

**CITY OF BOULDER
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM**

MEETING DATE: May 24, 2005

AGENDA TITLE: Discussion of the Implementation of the Open Space and Mountain Parks Visitor Master Plan

PRESENTERS: Open Space and Mountain Parks
Michael D. Patton, Director
Dave Kuntz, Division Manager, Planning and Technical Services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Council unanimously accepted the Open Space and Mountain Parks Visitor Master Plan (VMP) on April 12, 2005. Included in the actions taken by Council in approving the VMP was a request to return to Council to discuss the **schedule, funding and staffing** for implementing the VMP in 2005 and the following five years. More detailed information is presented on these three VMP implementation components with a specific focus on fiscal years 2005 and 2006.

Staff requests further direction from Council on implementing the Open Space and Mountain Parks Visitor Master Plan. A crucial part of the implementation component is a \$749,500 adjustment to the 2005 base budget for the Open Space and Mountain Parks Department to be discussed by Council as a second agenda item.

Approximately \$4.5 million is budgeted for VMP implementation in 2005, including \$607,000 for capital projects. The proposed funding levels for 2005 - 2010 meet the Identified Need investment program for capital projects presented in the VMP.

Staffing levels are proposed to be augmented in 2005 and 2006 by 5.5 fixed term positions to support the VMP implementation. In addition, five full-time equivalent seasonal positions are budgeted for VMP implementation in 2005. This staffing level requirement is expected to continue in future years.

Management actions in 2005 will focus initially on six principal areas.

- **Management of Habitat Conservation Areas** – Determine access for recreational purposes and protection of fragile or high-quality natural lands.
- **Trail studies, construction and maintenance** – Evaluate trail needs, determine status of undesignated trails, construct new trails, and maintain trail system.
- **Dog management** – Improve safety by reducing conflicts with other visitors and improve resource protection by reducing impacts on the natural environment.

- Evaluate effectiveness of dog management regulations and assess additional needs for no-dog trails.
- **Permits for commercial uses, special uses and off-trail use** – Develop an effective process for permitting commercial uses, special uses and off-trail use in Habitat Conservation Areas.
 - **Public involvement and community connections** – Involve the public in developing and reviewing various procedures for decision-making and ensure sufficient opportunities for public participation to improve information dissemination and stewardship.
 - **Education and enforcement** -- Focus education and enforcement in areas or on activities where visitor safety is a concern or where resource protection is important.

FISCAL IMPACTS:

Budgetary: Of the \$7.9 million approved 2005 Open Space and Mountain Parks' operating budget, approximately \$4.5 million, or 57%, is allocated to VMP implementation. This amount includes capital and non-capital expenditures for the VMP in 2005.

A one-time "adjustment to base" is proposed to the approved 2005 budget. This is due to the combined impacts of increases to actual and projected revenues for 2004 and 2005, as well as the 2004 ending fund balance. Starting in 2006, the Identified Need program level will be the base funding commitment – an increase of \$250,000 over the 2005 budget - and continuing through 2010.

The proposed adjusted 2005 budget meets the Identified Need level of funding for capital projects. Projected funding levels over the six-year CIP planning time frame also will meet the Identified Need funding level for capital projects. This investment program will result in significant improvements to the quality of the visitor experience, the condition of trails and trailheads and environmental protection.

As outlined in the VMP, the Open Space and Mountain Parks Department will also seek external funding and increase volunteer projects as part of the implementation of the VMP.

The schedule of capital improvements in the CIP as presented in the VMP for 2005-2010 is attached (Attachment A). Capital projects are funded with CIP funds and Colorado Lottery funds. CIP funding is anticipated to be approximately \$800,000 annually between 2008 and 2010.

