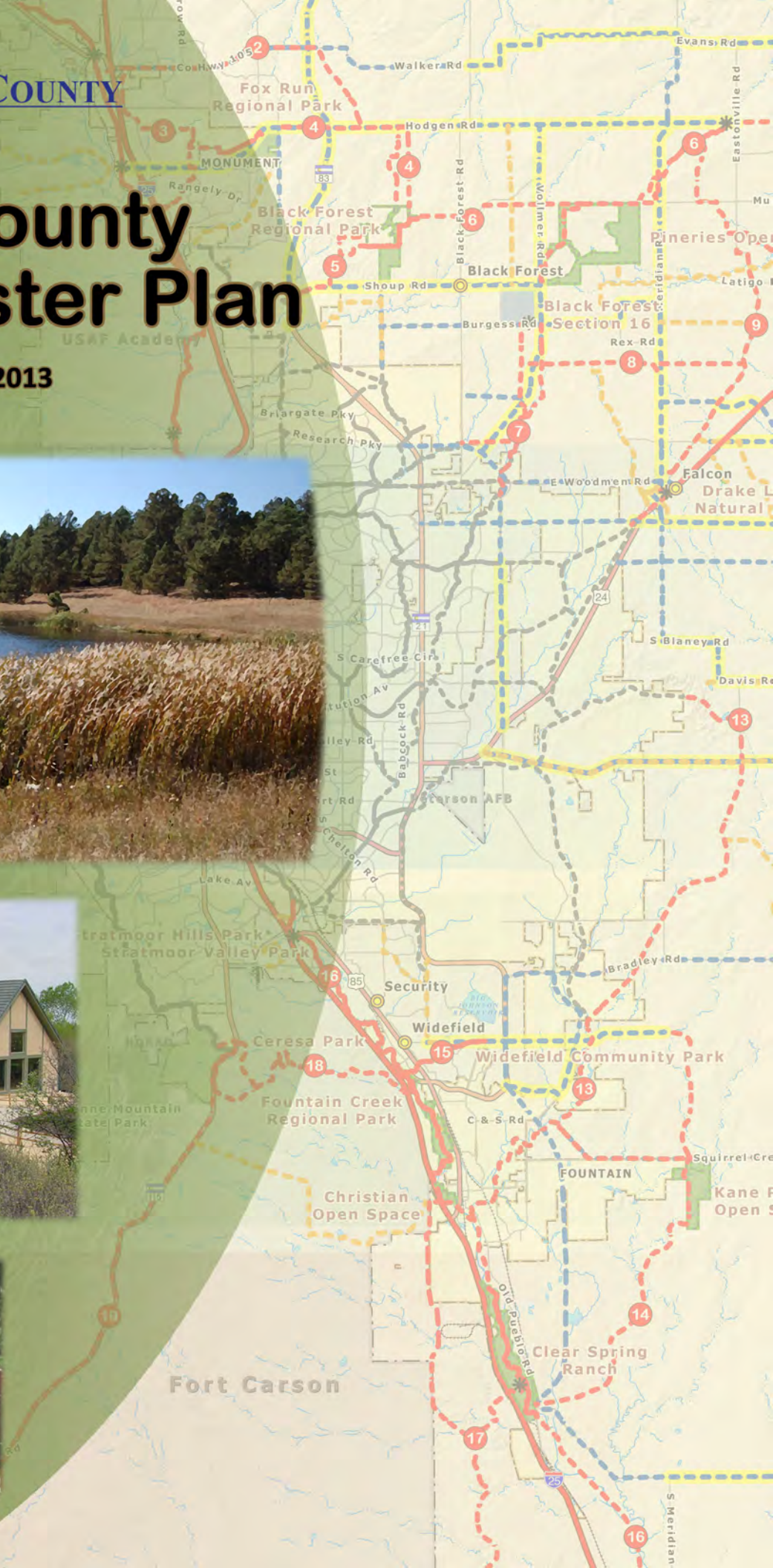


# El Paso County Parks Master Plan

Updated June 2013





# El Paso County Parks Master Plan

Updated June 2013

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**A Planning Grant from Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) helped make the  
Parks Master Plan update possible.**



AMENDMENT TO THE COUNTY PLAN

Commissioner Trowbridge moved that the following Resolution be adopted:

BEFORE THE PLANNING COMMISSION

OF THE COUNTY OF EL PASO

STATE OF COLORADO

RESOLUTION NO. MP-13-001

WHEREAS, El Paso County requests approval of and amendment to the Master Plan by adoption of an Update to the El Paso County Parks Master Plan, within the designated area of the unincorporated area of El Paso County; and

WHEREAS, public hearings were held by this Commission on May 21, 2013, and June 4, 2013; and

WHEREAS, based on the evidence, testimony, exhibits, study of the master plan for the unincorporated area of the county, comments of the El Paso County Public Services Department, comments of public officials and agencies, and comments from all interested parties, this Commission finds as follows:

1. That proper posting, publication and public notice was provided as required by law for the hearing of the Planning Commission.
2. That the hearing before the Planning Commission was extensive and complete, that all pertinent facts, matters and issues were submitted and that all interested parties were heard at that meeting.
3. That all data, surveys, analyses, studies, plans, designs, maps, and descriptive matter as are required by the State of Colorado and El Paso County have been submitted, reviewed and found to meet all sound planning requirements of the El Paso County..
4. That the proposal shall amend the Master Plan for El Paso County.
5. That for the above-stated and other reasons, the proposal is in the best interests of the health, safety, morals, convenience, order, prosperity and welfare of the citizens of El Paso County.

WHEREAS, § 30-28-108, C.R.S., provides that a county planning commission may adopt, amend, extend, or add to the County Master Plan, and § 30-28-109, C.R.S., requires the Planning Commission to certify a copy of the Amendment to the Master Plan to the Board of County Commissioners and to the planning commissions of all municipalities within the County.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the El Paso County Planning Commission hereby approves the Amendment to the Master Plan for El Paso County, specifically including the maps and descriptive matter that constitute the Amendment to the Master Plan attached hereto at

Exhibit A, for the unincorporated area of El Paso County by adopting the Update to the El Paso County Parks Master Plan.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that pursuant to § 30-28-109, C.R.S., the El Paso County Planning Commission hereby certifies to the Board of County Commissioners and to the planning commissions of all municipalities located within El Paso County a copy of the Amendment to the Master Plan for El Paso County, specifically including the maps and descriptive matter that constitute the Amendment to the Update to the El Paso County Parks Master Plan attached hereto at Exhibit A.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the El Paso County Planning Commission hereby directs the Secretary of the Planning Commission to record on the map and descriptive matter that constitute the Amendment to the Update to the El Paso County Parks Master Plan the action taken by the Planning Commission and affix their signature to said map and descriptive matter pursuant to § 30-28-108, C.R.S.

Commissioner Hannigan seconded the adoption of the foregoing Resolution.

The roll having been called, the vote was as follows:

|                         |     |
|-------------------------|-----|
| Commissioner Hicks      | aye |
| Commissioner Cordova    | aye |
| Commissioner Hannigan   | aye |
| Commissioner Dillon     | aye |
| Commissioner Trowbridge | aye |
| Commissioner Sparks     | aye |
| Commissioner Egbert     | aye |

The Resolution was adopted by a unanimous vote of 7 to 0 by the Planning Commission of the County of El Paso, State of Colorado.

DONE THIS 4th day of June, 2013 at Colorado Springs, Colorado

EL PASO COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

By: Steve Hicks

Steve Hicks, Chair

ATTEST:

By: Joyce K. Gotten  
\_\_\_\_\_, Secretary

## Table of Contents

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| <b>Chapter 1: Executive Summary</b> .....  | <b>1</b>   |
| Introduction .....   | 1          |
| Background .....   | 1          |
| Summary of Plan Recommendations.....   | 4          |
| <b>Chapter 2: Existing Assets – Parks, Trails, Open Space</b> .....                                      | <b>9</b>   |
| General County Information .....   | 9          |
| El Paso County Parks .....   | 9          |
| Regional, Community, and Neighborhood Parks and Recreation Areas .....                                   | 10         |
| Regional Trails .....  | 16         |
| Open Space .....   | 18         |
| Other Park Assets.....   | 20         |
| Other Providers of Recreation Facilities and Open Space .....  | 23         |
| <b>Chapter 3: El Paso County Recreation and Cultural Services</b> .....                                  | <b>33</b>  |
| Service Delivery.....  | 33         |
| Programs .....   | 34         |
| Nature Centers.....  | 34         |
| El Paso County Fair and Events Complex .....   | 36         |
| <b>Chapter 4: Stakeholder Input and User Perceptions</b> .....   | <b>37</b>  |
| Stakeholder Interviews .....   | 38         |
| Meetings-in-a-Box.....   | 39         |
| Web-based Survey/Community Dialogue.....   | 41         |
| <b>Chapter 5: Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Conservation Trends and Perspectives</b> .....           | <b>45</b>  |
| Demographic Shift .....  | 45         |
| Economic & Health Benefits of Parks .....  | 45         |
| Outdoor Recreation .....   | 47         |
| Nature Programming .....   | 48         |
| Adventure Programming and Extreme Sports.....  | 49         |
| Bicycling and Walking .....  | 49         |
| Winter Recreation Trends.....  | 50         |
| Role and Response of Local Government.....   | 50         |
| <b>Chapter 6: Population and Growth</b> .....  | <b>51</b>  |
| Summary .....  | 52         |
| Demographic Analysis.....  | 53         |
| Growth and Land Use.....   | 58         |
| <b>Chapter 7: Parks, Trails, and Open Space Research, Analysis, and Community Needs Assessment</b> ..... | <b>63</b>  |
| Integration of Stakeholder Input .....   | 63         |
| Parks and Recreation Areas .....   | 64         |
| Trails.....  | 68         |
| Open Space .....   | 92         |
| Candidate Open Space Resource Recommendations.....   | 102        |
| Historic and Cultural Resources .....  | 114        |
| <b>Chapter 8: Master Plan</b> .....  | <b>135</b> |
| Mission Statement .....  | 136        |
| Goals and Objectives.....  | 136        |
| Classifications.....   | 143        |
| Implementation Plan – Parks, Trails, and Open Space Facilities .....                                     | 150        |



|   |            |
|---|------------|
| <b>Chapter 9: Administration and Funding Strategies .....</b>     | <b>173</b> |
| Administration and Staffing .....                                 | 173        |
| Organizational and Administrative Considerations .....            | 175        |
| Boards and Commissions .....                                      | 176        |
| Parks and Recreation Operations and Capital Funding Sources ..... | 177        |
| Acquisition Strategies and Regulatory Tools .....                 | 185        |
| Voluntary Programs .....  | 188        |

## Table of Tables

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Table 2-1: 2012 Park Visitation through Reservations .....                      | 10  |
| Table 6-1: El Paso County and Subareas Population Forecast (2005 - 2035) .....  | 53  |
| Table 6-2: Subarea Demographic Overview .....                                   | 54  |
| Table 7-1: Trailshed Analysis.....  | 69  |
| Table 8-1: El Paso County Parks, Open Space, and Trails Classification .....    | 144 |
| Table 8-2: Implementation Plan - Parks, Trails, and Open Space Facilities ..... | 151 |

## Table of Figures

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Figure 4-1: Public Engagement Schedule.....                                   | 37  |
| Figure 6-1: El Paso County Subareas.....                                      | 51  |
| Figure 6-2: 2010 El Paso County Subarea Populations .....                     | 54  |
| Figure 6-3: 2011 El Paso County and Subarea Population Breakdown by Age.....  | 55  |
| Figure 6-4: Annual Household Income Distribution .....                        | 56  |
| Figure 6-5: Median Income in 2011 (Estimated based on 2010 U.S. Census) ..... | 56  |
| Figure 6-6: Educational Attainment for El Paso County (ages 25+).....         | 57  |
| Figure 6-7: Ethnicity by Subarea .....  | 58  |
| Figure 9-1: Organizational Chart.....   | 174 |

## **Table of Maps**

*Maps are located at the end of each chapter.*

Map 2-1 Existing Parks, Trails, and Open Space  
Map 6-1 Population Growth 2010 - 2035  
Map 7-1 Local Access to Parks (5 miles)  
Map 7-2 Regional Access to Parks (15 miles)  
Map 7-3 Special Facilities Access (20 miles)  
Map 7-4 Trailshed Analysis  
Map 7-5 Trails Visioning  
Map 7-6 Open Space Values Attributes  
Map 7-7 Open Space Composite Analysis  
Map 7-8 Land Cover, Landforms, and Landmarks  
Map 8-1 Parks Master Plan  
Map 8-2 Trails Master Plan  
Map 8-3 Open Space Master Plan

## **Appendices**

*Appendices have been provided as a separate document.*

Appendix I: Related Plans  
Appendix II: Stakeholder Interview Issue Summary  
Appendix III: Meetings-in-a-Box Summary Report  
Appendix IV: Survey Summary Report  
Appendix V: Trends Influencing Parks and Recreation  
Appendix VI: List of GIS Layers for Open Space Composite Analysis  
Appendix VII: Parks and Recreation Funding Sources  
Appendix VIII: Major Transportation Corridors Plan Exhibits

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# Chapter 1: Executive Summary

## Introduction

El Paso County contains some of Colorado’s most significant landscapes. The convergence of the high plains and Rocky Mountains is more dramatic here than at any other point along the Front Range. The land rises abruptly to more than 14,000 feet, and well-known landmarks such as the Garden of the Gods outcrop along the edge that marks the transition between mountains and plains. El Paso County also provides the setting for a convergence of ecosystems – a place where extensive pinyon-juniper forests and grasslands with candalabria cactus and other southern species reach their northern limits.

Within this remarkable setting, residents and visitors value and enjoy the parks, open space, trail, and recreation opportunities that the natural environment supports, as well as the facilities and programs that El Paso County Parks provides. Population growth, even during a period of slow economic growth since the last Master Plan update in 2005, and continuing urbanization create a need for additional recreational opportunities and efforts to protect some of the county’s distinctive landscapes. Addressing these needs in a creative and fiscally-responsible way with involvement of stakeholders is the intent of this Master Plan.

## Background

The El Paso County Park and Recreation District was formed in 1971 to provide the parks and recreation facilities needed to serve a rapidly growing population. The Department’s initial policies gave high priority to the development of parklands in urbanized but unincorporated areas of the County in an effort to reduce pressure on City of Colorado Springs facilities and programs. Within five years, the Department had completed construction of or allocated funds for the construction of parks in sixteen rural and urban areas of the County. Regional trails were also a priority, and the spines of primary regional trails were established in cooperation with other jurisdictions.

It became apparent, however, that maintenance of these areas was going to become an increasingly difficult financial challenge. In September of 1976, the Board of County Commissioners established a parks division and re-chartered the role of the division to emphasize the provision of large, regional-scale parks and abandon the effort to provide neighborhood parks and programs. While essentially natural in character, the regional parks were designed to include a developed portion with facilities such as turfing, multi-purpose playfields, tennis, volleyball and basketball courts, picnic areas with pavilions for group activities, restrooms, and green space for unstructured activities.

El Paso County Parks’ role was clarified to exclude the provision of structured recreational programs and organized sports. In fact, the word “recreation” was removed from the division’s name. The revised role became one that emphasized the provision of natural, historical, and cultural interpretation programs within the structure of a regional park and trail system.

Fiscal challenges continued in subsequent years (in fact, they increased) with the softening of the national and local economy in 2007 and a reduction in the Parks budget from the County general fund. To this day, the parks budget receives only a modest amount of the general fund and relies heavily on Conservation Trust Fund revenue and third-party contributions.

## Mission

The Mission of El Paso County Parks is to:

*Enhance quality of life in El Paso County by:*

- *Acquiring, developing, maintaining, and preserving regional parks, trails, and open space.*
- *Providing responsible resource management for open space lands characterized by unique natural environments.*
- *Providing natural and cultural history interpretation, education, and information services.*
- *Supporting major community events and festivals that celebrate our County's heritage and culture.*
- *Providing and managing visitor destinations and experiences.*

Some minor adjustments to the mission statement (as detailed in **Chapter 8**) were made as a result of public input to further clarify the role of El Paso County Parks.

## Purpose of the Master Plan

The El Paso County Parks Master Plan (Master Plan) is a guiding document that works with other County plans to strategize and provide outdoor recreation opportunities such as parks and trails, long term protection of open space, and historic and cultural resources interpretation. The Master Plan is an element of the County's comprehensive plan (statutory master plan) used by the Community Services Department, Development Services (Planning) Department, Park Advisory Board, Planning Commission, and the Board of County Commissioners to ensure that new development proposals conform and contribute to a cohesive system of parks, trails, and open space. A number of concurrent planning efforts are underway in the region that have some relationship to the Parks Master Plan and an impact on parks, trails, and open space in El Paso County. In addition, a number of plans have been completed by El Paso County and others that contain policies and recommended actions that are relevant to county-wide parks, trails, and open space planning. These plans are reviewed in **Appendix I**.

The Master Plan update process was designed to comprehensively address the needs of parks, trails, open space, and recreation and cultural services throughout El Paso County in a strategic way. The Master Plan endeavors to provide a sustainable approach to allocation of resources for the next five to ten years. The process reaffirms essential goals and objectives of the previous Master Plan, while incorporating needed changes and new ideas based on input by stakeholders and analysis of data. The Master Plan will guide the County's efforts to continue to provide a high quality of parks, recreation, and natural, historical, and cultural interpretation services that are valued by citizens.

## Vision for the Master Plan

El Paso County Parks currently owns or manages approximately 6,500 acres of park land and open space; 2,500 acres of conservation easements; a system of regional and internal park trails and nature centers; and the El Paso County Fair and Events Complex. This Master Plan is intended to provide a vision for the future of El Paso County parks, trails, and open space along with recreation and cultural services programs. It explores existing conditions and future needs from the vantage point of many stakeholders to provide a roadmap for the future and identify action items for the next five to ten years and beyond. This vision is articulated in the following paragraphs. Goals and Objectives and an Implementation Plan with specific action items may be found in **Chapter 8**.

## Parks

The County's **focus for parks remains on provision of regional facilities** consistent with the County Strategic Plan 2012-2016 and based on a reasonable allocation of available resources. The County currently owns and manages five full-service regional parks, which provide active use areas with facilities for a variety of sports and recreation activities, and passive use areas with limited facilities. The Master Plan recommends development of **two new regional parks** to serve potential higher growth areas in north/central and central/south El Paso County. **Maintaining and upgrading existing facilities** and **enhancing communication with park users** to maximize satisfaction are other top priorities.

## Trails

The trail system receives high marks as a regional asset, as reflected in surveys, public meetings, and many other forms of feedback. The County currently provides and maintains 100 miles of trails, most of which are six to eight-foot wide gravel surfaced regional trails that accommodate multiple uses. The Master Plan envisions over **700 miles of trails and bike routes in the long term**, which includes off-street regional trails and proposed bike routes. **Connectivity** with other regional trails is a high priority.

## Open Space

The Master Plan builds upon the candidate open space areas identified in the 2005 Master Plan with comprehensive Geographic Information System (GIS) analysis, including Colorado Natural Heritage Program data, and stakeholder input. Protection of resource values is emphasized, while allowing appropriate public access. The result is **27 identified "candidate open space" areas** that would be subject to additional analysis and conservation through voluntary programs, collaboration with willing land owners and conservation groups, and the land development process. A variety of mechanisms, such as conservation easements, planned unit developments, and acquisition in fee exist and are described in more detail in **Chapter 9**.

## Recreation and Cultural Services

El Paso County Parks receives approximately 2,000 facility reservations annually, accommodating over 150,000 participants. Over 1,000 programs are provided annually. Two nature centers are among the most popular facilities, and nature-based programs continue to be highly valued by local residents and visitors. The Master Plan proposes the addition of a **new nature center** in northern El Paso County once current facilities have been upgraded and funding can be secured. Goals include building on existing successful programs, **expanding opportunities that focus on natural and cultural resources and agricultural heritage**, and increasing **partnership and collaboration** as a programming strategy. The El Paso County Fair and Events Center is proposed as a recreation and social services hub for eastern El Paso County.

**Regional parks** provide a large area, typically 200 acres or more, with recreation resource values of regional and community significance. (For more detailed information about facilities classifications, please see Table 8-1.)

**Regional trails** provide recreational enjoyment, links, and access to recreation areas of regional significance, cities, local communities and commercial areas, and commuting opportunities.

**Open space** is generally described as an area with important natural, cultural, historic, or visual resource values that has been purposefully protected. Regional open space areas may vary in size depending on resource values and are typically 200 acres or more.

**Nature Centers** function to connect people to their natural and cultural resources and inspire them to become stewards for the parks and environment.



## Fundamental Questions for the Planning Process

Telling the story of the importance of a quality park system for social, environmental, and economic benefits is an essential element of this Master Plan and led to the following questions to citizens of El Paso County as part of the stakeholder engagement effort:

- What kinds of services, facilities, and programs should El Paso County Parks offer to meet the needs of a changing population that is aging and increasingly diverse, while still providing ample opportunities for youth?
- How can we help ensure the long-term health of the County Parks system?
- What information needs to be communicated to the community that would result in increased use and ownership of County Parks' lands, facilities, and programs, ultimately resulting in expanded resources? What are the best ways to provide that information?
- With a limited budget, how should El Paso County Parks utilize its funds?
- Should the County shift some of the funding currently used to provide developed facilities and place greater emphasis on protection of important natural areas?
- What new park, trail, and open space facilities should be developed, and what recreation and cultural services programs should be emphasized over the next decade?

## Summary of Plan Recommendations

### OVERALL SYSTEM MISSION/ROLE

**Goal 1: Refine the mission statement and role for the El Paso County Parks System.**

To fulfill its mission, continue to focus on providing regional facilities and services, working cooperatively with others to provide for existing and future needs. Better define its role to also include being a **supporter** of large community events and a provider and manager of **visitor** destinations and experiences.

**Goal 2: Provide a coordinated and connected system of parks, trails, and open space that is equitably distributed based on population and serves the needs of county residents.**

Meet the needs of residents and respect the significance of the natural and cultural resources. Participate in development review and long-range planning with the El Paso County Development Services Department and in transportation planning with the Public Services Department to anticipate growth and identify future park needs. Work with the Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments, the City of Colorado Springs, and others to address regional issues and connectivity. Balance taking care of current assets and acquiring new assets with an edge toward taking care of and maximizing current assets.

**Goal 3: Balance passive/active use of county parks and open space and determine what is most appropriate for individual sites based on community need and master planning processes.**

Refining a working definition of active and passive activities, provide regional-level active outdoor recreation facilities as part of the balance, focusing uses on the appropriate venues and balancing demand within carrying capacity, as well as preservation of resources with the need for public access.

**Goal 4: Provide an overall vision for the recreation and resource preservation network, and identify gaps so that the County, local jurisdictions, and others can work together to fill them.**

Convene a local parks and recreation “working group” of representatives from cities and towns to address potential collaborative efforts and serve as the local park resource working with small communities, special districts, and other organizations to meet needs to the extent possible. Participate in regional efforts to share and disseminate GIS data and capabilities.

### REGIONAL PARKS AND RECREATION AREAS

**Goal 1: Provide high quality and safe experiences for users of county park facilities and recreational areas.**

Provide visitors of all abilities appropriate recreational access and a high quality experience while protecting the natural character and environmental quality of the County’s parks and open spaces. Consider public safety and minimize user conflicts through master planning, design, sustainable park management and maintenance practices, and appropriate signage and public education.

**Goal 2: Enhance communication and engagement with users to maximize satisfaction with the visitor experience.**

Evaluate and adapt management practices based on input from users and staff and provide for enhanced enforcement of existing rules throughout the system through signage, public education, and staff training, while continuing cooperative relationships with other enforcement authorities such as the County Sheriff’s Office.

**Goal 3: Maintain a consistent and equitable level of services by filling gaps in existing service levels and providing new facilities and services to meet future population demand.**

Enhance service to address population-based needs through parks and facilities identified for specific areas of the county in this master planning effort. Enhance programming at the County Fair and Events Complex site by working with others to offer new opportunities, and update master plans or complete master planning processes for the El Paso County Fair and Events complex, regional parks, and recreation areas.

### REGIONAL TRAILS

**Goal 1: Work collaboratively with others to create a continuous, connected system of regional trails.**

Provide an overall vision for system of regional trails within the County and connected to adjacent counties and participate in the Regional Nonmotorized Trails and Bike Plan Update to identify standards and address needs as part of a multi-modal transportation network. Ensure that regional trail corridors are secured.

**Goal 2: Prioritize and locate trail connections using criteria and proposed actions items identified in this master planning process.**

Use the Trail Shed Analysis and the Trails Master Plan provided in this document to identify potential high priority connections based on identified connection criteria, and considering a variety of acquisition strategies and tools including funding and partnership opportunities. Locate trails minimizing conflicts between trail development and wildlife habitat and other sensitive natural and cultural resources.

**OPEN SPACE**

**Goal 1: Protect and enhance El Paso County’s legacy of unique natural features and areas and cultural resources, working in collaboration with others to conserve high priority open space areas in the county.**

Use the Open Space Composite Values Mapping developed as a part of this planning effort and the Open Space Master Plan provided in this document as a Tier 1 analysis and a Tier 2 analysis to verify the quality of the resource and evaluate other important criteria, in order to identify high priority areas for preservation. Work with other public entities to conserve open space, consider connectivity, and provide appropriate recreational access through a variety of techniques. Consider open space preservation for its natural ability to support water quality goals. Master plan each property acquired addressing appropriate access and considering resource sensitivity.

**RECREATION AND CULTURAL SERVICES PROGRAMS AND FACILITIES**

**Goal 1: Provide high quality recreation and educational experiences for users of county park facilities and recreational areas.**

Expand the Fountain Creek Nature Center building. Develop updated and new interpretive exhibits and displays at the Fountain Creek Nature Center and Bear Creek Nature Centers and provide nature-based programming and facility development in the northern area of the County. Maintain the diversity and quality of and participation in award-winning environmental education programs. Explore restoring hours of operation at nature centers to accommodate citizens’ interest in expanded programming.

**Goal 2: Expand recreation and education opportunities and programs that build upon the area’s natural and cultural resources and agricultural heritage and promote conservation and stewardship.**

Expand interpretive programming opportunities in northern and eastern El Paso County and outdoor recreation skills programming opportunities at the nature centers. Leverage the County Fair and Events Center as a regional events center and community center.

**Goal 3: Expand partnering and collaboration as a programming strategy.**

Expand general programming opportunities by continuing, and developing new, collaborative relationships with local service providers, including a particular focus on eastern El Paso County residents. Complete needed facility upgrades at the County Fair and Event Complex to accommodate expanded services. Pursue partnerships for regional interpretive services.

**Goal 4: Digitize the Inventory of System Resources.**

Continue to develop the database of existing historical and cultural resources working with the Development Services Department.

**MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION**

**Goal 1: Pursue best practices in the management and administration of all department operations.**

Consider environmental, economic, and social sustainability when developing master plans and managing park assets and develop forest management plans concurrently with master plans, when possible, to ensure an integrated approach. Pursue Agency Accreditation status ensuring and demonstrating that El Paso County Parks is utilizing best practices in all facets of operations, and review the County Park ordinances that address use and management of park facilities. Consider conservation easements on County parks to help provide assurance to citizens that the parks will not be sold, and plan for preventative maintenance of all park system assets. Identify costs of maintenance responsibilities for non-park services and separate from the EPC Parks budget.

**Goal 2: Pursue best practices in funding and use of volunteers.**

Enhance ongoing business practices through the development of a Cost Recovery/Resource Allocation philosophy, policy, and implementation plan and sponsorship, donation, and partnership policies that encourage each and establish consistency in process and implementation. Dedicate additional staff resources to support volunteer management utilizing friends groups, community organizations, and individuals to assist with park system improvements and programming efforts.

**COMMUNITY AWARENESS**

**Goal 1: Increase community awareness about the assets and services of the El Paso County Parks system and how resources are allocated to support the system.**

Dedicate additional staff resources to provide an effective public information program through updating and maintaining the EPC website, and creating a marketing plan using social media, cross marketing, newsletter articles, and e-mail blasts for distribution to existing networks, and participation in the statewide Get Outdoors Colorado web site. Create an appealing annual report to communicate accomplishments and progress on established performance measurements.

**IMPLEMENTATION AND FUNDING**

**Goal 1: Acknowledge the importance of parks and open space in El Paso County by providing adequate funding to develop, operate, and maintain these resources at a level commensurate with their importance.**

Continue to require developers to provide land dedication or fees in lieu of dedication, requesting specificity in regard to the park development plans and open space, including identification of capital and maintenance costs and funding sources. Continue to support park development with urban park fee funds. Consider maintenance and capital replacement costs in master plan development, addressing maintenance cost-saving measures, identifying funding source, and adequately budgeting funding for this purpose. Identify an annual budget for capital maintenance and replacement costs throughout the system based on life-cycle costing.

Explore restoring General Fund budget for El Paso County Parks to 2004 levels as the economy recovers. As General Fund revenues increase to previous levels, reallocate the CTF currently used for maintenance salaries for park improvement projects, and consider opportunities for dedicated funding to accelerate implementation of this Master Plan.

**Goal 2: Enhance El Paso County Parks through alternative funding sources.**

Seek alternative funding sources and creative methods such as donations, grants, sponsorships, partnerships, conservation easements, trust funds, and use of volunteers, and explore the development of an El Paso County Parks foundation. Collaborate through partnerships with related program non-profit or private organizations and governmental agencies to enhance the parks system. Optimize the use of fees and charges as a viable funding source through a Cost Recovery and Resource Allocation Philosophy and Policy and take a regional approach to funding by using County dollars as seed money to attract other funding.



## Chapter 2: Existing Assets – Parks, Trails, Open Space

### General County Information

El Paso County, the most populous County in Colorado, is home to approximately 620,000 people and is located in south central Colorado along the Interstate 25 corridor on the Front Range. Seven counties border El Paso County: Douglas and Elbert to the north, Elbert and Lincoln on the east, Crowley to the southeast, Pueblo to the south, and Fremont and Teller on the west. The county encompasses 2,158 square miles and ranges in elevation from 5,100 feet in the south central part of the county near Chico and Black Squirrel Creeks to 14,115 feet at the top of Pikes Peak. The combination of elevation changes and its physical location along the Front Range make El Paso County an attractive place to visit and live. Colorado Springs, the second largest city in Colorado with approximately 426,000 residents, is the county seat, and seven other incorporated municipalities are located within the county.

Approximately 496,000 acres (or 36 percent) of the total area of the county are publicly owned. Most of the public lands are in some form of federal ownership, including approximately 117,000 acres within the Pike National Forest, 3,800 acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands, and a substantial amount of military lands. The significant military presence in the county encompasses approximately 100,000 acres and includes Fort Carson, the Air Force Academy, Cheyenne Mountain Complex, and Peterson and Schriever Air Force Bases. Other public lands include nearly 184,000 acres of State-owned lands managed by the State Land Board and lands owned by the county and its various municipalities. Existing public lands and the contributions they make in providing open space and recreational opportunities are discussed in the sections that follow.

### El Paso County Parks

El Paso County Parks, comprised of the Park Operations, Recreation and Cultural Services, and Planning divisions of the Community Services Department, currently owns or manages approximately 6,500 acres of park land, 100 miles of trails, and approximately 2,500 acres of conservation easements. Most of the parks managed by County Parks are regional parks that are typically 200 acres or larger. Although the regional parks are predominantly natural in character, portions of each park are developed with facilities for active recreation such as playfields, playgrounds, picnic shelters, and hard surface play areas.

County Parks also manages several neighborhood parks, community parks, a trailhead area adjacent to Palmer Lake, and the County Fair and Events Complex. The neighborhood parks were acquired before the county limited its role to the provision of larger, regional parks and trails. County Parks encourages incorporated cities, towns, and special districts in unincorporated areas to provide neighborhood park facilities and supporting maintenance in localized areas.

All of the park facilities are less than 40 years old, and most are in acceptable condition. Historically, the county has had the means to replace or repair amenities when the need arises, but maintenance of park assets has been challenging since 2006 due to a weak economy, limited tax support, and the use of Conservation Trust Funds for ongoing maintenance.

## Visitation

El Paso County Parks allows for the reservation of a variety of facilities. In 2012, a total of 130,639 reserved visits were recorded throughout the system as indicated in **Table 2-1** below. As an illustration of growth in use of the system, in 2004, park reservations reached 65,112 visits, with a three year average of approximately 63,000. It should be noted that these figures do not reflect significant casual use of the park sites which is considerable. In addition, since 2010, El Paso County has served an annual average of 200,000 participants in recreation and cultural services programs through at the County's parks, nature centers, county parks, and the County Fair and Events Complex.

**Table 2-1: 2012 Park Visitation through Reservations**

| Site  | Number of Visitors |
|---|--------------------|
| Bear Creek Regional Park                        | 72,062             |
| Black Forest Regional Park                      | 10,425             |
| Fountain Creek Regional Park                    | 12,151             |
| Fox Run Regional Park                           | 27,613             |
| Homestead Ranch Regional Park                   | 1,181              |
| New Santa Fe Trail                              | 6,550              |
| Other facilities (vita course, disc golf, etc.) | 657                |
| Reservation Total                               | 130,639            |

The National Recreation and Park Association, through a relatively new data collection program known as PRORAGIS, provides a comparison with other participating agencies of similar population density (population less than 500 per square mile). Using 2011 data, park attendance, including estimates of visitors **and** program participants of 300,000 for El Paso County Parks, was very near the upper quartile (top 25 percent) reported figure of 309,000 participants, with 26 agencies reporting. The attendance per park site managed of 8,571 fell just above the median (50 percent mark) of 8,452, with 24 agencies reporting.

Existing county parks are shown on **Map 2-1: Existing Parks, Trails, and Open Space**. Each of the existing parks, recreation areas, open spaces, and trails within the county system is described below.

## Regional, Community, and Neighborhood Parks and Recreation Areas

Regional parks provide a large area, typically 200 acres or more, with recreation resource values of regional and community significance. Recreation areas have dominant natural or cultural resource values and provide special use recreation facilities. (For more detailed information about facilities classifications, please see **Table 8-1**.)

## Bear Creek Regional Park

Bear Creek Regional Park is located in the western portion of Colorado Springs in the foothills plant life zone (see Figure on page 88 for more information on Colorado Plant Life Zones). It is one of the most frequently used county parks. The park incorporates nearly three miles of Bear Creek and covers a total of 546 acres, 24 acres of which are developed for active recreation. The park is divided into three different areas linked by non-motorized, multi-purpose trails. Bear Creek East is located east of 21st Street

and is home to the County Parks' administrative offices. A community garden, picnic pavilions, playground, a volleyball court, and horseshoe pits are available to users. Bear Creek Terrace, the most developed portion of Bear Creek Park, includes three playfields covering about 20 acres, an archery range, tennis courts, an off-leash dog park, and numerous picnic pavilions.



*Bear Creek Regional Park*



The west end of Bear Creek Regional Park is adjacent to the City of Colorado Springs' Bear Creek Canyon Park and Red Rock Canyon Open Space which incorporates the properties previously known as Manitou Section 16 and White Acres. One of the highlights of this area is the Bear Creek Nature Center. The original center was destroyed by fire in 2000. Through significant community support, a new center was constructed that features hundreds of programs and services in the areas of conservation and nature studies. Additional information

about the nature center facilities and programs is located in **Chapter 3**.

### **Black Forest Regional Park**

Black Forest Regional Park includes 385 acres and is located in the Black Forest, approximately four miles east of Interstate 25 on Shoup Road. As suggested by its name, the character of Black Forest Regional Park is dominated by the presence of the ponderosa pine forest. The developed area, with turf playfields, tennis courts, and two picnic pavilions, was located in natural openings of the forest. A 13-mile, loop trail system (used for non-motorized recreation) winds through the park. A Forestry and Noxious Weed



*Black Forest Regional Park*

Management Plan was developed in 2011 to improve the forest health in the park. The plan includes overarching guidelines and specific prescriptions to address fire mitigation, noxious weeds, and dwarf mistletoe concerns.



*Fountain Creek Regional Park*

### **Fountain Creek Regional Park**

Fountain Creek Regional Park is a 460-acre linear park situated along Fountain Creek between the cities of Colorado Springs and Fountain. The park includes a creek-side trail, Willow Springs Ponds, and the Hanson Nature Park. The ponds are stocked on a regular basis, and fishing is allowed in the Willow Springs Ponds with a consumption advisory due to PCE contamination from the Schlage Lock plant located north of the park.

Downstream of the ponds, the Fountain Creek Nature Center serves as the focal point for learning about Fountain Creek, the watershed, and riparian ecology. Additional information about the nature center facilities and programs is located in **Chapter 3**. An internal nature trail winds through the Cattail Marsh Wildlife Area and is limited to pedestrian use. Farther south, the Duckwood active play area consists of a 12 acre site with multi-purpose fields, picnic shelters, and a playground.





*Lake at Fox Run Regional Park*

### **Fox Run Regional Park**

Fox Run Park is located in the Black Forest, approximately three miles east of Interstate 25 on Baptist Road. Opened in 1986, the 414-acre park has experienced steadily increasing use. Fox Run Regional Park is one of the most utilized County parks in terms of facility reservations. Two ponds, trails through the Fallen Timbers Area, playfields and playground equipment, and five group picnic pavilions attract many people on a daily basis: from individual hikers and cross-country skiers to daycare providers and children. A park maintenance facility for the north district is also located at this

park site. A dog park is planned to be constructed in 2013.

### **Homestead Ranch Regional Park**

El Paso County Parks acquired this 460-acre site located approximately 3.5 miles northwest of Peyton in 1987-88. The land is on the edge of the Black Forest and offers excellent hiking, biking, and environmental education opportunities. The park includes a playground, restroom facility, fishing pond, water features, picnic pavilions, and three miles of trails. The park also includes the top of Rattlesnake Butte and is connected to the remainder of the park property via platted trail easements. The base and slopes of the butte are privately owned.



*Homestead Ranch Regional Park*

### **John Ceresa Memorial Park (also known as Ceresa Park)**

Ceresa Park serves as a neighborhood park and is a natural grass area with trees and park improvements including a restroom, playground picnic tables, barbeque grills, and trails. The Crews Gulch Trail goes through a portion of the park. The park is comprised of three parcels totaling 12.9 acres located adjacent to the east side of Fountain Creek Regional Park. Access is via Southmoor Drive or Carson Drive.

### **Paint Mines Interpretive Park and Open Space**

The 531-acre park surrounding the mines has evidence of human life as far back as 9,000 years ago. The colorful clays were used by American Indians for making pottery and ceremonial paints. The park protects fantastic geological formations that feature spires and hoodoos and includes a restroom facility, four miles of trails, interpretive signage, overlooks, and many natural wonders. The adjacent 236 acre open space, to the west, preserves additional open space in eastern El Paso County.



*Paint Mines Interpretive Park and Open Space*

The Palmer Land Trust holds a conservation easement on 275 acres of the property.

### **Rainbow Falls Recreation Area**

The recreation area consists of the namesake Rainbow Falls and a small series of waterfalls downstream. The five acres are developed with a parking area, trailhead, covered kiosk with historical and geological interpretive information, picnic benches and tables, a 0.15 mile trail from the parking area to the Falls, and secondary trails along Fountain Creek and viewing overlooks.



*Rainbow Falls Recreation Area*





**Stratmoor Hills Park**

A small park of 1.25 acres, Stratmoor Hills Park is located south of Colorado Springs on the west side of Interstate 25, south of the World Arena, near the B-Street entrance to Fort Carson. A picnic pavilion, picnic tables, playground, and a basketball court are available to the public at this neighborhood park.



**Stratmoor Valley Park/Trailhead**

Stratmoor Valley Park/Trailhead is located south of Colorado Springs on the east side of Interstate 25, and is adjacent to Fountain Creek. This 17.8-acre park includes playfields, a multi-use court, a playground, a volleyball court, and a picnic shelter. This park also provides access to the Fountain Creek Regional Trail from Glenwood Drive.



*Stratmoor Valley Park*

**Widefield Community Park**

At 34 acres, Widefield Community Park is one of the larger County-held neighborhood parks. Approximately seven acres are developed with restrooms, disc golf course, tennis courts, playing fields, playground, picnic shelter, and basketball courts. The McCrae Reservoir, which is located north of Widefield Community Park, features a pedestrian bridge, natural trail, and wildlife viewing area.



*Widefield Community Park*

## Regional Trails

Regional trails provide recreational enjoyment, links, and access to recreation areas of regional significance and local communities, as well as commuting opportunities.

### Crews Gulch Regional Trail



The 2.5-mile Crews Gulch Regional Trail winds through several neighborhoods, along a riparian corridor and links Widefield and Ceresa Parks to the Fountain Creek Regional Trail and nearby Fountain Creek Regional Park and Fountain Creek Nature Center. A future connection will link to the City of Colorado Springs Blue Stem Open Space.

*Crews Gulch Regional Trail*

### Fountain Creek Regional Trail

Approximately 10 miles of trail have been developed along Fountain Creek from El Pomar Youth Sports Complex in Colorado Springs south through Fountain Creek Regional Park. The Fountain Creek Regional Trail passes through riparian habitat that includes mature cottonwoods, wetlands, and upland areas. The trail is part of the larger Front Range Trail system that is proposed to stretch from Wyoming to New Mexico.

### Fox Run Regional Trail

The 8-mile Fox Run Regional Trail is a partially completed, crushed limestone trail in the northern part of El Paso County, east of Interstate 25. The trail generally follows an east-west route and connects the Town of Monument to the Black Forest area, including Fox Run Regional Park and Black Forest Regional Park. Approximately 1 mile of this trail has been completed in the Fox Pines Subdivision. Another 2 mile section of the trail has also been completed along Hodgen Road.

### Jackson Creek Regional Trail

The 9-mile Jackson Creek Trail is a partially completed crushed limestone trail in the northern part of El Paso County, east of Interstate 25. It generally follows a north-south route connecting the Town of Monument with the City of Colorado Springs. It passes through several subdivisions and riparian corridors, including Preble's Meadows Jumping Mouse habitat. It also facilitates a connection to the Fox Run Regional Trail and New Santa Fe Regional Trail.

### **New Santa Fe Regional Trail**

The 20-mile New Santa Fe Regional Trail follows the abandoned Santa Fe Railroad right-of-way in a north-south route west of Interstate 25 from County Line Road in the north to the City of Colorado Springs in the south. The northern segment of the trail winds through foothills, shrublands, and ponderosa pines and links to the Greenland Trail managed by Douglas County. From Monument to Ice Lake at the south end of the Air Force Academy, the trail passes through open high plains and riparian



*New Santa Fe Regional Trail*

landscapes. The county secured an easement from the Air Force Academy to enable this 6.9-mile reach of the trail to pass through the facility. The trail may be accessed at Palmer Lake, Highway 105, Monument, Air Force Academy, Baptist Road, North Gate, and Ice Lake with trailhead facilities at Palmer Lake, Monument, and Baptist Road. Each trailhead is equipped with parking, a restroom, and picnic tables.

The New Santa Fe Regional Trail is very popular among recreational users and commuters. Informal user counts by County Parks estimate that 100,000 people use the trail annually. A portion of the American Discovery Trail (ADT) follows the New Santa Fe Trail. The ADT is an east-west multi-use hiking trail planned to cross the entire United States. It is part of the Front Range Trail through the region.

### **Palmer Divide Regional Trail**

The 15-mile Palmer Divide Regional Trail will begin just north of Black Forest Regional Park, where it connects to the Fox Run Trail, and will run east to Homestead Ranch Regional Park, before turning south where it will connect to the Rock Island Regional Trail. Two miles of the trail are complete through the Woodlake Subdivision, which includes a trailhead, wetlands areas, and historic remnants of a dairy farm. The trail features tall grasses and riparian areas along Kiowa Creek.

### **Rock Island Regional Trail**

The 23-mile Rock Island Regional Trail runs parallel to Highway 24 between Falcon and Ramah and is part of the America the Beautiful Trail. Nine miles of the trail was constructed on the former Chicago and Rock Island Railroad Line between Falcon and Peyton. Picnic tables are located at the Falcon trailhead, and benches are placed at regular intervals along the trail corridor.



### **Ute Pass Regional Trail**

The Ute Pass Trail is a planned 40-mile trail that will eventually connect Colorado Springs to Cripple Creek in Teller County. The trail is part of the American Discovery Trail and the America the Beautiful Trail. The trail will help to preserve the rich Ute Pass history that includes the Ute Indians using the historic trail for travel and pilgrimages, and later, explorers, gold seekers and settlers seeking the easiest passage to points west through the mountains.



*Ute Pass Regional Trail*

The first section of the El Paso County's Ute Pass Trail was constructed in 2003, connecting the Ute Pass Elementary School with the Town of Green Mountain Falls to allow safe passage for students. In 2006, a second section was completed connecting the Town of Green Mountain Falls to the Teller County line. Green Mountain Falls later provided an on-road trail through the community that links the two sections.

El Paso County received a State Trails grant for construction of a 3-mile portion of the trail east of Longs Ranch Road, with a turn-around interpretive loop to return hikers to the Manitou Springs area. Construction of this section is scheduled for 2013. The last section of the trail will connect the interpretive loop trail to the Ute Pass Elementary School. Planning for this segment is scheduled to begin in 2014.

## **Open Space**

Open Space areas possess important natural, cultural, historic, or visual resource values that have been purposefully protected, with an emphasis on protection over active use. Public access is permitted to the extent that resource values are not compromised.

### **Christian Open Space**

Four parcels make up the property within the City of Fountain known as the Christian Open Space. It is located south of Fountain Creek Regional Park near the older commercial core of the City of Fountain. The 80-acre undeveloped open space is bisected by Fountain Creek and is accessed from the south via Crest Drive and from the north via Missouri. The Palmer Land Trust holds a conservation easement on the property. An extension of the Front Range Trail is planned through the property.

### **Falcon Vista Wetlands**

The 17-acre creek bed with wetlands property in eastern El Paso County was provided as part of subdivision development. It is located southeast of Highway 24 adjacent to the Falcon Elementary School, near Falcon.

### **Forest Green Open Space**

The 15-acre natural open space area is primarily grassland with a small pond, and it has no planned trails or improvements. The property was provided as part of subdivision development. It is located in northeastern El Paso County, north of Hodgen Road.

### **Heritage Ranch Open Space**

Like the Forest Green Open Space, this 13-acre natural open space area is also primarily grassland with a small pond, and it has no planned trails or improvements. The property was provided as part of subdivision development. It is located in northeastern El Paso County, south of Highway 24.

### **Kane Open Space**

In 2003, the Alexander Kane estate offered El Paso County approximately 400 acres of land, approximately five miles east of Fountain, for the development of a regional park. The County conducted an environmental review of the site, required that certain mitigation measures be undertaken, and eventually accepted ownership of the property. When constructed, the regional park will help provide needed park facilities for the rapidly growing community of Fountain and the expansion of Fort Carson. A master planning process will be undertaken to determine recreation needs and site suitability and to help secure funding for park development.



*Kane Ranch*

### **Latigo Trails Open Space**

Three parcels make up this 100-acre open space. The natural grassland open space area, split by a roadway, includes sloping topography alongside a creek. Although there is currently no development, trails opportunities exist within this open space north of the Falcon townsite.



*Latigo Trails Open Space*

### **Peyton Pines Open Space**

The 48-acre natural open space area is primarily grassland and has no planned trails or improvements. The property was provided as part of subdivision development. It is located in northeastern El Paso County and is accessed via Blacksmith Road.

### **Pineries Open Space**

The Pineries Open Space, which spans the Palmer Divide, is the largest open space holding under County ownership at 1,067 acres. The Palmer Land Trust holds a conservation easement on 1,040 acres of the open space. It contains a variety of vegetation communities, including plants that are rare and unusual in Colorado, and mature Ponderosa Pine forest that is classified as old growth. By preservation of the property in its natural condition, with limited and appropriately sited recreation uses, the scenic, wildlife, and ecological values that currently exist on the property will also be preserved and maintained. The conservation easement and Master Plan developed in 2010 allow for planned public access and development with a focus on trails. Access will be off of Vollmer and Shoup roads and is currently available from Vollmer Road with an access easement crossing privately owned land. Trailheads are planned with facilities for non-motorized users and equestrians, along with restrooms and interpretive signage highlighting the property's natural assets.



*Pineries Open Space*

### **Schreder Open Space**

Schreder Open Space is adjacent to Fountain Creek Regional Park and located near the Nature Center. The 12 acres are managed as a separate open space area in compliance with the conservation easement held by Palmer Land Trust.

### **Other Park Assets**

The County owns or manages other assets that serve local and regional needs and provide a variety of recreation facilities. Roles and responsibilities are articulated in lease agreements or intergovernmental agreements.





*Black Forest – Section 16*

### **Black Forest – Section 16**

County Parks, in cooperation with the Colorado State Forest Service, Academy 20 School District, and EPC Environmental Services, leases this 640 acre site from the State Land Board. County Parks and the Black Forest Trails Association maintain a 4-mile long multi-use perimeter trail system at the site. A developed trailhead with a vault restroom is located adjacent to the parking area, accessed from Burgess Road. The County assists with forest management within the leased area.

### **Clear Spring Ranch**

Clear Spring Ranch is located south of Fountain and is owned by the City of Colorado Springs and is managed by Colorado Springs Utilities. El Paso County Parks entered into a lease agreement with the City in 2001 to maintain recreational trails and trailhead facilities and to preserve and enhance the wildlife habitat. The 970-acre site features grasslands and foothills ecosystems, and riparian habitat along Fountain Creek. The recreation facilities include parking, a pavilion, picnic tables, restroom, and four miles of trails. Additional primary regional trails will be constructed in 2013-2014 with GOCO River Corridors Initiative funds along with an improved trailhead that will accommodate equestrians.

### **Drake Lake Natural Area**

This 22.19-acre parcel of land in the Falcon area, west of Meadowlake Airport, contains a small lake, which is perpetually full. The property includes natural and constructed wetlands and areas for picnicking and wildlife viewing.



*Drake Lake*

### **El Paso County Fair and Events Complex (also known as the El Paso County Fairgrounds)**

The El Paso County Fair and Events Complex, which is located in Calhan, is home to the El Paso County Fair, which is a week-long event that attracts over 25,000 participants each year. In addition to the County Fair, the Fairgrounds are used for a variety of local events and private rentals. The 40-acre site contains a grandstand with a seating capacity of approximately 3,300, approximately 108,000 square feet of indoor facility rental space, and numerous smaller agricultural buildings that house a variety of recreational, commercial, youth, and private activities throughout the year. The Fairgrounds also contains a dirt track that hosts approximately 20 auto racing events each year. The facility is becoming a community hub for eastern El Paso County and for agriculture, recreation, and social services activities. A Community Outreach Center was established in 2012 and provides office and meeting space for various community organizations.



*El Paso County Fair and Events Complex*



*Palmer Lake Regional Recreation Area*

### **Palmer Lake Regional Recreation Area**

The Town of Palmer Lake and El Paso County jointly own and manage the recreation area located in Palmer Lake, Colorado. The County is responsible for the New Santa Fe Trail that links to the site, parking area, and restroom. The Town is responsible for managing the active park area and facilities, which include a picnic pavilion, volleyball court, playground, horseshoe pit, and fishing dock. Water levels in the lake have receded dramatically in the past ten years due to the drought and

changes in upstream drainage tributaries. The Town of Palmer Lake is working to develop long-term solutions for restoring the lake. The park is bordered on the east by Ben Lomond Mountain, a highly visible and scenic natural landform.

## **Cheyenne Mountain Shooting Complex**

The Cheyenne Mountain Shooting Complex is a joint project between the U.S. Army, El Paso County, the El Paso County Sheriff, and Colorado Parks and Wildlife. The 400-acre site sits on Army land near Interstate 25 just off of mile marker 132. The entrance is located just outside Fort Carson's Gate 20 security perimeter. Shooters using the range do not have to enter Fort Carson to use the range. The Range Complex is a three phase project. The first phase is now complete and includes 120 shooting positions across seven ranges.



*Cheyenne Mountain Shooting Range*

The County is required by law to provide shooting range facilities to meet the training and certification needs of the Sheriff's Office. A portion of the Complex is reserved Monday through Friday for the El Paso County Sheriff's Office and Colorado Springs Police Department staff to train. The remainder of the facility's ranges and shooting lanes are open and available to the general public seven days a week.

## **Other Providers of Recreation Facilities and Open Space**

A number of other government agencies and organizations own and manage land in El Paso County that provides recreational opportunities or serves as a form of open space. Some of these areas are shown in **Map 2-1: Existing Parks, Trails, and Open Space**, and are described in the text that follows.

