcome of the NTSA Plan could be recommendations for new trail connections to improve recreational opportunities and experiences.

How does OSMP land banking relate to recreation?

OSMP properties are really not land banked lands. The acquisition of properties is based on their fit with fulfilling City of Boulder Charter and OSMP provisions. One of the purposes for OSMP lands is for the “preservation of land for passive recreation use, such as hiking, photography or nature study, and if specifically designated, bicycling, horseback riding or fishing.”

GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Participants broke into small groups to discuss three main themes related to the NTSA: natural resources, recreation, and cultural and agricultural resources. A summary of key themes from the discussions follows.

NATURAL RESOURCES

What natural resources are important to the NTSA?

Geological Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shale and bed of fossils above the railroad grade • Plant shale communities near Six-Mile Fold • Public access to geological features • Outcrops along the hogbacks • Joder Ranch
Wildlife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Osprey • Eagles • Coyotes near Boulder Valley Ranch • Pronghorn near Boulder Valley Ranch

What currently works well with the protection and management of natural resources within the NTSA and what would you like to see improved?

Current Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flood hikes were beneficial in allowing the public to understand conditions. • Front Range is prone to landslides (e.g., Wonderland Lake, Lee Hill). • Trails on shale are not good and prone to erosion. • Eagle Trail around reservoir is alluvial and holds up well to erosion. • North of Sage Trail and west of North Rim are not getting enough water due to improper diversions. • Boulder Valley Ranch cattle shipping area is not needed and should be removed.
Recreation and Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate users about impacts of social trails. • Close trails when appropriate due to muddy conditions. • Educate users why certain areas are closed to recreation. • Allowing dogs on habitat conservation areas (HCAs) is an inconsistent policy. • Balance recreation in order to allow natural resources to thrive.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System works well because there are minimal disturbances. • Do not institute blanket closures for muddy conditions if not universal.
Habitat Conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Control where dogs are allowed. • Prevent habitat fragmentation and wildlife disturbances. • Provide more education about wildlife to avoid conflicts. • Maintain wildlife migration patterns near Lake Valley. • Protect and maintain integrity of habitat blocks. • Recognize the importance of shale communities. • Do not interfere with winter raptor habitat. • Dogs and humans negatively impact raptor habitat on the hogbacks.
Management Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare for possible impacts of climate change. • Have a staff presence in the NTSA during the planning process and tell visitors that they can influence the process. • Honor HCAs. HCAs are important. • Reevaluate HCAs after completing inventory assessment phase. • Include an explanation of dog policy on the Voice and Sight map. • Educate public regarding management decisions and conservation. • City prairie dog policies are misplaced due to lack of a true colony in the NTSA.

What natural resources would you like to know more about?

Wildlife and Vegetation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use signs to inform visitors where to be quiet to not disrupt wildlife. • Use signs to explain the importance of plant communities unique to the NTSA. • Inform public of necessary conservation steps regarding grassland species.
Natural Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show visitors what the area will look like in 50 years if it is properly maintained. • Educate the public about the geological and archeological features of the hogback outcropping. • Educate the public about reservoirs and other water systems. • Educate the public about The Palisades.
Management Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create educational programs in the NTSA, including nature hikes. • Share information that informs the public of management decisions.
Additional Comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open space does not need to be treated like wilderness. • Use more scientific information to inform the decision-making process. • Create better signage throughout the area while avoiding sign pollution. • The ecosystem in this area is unique and has been disturbed. • HCA designations are a bastardization of conservation.

RECREATION

Regarding recreation opportunities in the NTSA, what would you like to see remain the same and why?

Multi-use Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birdwatching and nature watching • Horseback riding, especially at Joder Ranch • Trail-based recreation • Dogs: both on and off leash • Lack of user conflict
-----------------------------	---

Conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain current good conditions. • Value geological features, especially the hogbacks on the foothills. • Continue to offer a variety of terrain.
Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain water access for dogs. • Maintain public access to geological features of interest. • Maintain quiet nature of NTSA. • Continue allowing access to Boulder Valley Ranch. • Continue allowing open access to existing trails.

Where can the management of recreation opportunities in the NTSA be improved?

