

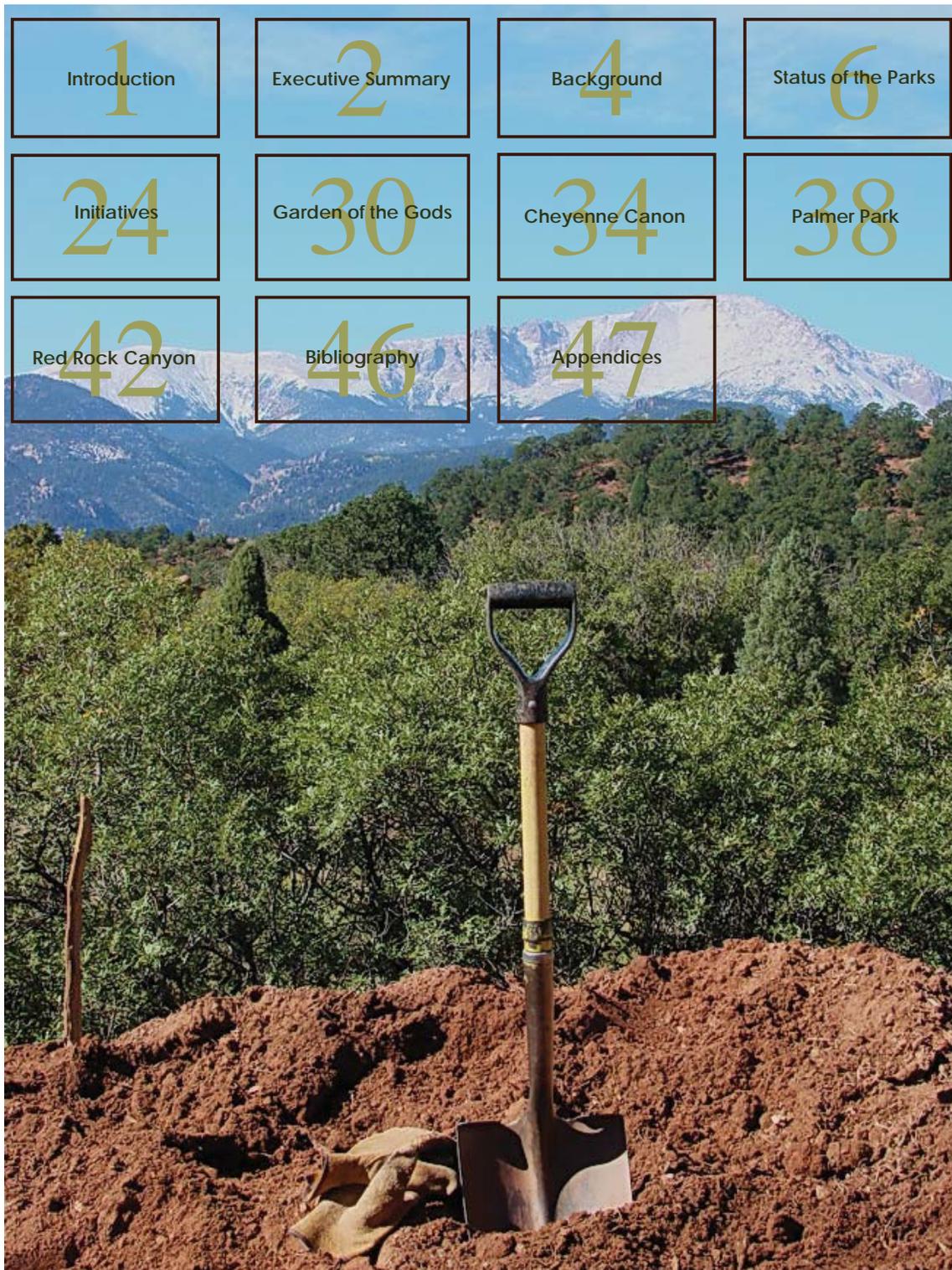
2011 Status Report



City of Colorado Springs
Regional Parks, Trails and Open Space

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Introduction

December 2011

In October of 2007 I had the honor to become the next Supervisor for the Regional Parks, Trails and Open Space Division for the City of Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department. Having spent a great deal of my life loving and caring for natural places and gaining my degree in Natural Resources Recreation Management, I can proudly say, I have reached a goal set many years ago. Once you reach a goal in life and enjoy your accomplishments it is imperative that you build upon this foundation.

I am privileged to supervise, what I consider to be, a top notch group of individuals who bring a strong sense of passion and duty to their jobs every day. They have played the major roles in the creation of this report, from data collection in the field to the final layout and editing, they have embodied the true spirit of professionalism.

We created this report to provide a snapshot of where we have been, where we are now, and the challenges we face moving forward.

It is very easy to see why people from all over the world have chosen to visit and live in Colorado Springs.

Our city has a rich history and a vibrant, enthusiastic population. The unique blend of individuals and families who have made the decision to fold Colorado Springs into their lives are the recipients of world class natural beauty and outdoor recreational opportunities that are hard to find anywhere else. We are proud to serve every individual who visits our beautiful city and it is our duty to provide the best experience possible.



Scott Abbott

Executive Summary



This report is intended as a candid appraisal of the system’s ecological and recreational resources, and documents the funding requirements and staffing levels necessary to maintain them.

It should be noted that many of the indicators for assessing ecological health across the system are in the process of being developed, and that existing baseline data may not be fully available across individual properties; in those situations, evaluations were based on observed evidence.

Within that context, this report provides the following:

- Highlights of select and critical issues that need to be addressed;
- The steps currently in place to address those issues; and
- Recommended actions to meet current and future challenges.

The objective of this report is to provide a rationale for addressing the long-term maintenance, restoration needs, and preservation goals for the ecological health and biodiversity of all the parks, trails and open spaces within our system.

Our experience over the past few years has shown that simply designating areas as parks or open space is not enough to provide complete resource protection. Fisheries and Oceans Canada notes,

“Environmental stewardship is an ethic that embodies cooperative planning and management of environmental resources in which organizations, communities and other groups actively engage both in the prevention of habitat loss and as well the facilitation of resource recovery and/or replenishment, usually with a focus on long-term sustainability.”