### **Federal**

#### **Bureau of Land Management**

Federal lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) within El Paso County encompass approximately 3,800 acres, including several small, isolated parcels in the eastern portion of the county. The largest concentration of BLM lands is adjacent to the southern edge of Pike National Forest and includes more than 3,000 acres in a nearly contiguous block. Most of the BLM lands in this area are under study for designation as wilderness due to their lack of access and largely undisturbed character. These lands are also in proximity to the Nature Conservancy's Aiken Canyon Preserve, an area with outstanding natural and scenic values.



## Department of Defense

There are five military installations based in El Paso County, three of which have designated areas open for public use. At Fort Carson, the U.S. Army has approximately 3,000 acres open to the public, which include a visitor center, Turkey Creek Recreation Area, a community park (Iron Horse Park), a rodeo arena, and approximately ten miles of trail. Turkey Creek Recreation Area has stables and equestrian amenities, as well as playgrounds, picnic sites, and hiking and riding trails. The Penrose House, a historic structure, is open to the public for special events. Ten miles of multi-purpose trails traverse the installation from Interstate 25 west to State Highway 115. The County is working with the Army to coordinate additional trail connections from B Street and the Fountain Creek Regional Park area. The civilian population is welcome to use these amenities while observing certain security restrictions.



*New Santa Fe Trail on Air Force Academy*

Historic buildings, displays, and visitor information areas exist on both the Air Force Academy and the Peterson Air Force Base. Approximately 6.9 miles of the New Santa Fe Regional Trail is located on the Air Force Academy, and is available for public use. Support staff of Peterson Air Force Base and Schriever Air Force Base have initiated discussion with the City and County on potential links to City and County trails and open space.

## Pike National Forest

The Pike National Forest covers approximately 117,000 acres (8.5 percent of the total County land area). It is confined to the mountainous western portion of the county in an area extending south from the Douglas County line to south of Cheyenne Mountain. Nearly all of the mountain slope area that can be seen from the Interstate 25 corridor is federal land administered by the U.S. Forest Service, and nearly all of that is accessible to the public for multipurpose recreational use, including hiking, equestrian use, mountain biking, and limited motorized uses. These lands act as a recreation and open space resource for the residents of El Paso County and the region.

## State

### Bohart Ranch and Chico Basin Ranch

Bohart Ranch and Chico Basin Ranch are large, multi-tract State landholdings located in southeastern El Paso County and managed primarily for natural resource conservation. Chico Basin Ranch is leased for grazing. The Nature Conservancy has a lease on the Bohart Ranch.

### **Cheyenne Mountain State Park**

Cheyenne Mountain State Park is located at the southern edge of Colorado Springs, west of Highway 115 at the base of Cheyenne Mountain. The 1,680 acre park includes over 20 miles of hiking and biking trails, a visitor center, parking lots, camping facilities, picnic pavilions, and other park amenities. The 1,000-acre top of Cheyenne Mountain was recently added to the park.



*Grazing Cattle*

### **Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife**

The Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife (CDPW) leases approximately 10,000 acres from the State Land Board in the south central portion of the county. The area is known as Turkey Track Ranch, and it is located south of Squirrel Creek Road between Peyton and Ellicott Highways. The Turkey Track Ranch is open to the public for wildlife related recreation (hunting and observation) between September 1 and February 28 of each year. While these types of public uses are emphasized during the fall and winter, other uses are not prohibited. During the remaining part of the year, the area is closed to the public and leased by a private landowner for grazing.

CDPW also manages a 360 acre state wildlife area at Ramah Reservoir that is an important refuge for migratory waterfowl. The agency owns or leases approximately half of the land, and while the rest is privately owned, public access is allowed throughout the area. Use of the area is restricted to day time only and includes fishing, hunting, and boating. The reservoir is situated on Sandy Creek for the purpose of flood control. The amount of water in the reservoir is entirely dependent on surface runoff. As a result, the reservoir can be completely dry one out of every four or five years. CDPW has received comments from local residents that they would like to see the reservoir further developed as a water-based recreation area.

### **State Land Board**

The State of Colorado owns a significant amount of land in El Paso County, most of which is concentrated south of Highway 94 and east of Interstate 25. This land is administered by the State Land Board for the purposes of generating revenue for the State's school system. The majority of these state-owned lands are privately leased to ranchers who use it for grazing cattle.

These lands are closed to the public; however, some leases have allowed horseback riding, hunting or hiking on the property. Amendment 16, a citizen-initiated modification to the Colorado constitution, was passed in November of 1996. This amendment fundamentally modifies the mission of the State Land Board by eliminating the requirement that state lands be managed for maximum revenue generation. The amendment now mandates the State Land Board work with local communities to preserve approximately 300,000 acres of state lands with important natural resource and scenic values.



*Grazing Cattle*

## **Cities and Towns**

### **City of Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services**

The City of Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services manages seven regional parks, eight community parks, 123 neighborhood parks, six sports complexes and 40 open space areas. Combined, the City manages over 15,500 acres of parks, trails, and open space. Key assets include Garden of the Gods, Palmer Park, Cheyenne Canyon Park, Stratton Open Space, and Red Rock Canyon Open Space. The City also offers a wide variety of recreation programming services including athletics, fitness, and aquatics. The City and the County work together to ensure that trails, open space, and park development link whenever possible and to avoid duplication of services.

### **Colorado Springs Utilities**

Colorado Springs Utilities manages thousands of acres of land owned by the City of Colorado Springs in El Paso County for the purpose of operating utility facilities and protecting its watershed and water supply. These areas include reservoirs on the north and south slopes of Pikes Peak, Longs Ranch west of Manitou Springs, Pinello Ranch north of Fountain, Hanna Ranch, and Clear Spring Ranch south of Fountain. Most of these areas allow limited public access for hiking, fishing, hunting, and biking. Depending on the facility, management of recreational used and facilities is shared by the U.S. Forest Service, Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife, El Paso County Parks, and the City of Colorado Springs.

The City of Colorado Springs owns approximately 5,000 acres east of Fountain known as Hanna Ranch. Colorado Springs Utilities manages a power plant that is located on the property. Approximately 3,900 acres of the area are managed by the Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife as the Colorado Springs Wildlife Area. It is open to the public primarily for hunting.

### **City of Fountain**

The City of Fountain maintains 100 acres of parkland that primarily consists of neighborhood and pocket parks and open space areas, including the Adams Open Space. The city also maintains an urban trail system that is being linked to the county trail system. The city has over 115 acres of open space within its jurisdictional boundaries.



### **Town of Green Mountain Falls**

The Town of Green Mountain Falls has continued to work cooperatively with the County to construct the Ute Pass Trail through its community. In addition, the Town manages several neighborhood parks that include a scenic lake with gazebo, swimming pool, tennis courts, playgrounds, and a trail system connecting to the Pikes Peak North Slope Recreation Area.

### **City of Manitou Springs**

The City of Manitou Springs has 10 neighborhood and pocket parks serving the community, as well as over 240 acres of open space areas. Recreation facilities include a small fishing pond, multiple playgrounds and picnic areas, and a public swimming pool. In addition, several trails originate or traverse through the city. The trails include the Paul Intemann Memorial Nature Trail, Barr Trail, Manitou Incline, Williams Canyon Trail, and Creekwalk Trail. Planning for the Iron Mountain Trail is underway.

### **Town of Monument**

The Town of Monument manages the 20-acre Monument Lake and several smaller neighborhood parks for recreational purposes. The 2003 *Parks, Trails, and Open Space Master Plan* identifies nine proposed parks and ten regional trails. The plan specifically encourages developing trail connections to the County's system.

### **Town of Palmer Lake**

In addition to the Town's namesake water feature, there are two reservoirs near the town accessible via the Palmer Lake Reservoir Trail. The Town allows fishing in one of these reservoirs, and encourages hiking and other passive recreational activities. As indicated earlier in the plan, the County and the Town cooperatively manage the recreation areas surrounding Palmer Lake.

## **Other Public Holdings**

### **Nature Conservancy**

The mission of The Nature Conservancy is to preserve the plants, animals, and natural communities that represent the diversity of Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive. In Colorado, The Nature Conservancy has helped protect more than 600,000 acres of precious landscapes. Some of these places are Nature Conservancy preserves and others are managed by partner agencies and organizations.



*Aiken Canyon Preserve (NOTE: This file is licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike License.](#))*

The Aiken Canyon Preserve is located 15.8 miles south of Colorado Springs in one of the highest quality foothills ecosystems along Colorado’s Front Range. This 1,621-acre preserve has a 4-mile loop hiking trail and an interpretive center open to the public.

The Bohart Ranch is a 47,000-acre working cattle ranch, leased to The Nature Conservancy by the Colorado State Land Board. The ranch supports extensive sandsage and shortgrass prairie South of Ellicott. Because this is a working ranch, visitation is only permitted in pre-arranged groups.

**Palmer Land Trust**

The Palmer Land Trust is a public, non-profit land trust dedicated to the permanent protection of open space, agricultural, scenic, and natural lands in Colorado. To conserve these resources, the Palmer Land Trust works on behalf of the community with private landowners and public agencies. By preserving diverse, undeveloped, private, and public lands, the Land Trust also secures habitat for wildlife and native plants, supports agriculture and ranching on family lands, provides recreational and educational opportunities,



*Cows grazing on protected land*

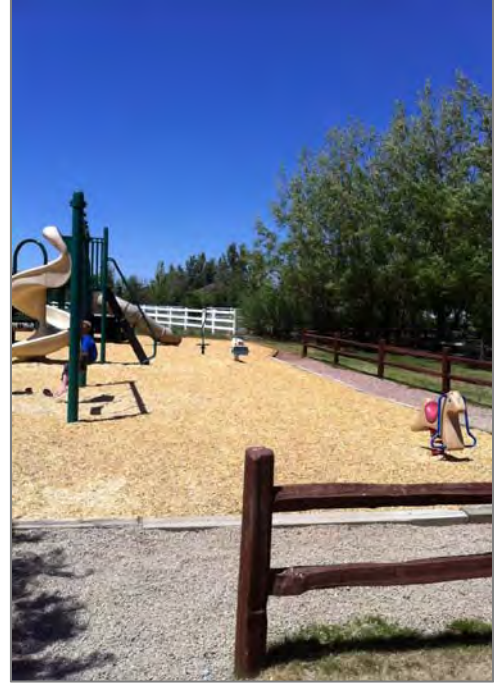
protects important historical sites, and maintains scenic vistas for the benefit of present residents and future generations. To date, the Palmer Land Trust has protected nearly 75,000 acres in Southeastern Colorado, with 5,191 of those acres in El Paso County.

**School Districts**

There are 17 school districts in El Paso County offering kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade public education. The schools are important providers of organized sports facilities and recreation programs, particularly the larger districts in the Colorado Springs area. Widefield School District 3 owns and operates its own parks and recreation district, and its Trails Committee develops trail plans with connections to several County parks and trails. The Urban Park Areas established by the County for purposes of collecting and distributing park fee funds generally coincide with the boundaries of the major school districts in the unincorporated County, specifically districts 38, 20, 49, and 3. The County has provided urban park grants to support school district development of sports facilities.

### Special Districts

There are numerous special districts within El Paso County (over 100 at this time), some of which currently provide recreation services and neighborhood and community park-type facilities under their service plans. The major metropolitan districts currently include: Meridian Ranch, Woodmen Hills, Lorson Ranch, Colorado Centre, Cathedral Pines, Falcon Highlands, Tri-view, Cherokee, and Paint Brush Hills. Each district varies in size and type of facilities provided and receives a portion of Colorado Lottery funds. Some metropolitan districts offer recreation programming through their community centers (e.g. Woodmen Hills), and some have established partnerships with the YMCA (Meridian Ranch) for these services. El Paso County Parks works with some of the districts to support their development of parks master plans and to provide urban park grants. Metropolitan districts play an important role in El Paso County in meeting the needs of the community for parks and other services, and are expected to continue to do so in the future.

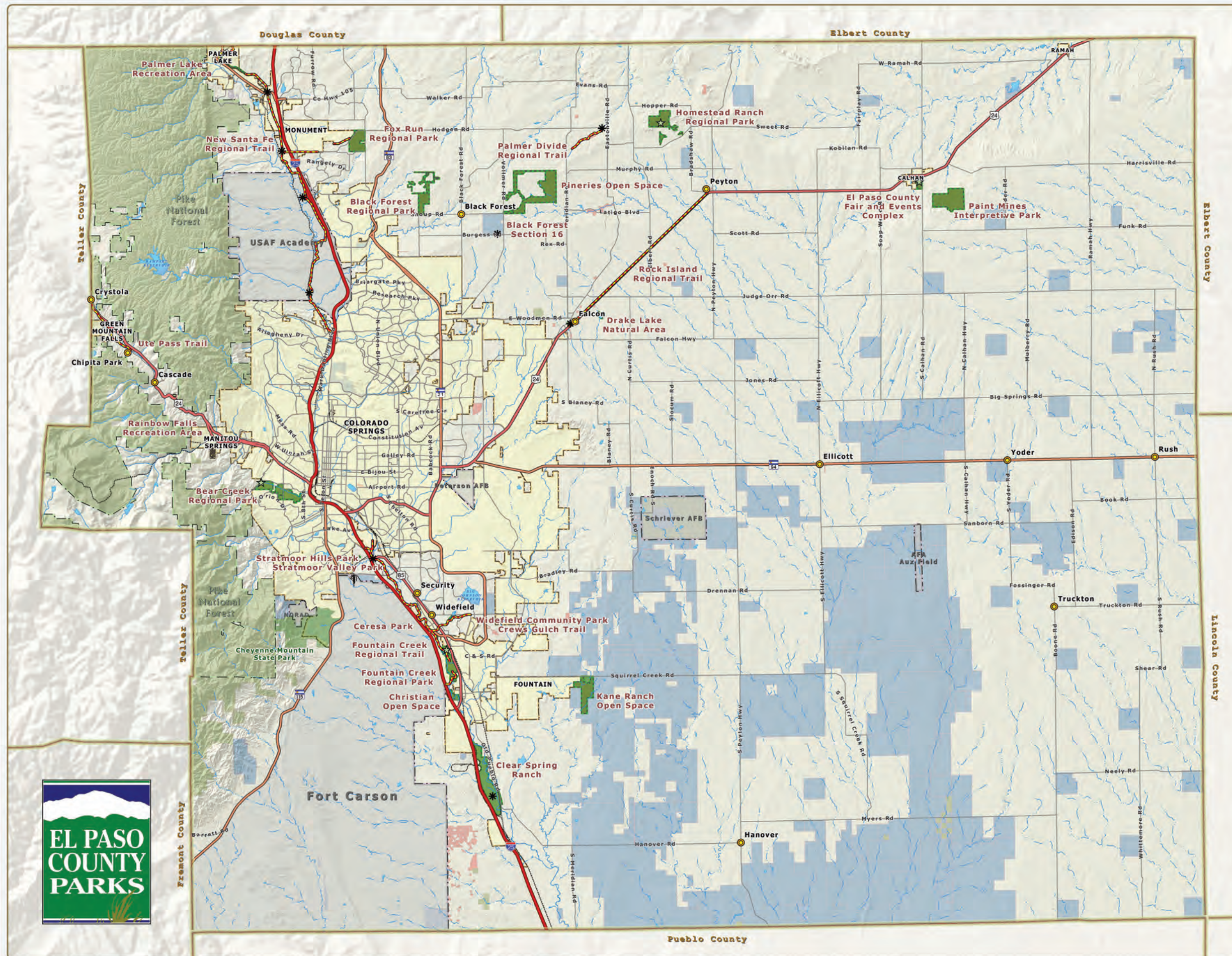


*Woodmen Hills Community Park – partially funded with El Paso County Urban Park Grant Fund.*

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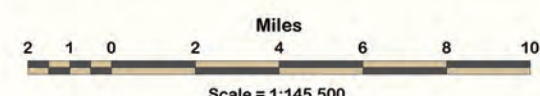
## Existing Parks, Trails, and Open Space



### Legend

- EPC Regional Trails
- Existing City Trails
- EPC Parks\*
- EPC Trailheads
- EPC Special Facilities
- US Interstate Highways
- US Highways
- State Highways
- Major Roadways
- Railroads
- Lakes & Reservoirs
- Creeks - Perennial
- Creeks - Intermittent
- Unincorporated Towns
- Military Areas
- County Lands
- Federal Lands
- State Lands
- Incorporated Cities
- Pike National Forest
- County Boundary

\*Note: Only larger open space areas are displayed.



June 2013  
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## Chapter 3: El Paso County Recreation and Cultural Services

El Paso County Parks offers facilities, programs, and events at two nationally recognized nature centers and the El Paso County Fair and Events Complex, and makes use of the park and trail system with over 6,500 acres of parkland and 100 miles of trails. Through class field trips, recreation classes, and community-wide special events, the division provides educational, recreational, and entertainment opportunities to El Paso County citizens and visitors.

Fostering stewardship of public lands and natural resources, as well as sustainable relationships among humans, the natural environment, and the earth we inhabit, is an important role for El Paso County Parks. As the population continues to grow locally and nationwide, and as the demand upon natural resources increases, we recognize that environmental problems and opportunities within our community, both now and in the future, must be addressed by empowered, informed, and involved citizens of all ages who understand their relationship with nature.

### Service Delivery

Annual volunteer efforts and donations provide considerable support for the recreation and cultural services programs as evidenced by the over 27,000 hours of volunteer service generously given in 2012 by local citizens. In addition to many other individual and group contributions, corporate entities, such as Kohl's department stores, have provided contributions towards maintenance and expansion of park facilities.

In 2011, the Fountain Creek Nature Center's "Discover the Wetlands" program received the Pre K-Elementary Award of Excellence from the Colorado Alliance for Environmental Education. The program, designed to help students gain an awareness, understanding, appreciation, and concern for all natural areas, especially wetlands, served 6,346 children in grades three through five in a three year period.

Aligning with the annual El Paso County Parks Action Plan, environmental education programs were successfully expanded into the north district at Fox Run Regional Park in 2012. Covering new terrain, learning new interpretive stories and opening the door to new nature connections, over 200 students, teachers, and parents were introduced to the natural attributes of Fox Run Regional Park.

Another cornerstone of the success of the County's nature-based programming is the *Friends of El Paso County Nature Centers*, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. The organization provides a strong role in fundraising to support the nature centers through program leadership and through sponsoring educational programs, interpretive projects, stewardship programs, and special events. For more than 30 years, it has provided volunteer hours and funding to support the nature centers, programs, and services.

Program awareness and stewardship is fostered through the El Paso County Parks' web site, brochures, a summer program guide, and "Naturalist Notes," a bi-annual newsletter. El Paso County Parks also actively promotes use of social media including Facebook and Twitter to advertise its offerings.

## Programs

Since 2010, El Paso County has served an annual average of 200,000 participants in recreation and cultural programs through the County's parks, nature centers, and the County Fair and Events complex. This includes 1,000 environmental education programs, serving 25,000 participants; 10 special events at County parks and nature centers along with the annual County Fair serving 25,000 participants; and 150,000 drop-in visitors at the nature centers.

Programs include a children's nature series, nature camps, daycare/camps, hikes, walks, family and club programs, school group field experiences, tennis lessons, archery, fitness boot camps, special events, concerts in the parks, the El Paso County Fair, and Gymkhana series. Interested parties can also schedule a guided tour, or celebrate a birthday with a party at the nature centers.

## Nature Centers

It is the mission of the El Paso County Nature Centers to connect people to their natural and cultural resources and inspire them to become stewards for the parks and environment.

### Bear Creek Nature Center

Bear Creek Nature Center is located in the western portion of Bear Creek Park at 245 Bear Creek Road in Colorado Springs. It opened in 1976 and was the first nature center in Colorado. The original building was destroyed by arson in 2000, and a new 8,900-square foot nature center facility opened at the same location in 2002.

Set in the scrub-oak covered foothills of Pikes Peak and Colorado's Front Range, Bear Creek Nature Center supports a variety of wildlife including red-tailed hawks, great-horned owls, black bears, mule deer, and coyotes, as well as a variety of birds, among other wildlife species. Scrub oak thickets, ponderosa pine forests, a mountain creek, and lush meadows covered with native grasses and wildflowers give this site its Rocky Mountain foothills character that attracts children and adults of all ages. Visitors find Bear Creek Nature Center and the surrounding two miles of nature trails, as well as the natural area, to be enjoyable, exciting, and fascinating.



*Bear Creek Nature Center*

As a window to the foothills life zone, the nature center offers wildlife viewing areas, interpretive signage, a three-dimensional map of the park and surrounding foothills, a wildlife diorama that features a black bear and cub, and a live honeybee observation hive. Also featured are interactive, computerized touchscreens and other exhibits that provide information about the park, as well as local foothills history, geology, weather and climate, wildlife, and native plants. Visitors also enjoy birdwatching and wildlife viewing on the patio at creekside, spectacular views of the mountains to the west, and a large-screen video presentation in the center's Bear Den Classroom that introduces many fascinating features of the park and the surrounding foothills.



*Fountain Creek Nature Center*

### **Fountain Creek Nature Center**

The Fountain Creek Nature Center is located at the edge of a riparian zone in the central portion of Fountain Creek Regional Park at 320 Pepper Grass Lane in Fountain. The facility opened in 1992 and has over 70,000 visitors annually. In 2013, the county will add approximately 2,100 square feet to the existing 2,100 square-foot building to expand exhibit, education, and project areas and accommodate the growing demand for programs and meeting space. A GOCO River Corridors Initiative grant for \$330,000 was awarded in 2012, and a

campaign has been initiated to raise funds for exhibits and energy efficiency building enhancements.

Set in the mature cottonwood forest and flood plain along Fountain Creek, numerous species of waterfowl and other riparian wildlife are attracted to the park by several meadows, spring-fed ponds, marshes, and the creek itself.

The nature center serves as a gateway to a variety of discovery experiences within the Cattail Marsh Wildlife Area that teems with abundant native plants and diverse wildlife including herons, hummingbirds, muskrats, and white-tailed deer. As an oasis on the plains, the nature center serves visitors of all ages and features interpretive exhibits that emphasize life in, on, and around the water. Exhibits and displays also feature wetland communities, aquatic wildlife, wildlife sightings, sounds in the park, native plants, weather and climate, the watershed, and the Rocky Mountain backdrop. Outside of the nature center are nature trails, interpretive signage, and wildlife observation blinds that provide many opportunities to enjoy abundant wildlife in this wetland environment and to observe more than 290 species of birds.

## El Paso County Fair and Events Complex

The El Paso County Fair and Events Complex, located in Calhan, is home to the El Paso County Fair which is an eight day event that attracts over 25,000 participants each year. The County Fair celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2005. In addition to the County Fair, the Fairgrounds are used for a variety of local events and private rentals. The 40-acre site contains a grandstand with a seating capacity of approximately 3,300, approximately 108,000 square feet of indoor facility space, including numerous smaller agricultural buildings.



*El Paso County Fairgrounds*

**It is the mission of the** El Paso County Fair to:

- Provide a wide variety of activities that celebrates our history, culture, and heritage
- Produce a varied program schedule that appeals to the interests of Fair participants
- Provide an effective venue for 4-H activities
- Ensure that the County Fair is financially self-sufficient

A Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and funding from the Fairgrounds Corporation will help provide upgrades to the south grandstand restrooms, including ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) accessibility in 2013.

County Parks works closely with the County Fair Sponsorship Committee to secure sponsorships to help support the successful operation of the County Fair. County Leadership, the Fair Advisory Board (FAB) volunteers, Fair advocates, and staff continuously work to improve the Fair experience and offerings.

A Community Outreach Center was established in 2012 at the El Paso County Fair and Events Complex and provides office and meeting space for various community organizations to provide social services for eastern El Paso County.

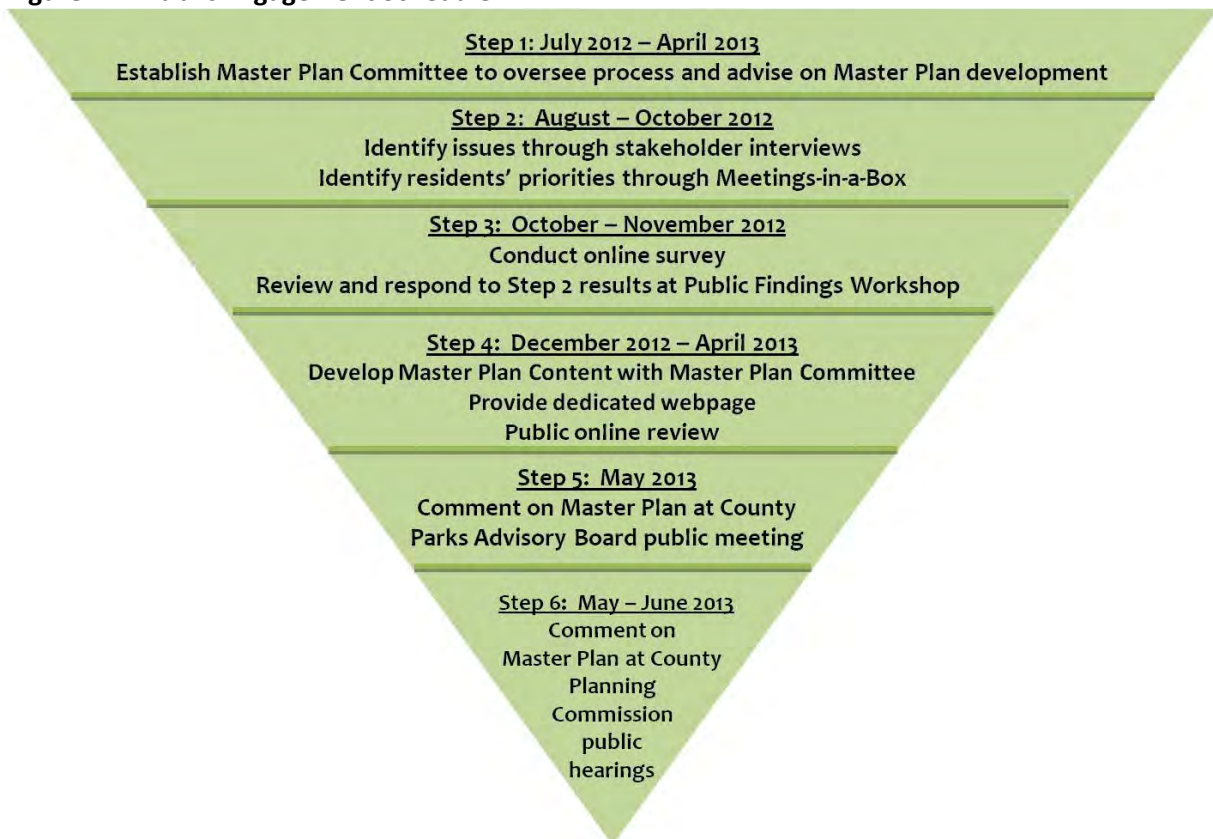


## Chapter 4: Stakeholder Input and User Perceptions

In May 2012, El Paso County Parks engaged the services of a team of consultants with national and local recreation planning experience (led by Colorado-based GreenPlay and including Design Concepts, Tapis Associates, and KezziahWatkins) to assist in developing this Master Plan. A Master Plan Committee made up of a cross-section of stakeholders (see Acknowledgements) as well as a staff Project Team guided the planning process. The Master Plan Committee was appointed by the Park Advisory Board and met periodically throughout the planning process to provide input on process, key issues, and the content of the Master Plan.

The El Paso County Strategic Plan 2012-2016 speaks to forging community consensus and partnerships to help determine funding opportunities and has a specific objective that calls for the updating of the Parks Master Plan. In developing the Master Plan update, El Paso County Parks staff was committed to encouraging a broad spectrum of County residents to participate in an open and transparent public involvement process. This process was designed to provide citizens information about the purpose of the Master Plan and the facilities and services provided by the County, and to solicit ideas and priorities related to existing and future parks, trails, open space, and recreation and cultural programs offered by the County. The public engagement schedule is shown in **Figure 4-1**.

**Figure 4-1: Public Engagement Schedule**



## Planning Process Givens

In preparation for soliciting citizen input and researching and analyzing information, the project team and a Master Plan Committee appointed by the Park Advisory Board identified issues that are critical to recognize and to ensure the success of the planning effort, essentially “givens” or sideboards. They included:

Parks, trails, open space, and recreation and cultural services are important components of the overall economic fabric of the community. Integration of community values related to these is critical.

Be sensitive to the current economic conditions. Sustainable growth is important. Citizen polling has indicated a desire to focus on maintaining the current park system versus system expansion; however, it should be recognized that land values are currently suppressed, and there are opportunities for acquisition.

Budget focus has been on “nuts and bolts” operations and infrastructure and minimal tax dollars have been spent on park development in recent history. This is not likely to change in the foreseeable future.

The County is not an urban park system. There is a large urban, incorporated area in the middle of the County (Colorado Springs and smaller cities), and there is a large National Forest within the County. A regional trails network is important.

Many national governance associations make their homes in Colorado Springs and have needs for facilities.

The County has a good data base, GIS, and other materials, on which to build.

Along with the ongoing input of the Master Plan Committee, three primary stakeholder input methods were used.

## Stakeholder Interviews

**A series of stakeholder interviews** were designed to solicit information about the parks system from those somewhat familiar with it through use or collaborative relationship with the County. An invitation was presented to identify issues of interest and concern related to El Paso County parks, trails, and open space; collect information and insights about existing conditions of facilities and programs; explore opportunities for partnerships in implementing the updated Master Plan; and solicit suggestions for what the Master Plan should aim to include or accomplish in the future.



Three days of interviews were held from August 22-24 at the Parks Administration Building, reaching 35 participants. As meetings progressed, common themes, hopes, and concerns emerged. Input was received regarding the role of El Paso County Parks, collaborative efforts including use of volunteers, conservation and preservation, trail linkages, level of service awareness and satisfaction levels, communication and marketing, funding, management and administration, and future needs.

The Stakeholder Interview Framework and the summary of input were provided to the Master Plan Committee members who were able to provide additional input and comment. Input from the stakeholders was used to help formulate the questions for “Meetings-in-a-Box.” The summary of input from the stakeholders is provided in **Appendix II**.

## Meetings-in-a-Box

**Meetings-in-a-Box (MIB)**, a community meeting approach developed by Kezziah Watkins, was used to reach stakeholders that might not be inclined to attend traditional public meetings. MIBs can be held in living rooms or back yards, at places of business, and at other comfortable community gathering places. They are turnkey meetings that citizens run themselves. The meetings are hosted by individuals, businesses, or civic groups and usually involve 5 to 15 participants invited by the meeting hosts.

The County provided each meeting host a box that literally held the meeting, including an agenda, background information about County Parks, the purpose of the Master Plan, the Master Plan “givens,” maps showing County parks and trails, a description of the public involvement process, and a discussion guide for the meeting’s host. The box also included a response form to be filled out by each group and response forms to be completed by each individual who attended a meeting. The questions focused on topics designed to help identify Master Plan priorities and to clarify information gleaned from the prior series of stakeholder interviews.

A total of 15 MIBs were held from September 17th to October 9th. The majority of the meetings were hosted by members of the citizen-based Master Plan Committee. One MIB open to all County residents was hosted by El Paso County Parks and held at the Park Administration Building on October 9th. A total of 136 people participated in the MIB meetings and reflected the County’s geographic diversity. Meetings were held in Monument; the Black Forest area; Cascade; Manitou Springs; Fountain; and in southeastern, northwestern, northeastern, and central Colorado Springs. Despite repeated attempts, no meeting was held in the eastern part of the County. However, except in a few instances, hosts invited people from all geographic areas to attend. (Eastern El Paso County was represented on the Master Plan Committee and in public meetings.) The full Meeting-in-a-Box Summary is provided in **Appendix III**.

### Key Findings of the Meetings-in-a-Box

- A broad theme that emerged through both group responses and individual responses was the need for increased resources for El Paso County Parks. Participants focused on not only the need for more funds but also an increased emphasis on partnerships with individual volunteers, area organizations and groups, as well as collaboration with regional governmental organizations.

- Another issue consistently raised by MIB participants was the need for increased community awareness of and public engagement with County Parks. As one participant explained, “If we know it, we can own it.” After receiving information about County Parks’ facilities and programs during their meetings, a number of participants said that they were pleasantly surprised by County Parks’ scope of offerings and encouraged increased visibility in order to increase support, resources, and use.
- Most MIB groups endorsed the first two elements of County Parks’ mission (acquiring, developing, maintaining, and preserving regional parks, trails, and open space) and providing responsible resource management for open space lands. Many people were relatively neutral on the third element (natural and cultural history interpretation, education, and information services) except for a significant number of participants who expressed support for restoring funding to the County’s nature centers. There was strong interest in decreasing the emphasis on the fourth and fifth elements – producing major community events and festivals (unless tied to Parks essential services) and promoting and managing tourism destinations and experiences. A caveat with respect to tourism is that attendees acknowledged that El Paso County Parks has an important role in providing the destinations and facilities that support tourism.
- Overall, groups of MIB participants assessed the County Parks’ effectiveness in achieving its mission as moderately effective, with an average group rating of 6 out of a possible 10. There was awareness that County Parks’ effectiveness is adversely impacted by a lack of funding, with one group’s assessment reflective of many responses received: “County Parks is limited by their funding, but staff does well with what budget they have.”
- When it comes to how County Parks allocates its resources, the group and individual responses were mixed. A number of groups believed that acquiring additional open space and park land should be a priority. In contrast, others suggested that preservation and maintenance of current properties far outweigh the need to purchase additional open space, believing that current lands and operations should be well-funded before considering acquiring new property.

Other responses to a question regarding the balance of resources between natural lands and active use areas and facilities in regional parks and to another question regarding the allocation of budget dollars also drew mixed responses. On one hand, 58 percent of the participants suggested that the current balance of 80 percent for natural lands and 20 percent for active use areas and facilities be adjusted to a 60 percent/40 percent balance, resulting in more intensive utilization of regional parks. On the other hand, 65 percent of the participants also suggested an increase in the capital improvements budget, which is used for new facilities, improvement of parks and trails, and for land acquisition.

- More specific areas of interest included a focus on trails, both the need for trail connectivity throughout the County and beyond and for completion of specific trails, such as the Fountain Creek Regional Trail to the south and the Ute Pass Regional Trail to the west. Comments which focused on the El Paso County Fair and Events Complex (bearing in mind there were no MIBs in eastern El Paso County which relies rather heavily on the facility as a community gathering place) indicate that the Fair in its present form is considered inadequate and ineffective, with some suggesting a need to increase participation and awareness, to improve Fairground facilities and increase revenue.



## Web-based Survey/Community Dialogue

Over 300 individuals participated in a **web based survey/community dialogue** that was available from October through December 2012. The average age of the responders was just over 50 years old with 56 percent female and 44 percent male. Twenty-eight (28) questions were asked about the parks, trails, and open space system and the recreation and cultural services programs offered by the County. Results from the survey aligned with information gleaned from the Meetings-in-a-Box. The final report (provided in **Appendix IV**) includes a wealth of information to help address the key issues identified during this process. Respondents to the survey provided information about interests, experiences, familiarity and awareness, satisfaction levels, future desires, values, and priorities.

### Highlights of Survey Responses

- Most respondents (90%) are very aware of the places available to them to enjoy the outdoors in El Paso County, and the most popular outdoor activities found in County parks include walking or hiking on trails (20%), wildlife viewing (14%), biking on paved trails (12%), and mountain biking (10%).
- Bear Creek Regional Park (20% frequently visited) is by far the most often visited park followed by Fox Run (13%) and Fountain Creek (12%) regional parks.
- There is a preference for parks with trails (35%) and natural areas (25%). Mid-sized parks with trails and structured pavilions/infrastructure are also popular. Park pavilions at Bear Creek and Fox Run are at the top of the list of facilities reserved or rented. Nature centers were also highly ranked facilities.
- Bear Creek Regional Park trails (24% use these trails) are the most frequently used followed by the New Santa Fe Regional Trail (18%), Fountain Creek Regional Trail (14%) and Fox Run Regional Park trails (12%). It is evident that trail use is a very popular pastime in El Paso County. An overwhelming number of respondents (72%) gain access to the trail they use most frequently by driving a personal motorized vehicle to the trailhead. Using the trail for recreational enjoyment (34%) or for personal fitness for health purposes (33%) are the top reasons cited for using the County trail system. Enjoying or experiencing nature (28%) follows as a fairly close third. Walking or hiking is by far the most popular use of the trail system (64%). The most frequently used trails are internal to a park site (52%) followed by regional trails that lie outside of established parks (43%).

- By far, the strongest sentiment for park and trail improvements over the next 5-10 years is for trail connections – regional trails, trails connecting neighborhoods, parks, and connections between city and county trails, along with connections to neighboring counties. This is followed by allocating sufficient resources to trail and park maintenance. Regarding open space, acquisition is a very high priority as well as



*Gazebo at Fox Run Regional Park*

providing a mix of open space (trails and undeveloped land) with developed parks (fields, courts, recreational facilities, pavilions).

- The top open space resource values are wildlife habitat/viewing wildlife (21%), preserving undeveloped land (18%), providing trees and other plants (18%), and buffering from development (16%).
- A large majority of respondents (77%) rated the maintenance of county parks, open space, and trails as either good (60%) or excellent (17%). Most respondents (89%) rated maintenance of facilities at the El Paso County Fair and Events Complex as either good (78%) or excellent (11%).
- Some respondents indicated their lack of awareness of rules. Many others felt that no new rules were needed, but enforcement of current rules is lacking. Although it was reported that some conflicts exist when using the parks and trails system, many indicated that they have never experienced or witnessed a conflict citing that most people are courteous, tolerant, and friendly.
- Matching national research on positive economic impact, there is clearly a very strong belief (94%) that having parks near home or work would be a key positive influence in the decision to purchase a home or locate a business in an area. In addition, El Paso County users reported in great numbers (96%) that they have been influenced by their use of these facilities to make purchases related to that use.
- Respondents are largely (66%) aware of recreation and cultural programs that they can attend in El Paso County. Almost one quarter reported that at least one member of their household visited either the Fountain Creek Nature Center or Bear Creek Nature Center over the past year. They are also quite generous with their time, as 15 percent indicated that they or members of their household volunteered for an outdoor project during the past year.
- Although there were a few written comments from respondents indicating they were not familiar or had not participated in any programs, there was significant comment from those who have had very enjoyable experiences at the County's two nature centers, and recognition that these are rare assets. Suggestions included a nature center in the north area and other ideas for expanding or adding more of what is already available.

- Many respondents indicated that they have not attended a festival or event in the County parks, but of those, most expressed that they would like to and that they support the idea of these events. They felt these programs are not advertised well enough, or that most are held in the south part of town and more should be offered on the north side.
- There was strong interest expressed by residents living near the El Paso County Fair and Events Complex for both a summer camp and youth sports programs at the Fairgrounds. Many ideas were offered as to what was desired.

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## Chapter 5: Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Conservation Trends and Perspectives

With its joint mission of responsible stewardship of the public lands within the regional park system and connecting the El Paso County community to outdoor recreation and nature, it is a challenge for El Paso County Parks to continue to respond to the changing recreation interests of those it serves. The following are highlights of relevant local, regional, and national outdoor recreation trends and perspectives that may influence El Paso County Parks for the next ten years. The full trends report researched for this update of the Master Plan and a bibliography of sources can be found in **Appendix V**.

### Demographic Shift

- Baby Boomers are driving the aging of America with boomers and seniors over 65 composing about 39 percent of the nation’s population. In the leisure profession, this generation’s devotion to exercise and fitness is an example of its influence on society. El Paso County’s demographic profile indicates that 25.8 percent of the current population falls within the Baby Boomer age range (those approximately 45-64 years of age). Boomers will look to park and recreation professionals to give them opportunities to enjoy many life-long hobbies and sports.
- The Youth population proportion is smaller than in the past, but still essential to our future. As of the 2010 Census, the age group under age 18 forms about a quarter of the U.S. population, and this percentage is at an all-time low. Nearly half of this population group is ethnically diverse, and 25 percent is Hispanic.

### Economic & Health Benefits of Parks

- Trails, parks, and playgrounds are among the five most important community amenities considered when selecting a home.
- Research from the University of Illinois shows that trees, parks, and green spaces have a profound impact on people’s health and mental outlook.
- U. S. Forest Service research indicates that when the economic benefits produced by trees are assessed, the total value can be two to six times the cost for tree planting and care.
- Fifty percent (50%) of Americans regard outdoor activities as their main source of exercise.

According to the 2012 El Paso County Parks Web-based survey, 94 percent of respondents indicated that the existence of parks near home or work would positively influence their decision to purchase a home or locate a business in a certain area.

The Trust for Public Land has published a report titled: “The Benefits of Parks: Why America Needs More City Parks and Open Space.” The report makes the following observations about the health, economic, environmental, and social benefits of parks and open space:

- Physical activity makes people healthier and increases with access to parks.
- Contact with the natural world improves physical and physiological health.
- Residential and commercial property values increase.
- Value is added to community along with economic development sustainability.
- Benefits of tourism are enhanced.
- Trees are effective in improving air quality and act as natural air conditioners.
- Trees assist with storm water control and erosion.
- Crime and juvenile delinquency are reduced.
- Recreational opportunities for all ages are provided.
- Stable neighborhoods and strong communities are created.

Americans create an annual economic impact of \$646 billion enjoying the outdoors:

- They devote more money to outdoor recreation than buying gasoline (\$354 billion), purchasing pharmaceutical drugs, or owning cars.
- More than 44 percent of us make outdoor recreation a priority.
- Outdoor recreation supports 6.1 million jobs and a combined \$80 billion in federal, state, and local tax revenue.
- There are more Americans working in jobs that depend on trail sports (768,000) than there are lawyers (728,200).
- The study (conducted by the Outdoor Industry Association) considers the design, development, marketing, and manufacturing of gear, sales linked to retailers and wholesalers of outdoor equipment, expenditures for going on a trip to use equipment, purchasing of licenses and supplies, and costs associated with leisure and hospitality.

**Economic Impact of Festivals:** There are a growing number of smaller more local community-based festivals and events in communities, most often supported by local councils that have been spawned partly as a reaction to larger festivals that have become prime economic drivers.

**Healthy Lifestyle:** The Colorado 2011 *Health Report Card* found that Colorado’s adult obesity levels recently jumped at the second-fastest rate in the country, and that one in every five Coloradans is now obese. The State of Colorado, along with non-profit partners such as the Colorado Health Foundation and Live Well Colorado, has invested in numerous programs aimed at countering the obesity epidemic.

### **Health Rankings**

The United Health Foundation has ranked Colorado 9th in its 2011 *State Health Rankings*, up four ranks from 2010. The State's biggest strengths include:

- Low levels of air pollution
- Lower prevalence of obesity than all other states
- Low prevalence of diabetes

Some of the challenges the State faces include:

- Low use of early prenatal care
- High geographic disparity within the state
- Low immunization coverage

Source: <http://www.americashealthrankings.org/SiteFiles/Statesummary/CO.pdf>

## **Outdoor Recreation**

The Outdoor Foundation's 2012 "Participation in Outdoor Recreation" report cites continuing fallout from the recent economic downturn, with outdoor recreation reaching the highest participation level in five years, in 2011.

- **Return to Nature:** Nearly 50 percent of Americans ages six and older participated in outdoor recreation in 2011.
- **Accessibility:** Activities that are affordable and accessible (gateway activities) have a contagious effect. Eighty-seven percent (87%) of hikers participate in one or more other activities. People with biking routes near their home get outdoors at a rate of 58 percent compared to a rate of 47 percent for those without easy access to biking routes.
- **Downward Trend Reversed:** For the first time since 2006, the downward trend of participation in outdoor sports among young boys has reversed to the upward direction. Female teen participation has grown to the highest rate recorded in the Outdoor Foundation's annual reports.
- **The Influence of Family:** Most youth are introduced to outdoor activities by parents, friends, family, and relatives.
- **Physical education in schools:** Among adults ages 18 and older who are current outdoor participants, 82 percent say they had PE in school between the ages of 6 and 12.

**Top outdoor activities in 2011:** Running, fishing, bicycling, camping, and hiking are the most popular activities. Birdwatching is also among the favorite outdoor activities by frequency of participation.

**Hispanic Trends:** Family and individual recreation patterns and preferences are strongly shaped by cultural influences. Participation in outdoor sports among Hispanics is at six percent nationwide. However, those who do get outdoors participate more frequently than other outdoor participants, with an average of 60 outings per year. Hispanic youth (ages 6 – 17) are the most likely age group in the Hispanic demographic to participate in outdoor recreation. The most popular outdoor activities among Hispanics are: running and jogging (24%), road and mountain biking and BMX (15%), camping (car, backyard, and RV) (12%), and hiking (8%).

**Dog Parks:** Dog parks continue to rise as a trend. The Bear Creek Dog Park, one of the most popular facilities in El Paso County’s park system, was recognized by Novartis Animal Health US, Inc. as one of the Top 10 dog parks in the nation.

**Fitness Programming:** Park and recreation departments have begun installing “outdoor gyms” with equipment comparable to what would be found in an indoor workout facility, increasing the usage of parks, trails, and other outdoor amenities while helping to fight the obesity epidemic and increase the community’s interaction with nature.

## Nature Programming

According to a 2007 National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) survey to member agencies regarding programs and facilities of public park and recreation provided to connect children and their families with nature.

- Staff training was listed as the most important element contributing to their most successful programs, followed by program content and number of staff/staff training. When asked about facilities, agencies listed funding followed by presence of wildlife and community support.
- Additional staff was most important resources needed to expand programming followed by funding.
- The most common facilities include: nature parks/preserves, self-guided nature trails, outdoor classrooms, and nature centers.

The 2012 El Paso County Parks Web-based survey participants ranked as the top activities (that are currently found in County parks): hiking/walking on trails, wildlife viewing, biking on paved trails, and mountain biking, followed by birdwatching, fishing, and horseback riding.

The National Association for Interpretation research indicates that about 20,000 paid interpreters are working nationally, along with an army of more than 500,000 unpaid volunteers staffing nature programs at parks, zoos, and museums. The growth of these programs is thought to come from replacing grandparents as the teacher about the “great outdoors.”

The U. S. Forest Service through the Internet Research Information Series (IRIS) 2012 report found that participation in walking for pleasure and family gatherings outdoors were the two most popular activities for the U.S. population as a whole. These outdoor activities were followed closely in popularity by viewing/photographing wildlife, boating, fishing, snow/ice activities, and swimming. There has been a growing momentum in participation in sightseeing, birding, and wildlife watching in recent years.



## Adventure Programming and Extreme Sports

**Popularity:** In recent years, mountain biking and BMX biking have continued their upward trend, while inline skating and skateboarding have trended downward in popularity according to the *Outside Recreation Participation Topline Report 2012*.

**Zip Lines:** Zip line tours and aerial adventure parks are booming in the Northwest United States with at least a dozen commercial zip line attractions opened in Oregon, Washington, and Idaho, plus an equal number in Alaska and British Columbia. While there has been concern about bringing in private business to public parks, along with potential neighborhood impacts, zip line purveyors point out that they are fun, not too expensive to construct, and safe.

## Bicycling and Walking

The Alliance for Biking and Walking's Bicycling and Walking in the United States 2012 Benchmark Report indicates:

- Bicycling and walking levels fell 66 percent between 1960 and 2009, while obesity levels increased by 156 percent.
- Between 1966 and 2009, the number of children who bicycled or walked to school fell 75 percent, while the percentage of obese children rose 276 percent.
- In general, states with the highest levels of bicycling and walking have the lowest levels of obesity, hypertension (high blood pressure), and diabetes and have the greatest percentage of adults who meet the recommended 30-plus minutes per day of physical activity.

### The economic benefits of bicycling and walking:

- Bicycling and walking projects create 11-14 jobs per \$1 million spent, compared to just seven jobs created per \$1 million spent on highway projects.
- Cost benefit analyses show that up to \$11.80 in benefits can be gained for every \$1 invested in bicycling and walking.

### National bicycling trends:

- Bike sharing and bike libraries allow people to rent bikes and tour communities using multiple pick up and drop off locations.
- Infrastructure to support biking communities is becoming more commonly funded in communities.
- Cycling participation by age almost doubled in the age group 25-64 from 23 percent in 1995 to 42 percent in 2009.
- Cycling participation by ethnicity shows that non-Hispanic whites have the highest bike mode sharing among ethnic groups, and cycling rates are rising faster among African Americans, Hispanics, and Asian Americans.

## Winter Recreation Trends

The Outdoor Foundation's *Topline Outdoor Recreation Report for 2012* reflects a three-year increase in participation (from 2009 to 2011) in cross-country skiing (12.2%) and snowshoeing (40%). Additional winter sports to consider are extreme sledding (all the rage in Minnesota), as well as the new winter sports trends such as speed riding (skiing while attached to a paraglider), equestrian skjoring (skier pulled along by a pony), and dog sledding.

## Role and Response of Local Government

Collectively, these trends have created profound implications for the way local governments conduct business. Some local governments are now accepting the role of providing preventative health care through parks and recreation services. What matters is refocusing its efforts to ensure the health, well-being, and economic prosperity of communities and citizens. In addition to responding to the above trends to provide the services that citizens want, Parks organizations need to respond to regulatory, management and administrative needs.

- **Administration Trends:** Newer partners include the health system, social services, justice system, education, the corporate sector, and community service agencies, reflecting both a broader interpretation of the mandate of parks and recreation agencies and the increased willingness of other sectors to work together to address community issues.
- **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):** For the first time in history, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA 2010 Standards) includes recreation environment design requirements.
- **Marketing:** Niche marketing trends have experienced change more frequently than ever before as technology affects the way the public receives information. Web 2.0 and 3.0 tools as well as popular social marketing electronic tools such as Facebook and Twitter, and mobile marketing are used as a means of promoting programs and services. Minority Americans lead the way when it comes to mobile internet access.

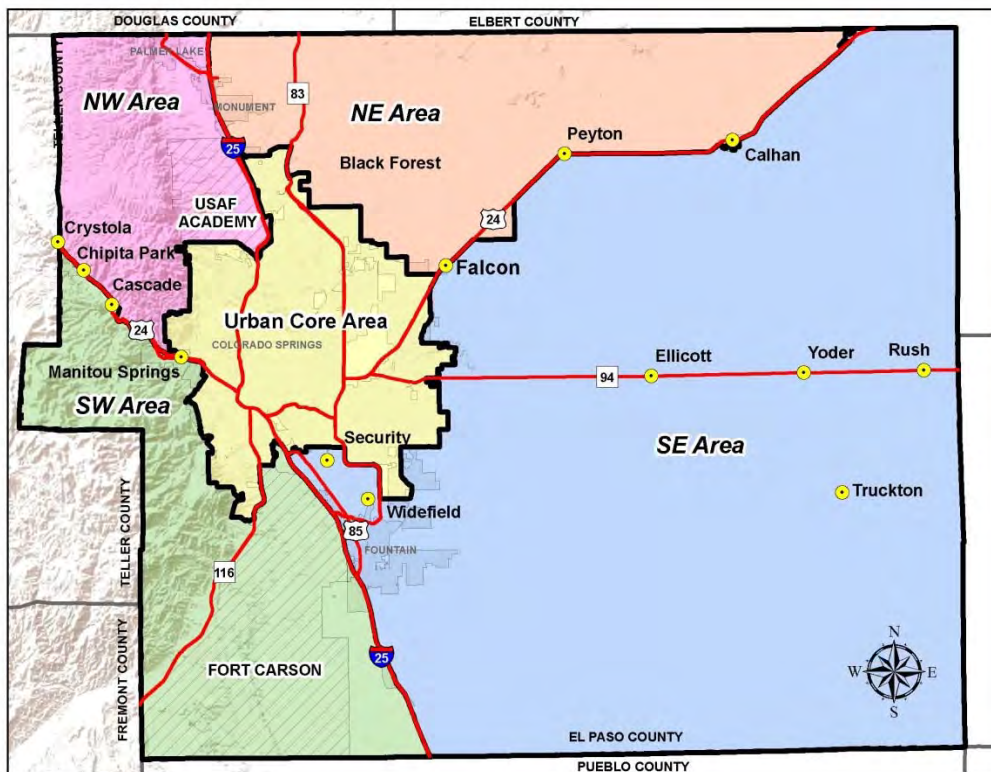
## Chapter 6: Population and Growth

El Paso County has been one of the fastest growing counties in the Rocky Mountain Region and is now the most populous County in Colorado, according to the State Demography Office. When this plan was last updated in 2005, the population was 546,250. The 2010 population was 619,846, an increase of approximately nine percent under less than robust economic conditions. Population is concentrated along the Interstate 25 corridor, with approximately 70 percent of all County residents living in the Urban Core area including and surrounding Colorado Springs. Most of the county residents live in the western one-third of the county.