Trails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate social trails for official designation. • Create regional trail connections: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hogback Trail to railroad grade ○ Railroad grade to Joder Ranch ○ Joder Ranch to Heil ○ Lefthand Canyon ○ North • Consider wildlife corridors when designing trails. • Discourage off-trail travel by explaining the reasoning. • Connect Old Kiln Trail to southern trails. • Create loop trails to reduce user conflicts and improve experience. • Do not close existing trails. • Allow night access during the full moon. • Create shorter trails for kids. • Maintain or expand voice and sight opportunities. • Foothills parking lot is dysfunctional. • Clean trail leading to the reservoir storage tank. • Create new trails on the perimeter of agricultural land. • Utilize geology to guide trail design. • Explore roadway network trail opportunities on West Beech. • Design better trails. • Consider demographics when designing trails. Build a variety of trail types for a variety of user abilities. • Manage new trails to avoid weed infestation. • Create more trails that are ADA accessible.
Visitor Conflicts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell visitors to avoid horses on lower side of trail to minimize horses feeling threatened. • Mountain bikers must use appropriate warnings and give pedestrians enough time to safely respond. • Develop parallel trails to avoid visitor conflicts with mountain bikers. • Increase staff presence to decrease visitor conflicts. • Consider new trail designs in order to slow mountain bikers. • Identify solutions for conflicts with mountain bikers and hikers on the Foothills Trail. • Reduce visitor conflicts on roads.
Management Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow off-trail access. • Improve wayfinding signage. • Use science that is incontrovertible. • Offer more open space on Boulder Valley Ranch and Table Mountain.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternate days for activities in certain areas. • Include information about OSMP purpose and mission. • Have a light policing presence. • Impose restrictions on users other than just dog guardians. • Maximize recreation while allowing species to thrive. • Remove signage when it is no longer necessary or relevant. • Increase outreach to out-of-town visitors regarding policies. • Provide additional information about resources at trailheads to increase visitation. • Better explain blanket regulations as they change throughout the year. • Charge fees at Sage Trailhead to deter overuse. • Educate users regarding animal species and proper behavior. • Find a way to disperse users at trailheads of high-use areas. • Offer Joder Ranch as equestrian area with horse trailer parking. • Create programming that targets older users.
Physical Improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide bike racks. • Place more benches throughout recreation areas.
Dogs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Control dog waste on trails with signage and by providing receptacles. • Educate dog guardians about leash laws. • Provide rationale for dog regulations. • Create more dog-free trails.

AGRICULTURE

What agricultural resources are important in the NTSA?

Water Storage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mesa Reservoir • Boulder Reservoir
Agricultural Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cattle grazing • Farming • Goats • Calves • Historic structures

What existing management practices of agricultural resources would you like to see improved or changed in the NTSA and why?

Boulder Valley Ranch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mismanagement has led to overgrazing and too many prairie dogs. • Cows are good, but cattle grazing is not beneficial. • Agricultural presence has devastated the land.
Land Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open space should not be subdivided. • Organic farming should be the focus of NTSA land. • Current weed management program is working. • Ditch burning adds carbon dioxide to the environment. • Agricultural land should be returned back to prairie ecosystem.
Programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct bike tours of agricultural ditches. • Develop programming around the impact of NTSA farming in Boulder.

What agricultural resources would you like to have more information about?

Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water infrastructure • Ditch and irrigation history
History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joder Ranch • Boulder Valley Ranch • Abandoned agricultural structures

CULTURE AND HISTORY

What cultural or historic resources, sites or uses are important in the NTSA?

Agricultural History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boulder Valley Ranch • Joder Ranch • Ranching
Natural Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fossil outcrops on the Six-Mile Fold • Natural prairie ecosystem and its history

What is currently working well with the protection and management of cultural resources within the NTSA and what would you like to see improved?

Trail Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain easy access to cultural resources. • Limit overcrowding by not encouraging wider development of the NTSA.
Preservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on structure preservation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Old Kiln ○ Cobalt Mine • Preserve the history of Joder Ranch.
Management Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain low impact and quiet nature of the NTSA. • Place signs efficiently; look at southern OSMP system for examples. • Develop programming around history. • Consider constructing a ranger cottage in a high-traffic area. • Stop neglecting cultural and historical resources.

What cultural or historic resources would you like to have more information about?

Structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cobalt Mine • Boulder Valley Ranch • Old town sites • Agricultural infrastructure
Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use interpretive signs to explain history and impact of agriculture. • Explain the history of water and Boulder County in the NTSA.
Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boulder County Horse Association • University of Colorado

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

- A bike trail connection to Heil/Hall/Lyons is likely to become a major training venue for professional mountain bikers. Keep this in mind when considering it!
- It is sometimes difficult to locate the rationale for trail decisions on the OSMP website. Please make it easier to find! Transparency!
- Look at attached map. Black and green are potential trails. (Map provided.)
- Acquire more!
- Have public input meetings in the NTSA.
- Contact the people managing Larimer County Open Space for the expert panels.

North TSA regional connection

Write a description for your map.