The City’s Regional Parks, Trails and Open Space system is steeped in natural beauty, rich in ecological diversity, and highly utilized by citizens across the region. It is also a system that is

severely stressed, underfunded, has insufficient staff, and is in urgent need of immediate and long-term attention.

Five primary challenges have been identified for providing effective maintenance and resource management services in our Regional Parks, Trails and Open Spaces. These challenges are listed in the chart below.

Challenge	Current Response	Summary of Recommendations
Pressure on the resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Primarily crisis-based response · Volunteer Stewardship program · Reliance on intra-agency personnel availability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Completion of an updated biophysical inventory to determine the current state of ecological integrity in all properties · Creation of a strong ordinance enforcement mechanism
Preserving resources while providing high-quality visitor experiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Primarily crisis-based response 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Continue to foster effective relationships with established and new Friend groups, conservation and land trust entities
Lack of ordinance enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Increased visibility of Rangers and other Parks staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The creation of a parks-centric code enforcement mechanism · Awareness and education campaigns
Lack of ecological integrity monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Crisis based response · Infraction monitoring · Public outreach and education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Foster effective relationships with institutes of higher learning and create a comprehensive paid internship program
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · General Fund apportion · Strong reliance on grants, volunteer stewards, their grant-writing and other fundraising efforts, and their volunteer labor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Explore fee and fine revenue stream · Explore creative funding mechanisms developed by other government agencies in similar-sized cities

Conclusion

Our review concludes that the maintenance, protection and restoration needs of the parks and open spaces far outweigh the resources currently available, despite some very important achievements in 2011, such as an expanded volunteer stewardship program, grant-funded restoration projects, and increased community education and outreach. The beauty of our parks and open spaces and easy access to outdoor recreation is a significant part of the draw for over 5.5 million visitors to the Pikes Peak region each year. We recognize that efforts to maintain our parks and open spaces in a pristine state would be neither realistic nor appropriate, and that the division’s goal is to preserve the ecological processes that shape native biotic communities while minimizing the disruptions caused by both visitor and park management activities. Without a solid support system and the tools to manage these varied requirements, there is a concern that over time the cumulative effect of so many pressures may erode the resource’s ability to recover and the damage will be irreparable.

Background



One hundred and forty years ago, General William Jackson Palmer established Acacia (North) Park as Colorado Springs' first park. That single act was the beginning of the community's love affair with outdoor spaces that continues to this day.

Since that time, the city's Regional Parks, Trails and Open Space system has grown to encompass more than 50 regional parks and open spaces comprised of more than 11,000 acres and roughly 265 miles of urban and park trails. The staff at Regional Parks, Trails and Open Space is tasked with safeguarding the long-term ecological health and sustainability of these areas while simultaneously managing for human use of the resource.

Funding

In 2011, Regional Parks, Trails and Open Space received approximately 6% of the funds apportioned to Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services. Deep budget cuts have prompted heavy reliance on volunteer stewards and advocacy groups, their fundraising efforts, and their volunteer labor. While these creative programs reap many positive benefits for the parks system and the community, they are not without inherent problems:

- 1) It is not possible for volunteer programs to generate enough revenue or to provide enough labor to fill all the gaps left by the agency's loss of funding and personnel. While with the help of volunteers many necessary and worthwhile projects have been completed over the past two years, across the system the gap between what we wish to accomplish — indeed, what we have a duty to provide — and what can be accomplished under current conditions sometimes seems too vast a span to bridge.
- 2) While donations of time, labor and alternate funding are gratefully received, there can sometimes occur competing pressures to address agenda-driven issues rather than park management priorities.

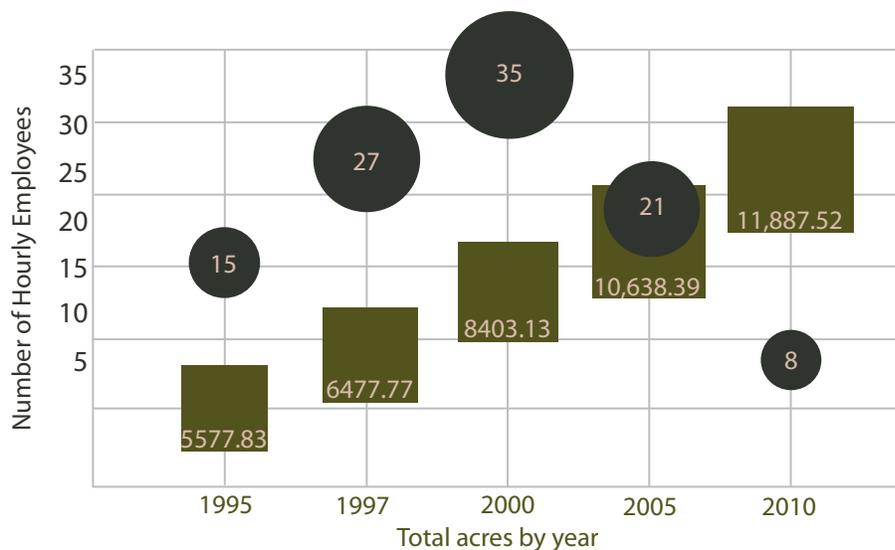
3) With the amount and sources of funding uncertain, park managers cannot make a commitment to either, long-term projects or the staff required to complete them.

Regional Parks, Trails and Open Space has not been alone in its budgetary constraints, and Parks staff are identifying the priority programs, infrastructure needs, personnel, and equipment to determine what standards are most appropriate to maintain. Through this benchmarking process, park managers will ensure that the stewardship goals outlined in this report are met, and that closing the gap between what the state of our park system is, and what it should be, is our priority.

56 Regional Parks and Open Spaces properties
 265 miles and 500 acres of park and urban trails
 6 FTE

Average acres per
 Regional Parks FTE
1929.8

Number of hourly employees for total acreage by year
 Regional Parks, Trails and Open Spaces



“ Who will maintain that trail in the years to come? No one can guarantee that any [volunteer] group will take on the forever job of maintaining any trail. It hasn't happened in the past. Even you cannot promise it will happen in the future. ”

Carol Lyndell, citizen
 Appendix A

Status of the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces



No park or open space is uninfluenced by the inhabitants and events of the broader landscape in which it resides. Economic and cultural pressures have had a profound impact on the ability of Regional Parks, Trails, and Open Space to achieve its goals. While over the past 30 years, the emphasis in resource management has shifted from protecting individual species to preserving entire ecological communities, the mandate from this community has required increasing access and the accommodation of multiple needs, uses, and activities. The area's population growth combined with the economic downturn has resulted in increased numbers of users looking for inexpensive recreation opportunities – opportunities made available through the region's parks, trails, and open spaces.