While most of the population lives in cities or towns, a significant number of El Paso County residents live in unincorporated areas that are developed to urban densities, including military bases. These developments present demands on the County to provide public services, including parks and recreation facilities. Special districts, particularly metropolitan districts, play an important role in providing infrastructure, including parks and recreation services. The remainder of the county is considered rural and agricultural – very low population densities with the majority of land used for grazing.

Due to the large size and high level of diversity in El Paso County, this plan includes important demographic analysis in **five subareas**. The map in **Figure 6-1** identifies each subarea: Northeast Northwest, Southeast, Southwest, and Urban Core. The Urban Core Subarea is generally within the City of Colorado Springs.

**Figure 6-1: El Paso County Subareas**



The population data used in this demographic profile of El Paso County comes from two sources. The Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments (PPACG) provided Transportation Analysis Zone (TAZ) population forecast data for the years 2005 through 2035 (**Table 6-1**) TAZ data was also used to create the County Subarea 2010 population chart in **Figure 6-2**. ESRI Business information Solutions, based on the U.S. Census, is the source of all other demographic data provided in the section. A summary of demographic highlights is followed by more detailed demographic analysis.

## Summary

Key demographic trends for park and recreation planning efforts in El Paso County are summarized below.

- According to ESRI Business Information Solutions (based on the 2010 U.S. Census), the estimated median household income for El Paso County residents was \$54,531 in 2011.
- The median age for the County in 2010 was 34.1, lower than the median age (37.1) for the United States.
- Gender distribution for El Paso County is 49.8 percent male and 50.2 percent female.
- In 2010, the Urban Core subarea ranked significantly higher in population than the other four subareas of the county. The Southeast Subarea had the next highest population, followed closely by the Northeast subarea. The Southwest and Northwest subareas had much lower population levels.

### Demographics by Subarea

Seventy-one percent (71%) of the population of El Paso County lives within the **Urban Core Subarea**, with a median income of \$52,743. The Urban Core is one of the more ethnically diverse subareas and is also relatively diverse with regard to educational attainment among its residents. The median age for this subarea is 34.7 with the greatest number of its residents in the 25-54 age range.

The next most populous subarea is the **Southeast Subarea**, with 12.95 percent of the population and a median income of \$52,548. This subarea has the greatest ethnic diversity, with the largest Hispanic population and one of the largest African American populations of the five subareas. Most of its adult residents have a high school education or some college with no degree. The median age for the Southeast Subarea is 33, and as with the urban core, many of its residents are in the 25-54 age range.

The **Northeast Subarea** houses 9.4 percent of the El Paso County population with a median income of \$94,539. The Northeast is the least diverse subarea with a 91 percent Caucasian population. This subarea also has the most residents with college and graduate degrees. The Northeast also has the oldest population of the subareas, with a median age of 40.3 and the greatest populations in the 35-74 age range.



The **Southwest Subarea**, home to the Fort Carson military base, has 4.4 percent of the population of El Paso County residents and the lowest median income of \$40,318. It is one of the more ethnically diverse subareas with a slightly larger African American population than the Southeast Subarea. As with the Southeast subarea, most of its adult residents have attained high school diplomas or have attended at least some college. Its population is young with a median age of 25.1, and the greatest number of residents in the 20-34 age range. It should be noted that the Southwest Subarea is not uniform in terms of population, age, and income distribution. Manitou Springs and some areas West of U.S. Highway 115 have demographic and economic characteristics more typical of the Urban Core. South of the City of Colorado Springs, including the Fort Carson and in unincorporated parts of El Paso County, income levels decline, and population is more dispersed.

The least populous subarea is the **Northwest Subarea** with 2.3 percent of the County’s population and a median income of \$58,496. It is one of the least diverse subareas with an 86.2 percent Caucasian population. It also has the greatest number of young residents in the age range of 15-24, and a median age of 23.6. Most of its adult residents have some college or a Bachelor’s Degree.

## Demographic Analysis

### Population Projections

**Table 6-1** illustrates the population forecast for El Paso County and subareas. The County’s population is predicted to grow by about 46 percent from 2010 to 2035, reaching 902,369. **Map 6-1: Population Growth 2010-2035** shows anticipated growth increments using the TAZ data. For the purposes of this Master Plan update, we will focus on the 2020 population projections. The County will grow by 18 percent; however, the biggest growth areas are predicted to be the Northeast subarea (40%) and the Southeast subarea (20%).

**Table 6-1: El Paso County and Subareas Population Forecast (2005 - 2035)**

|                        | Urban Core | Southeast | Northeast | Southwest | Northwest | County  |
|------------------------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------|
| <b>2005 Population</b> | 387,614    | 74,120    | 48,371    | 18,573    | 11,598    | 540,276 |
| <b>2010 Population</b> | 441,967    | 81,935    | 58,510    | 22,564    | 14,870    | 619,846 |
| <b>2015 Projected</b>  | 486,167    | 88,215    | 72,920    | 22,564    | 15,527    | 685,393 |
| <b>2020 Projected</b>  | 514,318    | 98,120    | 82,120    | 22,576    | 15,936    | 733,070 |
| <b>2025 Projected</b>  | 537,300    | 112,959   | 94,540    | 23,490    | 16,918    | 785,207 |
| <b>2030 Projected</b>  | 562,922    | 128,267   | 103,745   | 24,740    | 17,545    | 837,219 |
| <b>2035 Projected</b>  | 595,432    | 147,842   | 113,990   | 26,637    | 18,468    | 902,369 |

Source: Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments (PPACG), 2012.

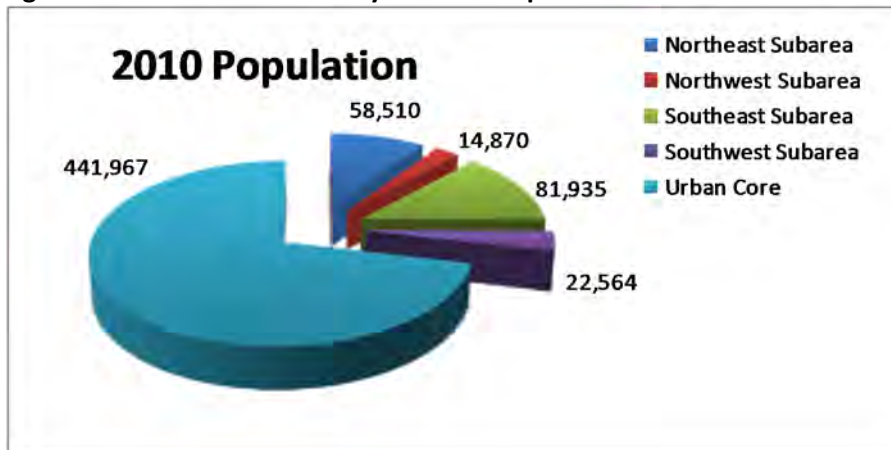
### County Subareas

The population distribution represented in **Figure 6-2** shows that in 2010:

The Urban Core subarea, with 71 percent of the county population (441,967), ranked significantly higher in population than the other four subareas of the county combined (177,879).

By 2020, this still holds true, however, the gap widens by another 31,558 people.

**Figure 6-2: 2010 El Paso County Subarea Populations**



Source: Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments (PPACG), 2012.

**Population, Age Ranges, and Family Information**

The information in **Table 6-2** was collected for each subarea using the 2010 US Census data for: Age Distribution, Median Age, Average Household Size, and Median Income

**Table 6-2: Subarea Demographic Overview**

|                    | Median Age (2010) | Average Household Size (2010) | Median Income (2011 forecast) | % of County Population (2010) |
|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Urban Core Subarea | 34.7              | 2.45                          | \$52,743                      | 70.87%                        |
| Northeast Subarea  | 40.3              | 2.96                          | \$94,539                      | 9.41%                         |
| Southeast Subarea  | 33.0              | 2.88                          | \$52,548                      | 12.95%                        |
| Southwest Subarea  | 25.1              | 2.72                          | \$40,318                      | 4.43%                         |
| Northwest Subarea  | 23.6              | 2.82                          | \$58,496                      | 2.34%                         |
| County             | 34.1              | 2.56                          | \$54,531                      |                               |

Source: 2010 U.S. Census, ESRI Business Information Solutions forecasts for 2011 Median Income.

The median age in the five planning areas ranges from 23.6 in the Northwest area to 40.3 years old in the Northeast Subarea.

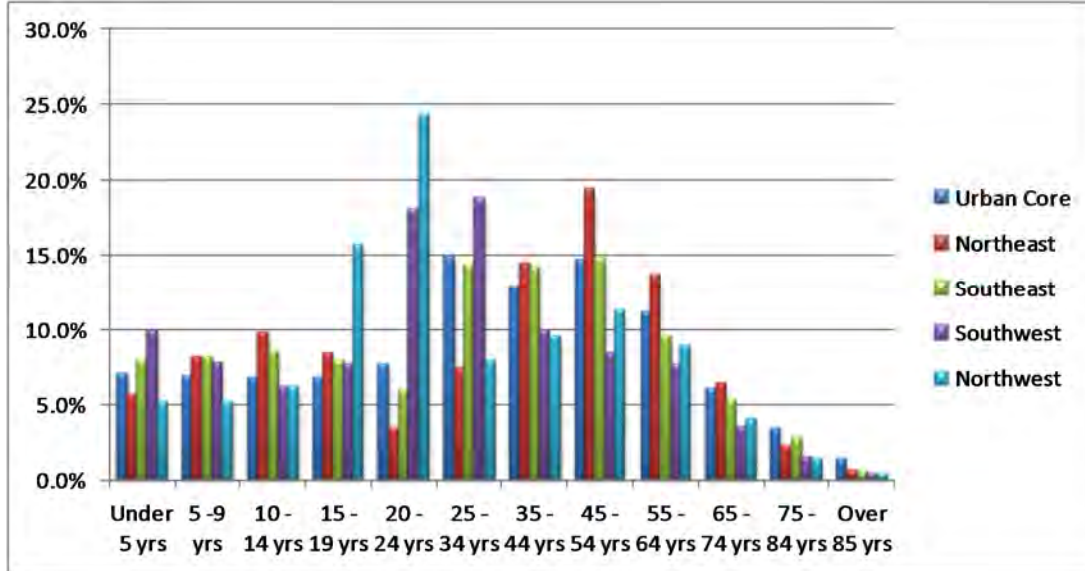
The average household size is similar within the five planning areas. There is a difference of .51 between the Urban Core Subarea, having the lowest at (2.45) and the Northeast area with the high at (2.96).

The median income ranges have a greater span with the Southwest Subarea at just above \$40,000, while the Northeast area is the highest at \$94,539.

## Age Distribution

The median age in 2010 for El Paso County was 34.1. A comparison of the planning areas as well as the county as a whole is illustrated in **Figure 6-3**.

**Figure 6-3: 2011 El Paso County and Subarea Population Breakdown by Age**



Source: 2010 U.S. Census; 2011 estimates provided by ESRI Business Information Solutions, 2011.

The Urban Core and Southeast Subareas most closely mirror the age distribution pattern for the County as a whole, showing the greatest number of residents in the 25-54 age range, with each of the three cohorts this range represents approaching 15 percent.

The Northwest Subarea reflects the greatest number of young residents, those in the 15-19 and 20-24 age cohorts, at 15.8 percent and 24.3 percent, respectively.

The Southwest follows as the next youngest area with its greatest residential numbers in the 20-24 age (18.1%) and 25-34 age (18.8%) cohorts.

The Northeast area has the largest residential population in the 35-74 age range, with 14.4 percent in the 35-44 age cohort, 19.5 percent in the 45-54 age cohort, and 13.7 percent in the 65-74 age cohort.

## Household Income

The estimated 2011 median household Income for El Paso County residents was \$54,531. **Figure 6-4** demonstrates the full income distribution for El Paso County. **Figure 6-5** reflects the median income for each subarea and for the county as a whole.

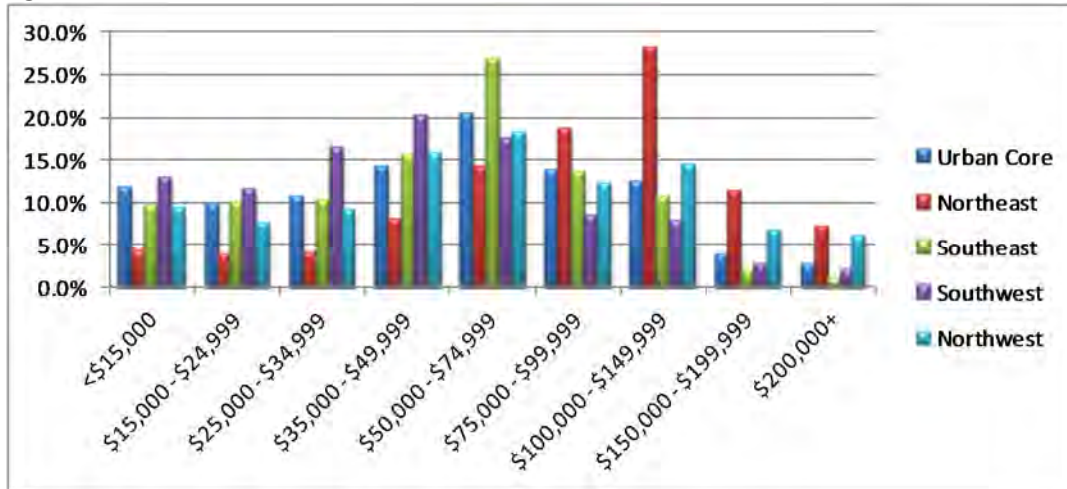
The Northeast area has the highest median household income in the county in 2011, estimated at \$94,539, with over 25 percent of the population having income in the \$100,000 - \$199,999 range.

The median household income for the Northwest area was estimated at \$58,496 with the most broadly distributed income range in the county.

The Southeast and Urban Core subareas each had median income in the \$52,000-\$53,000 range. Over 25 percent of the population in the Southeast area and 20 percent of the Urban Core had income levels in the \$50,000-\$74,999 cohort.

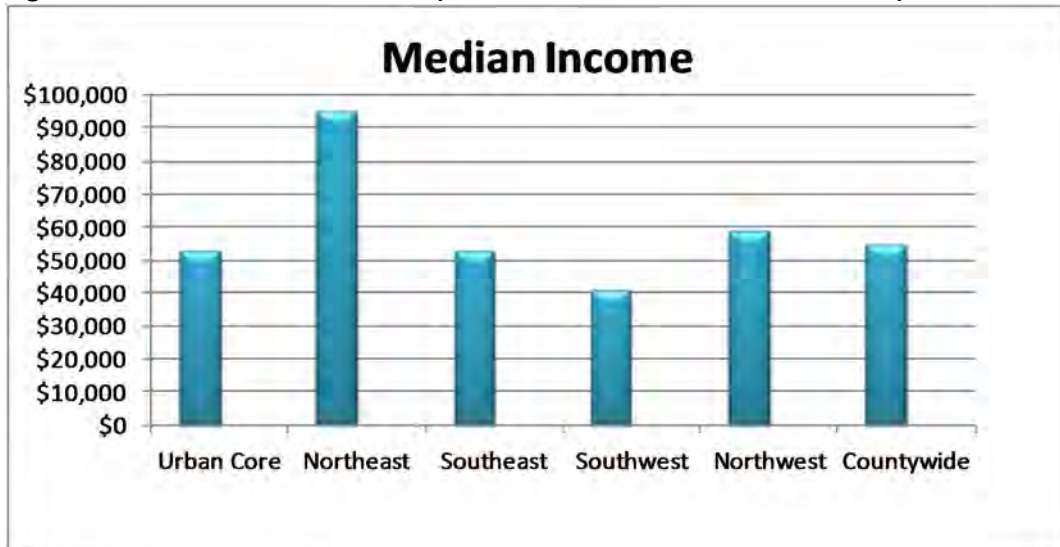
Data for the Southwest area reflected the lowest median income at \$40,318, with over 61 percent earning under \$50,000.

**Figure 6-4: Annual Household Income Distribution**



Source: ESRI Business Information Solutions, 2011.

**Figure 6-5: Median Income in 2011 (Estimated based on 2010 U.S. Census)**



Source: ESRI Business Information Solutions, 2011.



## Education

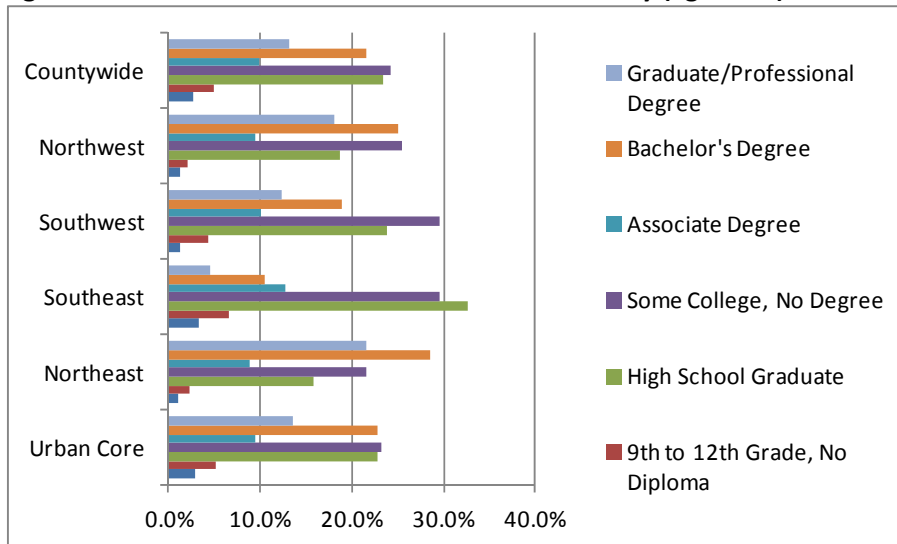
According to a new U.S. Census Bureau study, education levels had more effect on earnings over a 40-year span in the workforce than any other demographic factor, such as gender, race, and ethnic origin.

As Shown in **Figure 6-6**, ESRI’s forecasts from the U.S. Census estimate that the highest ranking cohorts county-wide in El Paso County are “high school graduate” (23.8%) and “some college education, no degree” (24.2%). Those residents that earned a bachelor’s degree follow with 21.6 percent of the population.

The Northeast Subarea has the highest percentage of those with a graduate or professional degree (21.6%) and with a bachelor’s degree (28.5%).

The Southeast Subarea has the highest percentage of residents with a high school degree (32.7%).

**Figure 6-6: Educational Attainment for El Paso County (ages 25+)**



Source: 2000 U.S. Census, 2010 Forecast by ESRI Business Information Solutions.

## Race/Ethnicity

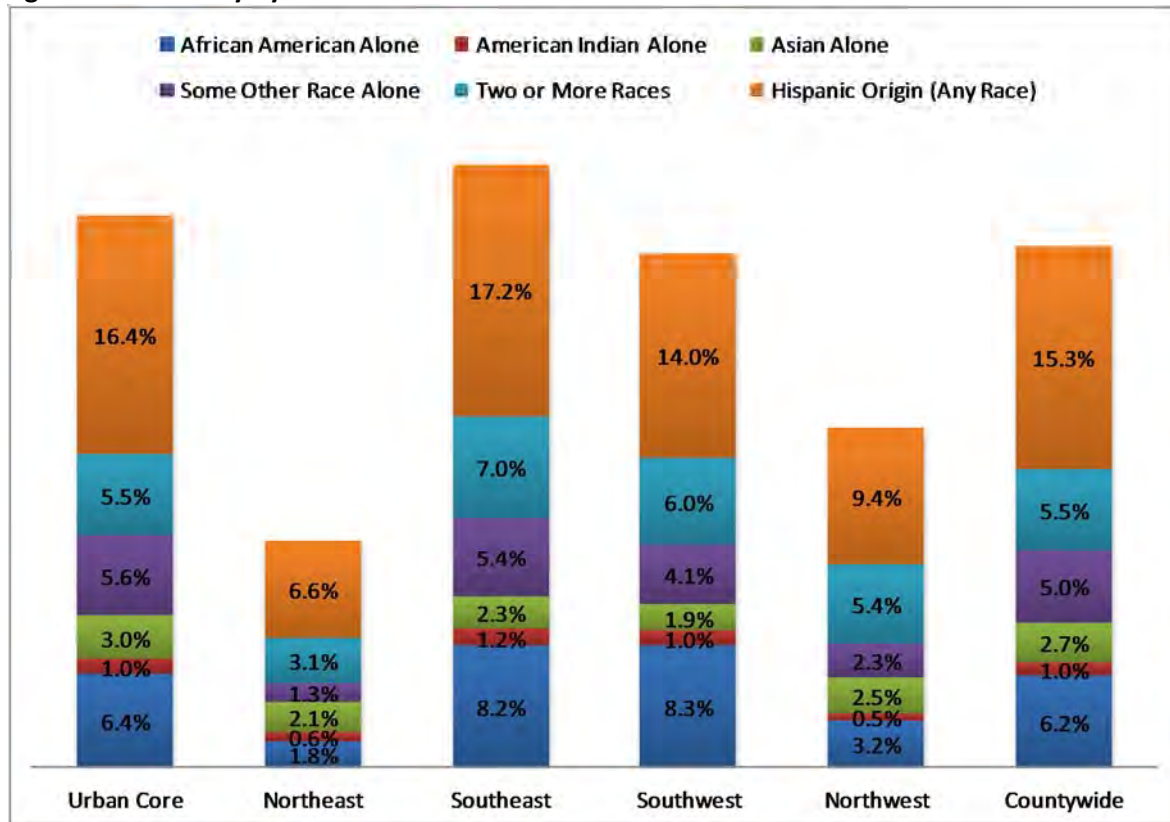
The current ethnic breakdown for the County shows that a high percentage (79.7%) of El Paso County residents are Caucasian. Countywide, the next highest racial/ethnic cohort is Hispanic Origin (any race) at 15.3 percent with African-American following at 6.2 percent. In the five El Paso County subareas, as shown in **Figure 6-7**, ethnic diversity is greater in the Southeast subarea (with 17.2 percent Hispanic population).

The Urban Core and Southwest also have over 15 percent Hispanic population.

The greatest African-American populations are in the Southwest (8.3%) and Southeast (8.2%) Subareas

The least amount of diversity is found in the Northeast subarea (91.1% Caucasian).

**Figure 6-7: Ethnicity by Subarea**



Source: ESRI Business Information Solutions, 2011 estimate from 2010 U.S. Census.

## Growth and Land Use

While most of the population lives in cities or towns, some El Paso County residents live in unincorporated areas that are developed to urban densities. These areas defined as having lot sizes of less than 2.5 acres. In 1990, the number of people living in urban density developments within unincorporated areas of the County was estimated by the County Development Services Department to be approximately 65,000. By 2003, that number had increased to approximately 90,000 (El Paso County Development Services Department 2005). As of 2011, there were almost 169,000 residents in unincorporated El Paso County (City of Colorado Springs 2013). About 25 percent of the unincorporated urban area residents live on military reservations.

The County subdivision regulations require that lots smaller than 2.5 acres be served by central water and sewer systems. “Rural residential” developments of 2.5 acres or larger continue to be popular with developers and homeowners because they offer a perceived rural lifestyle that lacks typical city problems such as noise and traffic. However, these low density developments present demands on the County to provide municipal-level services, including parks and recreation facilities. Park fees, required by the County of developers at the time of subdivision of residential lots, are the primary source of funding for development of regional park facilities. If not served by regional facilities, recreational amenities for residents of unincorporated areas may be limited to those provided in a school yard or, in some cases, a small town square.

Rural residential subdivisions are concentrated in the Black Forest, Tri-Lakes, Falcon/Peyton vicinity, Highway 94, Ellicott Valley, Security/Widefield and along Highway 115. Some of these areas, particularly Falcon and the Widefield area, have experienced rapid growth since the last Master Plan update in 2005.

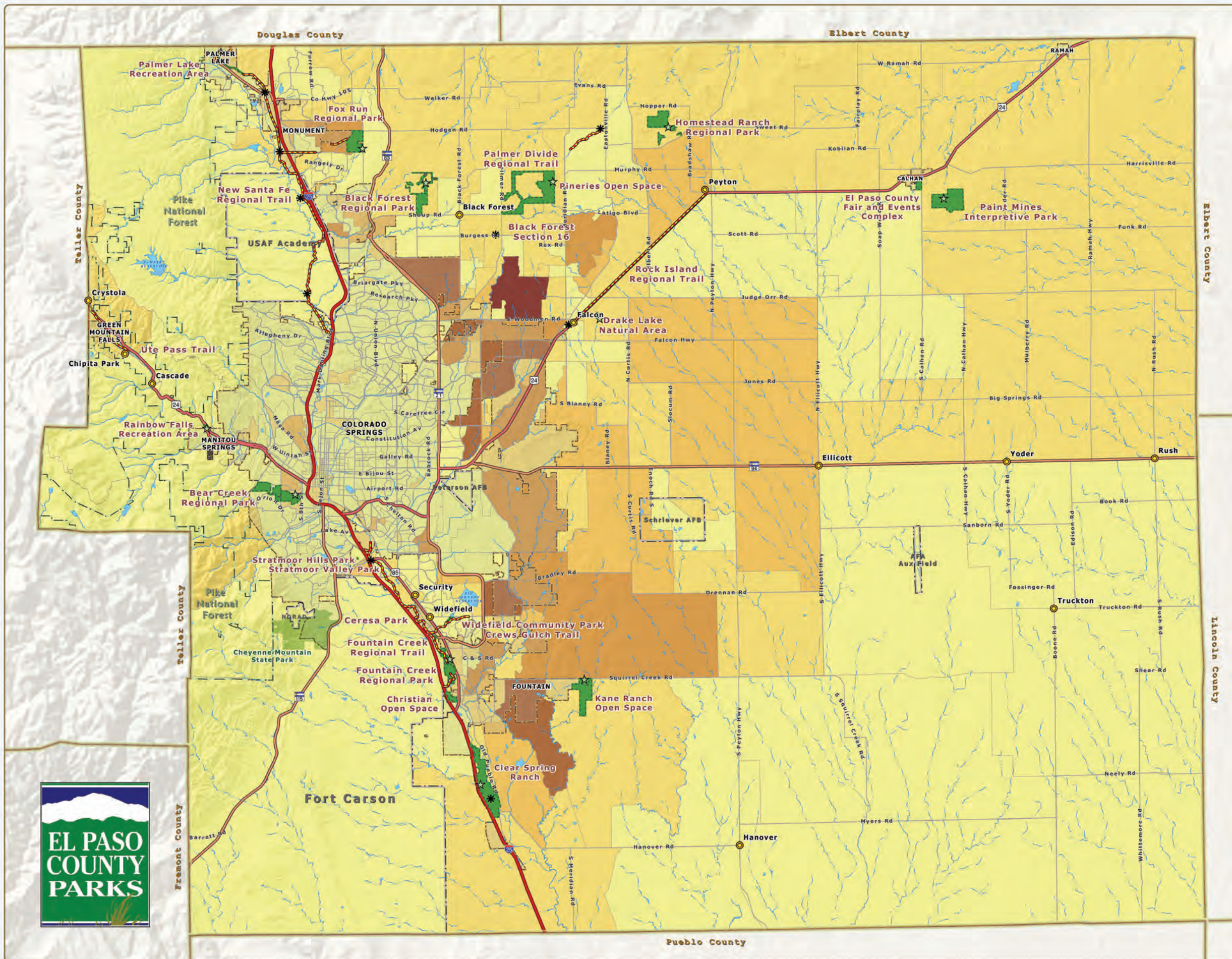
Special districts are the primary mechanism for provision of public services when not provided by local government in the unincorporated areas. There are 101 metropolitan districts in El Paso County at this time and three recreation districts, the Ellicott Recreation District, Tri-Lakes Park and Recreation District, and Widefield Park and Recreation District. The larger, well-established metropolitan districts, such as Meridian Service Metropolitan District and Woodmen Hills Metropolitan District, assess residents and provide park and recreation facilities and services, filling an important niche in central and eastern El Paso County.

Besides special districts serving mostly local residents and the County with its focus on regional facilities, there are few mechanisms in place to provide, maintain, and operate the finer grain of local parks, trails, open space, and recreation services for residents of some unincorporated areas. The Goals and Objectives in **Chapter 8** address how the Master Plan is intended to provide an overall vision and to identify gaps so that the County, local jurisdictions, and others can work together to fill them. Future updates to this Master Plan may need to include a more comprehensive level of service analysis to fully address parks and recreation gaps and needs.

The remainder of the County is considered rural with very low population densities, and the majority of land is used for grazing. The eastern and southeastern portions of the county have the fewest residents of all the regions in the county. A portion of eastern El Paso County has been divided into 35 acre (or slightly larger) parcels, as this type of development does not require county review and approval. No data is available that shows the location and extent of 35 acre developments within the county; however, the County Development Services Department estimates that less than nine percent of the total privately-owned land area in El Paso County is occupied by this development pattern (El Paso County Development Services Department 2005).

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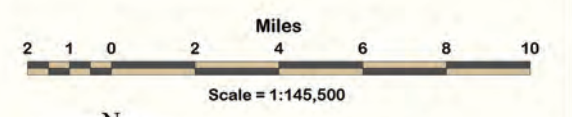
## Population Growth

### Legend

#### Projected Population Change (2010-2035)

- Population Loss or No Growth
- Less Than 1,000
- 1,000 to 2,500
- 2,500 to 5,000
- 5,000 to 10,000
- More Than 10,000
- EPC Regional Trails
- EPC Parks
- US Interstate Highways
- Major Highways
- Major Roadways
- Lakes & Reservoirs
- Creeks - Perennial
- Creeks - Intermittent
- Unincorporated Towns
- Military Areas
- Incorporated Cities
- Pike National Forest
- County Boundary

El Paso County wishes to acknowledge the assistance of DesignConcepts with the analysis that led to the development of this map.



June 2013  
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## Chapter 7: Parks, Trails, and Open Space Research, Analysis, and Community Needs Assessment

This chapter provides a summary of the research and analysis completed to develop specific recommendations for this master plan. Public input played a large role in the direction of the analysis. Geographic Information System (GIS) data was provided by staff and the citizen based Master Plan Committee provided input on the methodologies and draft recommendations. Specific recommendations follow in **Chapter 8**.

### Integration of Stakeholder Input

Public input has been incorporated into the analysis of several large policy issues; examples of some of the more frequently discussed issues appear below. Further information related to these discussions is addressed in this chapter under the specific categories of service, including: Parks and Recreation Areas; Trails; Open Space; and Historic and Cultural Resources. Action items resulting from the establishment of Goals and Objectives is included in **Chapter 8 (Table 8-2)**, and a discussion of potential funding sources appears in **Chapter 9**.

### Regional versus Local Parks Service

Local park and recreation services in some rural areas not served by a local jurisdiction is a challenge, and is often provided by a district. Concerns were raised about the ability to ensure that the districts are in compliance with the terms of their service plans. Regional parks also provide local service (defined as five miles or less from residences) in less populated or unincorporated areas. The County should look to partner with local jurisdictions to help assure local service. See **Chapter 4** for public input processes, and **Appendices II through IV** for input received.

### Active versus Passive Use of the Parks System

Although many residents suggested that the current balance of natural lands and active use areas and facilities in regional parks could be adjusted in favor of more land for active uses, it was recognized that a desire for additional trails and areas for sports in the northern area was the driving issue. Considering these uses, and that trails are considered an acceptable use in both passive and active use areas (defined below), the ability to develop appropriate active use sites at higher levels of intensity when site conditions permit (as determined in site-specific master planning processes) is serving the system well.

### Maintain Existing Properties and Facilities versus Adding to the Parks System

A number of discussion groups believed that acquiring additional open space and park land should be a priority. In contrast, others suggested that preservation and maintenance of current properties far outweigh the need to purchase additional open space, believing that current lands and operations should be well-funded before considering acquiring new. Clearly a balance is in order. **Chapter 9** addresses the administrative structure of El Paso County, its Parks and Recreation operations, and funding sources.

## Funding Level

A majority of residents suggested an increase in the capital improvements budget used for new parks and trails, parks and trail improvements, open space acquisition, and maintenance. A discussion of funding opportunities appears in **Chapter 9**, and a comprehensive listing of public input is contained in **Appendices II through IV**.

Further information related to the analysis of issue points raised by the public and stakeholders is addressed below, under the identified categories of service.

## Parks and Recreation Areas

The primary level of analysis for park and recreation areas is a view of these system elements considering the type of facility provided and the population it is intended to serve. This analysis considers access to facilities and distribution of facilities throughout the service area. Local access to parks is measured through a 5-mile radius, while regional access is measured through a 15-mile radius for regional parks and a 20-mile radius for special facilities. Geographic distribution is considered in light of the current population and projected growth areas. This is known as a gap analysis and is described below for each of the access parameters.

### Gap Analysis

Catchment areas are created on different types of facilities based on a user's presumed willingness to travel to a facility. Areas that fall outside of these catchment areas can be considered gaps. Gaps, however, do not necessarily indicate the need for EPC to deliver service to all areas identified by this gap analysis. Existing knowledge of other providers or further investigation to determine other providers that may be servicing these areas should be considered. **Maps 7-1 through 7-3 illustrate the gap analysis findings.**

### Local Access to Parks

Neighborhood parks serve the local population and generally include such facilities as open grass areas, picnic tables, playgrounds, and basketball or tennis courts. Regional parks also fulfill the element of local service for the nearby population. For this analysis, shown in **Map 7-1: Local Access to Parks (5 miles)**, five-mile catchment areas were placed on three different categories of facilities including neighborhood parks, regional parks, and a future location with local access.

Several facilities that function predominately as neighborhood parks with a five-mile service area are shown in the table below.

| Local Access Location             |
|-----------------------------------|
| Stratmoor Valley Trailhead Park   |
| Stratmoor Hills Neighborhood Park |
| Ceresa Park                       |
| Widefield Community Park          |



It is recognized that larger regional-based facilities may also offer localized service and are therefore shown with a five-mile service area in the table below.

| <b>Regional Park Location with Local Access</b> |
|---|
| Bear Creek Regional Park                        |
| Black Forest Regional Park                      |
| Clear Spring Ranch                              |
| Drake Lake Natural Area                         |
| Fountain Creek Regional Park                    |
| Fox Run Regional Park                           |
| Homestead Ranch Regional Park                   |
| Paint Mines Interpretive Park                   |
| Palmer Lake Recreation Area                     |
| Rainbow Falls Recreation Area                   |
| Pineries Open Space                             |

Also indicated on Maps 7-1 through 7-3 are areas of projected population growth from 2010 to 2035. The orange to red shaded areas indicate projected changes in population with the darker the shading showing the areas with the largest growth.

Good coverage of localized service occurs in two main corridors. It can be assumed that Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services parks are providing local or neighborhood, park access within its city limits. Areas of gap, based on projected population growth include:

An area surrounding the Kane Ranch Open Space property, suggesting that active use elements will be an important consideration for this property development.

An area just east of the Colorado Springs city boundary and the Schriever Air Force Base. Discussion should be held with the city of Colorado Springs regarding their potential need for a neighborhood park in that area.

An area in or near the vicinity of Ellicott, particularly to the west of Ellicott where population growth is projected, depending upon the development pattern.

An area in the vicinity of Green Mountain Falls and Crystola. Discussion should be held regarding potential partnership to provide local service.

Three potential sites for future consideration may include the vicinities of Ramah, Yoder, and Rush. Although some population growth is projected in these areas, it is not realistic to project at this time exactly where that population density may warrant locally accessible park facilities.

### **Regional Access to Parks**

Regional parks provide a significant service to a variety of users and typically include sports fields, pavilions, picnic areas, trails, and other facilities. As shown in **Map 7-2: Regional Access to Parks (15 miles)**, 15-mile catchment areas were placed on four full service regional park facilities for this analysis.

Shown in green on the map, EPC provides several facilities that function predominately as regional parks and offer a wide range of facilities.

| Regional Park Location        |
|-------------------------------|
| Bear Creek Regional Park      |
| Black Forest Regional Park    |
| Fox Run Regional Park         |
| Fountain Creek Regional Park  |
| Homestead Ranch Regional Park |

Also indicated on Map 7-2 are areas of projected population growth from 2010 to 2035. The orange to red shaded areas indicate projected changes in population with the darker the shading showing the areas with the largest growth.

The less densely populated eastern half of El Paso County is notably absent of access to regional park facilities. Areas of gap, based on projected population growth include:

The area in the center portion of the county, just east of the current service border. With the anticipated development of the Kane Ranch Open Space property, the consideration of regional park elements would push that regional service area out to include most of the anticipated population growth area currently not served.

The addition of regional park facilities in north central to northeast El Paso County between Falcon and Calhan.

### Regional Access to Special Facilities

As the name suggests, special facilities provide specialized services. In El Paso County these currently serve two distinct purposes. The first is the delivery of interpretive and educational services through two nature centers and the second is the County Fairgrounds and Event Center. As shown in **Map 7-3: Special Facilities Access (20 miles)**, 20-mile catchment areas were used for the two special use types for this analysis.

Shown in the table below, the two nature centers catchment areas cover the majority of the West-central and Southwest portions of the county.

| Nature Center                |
|------------------------------|
| Bear Creek Nature Center     |
| Fountain Creek Nature Center |

Shown in the table below, the El Paso County Fair and Events Complex provides its coverage to the Northeast quarter of the county.

| County Fair and Events Complex |
|--------------------------------|
| Fairgrounds                    |

Areas of gap, based on projected population growth occur in the Northwest and Southeast portions of the county for special facilities:

The more heavily populated northwest, with anticipated population growth, and demand expressed by residents in that area, would benefit from the addition of a nature center.

The sparsely populated southeast is anticipating very little population growth and does not currently display the characteristics of unmet need.

### **Passive and Active Uses**

El Paso County has adopted a working definition of active and passive uses within the system to guide development in terms of how properties are used. The definition of these uses includes the following types of activities:

Passive: Trail use, walking, unstructured play and exercise, wildlife viewing, unstructured natural and cultural resources enjoyment

Active: Athletic games, matches, and events, structured exercise/fitness activities, use of playgrounds, festivals, community gardening, picnicking, parking and use of support facilities

As stated in the Goals and Objectives, the County will continue to refine this working definition.

It should be noted that if new public facilities or substantial modifications to existing facilities are proposed, a planning process with public notification and opportunities to participate will be conducted prior to implementation. El Paso County Parks developed a Procedure for Public Notice in 2010 to formalize the process and it was adopted by the Park Advisory Board.

**Chapter 8** includes classifications of various park, trail, and open space types found in the El Paso County Parks system and provides guidance for planning future facilities.

## Trails

A focus on trail completion and connectivity is highly desired by County residents. This includes both the need for trail connectivity throughout the county and beyond and for completion of specific trails, such as the Fountain Creek Regional Trail to the south and the Ute Pass Regional Trail to the west. Other trail desires mentioned include support for a regional approach to the trail system in the area taking advantage of potential partnerships and collaborations, and consideration of PPACG transportation priorities.

### Trailshed Analysis

Trailshed analysis is a useful way to look at a trail system and its connectivity to other recreational opportunities. A trailshed may be defined as a set of connected trail segments within which any point may be reached from any other point by way of a connected included trail. It is common for a trail system to consist of many trailsheds. The ideal, however, is to create a single trailshed, a completely connected trail network to serve a user area.

For this analysis, as shown in **Map 7-4: Trailshed Analysis**, any trail segment within 1/10 mile of any other trail segment has been included in the same trailshed. In addition to El Paso County trails, Tier 1 and Tier 2 trails within the City of Colorado Springs trail system were also included in determining trailsheds as the definitions of those trails most closely matched the regional trail definition of El Paso County. The inclusion of these additional trails from outside the El Paso County system is intended to provide a fuller understanding of existing regional connectivity.

Based on these criteria, El Paso County has a total of 26 trailsheds. Trailsheds are shown on the trailshed analysis map in the previous section with each trailshed shown as a different color. A trail catchment area is intended to define recreational amenities along the trail that are easily accessible to trail users by foot or bike. For reference, each trailshed has been assigned a number and given a name and is labeled by number on the map. For trailshed names, refer to the trailshed analysis table (**Table 7-1**).





**Table 7-1: Trailshed Analysis**

**El Paso County Parks, Trails and Open Space Plan Update  
Trailshed Analysis  
March 21, 2013**

| TRAILSHED | TRAILSHED NAME                | ADJACENT TRAILSHEDS WITHIN 1/3 MILE | Trail Ownership | FACILITIES* |           |                                  |                                   | OUTDOOR COMPONENTS** |           |            |           |          |             |                   |            |           |                 |                 |              |           |            |                         |                   |          |                |                |        |           |            |
|-----------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------|-----------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|----------|-------------|-------------------|------------|-----------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|-----------|------------|-------------------------|-------------------|----------|----------------|----------------|--------|-----------|------------|
|           |                               |                                     |                 | USFS        | CityParks | El Paso County Indoor Facilities | El Paso County Outdoor Facilities | Archery Range        | Ballfield | Basketball | Disk Golf | Dog Park | Event Space | Garden, Community | Horseshoes | Loop Walk | MP Field, Large | MP Field, Small | Natural Area | Open Turf | Open Water | Playground, Destination | Playground, Local | Restroom | Shelter, Group | Shelter, Shade | Tennis | Trailhead | Volleyball |
|           |                               |                                     |                 |             |           |                                  |                                   |                      |           |            |           |          |             |                   |            |           |                 |                 |              |           |            |                         |                   |          |                |                |        |           |            |
| 01        | Front Range                   | 02,03,04,27                         | EPC/City        | 87          | 3         | 7                                | 98                                | 1                    | 1         | 5          | 1         | 1        | 1           | 7                 | 1          | 5         | 1               | 0               | 0            | 0         | 0          | 0                       | 0                 | 0        | 0              | 0              | 0      | 0         |            |
| 02        | North Powers                  | 01,03,07,08,09,28                   | City            | 10          |           |                                  | 0                                 |                      |           |            |           |          |             |                   |            |           |                 |                 |              |           |            |                         |                   |          |                |                |        |           |            |
| 03        | Cottonwood-Rock Island        | 01, 02,03,04,06,07,09,12            | City            | 54          |           |                                  | 0                                 |                      |           |            |           |          |             |                   |            |           |                 |                 |              |           |            |                         |                   |          |                |                |        |           |            |
| 04        | Sand Creek                    | 01,03                               | City            | 11          |           |                                  | 0                                 |                      |           |            |           |          |             |                   |            |           |                 |                 |              |           |            |                         |                   |          |                |                |        |           |            |
| 05        | Woodmen                       | 03,07,08                            | City            | 6           |           |                                  | 0                                 |                      |           |            |           |          |             |                   |            |           |                 |                 |              |           |            |                         |                   |          |                |                |        |           |            |
| 06        | Briargate                     | 02,03,06,28                         | City            | 8           |           |                                  | 0                                 |                      |           |            |           |          |             |                   |            |           |                 |                 |              |           |            |                         |                   |          |                |                |        |           |            |
| 07        | Skyline                       | 02,06                               | City            | 3           |           |                                  | 0                                 |                      |           |            |           |          |             |                   |            |           |                 |                 |              |           |            |                         |                   |          |                |                |        |           |            |
| 08        | East Woodmen                  | 02,03                               | City            |             |           |                                  | 0                                 |                      |           |            |           |          |             |                   |            |           |                 |                 |              |           |            |                         |                   |          |                |                |        |           |            |
| 09        | Banning Lewis                 | -                                   | City            |             |           |                                  | 0                                 |                      |           |            |           |          |             |                   |            |           |                 |                 |              |           |            |                         |                   |          |                |                |        |           |            |
| 10        | Jimmy Camp Creek              | -                                   | City            | 2           |           |                                  | 0                                 |                      |           |            |           |          |             |                   |            |           |                 |                 |              |           |            |                         |                   |          |                |                |        |           |            |
| 11        | Sand Creek East               | 03                                  | City            | 2           |           |                                  | 0                                 |                      |           |            |           |          |             |                   |            |           |                 |                 |              |           |            |                         |                   |          |                |                |        |           |            |
| 12        | Fountain Creek                | -                                   | EPC             |             |           | 1                                | 1                                 |                      |           |            |           |          |             |                   |            |           | 1               |                 |              |           |            |                         |                   |          |                |                |        |           |            |
| 13        | Rock Island                   | -                                   | EPC             |             |           | 1                                | 2                                 |                      |           |            |           |          |             |                   |            |           |                 |                 |              |           |            | 1                       |                   |          |                | 1              |        |           |            |
| 14        | Black Forest Regional Park    | -                                   | EPC             |             |           | 1                                | 9                                 |                      |           |            |           |          |             |                   |            | 1         |                 |                 |              |           |            | 1                       | 2                 | 2        |                | 2              |        |           |            |
| 15        | Black Forest Section 16       | -                                   | EPC             |             |           | 1                                | 1                                 |                      |           |            |           |          |             |                   |            |           | 1               |                 |              |           |            |                         |                   |          |                |                |        |           |            |
| 16        | Homestead Ranch Regional Park | -                                   | EPC             |             |           | 1                                | 1                                 | 6                    |           |            |           |          |             |                   |            |           | 1               |                 | 1            | 1         | 1          |                         | 2                 |          |                |                |        |           |            |
| 17        | Fox Run Regional Park         | 19,20                               | EPC             |             |           | 1                                | 22                                |                      |           |            |           |          |             | 1                 | 3          | 1         |                 | 2               | 2            | 2         |            | 5                       | 6                 |          |                |                |        |           |            |
| 18        | Fox Run                       | 18                                  | EPC             |             |           | 1                                | 22                                |                      |           |            |           |          |             | 1                 | 3          | 1         |                 | 2               | 2            | 2         |            | 5                       | 6                 |          |                |                |        |           |            |
| 19        | Fox Run East                  | 18                                  | EPC             |             |           |                                  | 0                                 |                      |           |            |           |          |             |                   |            |           |                 |                 |              |           |            |                         |                   |          |                |                |        |           |            |
| 20        | Pyramid Mountain              | 22                                  | EPC             | 1           |           |                                  | 0                                 |                      |           |            |           |          |             |                   |            |           |                 |                 |              |           |            |                         |                   |          |                |                |        |           |            |
| 21        | Waldo Canyon                  | 21                                  | EPC             | 1           |           |                                  | 0                                 |                      |           |            |           |          |             |                   |            |           |                 |                 |              |           |            |                         |                   |          |                |                |        |           |            |
| 22        | Ute Pass                      | -                                   | EPC             | 5           |           |                                  | 0                                 |                      |           |            |           |          |             |                   |            |           |                 |                 |              |           |            |                         |                   |          |                |                |        |           |            |
| 23        | Paint Mines Interpretive Pak  | -                                   | EPC             |             |           |                                  | 2                                 |                      |           |            |           |          |             |                   |            |           |                 |                 |              |           |            |                         |                   |          |                | 1              |        |           |            |
| 24        | Rockrimmon                    | 01                                  | City            | 7           |           |                                  | 0                                 |                      |           |            |           |          |             |                   |            |           |                 |                 |              |           |            |                         |                   |          |                |                |        |           |            |
| 25        | North Briargate               | 02,07                               | City            | 2           |           |                                  | 0                                 |                      |           |            |           |          |             |                   |            |           |                 |                 |              |           |            |                         |                   |          |                |                |        |           |            |
| 26        | Palmer Divide                 | -                                   | EPC             |             |           |                                  | 0                                 |                      |           |            |           |          |             |                   |            |           |                 |                 |              |           |            |                         |                   |          |                |                |        |           |            |

\*City\* refers to the City of Colorado Springs, Colorado.

\*Other lands included in this analysis were not accessible by these trailsheds, including Bureau of Land Management lands, Colorado State Parks, and Nature Conservancy properties.

\*\*This analysis assumes that access to an El Paso County facility equates to access to all available components associated with that facility. Component data not available for Drake Lake Natural Area.

The trailshed analysis table displays trailshed access to El Paso County Parks facilities, U. S. Forest Service lands, and Colorado Springs city parks. Access to a recreational amenity is defined by 1/3 mile proximity to any portion of a trail based on the trail centerline. Any facility located within that 1/3 mile catchment area is considered accessible via that trail. The table also lists adjacent trailsheds within 1/3 mile. Adjacent trailsheds may present opportunities to expand and unify trailsheds by linking them to others nearby.

The trailshed analysis reveals that the County trail system includes an extensive north-south trailshed reaching from the northern county border through the City of Colorado Springs to Fountain Creek Regional Park, running roughly parallel to Interstate 25. This primary trailshed may be considered the foundation of this trail network. This trailshed, named the Front Range Trailshed (01), provides user access to several County amenities, approximately half of all amenities in the County recreation system, and nearly half of all Colorado Springs parks.

In addition to this primary trailshed the North Powers (02), Cottonwood-Rock Island (03), and Sand Creek (04) trailsheds also provide extensive coverage. Though not connected with any EPC amenities, these other trailsheds do provide access to the majority of Colorado Springs city parks. If these trailsheds were to be merged with the Front Range Trailshed (01), the newly created unified trailshed would provide access to the vast majority of outdoor recreation opportunities in both El Paso County and the City of Colorado Springs.

Further, these five “target” trailsheds have good proximity to each other. Trailsheds 02, 03, and 04 all lay within 1/3 mile of the Front Range trailshed (01), and each is within 1/3 mile of at least one of the others. For this reason, linkage of these trailsheds may be a reasonable priority in future planning efforts.

### **Trailshed Visioning**

Trails visioning, as shown in **Map 7-5: Trails Visioning**, attempts to help prioritize future trail system expansion based on a number of factors including existing planning efforts, facility access, and trailshed proximity. In order to assist El Paso County Parks staff in future trail planning a trails visioning map on the following page has been provided. This map displays the EPC trailsheds already discussed as well as future trails currently proposed by the County and the City of Colorado Springs. Along with the trailshed analysis table, this map serves as a tool to help determine the future of the El Paso County trail system.

*Note: All existing and proposed trails mapped are based on GIS data provided by El Paso County and the City of Colorado Springs. Specific trail alignment may vary somewhat and may be subject to verification.*

### **Existing and Proposed Regional Trails**

The existing and proposed regional trails were determined based on the previous Trails Master Plan, the results of the Trail Shed and Trail Visioning Analysis completed as part of the Master Plan update process, GIS analysis of existing and proposed land use and other spatial attributes, and with input from stakeholders during the issue identification stage of the process. The trails listed below and shown on **Map 8-2: Trails Master Plan Map** in **Chapter 8**, are broad-brush in nature, and locations will be more specifically determined and easements or rights-of-way requested based on El Paso County Parks planning processes for specific trails or segments and through the development permit application review process.

*Note: The parenthetical references following the trail names correspond to **Trails Master Plan Map numbers**.*

**Trail Name:** Arroya Lane Regional Trail (#8)  
**District:** North District  
**Trail Length:** 32,000 feet, 6.06 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 32,000 feet, 6.06 miles  
**Summary:** Starting along the Eastonville Regional Trail, near Falcon High School, the trail heads west through the Meridian Ranch subdivision crossing under Meridian Road, continuing west through the Paintbrush Hills subdivision, crossing Vollmer Road to connect to the Sand Creek Regional Trail. This trail connects the Sand Creek Regional Trail, Woodmen Hills Trail, and Eastonville Regional Trail. Currently no portions of this trail are completed.

**Trail Name:** Bear Creek Regional Trail (#20)  
**District:** Central District  
**Trail Length:** 21,841 feet, 4.13 miles  
**Completed:** 20,407 feet, 3.86 miles  
**Remaining:** 1,434 feet, 0.27 miles  
**Project Cost:** \$21,510 trail  
**Summary:** Starting along 8th Street at Bear Creek, the trail generally follows Bear Creek west, though Bear Creek Regional Park, past South 21st Street, before splitting into two segments. One passes to the south of the Bear Creek Nature Center connecting to the City of Colorado Spring's Bear Creek Canyon Park, the other passes just north of the Nature Center, connecting to Bear Creek Road, and the City of Colorado Spring's Red Rock Canyon Open Space. Currently 3.86 miles of the trail is completed through Bear Creek Regional Park.

**Trail Name:** Big Sandy Creek Regional Trail (#11)  
**District:** East District  
**Trail Length:** 100,980 feet, 19.13 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 100,980 feet, 19.13 miles  
**Summary:** Starting at Homestead Ranch Regional Park the trail generally follows the Palmer Divide and Big Sandy Creek. The trail highlights the Palmer Divide, Big Sandy Creek, and Ramah Reservoir. Currently no portions of this trail are completed.

