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Management Goals for the Marshall Mesa-Southern Grasslands Trail Study Area (TSA)

8/12/05

Visitor Facility Goals

- Locate and design trails and facilities that are physically and environmentally sustainable and provide intended access, safety, and visitor enjoyment
- Provide new, safer trailhead access at the City Limits property
- Provide a safe road crossing under State Highway 93 with the Community Ditch underpass
- Provide appropriate levels of vehicle parking that provide a reasonable level of convenience while managing visitor use and its impacts
- Provide Americans with Disability Act (ADA) accessibility where feasible
- Determine what visitor services and amenities are necessary or desirable, such as toilets, dog excrement receptacles, and gates and parking lots that work for equestrians
- Determine which gates are necessary for visitor access to planned destinations, and determine which gates need to be removed
- Coordinate visitor access solutions with private property owners that may be affected

Visitor Experience / Recreational Opportunity Goals

- Provide trails in locations that take advantage of excellent views of the mountain backdrop and other open space properties
- Where possible, provide trail locations and designs that provide a high quality visitor experience by maintaining distance from structures, roads, utility corridors, and other development
- Provide a long-distance loop trail system along the periphery of the Trail Study Area (thereby maintaining un-trailed areas in the central portion of the TSA)
- Determine where loop trails are appropriate for visitor travel to desired destinations
- Evaluate trail connections in the TSA to surrounding areas (Davidson Mesa, South Boulder Creek Trail, Boulder County open space properties to the east and south, trails around Superior, Doudy Draw area trails, Front Range Trail, and Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge)
- Investigate whether OSMP could make arrangements with private property owners to provide visitors with access to existing or new trails around Marshall Lake
- Evaluate potential educational / interpretive opportunities for:
 - Historic homesteading, mining, grazing activities and more
 - Grassland ecosystems (including topics such as grassland biodiversity, role of fire and grazing, threat of invasive weeds, and importance / issues of prairie dog colonies)
 - Geological and paleontological resources
 - Ecological restoration processes and how they are being used in active restoration projects in the TSA
 - Leave-No-Trace and / or other low-impact visitor techniques

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- Evaluate potential recreational opportunities for:
 - Trail access for the elderly, the very young, and people with disabilities
 - Multiple-use trails that provide compatible access and recreational opportunities for pedestrians, equestrians, and bicyclists
 - Dedicated-use or limited-use trails that facilitate high-quality opportunities for specific recreational uses
 - Parallel trails that separate dogs and no-dog users or other conflicting users
 - Dog access and management provisions on existing and new trails (including dog walking opportunities and no-dog opportunities)
 - Expanded opportunities for bicycling with additional bike-accessible and bike-challenging trails (including single-track)
 - Seasonal or year-round sustainable off-trail access for equestrians, hang / paragliders, and others
 - Low-impact access to water for people, pets, horses
- Provide trail locations, alignments, and designs that minimize conflicts between different types of visitor use and access

Resource Protection Goals

- Protect the ecological integrity of the large Southern Grasslands habitat block that includes the large un-trailed grassland core area and the riparian corridor along un-trailed stretches of Coal Creek
- Protect rare, imperiled, and highly-vulnerable resources from the impacts of visitor use
- Restore habitat quality and natural ecosystem functions, such as:
 - Wetland and riparian ecosystems located in the Cowdrey drainage and reservoir, Eggleston Reservoirs, along the various ditches, and the Coal Creek riparian corridor
 - Mosaic of grassland patches that provide a high quality grassland ecosystem
 - Fire and grazing regimes that support ecosystem functions, native biodiversity, and resilience to human-induced changes
- Ensure that visitor use does not significantly affect historic ranching operations
- Close inappropriate undesignated trails and restore the natural habitat values
- Implement protection measures for natural and cultural resources to avoid or mitigate impacts (e.g., setbacks or buffers from sensitive resources, trail alignments or reroutes, seasonal closures, fencing, etc.)
- Prevent the spread of non-native plants and invasive weeds