Pressure on the resource

Visitor use data is incomplete for all parks within the system, however observation indicates the trend is strongly upward. Current use levels are straining park facilities where they exist, and where none are provided, use levels and activities are effectively unmanaged. City park managers, as with park managers everywhere, are struggling to meet their responsibilities to both serving the public and in safeguarding the ecological community.

The visitor use statistics that exist are gathered as part of marketing research conducted by the supporting Friends Groups at Garden of the Gods and North Cheyenne Canon. Garden of the Gods Visitor Center reports approximately two million visitors per year, and North Cheyenne Canon reports slightly more than 500,000 visitors per year. Recent traffic count studies performed by the city traffic division at Garden of the Gods and at Palmer Park suggest those marketing estimates may be low. Performed over non-holiday weekends, the studies provide a glimpse of how and when visitors are using our regional parks, providing an accurate count of the numbers and types of vehicles travelling within the parks. The number of visitors to all other parks and open spaces within the system is currently unknown.

“ As a botanist, I have viewed with concern the increasing noxious weeds and non-native elements spreading in the parks, often along the trails (social and designated), but also into previously intact zones of native vegetation [...] We all recognize that no park landscape is pristine and that no park remains untouched by use. However, benign neglect of an urban system under heavy pressure is not a viable management option if a key objective, to encompass and protect diverse ecological systems, is to remain a priority. ”

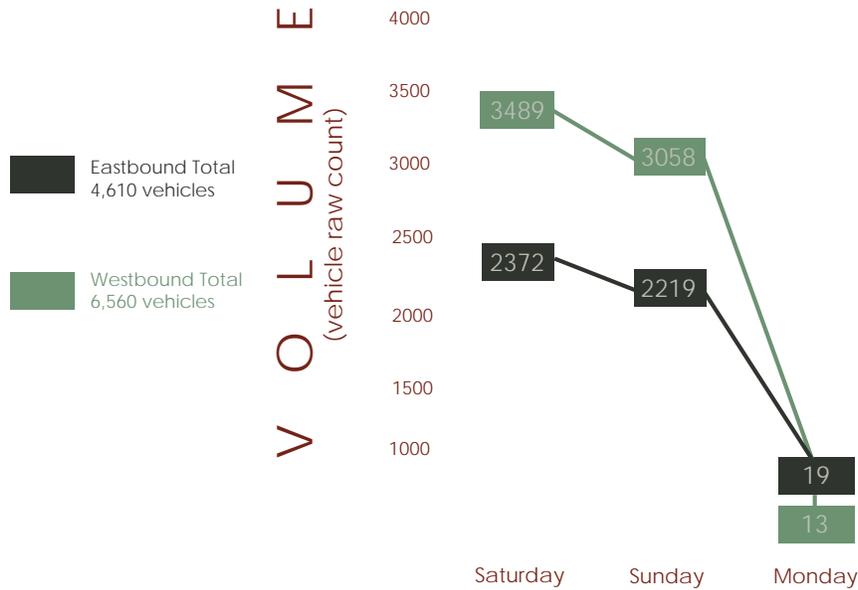
Tass Kelso
Professor of Biology
Colorado College
Appendix B



City of Colorado Springs Traffic Studies

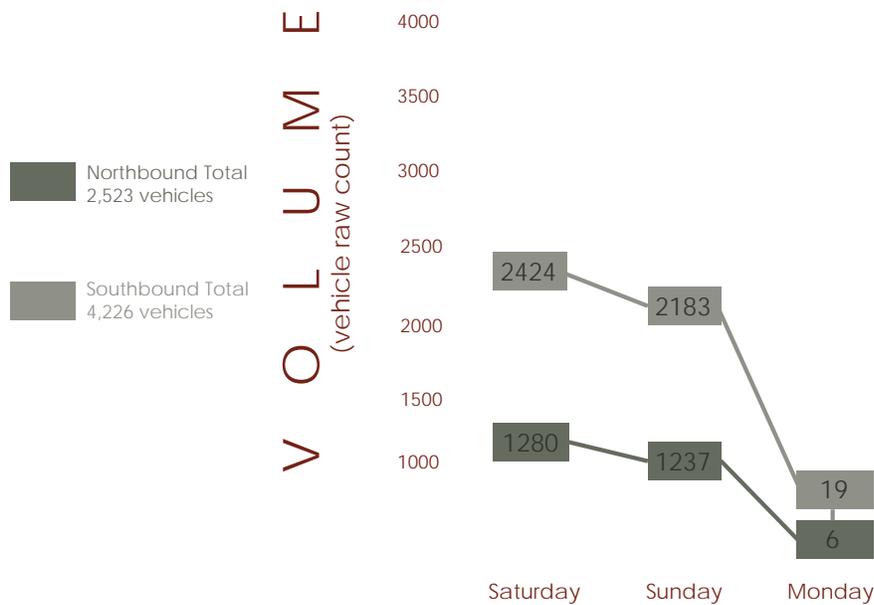
Garden of the Gods Traffic Study

Began: August 13, 2011 Midnight Ended: August 15, 2011 5:00 a.m.
 (Saturday through Monday)
 Access Road: Gateway



