



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

May 18, 2006

Guy Burgess

To: Don D'Amico and Joe Mantione

Jim Knopf

City of Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks (OSMP) Department

Mike O'Brian

Subject: Eldorado Mountain/Doudy Draw Draft Trail Alternatives

Chris Morrison

Gary Sprung

Holly Tulin

Eric Vogelsberg

Suzanne Webel

Of all the Trail Study Areas (TSAs), the Eldorado Mountain and Doudy Draw TSA provides the Open Space and Mountain Parks department with the best opportunity for dramatic improvements in recreational facilities. Almost all the major recreational groups visit the TSA. Hikers, runners, climbers, equestrians, dog walkers, wildlife viewers, bicyclists, and hang-gliders have all visited the properties for decades.

Despite the significant visitor interest, the designated TSA trail infrastructure is currently very limited in size and quality, being composed primarily of ditch, farm, and mine access roads, and portions of an old railroad alignment. Unsurprisingly, a large number of undesigned social trails have developed as visitors have remedied for themselves the shortcomings of the few designated trails. Some of these undesigned trails are not physically sustainable or environmentally conscious. With two-thirds of the TSA designated as a Natural Area where off-trail access is permitted, it is imperative that OSMP respond to the clear visitor desires by designating a significant number of new trails to appropriately manage the property.

Trail Alternatives:

BATCO supports implementation of the trail system identified by the Boulder Outdoor Coalition and included within the recent OSMP Eldorado Mountain/Doudy Draw Draft Trail Alternatives. Together these trails create a set of trail loops that encompass existing designated and undesigned trails to provide a world-class recreational experience.

The following trails are essential for the success of the TSA project and to the future OSMP management of the properties.

- Flatirons Vista & Doudy Rim Trail Loops (Locations 6 & 7 of the Draft Alternatives Report)
- Spring Brook Loop (Locations 10a & 10b of the Draft Alternatives Report)
- Bull Gulch Loop (Location 18 of the Draft Alternatives Report)
- Sound of Music Trail (Location 17 of the Draft Alternatives Report)
- Fowler Trail (Location 14 of the Draft Alternatives Report)
- Post Office Trail Connection (Location 11 of the Draft Alternatives Report)

BATCO supports regional trails. The Eldorado Mountain and Doudy Draw OSMP properties contain critical north-south links between Boulder and Jeffco Open Spaces and east-west links between OSMP trails and Boulder County, State Park, and Forest Service properties. Connections to the Front Range Trail, the OSMP Jewell Mountain property, the Rocky Flats Wildlife Refuge, Eldorado State Park, and the County's Walker Ranch all depend upon alignments through this TSA. The trail plan should foster these connections.

Finally, the trail plan must address the safety issues associated with Highway 93 crossings. Both the proposed Community Ditch Trail underpass and designated trail connections via the Matterhorn cattle underpass are required to resolve these hazards.

Trailhead Alternatives:

The current trailhead configurations at Flatirons Vista and Doudy Draw are too small and poorly configured to meet current visitor needs. We urge OSMP to redesign these popular trailheads, including sufficient parking for passenger vehicles and horse trailers, restrooms, landscaping and picnic tables. Quality recreational experiences require attractive, functional trailheads.

Activity Management Alternatives:

BATCO supports multiuse trails. We are disappointed that the Draft Alternatives Report fails to consider access to all the trails for all visitor groups. Equestrians and bicyclists, in particular, have been singled out without justification for exclusion from a number of the trail locations. Access for these visitors is significantly restricted elsewhere in the OSMP trails system: equestrians due to trail topologies and bicyclists due to lack of designated trails. We believe every effort must be made to provide them the maximum feasible access in this TSA. High quality physically and environmentally sustainable trails can be constructed for these groups. OSMP's own studies concede that these visitors provide no more environmental effects than do hikers. Proposals for their exclusion appear to be based primarily upon a regrettable staff bias that should be reconsidered. The final plan should include a clearly defined, objective system for evaluating appropriate visitor uses and justification for any visitor group exclusions.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Draft Trail Alternatives and have hopes for the success of the TSA process.

Sincerely,

Boulder Area Trails Coalition Board of Directors