The priorities for capital expenditures under the investment programs are:

- Visitor safety
- Maintenance of the existing infrastructure and facilities (trails and trailheads)
- Deferred maintenance of existing infrastructure

- Construction of new infrastructure

Non-capital expenditures are estimated at approximately \$3.8 million in 2005. These include personnel expenditures for current standard staff as well as fixed term and seasonal staff, including the junior ranger program. These estimates also include the cost of non-personnel expenses such as vehicles, equipment, contracted monitoring studies, printing of brochures and maps, and operating a geographic information system. The ability to successfully achieve the goals and initiatives outlined in the VMP is dependent upon having sufficient staffing with the necessary skills and training to meet the management needs outlined in the plan or to manage and oversee projects that meet those management needs.

Staff Time: Staffing levels will be augmented in 2005 and 2006 by 5.5 fixed term positions to support the VMP implementation (1 ranger, 2 resource monitoring technicians, 1 education and outreach specialist, 1 field researcher, 0.5 resource specialist). In addition, five full-time equivalent seasonal positions are budgeted for VMP implementation in 2005. Staffing level requirements are expected to continue in future years with more positions requiring project management, education and enforcement skills. An additional fixed term position will be requested in 2006 to manage and coordinate more contractors working on trail and trailhead projects.

OTHER IMPACTS:

The Visitor Master Plan identifies how the city will implement certain policies of the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan—specifically how the city will balance passive recreation with the other Charter purposes of OSMP lands. The VMP describes a community vision for specific services, and levels of service to provide a high quality and sustainable visitor experience.

As the first city master plan associated with the management of natural lands, the VMP will provide a new context for the Open Space and Mountain Parks Department. The Visitor Master Plan sets specific objectives that will improve current conditions and ensure the ability of future generations to enjoy the natural beauty and values of Open Space and Mountain Parks lands. The plan describes how OSMP will provide the community with passive recreation and visitor access as municipal services. The plan also includes measures by which the community can chart the OSMP Department's progress in meeting the VMP goals. Finally, the VMP calls for an on-going partnership with the community in the evaluation and implementation of strategies and in the refinement and development of policies.

BOARD AND COMMISSION FEEDBACK:

The general implementation schedule was included in the VMP adopted by Council. Discussions of specific projects, timing and scheduling and funding have occurred at various board meetings during the master plan review process. Preliminary discussions on implementation plans took place at the April 12, 2005 Council meetings. Staff has

discussed project implementation with the Open Space Board of Trustees on several occasions, most recently at its May 11, 2005 meeting.

PUBLIC FEEDBACK:

Project scheduling and timing, in conjunction with funding, have been topics of interest and comment throughout the public comment period on the Visitor Master Plan. The Council meeting is the first public meeting devoted solely to discussion of VMP implementation.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff requests further direction and comment from Council on the proposed implementation plan for the Open Space and Mountain Parks Visitor Master Plan.

ANALYSIS:

Project scheduling for VMP implementation is guided by accomplishment of the strategies identified to meet the seven management initiatives outlined in the VMP: (1) education and outreach initiative; (2) visitor safety and enforcement initiative; (3) recreational opportunities initiative; (4) trails and facilities initiative; (5) resource protection initiative; (6) user conflict reduction initiative; and, (7) public involvement initiative. Project timing and coordination is very important, since many projects are dependent on the completion of other projects.

The implementation schedule of the VMP starts on June 1, 2005. The first several months of plan implementation will require careful scheduling and coordination to ensure efficient use of staff time and timing of projects. Many projects are dependent upon the completion of prior projects or the completion of public involvement. Some projects are already underway; these will be noted in the discussion below.

Several ordinances in the City Municipal Code need to be revised or enacted.

Ordinances in the City Code needing revision include the special use permit regulation; several dog regulations including voice-and-sight tag, seasonal leash, and leash at selected trailheads. "New" ordinances will need to be enacted; some of these include commercial use permit regulations, off-trail permit regulations, and restrictions on competitive events. Council will receive a package of proposed ordinance revisions this summer (2005). Public involvement will be an important component of developing the new or revised ordinances. In addition to the public hearings held by Council, staff will meet with community groups and interested community members to gather input as part of the drafting of ordinances for Council consideration. A phase-in period for management actions will be necessary to enact many of the proposed management actions required by the new or revised ordinances.