**Trail Name:** Black Squirrel Creek Regional Trail (#12)  
**District:** East/South District  
**Trail Length:** 249,070 feet, 47.17 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 249,070 feet, 47.17 miles  
**Summary:** Starting in Black Forest along the Palmer Divide Regional Trail near Hodgen Road, the trail follows Black Squirrel Creek southeast to US Highway 24. The trail crosses near Elbert Road continuing to follow Black Squirrel Creek to Ellicott. The trail then turns south to Black Squirrel Creek Road. At the intersection of South Ellicott Highway and Squirrel Creek Road, the trail turns west along Squirrel Creek Road, past Kane Ranch Open Space, to the Jimmy Camp Creek Regional Trail. Currently no portions of this trail are completed.

**Trail Name:** Chamberlain Regional Trail (#18)  
**District:** South District  
**Trail Length:** 58,250 feet, 11.03 miles  
**Completed:** 49,350 feet, 9.35 miles  
**Remaining:** 8,900 feet, 1.68 miles  
**Summary:** Starting at Bear Creek Regional Park, the trail continues south through the City of Colorado Springs to Cheyenne Mountain State Park, continuing east through Fort Carson, where it is proposed to cross under Interstate 25 to the Fountain Creek Regional Trail. Currently 9.35 miles of the trail is completed through Fort Carson.

**Trail Name:** Cherry Creek Regional Trail (#2)  
**District:** North District  
**Trail Length:** 40,229 feet, 7.62 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 40,229 feet, 7.62 miles  
**Summary:** Starting at Interstate 25 and Highway 105, the trail follows Hwy 105 east to Highway 83. The trail continues east along Walker Road, turning south along an un-named tributary of Cherry Creek, through the Walden Metropolitan District, to Hodgen Road and the Fox Run Regional Trail. This trail facilitates a connection from the Hwy 105 corridor to the Fox Run Regional Trail.

**Trail Name:** Crews Gulch Regional Trail (#15)  
**District:** South District  
**Trail Length:** 12,729 feet, 2.41 miles  
**Completed:** 11,729 feet, 2.22 miles  
**Remaining:** 1,000 feet, 0.19 miles  
**Summary:** Starting at the Fountain Creek Regional Park, the trail follows Crews Gulch east, winding through several neighborhoods and Widefield Community Park, connecting to Fontaine Boulevard, continuing east to connect to the Blue Stem Prairie Open Space. Currently, 2.22 miles of the trail is completed to Fontaine Boulevard.



**Trail Name:** Eastonville Road Regional Trail (#9)  
**District:** East District  
**Trail Length:** 38,239 feet, 7.24 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 38,239 feet, 7.24 miles  
**Summary:** Starting in Falcon, the trail follows Eastonville northeast through the Meridian Ranch subdivision, Four Way Ranch subdivision and Falcon High School. The trail continues north along Eastonville Road through the Latigo Trails subdivision to Black Squirrel Creek Regional trail. This trail connects the Rock Island Regional Trail, Meridian Road route, Meridian Trail, Latigo Trail, and Black Squirrel Creek Regional Trail. Currently, no portions of this trail are completed.

**Trail Name:** Fountain Creek Regional Trail (#16)  
**District:** South District  
**Trail Length:** 169,488 feet, 32.10 miles  
**Completed:** 51,156 feet, 9.69 miles  
**Remaining:** 118,332 feet, 22.41 miles  
**Summary:** Starting along Fountain Creek at the El Pomar Youth Sports Complex in Colorado Springs, the trail continues south through the Fountain Creek Regional Park. The trail is proposed to continue south, along Fountain Creek, through the Christian Open Space to Clear Spring Ranch. The trail will then continue along Fountain Creek to the Pueblo County line. This trail is a component of the Front Range Trail (FRT). The FRT is a north-south multi-use trail planned to cross the entire state along the Front Range. Currently, 5.42 miles of the trail is completed from the City of Colorado Springs to Fountain Creek Regional Park and 4.27 miles of the trail is completed in Clear Spring Ranch.

**Trail Name:** Fountain Creek West Regional Trail (#17)  
**District:** South District  
**Trail Length:** 95,644 feet, 18.11 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 95,644 feet, 18.11 miles  
**Summary:** Starting in the Christian Open Space, near Fountain, the trail heads west, passing under Interstate 25 following an un-named creek. The trail then turns south adjacent to Fort Carson and splits at the Pikes Peak International Raceway. One segment of the trail turns east and connects to Clear Spring Ranch. The other segment continues south from the Pikes Peak International Raceway, through the Sand Creek subdivision, following Bocca Raton Heights, to the Pueblo County Line. This trail is a component of the Front Range Trail (FRT). The FRT is a north-south multi-use trail planned to cross the entire state along the Front Range. Currently, no portions of this route are completed.

**Trail Name:** Fox Run Regional Trail (#4)  
**District:** North District  
**Trail Length:** 43,700 feet, 8.28 miles  
**Completed:** 11,229 feet, 2.13 miles  
**Remaining:** 32,471 feet, 6.15 miles  
**Summary:** Starting at Baptist Road the trail heads north through the Promontory Point subdivision, then turns east and connects to the Fox Pines subdivision, then turns northeast to the Baptist Road trail crossing culvert into Fox Run Regional Park. The trail runs through Fox Run Regional Park to the Roller Coaster Trailhead, where it continues east along Hodgen Road. The trail then turns south and connects to Black Forest Regional Park. Currently 0.81 miles of the trail is completed in the Fox Pines subdivision, 0.62 miles in Fox Run Regional Park, and 0.70 miles along Hodgen Road.

**Trail Name:** Highway 115 Regional Trail #19)  
**District:** South District  
**Trail Length:** 88,172 feet, 16.70 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 88,172 feet, 16.70 miles  
**Summary:** Starting at Cheyenne Mountain State Park, the trail follows along the westerly side of Highway 115 southwest to Fremont County. Route is not recommended for on-street due to speeds and visibility concerns. This trail connects to Cheyenne Mountain State Park, the Chamberlain Trail, Fort Carson, Turkey Creek Recreation Area, and Blue Mountain. Currently, no portions of this trail are completed.

**Trail Name:** Jackson Creek Regional Trail (#3)  
**District:** North District  
**Trail Length:** 48,017 feet, 9.01 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 48,017 feet, 9.01 miles  
**Summary:** Starting at Hwy 105, the trail follows the Jackson Creek Parkway south to Baptist Road, before continuing southwest, through several homeowner's associations before splitting into two segments, with one passing under Interstate 25 to connect to the New Santa Fe Regional Trail, while the other continues south and connects to the City's trail system at the Northgate Open Space. This trail facilitates a connection to the Town of Monument, the Lewis-Palmer High School, YMCA, Baptist Road, New Santa Fe Regional Trail, and City of Colorado Springs. Currently, no portions of this trail are completed.

**Trail Name:** Jimmy Camp Creek Regional Trail (#13)  
**District:** South District  
**Trail Length:** 111,259 feet, 21.07 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 111,259 feet, 21.07 miles  
**Summary:** Starting at the confluence of Jimmy Camp Creek and Fountain Creek in the City of Fountain, the trail runs northeast, along Jimmy Camp Creek, through the Lorson Ranch subdivision, continuing northeast to the Corral Bluffs Open Space, turning northwest to connect to the City of Colorado Springs. This trail connects the City of Fountain's Adams Open Space, Fountain Boulevard route, Bradley Road route, Highway 94 route, Corral Bluffs Open Space, and the City of Colorado Springs's Jimmy Camp Creek Open Space. Currently no portions of this trail are completed.

**Trail Name:** Kane Ranch Regional Trail (#14)  
**District:** South District  
**Trail Length:** 65,931 feet, 12.49 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 65,931 feet, 12.49 miles  
**Summary:** Starting on Fontaine Boulevard in the Lorson Ranch subdivision, the trail heads south following Williams Creek on State Lands to Hwy 94, connecting to Kane Ranch Open Space. The trail then continues southwest through State and City owned lands to Old Pueblo Road, ending at Clear Spring Ranch. The trail facilitates a connection from the Widefield-Security area to Hwy 94, Kane Ranch Open Space, Clear Spring Ranch, and Fountain Creek Regional Trail. Currently, no portions of this trail are completed.

**Trail Name:** LaForet Regional Trail (#5)  
**District:** North District  
**Trail Length:** 14,515 feet, 2.75 miles  
**Completed:** 1,056 feet, 0.2 miles  
**Remaining:** 13,459 feet, 2.55 miles  
**Summary:** Starting at the end of City maintained trails at Voyager Parkway the trail continues east along the Black Squirrel Creek drainageway to the intersection of Hwy 83 and Shoup Road, crossing the pedestrian bridge and continuing east along Shoup Road, then turning north, following Open Space Areas, then east through the Knox Conservation Easement to Black Forest Regional Park. This trail connection was identified as an opportunity to partner with the City of Colorado Springs and TOPS. Currently, 0.20 miles of the trail is completed along Shoup Road.

**Trail Name:** New Santa Fe Regional Trail (#1)  
**District:** North District  
**Trail Length:** 106,812 feet, 20.23 miles  
**Completed:** 106,812 feet, 20.23 miles  
**Remaining:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Summary:** Starting at the Douglas County line near Palmer Lake, the trail continues south, through Monument, the United States Air Force Academy, connecting to the City of Colorado Springs trail system. The trail may be accessed at Palmer Lake, Highway 105, Monument, Air Force Academy, Baptist Road, North Gate, and Ice Lake with trailhead facilities at Palmer Lake, Monument, and Baptist Road. Each trailhead is equipped with parking, a restroom, and picnic tables. A portion of the American Discovery Trail (ADT) follows the New Santa Fe Trail. The ADT is an east-west multi-use hiking trail planned to cross the entire United States. This trail has been completed.

**Trail Name:** Palmer Divide Regional Trail (#6)  
**District:** North District  
**Trail Length:** 78,814 feet, 14.93 miles  
**Completed:** 9,300 feet, 1.76 miles  
**Remaining:** 69,514 feet, 13.17 miles  
**Summary:** Starting at Black Forest Regional Park, the trail continues east, through the Pineries Open Space, continuing to the Woodlake trailhead on Hodgen Road, before continuing east to connect to Homestead Ranch Regional Park. The trail highlights the Black Forest, high plains, and riparian areas along the Palmer Divide. Currently, 1.76 miles is completed through the Woodlake subdivision.

**Trail Name:** Paul Intemann Memorial Nature Trail (#21)  
**District:** Central District  
**Trail Length:** 78,814 feet, 14.93 miles  
**Completed:** 9,300 feet, 1.76 miles  
**Remaining:** 69,514 feet, 13.17 miles  
**Summary:** Starting at Ruxton Ave in Manitou Springs, the trail heads southeast, through several neighborhoods, crossing Crystal Park Road, continuing southeast to Red Rock Canyon Open Space and Section 16. The trail ends near the Section 16 trailhead off of Gold Camp Road. This trail facilitates an important connection between the Greenway Trail, Bear Creek Trail and Ute Pass Trail.

**Trail Name:** Rock Island Regional Trail (#10)  
**District:** East District  
**Trail Length:** 168,866 feet, 31.98 miles  
**Completed:** 48,758 feet, 9.23 miles  
**Remaining:** 120,108 feet, 22.75 miles  
**Summary:** Starting in Falcon, the trail runs parallel to Highway 24 on the former Chicago and Rock Island Railroad Line to Peyton. The trail is part of the America the Beautiful Trail and is proposed to continue east to Calhan and Ramah. Currently, 9.23 miles of the trail is completed from the Falcon trailhead to Peyton.



**Trail Name:** Sand Creek Regional Trail (#7)  
**District:** North District  
**Trail Length:** 16,169 feet, 3.06 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 16,169 feet, 3.06 miles  
**Summary:** Starting at the end of City maintained trails, the trail continues to follow sand creek, turning north to follow Vollmer Road, ending at Black Forest Section 16. Currently, no portions of this trail are completed.

**Trail Name:** Ute Pass Regional Trail (#22)  
**District:** Central District  
**Trail Length:** 58,080 feet, 11 miles  
**Completed:** 33,000 feet, 6.25 miles  
**Remaining:** 25,080 feet, 4.75 miles  
**Summary:** The Ute Pass Regional Trail is a planned forty-mile trail that will eventually connect Colorado Springs to Cripple Creek in Teller County. The trail is part of the American Discovery Trail and the America the Beautiful Trail. Over 11 miles of the trail is located within El Paso County along the US Hwy 24 corridor. Approximately three miles of the trail have been completed in the county to date. Starting at the Teller County Line in Crystola, the trail continues east to the Town of Green Mountain Falls, where it uses an on-street pedestrian route. The trail continues east to the Ute Pass Elementary School in Chipita Park. A three mile section of the trail starting at the Base of the Manitou Incline, heading west to Longs Ranch Road is scheduled for competition in 2013. Planning for the remaining 4.75 mile section from Longs Ranch Road to the Ute Pass Elementary School in Chipita Park is scheduled for 2014.

## Secondary Regional Trails

**Trail Name:** B Street Trail  
**District:** South District  
**Trail Length:** 5,400 feet, 1.03 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 5,400 feet, 1.03 miles  
**Summary:** Starting at the end of City maintained trails, the trail follows a City drainageway southeast to B Street, crosses using a pedestrian bridge, and then turns east along a drainageway into the South Academy Station development. The trail starts again at Academy Blvd and crosses using a concrete pedestrian and bicycle path to the Pikes Peak Community College, then turns west to the Gate 4 at Fort Carson. The Academy Blvd crossing is funded by PPRTA 1 and is expected to be completed in 2013.

**Trail Name:** Ben Lomond Mountain Trail  
**District:** North District  
**Trail Length:** 11,954 feet, 2.26 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 11,954 feet, 2.26 miles  
**Summary:** Starting at the Palmer Lake Recreation Area, the trail heads east through the Ben Lomond Mountain area, then turning south to connect to the New Santa Fe Regional Trail. This trail creates a loop trail in the Town of Palmer Lake that features Ben Lomond Mountain and Elephant Rock. Currently, no portions of this trail are completed.

**Trail Name:** Davis Road Trail  
**District:** East District  
**Trail Length:** 36,152 feet, 6.85 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 36,152 feet, 6.85 miles  
**Summary:** Starting at the Jimmy Camp Creek Regional Trail on the north end of the Corral Bluffs Open Space, the trail continues east along Davis Road, continuing east to North Peyton Highway. This trail connects the Jimmy Camp Creek Regional Trail with the Peyton Highway Route. Currently, no portions of this trail are completed.

**Trail Name:** Drake Lake Trail  
**District:** East District  
**Trail Length:** 5,096 feet, 0.97 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 5,096 feet, 0.97 miles  
**Summary:** Starting at the Rock Island Regional trail east of the Falcon Trailhead, the trail follows an un-named creek under US Hwy 24 to the Drake Lake Natural Area. Currently, no portions of this trail are completed.

**Trail Name:** Forest Lakes Trail  
**District:** North District  
**Trail Length:** 32,744 feet, 6.20 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 32,744 feet, 6.20 miles  
**Summary:** Starting at the Baptist Road Trailhead, the trail heads west, along Baptist Road and splits into two segments. One follows Forest Lakes Drive northwest of Forest Lakes to the National Forest Service, the other follows Hay Creek Road southwest of Forest Lakes to the National Forest Service. This trail connects the New Santa Fe Regional Trail, Baptist Road route and the National Forest Service. Currently, no portions of this trail are completed.

**Trail Name:** Fort Carson Trail  
**District:** South District  
**Trail Length:** 42,135 feet, 7.98 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 42,135 feet, 7.98 miles  
**Summary:** Starting at the intersection of Hwy 115 and Wilderness Road, the trail heads east along Wilderness Road, turning south at Butts Road. The trail continues south along Butts Road until turning east at an un-named creek through Fort Carson, crossing under Interstate 25 using a box culvert near Crest Drive, connecting the Fountain Creek Regional Trail and the Christian Open Space. Currently, no portions of this trail are completed.

**Trail Name:** Fremont Fort Trail  
**District:** East District  
**Trail Length:** 62,700 feet, 11.875 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 62,700 feet, 11.875 miles  
**Summary:** Starting at Homestead Ranch Regional Park, the trail generally follows the Palmer Divide towards Fremont Fort. The trail then turns southwest and connects to the Big Sandy Creek Regional Trail. Currently, no portions of this trail are completed.

**Trail Name:** Grinnell Boulevard Trail  
**District:** South District  
**Trail Length:** 14,119 feet, 2.67 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 14,119 feet, 2.67 miles  
**Summary:** Starting at the intersection of Powers Boulevard and Grinnell Boulevard, the trail heads south along the eastern right-of-way of Grinnell, past Bradley Road to Fontaine Boulevard, turning east to Widefield Park. Then starting again on Fontaine Boulevard at the intersection of Fountain Mesa Road, the trail connects to the Blue Stem Open Space trailhead. This trail connects to the Pheasant Run Trail, which connects the City of Colorado Springs Sand Creek Trail, several Fountain Mutual Metropolitan District trails, and the County's Crew Gulch Trail. Currently, no portions of this trail are completed.

**Trail Name:** Highway 94 Trail  
**District:** East District  
**Trail Length:** 93,000 feet, 17.61 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 93,000 feet, 17.61 miles  
**Summary:** Starting at the intersection of Highway 24 and Highway 94, the trail follows Highway 94 east, past Ellicott, ending at the Black Squirrel Creek Regional Trail. This trail connects the Jimmy Camp Creek Regional Trail, Curtis Road Route, Peyton Highway Route, Judge Orr Trail, Ellicott Highway Route, and Black Squirrel Creek Regional Trail. Currently, no portions of this trail are completed.

**Trail Name:** Homestead Ranch Trail  
**District:** East District  
**Trail Length:** 27,536 feet, 5.22 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 27,536 feet, 5.22 miles  
**Summary:** Starting in Peyton, the trail heads west, past Bradshaw Road, then turns north and continues past Sweet Road, turning west to Homestead Ranch Regional Park. This trail facilitates a connection between Peyton, the Rock Island Regional Trail, Homestead Ranch Regional Park, and the Palmer Divide Regional Trail. Currently, no portions of this trail are completed.

**Trail Name:** Judge Orr Trail  
**District:** East District  
**Trail Length:** 57,542 feet, 10.90 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 57,542 feet, 10.90 miles  
**Summary:** Starting at the intersection of Judge Orr Road and Eastonville Road in Falcon, the trail heads east along Judge Orr across US Hwy 24. The trail then turns south to the Falcon highway, turning east to an un-named creek. The trail then turns southeast following the creek to the North Peyton Highway. The trail then continues east to the Black Squirrel Creek. This trail connects the Eastonville Regional Trail to the Curtis Road Route, Peyton Highway Route, and Black Squirrel Creek Regional Trail. Currently, no portions of this trail are completed.

**Trail Name:** Latigo Trail  
**District:** East District  
**Trail Length:** 27,985 feet, 5.30 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 27,985 feet, 5.30 miles  
**Summary:** Starting east of Meridian Road along Black Squirrel Creek, the trail continues through the Latigo Trails subdivision, continuing to follow Black Squirrel Creek past Eastonville, to Black Squirrel Creek Regional trail. Currently, no portions of this trail are completed.



**Trail Name:** Milam Road Trail  
**District:** North District  
**Trail Length:** 10,640 feet, 2.02 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 10,640 feet, 2.02 miles  
**Summary:** Starting at the intersection of Shoup Road and Milam Road, the trail heads south, along Milam Road, connecting to the City of Colorado Springs. This trail connects the City of Colorado Springs to Burgess Road Route, Shoup Road Route and Black Forest Regional Park. Currently, no portions of this trail are completed.

**Trail Name:** Meridian Ranch Trail  
**District:** East District  
**Trail Length:** 13,000 feet, 2.46 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 13,000 feet, 2.46 miles  
**Summary:** Starting along the Meridian Road route north of Rex Road, this trail heads east through the Meridian Ranch subdivision to Eastonville Road. Currently, no portions of this trail are completed.

**Trail Name:** Pipeline Trail  
**District:** North District  
**Trail Length:** 21,356 feet, 4.04 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 21,356 feet, 4.04 miles  
**Summary:** Starting at Hodgen Road, the trail follows a pipeline easement south to Black Forest Section 16. This trail connects the Hodgen Route, Palmer Divide Regional Trail, and Black Forest Section 16. Currently, no portions of this trail are completed.

**Trail Name:** Pyramid Mountain Trail  
**District:** Central District  
**Trail Length:** 61,102 feet, 11.57 miles  
**Completed:** 16,130 feet, 3.05 miles  
**Remaining:** 44,972 feet, 8.52 miles  
**Summary:** Starting in Crystola near Sand Gulch Road, this trail climbs north along Wellington Gulch, then turns southeast and parallels Highway 24, through the Pyramid Mountain subdivision, connecting to the Waldo Canyon trail. This trail connects Crystola, Rampart Range Road, Pyramid Mountain subdivision, Cascade and Waldo Canyon Trail. Currently, 3.05 miles of the trail is completed in the Pyramid Mountain subdivision.

**Trail Name:** Rainbow Falls Connection Trail  
**District:** Central District  
**Trail Length:** 13,086 feet, 2.48 miles  
**Completed:** 5,900 feet, 1.12 miles  
**Remaining:** 7,186 feet, 4.75 miles  
**Summary:** Starting at the Rainbow Falls Recreation Area, the trail heads south splitting into three segments. The first segment follows the old Wagon Road southwest to the Ute Pass Regional Trail. The second segment continues south before turning west at Rattlesnake Gulch to the Ute Pass Regional Trail. The third segment continues south to Ruxton Avenue. This trail connects the Rainbow Falls Recreation Area, Ute Pass Regional Trail, Manitou Incline, Barr Trail, and the Intiman Trail. Currently, 1.12 miles of the trail exists from the Ute Pass Regional Trail, down Rattlesnake Gulch to Ruxton Avenue.

**Trail Name:** Schriever Trail  
**District:** East District  
**Trail Length:** 50,080 feet, 9.48 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 50,080 feet, 9.48 miles  
**Summary:** Starting at the Jimmy Camp Creek Regional Trail near the southern end of the Corral Bluffs Open Space, the trail continues southeast along an un-named creek, crossing South Curtis Road near the Schriever AFB, continuing to Drennan Road, and then turning east to the South Peyton Highway. This trail facilitates a connection from the Jimmy Camp Creek Regional Trail, Schriever AFB and the South Peyton Highway Route. Currently, no portions of this trail are completed.

**Trail Name:** Smith Creek Trail  
**District:** North District  
**Trail Length:** 16,169 feet, 3.06 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 16,169 feet, 3.06 miles  
**Summary:** Starting at Fox Run Regional Park, the trail follows Smith Creek in a southwest direction to North Gate Boulevard, where it connects to the City of Colorado Springs North Gate Open Space and trail system. The trail continues west, under Interstate 25 to the New Santa Fe Regional Trail. This trail facilitates a connection between Fox Run Regional Park, several residential development, North Gate Boulevard, Jackson Creek Regional Trail, Western Museum of Mining and Industry, and the New Santa Fe Regional Trail. Currently, no portions of this trail are completed.

**Trail Name:** Woodmen Hills Trail  
**District:** East District  
**Trail Length:** 22,323 feet, 4.23 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 16,169 feet, 3.06 miles  
**Summary:** Starting along the Arroya Lane Trail, near the northern end of Woodmen Hills subdivision, the trail heads southeast, through the Woodmen Hills subdivision, to Woodmen road, then continuing to the Rock Island Regional Trail in Falcon. Currently, 0.72 miles of the trail exists between Woodmen Road and Rock Island Regional trail.

## Proposed Bicycle Routes

The proposed bicycle routes were determined based on the previous Trails Master Plan Map (August 2005), 2040 Major Transportation Corridors Plan (MTCP), including the 2011-2020 MTCP Phased Improvements, the results of the Trail Shed and Trail Visioning Analysis completed as part of the Master Plan update process, GIS analysis of existing and proposed land use and other spatial attributes, and with input from stakeholders during the issue identification draft plan review stages of the process. The routes listed below are shown on **Map 8-2: Trails Master Plan Map** in **Chapter 8**. Highlighted routes denote roads that are designated for improvement or upgrades as 2011-2020 MTCP Phased Improvements. These MTCP-designated improvements will provide some degree of accommodation for multi-modal transportation, including bicycles and equestrians, with the detailed design standards to be determined based on County engineering and parks standards (separate administrative documents), development of specific corridor plans by the Transportation Division, and through the development permit application and review process. For detailed MTCP maps, please see **Appendix VIII**.

**Route Name: Baptist Road**

**District:** North District

**Route Length:** 35,965 feet, 6.81 miles

**Completed:** 21,965 feet, 4.16 miles

**Remaining:** 14,018 feet, 2.65 miles

**Project Cost:** N/A, On-road, paved or gravel

**Summary:** Starting west of Interstate 25 at the Baptist Road Trailhead, the route follows Baptist Road east, through Monument, turning northeast to Fox Run Regional Park. This route connects the New Santa Fe Regional Trail, Jackson Creek Parkway Regional Trail, Fox Run Regional Park, Fox Run Regional Trail, Roller Coaster Road route and Hodgen Road route. Currently, 4.16 miles of this route is completed east of Interstate 25.

**Route Name: Blaney Road**

**District:** East District

**Route Length:** 20,500 feet, 3.88 miles

**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles

**Remaining:** 20,500 feet, 3.88 miles

**Project Cost:** To be determined, based on standards (TBD)

**Summary:** Starting at the intersection of Meridian Road and Blaney Road, the route follows Blaney Road east, turning south along Hoffbeat Road, turning east along Davis Road to Curtis Road. This route connects the Jimmy Camp Creek Regional Trail, Davis Trail and Curtis Road route. This route is included in the 2011-2020 MTCP. Currently, no portions of this route are completed.

**Route Name: Briargate Parkway**

**District:** North District

**Route Length:** 8,460 feet, 1.60 miles

**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles

**Remaining:** 8,460 feet, 1.60 miles

**Project Cost:** TBD

**Summary:** Starting in the northeast part of the City of Colorado Springs, this route follows the extension of Briargate Parkway east, to Vollmer Road. This route connects the Vollmer Road Route and Sand Creek Regional Trail. Currently, no portions of this route are completed.

**Route Name:** Burgess Road  
**District:** North District  
**Route Length:** 39,668 feet, 7.51 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 39,668 feet, 7.51 miles  
**Project Cost:** TBD  
**Summary:** Starting in the Black Forest area, at the intersection of Milam Road and Burgess Road, this route follows Burgess Road east, then following Ayer Road to Meridian Road. This route connects the Vollmer Road route and Meridian Road route. This route is included in the 2011-2020 MTCP. Currently, no portions of this route are completed.

**Route Name:** Curtis Road  
**District:** East District  
**Route Length:** 125,389 feet, 23.75 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 125,389 feet, 23.75 miles  
**Project Cost:** TBD  
**Summary:** Starting in Falcon along Meridian Road, the route heads east along Stapleton Road, crossing Highway 24, turning south along Curtis Road. The route continues south, turning west on Bradley Road to Powers Boulevard. This route connects the Meridian Road route, Eastonville Regional Trail, Rock Island Regional Trail, Judge Orr Trail, Davis Road Trail, Highway 94 route, Schriever Trail, Jimmy Camp Creek Regional Trail, and South Powers route. This route is included in the 2011-2020 MTCP. Currently, no portions of this route are completed.

**Route Name:** Drennan Road  
**District:** East District  
**Route Length:** 53,150 feet, 10.07 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 53,150 feet, 10.07 miles  
**Project Cost:** TBD  
**Summary:** Starting at the intersection of Drennan Road and Curtis Road, the route follows Drennan Road south, turning east to follow Drennan Road, passing Peyton Highway, ending at Ellicott Highway. This route connects Curtis Road, Schriever Trail and Peyton Highway route. This route is included in the 2011-2020 MTCP. Currently, no portions of this route are completed.

**Route Name:** Elbert Road  
**District:** East District  
**Route Length:** 65,038 feet, 12.32 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 65,038 feet, 12.32 miles  
**Project Cost:** TBD  
**Summary:** Starting at the intersection of Judge Orr Road and Elbert Road, the route follows Elbert Road north, past Highway 24, continuing north to the Douglas County Line. This route connects the Judge Orr Trail, Rock Island Regional Trail, Black Squirrel Creek Regional Trail, Walker Road Route, and Palmer Divide Regional Trail. Currently, no portions of this route are completed.

**Route Name:** Ellicott Highway  
**District:** East District  
**Route Length:** 52,543 feet, 9.95 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 52,543 feet, 9.95 miles  
**Project Cost:** TBD  
**Summary:** Starting at Ellicott, at the intersection of Highway 94 and Ellicott Highway, the route follows Ellicott Highway south to Squirrel Creek Road. This route connects Highway 94 Route, Drennan Road Route, Black Squirrel Creek Regional Trail, and Squirrel Creek Road Route. Currently, no portions of this route are completed.

**Route Name:** Falcon Highway  
**District:** Central District  
**Route Length:** 45,000, 8.52 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 45,000, 8.52 miles  
**Project Cost:** TBD  
**Summary:** Starting at the intersection of US Highway 24 and Falcon Highway, the route continues east, along the Falcon Highway, past Meridian Road, Curtis Road, ending at Peyton Highway. This route connects Marksheffel Road Route, Rock Island Regional Trail, Judge Orr Trail, and Curtis Road Route. This route is included in the 2011-2020 MTCP. Currently, no portions of this route are completed.

**Route Name:** Fontaine Boulevard  
**District:** South District  
**Route Length:** 32,018 feet, 6.06 miles  
**Completed:** 3,800 feet, 0.72 miles  
**Remaining:** 28,218 feet, 5.34 miles  
**Project Cost:** TBD  
**Summary:** Starting at the intersection of Fontaine Boulevard and Grinnell Boulevard, the route follows Fontaine Boulevard east, past Widefield Park, continuing past the City of Colorado Springs Blue Stem Prairie Open Space, the route continues east through the Lorson Ranch subdivision. This route facilitates a link between the Crews Gulch Regional Trail and Kane Ranch Regional Trail. This route is included in the 2011-2020 MTCP. Currently 0.72 miles of the route is completed through the Lorson Ranch subdivision.

**Route Name:** Garrett Road  
**District:** South District  
**Route Length:** 21,315 feet, 4.04 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 21,315 feet, 4.04 miles  
**Project Cost:** TBD  
**Summary:** Starting at the intersection of Highway 24 and Garrett Road, the route follows Garrett Road east, to North Curtis Road. Currently, no portions of this route are completed.



**Route Name:** Hanover Road  
**District:** South/ East District  
**Route Length:** 265,101 feet, 50.21 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 265,101 feet, 50.21 miles  
**Project Cost:** TBD  
**Summary:** Starting at the intersection of Old Pueblo Road and Hanover Road, the route continues east, along Hanover Road to Hanover. The trail then continues north along South Peyton Highway, then east along Myers Road, then north along Boone Road to Truckton. The trail continues east along Truckton Road, then north along South Rush Road to Rush. This trail connects to Clear Spring Ranch, Hanover, South Peyton route, Truckton, Rush and Highway 94 route. This route is included in the 2011-2020 MTCP. Currently, no portions of this route are completed.

**Route Name:** Highway 83  
**District:** North District  
**Route Length:** 51,175 feet, 9.69 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 51,175 feet, 9.69 miles  
**Project Cost:** TBD  
**Summary:** Starting at the intersection of Interquest Parkway and Highway 21, the route continues north along Highway 83, past Shoup Road, North Gate Boulevard, and Hodgen Road, connecting to Douglas County at County Line Road. This route connects the City of Colorado Springs to residential developments in the Black Forest area, and between to Black Forest and Fox Run Regional Parks. This route is included in the 2011-2020 MTCP. Currently, no portions of this route are completed.

**Route Name:** Highway 94  
**District:** South/ East District  
**Route Length:** 164,400 feet, 31.14 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 164,400 feet, 31.14 miles  
**Project Cost:** TBD  
**Summary:** Starting at the intersection of Highway 24 and Highway 94, the route continues east to Ellicott, Yoder, and Rush. This route connects to the Kane Ranch Open Space, Black Squirrel Creek Regional Trail, Ramah Highway route, and Hanover Road route. This route is included in the 2011-2020 MTCP. Currently, no portions of this route are completed.

**Route Name:** Highway 105  
**District:** North District  
**Route Length:** 26,911 feet, 5.10 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 26,911 feet, 5.10 miles  
**Project Cost:** TBD  
**Summary:** Starting at the intersection of Interstate 25 and Highway 105, the route continues east, along Highway 105 to Highway 83. This route connects Monument, Cherry Creek Regional Trail, Highway 83 Route, and Walker Road Route. Currently, no portions of this route are completed.

**Route Name:** Hodgen Road  
**District:** North District  
**Route Length:** 60,893 feet, 11.53 miles  
**Completed:** 24,000 feet, 4.55 miles  
**Remaining:** 36,893 feet, 6.98 miles  
**Project Cost:** TBD  
**Summary:** Starting at Hodgen Road, near Fox Run Regional Park, the route follows Hodgen Road east, to Eastonville Road, where it connects to the Palmer Divide Regional Trail. This route connects Fox Run Regional Park, Fox Run Regional Trail, Pipeline Trail, Vollmer Road route and Palmer Divide Regional Trail. This route is included in the 2011-2020 MTCP. Currently, no portions of this route are completed.

**Route Name:** Hopper Road  
**District:** East District  
**Route Length:** 15,294 feet, 2.90 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 15,294 feet, 2.90 miles  
**Project Cost:** TBD  
**Summary:** Starting at the intersection of Elbert Road and Hopper Road, this route follows Hopper Road east, to Bradshaw Road, near the Big Sandy Creek Regional Trail. This route is included in the 2011-2020 MTCP. Currently, no portions of this route are completed.

**Route Name:** Judge Orr Road  
**District:** East District  
**Route Length:** 32,132 feet, 6.09 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 32,132 feet, 6.09 miles  
**Project Cost:** TBD  
**Summary:** Starting at the intersection of Judge Orr Road and Eastonville Road, this route follows Judge Orr Road east, crossing Highway 24, continuing past Curtis Road, Elbert Road, ending at Peyton highway. This route connects the Eastonville Road Regional Trail, Judge Orr Trail, Curtis Road Route, and Black Squirrel Creek Regional Trail. This route is included in the 2011-2020 MTCP. Currently, no portions of this route are completed.

**Route Name:** Log Road  
**District:** East District  
**Route Length:** 47,800 feet, 9.05 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 47,800 feet, 9.05 miles  
**Project Cost:** TBD  
**Summary:** Starting at the intersection of Judge Orr Road and Log Road, the route follows Log Road South to Highway 94. This route is included in the 2011-2020 MTCP. Currently, no portions of this route are completed.

**Route Name:** Marksheffel Road  
**District:** North District  
**Route Length:** 48,091 feet, 9.11 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 48,091 feet, 9.11 miles  
**Project Cost:** TBD  
**Summary:** Starting at the intersection of Highway 24 and Markshffel Road, the route follows Marksheffel Road north, to Vollmer Road. This trail connects the City of Colorado Springs to Black Forest and the Vollmer Road route and Sand Creek Regional Trail. This route is included in the 2011-2020 MTCP. Currently, no portions of this route are completed.

**Route Name:** Meridian Road  
**District:** East District  
**Route Length:** 82,409 feet, 15.61 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 82,409 feet, 15.61 miles  
**Project Cost:** TBD  
**Summary:** Starting south of Falcon at the intersection of Blaney Road and Meridian Road, the route follows Meridian Road north through Falcon, past Woodmen Road, Hodgen Road, ending at Walker Road. This route connects the Blaney Road Route, Garrett Road Route, Falcon Highway Route, Rock Island Regional Trail, Woodmen Road Route, Eastonville Road Regional Trail, Curtis Road Route, Arroya Lane Regional Trail, Meridian Ranch Trail, Latigo Trail, Palmer Divide Regional Trail, Hodgen Road Route, and Walker Road Route. This route is included in the 2011-2020 MTCP. Currently, no portions of this route are completed.

**Route Name:** Milam Road  
**District:** North District  
**Route Length:** 10,463 feet, 1.98 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 10,463 feet, 1.98 miles  
**Project Cost:** TBD  
**Summary:** Starting at the intersection of Old Ranch Road and Milam Road, the route follows Milam Road north, to Shoup Road and Black Forest Regional Park. This route connects the City of Colorado Springs to Black Forest. Currently, no portions of this route are completed.

**Route Name:** North Calhan Highway  
**District:** East District  
**Route Length:** 29,951 feet, 5.67 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 29,951 feet, 5.67 miles  
**Project Cost:** TBD  
**Summary:** Starting at the North Calhan Highway, along the Big Sandy Creek Regional Trail, the route follows the North Calhan Highway south, to Calhan. The route continues south and turns east onto Paint Mines Road to Paint Mines Interpretive Park. This route connects the Big Sandy Creek, Rock Island Regional Trail, Ramah Highway route and Paint Mines Interpretive Park. Currently, no portions of this route are completed.

**Route Name:** Peyton Highway  
**District:** East/South District  
**Route Length:** 184,974 feet, 35.03 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 184,974 feet, 35.03 miles  
**Project Cost:** TBD  
**Summary:** Starting at the intersection of the North Peyton Highway and Sweet Road, the route follows North Peyton Highway south to Highway 24. The route continues south along North Peyton Highway to Hanover. This route connects the Big Sandy Creek Regional Trail, Rock Island Regional Trail, Judge Orr Trail, Falcon Highway route, Highway 94 route, Black Squirrel Creek Regional Trail, and Hanover Road route. This route is included in the 2011-2020 MTCP. Currently, no portions of this route are completed.

**Route Name:** Ramah Highway  
**District:** East District  
**Route Length:** 110,579 feet, 20.94 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 110,579 feet, 20.94 miles  
**Project Cost:** TBD  
**Summary:** Starting in Calhan at the El Paso County Fairgrounds, the route follows the North Calhan Highway South, until turning east on Funk Road, then turning south on the Ramah Highway to State Highway 94. The trail facilitates a connection between Calhan and the towns of Yoder and Rush. Currently, no portions of this route are completed.

**Route Name:** Roller Coaster Road  
**District:** North District  
**Route Length:** 12,925 feet, 2.45 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 12,925 feet, 2.45 miles  
**Project Cost:** TBD  
**Summary:** Starting adjacent to Fox Run Regional Park at Baptist Road, the route follows Roller Coaster Road south to North Gate Boulevard and the City of Colorado Springs. Currently, no portions of this route are completed.

**Route Name:** Shoup Road  
**District:** North District  
**Route Length:** 33,057 feet, 6.26 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 33,057 feet, 6.26 miles  
**Project Cost:** TBD  
**Summary:** Starting at Highway 83 and Shoup Road, the route follows Shoup Road east to Vollmer Road. This route connects the LaForet Regional Trail, Milam Road Route, Black Forest Regional Park, Pipeline Trail, Palmer Divide Regional Trail and the Pineries Open Space. This route is included in the 2011-2020 MTCP. Currently, no portions of this route are completed.

**Route Name: South Marksheffel Road**

**District:** South District

**Route Length:** 22,580 feet, 4.28 miles

**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles

**Remaining:** 22,580 feet, 4.28 miles

**Project Cost:** TBD

**Summary:** Starting at the intersection of South Marksheffel Road and Bradley Road, the route follows Marksheffel Road south, past Fontaine Boulevard, turning west along Mesa Ridge Parkway ending at South Powers. This route connects the Curtis Road route, Fontaine Boulevard route and South Powers route. This route is included in the 2011-2020 MTCP. Currently, no portions of this route are completed.

**Route Name: South Powers Boulevard**

**District:** South District

**Route Length:** 60,302 feet, 11.42 miles

**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles

**Remaining:** 60,302 feet, 11.42 miles

**Project Cost:** TBD

**Summary:** Starting at Powers Boulevard and Bradley Road, the route follows Powers Boulevard south to the intersection of Old Pueblo Road and Hanover Road. This route connects the Curtis Road Route, Fontaine Boulevard Route, Jimmy Camp Creek Regional Trail, Hanover Route, and the Fountain Creek Regional trail. Currently, no portions of this route are completed.

**Route Name: Squirrel Creek Road**

**District:** South District

**Route Length:** 128,603 feet, 24.36 miles

**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles

**Remaining:** 128,603 feet, 24.36 miles

**Project Cost:** TBD

**Summary:** Starting near the City of Fountain, the route follows Squirrel Creek Road east, passing Peyton Highway and Ellicott Highway before turning south, along Squirrel Creek Road to Myers Road. This Route connects the South Powers route, Kane Ranch Regional Trail, Peyton Highway route, Black Squirrel Creek Regional Trail and Hanover Road route. This route is included in the 2011-2020 MTCP. Currently, no portions of this route are completed.

**Route Name: Sweet Road**

**District:** East District

**Route Length:** 26,325 feet, 4.99 miles

**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles

**Remaining:** 26,325 feet, 4.99 miles

**Project Cost:** TBD

**Summary:** Starting north of Peyton at the intersection of Peyton Highway and Sweet Road, the route follows Sweet Road east to Ellicott Highway. This route connects the Peyton Highway route and Big Sand Creek Regional Trail. This route is included in the 2011-2020 MTCP. Currently, no portions of this route are completed.



**Route Name:** Vollmer Road  
**District:** North District  
**Route Length:** 50,176, 9.50 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 50,176, 9.50 miles  
**Project Cost:** TBD  
**Summary:** Starting at the intersection of Marksheffel Road and Vollmer Road, the route follows Vollmer Road north, through Black Forest to Hodgen Road. This route connects the City of Colorado Springs, Sand Creek Regional Trail, Arroya Lane Region Trail, Palmer Divide Regional Trail and Hodgen Road route. This route is included in the 2011-2020 MTCP. Currently, no portions of this route are completed.

**Route Name:** Walker Road  
**District:** North/ East District  
**Route Length:** 81,381 feet, 15.41 miles  
**Completed:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Remaining:** 81,381 feet, 15.41 miles  
**Project Cost:** TBD  
**Summary:** Starting in Black Forest at the intersection of Highway 83 and Walker Road, the route follows Walker Road east, continuing along Evans Road, to Elbert Road. This route facilitates a connection between Highway 105, Highway 83, Cherry Creek Regional Trail, and the Elbert Road route. This route is included in the 2011-2020 MTCP. Currently, no portions of this route are completed.

**Route Name:** Woodmen Road  
**District:** East District  
**Route Length:** 20,612 feet, 3.90 miles  
**Completed:** 20,612 feet, 3.90 miles  
**Remaining:** 0 feet, 0 miles  
**Project Cost:** N/A, On-road paved or gravel  
**Summary:** Starting in Falcon at the intersection of Woodmen Road and US Highway 24, the route follows Woodmen Road west, past Meridian Road to the City of Colorado Springs. This route connects the Rock Island Regional Trail, Meridian Road Route and Woodmen Hills Trail. This route is complete.

## Open Space

Consideration of natural resources information is essential for understanding the existing character of the county and helping to identify potential open space conservation areas. Open Space is defined as an area with important natural, cultural, historic, or visual resource values that has been purposefully protected, with an emphasis on protection over active use. Public access is permitted to the extent that resource values are not compromised.

Residents expressed that conservation and public access are integral and that the system should promote stewardship and provide environmental education. Determining important open space attributes or criteria is critical to prioritizing potential acquisitions. Wildfire hazard is a pressing concern at this time, and preservation of wildlife habitat and plant communities, water quality, and stormwater management remain priorities as well.

### Open Space Composite Analysis

The open space composite analysis illustrates open space value in terms of ecology and wildlife, wildfire hazard, conserved and preserved land, landmarks and landforms, slope of 30 percent or greater, surface water, and cultural and historic sites. Areas are identified and buffered for the presence of these factors as well as for consideration of protection of lands that are adjacent. Other factors are either subtracted from the value, such as irrigated agricultural land and those lands with commercial and industrial zoning, or extracted from the data set, such as military installations. The categories (shown in **Map 7-6 Open Space Values Attributes**) are then overlaid to form a composite map that ranks the probable suitability of lands within the study area for open space. The result is **Map 7-7: Open Space Composite Analysis**. Areas with darker colors in the map exhibit the highest presence of values to satisfy conservation criteria; lighter colored areas exhibit lower, but still significant values for potential protection.

These properties should broadly be considered by the County as high priorities for further evaluation for protection. Because areas in the *potential open space composite value analysis* were evaluated based on the broad potential that these preservation attributes occur, it is not known how well or to what extent individual parcels meet specific criteria. Therefore, it is necessary to further evaluate individual parcels on a case-by-case basis for value as open space. This can be accomplished through the *Potential Open Space Tier 2 Analysis* that is being developed as a result of this master planning effort. This includes field verification and also considers other values that are not appropriate for mapping but drive the priority for open space protection such as the potential for public access, willingness of the seller, cost, immediate and ongoing maintenance needs, and potential for partnership in the endeavor.

### Tier 1 Analysis

Tier 1 analysis is the foundation for and a contributor to a future Tier 2 analysis and was completed as a part of this master planning effort. Its purpose is to identify the “potential” that certain attributes exist on a particular site based on existing data sets. This contributed to the identification of recommendations for “candidate open space areas.” This “potential” is further evaluated in a Tier 2 process through a field verification to determine both the existence as well as the quality of the attribute(s). Tier 2, as more fully explained later in this chapter, uses the Tier 1 information along with other important criteria to help determine priorities and strategies for protection.

Based on the attributes identified for this effort and the existence of data sets representing those attributes, the data was assembled into the following categories or themes:

- Ecology and wildlife
- Agricultural lands
- Cultural and Historic Sites
- Landmarks and Landforms
- Conserved and Preserved Land
- Surface Water
- Slope



*Riparian Grassland*

Data for this study was obtained entirely from existing sources, without fieldwork to generate new information. The platform for managing the geospatial data was ArcGIS. Primary sources of this data included GIS (Geographical Information System) files from El Paso County. This GIS data for wildlife and ecology was obtained from the Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP), and El Paso County. For a list of GIS layers, please see **Appendix VI**.

All of the collected and assembled data is displayed on a series of maps, which were reviewed by the staff and Master Plan Committee. Any known inaccuracies were noted and adjusted accordingly on the maps. However, it is important to note that without field verifications of any data, inaccuracies and outdated information are bound to be inherent within the database. Nonetheless, the compiled database was found to be suitable for the use to which it has been applied in this study.

Each attribute as shown in **Map 7-6: Open Space Values Attributes** was weighted equally, so that none was given priority over another in the scoring. Attributes within the dataset are assigned a value score of 1 unless otherwise specified.

- **Ecology and Wildlife (A, G, H)** – Information detailing ecology and wildlife surveys is in the dataset. Survey data included habitat locations of Preble’s Jumping Mouse, as well as Wildlife Impact Areas (High and Very High). The locations of Preble’s Jumping Mouse were buffered 300 feet. Lands considered to have a high and very high Wildlife Impact were also included in this dataset. This particular composite dataset is produced by “stacking” activity areas for each of the 30 individual species in El Paso County. The last dataset included in this category includes lands with high Wildfire Hazard.
- **Conserved and Preserved Land (B, C, F)** – Parcels with a centroid within 250 feet of conserved or preserved lands were included in this dataset. Conserved and preserved lands include County, State, and Federal lands, parcels described as such in County data, Bureau of Land Management lands, parks, trails, State Parks, Military Areas, National Forests, Conservation Easements, Nature Conservancy Lands, State Land Board Stewardship Trusts & Ownership. Parcels considered to be vacant within any of the adjacent parcels were added in this dataset. Colorado National Heritage Program information was also used in this dataset including Potential Conserved Land.

- **Landmarks and Landforms (D)** – Significant landmarks and landforms were included in this dataset. Points such as Pikes Peak, were taken from the existing Parks Master Plan and given a one half mile radius.
- **Slope (E)** – Slopes greater than or equal to 30 percent were included in this dataset.
- **Surface Water (I,J,K,L)** – Surface water includes the Black Creek Alluvial Aquifer, 100-Year Floodplain, creeks, streams, lakes, reservoirs, and wetlands. All surface water data were buffered 1000 feet.
- **Agricultural Lands (M)** – Information on irrigated agriculture is included in the dataset. Any land found within this dataset was **subtracted** at a value of one (1), as the assumption is that this use will remain.
- **Commercial and Industrial Zoning (N)** – Any land within the boundary of a commercial or industrial zone was included in this dataset and **subtracted** at a value of one (1).
- **Military Installations (O)** – Any land within the boundary of a military installation included in this dataset was **extracted** from the study.
- **Cultural & Historic Sites (P)** – This dataset includes over 200 historical sites provided through the Elaine Freed Report.

Utilizing the GIS, the theme maps were overlaid to create a composite map as shown in *Map 7-7: Open Space Composite Analysis*, based on accumulated scores for any given point within the study area. Darker colored areas score the highest in terms of their potential to satisfy criteria in the ordinance; lighter colored areas score the lowest.



*Pike View Ranch*

The analysis was broad-stroke and did not address individual parcels. It simply gives an idea of where open space parcels that meet the criteria outlined are likely to occur. However, individual parcels that meet these same criteria may exist within areas that scored low overall. Also, because an attempt was made to weigh all of the criteria equally, simply based on the potential for those attributes to occur, there is no evaluation of how well or to what extent individual parcels meet specific criteria. In this analysis, the potential to meet several criteria even marginally would result in a higher score than a parcel that met a single criterion exceptionally well. Tier 1 alone is not adequate to set priorities, therefore, it is necessary to evaluate individual parcels under consideration by additional means. This is the purpose of the Tier 2 analysis described later in this section. Tier 2 also contains additional criteria by which the parcel will be evaluated.

### **Sensitive Wildlife Habitat and Colorado Natural Heritage Program Sites**

Significant wildlife habitat in El Paso County is represented in the mapping through data collection and evaluative efforts the Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW), now incorporated with Colorado State Parks into a combined division of Colorado Parks and Wildlife. This data set was further merged with a data set representing the federally protected Preble's Meadow Jumping Mouse.



*Preble's Meadow Jumping Mouse*

CDOW mapped significant wildlife habitats throughout El Paso County and their sensitivity to impact from development activities. The CDOW wildlife data reflects a combined ranking assigned to 30 different species based on two factors: 1) the Impact Factor, which is the sensitivity of individual species' activity areas to potential impact from development; and 2) the Status Factor, which is based on a combination of factors related to the rarity of a certain species such as federal, state threatened or endangered, the sensitivity of a species to environmental disturbance, whether there is special concern for a species and whether the species is economically important. After assigning a rank of 1 through 5 to each of the factors, the Impact Factor and Status factors are combined and a final ranking is assigned based on the Total Factor Ranking.

The Wildlife Habitat composite data is a way for CDOW to summarize wildlife information on one data set allowing for an easily understood mapping format. This composite map is produced by "stacking" activity areas for each of the 30 individual species in El Paso County. Selection criteria for this list of species was based on several categories. Economically important species, such as big game, were included. Species with restricted distributions or highly specific habitat requirements, such as great blue heron, pheasant, and osprey were selected because they serve as barometers of change. Threatened and endangered species such as the bald eagle and peregrine falcon were selected to meet legal requirements. This Preble's dataset was developed to track the buffered creek areas for the Preble's Meadow Jumping Mouse habitat in El Paso County.

High impact areas, which are considered the most sensitive, are primarily located along the southern portion of Fountain Creek, including its tributary Jimmy Camp Creek, and at several locations in the mountains. Moderate/High Impact, is the next most sensitive rating; most of these areas are associated with the remaining portions of Fountain and Monument Creeks as well as much of the montane forest and foothills areas of the county. Other areas of the county are considered some combination of Moderate to Low Impact, including most of the Black Forest and grasslands portions of the county. Generally speaking, the plains have a lower density of wildlife species and most of the area is mapped by CDOW as having a low sensitivity to development activities. Exceptions to this low sensitivity rating occur along some of the riparian corridors and in a few locations with known raptor nesting sites or known occurrences of other sensitive species such as the mountain plover.





Mountain Plover (Credit: USFWS)

In 1996, the Colorado Natural Heritage Program performed a Level One Inventory of Biological Special Interest Areas under contract to El Paso County. Using infrared aerial photography, biologists delineated approximately 200 preliminary conservation planning areas. It should be noted that this level of survey did not include field verification of all the identified sites and the boundaries of the sites are generally drawn and not intended to be precise in all instances. The mapping shows only a portion of the approximately 200 sites that were identified and are the sites with known occurrences of rare, threatened, or sensitive species or those areas that were noted as having particularly important or intact habitat values. Various wildflowers and species such as the small rattlesnake plantain

(*Goodyera repens*), are examples of the type of rare plant included in the survey.

## Tier 2 Analysis

Individual tracts of land that are being considered for inclusion in the open space system should be evaluated to determine how well they address the specific attributes of open space. This includes any lands offered through a willing seller or other means.

At this level, parcels are examined with a finer filter to determine the degree to which specific open space attributes exist on the site. The criteria allow evaluation of each tract on the level to which it satisfies the open space values identified below. If a parcel rates high enough overall or in any specific category, it can be considered for inclusion in the open space system.

