

2023 Capital Improvement Projects

PARK OPERATIONS DIVISION

1. Update Park Maintenance Standards

Having established maintenance and operations standards helps protect, preserve, and provide consistency in services throughout the County Park system. Staff will assess the current Park Operations Division manual and revise to be more user-friendly. During this process, maintenance standards will be updated into a concise format with recommended frequency and acceptable quality.

2. Develop New Capital Improvement Program

El Paso County Parks (County Parks) currently manages a multi-million-dollar park system that includes approximately 8,000 acres of parkland, 145 miles of trails, 32 pavilions, 11 playgrounds, 23 restroom facilities, two nature centers, 2,500 acres of conservation easements, and numerous athletic facilities. County Parks also manages the El Paso County Fairgrounds and landscape maintenance at numerous County buildings.

The Capital Improvement Program is a guiding document to help ensure all facilities are well-maintained and that we make every effort to meet the parks and recreation needs of our citizens with the available resources. This is a critical management tool that looks at the next five years to help determine funding, major maintenance needs of existing facilities, new project design and development, land acquisition, and implementation schedule. The current format and process will be evaluated and updated to better align with increasing design / project costs, available resources and funding.

3. Ute Pass Regional Trail

The Master Plan for the Ute Pass Regional Trail was approved by the Board of County Commissioners on October 15, 2015. The Ute Pass Regional Trail is a planned 11-mile trail corridor between Manitou Springs and the El Paso / Teller County Line. The trail has been developed in sections starting in 2003. Currently 4 miles of the trail remain in the Cascade / Chipita Park area. The Master Plan identified a preferred trail alignment for the trail that includes utilizing public right-of-way by following Chipita Park Road, Fountain Avenue, and CDOT frontage roads, before following French Creek and connecting to the existing Ute Pass Regional Trail. The trail will be concrete or asphalt along public roads and gravel along French Creek. A trailhead is planned within public right-of-way along Spring Street that will include parking, restroom facility, and various site amenities. El Paso County secured Federal Highway monies from the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) through the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) and Transportation Improvement Programs (TIP) to fund the design and construction of a 3-mile segment between Winnemucca Road and Fountain Avenue by 2024.

4. County Fairgrounds Barn Replacement

El Paso County updated the County Fairgrounds Master Plan in 2015 which identified existing facilities that need upgrades to improve functionality, protect infrastructure, and enhance user experiences. The proposed improvements included the removal and replacement of the small animal barns that are located west of Owens Livestock Arena. The existing, dilapidated

wooden barns will be replaced with a new 7,500 square foot barn. The anticipated project completion date is Spring 2023.

5. Fox Run Regional Park Improvements

Fox Run Regional Park is a 414-acre regional park located within Black Forest along Baptist Road. It is one of the most used parks in the County Park system featuring athletic fields, natural trails, playgrounds, and off-leash dog park. The Oak Meadows restroom has been closed for three seasons due to antiquated infrastructure and a compromised leach field. The project will focus on designing a new septic system for both Oak Meadows and Pine Meadows restrooms, improving guest experience by converting the restrooms from a Clivus composting system to flushable toilets, and ADA accessibility improvements.

6. Black Forest Regional Park Improvements

Black Forest Regional Park is a 385-acre regional park located northeast of Shoup Road and Milam Road. The park was severely impacted by the 2013 Black Forest Fire and recovery efforts have focused on forestry, drainage, and trail improvements. This project will shift efforts to the active use area by renovating the two tennis courts which are in poor condition and deemed beyond its functional life. The anticipated project completion date is Spring 2023.

7. Homestead Ranch Regional Park

Located at the edge of Black Forest, Homestead Ranch Regional Park includes 460 acres of diverse topography ranging from rolling, open meadows to tree-covered bluffs running the length of the park. This project will implement recommendations from the master plan update which was completed December 2022. It is anticipated that work will include trail upgrades, parking lot and drainage improvements, and forest management tasks.

8. Fountain Creek Regional Park Parking and ADA Improvements

Fountain Creek Regional Park is a 388-acre regional park located along Fountain Creek between the cities of Colorado Springs and Fountain. Portions of the asphalt roads and parking lots are in poor condition and need of repair. Work includes asphalt paving, patching, concrete curb and gutter replacement. Several sections of concrete trail need replacement due to heaving or settling. ADA ramps will also be installed to improve access within the park. The sidewalks and trails around the Fountain Creek Nature Center need upgrading to provide ADA accessibility. First part of the project consists of project design which will be followed by construction.

9. Fox Run Nature Center Design

Based on projected population growth and public surveys in the El Paso County Parks Master Plan in 2013, developing a nature center in northern El Paso County was identified as an objective. A feasibility study was completed in 2019 to analyze and evaluate location, potential partnerships/collaborations, public support, revenue sources, construction costs, and long-term maintenance and staffing. A Request for Proposals was issued in 2022 for the nature center design. This project includes building design, surrounding site design, utilities, and programming. Stakeholder and public outreach will be continuous throughout the duration of the project. Design is scheduled to launch in late 2022,

continue through 2023, with construction anticipated in 2024. A capital campaign will launch parallel to the design process to raise funds for the construction of the Fox Run Nature Center.

10. Widefield Community Park / Crews Gulch Trail Paving

The Crews Gulch Primary Regional Trail runs southwest to northeast from Ceresa Park and the Fountain Creek Regional Trail, northeast through Widefield Community Park, to its terminus at Fontaine Boulevard. While some of the trail is paved through Widefield Community Park, the section south of Quebec Street is currently gravel surfaced. The 2017 Widefield Community Park Master Plan identified the southern section of the Crews Gulch Trail as a candidate for concrete paving, thus allowing for more robust ADA accessibility through the park. El Pas County Parks was awarded a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) to complete this project. The anticipated project completion date is late Summer 2023.

11. Pineries Single-Track Trail Construction

The Pineries Open Space Master Plan includes the development of two single-track trail loops. The first 8.5-mile trail loop was constructed by hand in 2019-2020 by the Mile High Youth Corps and Rocky Mountain Field Institute. The trail provides access to the north, east, and southern areas of the property. Since its opening, this trail has been heavily used by hikers, bikers, and equestrians. This project includes construction of a second single-track trail which will provide access to the southwestern portion of the property. This trail is identified in the master plan and totals approximately 3.5 miles. Following a similar approach to the first trail, this trail is planned to be constructed by the Mile High Youth Corps and Rocky Mountain Field Institute in 2023. Funding for this project comes from a pending Great Outdoors Colorado Grant which will fund the youth corps, with matching funds going to Rocky Mountain Field Institute to provide oversight, technical assistance, and training opportunities. El Paso County will provide matching funds to cover the cost of RMFI oversight and building materials.

12. Paint Mines Interpretive Park Master Plan

The Paint Mines Interpretive Park is in the northeast section of the County near Calhan with approximately 750 acres. The park features geological formations including spires and hoodoos that form through erosive action that creates incised gullies and colorful exposed layers of rock. The park includes a restroom facility, four (4) miles of trails, interpretive signage, and three (3) parking areas. In recent years the number of visitors to the park has increased leading to several management challenges which includes vehicle congestion, user-created social trails, climbing on the formations, and overall site degradation. In response to these challenges, the County completed two projects in 2020-2021 aimed at improving the existing parking areas, resurfacing existing trails, completing minor ditch and drainage improvements, and adding fencing and signage to guide park visitors. El Paso County is now looking to create a Master Plan which will build-upon these improvements and provide a long-term plan to manage park visitors while also protecting the formations.