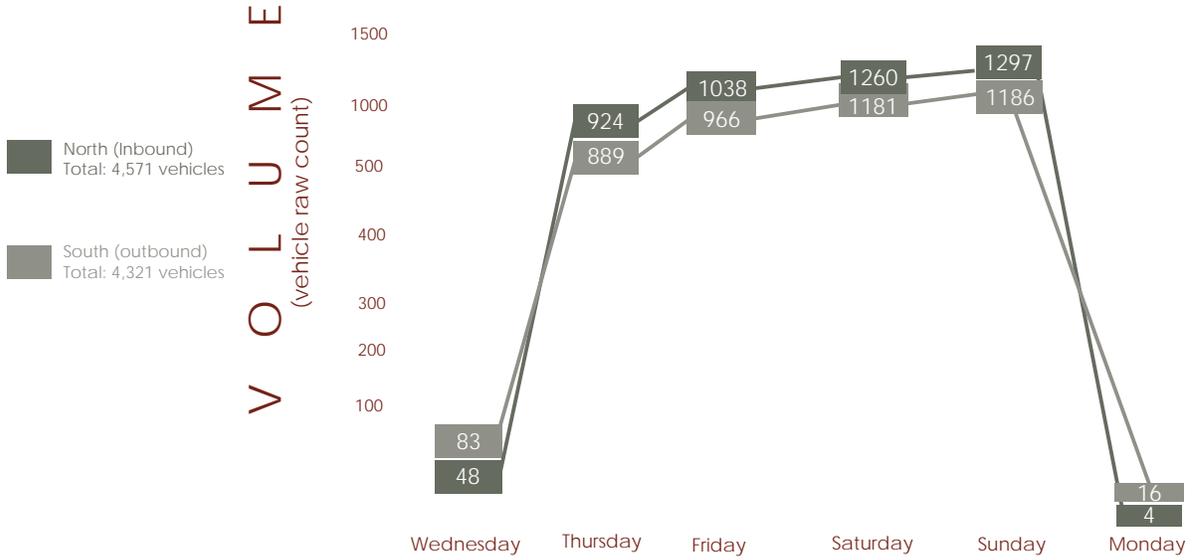
Garden of the Gods Traffic Study

Began: August 13, 2011 Midnight Ended: August 15, 2011 5:00 a.m.
 (Saturday through Monday)
 Access Road: Balanced Rock



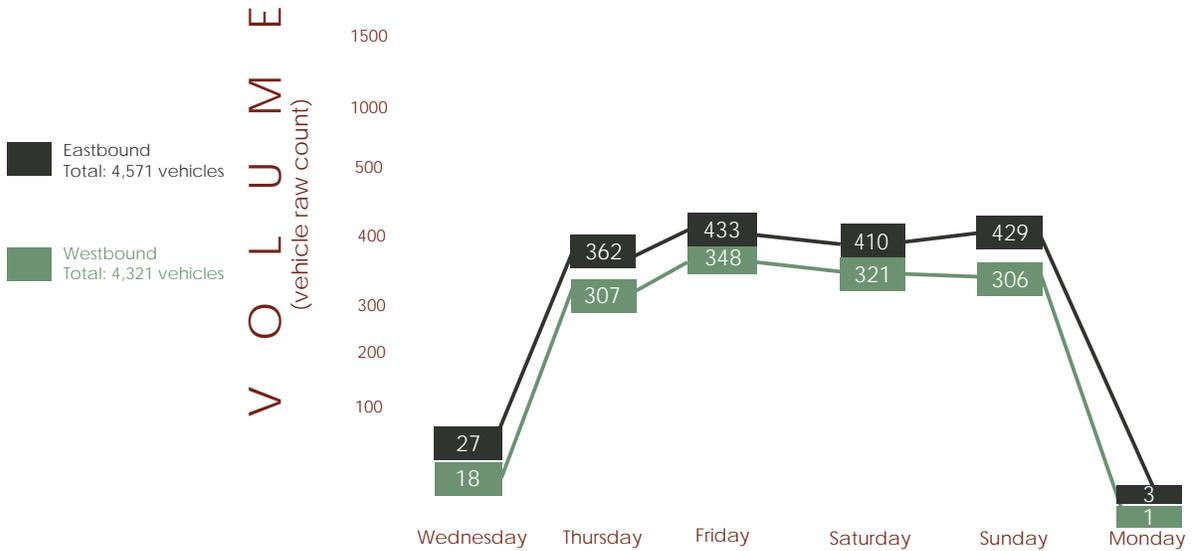
Palmer Park Traffic Study

Began: August 17, 2011 9:00 p.m. Ended: August 22, 2011 5:00 a.m.
Access Road: Maizeland



Palmer Park Traffic Study

Began: August 17, 2011 9:00 p.m. Ended: August 22, 2011 5:00 a.m.
Access Road: Chelton Road





Natural Disturbances

The eastern plains of Colorado received well below normal precipitation starting in October 2010 (the beginning of the water year). In June, the United States Department of Agriculture Drought Monitor placed Colorado Springs in the Extreme Drought category. On June 17, 2011, The Fire Marshall declared a burn ban in Colorado Springs, which was downgraded to Fire Restrictions on July 15. Fire restrictions were lifted on August 1, due to seasonal monsoon moisture.

In 2010, as part of an ongoing mitigation program, 16 acres of fire fuel in Garden of the Gods were removed by the Forestry Division; there are Forestry Division plans for similar fuel mapping and mitigation programs throughout the rest of the system, dependent on budget.

City Forestry also reports high populations of Ips Bark Beetle on the Front Range, which affect both stressed pine and spruce trees. Forestry has removed several affected pines off Mesa in North Cheyenne Canon; they are also currently monitoring several sites in Garden of the Gods for Cedar Bark Beetle.



Noxious Plant Species

State of Colorado and El Paso County A, B and C list noxious weeds are known to exist in all properties in the system. In 2010, with the aid of state grant money made available through El Paso County, Regional Parks, Trails and Open Space developed a noxious weed mapping and mitigation plan for Garden of the Gods. That plan was used as a template for similar IPM protocol development for all regional parks and open spaces; however, personnel and equipment funding falls short of what is needed in order to map populations of invasive species system-wide.

Social Issues

Encouraging public access and enjoyment necessarily alters ecological communities; providing safe places for leisure and recreation requires intervention and results in the disturbance of natural processes. Visitor activities can forever alter park resources and more needs to be done to provide for the long term protection, preservation, and restoration of these natural areas.



Off-Trail Use

Visitor off-trail use damages fragile soils and understory plants, increases erosion, and aids the spread of invasive plants. The resulting fragmentation increases crowding and competition and degradation of existing habitat due to edge effects and invasive species. The proliferation of social trails has seen a correspondingly rapid increase in vegetation loss, destruction of topsoil, and erosion. Geological and cultural assets remain at risk due to inadvertent or deliberate destruction by an ever growing number of user groups.