Tier 2 criteria could include:

- Tier 1 attributes
- Willingness of seller
- Wildlife/vegetation and restoration potential
- Cultural and historic value
- Recreation value and adjacent land uses
- Cost/benefit of acquisition and long-term management

When a property is deemed desirable for acquisition, the following questions come into play:

Will the opportunity to protect the property be lost or become significantly more expensive and/or difficult if not acquired soon?

Should the parcel be acquired fee simple or protected through some other means?

Based on how well the parcel meets goals of other jurisdictions, who should acquire the land? Is this a partnering opportunity?

### **Landscape Character and Significant Landforms/Landmarks**

The character of the natural landscape is an important factor in identifying areas that should be considered for open space conservation. As more of the county is developed, less area is left in its natural condition and good examples of some of the significant landscapes that make up El Paso County may be lost. A useful way to understand the county is to divide it into landscape types, each of which reflect the character of a particular area based primarily on landforms and vegetation.



*Fox Run Regional Park in the Black Forest*

### **Southern Rocky Mountains**

This landscape type is characterized by dramatic landforms, steep slopes, and major variations in elevation. Most of this landscape type is forested, and it generally occurs at elevations above 7,000 feet in the western portion of the County. The Mountain Front subarea is a dominant feature on the face of the mountains of the Rampart Range that forms the backdrop to the county. In many places, the mountains rise abruptly along this front, reaching an elevation of more than 9,000 feet in a near vertical rise from their base. Rock faces, spires, and other interesting rock outcrops are common and add visual interest to this subarea. Vegetation is diverse and includes both montane forest dominated by ponderosa pine and subalpine communities at higher elevations dominated by Engleman spruce and other conifers. Canopy cover is generally dense and somewhat uniform, which when combined with the angle of view from the lower areas where most county residents live, results in a high degree of visual sensitivity due to the fact that changes in vegetation or other modifications are highly visible. Notable landmarks in this subarea include Cheyenne Mountain and Cameron Cone.

The Subalpine Forest occupies the uplands above 9,000 feet extending to timberline. Landforms are somewhat less dramatic within this subarea, particularly north of Fountain Creek, and large portions of the area are gently sloping, elevated uplands dominated by a dense cover of various conifers. The Alpine subarea occupies a small portion of the extreme western edge of the county. Elevations range from 11,000 feet to over 14,000 feet and a major portion of the subarea is above tree line. Pikes Peak is an obvious landmark within this subarea.

### **Foothills and Transitional**

The Southern Rocky Mountain landscape type merges into the Foothills and Transitional Landscape type, which has been divided into five subareas. The Black Forest is a major subarea that is located in the north central portion of the county east of Monument Creek. Essentially an elevated plateau dissected by a series of drainages, the Black Forest represents the furthest eastward extension of the ponderosa pine community in Colorado. As such, it is one of the more distinctive landscapes in Colorado. Neither high plains nor a simple extension of the foothills to the west, the Black Forest combines many of the best features of both landscapes. Dense stands of pine occupy the higher areas of the unit above 7,000 feet and lower areas are a mosaic of grassland, shrubland, and isolated stands of pine and scrub oak. Wind and water erosion has resulted in the sporadic occurrence of a few isolated landmarks, namely Table Rock, Rattlesnake Butte, and Fremont Fort.

The Foothills Woodland subarea includes most of the Air Force Academy and extends east to merge with the Black Forest. Topography in this subarea is fairly gentle, ranging from the flats along Monument Creek to rolling uplands penetrated by a series of small canyons. Vegetation also varies across the area, with dense stands of ponderosa pine on the benches west of Monument Creek and open grasslands fringed with scrub oak and mountain shrubs dominating east of Monument Creek. Cathedral Rock (an isolated rock spire), Ben Lomond Mountain, and Elephant Rock are definite landmarks within this subarea. Another distinct subarea is the Pinyon Juniper Parkland area on the southern edge of the county, most of which is within the boundaries of Fort Carson. Topography within this subarea is irregular and consists of a series of small canyons and low mountains 6,550-7,000 feet in elevation. Vegetation is also varied, and includes open grasslands as well as dense stands of pinyon and juniper. This subarea is notable in El Paso County due to the fact that its occurrence here represents the northern edge of the pinyon juniper forest community along the Front Range.

The areas of lower elevation in and around Fort Carson are classified as the Foothills Grassland subarea. Although primarily grassland with a sprinkling of shrub communities, the more complex topography of this subarea distinguishes it from the flat to gently rolling plains located further east. Consistent with El Paso County's position as a meeting ground of northern and southern species, this subarea contains the furthest north extension of candalabra cactus, a species that is common in the grasslands of the southwest.



*Fountain Creek*

## High Plains

The third and largest landscape type in the county is characterized as high plains. Most of the high plains consists of the Grasslands subarea, which consists of short and mid-grasses such as blue grama, buffalo grass, and little bluestem. Topography in this landscape is primarily flat to rolling with localized variations that result from erosive action, leaving isolated buttes and ridgelines. Examples of these localized variations include the Paint Mines near Calhan, Corral Bluffs east of the City of Colorado Springs, and Crow’s Roost in the south central portion of the county. Other examples include the buttes along the southern reaches of Fountain Creek, which are a series of small teepee formations that dot an otherwise smooth landscape.

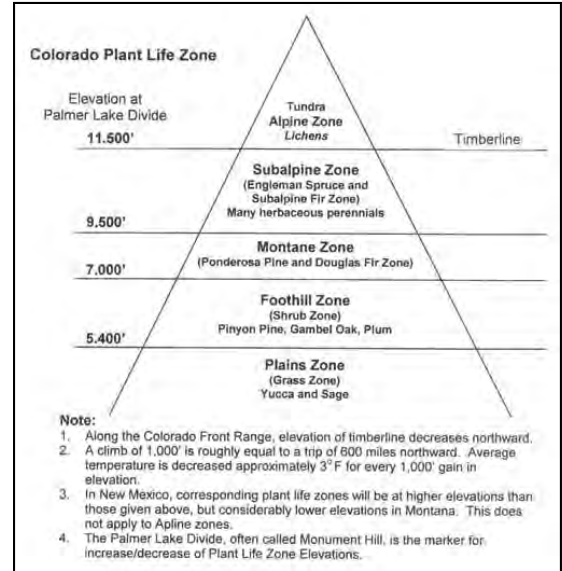
Although most of the high plains within El Paso County remains in grass, some areas are cultivated for dryland wheat or irrigated crops. These relatively small subareas are identified in **Map 7-6** as Irrigated Agriculture. These attributes were addressed in the open space composite analysis, with the assumption that these uses will continue and therefore not ideal candidates for open space acquisition..

**Map 7-8: Land Cover, Landforms, and Landmarks** illustrates the above landscape types and specific land cover types. Significant stream corridors are also noted on **Map 7-8**. These include stream corridors with notable riparian areas along some or all of their length. The stream corridors usually have a narrow width and therefore do not represent a distinct landscape type. They are delineated, however, due to their importance as wildlife corridors and the visual interest they add to the landscape.

The results of the first phase of the Front Range Mountain Backdrop Study are also included on **Map 7-8**. Five Potential Critical Preservation Candidate Land Areas were identified in El Paso County, all of which are located within the defined Mountain Backdrop study area. The delineation of these areas was accomplished by overlaying a variety of quantitative and qualitative features with a computer mapping system to arrive at the most critical areas. Factors used in the analysis included, but were not limited to: computerized visual analysis, visual features, and viewpoints identified through public surveys, wildlife resources, sensitive plant ecosystems, existing public lands, existing developed areas, and mineral areas. The five areas identified using this methodology are collectively shown on Map 7-8 under the label “Front Ranch Mountain Backdrop Study,” and are listed below, starting on the north:

- Palmer Lake Backdrop
- Quarry Reclamation Area
- Ute Pass Area
- Section 16 to Cheyenne Mountain
- Aiken Canyon Area

Colorado contains five “Plant Life Zones,” as illustrated in the figure to the right. These zones represent commonly found vegetation within certain elevation ranges. El Paso County has three major landscape types -Southern Rocky Mountains, Foothills and Transitional, High Plains - each having one or more sub-areas, as discussed below. The sub-areas share similar characteristics to the larger landscape type they occupy, but exhibit sufficiently distinct variations in landform, vegetation type, or some other factor that merits their identification as separate landscape units. **Map 7-8** illustrates the three major landscape types.



*Colorado’s Plant Life Zones  
(Credit: Colorado State University)*

**Landmarks**

*Table Rock, Elephant Rock, Cathedral Rocks, Pulpit Rock, Fremont Fort, and Ben Lomond Mountain* are among many landmarks identified on **Map 7-8**. These significant landforms and landmarks are highly visible and notable features that stand out from the surrounding landscape. These features also have historic value, because at the turn of the century, summer social events included picnics at these local landmarks. Excursions led by local hotels brought visitors and county residents alike by horseback or carriage to enjoy the unusual landforms and views of the mountains. An inventory of historic and cultural landmarks is included in the open space composite analysis in Map 7-6.



*Table Rock*



### **Garden of the Gods**

Although this asset is located within the incorporated City limits of Colorado Springs, Garden of the Gods is notable, as it has long been revered as a fascinating and sublime landscape. Visitors from around the world have appreciated its unique beauty, from the early 1800s, before any substantial development of the area, to present times. The park is now among the assets managed by the City of Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services.



*Pikes Peak and Garden of the Gods (Credit: Wikipedia\*)*

### **Candidate Open Space Areas**

El Paso County has an excellent quality of life with a moderate climate, affordable housing, and close proximity to many outdoor recreation opportunities. This popularity has led to explosive growth that challenges the environment that draws individuals to this area. Many Colorado counties are experiencing similar growth and have established aggressive open space programs to preserve critical vital areas for future generations.

There are many positive attributes for open space conservation, and several areas are identified as high priority lands for conservation. In most cases, a broadly-defined area is shown that encompasses a landscape unit or defined habitat type without regard to individual ownership boundaries. Any acquisition of land or easements in these areas would be accomplished through agreements with the landowners on a willing seller basis. One example of such an agreement would be a Conservation Easement, which is discussed in greater detail along with other mechanisms in **Chapter 9**, under **Voluntary Programs**. The boundaries of these areas were also generalized to create linkages between important resource areas and to allow flexibility in working with landowners. The plan should not be interpreted to mean that the County will necessarily attempt to protect all the areas shown on the map. Instead, the map identifies those areas where available resources will be focused to determine if mutual agreements can be made with landowners to protect important open space.

Generally speaking, the high priority conservation areas are where two or more important natural resource values converge. These values include important wildlife habitat areas identified by the Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife and Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP) sites. Other considerations include significant landscapes and important stream corridors. The Potential Open Space Composite Analysis described previously identified areas with the highest combined values of natural resource and other attributes and was used to determine the candidate open space areas described in the following list and shown on **Map 8-3: Open Space Master Plan** in **Chapter 8**.

A Tier 2 screening needs to be undertaken prior to acquisition or conservation by other means, to fully address suitability in terms of physical, cost, and timing considerations. Protection of the identified conservation areas could be accomplished through a variety of means, including conservation easements and other techniques that do not require fee simple purchase. Some of the conservation areas might have facility development and others might have no public use at all, depending upon the method of conservation and resource sensitivity. Those areas that become protected as natural areas or open space areas would be managed according to the guidelines listed in **Table 8-1: El Paso County Parks, Open Space, and Trails Classification**. In most cases, development would be limited to a minimal amount based on what is needed to allow access (if appropriate) and protect the resource. Other areas could eventually become regional parks, with a higher level of facility development on a portion of the site and the remainder protected in a more natural condition.

### **Candidate Open Space Resource Recommendations**

**Ben Lomond Mountain and Elephant Rock** (*Elev. 7,636 feet; just east of Palmer Lake; Elephant Rock slightly further [3/4 mile] east of mountain*) – These regionally significant landmarks are located near Palmer Lake along State Highway 105. Elephant Rock is an isolated cluster of cap rock that extends off Ben Lomond Mountain, standing above the surrounding pines like a castle ruin. The overall landscape is very scenic. The higher portions of Ben Lomond Mountain are a series of cliff faces that have shed huge blocks of rock lying along the lower slopes. Ponderosa pine and scrub oak blend into an extensive and gently sloping meadow that meets the base of the mountain and emphasizes its abrupt rise. Protection of this area would preserve two notable landmarks and a critical backdrop to the popular Palmer Lake Recreation Area.

The area is also traversed by the New Santa Fe Trail and it represents one of the more scenic settings along the trail. However, the meadows and flanks of the mountain face imminent development that may preclude the exploration of protection options unless discussions begin immediately. As a natural area, development of facilities would be minimal and access controlled to protect sensitive areas and steep slopes. Future trail connections could also be made that would link the area to existing Forest Service trails up nearby canyons to the west. The result could be a trail through land managed by the Forest Service, El Paso County and other jurisdictions.

**Big Sandy Creek** (*headwaters at east edge of Black Forest to Ramah Reservoir*) – Contains a good example of the globally-vulnerable Arkansas darter, a threatened species in the State of Colorado. The area also supports a good example of plains cottonwood riparian woodland, plains cottonwood with peachleaf willow and coyote willow; good examples of this plant community are rarely encountered. Maintenance of the natural flooding regime is important in recharge to the alluvial aquifer that supports the creek and spring-fed ponds sustaining the Arkansas darter.

**Bijou Basin (“West Bijou Creek NCA”)** – West Bijou Creek is an ephemeral stream on the that drains from the Black Forest region of Elbert and El Paso counties into Arapahoe County, about two miles from the Adams County line. The floodplain and channel are relatively wide and the stream is often dry in the late summer. The northern end of the conservation area is surrounded mostly by agricultural land (center pivot irrigation), but the southern end (Bijou Basin) is surrounded by rangeland. The floodplain, banks, and terraces of the stream are dominated by large or good quality patches of plains cottonwood with scattered peach-leaf willow. Coyote willow is present within the floodplain. The upper reaches of the stream are a diverse mosaic of riparian and wetland plant associations, whereas downstream reaches can support only the cottonwood dominated plant association. The natural hydrologic flow of the stream and groundwater must be maintained for long term survival of this riparian ecosystem. Boundaries that protect the elements from direct impacts such as weed invasions and physical alterations of the vegetation structure should be considered. Boundaries should incorporate the major ecological processes that allow the element to survive, such as channel migration, flooding and sedimentation, fire, and herbivory actions. Inclusion of the entire floodplain into the site boundaries would allow for natural migration of the channel, allowing the creation of sites for cottonwood regeneration and other vegetation types.

**Black Squirrel Creek: Squirrel Creek School (*Squirrel Creek Road at Ellicott Hwy*)** – Black Squirrel Creek supports a good occurrence of globally imperiled and state-imperiled Mountain Plover, a species designated as special concern to the State of Colorado, and a candidate for Federal listing as threatened/endangered, and as Sensitive by the BLM/Forest Service. This particular area includes breeding pairs, with over 20 breeding pairs identified in some years. Black tailed prairie dogs and Burrowing Owls also occur within this site.

**Black Forest North** – This Black Forest area consists of a mosaic of woodlands and forest dominated almost exclusively by ponderosa pine, and occasionally including individual trees of Rocky Mountain juniper, and less frequently, small patches of aspen. The forested areas are frequently broken by meadows of shortgrass, midgrass, and tallgrass species. The Black Forest area is unique in being the only place in Colorado where montane ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) forest grows east of the Front Range foothills. Although previous



land uses have modified the composition and structure of the Black Forest, the area supports fair examples of two ponderosa pine woodland communities: ponderosa pine with sunsedge and ponderosa pine with little bluestem. The Pineries Open Space occupies an area of the Black Forest from just east of Vollmer Hill extending east and northeast over the headwater reaches of West Kiowa Creek, Black Squirrel Creek, and Snipe Creek. The Pineries Open Space also supports a good (B-ranked) occurrence of Richardson's alumroot. Since it is common throughout the rest of its range and since the Colorado portion of the range is isolated to the west of the rest of the range, Richardson's alumroot is considered disjunct in Colorado.

This area supports a fair occurrence of the globally-vulnerable/apparently secure (G3G4) ponderosa pine/sun sedge woodland which is imperiled (S2) in Colorado; a fair occurrence of the globally-vulnerable/apparently secure (G3G4) ponderosa pine/little bluestem woodland which is critically imperiled (S1) in Colorado; and a good occurrence of Richardson's alumroot a globally-secure (G5) species that is critically imperiled (S1) in Colorado. Residential development is progressing rapidly in the surrounding area. This area includes relatively large tracts of intact land owned by a few property owners. Portions of the area could be expected to develop into subdivisions. Conservation strategies, including the purchase of conservation easements, could help maintain this island of significant plants and plant communities. The entire Black Forest area is considered a high wildfire hazard area by El Paso County.

**Black Forest South** – Near its northernmost limit, the Black Forest site includes the highest point in the Black Forest (Vollmer Hill at 7,704 ft; 2,376 m) and drops in elevation to the south to 7,080 ft (2,183 m) at its southern boundary. The headwaters of numerous creeks and streams radiate from this area, including Black Squirrel Creek, Kettle Creek, Cherry Creek, and Sand Creek. The Black Forest is unique in that it is the only place in Colorado where montane forest grows east of the Front Range and foothills. On vegetation maps, satellite images, and even from the summit of Pikes Peak, this extension of forest into the plains is very conspicuous. The flora and structure of this forest resemble that of the Black Hills in South Dakota. Additionally, many species found within the Black Forest are also found disjunctly in the Black Hills. Many of the plant species that this area includes are considered “woodland prairie relicts” which were once more common in Colorado and have diminished here due to climatic change.

The Black Forest offers these species a refuge in which they can persist, widely disjunct from other populations of the same species. Long-term separation of populations of this sort can lead to allopatric speciation (the formation of new species *via* geographic isolation from parent populations), and for this and other reasons these disjunct populations are worthy of conservation attention. The Richardson alumroot, prairie goldenrod, birdfoot violet, and Selkirk's violet are all common elsewhere but rare in Colorado. One occurrence of the Southern Rocky Mountain cinquefoil was found during 2000 in this area. This species is restricted in range to the Southern Rocky Mountains and is only found in isolated areas in New Mexico and Colorado. Most of the land within this area is privately owned.

Weeds threaten all of the occurrences; particularly menacing is yellow toadflax. This species was found near all of the occurrences revisited in 2000 and grows vigorously in natural and disturbed areas throughout the Black Forest, and can displace native species. In most areas, fire suppression has resulted in dense, doghair stands of ponderosa pine. The fire-maintained open savannahs that historically dominated the area have largely succeeded to closed canopy forest, reducing the quality and availability of habitat. The potential for destructive crown fires appears high in many areas. Part of the occurrence of the birdfoot violet at La Foret is growing on a mowed lawn that is surrounded by ponderosa forest and an adjacent riparian area. The birdfoot violet likely was present prior to human alteration of the area, and may persist as a response to the removal of competing taller grass and forb species as a result of mowing.

**Blue Mountain** (17,000 acres) – This area is located west of Highway 115 in the southwestern corner of the county and supports a good occurrence of globally vulnerable and State critically imperiled Mexican Spotted Owl, a State- and Federally- threatened species (four nests identified). Two additional occurrences of globally- and state-vulnerable American Peregrine Falcon exist, a Federally-endangered subspecies (two nests identified). The area only includes the nesting habitat of both species; home ranges and feeding areas reach far beyond the site boundaries.



*Mexican Spotted Owl (Credit: National Park Service)*

The area also contains state-imperiled Yellow lady's slipper, in the riparian zone along Little Fountain Creek.

**Buffalograss Playas** – In southeastern El Paso County, between the many low rolling hills of shortgrass prairie, are small flat-bottomed depressions. There are no surface channels draining the area, instead rainfall and runoff collect in these basins forming ephemeral wetlands. It is not clear whether these depressions are wind deflated playas (Bolen *et al.* 1989) or remnants of buffalo wallows (Uno 1989; F. Knopf, USGS, pers. comm.), both of which develop clay bottoms and collect runoff after heavy rainstorms. We have chosen to refer to these depressions as playas, fully acknowledging that their origin is not well understood. The area outlined by the PCA is estimated to contain over 300 playas, an average density of about three playas per square mile. The playas are generally circular to oval-shaped, oriented roughly north-south, and range in size from about 0.5 to 10 ac (0.2 to 5 ha).

These basins remain dry throughout most of the year and collect water only after heavy rainfall. In southeastern El Paso County, the heavy rains generally occur in the late summer and in many cases a series of storms are required in order for the playas to retain water (Weathers 2000; G. Paul, local landowner, pers. comm.). Runoff collecting in a dry playa infiltrates cracks in the clay bottom of the playa and swells the clay, effectively sealing the playa bottom (Zartman *et al.* 1994). After the clay has been wetted, subsequent storms can result in playa filling. The playas may hold water for periods ranging from days to weeks, depending on the size of the drainage basin and intensity of the rainstorm (Weathers 2000). In some cases, these playas may hold water from May to August (G. Paul, pers. comm.) or in dry years may remain dry year round.



The vegetation in the playas is shorter than the surrounding blue grama shortgrass prairie and consists of different species. The dominant species in the playas is the perennial warm-season grass buffalograss. Growing with the buffalograss are the perennial forbs plains ambrosia and short-ray prairie coneflower. The vegetation in the playas generally occurs in bands where the outermost rim often supports the highest density of plains ambrosia and coneflower. Other plants growing in the playas include a dryland sedge, prostrate vervain, frog-fruit, spreading yellow cress, green thread, curly cup gumweed, and Russian thistle. Interestingly, buffalograss submerged during the growing season has been known to withstand more than five weeks of inundation (Porterfield 1945). In the playas that remain wet the longest, there may be a small bare ground portion in the center with very sparse cover that could include western wheatgrass, spikerush, goosefoot, or weedy annuals.

Plains ambrosia is a rare shortgrass prairie species that is restricted to an area of about 100 miles by 50 miles (primarily

in El Paso and Lincoln counties). Plains ambrosia requires a little more moisture than most upland plants and as such, the playas appear to be their native habitat, as the clay soils of the playas retain moisture longer than the upland soils.

Roadsides also appear to provide the extra moisture required by the plains ambrosia and, as such, plains ambrosia is very prevalent on the sides of many unpaved roads in the area.

The playas in El Paso County are the best known occurrences for this species. Plains ambrosia, though locally abundant, has a very limited global range (about 50 miles by 100 miles) and almost the entire habitat is privately owned.

In late summer 2000, Mountain Plover were observed gathering for migration in dry playas. Mountain Plover is a declining shortgrass prairie species that is known to inhabit areas with low vegetation and a high percentage of bare ground such as prairie dog towns and heavily grazed shortgrass prairie (Knopf 1996b). Observations of concentrations of Mountain Plover exceeding 50 birds in the playas in late summer may indicate that playas may be another habitat attractive to Mountain Plover because of the low-growing vegetation. In addition, a breeding location for another shortgrass prairie bird that prefers low-growing vegetation, McCown's Longspur, was noted in the vicinity of playas (A. Versaw, pers. comm.). This may be the southernmost known current breeding location in Colorado for McCown's Longspur (Kingery 1998).

This area contains the best known playa habitat for the globally-vulnerable plains ambrosia. It also includes most of the known extent of the globally-vulnerable buffalograss playa community. The landscape included within this area is fragmented by roads and some agriculture but remains largely intact.



*Plains Ambrosia (Ambrosia Linearis)*  
*aka: Linear-leaf Bursage*  
*Credit: Bill Jennings (Photographer),*  
*Nature Conservancy*

**Cheyenne Mountain** – The Cheyenne Mountain area is located in the foothills of west-central El Paso County, just west of the northern end of the Fort Carson Military Reservation. It is partially contained within the newly created Cheyenne Mountain State Park, extending from the edge of the rolling prairie grasslands near Highway 115 to nearly the top of Cheyenne Mountain. It includes most of the Limekiln Valley, portions of the Cheyenne Mountain Air Force Station, and private and federal lands to the north and west. The site occupies an area at the ecotone between the prairie grasslands of the Great Plains and the lower montane foothill forests of the Front Range. It encompasses portions of both the prairie and the foothill forest ecosystems and as a result it supports a very diverse flora and fauna including golden columbine, Peregrine Falcon, and Ovenbird. It also supports one of the best remaining examples of the Front Range foothills mesic oak-shrub ecosystems, as well as remnants of tallgrass prairie. Remnant foothill grasslands of big bluestem, little bluestem, and mountain muhly support a variety of butterfly species, including the crossline skipper.

The lower elevation portions of the site are dominated by prairie grasslands with shortgrass and midgrass species interspersed with scattered islands of Gambel’s oak. In these areas, several blacktailed prairie dog towns are present, and these towns support other species such as Mountain Plovers and Burrowing Owls. On higher elevation areas, forests of ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, and white fir dominate steep, rocky slopes. Mixed woodlands and shrublands form an interface between the prairie and woodland ecosystems.

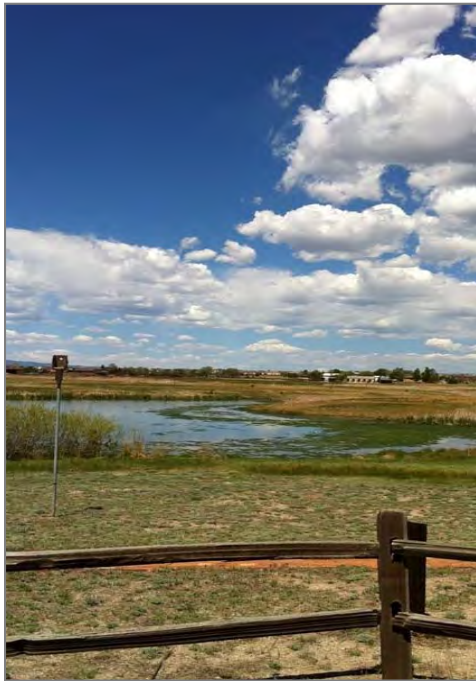


*Golden Columbine (Credit: USFS)*

**Chico Creek** – The Chico Creek watershed reaches from the Black Forest to the Arkansas River, encompassing over 580 square miles in El Paso and Pueblo counties. Chico Creek and its tributary, Black Squirrel Creek, are ephemeral throughout most of their length and surface flow reaches the Arkansas River only after heavy precipitation events. In the southern portion of the watershed, various seeps and springs create an extensive Great Plains wetland and riparian complex with perennially ponded portions. Surface water is extremely rare in the basin, and the wetlands formed by these seeps and springs are the most significant hydrologic feature of the entire basin. The Chico Creek site encompasses these wetlands and riparian areas. It contains a good occurrence of the globally-vulnerable Arkansas darter; good occurrences of two globally-vulnerable wetland communities; and a fair occurrence of a globally-imperiled cottonwood riparian woodland.

The large acreage, and the wide range of wetland communities, are unusual qualities for the central shortgrass prairie. Wildlife observed within the wetlands areas includes plains leopard frogs; northern leopard frogs; red-winged blackbirds; and common snipe, as well as over 45 species of aquatic insects. Other wildlife using riparian areas includes the typical shortgrass prairie species such as pronghorn antelope, white-tailed deer, coyote, desert cottontail, jackrabbit, western rattlesnake, and Woodhouse’s toad. Bird species include red-tailed and Swainson’s Hawks, Great Horned Owl, and several others.

**Corral Bluffs** – This distinctive landform extends along the eastern fringes of the urbanizing area of Colorado Springs. In places, the bluffs drop nearly 400 feet, marking an abrupt transition from the elevated plains on the east to the Fountain Creek drainage basin. Erosion along this front has exposed an interesting set of rock strata and created a series of gullies where more favorable moisture conditions support the establishment of isolated juniper, ponderosa pine, and other woody species. The bluffs are generally more prominent north of State Highway 94 and taper off to the south. The area encompasses an approximately one-mile wide swath of land that includes the limestone outcrops for which the area is named, as well as some of the prairie at the base and along the top of the cliffs. It also includes important wildlife habitat. Portions of the bluffs (500+ acres) have been acquired by the City of Colorado Springs. Protection of this area would maintain the visual quality of this important landmark and could also provide an opportunity for a regional trail alignment along the base of the bluffs that would link Fountain Creek with the proposed Jimmy Camp Creek Park (Colorado Springs). The bluffs also have important cultural resource values, including their use by early Native Americans as a buffalo jump. Cattlemen gave the bluffs their name back in the days of open range – the steep cliffs served as a barrier where cattle could be corralled with relatively little fence construction.



Drake Lake

**Drake Lake** – Part of this area is owned by El Paso County and has recently been established for passive use as a park asset. The lake is located approximately one mile east of the Falcon townsite. Situated within a rural-residential subdivision the lake supports habitat for over eighty species of birds and contains wetlands that provide habitat for a variety of plant species.

**Falcon/Garrett Road (“Sand Creek Ridge” under CNHP)** – The Sand Creek Ridge area is located on both sides of U.S. Highway 24 starting just north of Colorado Highway 94 and extending north to just south of the town of Falcon, directly between the tallgrass prairie areas around the Colorado Springs Airport and the tall and mixed-grass prairies of the Judge Orr Road site. It occupies the broad northeast trending ridge that separates upper Jimmy Camp Creek from the East Fork Sand Creek. The Sand Creek Ridge PCA consists of a gently rolling ridgeline that separates the Upper Jimmy Camp Creek drainage from the East Fork Sand Creek drainage. The east side of the ridge descends through moderately steep hillsides of ponderosa pine woods into the Upper Jimmy Camp

Creek drainage. The west side of the ridge descends gradually through open needle and thread (*Stipa comata*) prairies down to the East Fork of the Sand Creek. U.S. Highway 24 traverses the ridge on the west side. This area contains a good (B-ranked) example of a globally-secure (G5 S2S3) mixedgrass prairie community, needle, and thread-blue grama grass prairie.

**Foothills (not included in National Forest)** – The foothills area includes land that sits at the base of the Front Range and is highly visible from much of El Paso County, including Colorado Springs and other cities and towns along Interstate-25. Foothills areas are considered important due to the visual impacts from development of this landscape type, as well as their role in habitat support, being a significant transition between diverse attributes of the plains and the complex elements of the Front Range mountain habitats. The foothills area is considered a high wildfire hazard area by El Paso County.

**Forest Lakes** (“*Monument Creek Tributaries*”; *Town of Monument south to AFA*) – This site consists of channels within Monument creek as well as upstream tributary drainages. Supports an excellent occurrence of the globally-imperiled and state-imperiled Preble’s meadow jumping mouse; in fact, the best known occurrence of the mouse in the Arkansas River drainage. This species is federally threatened and a species of special concern by the State of Colorado. This area contains habitat parameters likely critical to the mouse persistence: dense herbaceous and shrub riparian communities and upland grassland communities free from urban impacts.

**Fremont Fort** (*area includes bluffs southeast of the terminus of Combs Point*) – This area contains a good occurrence of globally-imperiled big bluestem prairie sandreed tallgrass plant community. The big bluestem prairie sandreed tallgrass community occurs on the upper slopes, drainage swales, and saddles surrounding the main rock outcrops of the Fremont Fort and associated geologic formations. The community primarily occurs on areas with deeper soils, and is often adjacent to or interspersed with open stands of ponderosa pine. Large occurrences of the tallgrass prairie community type are rarely encountered in Colorado, and no A-ranked (“excellent”) occurrences remain. It also supports a good example of the state-rare Richardson’s alumroot.

**Fountain Creek** (*and Jimmy Camp Creek*) – This area is within the Fountain Creek watershed, which is comprised of 927 square miles. The Fountain Creek watershed includes portions within eleven governmental jurisdictions - Monument, Palmer Lake, Fountain, Woodland Park, Manitou Springs, Green Mountain Falls, City and County of Pueblo, Colorado Springs, Teller County, and El Paso County. The Colorado Division of Wildlife has documented the Arkansas darter, a globally-vulnerable (G3 S2) small plains fish, in two reaches of Fountain Creek.



*Arkansas Darter (Credit: Colorado Parks and Wildlife)*

Arkansas darters are small Great Plains fish native to streams in the Arkansas River basin and are known to inhabit small, shallow, clear streams that are often spring-fed and have sandy substrates, slow current, cool water, and aquatic vegetation (Nesler *et al.* 1999). In Fountain and Jimmy Camp creeks, Arkansas darters are probably most abundant in spring-fed marshes adjacent to the creeks and not within the main channels. Other fish species that have been documented to occur with the Arkansas darter include fathead minnows, flathead chubs, longnose daces, and brook sticklebacks (Colorado Division of Wildlife 2001d). As the Fountain Creek Watershed has become increasingly urbanized, problems associated with Fountain and Monument creeks and their tributaries have become apparent. Erosion, sedimentation, and flooding problems have highlighted the need to understand the consequences of development in the watershed on channel stability and habitat changes.



Factors contributing to the watershed changes have resulted primarily from rapid area growth and include:

- An increase in impervious surfaces (i.e., roads, rooftops, parking lots) which leads to increased stormwater runoff
- Floodplain encroachment
- Increased urban irrigation
- Creek restraints and hardpointing

Reaches of Fountain Creek support a mature riparian forest of plains cottonwood with coyote willow. Unfortunately, Russian olive, crack willow, and tamarisk, all invasive exotic species, comprise much of the vegetative cover and thus contribute to ecosystem degradation. However, the riparian vegetation provides important habitat for a range of bird species and is an important migration corridor along the Front Range. In fact, Fountain Creek Regional Park has been designated by the National Audubon Society as an Important Bird Area (IBA) of Colorado (Cafaro 2000). The IBA designation is based on the area's providing essential wetland habitat and resources for resident and migrant species. Observers have recorded over 250 bird species in the park. A Great Blue Heron rookery supporting over 50 pairs is located in the riparian area.



*Waterfowl*

Also documented as breeding within the Fountain Creek riparian area are Bullock's Orioles and Swainson's Hawks (Cafaro 2000). Other wildlife known in the riparian area includes beavers, muskrats, and white-tailed deer. A trail runs along portions of Monument and Fountain Creeks and interpretive programs focusing on hands-on environmental education occur within Fountain Creek Regional Park. Residential and industrial development is occurring within the watershed and on creek banks at a rapid pace, decreasing the creek's natural ability to accommodate flooding. April/May 1999 flooding along Fountain Creek removed large acreages of wetlands and adjacent riparian habitat. Another issue within the Fountain Creek watershed is water quality with increased point source and non-point source pollution loading to the creek.

**Fox Run Grasslands** – This area is adjacent to and west of the north end of Fox Run Regional Park and lies near the head of Smith Creek. It contains a relatively large segment of Black Forest with a fringe of scrub oak that transitions into a grassland landscape on its western edge. The area is another example of a relatively undisturbed Black Forest landscape; a landscape that is becoming increasingly rare within El Paso County and other areas along the Front Range. The addition of this area to Fox Run Regional Park would increase opportunities for hiking and nature interpretation and would result in protection of a more significant segment of the Black Forest landscape.



**Judge Orr Road** (25,000 acres on both sides of Hwy 24) – Good example of globally-imperiled tallgrass community, big bluestem-little bluestem, on the southeast side of Highway 24; Northwest of Highway 24 is another relatively intact grassland containing little bluestem with sideoats grama, and is globally vulnerable. Several good examples of globally-vulnerable wetland plant communities occur in this area, supporting a variety of aquatic invertebrates, small fishes, and the northern leopard frog. The small-headed rush occupies some of these wetlands along Black Squirrel Creek, the only known current Colorado location for this plant. High urgency area due to development pressures from the town of Falcon and surrounding subdivisions.

**Manitou North** (*Cave of the Winds under the Colorado Natural Heritage Program*) – At least two caves within the area are used as maternity roosts by Townsend’s big-eared bats. It is not clear whether the bats in these two roosts represent one or two distinct bat colonies (K. Navo, CDOW, pers. comm.).



*Townsend’s big-eared bat (Credit: National Park Service)*

Caves occupied by Townsend’s big-eared bats are located in precipitous, rocky terrain that is characterized by the presence of pinyon-juniper woodland with scattered, brushy oak. Stands of mixed conifers also occur on the site. In addition, a vast network of subterranean caves, including the Cave of the Winds tourist destination, lies within the site. Although guided tours at Cave of the Winds do not visit the specific caves that are used as maternity roosts by Townsend’s big-eared bats, the bat-occupied caves lie within the extensive cave network that is visited by tourists. This site includes the location of the caves in which bats were observed plus a 0.5-mile radius buffer zone around that location. The land on which the maternity roost caves are located is privately owned. Nearby caves in the same network of underground caverns are open to the public as part of a well-established tourist exhibit that is visited by thousands of tourists each year. Additional development of the cave system at Cave of the Winds could impact the maternity roosts and reduce the viability of the Townsend’s big-eared bat occurrence. Because bat maternity roosts are highly sensitive to disturbance by human activities, it is critically important to keep people away from roosting areas.

**Manitou South** – The area around Manitou Springs was identified in the Mountain Backdrop Study as an area of Critical Preservation. Much of this area is highly visible from U.S. Highway 24 and portions of Manitou Springs and Colorado Springs. All of the area is within the Mountain Front landscape type, a dramatic landscape that marks the abrupt transition from the plains to the mountains. The area has also been identified as important wildlife habitat by the Colorado Division of Wildlife. Protection of this area would preserve scenic values as well as provide future connections to Red Rocks Canyon, Bear Creek Regional Park, and a multitude of regional trails.

**Riser At Calhan** (*northeast of Calhan, on both sides of Highway 24*) – The Riser at Calhan is considered highly significant due to the existence of two good (B-ranked) occurrences of plains ambrosia, a globally-vulnerable (G3 S3) plant species. The area is near the upper elevational extent of shortgrass and midgrass prairies in El Paso County, approaching 6,600 ft (2,035 m) at its southeastern boundary. This area includes the highest of the high plains in El Paso County. The landscape is topographically diverse in this area, with high rolling hills in the eastern portion overlooking the bottomlands upslope from an unnamed reservoir at the northwestern edge of the area. The plant species is vulnerable to development and hydrological alterations within the area.

**Signal Rock Sandhills** (*100,000+ acres in southeast part of county; includes Chico Basin Ranch and area known as Bohart Ranch*) – This area contains an excellent example of a globally vulnerable sandsage prairie community, a good occurrence of globally-vulnerable Great Plains mixed-grass prairie community, and good occurrences of two globally-vulnerable plant species: sandhill goosefeet, and plains ambrosia. Wildlife observed in the black-tailed prairie dog town located on the north western side of the area includes Burrowing Owls, Mountain Plovers, and swift foxes; and a Golden Eagle nest is located on the bluffs east of Black Squirrel Creek.

**Spruce Hill** – The Spruce Hill conservation area represents a combination of important wildlife habitat and features noted by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program. The area contains some remnant ponderosa pine stands that merge with a wet meadow near the base of the hill. Seeps and wetlands are present in the meadow, adding interest to the landscape and enriching its habitat values. Spruce Hill is near State Highway 83, a heavily traveled road, and is also adjacent to ongoing residential development. It is likely that the area will continue to experience strong development pressure.



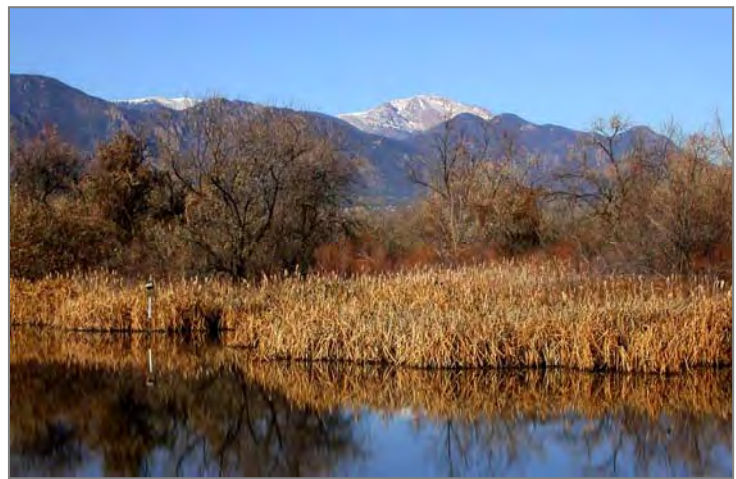
*Bluestem Prairie Grass*

**Table Rock** (*area includes bluffs approximately 8 miles north of Black Forest townsite*) – This distinctive landmark consists of a wooded mesa which overlooks the headwater reaches of East Cherry Creek. The exposed bedrock leaves only cracks and small patches of soil for a few tenacious herbaceous plants to grow in. The flanks are forested with ponderosa pine, particularly on the north-facing slope, where some large, old trees occur. The area contains a fair occurrence of the big bluestem prairie dropseed xeric tallgrass community; a globally-imperiled type that is also critically imperiled in the state. This area also supports an excellent occurrence of Richardson’s alumroot which is critically imperiled in Colorado. Non-native and invasive species have affected much of this area, representing a serious concern requiring active management.

**Truckton-Edison** (92,000+ acres in southeast part of county east of Signal Rock Sandhills) – Contains an excellent occurrence of the Mountain Plover as well as breeding pairs of Mountain Plovers over many years. The species prefers flat open areas with very low-growing or closely-cropped vegetation, which is prevalent in this very dry area of the County.

**Widefield/Fountain** - This Y-shaped site includes a strip of land along Fountain Creek from Academy Boulevard southward to Wigwam Road. Bounded on the west by Interstate 25, the portion of the site that lies along Fountain Creek varies in width from about 0.7 to about 2.3 miles. Among the larger tributaries that join Fountain Creek within the site are Jimmy Camp Creek, Little Fountain Creek, and Williams Creek. The eastern portion of the site (the eastern branch of the "Y") lies to the east of the cities of Widefield and Fountain, Colorado and it is crossed by Jimmy Camp Creek. It extends southward from Fontaine Boulevard to the intersection of Link Road and Old Pueblo Road, and it is bounded on the east by Marksheffel Road and Link Road.

The western portion of the Widefield/Fountain site (along Fountain Creek) consists mainly of the open, flat, floodplain along Fountain Creek and several of its tributaries. At the southern end of this area the site extends eastward onto a large expanse of cholla within shortgrass prairie along Hanover Road. The western portion of the site is covered by a mosaic of soil types (Larsen 1981). The complex distribution of soil types, especially within the floodplain of Fountain Creek, precludes the identification of clearly discernible patterns of preferential use of soils by the prairie dogs.



*Riparian Vegetation near Fountain Creek*

The eastern portion of the Widefield/Fountain East site (the eastern branch of the "Y"-shaped site) is also covered by a mosaic of soil types (Larsen 1981). Each of the five known prairie dog colonies in this area, however, is located on a patch of soil of a single type. Two prairie dog colonies are located on Nunn clay loam, two are located on Ascalon sandy loam, and one is located on Stoneham sandy loam. All of these soils are deep and well-drained, with moderately slow to moderate permeability, moderate to high available water capacity, slow to medium surface runoff, and a slight to moderate hazard of erosion or soil blowing. The effective rooting depth for plants in these soils is 60 inches (150 centimeters) or more (Larsen 1981). Riparian vegetation lines the banks of Jimmy Camp Creek, which crosses the site between C and S Road and Squirrel Creek Road and then runs southward along the western boundary of the eastern portion of the site. At least nine occurrences (colonies or towns) of the apparently secure (G4 S4) black-tailed prairie dog are present within the Widefield/Fountain East site.

Historically, much of the Widefield/Fountain site was covered with floodplain, riparian, and native shortgrass prairie vegetation. Although patches of these vegetation types remain, large portions of the site (especially the flat, relatively rich soiled floodplain along Fountain Creek) were converted to agricultural croplands during the past 100 years. The cultivation of many of these areas was subsequently abandoned, producing "old field" (weedy, early successional) habitats. Vegetative cover on these fields now varies greatly: some areas are characterized by high proportions of bare soil, whereas other areas support dense stands of invasive, early successional perennial and annual species. Other agricultural fields within the site remain under cultivation. Horse pastures planted with mixed-grasses are common near the towns of Widefield and Fountain. Grazing of domestic livestock occurred historically on much of the site, and today grazing continues on many areas, especially to the north of Kane Road.

Human activities and the presence of free ranging domestic dogs have the potential to exert deleterious effects on the viability of blacktailed prairie dogs at the Widefield/Fountain site. Depending upon the extent of anthropogenic impacts, new management actions may be needed to reduce or limit disturbances to prairie dogs. In addition, efforts to "environmentally educate" the residents of the subdivisions that lie adjacent to the prairie dog colonies may reduce the incidence and magnitude of conflicts between people and prairie dogs.

## Historic and Cultural Resources

El Paso County has an interesting human history that is often linked to its natural features and landscape. Distinctive landforms, such as the granite fins of the Morrison Formation and the Paint Mines near Calhan, had both utilitarian and spiritual values for Native Americans. Later, some of these same features were important landmarks that guided settlers to the area. Before the railroad, Big Sandy Creek provided a convenient east-west route. The stage eventually stopped in Bijou Basin, and a small town grew up around the stop. Early settlers developed water conveyances such as the El Paso Canal, which allowed settlement on the plains in the area of Colorado Springs. The mountain springs, unusual rock formations, and the area's overall scenic beauty were popularized by entrepreneurs for their recuperative powers and gradually a leisure culture grew from Palmer Lake to Manitou Springs.

The following list includes a number of important historic and cultural sites. Some of them are also natural landforms or landmarks and have been identified on **Map 7-8: Land Cover, Landforms and Landmarks** as such. This list is by no means inclusive of all significant historic features or sites in the County. It is intended to highlight historically and culturally important features in the county that merit consideration for protection and potential inclusion within the county's system of regional parks and open space. Information on these sites was obtained primarily through references contained in Historic Sites and Structures (1979) by Freed and Barber.

### Bijou Basin

Bijou Basin was the location of a stage stop. Later in the 1870's, when the railroad was being built, a community of approximately 430 people settled in the basin. Fremont Fort, a prominent rock bluff on the eastern edge of the basin has been used by many as a landmark.

## Cemeteries and Churches

As settlements popped up seemingly overnight on the plains of El Paso County, community values dictated that churches and cemeteries be provided to serve the residents. The historic structures or sites that have survived have special meaning today because of the stories they can tell about lives of the past. Many of the historic church sites within El Paso County are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Some are contained within municipal boundaries, and are not included in this inventory. However, a number of



churches from the early settlement period of the County have been preserved and some are still in use, such as the St. Mary's Orthodox Church of Calhan. Several historic cemeteries and private gravesites from the past also remain, including the following partial list:

- Antioch Cemetery (Yoder)
- Calhan Memorial Cemetery (Calhan)
- Chico Basin Cemetery (Hanover)
- Crescent Cemetery (Rush)
- Eastonville Cemetery (Black Forest),
- Juris National Slovak Cemetery (Calhan)
- Leader Church Cemetery (Yoder)
- Lenardt Cemetery (Calhan)
- Myers Cemetery (northeastern El Paso County)
- Peyton Cemetery (Peyton)
- Ramah Cemetery (Ramah)
- St. Lukes Lutheran Cemetery (Edison)
- St. Matthias Cemetery (Monument)
- Table Rock Cemetery and Evans "Bluff" Cemetery (northern El Paso County)
- Wilson's Cemetery (southern El Paso County)

## Corral Bluffs

The Corral Bluffs are an area of rugged topography that extends for approximately 4 miles just east of Colorado Springs. There is evidence that early Indians hunted buffalo by driving them over these cliffs. Later, cattlemen relied on the landform to help corral their herds. And local folklore claims that a trader named Jimmy Boyer set up a trading post in the area for trappers, cattlemen and settlers, and was eventually killed by his partner over a piece of calico.

## Crows Roost

Believed to have been used first by the Indians as a campsite and later in the 1890s by picnickers, Crows Roost is a white sandstone rock outcropping located in the southeastern portion of the county. Many Indian artifacts have been recovered at Crows Roost and early settlers claimed that there were Indian paintings on the walls of the rock.



### Homesteads and Railroads

Much of El Paso County, as well as the surrounding areas of Colorado and other western states, was settled in the 1800s, when the US Government offered free land to pioneers who made a claim to the land and successfully worked the land for five years (the Homestead Act of 1862). As a result, homesteaders arrived in rural areas of El Paso County and established settlements along railroad lines to support the trains and provide staples to



*1879 Homestead in El Paso County*

travelers at regular locations along the routes. Railroads that helped provide access for settlers to the region included the Denver and New Orleans (1881); the Chicago and Rock Island (1888); and the Midland Railroad. Many of the homes built in the railroad era that remain in the eastern plains of El Paso County are likely eligible for listing on the National and State Registers of Historic Places.

### Indian Burial Rock

A little-known rock outcropping south of Franceville is called Indian Burial Rock, an ancient ceremonial spot for the plains Indians. Prominent tribal members were buried here and hunters used the high vantage point to look for buffalo herds.

### JG Evans Barn

This barn, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is significant because it is one of the few remaining examples of structures built during the earliest period of settlement and development in the Black Forest community of El Paso County. The barn is associated with one of the County's pioneer ranches, and is one of the earliest barns built in the area.



*JG Evans Barn (Credit: Wikipedia\*)*

### Jimmy's Camp

Also known as Jimmy Camp, this site is located in what is now eastern Colorado Springs, Colorado. Jimmy's Camp was an early camp site located on the Cherokee Trail. The camp was most likely named in the early 1840's for a trader named Jimmy Daugherty. It was one of the most heavily used campgrounds along the Front Range, due to the existence of a freshwater spring which provided a reliable source of water, as well as the availability of pine timber for campfires. It was frequented by Indians, Spaniards, trappers, traders, explorers, gold seekers, and pioneers over time.



*Paint Mines*

### **Paint Mines**

South of Calhan, this unique geological site was frequented by Native Americans and later curious picnickers and geology buffs. Part of the Holcomb Hills in eastern El Paso County, the Paint Mines consist of subtle dissected bluffs that have eroded to expose the muted hues of selenite and jasper: beige, purple, red and yellow. Some speculate that Indians used the soils for war paint, while the art nouveau artist, Artus Van Briggle, reportedly created some of his art pottery from the colorful soils.

### **Pikes Peak**

Clearly the most renowned site within El Paso County, Pikes Peak is also known as “America’s Mountain.” Discovered by explorer Zebulon Pike in 1806, though long familiar to Indians and Spaniards, the peak has an elevation of 14,110 feet. It was first climbed in 1820. During the 19th century, “Pike’s Peak or Bust” became a familiar rallying cry for those heading west, and over the years it has assumed the role of a virtual icon of western exploration and settlement.



*Pikes Peak*

Text from the historic marker erected in 1963 atop the mountain reads: “Pikes Peak has been designated a Registered National Historic Landmark under the provisions of the Historic Sites Act of August 21, 1935. This site possesses exceptional value in commemorating and illustrating the history of the United States. US Department of the Interior, National Park Service 1963.”

