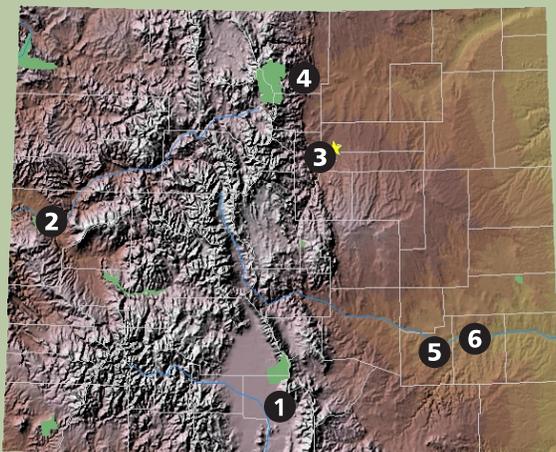




Colorado News

The planning team explores site opportunities at Howelsen Emerald Mountain Park. Photo: NPS

PROJECTS AND PARTNERS 2015



■ NPS Unit
★ State Capital

CURRENT PROJECTS

1. Rio Grande and Sangre De Cristo Greenbelts
2. Monument Road Corridor Protection
3. Montbello Connections to Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge
4. Estes Valley Trails Master Plan
5. La Junta Trails System
6. Boggsville Sustainable Stewardship

Find out more about each project starting on page 2.

ABOUT US

The Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program is the community assistance arm of the National Park Service. Program staff provide technical assistance to community groups and local, state, and federal government agencies working to protect natural areas and water resources and enhance close-to-home outdoor recreation opportunities. We help communities plan, organize partnerships, and achieve on-the-ground success on projects they initiate.

Recent Successes

Steamboat Springs Howelsen Emerald Mountain Park

Howelsen Emerald Mountain Park, just southwest of downtown Steamboat Springs, has been the community's informal local mountain park for decades even though it has been privately owned with a conservation easement. It is an area renowned for hiking, mountain biking, snowshoeing, and Nordic skiing. In 2011, the 586-acre park was formalized as public land when the city of Steamboat purchased the property through the grant assistance of Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) and the Yampa River System Legacy Project. In 2012, the project was awarded another grant from GOCO for master planning the site with the aim of balancing public recreation values with those of the conservation easement. Goals also included determining wildlife buffer zones, integrating appropriate recreational uses, determining use and access of the site, and recommending priority projects. Project partners included the City of Steamboat Springs, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Bureau of Land Management, Routt County Riders, Yampa Valley Land Trust, Steamboat Springs Winter Sports Club, and the Steamboat Nordic Council. The plan's goal is to manage resource conservation and recreational use of the Howelsen Emerald Mountain Park in a manner that is consistent with the existing state and federal wildlife and forestry management plans for areas adjacent to the property as well as the community's desires.

The resulting plan was a product of an interactive public outreach planning process that used Mindmixer, an online community engagement tool, as well as public planning workshops.

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The Scenic Monument Road Corridor. Photo: Mesa Land Trust

Current Projects

1. Rio Grande and Sangre De Cristo Greenbelts

Project Partners: Costilla County, Colorado Open Lands, Southwest Conservation Corps

NPS Contact: Patsy McEntee

Location: Costilla County, San Luis Valley

Congressional District: CO - 3

Project Goal

Develop two parks: 1) a 3-mile greenway trail along the Rio Grande with additional park amenities to include formal access points, picnicking, interpretive/educational features, and fishing access. 2) develop a modern park facility at Rito Seco Park and trailhead. Complete fire mitigation and erosion control in the drainage west of the park, and connect the park by trail to the upper fishing ponds.

NPS Role

To provide technical assistance in the development of conceptual site plans for the Rio Grande Greenway and Sangre de Cristo Parks. To develop trail systems and amenities for both parks that are supported and desired by the community and can be implemented and maintained.

2. Monument Road Corridor Protection

Project Partners: Mesa Land Trust, City of Grand Junction, Bureau of Land Management

NPS Contact: Patsy McEntee

Location: Between Grand Junction and Colorado National Monument

Congressional District: CO - 3

Project Goal

Expand public access to the natural, cultural, and recreational resources of the area by introducing additional non-motorized trails linking Downtown Grand Junction to Three Sisters Park, Bureau of Land Management trails, and Colorado National Monument. Provide enhanced scenic viewshed preservation and improve visitor experience of natural areas.

NPS Role

Work with local partners and interested groups to develop a vision statement to guide the assessment and protection of the resources found in the Monument Road corridor. Assist in developing implementation strategies to achieve on-the-ground results. Support the development of a park masterplan for newly acquired public corridor parcels.

3. Montbello Connections to Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge

Project Partners: Environmental Learning for Kids (ELK), Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge, City and County of Denver

NPS Contact: Patsy McEntee

Location: Northeast Denver neighborhood adjacent to the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge

Congressional District: CO - 1

Project Goal

Develop interpretive and recreational opportunities between Environmental Learning for Kids and the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge and improve the community's connections to the natural environment.

