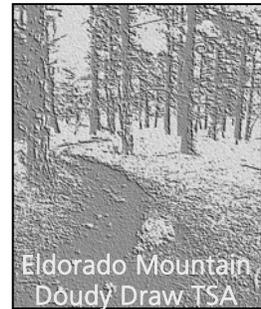


# City of Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks

## Spring Brook Loop Trail Visitor Conflict Monitoring Project Summary

March 5, 2010

For more information contact: Steve Armstead (720-564-2059)



### ***Background***

Interactions between activity groups or individuals with contrasting desired experiences and values on shared-use trails contribute to experiences of recreational conflict. Recreational conflict occurs when the presence or behavior of others interferes with a visitor's enjoyment and/or recreational goals. Discourteous behavior or an unwillingness to share trails can result in an experience of recreational conflict. Understanding differences in attitudes, values and how visitors interact on Open Space and Mountain Parks (OSMP) trails is crucial to developing solutions that reduce recreational conflict.

The Eldorado Mountain / Doudy Draw Trail Study Area (EM/DD TSA) Plan called for monitoring the level of recreational conflict on Spring Brook Loop Trail to help assess the visitor experience on this new shared-use trail. The [Sustainable Recreation Monitoring Plan for EM/DD TSA](#), with input from the community and the Open Space Board of Trustees, documents the monitoring projects occurring in the EM/DD TSA and established ranges of unacceptable conditions that indicate a need for management action. A visitor survey was identified as the means to measure recreational conflict on Spring Brook Loop Trail to determine if conflict levels are acceptable or unacceptable. The ranges of acceptable/unacceptable conflict were based on previous survey results of recreational conflict on OSMP and conflict information from other regional open space programs. The OSMP department administered an on-site written survey on Spring Brook Loop Trail in the summer of 2009.

This document provides a brief overview of the survey results and recommended adaptive management responses based on the survey results and established ranges of acceptable conflict. The complete documentation, analysis, and discussion of the survey results are available in the [Spring Brook Loop Trail Visitor Conflict Monitoring Report](#).

### ***Management objectives for Spring Brook Loop specific to visitor conflict***

1. Achieve and maintain an acceptable level of visitor-reported conflict for any individual day. An acceptable range is defined as 0-5% of the Spring Brook Loop visitor population experiencing conflict on a given day.
2. Achieve and maintain an acceptable level of visitor conflict for the past six months (intended to approximate duration since trail opening). An acceptable range is defined as 0-20% of the Spring Brook Loop visitor population experiencing conflict over the past six months.

### Major Findings

Because this survey was an on-site survey, it did not measure visitor displacement (i.e. those visitors who have stopped visiting Spring Brook Loop because of conflict or other reasons). Results are based upon a survey of 776 Spring Brook Loop visitors conducted during summer 2009.

#### Conflict

- Six percent of the survey respondents reported experiencing conflict on the day of the survey. This value lies *outside* the pre-determined acceptable range (0-5%).
- Ten percent of the respondents reported experiencing conflict during the past six months. This value lies *within* the pre-determined acceptable range (0-20%).
- A greater percentage of hikers reported conflict than any other activity.
- For all respondents combined, cyclists and dogs were, respectively, the first and second sources of conflict.
- Serious problems accounted for only 7% of the estimated conflict on the day of the survey and 10% of the total conflict over the past six months.

**Survey Question:** Did you experience *recreation conflict* while visiting Spring Brook Loop Trail today?

Response	No. of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
No	719	94.0%
Yes	46	<b>6.0%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>765</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**Survey Question:** Not including today, have you experienced *recreation conflict* while visiting Spring Brook Loop Trail during the past six months?

Response	No. of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
No	675	89.8%
Yes	77	10.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>752</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

#### Trip Characteristics

- Most respondents (68%) considered cycling their primary activity. The remainder was divided among hiking (18%), running (13%) and horseback riding (<1%).
- Less than three percent (2.8%) of the respondents brought at least one dog on the day they completed the survey. Of those with a dog, 81% were visiting with one dog and 19% had two or three dogs.
- Most respondents (65%) reported “good place to do the activities I enjoy” as the most important reason for visiting OSMP. The remainder was split between “to enjoy the place itself” (27%) and “spending time with family or friends” (7%).

### *Visitor Attitudes*

- The vast majority of respondents (95%) reported “just knowing dogs are in the area” was not a problem for them. Similarly, 96% of respondents reported “just knowing bicycles are in the area” was not a problem.
- Most respondents (91%) believed that OSMP was successfully managing Spring Brook Loop as a shared-use trail.

### *Visitor Characteristics*

- The average and median age of respondents was approximately 41 years, and the median age of respondents was 41.0 years. Most of the respondents (71%) reported living within Boulder County.
- On average, respondents had visited OSMP areas for 9.9 years (median: 6.0 years).
- The average number of times per month respondents visited Spring Brook Loop was 3.5 (median: 2.0 visits).

### ***Management Recommendations***

Early detection of visitor conflicts and effective conflict resolution depend upon understanding where and how conflicts arise. Measuring recreational conflict on the new Spring Brook Loop Trail, with the mix of activities and on-trail requirements, provides OSMP with the opportunity to characterize and address conflicts that may impact visitors' experiences. The results from this monitoring effort provide an opportunity for the early detection and adaptive response to recreational conflicts. It provides an opportunity for OSMP, the community, and trail visitors to take actions that maintain and improve the visitor experience for all visitors.

The estimated overall visitor conflict rate for the day of the survey slightly exceeded the established 0-5% range of acceptability. Based upon these findings that one indicator is slightly above the range of acceptability, OSMP recommends the following management actions to reduce conflict in the Spring Brook Loop area:

- Host trail “safety day” events that call attention to behaviors and activities that cause conflict.
- Enhance education, outreach, and signs communicating trail and activity etiquette, courtesies, problematic behaviors, and visitor experience expectations for shared-use trails.
- Clarify the “yielding triangle” requirements and expectations and increase communication and broadly share this information through additional trail and trailhead signs, education and outreach approaches.
- Meet with community groups and implement strategies aimed at reducing conflict (e.g., volunteer patrols, education and outreach to constituents).
- OSMP will not repeat the Spring Brook Loop visitor conflict survey in 2010. Instead, OSMP will use results from system-wide surveys to gauge levels of recreational conflict and ranger observations and visitor complaints to help identify any concerns that may arise at Spring Brook Loop or elsewhere. The next system-wide visitor survey is scheduled to begin in 2010.