### **Ute Pass, Santa Fe, and Cherokee Trail**

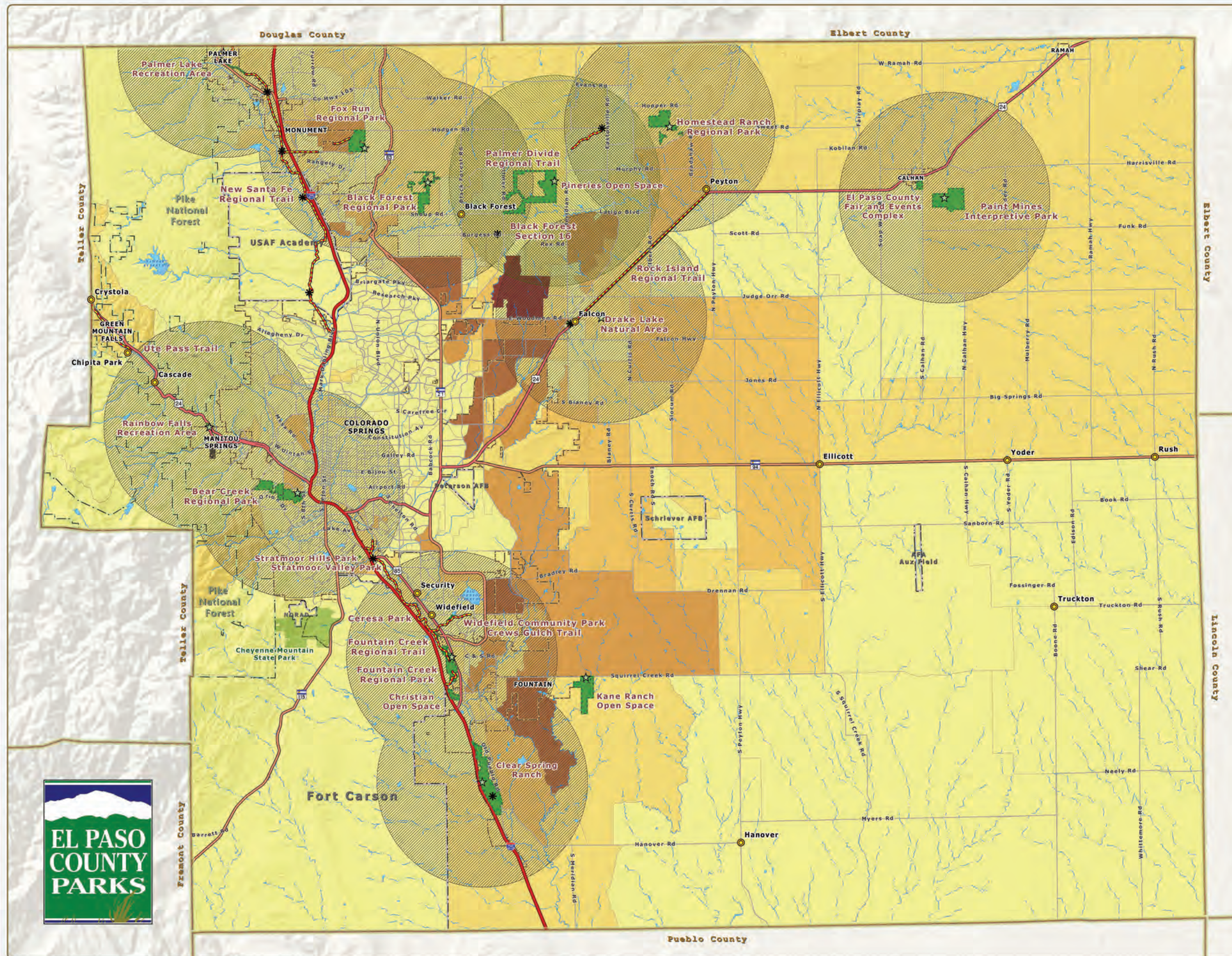
Leading from the plains to the mountains, the Ute Pass trail was first worn by wildlife and Ute Indians and later by explorers, gold seekers, and settlers. It was the easiest passage to points west through the mountains and became an important conduit of settlers and development in Colorado. People came on foot and horseback, then stage and railroad, and finally on the first publicly funded highway. The Ute Pass takes its name from the Native American tribes that utilized this route during their occupation of the plains and mountains of Colorado and El Paso County. As American explorers began mapping the area in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, a number of additional travel routes came into use, and became important connectors between frontier outposts. Routes such as the Ute Pass, Cherokee, and Santa Fe Trail were utilized so heavily and for so long that their names are often still in use to describe locations of regional significance. El Paso County was named for this pass.

In 1929, an historic marker commemorating Ute Pass was established at the junction of US Business Route 24 and US Route 24 northwest of Manitou Springs. The marker reads as follows:

“UTE PASS Named from the old Ute Trail which led from South Park through Manitou to the Plains. Traversed by the Utes on hunting and war expeditions. Improved highway built 1916-28. Erected by the State Historical Society of Colorado from the Mrs. J. N. Hall Foundation and by the State Highway Department and the U.S. Forest Service. 1929.”

El Paso County Parks, Teller County, the Town of Green Mountain Falls, and a variety of other organizations are in the process of constructing the 40 mile, Ute Pass Trail that will eventually connect Cripple Creek to Colorado Springs.



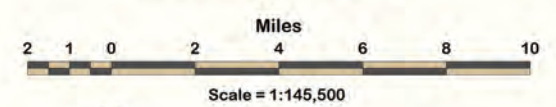


## Local Access to Parks (5 Miles)

### Legend

- Population Change (2010-2035)**
- Population Loss or No Growth
  - Less Than 1,000
  - 1,000 to 2,500
  - 2,500 to 5,000
  - 5,000 to 10,000
  - More Than 10,000
- Regional Facility 5-Mile Access** (Hatched circle)
- Future Facility 5-Mile Access** (Dotted circle)
- EPC Regional Parks
  - EPC Trailheads
  - EPC Regional Trails
  - EPC Parks
  - US Interstate Highways
  - Major Highways
  - Major Roadways
  - Lakes & Reservoirs
  - Creeks - Perennial
  - Creeks - Intermittent
  - Unincorporated Towns
  - Military Areas
  - Incorporated Cities
  - Pike National Forest
  - County Boundary

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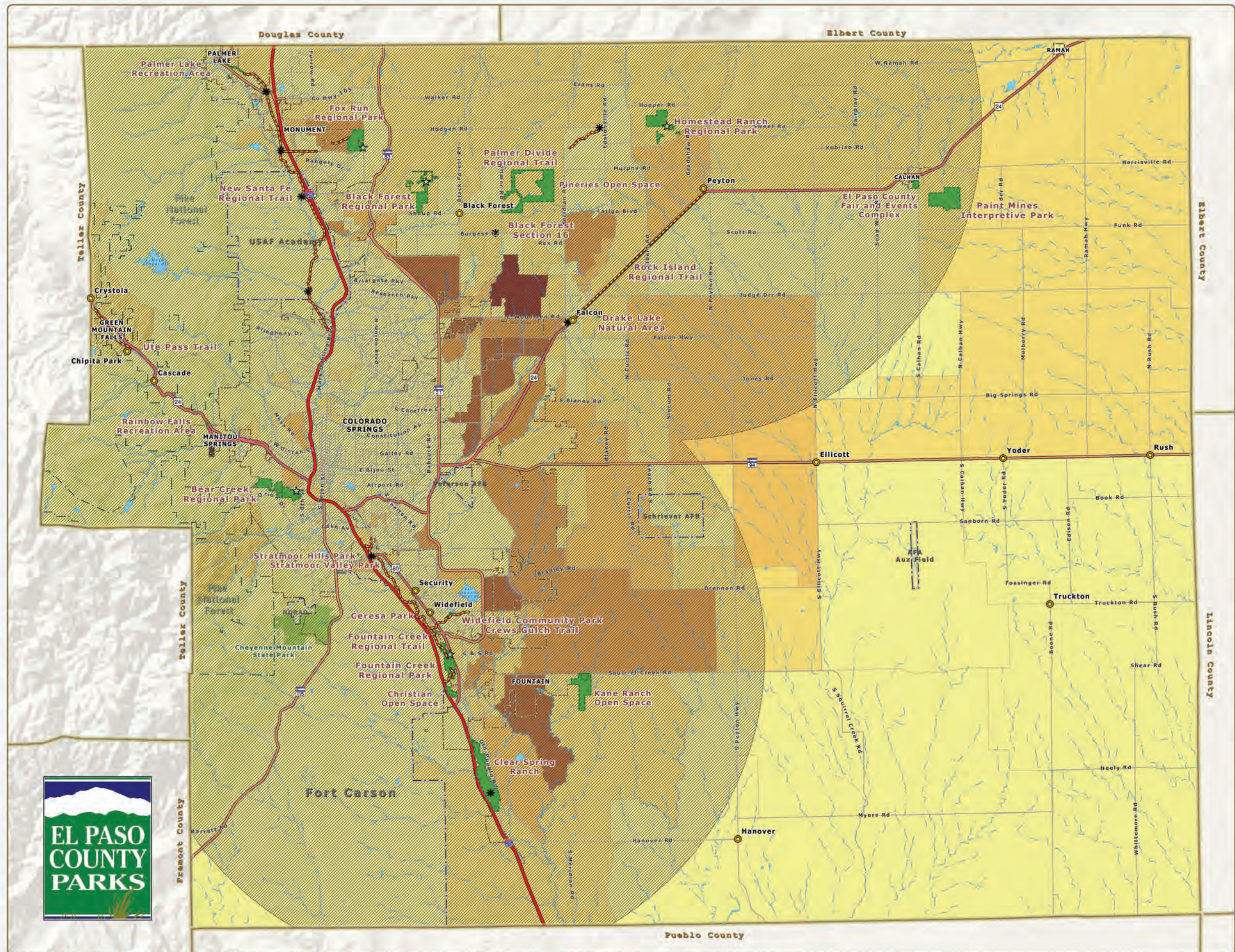
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## Regional Access to Parks (15 Miles)

### Legend

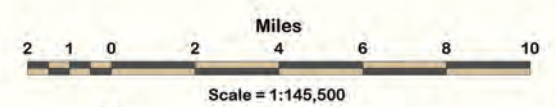
**Population Change (2010-2035)**

- Population Loss or No Growth
- Less Than 1,000
- 1,000 to 2,500
- 2,500 to 5,000
- 5,000 to 10,000
- More Than 10,000

**Regional Facility 15-Mile Access**

- Regional Facility 15-Mile Access
- EPC Full-Service Regional Parks
- EPC Trailheads
- EPC Regional Trails
- EPC Parks
- US Interstate Highways
- Major Highways
- Major Roadways
- Lakes & Reservoirs
- Creeks - Perennial
- Creeks - Intermittent
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# Access to Special Facilities (20 Miles) - Nature Centers and Fairgrounds

## Access to Special Facilities (20 Miles)

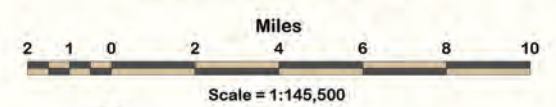
### Legend

#### Population Change (2010-2035)

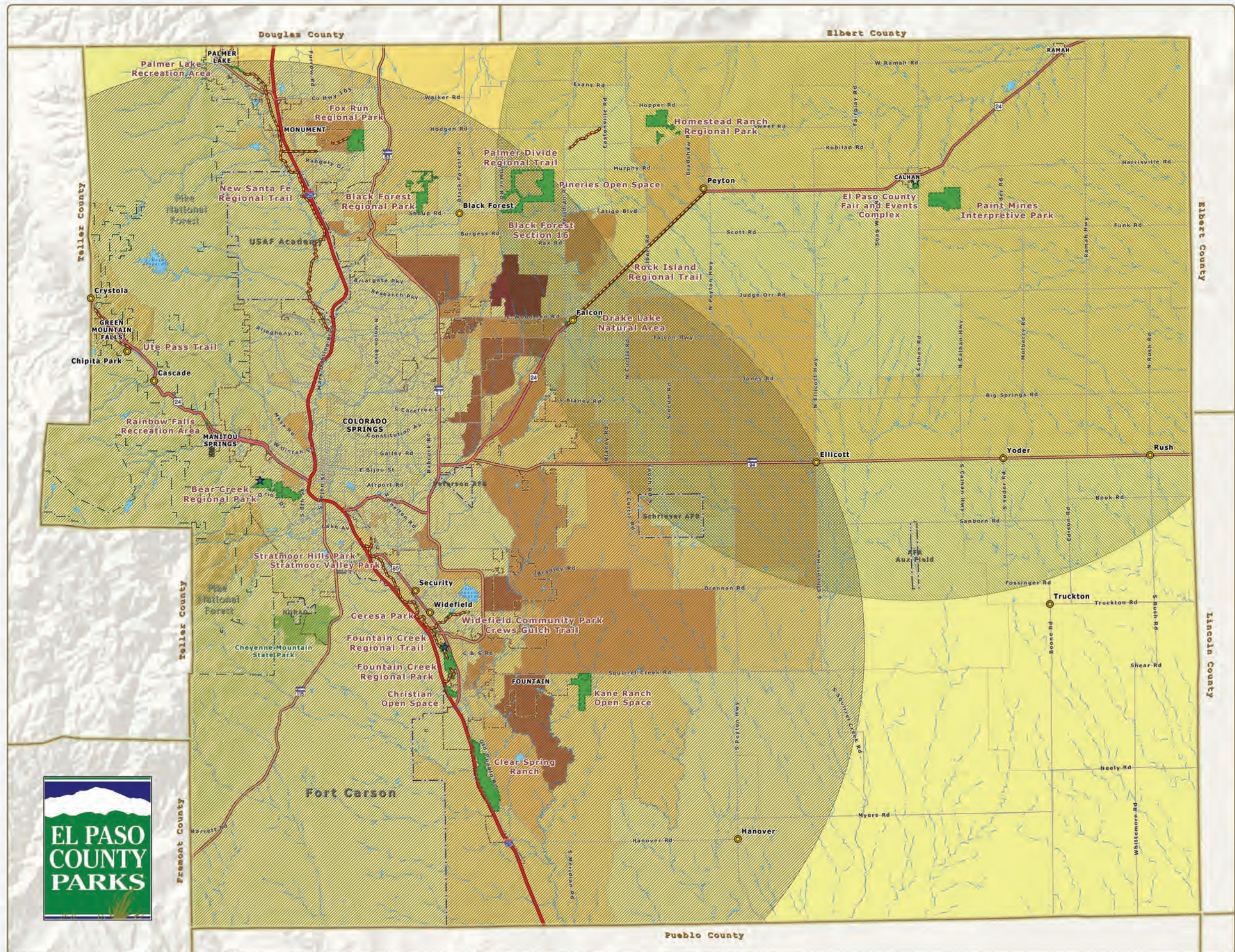
- Population Loss or No Growth
- Less Than 1,000
- 1,000 to 2,500
- 2,500 to 5,000
- 5,000 to 10,000
- More Than 10,000

- EPC Fairgrounds
- EPC Nature Centers
- Nature Center Access
- County Fairgrounds Access
- EPC Regional Trails
- EPC Parks
- US Interstate Highways
- Major Highways
- Major Roadways
- Lakes & Reservoirs
- Creeks - Perennial
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## Trailshed Analysis

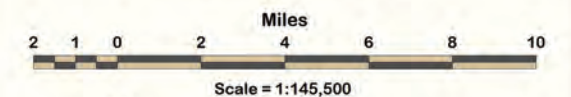
The 1/3-mile trail catchments displayed in various colors on this map represent individual trailsheds based on El Paso County trails, as well as Tier 1 and 2 City of Colorado Springs trails.

A trailshed is a set of connected trails within which any point may be reached from any other point by way of an included trail. For this analysis, any trail within 1/10-mile of any other trail has been included within the same trailshed.

### Legend

- \* EPC Trailheads
- ☆ EPC Special Facilities
- EPC Regional Trails
- Existing City Trails
- Proposed City Trails
- 5-Mile Trailhead Catchments
- EPC Parks
- US Interstate Highways
- Major Highways
- Major Roadways
- Lakes & Reservoirs
- Creeks - Perennial
- Creeks - Intermittent
- Unincorporated Towns
- Military Areas
- Incorporated Cities
- Pike National Forest
- County Boundary

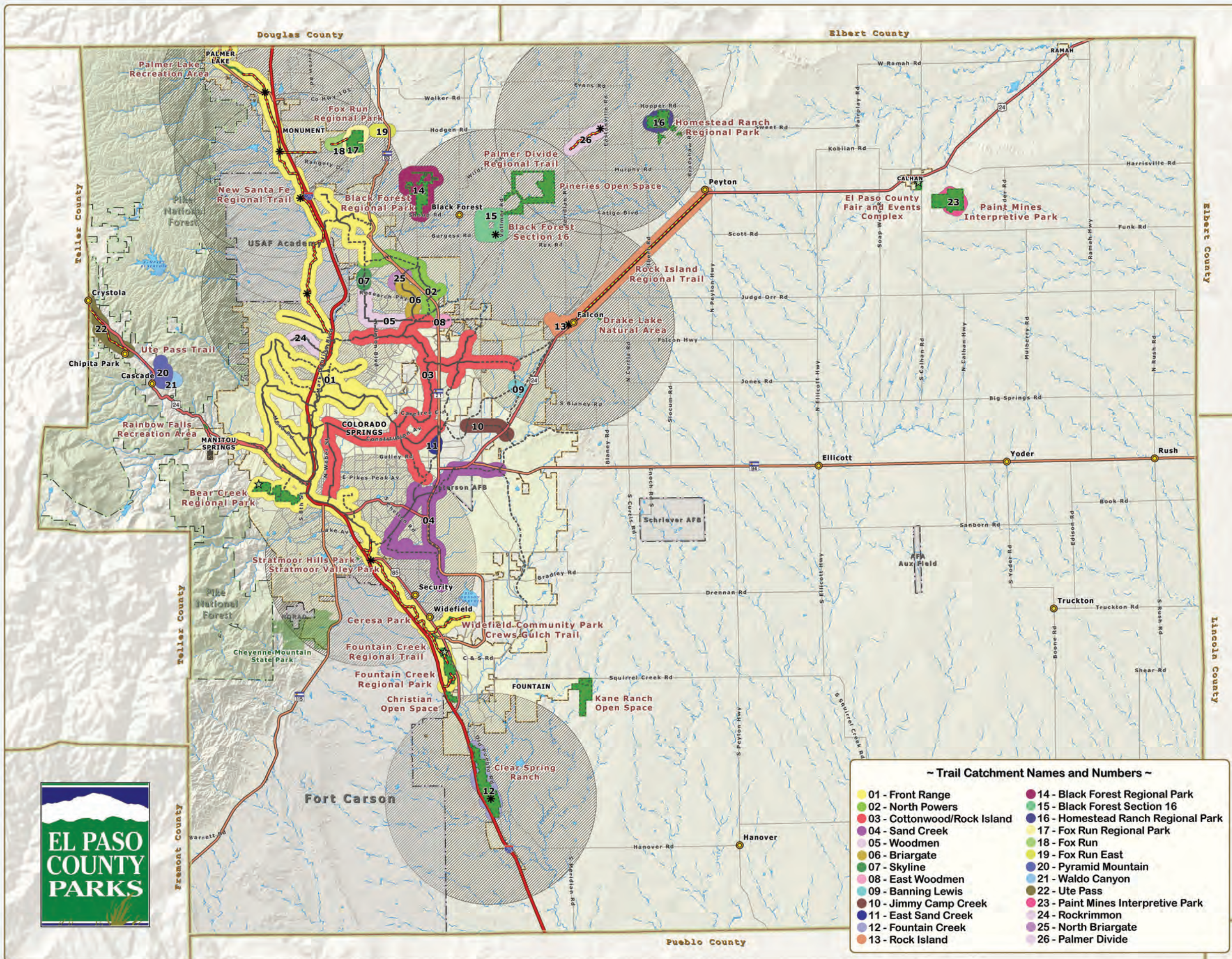
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### ~ Trail Catchment Names and Numbers ~

- |                             |                                    |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 01 - Front Range            | 14 - Black Forest Regional Park    |
| 02 - North Powers           | 15 - Black Forest Section 16       |
| 03 - Cottonwood/Rock Island | 16 - Homestead Ranch Regional Park |
| 04 - Sand Creek             | 17 - Fox Run Regional Park         |
| 05 - Woodmen                | 18 - Fox Run                       |
| 06 - Briargate              | 19 - Fox Run East                  |
| 07 - Skyline                | 20 - Pyramid Mountain              |
| 08 - East Woodmen           | 21 - Waldo Canyon                  |
| 09 - Banning Lewis          | 22 - Ute Pass                      |
| 10 - Jimmy Camp Creek       | 23 - Paint Mines Interpretive Park |
| 11 - East Sand Creek        | 24 - Rockrimmon                    |
| 12 - Fountain Creek         | 25 - North Briargate               |
| 13 - Rock Island            | 26 - Palmer Divide                 |









# Trails Visioning

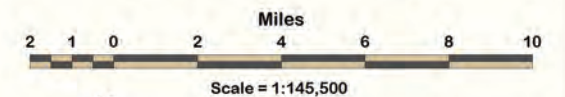
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## Legend

- \* EPC Trailheads
- ☆ EPC Special Facilities
- EPC Regional Trails
- Existing EPC Trails
- Proposed EPC Trails
- Existing City Trails
- Proposed City Trails
- 5-Mile Trailshed Catchments
- El Paso County Parks
- US Interstate Highways
- Major Highways
- Major Roadways
- Lakes & Reservoirs
- Creeks - Perennial
- Creeks - Intermittent
- Unincorporated Towns
- Military Areas
- Incorporated Cities
- Pike National Forest
- County Boundary

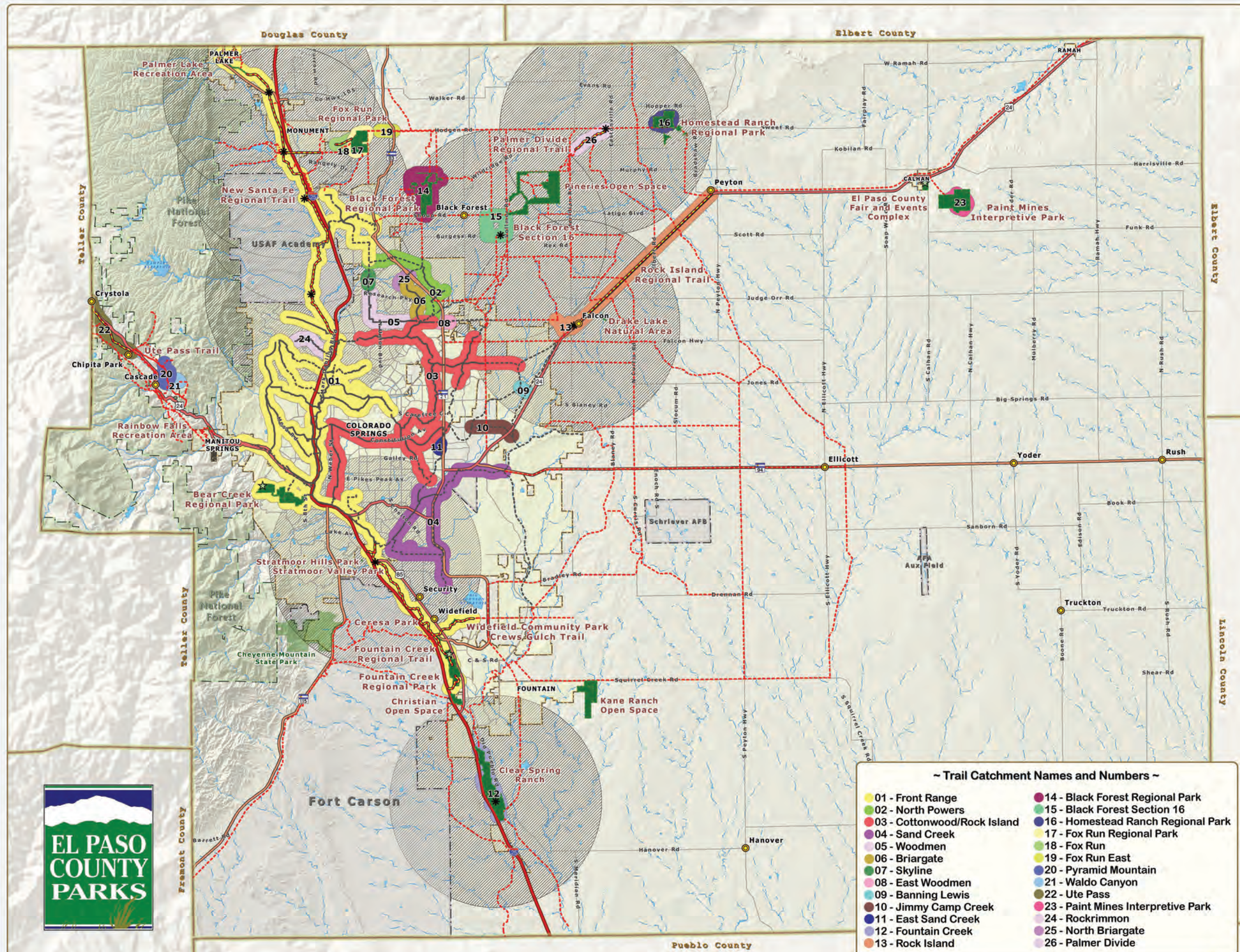
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### ~ Trail Catchment Names and Numbers ~

- |                             |                                    |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|
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| 02 - North Powers           | 15 - Black Forest Section 16       |
| 03 - Cottonwood/Rock Island | 16 - Homestead Ranch Regional Park |
| 04 - Sand Creek             | 17 - Fox Run Regional Park         |
| 05 - Woodmen                | 18 - Fox Run East                  |
| 06 - Briargate              | 19 - Pyramid Mountain              |
| 07 - Skyline                | 20 - Waldo Canyon                  |
| 08 - East Woodmen           | 21 - Ute Pass                      |
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| 11 - East Sand Creek        | 24 - Rockrimmon                    |
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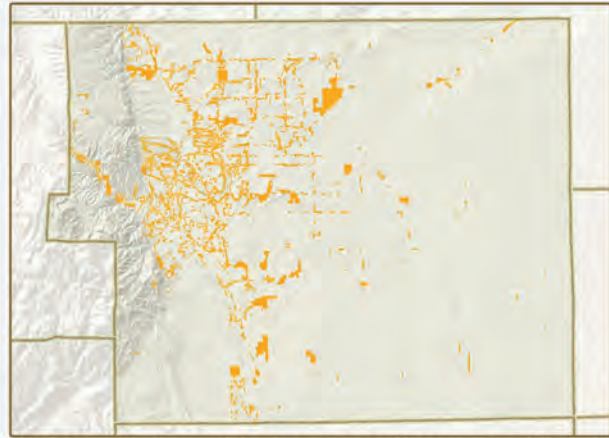




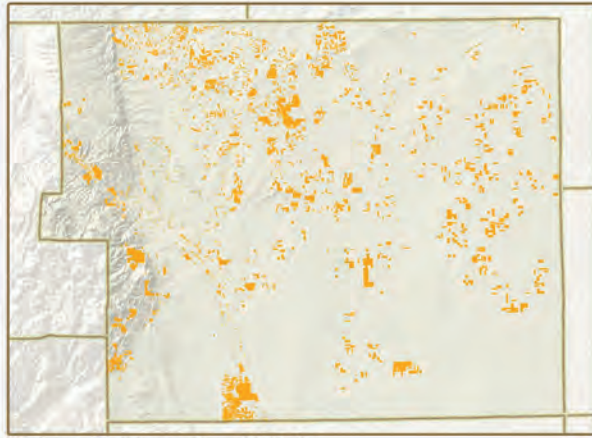




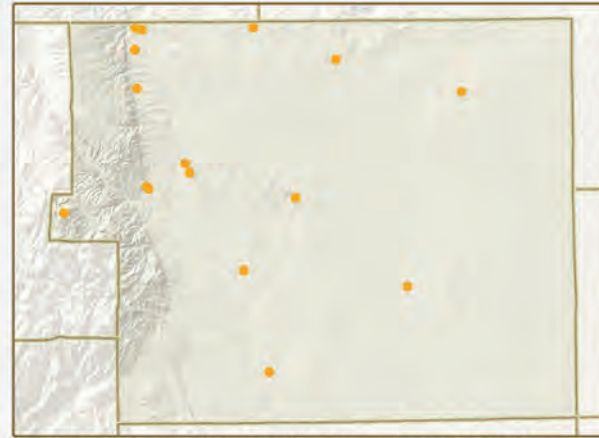
A. Wildfire Hazard Areas



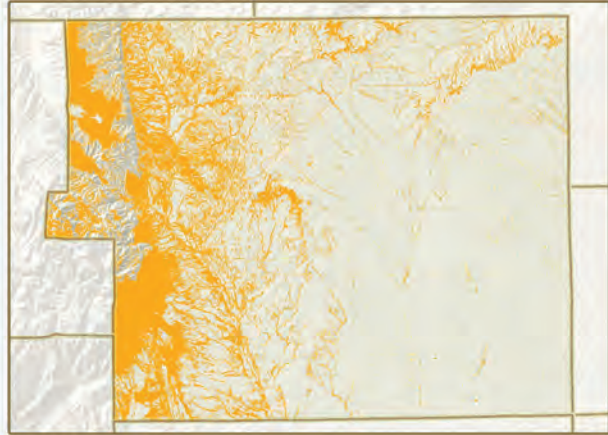
B. Parcel Adjacent to Conserved/Preserved Lands



C. Vacant Lands - 250 ft



D. Landmarks & Landforms - .5-Mile Buffer



E. Slope > 30%



F. Colorado Natural Heritage Program



G. Federally Protected Wildlife - Prebles



H. Wildlife Impact - High & Very High



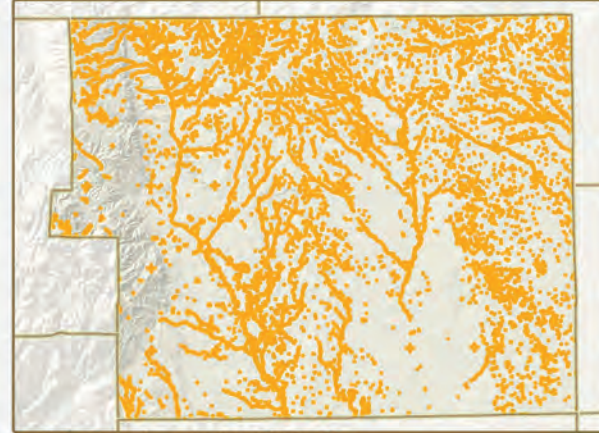
I. Upper Black Squirrel Creek Alluvial Aquifer



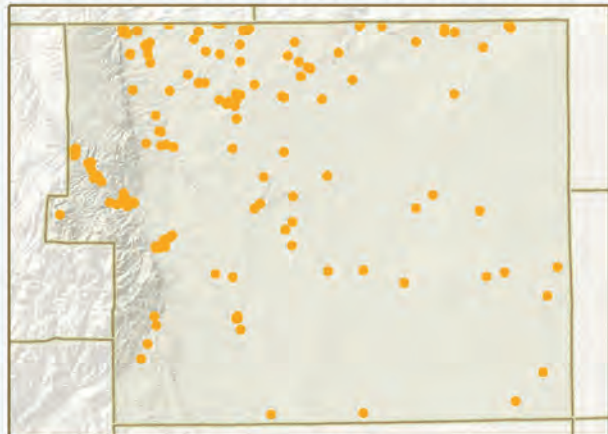
J. 100-Year Floodplain



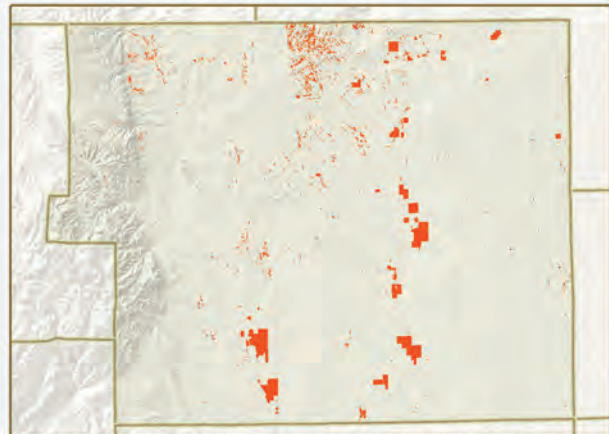
K. Surface Water - 1000-ft Buffer



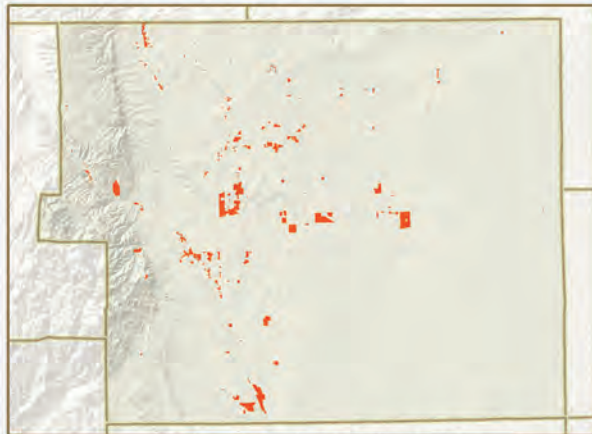
L. Wetlands - 1000-ft Buffer



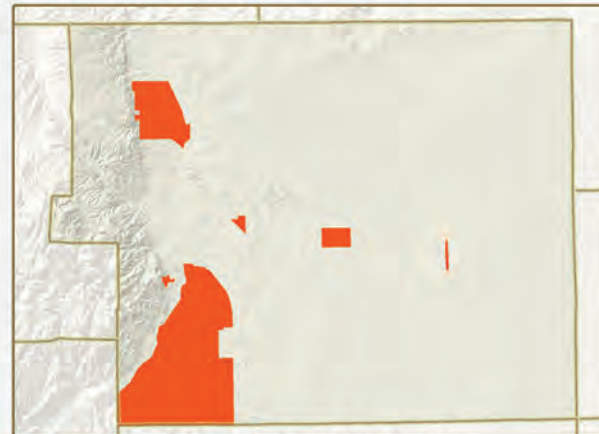
M. Cultural and Historic Sites



N. Existing Irrigated Agricultural - Subtract



O. Commercial and Industrial - Subtract



P. Existing Military Areas - Extract

## Open Space Values Attributes

### GIS Data Layers

- A. Forested/High Wildfire Hazard Areas
  - a. LandCover1992 (Codes = 41, 42, 51)
- B. Parcel Adjacent to Conserved/Preserved Lands
  - a. CountyStateFederalLands
  - b. BLM-Lands
  - c. ParkArea
  - d. ParkTrailLine
  - e. ColoSpgsParkArea
  - f. ColoSpgsTrailLine
  - g. ColoStateParks
  - h. Military\_Area
  - i. National\_Forest
  - j. ConservationEasement
  - k. NatureConservancyLands
  - l. SLBStewardshipTrust
  - m. SLBSurfaceLandOwnership
- C. Vacant Land From Above Parcel Data
  - a. CurrentLandUse
  - b. Parcels (Using Land Use Attributes)
- D. Significant Landmarks & Landforms
  - a. Existing Parks Master Plan - .5-Mile Radius
- E. Slope > 30%
  - a. Slp30pct5ft
- F. Colorado Natural Heritage Program
  - a. CNHP\_NCAs
  - b. CNHP\_PCAs
  - c. PotentialConservLand
  - d. ParkOSCLand
  - e. ConservationEasements
  - f. NatureConservancyLands
- G. Federally Protected Wildlife
  - a. PreblesMouseCreekBuffer
  - b. PreblesMouseFloodplainBuffer
- H. Wildlife Impact Areas (High & Very High)
  - a. WildlifeImpact (High = 4; Very High = 5)
- I. Upper Black Squirrel Creek Alluvial Aquifer
  - a. UBSAlluvium
- J. 100-Year Floodplain
  - a. FEMA\_Floodplain
- K. Surface Water + 1000-foot buffer
  - a. CreeksStreams
  - b. LakesReservoirs
- L. Wetlands + 1000-foot buffer
  - a. WetlandArea
  - b. WetlandPoint
  - c. WetlandLine
- M. Cultural & Historic Sites
  - a. HistoricalSites
- N. Existing Irrigated Agriculture
  - a. CurrentLandUse
  - b. LandCover1992
- O. Commercial & Industrial Zoning
  - a. Zoning
  - b. CurrentLandUse
- P. Military Installations
  - a. Military\_Area
  - b. CurrentLandUse

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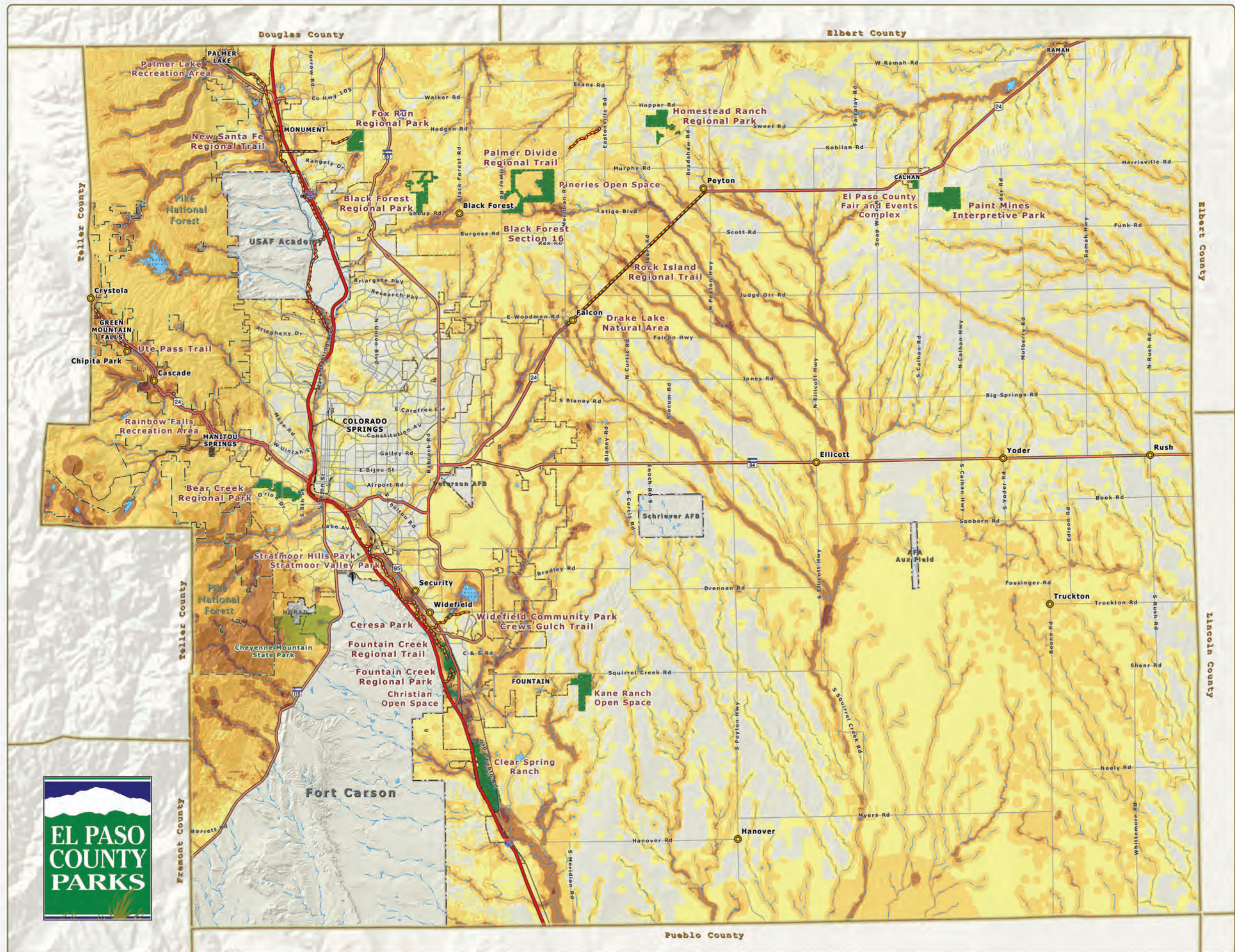
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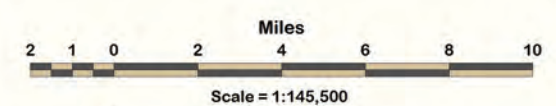
## Open Space Composite Analysis



### Legend

- Potential Open Space Values**
- Lower Attribute Value
  - 
  - 
  - 
  - Higher Attribute Value
- EPC Parks
  - EPC Regional Trails
  - US Interstate Highways
  - Major Highways
  - Major Roadways
  - Railroads
  - Lakes & Reservoirs
  - Creeks - Perennial
  - Creeks - Intermittent
  - Unincorporated Towns
  - Incorporated Cities
  - Military Areas
  - Pike National Forest
  - County Boundary

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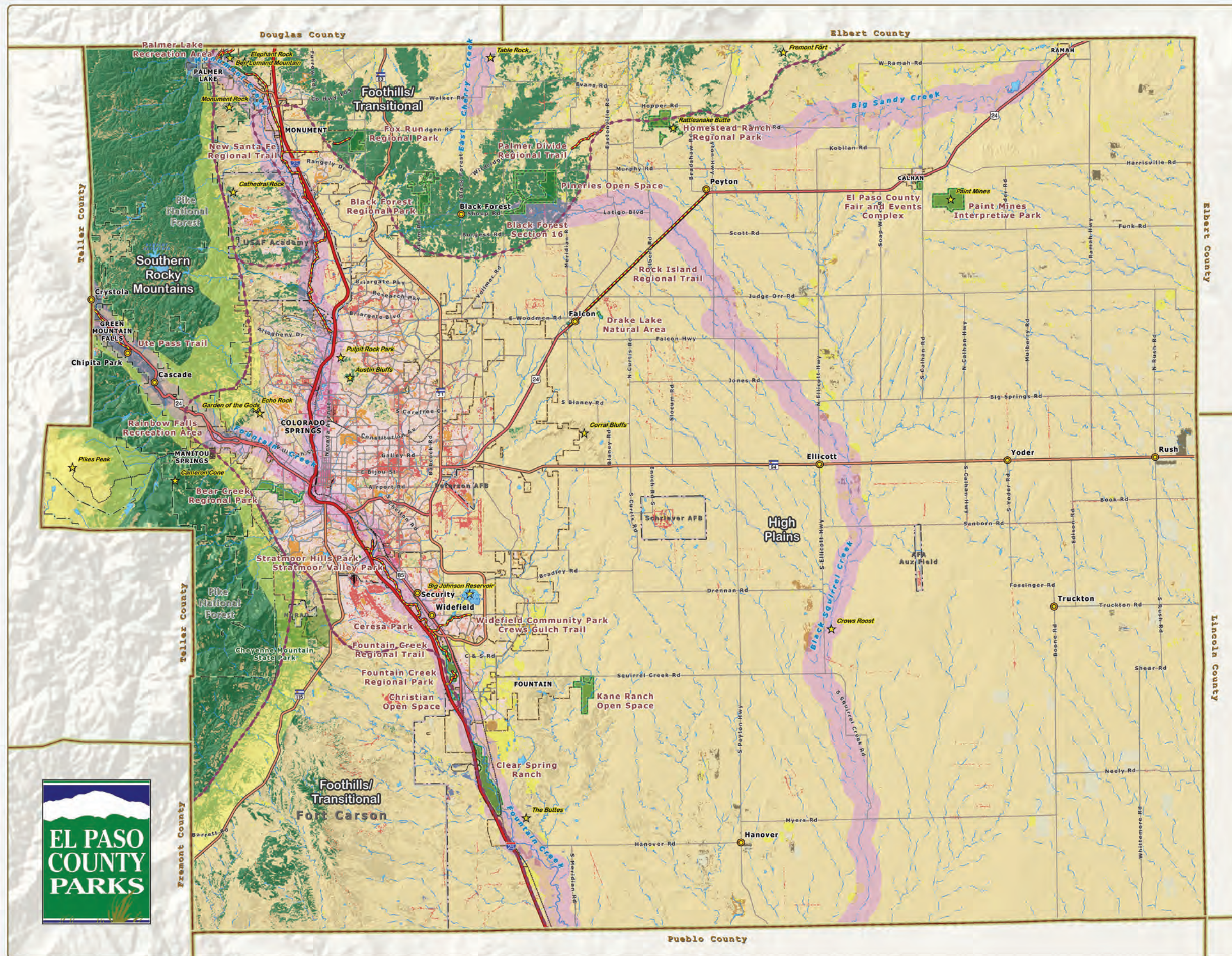
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## Land Cover, Landforms, and Landmarks



### Legend

#### Land Cover Types

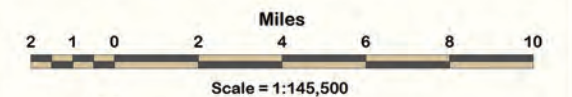
- |  |                            |  |               |
|--|----------------------------|--|---------------|
|  | Water                      |  | Shrublands    |
|  | Low Intensity Residential  |  | Grasslands    |
|  | High Intensity Residential |  | Pasture Lands |
|  | Commercial/Transportation  |  | Row Crops     |
|  | Bare Rock/Sand             |  | Small Grains  |
|  | Quarries/Gravel Pits       |  | Fallow Lands  |
|  | Deciduous Forests          |  | Urban Grasses |
|  | Evergreen Forests          |  |               |

Source:  
Multi-Resolution Land Characteristics Consortium (MRLC)  
National Land Cover Database (NLCD)

- Significant Landmarks/Landforms
- Major Landscape Areas
- Significant Stream Corridors
- Front Range Mountain Backdrop Study

#### Base Map Information

- EPC Parks
- EPC Regional Trails
- Interstate Highways
- Major Highways
- Major Roadways
- Railroads
- Creeks - Perennial
- Creeks - Intermittent
- Lakes & Reservoirs
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## Chapter 8: Master Plan

The El Paso County Strategic Plan 2012-2016 sets a goal to continue to improve and update the County park system including parks, trails, open space, nature centers, fairgrounds, and services guided by an update of the Parks Master Plan. The updated plan will be used to determine current and future needs, to forge community consensus and partnerships, and to help determine funding opportunities.

The 2013 El Paso County Parks Master Plan is a long-term vision and guiding document generated from extensive public engagement that addresses evolution of the existing system of regional parks, trails, open space and recreational areas, as well as recreation programs and cultural services and sustainable use of the system. It considers the expressed desire for protection of natural and cultural resources, balanced with appropriate visitor access for both passive and active use. Goals and objectives have been developed to guide more specifically the types of actions that El Paso County Parks will take in support of its mission.

Building on the strengths of the existing system, perspectives of the public, regional, and national trends, a current and future profile of the county population, and the research and analysis presented in the preceding chapters, this chapter outlines a series of goals and objectives that are designed to help fulfill the mission of El Paso County Parks. The final chapters of this document provide an Implementation Plan and tools.

The public expressed enthusiasm about the Master Plan and its eventual implementation citing the importance of tying the recommendations to community outcomes and the guidance it will provide in helping to set priorities and secure funding, while clarifying a very critical role for El Paso County Parks in making a difference in the county. They saw the ability to generate excitement about new facilities, the value of short-term recommendations to show progress, and the value of long-term visionary recommendations.

**Chapter 8** is the heart of the Master Plan. It includes the updated Mission Statement, Goals and Objectives, Classifications of park, trail and open space types, and an Implementation Plan with action items for park, trail and open space facilities. There are Master Plan maps for parks, trails and open space that illustrate recommendations: **Map 8-1: Parks Master Plan; Map 8-2: Trails Master Plan; and Map 8-3: Open Space Master Plan.**

## Mission Statement

*The County's mission for Parks (as updated in 2013) is to enhance quality of life in El Paso County by:*

- *Acquiring, developing, maintaining, and preserving regional parks, trails and open space.*
- *Providing responsible resource management for open space lands characterized by unique natural environments.*
- *Providing natural and cultural history interpretation, education, and information services.*
- *Supporting major community events and festivals that celebrate our County's heritage and culture.*
- *Providing and managing visitor destinations and experiences.*

## Goals and Objectives

### OVERALL SYSTEM MISSION/ROLE

#### **Goal 1: Refine the mission statement and role for the El Paso County Parks System**

**Objectives:**

- A. Continue to focus on providing regional facilities and services, and work cooperatively with other providers of park and recreation facilities and services to address existing and future needs.
- B. Better define El Paso County Parks' role as a producer of events that align with its essential mission, and in **support** of large community events and festivals; and as a provider and manager of **visitor** destinations and experiences (as reflected in revised Mission Statement).

#### **Goal 2: Provide a coordinated and connected system of parks, trails, and open space that is equitably distributed based on population and serves the needs of county residents.**

**Objectives:**

- A. Provide regional parks, recreation areas, trails, and open space that meet the needs of residents and that respect the significance of the natural and cultural resources present.
- B. Continue to participate in development review and long-range planning with the El Paso County Development Services Department and in transportation planning with the Public Services Department to anticipate future growth and to identify areas where additional park needs are likely to emerge. Work with the Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments, the City of Colorado Springs and other communities and organizations to address regional issues and connectivity.
- C. Balance taking care of current assets and acquiring new assets with an edge towards taking care of and maximizing current assets.

**Goal 3: Balance passive/active use of county parks and open space and determine what is most appropriate for individual sites based on community need and master planning processes.**

***Objectives:***

- A. Refine the working definition of active and passive activities.
- B. Provide regional-level active outdoor recreation facilities as part of the balance.
- C. Balance demand to keep use levels at or below carrying capacity.
- D. Balance preservation of natural and cultural resources with the need for public use and access.
- E. Manage the ever increasing demands for active recreation and new types of facilities, focusing uses on the appropriate venues.
- F. Update individual park master plans at least every 10 years.

**Goal 4: Provide an overall vision for the recreation and resource preservation network, and identify gaps so that the County, local jurisdictions, and others can work together to fill them.**

***Objectives:***

- A. Convene on a regular basis a local parks and recreation “working group” of representatives from cities and towns to address potential collaborative efforts. The group could help address meeting community needs, integrated planning, funding, best management practices and consistent standards; promote awareness, and sharing of resources and information, training, and use of volunteers, among other topics.
- B. Continue to develop the GIS database and capabilities and participate in regional efforts to share and disseminate data, including COMap.
- C. Serve as the local park resource working with small communities, special districts, and other organizations to meet needs to the extent possible.

**REGIONAL PARKS AND RECREATION AREAS**

**Goal 1: Provide high quality and safe experiences for users of county park facilities and recreational areas.**

***Objectives:***

- A. Provide appropriate recreational access while protecting the natural character and environmental quality of the County’s parks and open space.
- B. Provide visitors a high quality experience and minimize user conflicts through master planning and thoughtful facility design, sustainable park management and maintenance practices, and appropriate signage and public education.
- C. Consider public safety in the planning and management of all park facilities.
- D. Provide access for people of all abilities through the development and implementation of the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Transition Plan.



**Goal 2: Enhance communication and engagement with users to maximize satisfaction with the visitor experience and to help ensure user safety.**

**Objectives:**

- A. Evaluate and adapt management practices based on input from users and observation and experience of Parks personnel.
- B. Provide for enhanced enforcement of existing rules throughout the system through signage, public education, and staff training focused on monitoring, educating users, and development of enforcement tools.
- C. Continue to develop cooperative relationships with other enforcement authorities such as the County Sheriff's Office.

**Goal 3: Maintain a consistent and equitable level of services by filling gaps in existing service levels and providing new facilities and services to meet future population demand.**

**Objectives:**

- A. Enhance park and recreation facilities to serve population bases through:
  - 1. Expand recreation facilities in the north central to northeast part of the County
  - 2. Regional parks in population growth areas such as north central to northeast and south central El Paso County
  - 3. Active use areas in the south central part of the County (parks, athletic fields )
  - 4. Baseball fields and park facilities in the Monument, Falcon, and Fountain areas
  - 5. Continue to explore the development of an Off-Highway Vehicle park that may include partnerships with interested stakeholders.
- B. Enhance use of the Fairgrounds and Event Center site to offer facility opportunity for recreation, working in collaboration with other organizations to provide programming.
- C. Complete master planning processes for:
  - 1. El Paso County Fairgrounds and Event Center (update)
  - 2. Fox Run Regional Park (update)
  - 3. Fountain Creek Regional Park (update)
  - 4. Kane Ranch Open Space
  - 5. Falcon Regional Park (need to secure land and develop in cooperation with other service providers)

**REGIONAL TRAILS**

**Goal 1: Work collaboratively with others to create a continuous, connected system of regional trails.**

**Objectives:**

- A. Strengthen trail system plan for the region by providing an overall vision for system of regional trails within the County and connected to adjacent counties. This requires continued sharing of GIS data and creation and promotion of consistent trail design standards.
- B. Participate in the Regional Nonmotorized Trails and Bike Plan Update through the Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments to address needs as part of a multi-modal transportation network, identify improvements, including areas where connectivity is needed, prioritize projects, and develop consistent standards.

- C. Ensure regional trail corridors are secured by working closely with the Development Services and Public Services departments during the planning, design and development review processes, and with other local governments.

**Goal 2: Prioritize and locate trail connections using criteria and proposed actions items identified in this master planning process.**

**Objectives:**

- A. Use the Trail Shed Analysis and the Trails Master Plan provided in this document to identify potential high priority connections for EPC Parks based on the following criteria (in no particular order):
  - 1. Connection to the main spine of primary regional trails
  - 2. Connection to primary regional trails and other destinations with secondary regional trails
  - 3. Connection to on-road routes
  - 4. Connection to regional parks
  - 5. Connection to community and neighborhood parks
  - 6. Connection to open space areas and greenways
  - 7. Connection to public lands of other jurisdictions
  - 8. Connection to key destinations, including commercial areas and employment centers
  - 9. Funding opportunities
  - 10. Partnership opportunities
  - 11. Connection to outlying gap areas
- B. Locate trails along major drainages or other natural features using existing rights-of-way to the extent practical, while minimizing conflicts between trail development and wildlife habitat and other sensitive natural and cultural resources.
- C. Consider a variety of acquisition strategies and tools.

**OPEN SPACE**

**Goal 1: Protect and enhance El Paso County’s legacy of unique natural features and areas and cultural resources, working in collaboration with others to conserve high priority open space areas in the county.**

**Objectives:**

- A. Use the Open Space Composite Values Mapping developed as a part of this planning effort and the Open Space Master Plan provided in this document as a tier one analysis and recommendations to identify high priority areas for preservation. Use a tier two analysis to verify the quality of the resource and resource values, and to evaluate other important criteria such as the appropriate acquisition tools, potential for partnership, existing conditions, context (size, buffer, adjacency), threat of development, and passive recreational potential.
- B. Investigate opportunities for protecting open space through a variety of techniques from fee-simple purchase to conservation easements, to use of regulatory tools, and partnerships with private landowners, other jurisdictions, or advocacy organizations.
- C. Work with other public entities to conserve open space, consider connectivity, and provide appropriate recreational access.