Plan implementation will focus on six principal actions: (1) managing habitat conservation areas; (2) evaluating, constructing and maintaining trails; (3) managing dogs to reduce conflicts and protect natural resources; (4) permitting commercial uses, special uses and off-trail use; (5) involving the public in designing procedures and assessing progress and, (6) focusing education and enforcement.

Management of Habitat Conservation Areas. Staff proposes to implement management actions in habitat conservation areas (HCA), including: on-trail requirements in four HCAs that have an existing trails; completing Trail Study Area assessments that include four HCAs (maintain status quo for public access until decisions); and, scheduling Trail Study Area assessments for remaining HCAs that have no trails (keeping them closed to public access until complete) in 2008 and 2009. Designing and placing new signs and distributing new information brochures will comprise an essential part of the VMP implantation for community education and outreach.

Trail studies, construction and maintenance. Four trail study areas within habitat conservation areas are scheduled for completion in 2005-2006. One trail study is scheduled for completion in the North Mountain Parks Natural Area and Western Mountain Parks Habitat Conservation Area. Evaluations of climbing access in HCAs will occur in conjunction with the trail study areas. Three new trails are scheduled for completion in 2005. Three existing designated trails are scheduled for major trail re-routes and improvements in 2005. Four trailheads are scheduled for re-builds or improvements in 2005. One major road crossing underpass is scheduled for completion in 2005. Two volunteer trail projects are scheduled in 2005.

Dog management. The voice-and-sight educational video for dog owners and dog tag program will begin in summer 2005, with the full program underway later in the fall. The trailhead leashing pilot project will begin in summer 2005. Monitoring studies, including monitoring compliance with dog regulations and assessment of impacts from recreational activities, will begin with information collected in 2005 to establish baselines to compare with future conditions. Open Space and Mountain Parks will continue to work with the Parks Department on drafting revised dog management ordinances and enforcing dog regulations.

Permits for commercial uses, special uses and off-trail use. Programs for permitting commercial use, special use and off-trail use will developed in 2005. Permit programs will be designed with the assistance of interested members of the public and community group representatives. Permitting criteria, permit administration and permit enforcement will be developed as part of the permit program. Special use permitting will continue with the new minimum (25 participants) threshold in 2006. Commercial use and off-trail permits will be required beginning in 2006.

Public involvement and community connections. Many of the initial implementation actions will require public participation and assistance. Developing trail management criteria, assessing trail study areas, designing an educational video for dog owners, assessing opportunities for "no dog" trails and developing permit programs are examples of projects requiring public participation in 2005. Community volunteers and community volunteer projects will be important parts of the VMP implementation beginning in 2005.

Education and enforcement. Education and enforcement will focus on issues and in areas or on activities where visitor safety is a concern and/or where resource protection is important. Initial educational projects will use interpretive and informational signs, descriptive brochures and the departmental web page to disseminate information. Enforcement of new regulations will be phased-in after an educational “grace” period. Contacting and connecting with the community will be particularly important as new information and new regulations are instituted.

Project Phasing and Scheduling

Major capital and non-capital projects to implement the Visitor Master Plan are scheduled for the Open Space and Mountain Parks Program work plan. Projects listed below are among those major projects identified for 2005 and 2006 to achieve the goals in the Visitor Master Plan. Attachment A (Project Phasing for Plan Implementation) include major projects identified for 2005 through 2010.

2005

Trail study areas – 2 trail study area assessments

- Complete development of trail suitability and evaluation criteria (including undesignated trail evaluation criteria)
- Complete two Trail Study Area plans: Eldorado Mountain/Doudy Draw and Marshall Mesa /Southern Grasslands
 - Designate climbing accesses in Habitat Conservation Areas (Sacred Cliffs, Peanuts Wall, Mickey Mouse Wall)
 - Designate additional no-dog trails

Trail construction – 7 new or re-constructed trails

- Build Cottontail Trail to Connect to Monarch Trail across Hwy. 52
- Build Marshall Mesa to South 66th (community volunteer project)
- Build Flagstaff Sensory Interpretive Trail
- Build Marshall Mesa – City Limits Trail
- Rebuild/reroute E.M. Greenman Trail
- Rebuild/reroute Bear Canyon Trail - middle section
- Rebuild Elephant Buttress trail and restore area (volunteer project)