Colorado Department of
Agriculture Noxious Weed
Species identified in the
system:

A List

- Myrtle Spurge

B List

- Bouncing Bet
- Canada Thistle
- Chamomile
- Chinese Clematis
- Common Mullein
- Dalmation Toadflax
- Diffuse Knapweed
- Field Bindweed
- Hoary Cress
- Leafy Spurge
- Musk Thistle
- Oxeye Daisy
- Russian Knapweed
- Russian Olive
- Scotch Thistle
- Spotted Knapweed
- Tamarisk (Salt Cedar)
- Yellow Toadflax

C List

- Chicory
- Common Burdock
- Common Mullein
- Field Bindweed
- Poison Hemlock
- Common Teasel



Off-Leash Dogs

Cultural acceptance of off-leash dogs outside designated off-leash areas and within city parks continues to be a serious problem within the parks system.

The city currently offers three dog runs and one dog park within its regional park and open space properties (there are two additional off-leash areas in neighborhood parks); these spaces are heavily used and often crowded. It is worth considering the addition of more dog parks and runs to the system, as studies indicate that offering ample off-leash locations reduces law breaking by dog owners (Krohe, 2005).

The detrimental effect off-leash dogs have on wildlife, and how dogs aid in the spread of disease, parasites, and noxious weeds is well documented. A recent study indicated that the presence of dogs alters habitat and habitat use by Mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), and that this effect extended at least 100 meters off-trail (McAndrews, 2006). Multiple studies from as early as 1971 provide evidence that dog chasing sometimes leads to deer mortality through direct attacks or exhaustion.

In 2011, there was one report of unleashed dogs mauling and killing a mule deer fawn in a regional park.

Off-leash dogs increase the flushing distance and heart rates of bighorn sheep (*Ovis canadensis*) (Simes, 1999), and elevated sensitivity and flushing distances in western meadowlarks (*Sturnella neglecta*), and American robins (*Turdus migratorius*) (McAndrews, 2006). Carnivore activity is also affected by the presence of dogs; Red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) detections are higher in areas which allow dogs, and bobcat (*Felis rufus*) detections are lower (McAndrews, 2006).

A corollary to dogs off-leash is the failure of owners to clean up their pet's feces. While fifty to seventy percent of dog owners clean up after their dogs (City of Englewood, 2005), those who do not create an ongoing problem for other users in the parks. Dog waste is not only viscerally unattractive, it can harbor bacteria such as fecal coliform bacteria, *Escherichia coli*, and *Campylobacteriosis* (McAndrews, 2006).

Parasites found in dog waste include *Toxocara canis* (ascarids or roundworm), *Ancylostoma caninum* (hookworm), and *Trichuris vulpis* (whipworm), all of which are transmissible to humans (McAndrews, 2006). *Giardia lamblia* and *Cryptosporidium* are other parasites also found in dog waste (McAndrews, 2006).

The issue, at least among local park users, does not seem to be an unawareness of park rules. "For many dog owners, running dogs unleashed is a justifiable act of civil disobedience" (Krohe, 2005). One study concluded that, "Results show that visitors who choose to illegally walk their dogs off-leash do so with a heightened





In 2010, vandals caused more than
\$160,000
worth of material damage in
city parks, open spaces, and
recreation centers.



knowledge of park rules, signifying that they make a willing and conscious decision to disregard the posted ordinance. (Nesbitt, 2006).

Nesbitt also notes:

“Uninformed violators should be made aware of the negative consequences of their actions to activate feelings of personal responsibility. Moral appeals and aggressive education have high potential to correct these violations. Willful violators have shown consistent disregard for normative rules and regulations. While direct management may be an over-reaction to other types of violations, regulatory enforcement or staff presence are the most successful interventions to change the behavior of willful violators.”

Vandalism

In 2010, vandals caused more than \$160,000 worth of material damage in Colorado Springs parks and recreation facilities. Not including labor, the cost of graffiti removal from over 10,000 square feet of surface topped \$5500. To help combat the problem, Rangers and park personnel have increased their visibility within the parks, instituted random night patrols, and consulted with local law enforcement for ways to discourage acts of vandalism.

Both sanctioned and unsanctioned events have been the source of graffiti damage. Event supporters have spray painted roads and sidewalks with route indicators and support messages, and individual and gang-related graffiti is an ongoing problem on park signage and rock faces.

Preserving resources while providing high-quality visitor experiences

Historically within the system, resource protection has not had as high a profile as user experience, and in many cases resources have suffered at the expense of providing for user desires. To protect the parks resources as well as maintain the quality of the visitor's experience, use has to be managed, and in some cases restricted. Finding a balance between the needs of preservation and allowing public use is a challenging process; there is always a wide divergence of opinion between user groups as to what the priorities should be.

Both adequate numbers of personnel to monitor visitor use and the mechanisms for controlling visitor use are lacking; while there are use requirements and city ordinances in effect, their existence remains virtually unknown by the general public. While excellent educational outreach programs are available through city Cultural Services, and volunteer-led environmental

education and interpretive programming is offered at the three visitor centers, their reach is, by virtue of place and lack of personnel and funding, far short of what is needed.

Multi Use Trails

Multi-use trails offer the widest access to the greatest variety of users within the park system, and all the region's trails see high use by every category of user. While trail repair work is often the primary focus of volunteer stewardship groups, the scope of their work is constrained by a number of factors including adequate numbers of volunteers and their training and experience, as well as the sophistication of the group's fundraising and recruiting campaigns. While the work volunteer stewards provide is essential and appreciated, no volunteer group can keep pace with the need for trail maintenance and the number of restoration projects that currently exist in the system.

Illegal (Social) Trails

Of urgent concern in every park and open space is the proliferation of highly erosive illegal ("social") trails created by bicyclists, horseback riders and hikers. During the management plan development process in Red Rock Canyon Open Space, 15.7 miles of social trails were mapped; that number has steadily increased as use of the park has grown. In May and June of 2011, Rocky Mountain Field Institute began a grant-funded project to close social trails and rehabilitate approximately 400 acres in the most heavily trafficked central portion of Garden of the Gods. In other regional parks and open spaces, the levels of environmental damage due to illegal trail formation has reached critical proportions, far exceeding park manager and stewardship groups' ability to mitigate the damage and rehabilitate the landscape.