- D. Determine appropriate type and level of public access through master planning for each property acquired, considering resource sensitivity.
- E. Consider open space preservation for its natural ability to support storm water management, watershed protection and restoration goals, and to protect the quality of surface water and groundwater.

## RECREATION AND CULTURAL SERVICES PROGRAMS AND FACILITIES

### **Goal 1: Provide high quality recreation and educational experiences for users of county park facilities and recreational areas.**

***Objectives:***

- A. Develop updated and new interpretive exhibits and displays with the expansion of the Fountain Creek Nature Center.
- B. Update interpretive exhibits and displays at the Bear Creek Nature Center.
- C. Expand nature-based programming and develop nature center facility in the northern area of the County.
- D. Maintain the diversity and quality of and participation in the award-winning environmental education programs and day camps at County nature centers.
- E. Explore restoring hours of operation at County nature centers to accommodate citizens' interest in expanded programming.

### **Goal 2: Expand recreation and education opportunities and programs that build upon the area's natural and cultural resources and agricultural heritage and promote conservation and stewardship.**

***Objectives:***

- A. Expand interpretive programming opportunities in northern and eastern El Paso County.
- B. Expand outdoor recreation opportunities at Bear Creek and Fountain Creek Nature Centers.
- C. Provide educational offerings regarding fire's role in the ecosystem.
- D. Combine interpretive naturalist services with shelter rentals as optional fee for service.
- E. Leverage the County Fair and Events Center as a regional events center and community center.
- F. Partner with non-profit organizations in the development of new event opportunities, such as an annual heritage festival to celebrate the regions diverse cultural heritage.

### **Goal 3: Expand partnering and collaboration as a programming strategy**

***Objectives:***

- A. Continue programming partnerships.
- B. Pursue partnerships for regional interpretive services.
- C. Expand general programming opportunities at regional parks by developing collaborative relationships with local service providers.
- D. Partner with local entities to provide social and recreational services for eastern El Paso County residents at the County Fairgrounds and complete needed facility upgrades to accommodate the expanded services.



- E. Pursue grant opportunities to support recreation, natural resources and cultural resources programs and events.

**Goal 4: Digitize the Inventory of System Resources**

**Objectives:**

- A. Continue to develop the database of existing historical and cultural resources working with the Development Services Department.

**MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION**

**Goal 1: Pursue best practices in the management and administration of all department operations.**

**Objectives:**

- A. Consider environmental, economic, and social sustainability when developing master plans and managing park assets.
- B. Consistent with this master plan, develop and implement forest management plans that address tree health, invasive species and fuels management for county parks and open space. Develop these plans concurrently with master plans, when possible, to ensure an integrated approach.
- C. Consider the potential establishment of conservation easements on County parks to help provide assurance to citizens that the parks will not be sold. The easement makes the property less valuable for other development as the conserved area of the park must remain as open space in perpetuity. This concept is being explored for Bear Creek Regional Park in 2013.
- D. Pursue Agency Accreditation status through the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA), assuring and demonstrating that El Paso County Parks is utilizing best practices in all facets of operations.
- E. Plan for preventative maintenance of all park system assets.
- F. Identify costs of maintenance responsibilities for non-park services and separate from the EPC Parks budget.
- G. Review the County Park ordinances that address use and management of park facilities and provide potential updates for Park Advisory Board consideration and endorsement, and Board of County Commissioners approval.

**Goal 2: Pursue best practices in funding and use of volunteers.**

**Objectives:**

- A. Develop and adopt a Cost Recovery/Resource Allocation philosophy, policy and implementation plan as an ongoing business practice providing parameters for setting fees for all programs and services.
- B. Develop and adopt sponsorship, donation (land and dollars), and partnership policies that encourage each and establish consistency in process and implementation.
- C. Dedicate additional staff resources to support volunteer management for projects and events, friends groups, and individual volunteers.
- D. Expand the volunteer program utilizing community organizations, and individuals to assist with park system improvements and programming efforts.
- E. Continue to develop and support friends groups.

## COMMUNITY AWARENESS

**Goal 1: Increase community awareness about the assets and services of the El Paso County Parks system and how resources are allocated to support the system.**

**Objectives:**

- A. Dedicate additional staff resources to provide an expanded public information program.
- B. Update and maintain the EPC website as a valuable and timely resource for El Paso County Parks information.
- C. Create a marketing plan (taking into account the extensive public input provided during the master planning process as well as the Master Plan recommendations) to include such strategies as:
  1. Expand use of social media to target hard-to-reach population segments.
  2. Expand cross marketing efforts such as using kiosks and trailheads in parks to promote other EPC Parks offerings.
  3. Expand use of newsletter articles and e-mail blasts for distribution to existing networks, employing ideas such as: park of the month; county park factoids; natural, cultural, and historic resources information; as well as timely information and announcements about upcoming events and opportunities.
  4. Actively participate in the statewide web site currently in development (Get Outdoors Colorado to be launched spring/summer 2013) to list and promote El Paso County Parks activities and opportunities.
- D. Create an appealing annual report to communicate accomplishments and progress on established performance measurements.

## IMPLEMENTATION AND FUNDING

**Goal 1: Acknowledge the importance of parks and open space in El Paso County by providing adequate funding to develop, operate, and maintain these resources at a level commensurate with their importance.**

**Objectives:**

- A. Continue to require developers to provide land dedication or fees in lieu of dedication to provide at least a minimum standard for local park service to the development.
- B. Continue to support community, neighborhood, and pocket park development with urban park fee funds under the County Urban Park Grant Program.
- C. In reviewing development permit applications, request specificity in regard to the park development plans and open space, including identification of capital and maintenance costs and determination of funding for those purposes.
- D. Consider maintenance and capital replacement costs in master plan development, identifying funding source, and adequately budgeting funding for this purpose.
- E. Consider maintenance cost-saving measures in capital improvement projects (such as native grass, artificial turf for sports fields, sustainable trail building, etc).
- F. Identify an annual budget for capital maintenance and replacement costs based on life-cycle costing.
- G. Explore restoring the General Fund tax support for El Paso County Parks to 2004 levels (approximately \$1.7 million) as the economy recovers and as General Fund revenues increase to previous levels.

- H. Explore reallocation of the Conservation Trust Fund currently used for maintenance salaries to park improvement projects.
- I. Explore dedicated funding to accelerate implementation of this Master Plan.

**Goal 2: Enhance El Paso County Parks through alternative funding sources.**

***Objectives:***

- A. Explore the use of alternative funding sources and creative methods such as donations, grants, sponsorships, partnerships, foundations, conservation easements, trust funds, and use of volunteers. (See Chapter 9 description of potential funding sources.)
- B. Explore the development of a parks foundation to advocate for and financially support El Paso County Parks.
- C. Collaborate through partnerships with related programs such as with the Fountain Creek Watershed, Flood Control and Greenway District, local government, state and federal agencies, military installations and non-profit or private organizations, to enhance the parks system.
- D. Optimize the use of fees and charges as a viable funding source through the Cost Recovery and Resource Allocation Philosophy and Policy.
- E. Take regional approach to funding; use County dollars as seed money to attract other funding, perhaps through matching grants.

## **Classifications**

**Table 8-1** provides a chart of classifications of various park, trail, and open space types found in the El Paso County Parks system. It informs the analysis and ultimately the recommendations in this plan. It also serves as a useful planning tool, for benchmarking with other recreation providers, and for developing master plans for park properties.



**Table 8-1: El Paso County Parks, Open Space, and Trails Classification**

| Classification           | Size <sup>1</sup> | Purpose/Function  | Recreational Activities  | Common Amenities <sup>2</sup>   |
|--------------------------|-------------------|---|--|---|
| <b>1. Parks</b>          |                   |   |  |   |
| <b>A. Regional Parks</b> | 200+ acres        | Provide a large area with recreation resource values of regional and community significance and provide a variety of opportunities for sports-and nature-oriented, outdoor recreation experiences. Level of development will vary based on resource values, location, and public need. Facilities designed and developed to accommodate individuals and large and small groups. There should be an equity of distribution based on population; however, the criteria for site selection is also based on conservation of natural and/or cultural resources. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Picnicking</li> <li>• Field sports and other selected sports activities</li> <li>• Hiking, walking, jogging</li> <li>• Mountain biking</li> <li>• Horseback riding</li> <li>• Fishing</li> <li>• Non-motorized boating</li> <li>• Pet exercise</li> <li>• Nature study and observation</li> <li>• Cultural and historic resources interpretation</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parking</li> <li>• Picnic tables/sites</li> <li>• Benches</li> <li>• Fire grates/grills</li> <li>• Potable water</li> <li>• Restrooms</li> <li>• Identification, wayfinding, interpretive and regulatory signage</li> <li>• Archery range</li> <li>• Tennis courts</li> <li>• Play equipment</li> <li>• Basketball courts</li> <li>• Volleyball courts</li> <li>• Horseshoe pits</li> <li>• Exercise courses</li> <li>• Dog parks</li> <li>• Trails</li> <li>• Trailheads</li> <li>• Group picnic pavilions</li> <li>• Multi-purpose sports fields</li> <li>• Lighting</li> <li>• Nature centers</li> <li>• Water bodies (lake, stream, river, pond) or features</li> <li>• Boat access</li> </ul> |

<sup>1</sup> Information on sizes of facilities is intended to show what is typical and is not intended to be prescriptive.

<sup>2</sup> Listed amenities are common for the types of facilities and are not intended to be prescriptive or rule out other suitable facilities.

| Classification                      | Size   | Purpose/Function   | Recreational Activities  | Common Amenities  |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|--|---|
| <b>B. Regional Recreation Areas</b> | Variable   | Provide an area with recreation opportunities and dominant natural and/or cultural resource values. These areas provide special use recreation facilities or serve a particular area of the county. Location and level of development determined by the presence and size of natural or cultural features or by special use needs.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Picnicking</li> <li>• Field sports and other selected sports activities</li> <li>• Hiking, walking, jogging</li> <li>• Mountain biking</li> <li>• Horseback riding</li> <li>• Fishing</li> <li>• Non-motorized boating</li> <li>• Nature study and observation</li> <li>• Cultural and historic resources interpretation</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special viewing or access areas featuring natural or cultural resources</li> <li>• Parking</li> <li>• Picnic tables/sites</li> <li>• Benches</li> <li>• Fire grates/grills</li> <li>• Potable water</li> <li>• Restrooms</li> <li>• Identification, wayfinding, interpretive and regulatory signage</li> <li>• Archery range</li> <li>• Play equipment</li> <li>• Horseshoe pits</li> <li>• Exercise courses</li> <li>• Trails</li> <li>• Trailheads</li> <li>• Group picnic pavilions</li> <li>• Lighting</li> <li>• Nature centers</li> <li>• Water bodies or features</li> <li>• Boat access</li> </ul> |
| <b>C. Community Parks</b>           | 24 acres per LDC; Varies if not established via County subdivision process | Provide a medium to small area that supports a variety of outdoor recreation experiences at a local level. Level of development will vary based on resources, location and public need. Developers, special districts or other local governments are the primary provider of these smaller parks. Size is specified in the EPC Land Development Code (LDC), Section 8.5.2. Suggested locations include adjacent to junior high or senior high schools and within a one-mile radius of the residential communities that they are intended to serve. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Picnicking</li> <li>• Field sports and other selected sports activities</li> <li>• Hiking, walking, jogging</li> <li>• Mountain biking</li> <li>• Horseback riding</li> <li>• Pet exercise</li> <li>• Nature study and observation</li> <li>• Cultural and historic resources interpretation</li> </ul>                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parking</li> <li>• Picnic tables/sites</li> <li>• Benches</li> <li>• Fire grates/grills</li> <li>• Potable water</li> <li>• Restrooms</li> <li>• Identification, wayfinding, interpretive and regulatory signage</li> <li>• Tennis courts</li> <li>• Play equipment</li> <li>• Basketball courts</li> <li>• Volleyball courts</li> <li>• Horseshoe pits</li> <li>• Exercise courses</li> <li>• Dog parks</li> <li>• Trails</li> <li>• Trailheads</li> <li>• Group picnic pavilions</li> <li>• Multi-purpose sports fields</li> <li>• Lighting</li> <li>• Water bodies or features</li> </ul>               |

| Classification               | Size  | Purpose/Function   | Recreational Activities  | Common Amenities  |
|------------------------------|---|--|--|---|
| <b>D. Neighborhood Parks</b> | 3 acres per LDC; Varies if not established via County subdivision process | Provide a small area that supports a variety of outdoor recreation experiences at a local level. Level of development will vary based on resources, location and public need. Developers, special districts or other local governments are the primary providers of these smaller parks. Size is specified in the EPC Land Development Code, Section 8.5.2. Suggested locations include adjacent to elementary schools and within 1/2 mile radius of the residential units they are intended to serve. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Picnicking</li> <li>• Field sports and other selected sports activities</li> <li>• Hiking, walking, jogging</li> <li>• Mountain biking</li> <li>• Horseback riding</li> <li>• Pet exercise</li> <li>• Nature study and observation</li> <li>• Cultural and historic resources interpretation</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parking</li> <li>• Picnic tables/sites</li> <li>• Benches</li> <li>• Potable water</li> <li>• Restrooms</li> <li>• Identification, wayfinding, interpretive and regulatory signage</li> <li>• Tennis courts</li> <li>• Play equipment</li> <li>• Basketball courts</li> <li>• Volleyball courts</li> <li>• Horseshoe pits</li> <li>• Exercise courses</li> <li>• Trails</li> <li>• Trailheads</li> <li>• Multi-purpose sports fields</li> <li>• Low-impact lighting</li> <li>• Water features</li> </ul> |
| <b>E. Pocket Parks</b>       | Variable; Typically ½-1 acre  | Provide a small area within a development that provides limited outdoor recreation experiences, mostly for nearby residents. Pocket parks are primarily provided by developers, special districts, and homeowners' associations. Locations are within walking distance of the residences it is intended to serve.  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Picnicking</li> <li>• Selected sports activities</li> <li>• Hiking, walking, jogging</li> <li>• Pet exercise</li> <li>• Nature study and observation</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Picnic tables</li> <li>• Benches</li> <li>• Identification, interpretive and regulatory signage</li> <li>• Play equipment</li> <li>• Basketball courts</li> <li>• Volleyball courts</li> <li>• Horseshoe pits</li> <li>• Trails or walkways</li> </ul>   |



| Classification                | Size <sup>1</sup>    | Purpose/Function   | Recreational Activities   | Common Amenities <sup>2</sup>  |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|--|---|--|
| <b>2. Open Space</b>          |                      |  |   |  |
| <b>A. Regional Open Space</b> | Typically 200+ acres | Preserve a large area with important natural, cultural, historic or visual resource values. Emphasize protection over public access. May contain active use areas, as appropriate. Location based on resources to be contained within or preserved by the open space area. | Varies, based on sensitivity of the resource(s); activities may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Picnicking</li> <li>• Field sports and other selected sports activities</li> <li>• Hiking, walking, jogging</li> <li>• Mountain biking</li> <li>• Horseback riding</li> <li>• Fishing</li> <li>• Non-motorized boating</li> <li>• Nature study and observation</li> <li>• Cultural and historic resources interpretation</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special viewing or access areas featuring natural or cultural resources</li> <li>• Parking</li> <li>• Picnic tables/sites</li> <li>• Benches</li> <li>• Fire grates/grills</li> <li>• Potable water</li> <li>• Restrooms</li> <li>• Identification, wayfinding, interpretive and regulatory signage</li> <li>• Archery range</li> <li>• Play equipment</li> <li>• Horseshoe pits</li> <li>• Exercise courses</li> <li>• Trails</li> <li>• Trailheads</li> <li>• Group picnic pavilions</li> <li>• Low-impact lighting</li> <li>• Nature centers</li> <li>• Water bodies or features</li> <li>• Boat access</li> </ul> |
| <b>B. Natural Areas</b>       | Variable             | Preserve and area with important natural, cultural, historic or visual resource values. Emphasize protection over public access. Minimal or no development. Location based on resources to be contained within or preserved by the open space area.                        | Varies, based on sensitivity of the resource(s), activities may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Picnicking</li> <li>• Hiking, walking, jogging</li> <li>• Fishing</li> <li>• Non-motorized boating</li> <li>• Nature study and observation</li> <li>• Cultural and historic resources interpretation</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special viewing or access areas</li> <li>• Parking</li> <li>• Picnic tables</li> <li>• Benches</li> <li>• Restrooms</li> <li>• Identification, wayfinding, interpretive and regulatory signage</li> <li>• Trails</li> <li>• Low-impact lighting</li> <li>• Nature centers</li> <li>• Water bodies or features</li> <li>• Boat access</li> </ul>   |

<sup>1</sup> Information on sizes of facilities is intended to show what is typical and is not intended to be prescriptive.

<sup>2</sup> Listed amenities are common for the types of facilities and are not intended to be prescriptive or rule out other suitable facilities.

| Classification                      | Size <sup>1</sup>                        | Purpose/Function   | Recreational Activities   | Common Amenities <sup>2</sup>   |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|---|---|
| <b>3. Trails<sup>3</sup></b>        |  |  |   |   |
| <b>A. Primary Regional Trails</b>   | 25-foot to over 100-foot easement or ROW | Provide link and access to recreation areas of regional significance and local communities, and commuting opportunities.                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreational biking</li> <li>• Horseback riding</li> <li>• Walking</li> <li>• Jogging</li> <li>• Cross-country skiing</li> <li>• Nature study and observation</li> <li>• Cultural and historic resources interpretation</li> </ul>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concrete, paved or gravel trail</li> <li>• Benches</li> <li>• Identification, wayfinding, interpretive and regulatory signage</li> <li>• Trailheads</li> <li>• Creek access points</li> </ul>  |
| <b>B. Secondary Regional Trails</b> | 25-foot to over 100-foot easement or ROW | Provide link and access to Primary Regional trails, recreation areas of local significance, local communities and commuting opportunities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreational biking</li> <li>• Horseback riding</li> <li>• Walking</li> <li>• Jogging</li> <li>• Cross-country skiing</li> <li>• Nature study and observation</li> <li>• Cultural and historic resources interpretation</li> </ul>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concrete, paved or gravel trail</li> <li>• Benches</li> <li>• Identification, wayfinding, interpretive and regulatory signage</li> <li>• Trailheads</li> <li>• Creek access points</li> </ul>  |
| <b>C. Regional Trailheads</b>       | 2-15 acres                               | Provide access, convenience, and comfort area for regional trail user. Generally 3-4 miles apart on regional trails.                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreational biking</li> <li>• Horseback riding</li> <li>• Walking</li> <li>• Jogging</li> <li>• Cross-country skiing</li> <li>• Nature study and observation</li> <li>• Cultural and historic resources interpretation</li> </ul>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parking lot</li> <li>• Horse trailer parking</li> <li>• Restrooms</li> <li>• Identification, wayfinding, interpretive and regulatory signage</li> <li>• Picnic tables</li> <li>• Benches</li> <li>• Potable water</li> <li>• Lighting</li> </ul> |
| <b>D. Internal Park Trails</b>      | 2-foot to 8-foot width                   | Provide recreation opportunities and access to active use areas, facilities, natural areas and regional trails.                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hiking</li> <li>• Walking</li> <li>• Jogging</li> <li>• Mountain biking</li> <li>• Cross-country skiing</li> <li>• Horseback riding</li> <li>• Nature study and observation</li> <li>• Cultural and historic resources interpretation</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concrete, paved, gravel or natural surface trail</li> <li>• Wayfinding, interpretive and regulatory signage</li> <li>• Benches</li> </ul>  |

<sup>1</sup> Information on sizes of facilities is intended to show what is typical and is not intended to be prescriptive.

<sup>2</sup> Listed amenities are common for the types of facilities and are not intended to be prescriptive or rule out other suitable facilities.

<sup>3</sup> See El Paso County Trail Standards for specific design criteria and standards.

| Classification   | Size   | Purpose/Function  | Recreational Activities   | Common Amenities  |
|------------------|--|---|---|---|
| E. Bicycle Route | 6-foot to 8-foot width including shoulder, depending on ROW width, speed of road, classification, and function | Provide links between communities and access to recreation areas of regional significance. May be a scenic route. This type of route is not the responsibility of El Paso County Parks to construct and coordination with the Public Services Department should occur to ensure that important connections are made to the regional trail system and other major access trails. Road provides multi-modal accommodation with separate vehicular and bicycle lanes to improve road safety and the recreational experience for the bicyclist. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreational road biking</li> <li>• Commuter biking</li> <li>• Horseback riding</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paved or unpaved shoulder</li> <li>• Identification, wayfinding, and regulatory signage</li> </ul> |



## Implementation Plan – Parks, Trails, and Open Space Facilities

The Implementation Plan (**Table 8-2**) in this chapter summarizes the plan recommendations and identifies potential partnering or collaboration opportunities, estimated cost, potential funding options and recommended timeframe for implementation. The Implementation Plan is subject to further refinement and will be used to develop the annual Parks Action Plan and budget.

This Implementation Plan is intended to focus on priorities for the next 5 to 10 years. It is based on the following time framework for short, medium, and long-term priorities:

- Short-Term: 0-2 years
- Mid-Term: 3-5 years
- Long-Term: 6-10 years and beyond

Three maps illustrate the recommendations:

- **Map 8-1: Parks Master Plan**
- **Map 8-2: Trails Master Plan**
- **Map 8-3: Open Space Master Plan**

**Table 8-2: Implementation Plan - Parks, Trails, and Open Space Facilities**

| ACTION ITEMS  | OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTNERSHIP                         | COST<br>Preliminary or Actual, if underway<br>(2013 dollars) | FUNDING OPTIONS                                 | TIMING<br>Short-term=1-2 years<br>Mid-term=3-5 years<br>Long-term=6 years and beyond |
|---|---|--|---|--|
| <b>Regional Parks and Recreation Areas</b>  |   |  |   |  |
| <b>Goal 1: Provide high quality and safe experiences for users of County park facilities and recreation areas.</b>  |   |  |   |  |
| <b>Goal 2: Enhance communication and engagement with users to maximize satisfaction with the user experience.</b>   |   |  |   |  |
| <b>Goal 3: Maintain a consistent and equitable level of services by filling gaps in existing service levels and providing new facilities and services to meet future population demand.</b> |   |  |   |  |
| <b><i>Enhance park and recreation facilities to serve population bases through:</i></b>   |   |  |   |  |
| <b>A. Recreation facilities in the north/central to north/east part of the County</b>   |   |  |   |  |
| 1. Fox Run Regional Park  |   |  |   |  |
| a. Complete facility upgrades   | Friends of Fox Run, Black Forest Trails Association   | \$100,000  | Regional park fees, donations<br>County in-kind | Short-Term   |
| b. Update Master Plan   | Friends, land owners, Black Forest Trails Association |  |   | Short-Term   |
| c. Implement Master Plan  | Friends   | \$60,000   | Regional park fees, donations                   | Mid-Term   |

| ACTION ITEMS   | OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTNERSHIP   | COST<br>Preliminary or Actual, if underway (2013 dollars) | FUNDING OPTIONS                     | TIMING   |
|--|---|---|-------------------------------------|--|
|  |   |   |                                     | Short-term=1-2 years<br>Mid-term=3-5 years<br>Long-term=6 years and beyond |
| 2. Black Forest Regional Park                        |   |   |                                     |  |
| a. Implement Master Plan, Phase I                    | Cathedral Pines Metro District, VOC (Volunteers Outdoor Colorado)                             | \$400,000   | GOCO LOPR grant, regional park fees | Underway   |
| b. Secure funding and implement Master Plan, Phase 2 | Cathedral Pines Metro District, VOC, Black Forest Trails Association, potential Friends group | \$250,000   | GOCO LOPR grant, regional park fees | Mid-Term   |
| 4. Homestead Ranch Regional Park                     |   |   |                                     |  |
| a. Monitor use levels and preferences                |   |   | County in-kind                      | Short-Term   |
| b. Update Master Plan                                | Black Forest Trails Association, Cavalier Trail Riding Club Friends group, VOC, MHYC          |   | County in-kind                      | Long-Term  |
| c. Implement Master Plan                             | Black Forest Trails Association, Cavalier Trail Riding Club Friends group, VOC, MHYC          |   | GOCO LOPR Grant, regional park fees | Long-Term  |



| ACTION ITEMS   | OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTNERSHIP  | COST<br>Preliminary or Actual, if underway (2013 dollars) | FUNDING OPTIONS  | TIMING   |
|--|--|---|--|--|
|  |  |   |  | Short-term=1-2 years<br>Mid-term=3-5 years<br>Long-term=6 years and beyond |
| 5. Paint Mines Interpretive Park   |  |   |  |  |
| a. Monitor use levels, preferences, and conservation values, and update existing Management Plan as needed | Palmer Land Trust, cultural/historic organizations, Native American tribes             |   | County in-kind   | Short-Term   |
| b. Develop master plan for west parcel   | Denver Museum of Nature and Science, Educational Institutions, Potential Friends Group |   | County and partner in-kind   | Mid-Term   |
| c. Secure funding for public access improvements to existing and west parcel                               | Educational Institutions, Potential Friends Group                                      | \$60,000  | Cultural resources organization grants, tribes, regional park fees | Mid-Term   |

| ACTION ITEMS  | OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTNERSHIP                                    | COST<br>Preliminary or Actual, if underway (2013 dollars) | FUNDING OPTIONS  | TIMING   |
|---|--|---|--|--|
|   |  |   |  | Short-term=1-2 years<br>Mid-term=3-5 years<br>Long-term=6 years and beyond |
| <b>B. Regional parks in population growth areas such as north/central and central/south El Paso County</b>                                      |  |   |  |  |
| 1. Falcon Regional Park   |  |   |  |  |
| a. Secure property  | Land owner/developer   |   | Subdivision process/parklands agreement                      | Short-Term   |
| b. Develop Master Plan  | Land owner/developer, metro districts, other land owners         | \$40,000  | GOCO planning grant or developer                             | Mid-Term   |
| c. Implement Master Plan, Phase 1   | Potential Friends Group  | \$500,000   | GOCO LOPR grant, other grants, regional park fees, donations | Long-Term  |
| 2. Fountain Creek Regional Park   |  |   |  |  |
| a. Water line improvements  | Fountain Water and San. District                                 | \$30,000  | Regional park fees   | Short-Term   |
| b. Update Master Plan, and explore potential for disc golf, archery, sports fields, active use facilities, and additional Fountain Creek access | Fountain Creek Watershed District, City of Fountain, Fort Carson |   | County in-kind   | Short-Term   |
| c. Secure funding and implement Master Plan   | Potential Friends group  | \$150,000   | GOCO LOPR grant, other grants<br>Regional park fees          | Mid-Term   |
| d. Square pond improvements   |  | \$50,000  | Grants   | Mid-Term   |
| 3. Kane Ranch Open Space  |  |   |  |  |
| a. Explore potential for recreation facilities development as master plan is developed  | Potential Friends Group  |   | County in-kind or GOCO planning grant                        | Mid-Term   |

| ACTION ITEMS   | OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTNERSHIP   | COST  | FUNDING OPTIONS   | TIMING   |
|--|---|---|---|--|
|  |   | Preliminary or Actual, if underway (2013 dollars) |   | Short-term=1-2 years<br>Mid-term=3-5 years<br>Long-term=6 years and beyond |
| 5. Widefield Community Park  |   |   |   |  |
| a. Monitor use   | City of Fountain  |   | County in-kind  | Mid-Term   |
| b. Update Master Plan  | City of Fountain  |   | County in-kind  | Long-Term  |
| <b>C. Active use areas, including athletic fields, in the northern and central/south part of the County</b>  |   |   |   |  |
| 1. Explore potential park sites with other recreation providers  | City of Fountain, City of Monument, City of Colorado Springs, schools, sports organizations, Fort Carson, Air Force Academy |   | County and partner in-kind  | Short-Term   |
| 2. Explore development of a regional sports complex in northern El Paso County   | Town of Monument, City of Colorado Springs, land owner/developer, sports organizations, private sector, tourism promoters   |   | County and partner in-kind  | Underway   |
| 3. Consider the potential purchase of a portion of, or all of, the Willow Springs Ranch site for community uses including open space and park purposes | Town of Monument, City of Colorado Springs, land owner/developer, sports organizations, private sector                      | \$2,000,000                                       | GOCO open space grant, partner agency funds, TOPS, sports organization grants and/or donations, private donations | Underway   |
| 4. Explore development of more baseball fields in the Falcon area  | Cities and towns, schools, land owner/developer, sports organizations, private sector                                       |   | County and partner in-kind  | Short-Term   |
| 5. Continue to explore the development of an Off-Highway Vehicle park  | OHV Steering Committee, land owners, developers   | \$500,000-\$700,000 including land acquisition    | State Trails OHV Grant Program  | Long-Term  |



| ACTION ITEMS   | OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTNERSHIP   | COST<br>Preliminary or Actual, if underway (2013 dollars) | FUNDING OPTIONS   | TIMING<br>Short-term=1-2 years<br>Mid-term=3-5 years<br>Long-term=6 years and beyond |
|--|---|---|---|--|
| <b>D. Collaborate with non-profit and other organizations to promote equestrian activities and facilities in the region</b>                    |   |   |   |  |
| 1. Consider the development of an equestrian skills park in Bear Creek Regional Park and update of existing jump facility on east side of park | Equestrian groups, private sector, tourism promoters  |   | County and partner in-kind                              | Underway   |
| <b>E. Explore potential for additional disc golf courses</b>   |   |   |   |  |
| 1. Evaluate suitability and feasibility of use of existing regional parks  | City of Colorado Springs, City of Fountain, disc golf community                               |   | County and partner in-kind                              | Underway   |
| 2. Develop site-specific plan for suitable area(s)   | Disc golf community   |   | County and partner in-kind                              | Short-Term   |
| 3. Work with disc golf community to secure funding and implement (at least one course)   | Pikes Peak Flying Disc Club, disc golf community, City of Colorado Springs, tourism promoters | \$12,000  | Regional park fees, donations                           | Short-Term   |
| <b>F. Develop natural playgrounds</b>  |   |   |   |  |
| 1. Develop a conceptual plan to promote development of natural playgrounds   | Docent organization, schools  |   | County in-kind  | Short-Term   |
| 2. Evaluate suitability and feasibility of County properties for natural playground development  |   |   | County in-kind  | Mid-Term   |
| 3. Develop site-specific plans for suitable area(s)  |   |   | County in-kind  | Mid-Term   |
| 4. Secure funding and implement plan   | Docent organization, schools  | \$100,000   | GOCO LOPR grant, docent organization, private donations | Mid-Term   |

| ACTION ITEMS  | OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTNERSHIP  | COST  | FUNDING OPTIONS   | TIMING   |
|---|--|---|---|--|
|   |  | Preliminary or Actual, if underway (2013 dollars) |   | Short-term=1-2 years<br>Mid-term=3-5 years<br>Long-term=6 years and beyond |
| <b>G. Improve/upgrade existing facilities</b>                               |  |   |   |  |
| 1. Rainbow Falls Recreation Area  |  |   |   |  |
| a. Complete access improvements and service road/trail, Master Plan Phase 1 | Rainbow Falls Coalition, MECA, City of Manitou Springs                   | \$385,000   | TIP Transportation Enhancement Grant, regional park fees, City of Manitou Springs       | Underway   |
| b. Secure funding and implement Master Plan Phase 2                         | Rainbow Falls Coalition, MECA, City of Manitou Springs, MHYC             | \$50,000  | MECA, regional park fees  | Mid-Term   |
| 2. Bear Creek Regional Park   |  |   |   |  |
| a. Secure conservation easement   | Neighbors, potential Friends group                                       | \$17,500  | Regional park fees, donations   | Underway   |
| b. Replace pavilion roofs   |  | \$50,000  | Regional park fees  | Short-Term   |
| c. Repair tennis courts   |  | \$110,000   | Regional park fees  | Mid-Term   |
| e. Complete other park facility upgrades                                    |  | \$160,000   | Regional park fees  | Long-Term  |
| 3. Bear Creek Nature Center   |  |   |   |  |
| a. Upgrade exhibits   | Friends of El Paso County Nature Centers (docent organization)           | \$100,000   | GOCO grant, docent organization   | Mid-Term   |
| 4. Fountain Creek Nature Center   |  |   |   |  |
| a. Expand building  | Friends of El Paso County Nature Centers (docent organization),          | \$440,000   | GOCO River Corridors Initiative grant, docent organization, City of Fountain, donations | Underway   |
| b. Upgrade or install new exhibits  | City of Fountain, Fountain Creek Watershed District, docent organization | \$150,000   | Grants, docent organization   | Short-Term   |

| ACTION ITEMS   | OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTNERSHIP  | COST  | FUNDING OPTIONS                                  | TIMING   |
|--|--|---|--|--|
|  |  | Preliminary or Actual, if underway (2013 dollars) |  | Short-Term=1-2 years<br>Mid-Term=3-5 years<br>Long-Term=6 years and beyond |
| <b><i>Enhance use of the Fairgrounds and Events Center site to offer facility opportunity for recreation, working in collaboration with other organizations to provide the programming effort.</i></b> |  |   |  |  |
| A. Improve and upgrade facilities  |  |   |  |  |
| 1. Address design and implementation of recreation facilities consistent with programming needs as Master Plan is updated  | Fairgrounds Corporation, cities and towns, sports organizations, clubs |   | County and partner in-kind                       | Short-Term   |
| 2. Upgrade Whittemore Building   | Fairgrounds Corporation  | \$400,000   | CDBG grants, GOCO grant, other grants            | Mid-Term   |
| 3. Construct improved maintenance facilities   | Fairgrounds Corporation  | \$200,000   | GOCO grant, regional park fees, donations        | Mid-Term   |
| 4. Upgrade grandstands with aluminum planking, ADA-compliant seating, additional seating, and fix slab on grade  | Fairgrounds Corporation  | \$487,000   | CDBG grants, GOCO grant, other grants, donations | Long-Term  |
| <b><i>Complete master planning process for park properties.</i></b>  |  |   |  |  |
| A. Complete and update master Plans as described under Objective A, No. 1  |  |   |  |  |
| B. Develop master plans as new properties are acquired.  |  |   |  |  |



| <b>ACTION ITEMS</b><br>See detailed descriptions of trail links in Chapter 7   | <b>OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTNERSHIP</b>  | <b>COST</b><br>Based on \$15/linear foot and 10% contingency | <b>FUNDING OPTIONS</b>   | <b>TIMING</b><br>Short-Term=1-2 years<br>Mid-Term=3-5 years<br>Long-Term=6 years and beyond |
|--|---|--|--|---|
| <b>Trails</b>  |   |  |  |   |
| <b>Goal 1: Work collaboratively with others to create a continuous, connected system of regional trails.</b>                                       |   |  |  |   |
| <b>Goal 2: Prioritize and implement trail connections using the criteria and proposed action items identified in this master planning process.</b> |   |  |  |   |
| A. Primary Regional Trails   |   |  |  |   |
| 1. Arroya Lane Regional Trail  | Metro districts, land owners, land developers   | \$528,000  | Regional park fees   | Long-Term   |
| 2. Bear Creek Regional Trail   | City of Colorado Springs, TOSC, MHYC  | \$21,510   | Regional park fees   | Short-Term  |
| 3. Big Sandy Creek Regional Trail  | Colorado Parks and Wildlife, landowners   | \$1,666,710  | State Trails grant, regional park fees, partner agency funds                   | Long-Term   |
| 4. Black Squirrel Creek Regional Trail   | Black Forest Trails Association (BFTA), land owners, land developers                                      | \$4,109,655  | Regional park fees   | Long-Term   |
| 5. Chamberlain Regional Trail  | City of Colorado Springs, Colorado State Parks, Fort Carson, TOSC   | \$146,850  | State Trails grant, regional park fees, partner agency funds                   | Short-Term  |
| 6. Cherry Creek Regional Trail   | BFTA, metro districts, land owners, land developers   | \$663,779  | State Trails grant, regional park fees, partner agency funds                   | Mid-Term  |
| 7. Crews Gulch Regional Trail  | City of Fountain, City of Colorado Springs  | \$15,000   | Regional park fees, EPC Public Services Department (PSD), partner agency funds | Short-Term  |
| 8. Eastonville Road Regional Trail   | PSD, metro districts, land owners, land developers  | \$630,944  | Regional park fees, PSD, partner agency funds                                  | Mid-Term  |
| 9. Fountain Creek Regional Trail (part of the Front Range Trail)   | City of Colorado Springs, Colorado Springs Utilities, City of Fountain, Fountain Creek Watershed District | \$844,074  | State Trails grant, regional park fees, partner agency funds                   | Mid-Term  |

| ACTION ITEMS   | OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTNERSHIP   | COST<br>Preliminary or Actual, if underway (2013 dollars) | FUNDING OPTIONS   | TIMING<br>Short-Term=1-2 years<br>Mid-Term=3-5 years<br>Long-Term=6 years and beyond |
|--|---|---|---|--|
| 10. Fountain Creek West Regional Trail (part of the Front Range Trail) | City of Fountain, land owners, land developers, Palmer Land Trust                                       | \$1,578,126   | State Trails grant, regional park fees, partner agency funds                    | Long-Term  |
| 11. Fox Run Regional Trail   | BFTA, PSD, land owners  | \$535,772   | State Trails grant, PPACG, GOCO grant, Regional park fees, PDS, donations       | Short-Term   |
| 12. Highway 115 Regional Trail   | Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT)  |   | State Trails grant, regional park fees, partner agency funds                    | Long-Term  |
| 13. Jackson Creek Regional Trail                                       | City of Colorado Springs, Air Force Academy, Town of Monument, TOSC, YMCA, land owners, land developers | \$792,281   | State Trails grant, PPACG, GOCO grant, regional park fees, partner agency funds | Mid-Term   |
| 14. Jimmy Camp Creek Regional Trail                                    | City of Colorado Springs, City of Fountain, TOSC, land owners, land developers                          | \$1,835,774   | State Trails grant, GOCO, regional park fees, partner agency funds              | Long-Term  |
| 15. Kane Ranch Regional Trail  | Colorado State Land Board, City of Colorado Springs, PSD  | \$1,087,862   | Regional park fees, partner agency funds  | Long-Term  |
| 16. LaForet Regional Trail   | City of Colorado Springs, Palmer Land Trust, BFTA, land owners, land developers                         | \$222,074   |   | Mid-Term   |
| 17. New Santa Fe Regional Trail (part of the American Discovery Trail) | Air Force Academy, City of Colorado Springs, City of Monument, TOSC                                     |   |   | Existing   |
| 18. Palmer Divide Regional Trail                                       | Palmer Land Trust, BFTA, land owners land developers  | \$1,146,981   | State Trails grant, regional park fees, partner agency funds, donations         | Mid-Term   |
| 19. Paul Intemann Memorial Nature Trail                                | City of Manitou Springs, City of Colorado Springs, TOSC   | \$43,560  | State Trails grant, regional park fees, partner agency funds, donations         | Short-Term   |

| ACTION ITEMS   | OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTNERSHIP  | COST<br>Preliminary or Actual, if underway (2013 dollars) | FUNDING OPTIONS   | TIMING<br>Short-Term=1-2 years<br>Mid-Term=3-5 years<br>Long-Term=6 years and beyond |
|--|--|---|---|--|
| 20. Rock Island Regional Trail (part of the America the Beautiful Trail) | CDOT, PSD, metro districts, High Plains Chamber of Commerce, City of Calhan, Town of Ramah, utility companies, landowners, land developers   | \$1,981,782   | State Trails grant, PPACG, regional park fees, partner agency funds, donations                    | Long-Term  |
| 21. Sand Creek Regional Trail  | City of Colorado Springs, PSD  | \$266,789   |   | Mid-Term   |
| 22. Ute Pass Regional Trail (part of the American Discovery Trail)       | City of Colorado Springs, Colorado Springs Utilities, City of Manitou, Town of Green Mountain Falls, U. S. Forest Service, Ute Pass Corridor Trails Committee, CDOT, PSD, land owners, land developers | \$413,820   | State Trails grant, GOCO grant, regional park fees, partner agency funds, other grants, donations | Short-Term   |
| <b>B. Secondary Regional Trails</b>                                      |  |   |   |  |
| 1. B Street Trail  | Fort Carson, City of Colorado Springs, land owners, South Academy Station developers   | \$127,600   | PPRTA, GOCO grant, regional park fees, partner agency funds, donations                            | Short-Term   |
| 2. Ben Lomond Mountain Trail   | Town of Palmer Lake, United Congregational Church  | \$197,241   | GOCO grant, regional park fees, partner agency funds, other grants, donations                     | Long-Term  |
| 3. Davis Road Trail  | City of Colorado Springs, Waste Management of Colorado, land owners  | \$596,508   | Regional park fees, partner agency funds, donations   | Long-Term  |
| 4. Drake Lake Trail  | CDOT, PSD, land owners   | \$84,084  | State Trails grant, GOCO grant, regional park fees, partner agency funds, other grants, donations | Mid-Term   |



| ACTION ITEMS                | OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTNERSHIP   | COST<br>Preliminary or Actual, if underway (2013 dollars) | FUNDING OPTIONS   | TIMING<br>Short-Term=1-2 years<br>Mid-Term=3-5 years<br>Long-Term=6 years and beyond |
|-----------------------------|---|---|---|--|
| 5. Falcon Vista Trail       | CDOT, PPCC, Falcon School Dist. 49, land owners   | \$57,288  | State Trails grant, GOCO grant, regional park fees, partner agency funds, donations | Short-Term   |
| 6. Forest Lakes Trail       | USFS, land owners   | \$580,276   | regional park fees, partner agency funds, donations                                 | Long-Term  |
| 7. Fort Carson Trail        | Fort Carson, CDOT, land owners  | \$585,750   | State Trails grant, GOCO grant, regional park fees, partner agency funds, donations | Long-Term  |
| 8. Fremont Fort Trail       | State Historical Society, land owners   | \$1,034,550   | Regional park fees, other grants, partner agency funds, donations                   | Long-Term  |
| 9. Grinnell Boulevard Trail | PSD, Fountain Valley School   | \$206,096   | Regional park fees, partner agency funds  | Short-Term   |
| 10. Judge Orr Trail         | CDOT, PSD, land owners  | \$949,443   | Regional Park fees  | Long-Term  |
| 11. Kettle Creek Trail      | City of Colorado Springs, land owners   | \$170,775   | State Trails grant, GOCO grant, regional park fees, partner agency funds, donations | Mid-Term   |
| 12. Latigo Trail            | PSD, Pikes Peak Range Riders Foundation, land owners, 4-Way Ranch developers, Black Forest Trails Association | \$461,753   | Regional park fees, partner agency funds, donations                                 | Mid-Term   |
| 13. Meridian Ranch Trail    | PSD, Meridian Ranch developers, Black Forest Trails Association   | \$214,500   | Regional park fees, partner agency funds  | Short-Term   |
| 14. Homestead Ranch Trail   | Cavalier Trail Riding Club, Black Forest Trails Association   | \$454,344   | Regional park fees, donations   | Mid-Term   |
| 15. Pipeline Trail          | Black Forest Trails Association, land owners, Colorado Interstate Gas Company                                 | \$320,340   | Regional park fees, donations   | Long-Term  |
| 16. Pyramid Mountain Trail  | PSD, USFS, landowners, Pyramid Mountain developers  | \$742,038   | Regional park fees, partner agency funds, donations                                 | Long-Term  |

| ACTION ITEMS                       | OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTNERSHIP   | COST<br>Preliminary or Actual, if underway (2013 dollars) | FUNDING OPTIONS   | TIMING<br>Short-Term=1-2 years<br>Mid-Term=3-5 years<br>Long-Term=6 years and beyond |
|------------------------------------|---|---|---|--|
| 17. Rainbow Falls Connection Trail | City of Manitou Springs, City of Colorado Springs, CDOT, landowners, land developers                  | \$118,569   | State Trails grant, GOCO grant, other grants, regional park fees, partner agency funds, donations | Short-Term   |
| 18. Schriever Trail                | City of Colorado Springs, Schriever AFB, State of Colorado, Waste Management of Colorado, landowners, | \$826,320   | Regional park fees, partner agency funds  | Long-Term  |
| 19. Smith Creek Trail              | City of Colorado Springs, Sun Hills subdivision, landowners   | \$266,789   | Regional park fees, partner agency funds, donations   | Long-Term  |
| 20. Woodmen Hills Trail            | PSD, Woodmen Hills Metropolitan District, land developers, landowners                                 | \$368,330   | Regional park fees, partner agency funds, donations   | Long-Term  |
| <b>C. Proposed Bicycle Routes</b>  |   |   |   |  |
| 1. Baptist Road                    | PSD, CDOT, land developers  |   | Same as Opportunities for Partnership column for all roads  | Mid-Term   |
| 2. Blaney Road                     | PSD, land developers  |   |   | Long-Term  |
| 3. Briargate Parkway               | PSD, City of Colorado Springs, land developers  |   |   | Long-Term  |
| 4. Burgess Road                    | PSD, land developers  |   |   | Long-Term  |
| 5. Curtis Road                     | PSD, CDOT, land developers  |   |   | Long-Term  |
| 6. Drennan Road                    | PSD, land developers  |   |   | Long-Term  |
| 7. Elbert Road                     | PSD, CDOT, land developers  |   |   | Long-Term  |
| 8. Falcon Highway                  | PSD, CDOT, City of Colorado Springs, land developers  |   |   | Long-Term  |
| 9. Fontaine Boulevard              | PSD, land developers  |   |   | Long-Term  |
| 10. Garrett Road                   | PSD, land developers  |   |   | Long-Term  |
| 11. Hanover Road                   | PSD, land developers  |   |   | Long-Term  |
| 12. Highway 83                     | CDOT, PSD, Land developers  |   |   | Short-Term   |

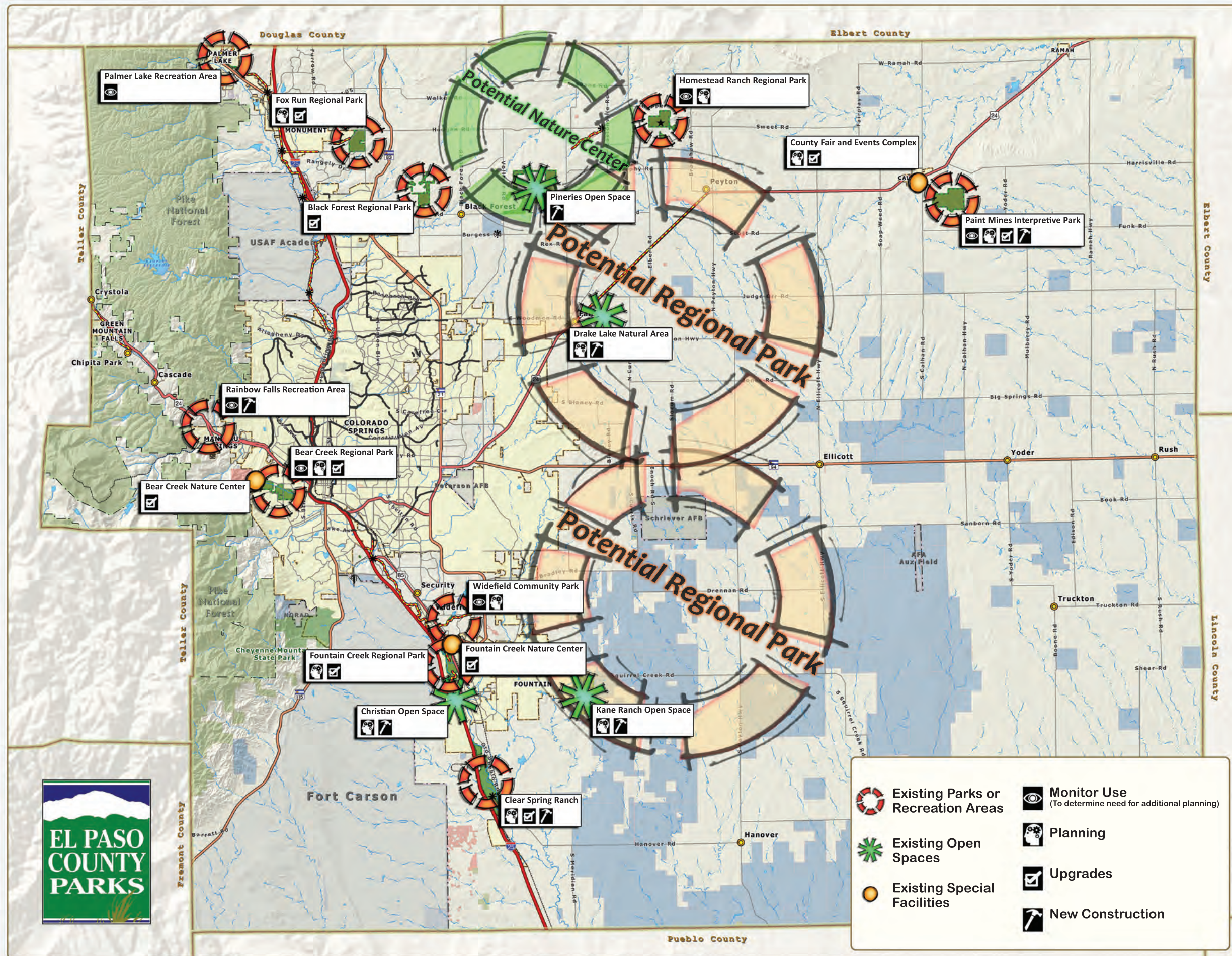
| ACTION ITEMS               | OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTNERSHIP                                    | COST<br>Preliminary or Actual, if underway (2013 dollars) | FUNDING OPTIONS | TIMING<br>Short-Term=1-2 years<br>Mid-Term=3-5 years<br>Long-Term=6 years and beyond |
|----------------------------|--|---|-----------------|--|
| 13. Highway 94             | CDOT, City of Fountain, land developers                          |   |                 | Long-Term  |
| 14. Hodgen Road            | PSD, CDOT, City of Colorado Springs, land developers             |   |                 | Short-Term   |
| 15. Hopper Road            | PSD, land developers   |   |                 | Long-Term  |
| 16. Judge Orr Road         | PSD, CDOT, land developers                                       |   |                 | Long-Term  |
| 17. Log Road               | PSD, land developers   |   |                 | Long-Term  |
| 18. Marksheffel Road       | PSD, City of Colorado Springs, City of Fountain, land developers |   |                 | Long-Term Existing (frontage road)   |
| 19. Meridian Road          | PSD, land developers   |   |                 | Mid-Term   |
| 20. Milam Road             | PSD, land developers   |   |                 | Long-Term  |
| 21. North Calhan Highway   | PSD, CDOT, land developers                                       |   |                 | Long-Term  |
| 22. Peyton Highway         | PSD, CDOT, land developers                                       |   |                 | Long-Term  |
| 23. Ramah Highway          | PSD, CDOT, land developers                                       |   |                 | Long-Term  |
| 24. Roller Coaster Road    | PSD, City of Colorado Springs, land developers                   |   |                 | Long-Term  |
| 25. Shoup Road             | PSD, CDOT, land developers                                       |   |                 | Long-Term  |
| 26. South Marksheffel Road | PSD, CDOT, City of Fountain, land developers                     |   |                 | Long-Term  |
| 27. South Powers Boulevard | PSD, CDOT, City of Fountain, land developers                     |   |                 | Long-Term  |
| 28. Squirrel Creek Road    | PSD, land developers   |   |                 | Long-Term  |
| 29. Sweet Road             | PSD, land developers   |   |                 | Long-Term  |
| 30. Vollmer Road           | PSD, City of Colorado Springs, land developers                   |   |                 | Long-Term  |
| 31. Walker Road            | PSD, land developers   |   |                 | Long-Term  |
| 32. Woodmen Road           | PSD, CDOT, City of Colorado Springs, land developers             |   |                 | Existing (frontage road)   |



| <b>ACTION ITEMS</b><br>See detailed descriptions of candidate open space areas in Chapter 7   | <b>OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTNERSHIP</b>  | <b>COST</b>   | <b>FUNDING OPTIONS</b>   | <b>TIMING</b><br>Short-Term=1-2 years<br>Mid-Term=3-5 years<br>Long-Term=6 years and beyond                         |
|---|---|---|--|---|
| <b>Open Space</b>   |   |   |  |   |
| <b>Goal 1: Protect and enhance El Paso County's legacy of unique natural features and cultural resources, working and collaborating with others to conserve high priority open space areas in the County.</b>   |   |   |  |   |
| A. Use Parks Master Plan information, tools and Open Space Master Plan Map to identify and conserve open space  |   |   |  |   |
| 1. Conduct Tier 2 screening of candidate open space properties on an annual basis to identify priorities and costs for the annual Parks Action Plan   | County Environmental Services, Colorado Department of Parks and Wildlife, land trusts, TOSC   |   | County in-kind   | Short-Term  |
| 2. Work with the Development Services Department, landowners and developers, during the development permit review process to conserve candidate open space areas  | Trust for Public Land, Palmer Land Trust, other land trusts, Colorado Department of Parks and Wildlife, landowners, developers, TOSC  |   | Open space dedication during development permit review process, Colorado Department of Parks and Wildlife grant programs, other grants, donations  | Opportunistic   |
| 3. Proceed with acquisition or other protection of identified potential open space areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Forest Lakes/Willow Springs - acquisition</li> <li>b. Black Forest North/Snipe Creek – acquisition or conservation easement</li> <li>c. Drake Lake, augment existing Natural Area – acquisition or conservation easement</li> <li>d. Manitou South - connect Rainbow Falls area to Ute Pass Trail – acquisition or easement</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City of Monument, City of Colorado Springs, neighbors, landowner/developer, private sector</li> <li>Landowner/developer, Palmer Land Trust, Trust for Public Land</li> <li>Neighbors, landowners, High Plains Chamber of Commerce, Colorado Parks and Wildlife</li> <li>City of Manitou Springs, CDOT, MECA, landowners</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>\$2,000,000</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional park fees, partner agency funds, GOCO open space grant, TOPS, donations</li> <li>Open space dedication via development permit review process, regional park fees, GOCO open space grant, donations</li> <li>Regional park fees, partner agency funds, donations</li> <li>Regional park fees, GOCO or State Trails grants, donations</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Short-Term</li> <li>Mid-Term</li> <li>Long-Term</li> <li>Mid-Term</li> </ul> |

| ACTION ITEMS  | OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTNERSHIP   | COST  | FUNDING OPTIONS                                   | TIMING   |
|---|---|---|---|--|
|   |   | Preliminary or Actual, if underway (2013 dollars) |   | Short-Term=1-2 years<br>Mid-Term=3-5 years<br>Long-Term=6 years and beyond |
| e. Fountain Creek/Clear Spring Ranch Vicinity – augment existing greenway area and allow for Front Range Trail connectivity – acquisition or easement | City of Colorado Springs, Colorado Springs Utilities, City of Fountain, Fountain Creek Watershed District, railroad companies, landowners |   | GOCO or State Trails grants, partner agency funds | Short-Term   |