Trailhead improvements – 5 trailheads

Road crossings

- Construct Community Ditch underpass at Hwy. 93

New non-capital priority projects

- Adopt new ordinances for on-trail travel and dogs on-leash in Habitat Conservation Areas, sign areas and begin education and enforcement

- Adopt trailhead leash ordinance, sign areas and begin education and enforcement
- Complete dog management compliance video and begin education, signs and training classes with public participation
- Develop commercial use permit program with public process
- Revise Special Use Permit ordinance
- Develop off-trail permit program, including criteria, with public process
- Focus public information and education – signs, maps, brochures, webpage
- Begin implementation and effectiveness monitoring – collect baseline data, when necessary
- Hold annual public forum to review work program

2006

Trail study areas – 4 trail study area assessments

- Complete four Trail Study Areas (North Foothills, Tallgrass Prairie East, Mountain Parks North and East Boulder-Dry Creek)
 - Designate climbing access in Trail Study Areas
 - Designate additional no-dog trails

Trail construction – 3 new or re-constructed trails

- Build Greenbelt Plateau - Coalton Trail
- Build Wonderland Paraglider Access Trail
- Implement 2005 Trail Study Areas improvements
- Rebuild Marshall Mesa-Community Ditch Trail

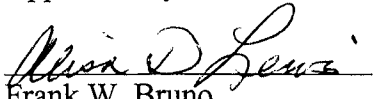
Trailhead improvements – 2 trailheads

- Improve Sanitas and Centennial Trailheads
- Improve Buckingham Picnic area

New non-capital projects

- Require commercial use permits and off-trail permits
- Begin enforcement of new dog regulations
- Continue implementation and effectiveness monitoring
- Update maps and brochures
- Schedule two community volunteer projects
- Hold public forum to review work plan

Approved By:



Frank W. Bruno,
City Manager

ATTACHMENT:

A: Project Phasing for Plan Implementation

ATTACHMENT A

Project Phasing for Plan Implementation

Major capital and non-capital projects to implement the Visitor Master Plan are scheduled for the Open Space and Mountain Parks Program work plan. Projects listed below are among the major projects identified for 2005 through 2010 to achieve the goals in the Visitor Master Plan.

2005

Trail study areas

- Complete development of trail management criteria (including undesignated trail evaluation criteria)
- Complete two Trail Study Area plans: Eldorado Mountain/Doudy Draw and Marshall Mesa/Southern Grasslands
 - Designate climbing accesses in Habitat Conservation Areas (Sacred Cliffs, Peanuts Wall, Mickey Mouse Wall)
 - Designate additional no-dog trails

Trail planning

- Study Boulder Feeder Canal Trail
- Plan Greenbelt Plateau to Coalton Trail

Trail construction

- **New trails**
 - Fund building of Cottontail Trail to Connect to Monarch Trail across Hwy. 52
 - Build Marshall Mesa to South 66th (community volunteer project)
 - Build Flagstaff Sensory Interpretive Trail
 - Build Marshall Mesa – City Limits Trail
- **Rebuild or re-route trails**
 - Rebuild/reroute E.M. Greenman Trail
 - Rebuild/reroute Bear Canyon Trail - middle section
 - Rebuild Elephant Buttress trail and restore area (volunteer project component)

Trailhead improvements

- Settlers Park Trailhead
- Crown Rock Trailhead
- Boulder Falls
- South Mesa Trailhead
- Build City Limits Trailhead
- Plan Sanitas Trailhead and Centennial Trailhead improvements

Road crossings

- Construct Community Ditch underpass at Hwy. 93
- Study South Boulder Creek Trail road crossing at Hwy. 93

New non-capital priority projects

- Adopt new ordinances for on-trail travel and dogs on-leash in Habitat Conservation Areas, sign areas and begin education and enforcement
- Adopt trailhead leash ordinance, sign areas and begin education and enforcement