NPS Role

Assist with the conceptual planning of Montbello neighborhood trail connections that create safe walking and biking environments between the future Montbello Open Space and Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge. Facilitate communication and provide technical planning assistance to build working partnerships between the community and federal agencies.

Current Projects cont.

4. Estes Valley Trails Master Plan

Project Partners: Estes Valley Recreation and Park District, Town of Estes Park, Rocky Mountain National Park, US Forest Service, Estes Land Trust, YMCA
NPS Contact: Patsy McEntee
Location: Estes Valley, Larimer County
Congressional District: CO - 2

Project Goal

Enhance trail and multimodal access and connectivity within the Town of Estes Park and between existing trail systems, Rocky Mountain National Park, US Forest Service land, and key community destinations.

NPS Role

Work with partners to develop a valleywide trails master plan by engaging stakeholders and working collaboratively with partners to identify gaps and set priorities. Support a public process that will bring the community together to create trail and multimodal connections between existing trail systems and key destinations.

5. La Junta Trails System

Project Partner: City of La Junta
NPS Contact: Hugh Osborne
Location: La Junta
Congressional District: CO - 3

Project Goal

Create an integrated system of trails that will link the city's parks and residential areas with the Arkansas River and other outdoor spaces. The implementation of the trail system will encourage healthy, creative activities, especially among young people.

NPS Role

Assist community activists and advocates to identify stakeholders interested in development of the trails system, provide technical assistance in assessing existing and potential recreation resources, and conduct a series of public engagement activities.

6. Boggsville Sustainable Stewardship

Project partners: National Trust for Historic Preservation, National Park Service Bent's Old Fort, Pioneer Historical Society of Bent County
NPS Contact: Joy Lujan
Location: Las Animas
Congressional District: CO- 4

Project Goal

A strong coalition of partners actively engaged in the stewardship of Boggsville Historic Site.

NPS Role

Work with the National Trust for Historic Preservation and partners to identify and analyze issues and opportunities, assess and engage stakeholders, create conceptual site plans, explore alternatives, and develop a plan for sustainable use and protection of the Boggsville Historical site.

“The technical assistance provided by the NPS staff is superb. They bring with them a wealth of expertise to help guide and bring together stakeholders to create the most robust and comprehensive process. Listening, supplying feedback, and brainstorming ideas enable partners to really be part of the process and to have full ownership of the solutions decided upon. They have been an invaluable asset to our project.”

-Stacie Gilmore, Executive Director
Environmental Learning for Kids | ELK



Costilla County Community Corps teens spent several days in July beautifying their local Rito Seco Park. Photo: NPS

We're Here For You.

Could your project benefit from NPS Staff Assistance? Contact us to find out.



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2014 Nationwide Partnership Success

3,278.74 Miles of Trail Developed

2,046.25 Miles of River Conserved

9,411.06 Acres of Open Space and Parkland Protected

Find more information online at
www.nps.gov/rtca



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Recent Successes cont.

In 2014, the project received the Colorado American Planning Association's award of Merit for Innovation/Creative Partnerships and Collaborations due to the broad array of partnerships required for both the plan and the shared management of the property. Many of these partnerships have maintained trail stewardship of the park in the past and as a result of the plan have developed reroutes of unsustainable trails, expanded backcountry skiing opportunities, and identified wildlife buffers and youth outdoor opportunities.

Cleaning an Urban Creek in Colorado

Lower Bear Creek flows 8.2 miles through the cities of Lakewood, Denver, and Sheridan before draining into the South Platte River. The river corridor and associated park lands are important recreation sites and wildlife habitat within densely populated urban and suburban neighborhoods but development has constrained and altered the floodplain and water course, degrading the creek's water quality. In 2010, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment listed the lower reaches of Bear Creek and downstream segments of the South Platte as "impaired" because elevated levels of E. coli bacteria make it unsafe for primary contact recreation.

Groundwork Denver, a local nonprofit working to improve the physical environment and promote health through community partnerships and action, sought support from the National Park Service in developing a watershed management plan. The National Park Service helped to engage local jurisdictions, water quality experts, community activists, neighboring residents, and creek users to understand better what is affecting the creek and its water quality and work together to protect and improve the watershed. The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment gave financial and technical support with Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) funds and the EPA provided further support by analyzing E. coli samples collected in 2013 and 2014.

Identifying and acting on specific targets to reduce contamination of an urban creek is a complex undertaking that requires participation by many organizations and individuals. This planning process brought stakeholders together to seek agreement on priorities and collaborative strategies for getting Lower Bear Creek back in compliance with water quality standards for recreational use. Watershed plan recommendations include at least one full year of water quality monitoring to help in selecting the right "best management practices" and establishment of interactive education and information programs with communities near the creek. Partners have begun to implement the recommendations. Groundwork Denver received \$10,000 through the NPS Challenge Cost Share Program to help develop a program of "Youth Master River Stewards" to organize and carry out community education and engagement activities.



Bear Creek. Photo: NPS.