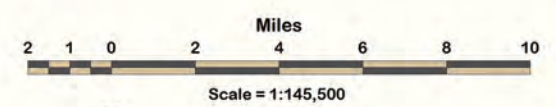


## Parks Master Plan

### Legend

- EPC Regional Trails
- Existing City Trail
- EPC Parks
- EPC Trailheads
- EPC Indoor Facility
- US Interstate Highways
- US Highways
- State Highways
- Major Roadways
- Railroads
- Lakes & Reservoirs
- Creeks - Perennial
- Creeks - Intermittent
- Unincorporated Towns
- Military Areas
- County Lands
- Federal Lands
- State Lands
- Incorporated Cities
- Pike National Forest
- County Boundary

- Existing Parks or Recreation Areas
- Existing Open Spaces
- Existing Special Facilities
- Monitor Use  
(To determine need for additional planning)
- Planning
- Upgrades
- New Construction



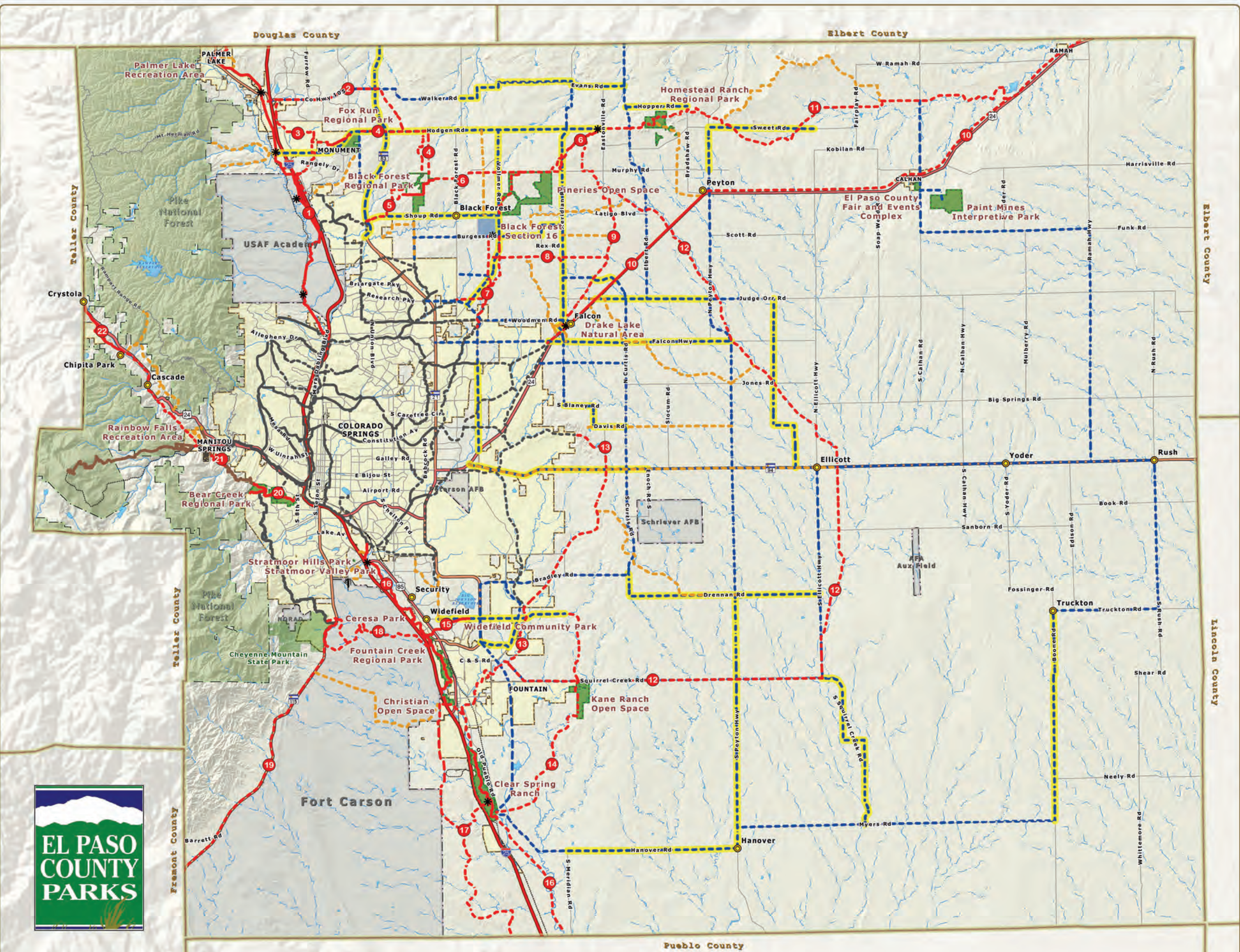
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## Trails Master Plan



### Legend

**Existing & Proposed Regional Trails**

|                          |                               |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 New Santa Fe Trail     | 12 Black Squirrel Creek Trail |
| 2 Cherry Creek Trail     | 13 Jimmy Camp Creek Trail     |
| 3 Jackson Creek Trail    | 14 Kane Ranch Trail           |
| 4 Fox Run Trail          | 15 Crews Gulch Trail          |
| 5 LaForet Trail          | 16 Fountain Creek Trail       |
| 6 Palmer Divide Trail    | 17 Fountain Creek West Trail  |
| 7 Sand Creek Trail       | 18 Chamberlain Trail          |
| 8 Arroya Lane Trail      | 19 Highway 115 Trail          |
| 9 Eastonville Road Trail | 20 Bear Creek Trail           |
| 10 Rock Island Trail     | 21 Paul Intemann Nature Trail |
| 11 Big Sandy Creek Trail | 22 Ute Pass Trail             |

Completed Primary Regional Trails  
 Proposed Primary Regional Trails  
 Completed Secondary Regional Trails  
 Proposed Secondary Regional Trails  
 Proposed Bicycle Routes  
 2011-2020 MTCP  
 Trails By Others  
 Existing City Trails  
 Proposed City Trails

---

### Base Map Information

|                      |                       |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| * EPC Trailheads     | Interstate Highways   |
| EPC Parks            | Major Highways        |
| Leased State Lands   | State Highways        |
| Incorporated Cities  | Major Roadways        |
| Military Areas       | Railroads             |
| Pike National Forest | Lakes & Reservoirs    |
| County Boundary      | Creeks - Perennial    |
| Unincorporated Towns | Creeks - Intermittent |

\*Note: Only larger open space areas are displayed

Miles

Scale = 1:145,500

June 2013

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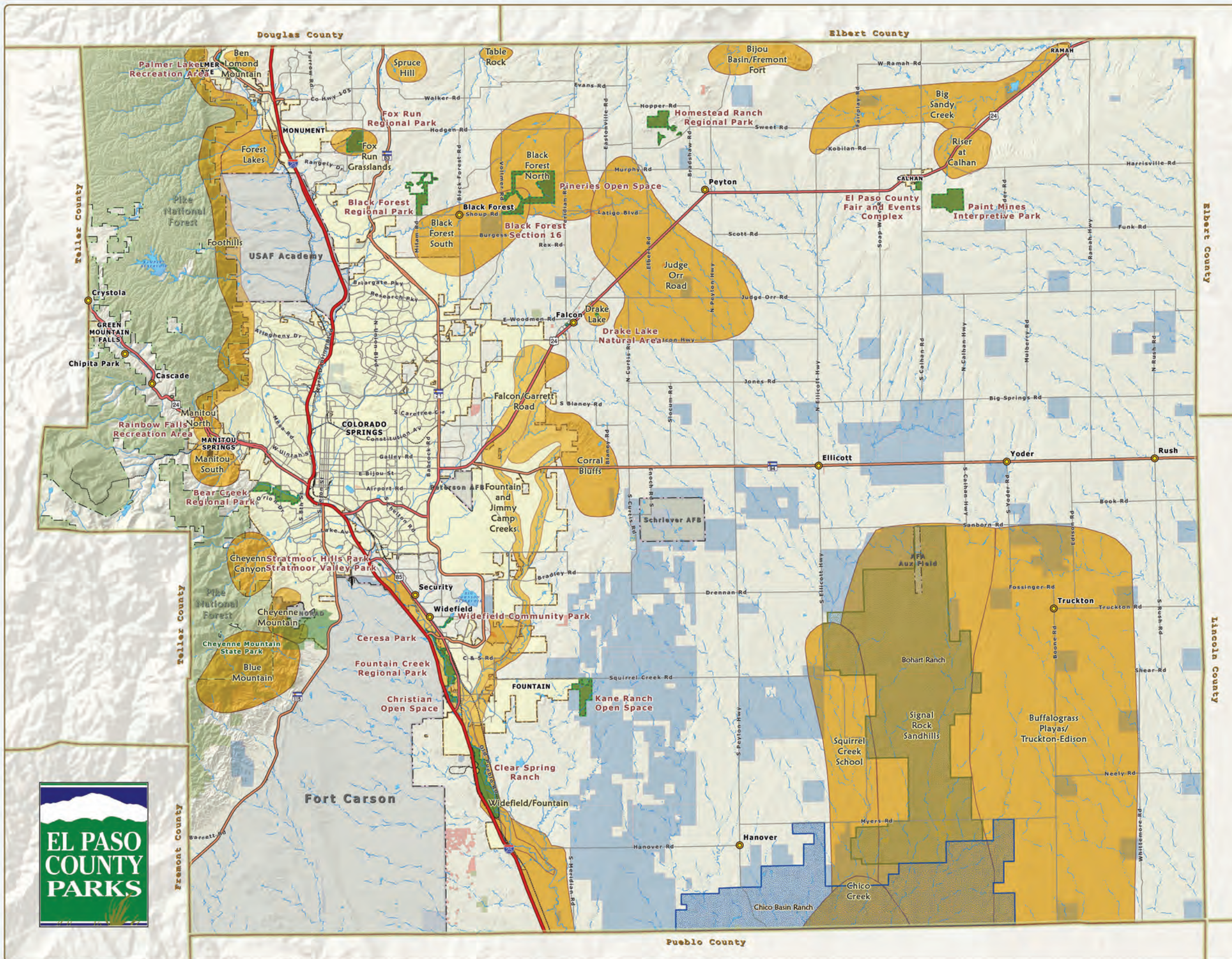








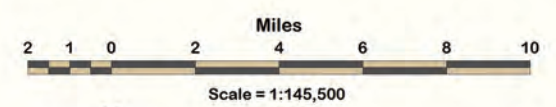
## Open Space Master Plan



### Legend

- Candidate Open Space Lands
- EPC Parks\*
- Military Areas
- County Lands
- Federal Lands
- State Lands
- Pike National Forest
- Incorporated Cities
- Nature Conservancy Lands:**
- Bohart Ranch
- Chico Basin Ranch
- Unincorporated Towns
- US Interstate Highways
- US Highways
- State Highways
- Major Roadways
- Railroads
- Lakes & Reservoirs
- Creeks - Perennial
- Creeks - Intermittent
- County Boundary

\*Note: Only larger open space areas are displayed.



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## Chapter 9: Administration and Funding Strategies

The El Paso County Parks Master Plan provides a vision, goals, and action item framework to guide the expansion of the regional park, trails and open space system, integrating recreation and cultural services and incorporating best management practices in response to evolving community trends, needs, and interests. The plan includes decision-making tools to guide staff and leaders in making wise capital and operating investment decisions for recreation opportunities for the next 5-10 years. Securing the needed resources to complete the plan will be challenging and having a varied and extensive “tool box” of potential funding sources, and service delivery alternatives is paramount.

Citizen discussion groups felt El Paso County Parks is reasonably effective in achieving its mission but is hindered by a lack of funding. Citizens focused on not only the need for more funds, but encouraged increased visibility and community awareness in order to increase support, resources, and use, along with an increased emphasis on partnerships with individual volunteers, area organizations and groups, as well as collaboration with regional governmental organizations. They stated that an effective system cannot be accomplished on an individual basis, but needs support and funding from the entire community to make it happen.

They also recognized the economic, environmental, and social benefits of having the County Parks system and the importance of “telling the story” about the benefits and the cost in order to attract support. The challenge is identifying feasible, supportable ways of obtaining more resources, acknowledging the investment that is needed to generate the additional resource and that a comprehensive funding package is needed.

### Administration and Staffing

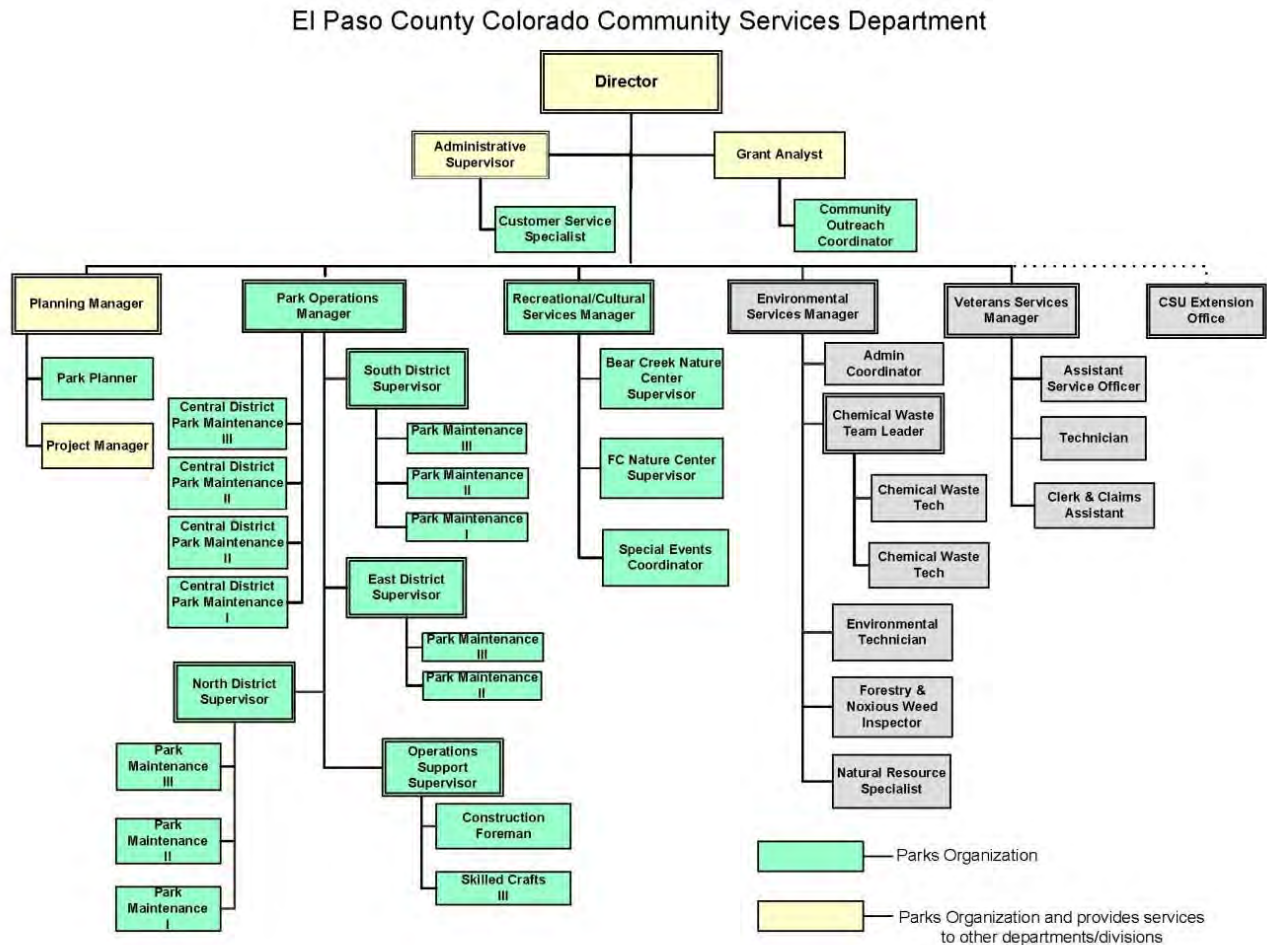
El Paso County Parks was established in 1971 to provide parks, trails, open space, and recreation and cultural services for El Paso County residents. County Parks has focused on the development of a regional park system, securing important natural resources, establishing a regional trail system, and providing a diverse environmental education programming schedule.

#### Staff

El Paso County Parks is currently comprised of three divisions: Park Operations, Planning, and Recreation and Cultural Services, all of which are part of the six-division Community Services Department as shown in **Figure 9-1**. The Director of Community Services provides the leadership for the six divisions and provides the ultimate direction for El Paso County Parks. There are currently 31 full time employees (five of which primarily support parks and also provide services to other departments/divisions), five part time employees, and temporary/seasonal employees that are mostly tasked with maintenance of parks, trails and open space areas.



**Figure 9-1: Organizational Chart**



The Park Operations Division is responsible for the daily maintenance of all park property and landscaping functions at numerous County buildings. The division is supervised by the Park Operations Manager and is divided into four geographic districts: North, East, Central, and South. Each maintenance district is managed by a District Supervisor with several park maintenance technicians being assigned to each district. The division includes a Support Services group with a Supervisor, Foreman, and Skilled Crafts Workers.

The Recreation and Cultural Services Division is responsible for the management of the Bear Creek and Fountain Creek Nature Centers and the provision of a wide variety of interpretive and recreation programming. The Recreation and Cultural Services Manager directs Nature Center Supervisors and Interpretive Specialists. The division is responsible for management of the County Fair and non-fair programming at The El Paso County Fair and Events Complex, and the staff plans and conducts special events and other programs in County parks.

The Planning Division coordinates the planning functions of El Paso County Parks and provides long-range planning expertise for other County departments/divisions. The division is directed by the Planning Manager and includes a Park Planner and a Project Manager. The staff coordinates development of master plans and construction plans for parks, open space, and trail projects, provides project management of Parks capital projects, reviews development permit applications, provides substantive direction on grant submittals, completes a variety of Geographic Information System (GIS) functions, and helps staff a variety of regional planning initiatives.

Administrative Services staff serve the Community Services Department along with El Paso County Parks and are responsible for the management of the financial operations, front desk, human resources, and other functions related to the operations. Staff include an Administrative Services Supervisor and support staff, a Grant Analyst and a Community Outreach Coordinator.

Volunteers are critical to the ongoing operations of El Paso County Parks, especially for recreation and cultural programs, including nature-based programming. Volunteers contribute 27,000 hours annually. Notable for its contribution of both volunteer time and funding is the Friends of El Paso County Nature Centers, a non-profit docent organization.

## **Organizational and Administrative Considerations**

From its beginnings as the Interpretive Services division, and a series of reorganizations since 2005, the Recreation and Cultural Services Division has accepted new responsibilities including management of Bear Creek and Fountain Creek nature centers, programming for the El Paso County Fair and Events Complex and the County Fair, and recreation programming throughout County parks, trails, and open spaces.

As a result of the 2009 budget reductions, the full-time nature center personnel were reduced by 50 percent and the hours of operations were reduced by 30 percent. The nature centers mission shifted to focus on spring and fall environmental education field trips, summer nature camps, and family preschool programs. The County Fair maintained the existing staff and budget, supported by the revenue from sponsors, gate fees, vendor fees, and program fees. Through creative and collaborative partnerships, sponsorships, and donations, the Recreation and Cultural Services Division has expanded recreation programming to include fitness boot camps, archery camps, tennis lessons, and special events.

Public input during this Master Plan update showed strong support for the nature centers and suggested the County could play a stronger role in increasing understanding and stewardship of the natural ecosystems. There was recognition and disappointment that services have been reduced. There was an indication of limited local awareness of educational programs and interest in enhancing the existing nature centers, including adding a center in the northern part of the County. Facilities and programs are considered excellent, well organized, even “community treasures,” and staff is praised. The nature centers’ approach for long term relationships and partnerships is worth modeling.

## Boards and Commissions

### Board of County Commissioners

The County Commissioners are constitutional officers elected to four-year terms. The Board of County Commissioners, an administrative and policy-making body, has only such powers and authority as are granted by the General Assembly of the Colorado State Legislature. County government is a political subdivision of state government, created to carry out the will of the state. Colorado counties with a population of 70,000 or more may have a three or five-member board of commissioners. In 1976 the voters of El Paso County chose to have a board of five commissioners, each elected to represent a district. The districts are equal in population, and the boundaries are established by the board every two years.

The Board of County Commissioners approves the annual budget for County business units, including the Community Services Department, and annually sets the amount of park fees authorized by the El Paso County Land Development Code. A Commissioner liaison to El Paso County Parks is appointed on an annual basis and the individual provides support and guidance for parks planning, operations and programs.

### Planning Commission

The Planning Commission consists of nine members appointed by the Board of County Commissioners for three-year terms. Three associate members may also be appointed for one-year terms. The Planning Commission reviews development permit applications and makes recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners, and prepares a master plan for unincorporated areas of the County.

In El Paso County, the master plan is a collection of planning documents, including the Parks Master Plan. The Planning Commission is the final approval authority for adoption of the Parks Master Plan and does so after two public hearings.

### Park Advisory Board

The Board of County Commissioners appoints a nine-member Park Advisory Board which provides recommendations on the operation of the County's park system. The Park Advisory Board's specific responsibilities include formal recommendations on development permit applications, the annual operating budget, long-range plans, and individual master plans for the development of regional parks, trails, and open space, and department policies and procedures.

### Park Fee Advisory Committee

The Committee consists of five members appointed by the Board of County Commissioners. The Park Fee Advisory Committee meets from September through December of each year to establish a fair and equitable park fee schedule for the coming year for the fees in lieu of land dedication allowed by the Land Development Code. The group works with information from the County Assessor to evaluate the fee relative to land values and other factors makes recommendations to El Paso County Parks and the Board of County Commissioners.

### Fair Advisory Board

The Board of County Commissioners appoints a Fair Advisory Board that assists with the administration of the County Fair. The members work closely with the Fairgrounds Corporation and staff and assume specific areas of responsibility to ensure the County Fair is administered effectively each year.



## **Parks and Recreation Operations and Capital Funding Sources**

There are a variety of mechanisms that local governments can employ to provide services and to make public improvements. Parks and recreation operating and capital development funding typically comes from conventional sources such as sales, use, and property tax referenda voted upon by the community, along with developer exactions. Operating funds are typically capped by legislation; may fluctuate based on the economy, public spending, or assessed valuation; and may not always keep up with inflationary factors. In the case of capital development, “borrowed funds” sunset with the completion of loan repayment, and are not available to carry-over or re-invest without voter approval.

Fee-simple purchases of land for public parks and open space are not common in El Paso County. Instead, the County has typically relied upon land acquisition techniques that involve easements, donations, grants, partnerships, and/or leveraged funds. Alternative funding sources include a variety of different or non-conventional public sector strategies for diversifying the funding base beyond traditional tax-based support.

### **Current Funding Sources**

Currently, El Paso County Parks utilizes a variety of techniques to fund development and operations.

#### **Tax Support**

El Paso County Parks currently receives approximately \$1.2 million in General Fund support. Approximately \$700,000 is from property tax and sales tax and the remainder is generated from fees and charges. The funds are used for administrative and supervisory salaries, materials and supplies, and other general operation expenses.

#### **Conservation Trust Fund (Lottery Funds)**

El Paso County Parks receives approximately \$1.2 million annually from lottery proceeds. The Conservation Trust Funds (CTF) are provided to counties, cities, and special districts to develop new and expanded parks, trails, and open space. Due to significant financial pressures facing the County with the softening of the economy since the last Master Plan update in 2005 and the decrease in general fund support devoted to parks, \$1,000,000 of annual Conservation Trust Funds (CTF) funding is now being used for park maintenance salaries and benefits. El Paso County Parks utilizes the remainder of the annual allotment for ongoing maintenance. Therefore, there are no CTF funds available for park or open space development. The CTF has a current fund balance of approximately \$500,000.

#### **Regional and Urban Park Fees**

El Paso County Parks receives regional and urban park fees from new housing development in the County. The regional park fees can be used for development of park facilities or the purchase of park property or open space. The regional fees must be used in designated areas where the fees were collected. Up until 2005, the regional park fees exacted via the development permit application process generated between \$200,000-\$300,000 per year. By 2012, due to the soft real estate development market, contributions to the regional park fee fund declined to \$50,000-\$75,000 per year. Urban park fees can be used for the development of neighborhood or pocket parks and recreation facilities by another governmental or quasi-governmental entity (such as a metropolitan district) as the County does not develop urban park facilities. Until 2005, urban park fees typically generated approximately \$100,000-\$150,000 per year. Again, due to the soft real estate development market, contributions to this fund have declined to approximately \$25,000-\$50,000 annually.

## **User Fees**

User fees are charged for a variety of individual or group uses currently generating approximately \$500,000 annually.

- Admissions/Ticket Sales
- Camping fees & hook-up fees
- County Fair fees
- Equipment Rental: tables and chairs, tents, recreation equipment
- Facility rentals
- Program fees
- Security and clean-up fees

## **Contractual Services, Permits, Licensing Rights, and Use of Collateral Assets**

- Agricultural leases
- Booth Lease Space: for vendors in parks, special events and tournaments
- Catering permits and services
- Concession Management: outside vendor for retail sale or rental of soft goods, hard goods, or consumable items.
- Land swaps
- Private concessionaires
- Privatization: outsourcing management or maintenance
- Rentals of houses and buildings by private citizens
- Special use permits

## **Philanthropic Support/ Donations**

- Adopt-a-Park/Adopt-a-Trail
- Fundraising/Friends associations
- Gifts/ Gift catalogs
- Volunteers/In-kind services

## **Other Techniques**

- Corporate sponsorships
- Cost avoidance (shared purchasing for example)
- Inter-local agreements
- Positive cash flow (end of year fund balance)
- Partnership opportunities
- Fee-simple land purchase

## **Grants**

El Paso County Parks aggressively pursues grants from Great Outdoor Colorado (GOCO), State Trails, federal enhancement funds, and state and local private foundations, for respective park projects.

- Land and Water Conservation Fund
- Planning grants
- Facilities and equipment grants
- Matching grants
- Seed money or start-up grants

## Potential Funding Strategies for Consideration

A number of potential funding sources were considered for El Paso County Parks. The following were placed into two categories: those that EPC Parks could consider for additional funding and may be the most reasonable to pursue, and those that they could consider but may not be available currently in the state of Colorado or an intergovernmental agreement may be necessary for implementation, or may meet with some resistance and be more difficult to implement. These findings do not recommend any particular funding strategy over another. Economic conditions may vary with time and El Paso County Parks should explore the best means of achieving its goals with regard to its operations, programs, and facilities on an ongoing basis. A full description of the funding sources is provided in **Appendix VII**. **The following funding sources are potential funding opportunities EPC Parks could consider for additional funding of capital and operational expenditures.**

### Operating Foundation - Commercial Property Endowment Model

John L. Crompton<sup>1</sup> discusses government using the Commercial Property Endowment Model citing two case studies in the United Kingdom and Mission Bay Park in San Diego, California as an alternative structure to deliver park and recreation services. A non-profit organization may be established and given park infrastructure and/or land assets to manage as public park and recreation services along with commercial properties as income-earning assets or commercial lease fees to provide for a sustainable funding source. This kind of social enterprise is charged with operating, maintaining, renovating, and enhancing the public park system and is not unlike a model to subsidize low-income housing with mixed-use developments.

### Recreation Service Fee

The Recreation Service Fee is a dedicated user fee that can be established for the purpose of constructing and maintaining recreation facilities. The fee can apply to all organized activities that require a reservation of some type, or other purposes. Examples of such generally accepted activities that are assigned a service fee include recreation and cultural programs and special interest classes. The fee, above and beyond the user fee, allows participants to contribute toward the construction and/or maintenance of the facilities being used.

### Utility Roundup Programs

Agencies work with local utilities on a round up program whereby a consumer can pay the difference between their bill and the next highest even dollar amount as a donation to the agency. Ideally, these monies would be used to support utility improvements such as sports lighting, irrigation cost, and HVAC costs.

### Cell Towers and Wi-Fi

Payment for cell towers attached to existing or new light poles in game field complexes or other tall structures. Another type of revenue for a facility or complex can come from providing sites for supporting Wi-Fi technology. In California, the State Park System is providing wireless internet access and is charging \$7.95 for 24 hours of connectivity (approximately \$.33 per hour) within its service area. They have connected 85 state parks with SBC Communications. For more information, contact California State Parks at [www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov).

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<sup>1</sup> Spring 2010 *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration*, Volume 28, Number 1, pp 103-111



### **Merchandising Sales or Services**

This revenue source comes from the public or private sector on resale items from gift shops, pro-shops, restaurants, concessions, and coffee shops for either all of the sales or a defined percentage of the gross sales.

### **Naming Rights**

Many agencies throughout the country have successfully sold the naming rights for newly constructed facilities or when renovating existing buildings. Additionally, newly developed and renovated parks have been successfully funded through the sale of naming rights. Generally, the cost for naming rights offsets the development costs associated with the improvement. People incorrectly assume that selling the naming rights for facilities is reserved for professional stadiums and other high profile team sport venues. This trend has expanded in recent years to include public recreation centers and facilities as viable naming rights sales opportunities.

Naming rights can be a one-time payment or amortized with a fixed payment schedule over a defined period of time. During this time, the sponsor retains the “rights” to have the park, facility, or amenity named for them. Also during this time, all publications, advertisements, events, and activities could have the sponsoring group’s name as the venue. Naming rights negotiations need to be developed by legal professionals to ensure that the contractual obligation is equitable to all agents and provides remedies to change or cancel the arrangements at any time during the agreement period.

### **Gifts in Perpetuity**

#### ***Maintenance Endowments***

Maintenance Endowments are set up for organizations and individuals to invest in ongoing maintenance improvements and infrastructure needs. Endowments retain money from user fees, individual gifts, impact fees, development rights, partnerships, conservation easements, and for wetland mitigations.

#### ***Irrevocable Remainder Trusts***

These trusts are set up with individuals who typically have more than a million dollars in wealth. They will leave a portion of their wealth to an agency in a trust fund that allows the fund to grow over a period of time and then makes a portion of the interest available for agency use to support specific park and recreation facilities or programs that are designated by the trustee.

#### ***Life Estates***

This revenue source is available when someone wants to leave their property in exchange for their continued residence on the property until their death. The agency can usually use a portion of the property for park and recreational purposes, and then use all of it after the person’s death. This revenue source is very popular for individuals who have a lot of wealth and their estate will be highly taxed at their death. Their benefactors will have to sell their property because of probate costs. Life Estates allow individuals to receive a good yearly tax deduction on their property while leaving property for the community. Agencies benefit because they do not have to pay for the land.

The following funding sources are potential funding opportunities EPC Parks could consider for additional funding of capital and operational expenditures but would be more challenging to pursue. Full descriptions are found in the staff resource document.

### **Assessments/Taxes**

- Real Estate Transfer Tax/Assessment/Fee: collected at the time of real estate transactions.
- Sporting Goods Tax: States collect and redistribute to cities and counties on a population basis and from licenses sold.
- Parks and Recreation Independent Taxing District: serves just the residents of the district through a property tax with separate administration and an elected body.
- Special Improvement District/Benefit District: provide funds for certain types of improvements that benefit a specific group of affected properties through county pass through funding.

### **Bonds**

- Referenda: general obligation, revenue, industrial development, or special assessment bonds
- Annual Appropriation/Leasehold Financing: complex financing structure that requires use of a third party to act as an issuer of the bonds who would construct the facility and retain title until the bonds are retired.

### **Federal Park and Open Space Funding Sources**

#### ***Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act***

This funding program, commonly called ISTEA (pronounced Ice-Tea) Grants, was authorized by the Federal Government in 1991. It presented an overall intermodal approach to highway and transit funding with collaborative planning requirements. The law provided for significant enhancement revenues available for transportation related projects, including bicycle and pedestrian trails, rail depot rehabilitation, landscaping, and beautification projects. Funds are distributed through the state.

ISTEA expired in 1997. The current version of the law, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act (MAP-21) was enacted in 2012. Under MAP-21, funding for bicycle and pedestrian transportation is reduced and consolidated into a broader program called “Transportation Alternatives.” A new ‘Find It, Fund It’ chart (<http://bit.ly/157kRUt>) indicates potential eligibility for pedestrian and bicycle projects under federal highway and transit programs. In each case there are specific requirements that must be met within eligibility criteria and eligibility will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

#### ***Management or Technical Assistance Grants***

Unlike most project grants, a technical assistance grant does not directly support the mission-related activities of the agency. Instead, they support the agency’s management or administration and its associated fundraising, marketing, and financial management needs.

#### ***Program-Related Investments (PRIs)***

In addition to grants, the Internal Revenue Service allows foundations to make loans—called Program-Related Investments (PRIs)—to nonprofits. PRIs must be for projects that would be eligible for grant support. They are usually made at low or zero interest. PRIs must be paid back to the grant maker. PRIs are often made to organizations involved in building projects.

## **Fees and Charges**

- Annual and Season Pass Sales
- Capital Improvement Fees: on top of the set user to support capital improvements
- Dog Park Fees: for exclusive use
- Flexible Fee Strategies: off peak pricing
- Parking Fee: selected destination facilities
- Room Overrides on Hotels: for sports tournaments and special events
- Signage Fees: key locations with high visibility for short-term events
- Trail Fee: for access to secured bike trails
- Transaction Surcharge: surcharge on every transaction, admission, or registration

## **Leases, Sale of Rights, Easements**

- Leasebacks on Recreational Facilities: private investor builds facility to county specifications with investment company financing project; county leases the property back from the investor over 20+ years (or reverse).
- Private Developers: long term lease of space for recreation enhancements that could include sports complexes and recreation centers.
- Sale of Development Rights: below park ground or along trails to utility companies.
- Sale of Mineral Rights: under parks, including water, oil, natural gas, and other by products
- Subordinate Easements: Recreation/Natural Area Easements: develop some type of an improvement above ground or below ground

## **Permits, Licensing Rights, and Use of Collateral Assets**

- Advertising Sales: tasteful and appropriate advertising on agency-related items
- Community Gardens: permit out growing plots
- Film Rights: old ballparks or unique grounds used by film commissions
- Fishing License for County Lakes: county put and take fish operation and safe fishing laws
- Hospitality Centers: developed for use by the public for wedding, reunions, and special gatherings
- Licensing Rights: entity licenses its name on all resale items that private or public vendors sell
- Manufacturing Product Testing and Display: manufacturers test their products in parks, recreation facility, or in a program or service.
- Patron Cards: allows them special privileges above the general public





## Other Options

- Designated License Plate for Parks
- Family Tree Program: work with local hospitals to provide cash to the parks system to buy and plant a tree in honor of every new born in the City.
- Land Trusts: developed land trusts to help secure and fund the cost of acquiring land
- Maintenance Endowments: Endowments retain money from user fees, individual gifts, impact fees, development rights, partnerships, conservation easements, and for wetland mitigations.
- Neighborhood Park Watch
- Product Sales: sale of specific products for purchases or consumption by the public. This would include trees, food, maple syrup, livestock animals, fish, plants, etc.
- Raffleing: such as purchasing an antique car that can be raffled off in contests.

## Grant Resources

Many resources are available which provide information on private grant and philanthropic agency opportunities. A thorough investigation and research on available grants is necessary to ensure mutually compatible interests and to confirm the current status of available funding. Examples of publicly accessible resources are provided below.

- Information on current and archived Federal Register Grant Announcements can be accessed from The Grantsmanship Center (TGCI) on the Internet at: <http://www.tgci.com>.
- For information on government product news and procurement visit GovPro at [www.govpro.com](http://www.govpro.com).
- Another resource is the Foundation Center's RFP Bulletin Grants Page on Health at: [www.fdncenter.org](http://www.fdncenter.org).
- Research [www.eCivis.com](http://www.eCivis.com) for a contract provider of a web-based Grants Locator system for government and foundation grants specifically designed for local government.

## Grant Resources Available in Colorado

### ***Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO)***

Contact: 303 E. 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Suite 1060

Denver, CO 80203

Phone: (303) 226-4500

[www.goco.org](http://www.goco.org)

### ***Local Government Grants***

Competitive grants are awarded to counties, municipalities, and special districts to acquire, establish, expand, and enhance park, outdoor recreation, and environmental education facilities. Projects include ballfields, sports complexes, skate parks, playgrounds, and swimming pools.

- School Play Yard Initiative - Starting in the spring of 2013, GOCO is offering a competitive grant initiative for funding the construction of new, and improvements to existing, school play yards. Applications must be a partnership between a local government and a school or school district. Design process must be student-led. The goal is to provide kids with places for unstructured play and outdoor learning (natural playscapes).

### ***GOCO Special Initiatives***

GOCO also provides grant funding through special initiatives from time to time. In June of 2012, a \$2.5 million GOCO/Lottery grant was awarded through the *River Corridor Initiative* for the Fountain Creek Watershed Trails and Recreation Projects sponsored by numerous partners including the City of Pueblo, the City of Colorado Springs, El Paso County, and the City of Fountain. This initiative was developed to “provide close-to-home recreation opportunities for Coloradans to get outdoors and enjoy, experience and learn firsthand about nature and the state’s waterways.”

GOCO is anticipating a *Trails Initiative* to be available in August of 2013.

### ***Open Space Grants***

Competitive grants are awarded to non-profit land conservation organizations, local governments, and the Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife for projects that protect land and natural areas such as urban open space, riparian corridors, wildlife habitat, and agricultural land and community separators.

### ***Wildlife Grants***

GOCO funds efforts to preserve and protect Colorado’s wildlife through the Colorado Division of Wildlife. Projects include keeping species off the federal threatened and endangered species list through recovery efforts and the protection of critical wildlife habitats, wildlife education programs, and wildlife viewing programs.

### ***Trails Grants***

Projects that build, enhance, maintain, or expand trails around the state receive GOCO funding through the Colorado State Trails Program, a partnership between GOCO and Colorado State Parks.

### ***Planning & Capacity Building***

These competitive grants help develop plans to preserve or enhance open space, parks and outdoor recreation or to help build the capacity of organizations to do so. Entities eligible to receive planning & capacity building grants are local governments, non-profit land conservation organizations, special land conservation districts, and the Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife.

### ***Conservation Excellence Grant Program***

These competitive grants are designed to assist organizations in achieving high-caliber land conservation. They fund conservation planning, staff training open space assessment, planning for public access and other activities that improve an organizations capacity to achieve quality land conservation. Entities eligible to receive planning & capacity building grants are local governments, non-profit land conservation organizations, the Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife.

### ***GOCO Special Initiatives***

#### **Banks**

The Community Reinvestment Act requires banks to invest in the communities in which they collect deposits. Because of this, most large banks have a centrally-administered community grants program that you can apply to for small grants, usually at the beginning of the year. The branch managers of these banks also have money that they can give to neighborhood community groups at their discretion. To get a larger grant, your program should probably include some kind of economic development, like employing local youth.

### **Colorado State Historical Fund**

Contact: History Colorado Center  
1200 Broadway, Denver, CO 80203  
303-866-2042

<http://www.historycolorado.org/oahp/state-historical-fund>

Competitive grants, from a few hundred dollars to over \$200,000 to governmental entities and non-profits that demonstrate a strong public benefit and community support. These grants support a wide variety of preservation projects including restoration and rehabilitation of historic buildings, architectural assessments, archeological excavations, designation and interpretation of historic places, preservation planning studies, and education and training programs.

### **Recreational Equipment, Inc.**

Contact: [www.rei.com/stewardship/community/non-profit-partnerships-and-grants.html](http://www.rei.com/stewardship/community/non-profit-partnerships-and-grants.html)

Recreational Equipment, Inc. (REI) is helping build a lasting legacy of trails, rivers, and wildlands for generations to come and ensuring ongoing programs to help people of all ages and experiences participate. The Grant program supports organizations nominated solely through REI employees. REI's charitable giving focuses support on projects that protect outdoor places for recreation and help increase participation in outdoor activities. The process begins with REI store teams, who endorse nonprofits with whom they've forged meaningful partnerships. Endorsed partners are then invited to submit applications for grant funding.

## **Acquisition Strategies and Regulatory Tools**

### **Fee Simple Acquisition**

A fee simple purchase transfers full ownership of the property, including the underlying title, to another party. Fee simple land acquisition may also be the result of a donation, with the landowner realizing tax benefits from the donation. Sometimes a combination of purchase and donation occurs, resulting in a sale of land for below market value and the landowner donating a portion of the property's value to the buyer. This type of exchange is referred to as a "bargain sale" and benefits the donor because they can deduct the value of the gifted portion of land from their federal income taxes. Under this scenario, landowners enjoy direct economic gains from the sale of their land and potentially from the tax benefits of donating a portion of their land.

Fee title purchases are voluntary transactions between a landowner (seller) and purchaser (buyer). A fee title is a full interest in real property. In granting a sale of land, the landowner generally retains no ownership of the property and gives up all rights. The party that holds the fee title, whether it is a private individual, public agency, or a non-profit organization, has a long-term responsibility to administer and monitor the title.

The process of fee simple land acquisition for conservation purposes is usually facilitated by a non-profit organization, such as a land trust, because these types of organizations often have access to funding for land purchases. (<http://www.uwyo.edu/toolkit/land-conservation/fee-simple.html>, April 24, 2013)



It is unrealistic to presume that all of the land identified for protection of open space in El Paso County will be purchased by the County or other public entity. This section reviews some of the regulatory tools that can be used to contribute to implementation of the open space goals and objectives.

### **Parks Master Plan**

The Parks Master Plan is an element of the County's statutory Master Plan, and consequently, has a higher level of standing and authority than administrative planning tools. It works with the Land Development Code during the development permit application review process to ensure that parks, trails and open space are provided and guided to appropriate areas. El Paso County Parks requests fees and trail easements through the development permit application review process and works with willing developers to secure parkland under parklands agreements.

### **Intergovernmental Agreements**

Intergovernmental agreements can be formulated between municipalities, other governmental entities, and the County to address matters such as cooperative planning and implementation of parks, trail and open space projects and the establishment of urban growth boundaries which can be used to direct growth and the development of infrastructure to the most suitable areas, thus protecting productive agricultural land and other important open space areas. . Intergovernmental agreements for planning and development of projects is common for El Paso County, but local government entities in the region have not been supportive to date of establishing an urban growth area . The regional sustainability plan developed by the Pike Peak Area Council of Governments in 2012 encourages establishment of an urban growth area and the accompanying agreements to direct growth to areas with urban-level facilities and conserve open space.

### **Clustered Development**

Clustered development is a type of development where the buildings are grouped together at one or more places on the development site in order to preserve the remainder of the land as open space, protect important wildlife habitat, minimize construction of roads and extension of utilities, avoid hazardous areas such as floodplains, protect the character of a landscape, and keep the remainder of the land in agriculture. Developers may be offered extra density on the cluster area as a bonus to choose this approach. A conservation easement is recommended for the undeveloped portion of the land to insure that it is retained as open space.

The Planned Unit Development (PUD) zoning provision of the El Paso County Land Development Code is one of the most effective tool that the County has to promote clustering and open space preservation in exchange for design flexibility, including smaller lot sizes, in non-urban areas. At least 10% of the land must be designated open space, and 25% of the 10% must allow active recreational use. There is occasionally pressure to waive the 10% requirement in the interest of optimizing development potential.

Larimer County has implemented a rural land use program that provides landowners with incentives to avoid standard one unit per 35 acre development, preserve open space and increase density without all the requirements of the subdivision process. Participation in the program is entirely voluntary and landowners can earn incentives by clustering development and avoiding sensitive areas. The types of incentives offered include density bonuses and an expedited review process that eliminates many of the requirements associated with a standard subdivision application. El Paso County established a similar program in 2007, via the Rural Land Use Plan zoning overlay, but it has only been used a few times, and there were developer concerns about the County's procedural requirements.

### **Design Guidelines**

Appropriate development should respect a community's character and sense of place. In important viewsheds, such as the Interstate-25 corridor, and in proximity regional open space areas, development should be set back, located in places that reduce its visual impact, or screened with appropriate vegetation. Guidelines can also be used to influence architectural character, assuring that new buildings have a mass and scale and use of materials and colors that have minimal visual impact. Use of traditional plant materials and sensitive siting of utility lines also help to maintain the rural character of a community. Many of larger PUDs approved by the County since 2007 and some of the small area comprehensive plans that have been adopted by the County as part of its statutory Master Plan have included design guidelines. Continuing to encourage PUD development and updating the older small area master plans would be means to encourage open space preservation and compatible development.

### **Transfer of Development Rights**

Transfer of development rights (TDR) is a device by which the development potential of a site is severed from its title and made available for transfer to another location. The owner of a site within a transfer area retains ownership but not approval to develop. The owner of a site within a receiving area may purchase transferable development rights which allow a receptor site to be developed at a greater density. This method allows transfer of development away from environmentally sensitive areas to areas where development is more appropriate. This may be useful for protection of natural areas or agricultural lands. It can be useful when a government entity does not have funds to purchase fee title or a conservation easement, and developers may benefit from increased density. Implementation of a TDR system, however, is a somewhat complex undertaking that is tied to other regulatory tools such as the Land Development Code, and the concept has historically been faced with some degree of resistance.

### **Zoning**

Zoning and other regulatory tools can be used to direct development away from inappropriate areas and assure that appropriate densities and compatible uses are achieved. Effective use of large lot zoning designations maintains rural character and a land use pattern consistent with agricultural operations. Weld County, for example, has a requirement that limits development in areas zoned for agricultural use to one unit per 80 acres. However, zoning is subject to change and a rigid adherence to agricultural zoning in areas experiencing growth pressures can raise issues of individual property rights and fairness. In addition, existing County zoning often becomes moot when municipalities annex unincorporated areas. Therefore, traditional zoning and other regulatory approaches usually must be supplemented with some of the other tools described in this section to be fully effective.

## Voluntary Programs

### Agricultural Districts

The County or a group of farmers may establish a district wherein a farmer may voluntarily join for a pre-established, renewable length of time. Within these districts, state and local governments may be limited in their ability to restrict farm practices, take farmland by eminent domain, or allow construction of utilities. Sometimes, counties may grant additional incentives to farmers who join or create a district: cost-sharing for compliance with environmental regulations; soils and water conservation grants; exemption on state inheritance taxes; marketing support; and low-interest loans for farm operation and improvements. Creation of such districts helps promote the continuation of agricultural use, thus contributing to open space goals.

### Colorado Heritage Areas Partnerships

According to a National Parks Service definition, a heritage area is a region where natural, cultural, and historic resources combine to form a cohesive, distinctive landscape arising from patterns of human activity shaped by geography. While the State of Colorado does not currently have a program for heritage area designation, it is studying the prospects for a state program. In the meantime, many communities have self-designated regions as heritage areas and have subsequently received high levels of support from state and federal agencies in addition to local governments and private sources. These areas could be eligible for funding from the Colorado Historic Society as discussed previously under “Funding Sources.”

### Colorado Natural Areas Program

The Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife administers the Colorado Natural Areas Program. Its purpose is to identify, evaluate and protect examples of Colorado's natural heritage, maintain an inventory and registry of qualified natural areas and establish a system of designated natural areas. Anyone may initially nominate an area for consideration and both public and private lands are eligible. If the area meets certain criteria, and the landowner is willing, the site may be designated as a natural area. An agreement is written that outlines management, monitoring, and rights and duties of the landowner as well as the state. Depending on the resource and the desires of the landowner, use of the area may be restricted.

Designation of such areas protects habitats, biological and geological features, rare plants, and terrestrial and aquatic communities. It requires voluntary participation of landowners. It provides a way for landowners to receive technical assistance and other support to protect important habitats.

### Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP)

Established in 1979, the CNHP is a non-profit scientific organization affiliated with the Warner College of Natural Resources at Colorado State University. The CNHP is a comprehensive source of information on the status and location of Colorado's rarest and most threatened species and plant communities. Colorado State University shares the information with a wide range of stakeholders and partnerships to help ensure the Colorado's biodiversity resources are not diminished. The data is widely used by local communities, including El Paso County, to identify high-priority areas for conservation. A more detailed description of the specific areas identified in El Paso County may be found in Chapter 7.



### **Partners for Wildlife**

This program operates similarly to the Colorado Natural Areas Program. The Partners for Wildlife program improves and protects fish and wildlife habitat on private lands through alliances between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, other organizations and individuals, while leaving the land in private ownership. At the request of landowners and providing the project meets certain criteria, the Fish and Wildlife Service will help landowners plan and design a habitat management project that will restore or enhance existing habitat.



*Yellow-Headed Blackbird*

### **Land Trusts**

Land trusts are typically nonprofit organizations that hold land and other property rights for the benefit of the public. Because most are private, land trusts have significant flexibility in the way they can acquire property and have the ability to react quickly to buy land or acquire an easement before the land is developed. Land trusts can assist in a number of ways, including participation in pre-acquisition negotiations and the ability to accept donations of property through a transaction that qualifies the landowner for substantial tax benefits. Their private status is often appealing to landowners who may otherwise be reluctant to deal with a government entity. El Paso County Parks has worked cooperatively with the Palmer Land Trust to preserve the conservation values on several properties. Municipalities may also form land trusts. A municipal land trust is a quasi-public agency that is established by local ordinance, funded out of a city budget, and authorized by charter to hold and manage lands for conservation purposes. It functions similarly to a private land trust. A disadvantage is its connection to government, which may sway the confidence of some landowners.

### **Conservation Easements**

The County initiated accepting conservation easements in 1997 and has secured approximately 2,500 acres. The program allows the landowner to maintain ownership and use of the land but gives up development opportunities for tax benefits. Most of the County easements are relatively small, averaging approximately 65 acres. The easement program has been very helpful in preserving open space at minimal cost to the County. The Palmer Land Trust and other land trusts have also secured thousands of acres of land through the conservation easement program, including the Pineries Open Space easement at 1,030 acres.

### **Special Districts**

As the County continues to experience the significant expansion of Title 32 Special Districts, with 101 established at this time according to the Development Services Department, El Paso County Parks should continue to encourage the inclusion of urban parks within the special district's level of service. The provision of these facilities can be assisted by the development of standards and criteria to be used by the developer for the recreation facilities. The County can also financially assist the developer with the provision of Urban Park Grant funds (from the fees exacted at the time of subdivision for the construction of the facilities).