Rock Climbing

Technical climbing is allowed in the Garden of the Gods, Red Rock Canyon Open Space, Cheyenne Canon, and Ute Valley Park by permit. Erosive damage to the rock and other resources is visible in all locations where technical rock climbing is permitted. Collateral damage includes wildlife disturbance, illegal ("social") trails, loss of vegetation, erosion, increased vandalism and trash. Monitoring and replacement of fixed equipment (pitons, expansion bolts, etc.), is currently overseen and funded by a variety of volunteer groups and individuals.

Non-technical climbing (scrambling), is defined as climbing on a rock formation more than ten feet above its base without using proper equipment. Where scrambling takes place, evidence of wildlife disturbance, loss of vegetation, erosion, increased vandalism, trash, and numerous social trails are all apparent.

Restoration

Where resource protection measures have been successfully implemented (e.g., the closure of social trails), personnel and

Academy Riding Stables took

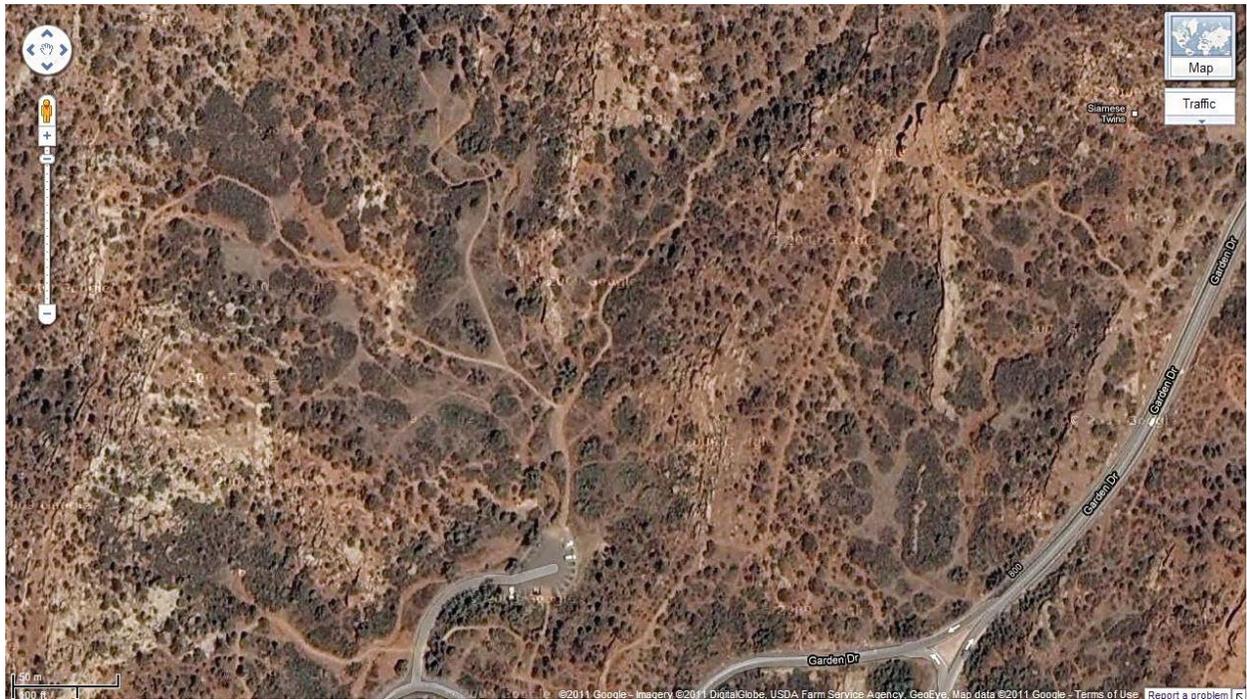
12,000

visitors on a horseback ride through the Garden of the Gods between New Years and Labor Day.