- Complete dog management compliance video and begin education, signs, and training classes (with public participation)
- Develop commercial use permit program with public process
- Revise Special Use Permit ordinance
- Develop off-trail permit program, including criteria, with public process
- Focus public information and education – signs, maps, brochures, webpage
- Begin implementation and effectiveness monitoring – collect baseline data, when necessary
- Hold annual public forum to review work program

2006

Trail study areas

- Complete four Trail Study Areas (North Foothills, Tallgrass Prairie East, Mountain Parks North and East Boulder-Dry Creek)
 - Designate climbing access using results from Trail Study Areas
 - Designate additional no-dog trails

Trail planning

- Plan Boulder Feeder Canal Trail in conjunction with city and county
- Plan Saddle Rock Trail improvements
- Plan Chautauqua Bluebell –Baird and Bluebell Mesa trail rebuilds
- Plan Dry Creek – South Boulder Creek Trail

Trail construction

- **New trails**
 - Build Greenbelt Plateau - Coalton Trail
 - Build Wonderland Paraglider Access Trail
 - Implement 2005 Trail Study Areas improvements
- **Rebuild or re-route trails**
 - Rebuild Marshall Mesa-Community Ditch Trail

Trailhead improvements

- Improve Sanitas and Centennial Trailheads
- Improve Buckingham Picnic area
- Improve Fourth of July Campground

Road crossings

- Improve South Boulder Creek Trail road crossing at Hwy. 93
- Improve South Mesa to Doudy Draw road crossing

New non-capital projects

- Require commercial use permits and off-trail permits
- Begin enforcement of new dog regulations
- Continue implementation and effectiveness monitoring
- Update maps and brochures
- Schedule two community volunteer projects
- Hold public forum to review work plan

2007

Trail study areas

- Complete three trail study areas (Mountain Parks South, East Boulder/Teller and Shanahan - South Mesa)

Trail planning

Trail construction

- **New trails**
 - Implement 2006 trail study area improvements
 - Build Boulder Feeder Canal trail
 - Build Dry Creek - South Boulder Creek Trail
 - Designate climbing accesses
- **Rebuild/re-route trails**
 - Rebuild/reroute Saddle Rock trail
 - Rebuild Chautauqua (Bluebell-Baird, Bluebell Mesa)

Trailhead improvements

- Improve Gregory Canyon trailhead
- Improve Realization Point trailhead
- Plan Flagstaff Summit improvements

Road crossings

- Improve road crossing on East Boulder Trail at Valmont Road

New non-capital projects

- TBD

2008

Trail study areas

- Complete two Trail Study Areas (others)

Trail planning

- Plan Flagstaff Trail improvements

Trail construction

- **New trails**
 - Implement 2007 Trail Study Area improvements
 - Build North Rim Trail (county)
 - Build Dry Creek – Teller Trail (East Boulder Trail) – Phase I
- **Rebuild/re-route trails**
 - Chautauqua area trails

Trailhead improvements

- Flagstaff Summit Trailhead

New non-capital projects

- TBD

2009

Trail study areas

- Complete two Trail Study Areas (Jewell Mountain and Union Pacific ROW)

Trail planning

- Plan Bear Peak summit access from Fern Canyon and Bear Peak West Ridge
- Plan Green Mountain West Ridge Trail to Lost Gulch overlook
- Plan upper Flagstaff Mountain trail connection

Trail construction

- **New trails**
 - Implement 2008 Trail Study Area improvements
 - Build Dry Creek to Teller (East Boulder Trail)
 - Continue Flagstaff Summit improvements
- **Rebuild/re-route trails**
 - Flagstaff Trail

Trailhead improvements

- Flagstaff Summit Trailhead

New non-capital projects

- TBD

2010

Trail construction

New trails

- Continue to implement Trail Study Area improvements
- Green Mountain West Ridge Trail to Lost Gulch Overlook

Rebuild/re-route trails

- Bear Peak summit access from Fern Canyon
- Flagstaff Mountain trail connector