Illegal (“social”) Trails

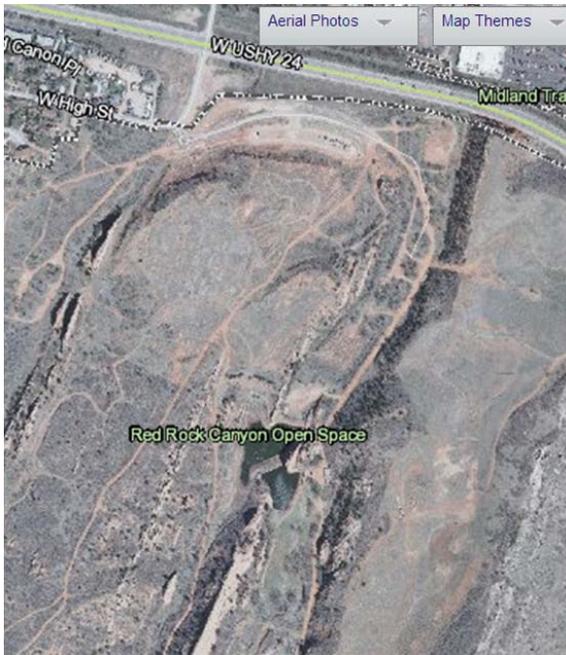
Spring Canyon, Garden of the Gods



-  Designated trails
-  Undesignated (social) trails



Red Rock Canyon Open Space

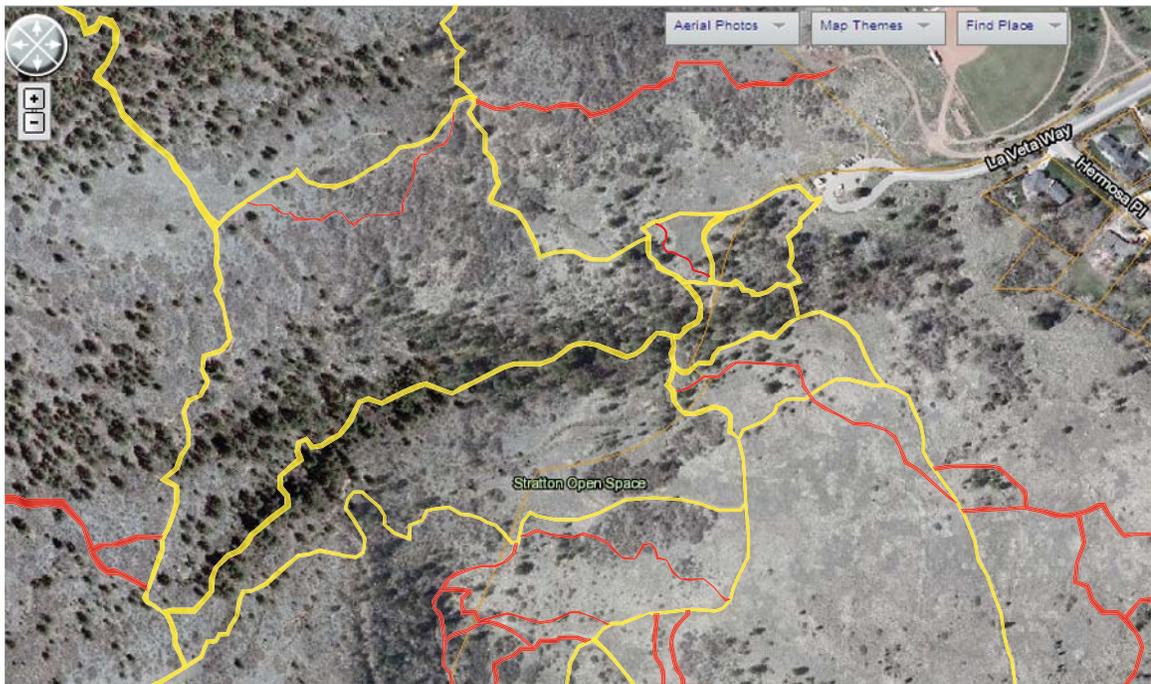


2007



2010

Stratton Open Space



CSFD Service Calls

In 2011, the Colorado Springs Fire Department responded to 131 alarms in Garden of the Gods, Cheyenne Canon, Palmer Park and Red Rock Canyon, including

11 Service calls for falls
and
23 High-angle rescues.



January - December 2011

Falls in Red Rock Canyon and Garden of the Gods resulted in

2 deaths



CSFD responded to

22 reports of grass or vehicle fires in regional parks and open spaces.

funding have been inadequate to install and monitor full restoration measures.

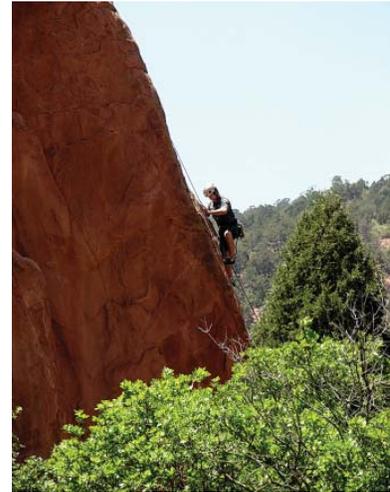
Ordinance enforcement

Rule enforcement is by no means the only, or even the primary form of managing visitor use; however, the protection of park resources from inadvertent or deliberate harm is one of the oldest and most traditional of all ranger duties.

Park Rangers are currently dependent on both the availability and the willingness of code and law enforcement officers to issue warnings or summonses for common infractions such as rock scrambling, climbing without permits, parking in unauthorized areas, and the harassment of wildlife.

In March, 2011, Regional Parks, Trails and Open Space park rangers and park personnel began tracking the number of incidences of common ordinance violations observed by Parks' personnel; in addition to the threats posed to the health of the resource and to native wildlife, many of the violations compromise visitor and park personnel safety.

Between January and December 2011, the Colorado Springs Fire Department performed 23 above grade/high angle rescues of visitors engaged in illegal rock scrambling. In one



From New Years to Labor Day, the Garden of the Gods Visitor and Nature Center issued

5653
rock climbing permits.

66
FTE Hours
were required to remove

24
Homeless Camps
from a single city property.



highly publicized incident, a man who strayed from the trail boundary survived with relatively minor injuries a fall of 150 feet from the top of Helen Hunt Falls; two visitors in other parks have fallen to their deaths.

Regional Parks, Trails and Open Space strongly urges the immediate consideration of an ordinance enforcement mechanism, either by granting code enforcement/ticket-writing authority to Park Rangers as was done in the past, or through the creation of an intra-agency task force modeled on CSPD’s HOT (Homeless Outreach Task Force).

The CSPD HOT was formed in June 2009 to specifically develop a strategy for addressing the increasing numbers of homeless persons and homeless camps in Colorado Springs. The solution-focused and innovative combination of law enforcement, education, and community outreach proved effective in reducing both the population of the homeless within Colorado Springs, and in reducing the problems associated with homelessness.

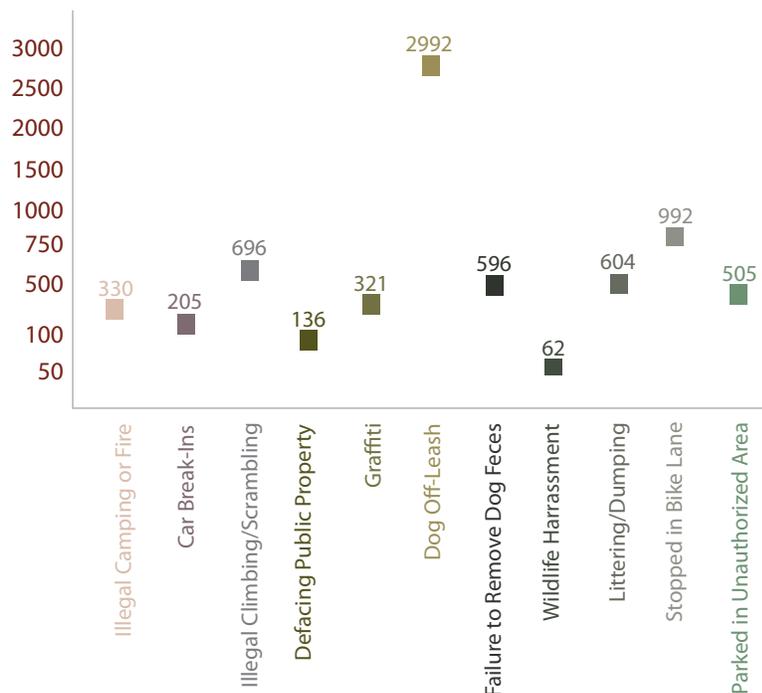
HOT’s remarkable success is a compelling argument for exploring a parks-centric initiative modeling the program; as explained by the HOT members, “The formation of the HOT has essentially established a blueprint for the community of Colorado Springs and the police department on how to deal with large scale problems that affect a wide segment of the population in one way or another [...]”

A third potential alternative is the funding of a single full-time police or code enforcement position solely dedicated to patrolling regional park and open space properties.

Ordinance Infractions

Observed Ordinance infractions
March 1, 2011 - December 30, 2011

Beginning in March 2011, Regional Parks’ employees began tracking their observations of ordinance violations committed on city properties.



CSPD Service Calls

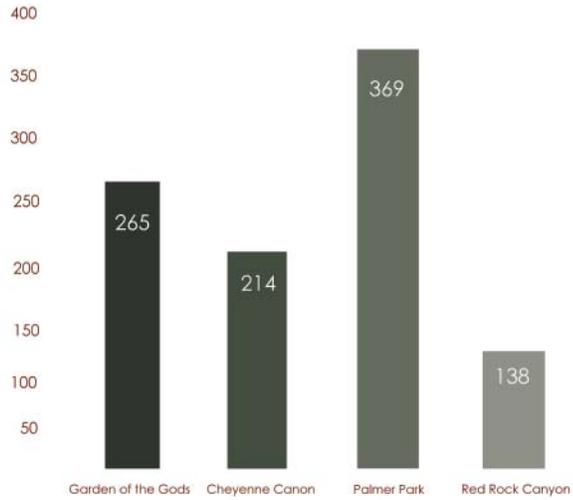
CSPD reports over

120

vehicle break-ins at park trailheads over the past year.



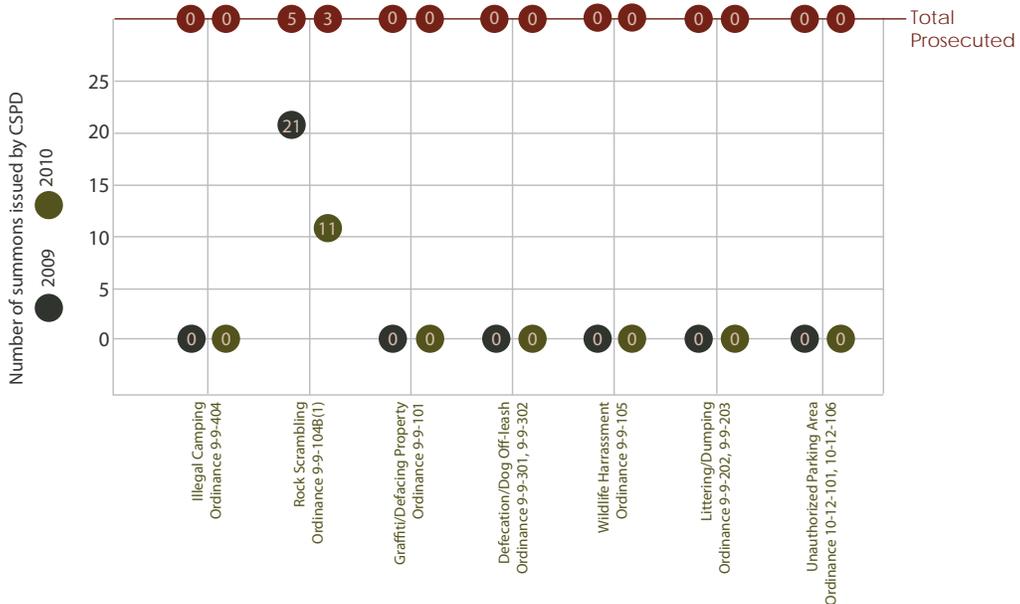
Colorado Springs Police Department
Calls for Service
January 1, 2011 to July 31, 2011



Judicial Outcomes of Summons Served

Municipal Court Outcomes

Ordinance infraction cases for Regional Parks, Trails and Open Spaces



Cooperative Stewardship

"Unauthorized trails are a constant problem in the city's open space," said city parks department trails manager Scott Abbott, as he gave a tour of the affected area, "But rarely is it this bad."



In March 2011, a Visitor Center Safety Ranger came across four men creating an illegal "radical" bike trail in western Garden of the Gods.

The trail builders cut a devastating swath down the fall line of a slope, hacking limbs off junipers, compacting the fragile soil, crushing, removing, and killing native plants and causing extensive damage to an otherwise primarily untouched natural area.

Regional Parks, Trails and Open Space recognized that holding an invitational workday to restore the site would present several opportunities to create a positive outcome from the situation; first, a hands-on opportunity for diverse user-advocacy groups to come together in our common goal of supporting legal access to recreational opportunities while preserving our natural resources; second, the opportunity for advocacy groups to create, strengthen and broaden their connections with other regional advocacy groups; and third, the opportunity to receive some positive media exposure while encouraging citizen participation in both legal outdoor recreation activities and in the many opportunities for volunteering in our parks. Medicine Wheel Trail Advocates, the region's premier bike advocacy group, immediately stepped forward to partner in the effort.

As a result, more than 60 volunteers from advocacy groups across the region came together and worked to reclaim approximately one mile of illegal trail. Volunteers tore down ramps, moved rock, loosened compacted soil, reseeded native grasses and pruned damage from affected trees.

"Medicine Wheel Trail Advocates has worked for almost 20 years to keep the Pikes Peak Region a mountain bike-friendly place. Lately though, with more people, more riders and better bikes, there's been more and more off-trail riding. You can especially see this in places like Palmer Park and Ute Valley. At the same time, the parks department has gotten more calls about "those damned bikers." The trend isn't good. We sure don't want to end up like some other cities in Colorado where opening just one trail to bikes has been a long and fruitless quest." Jim Schwerin, President, Medicine Wheel Trail Advocates.

Lack of ecological integrity and other monitoring

The threat of over-use poses current and potentially irreversible long-term damage because of the limited resources available to deal quickly and directly with its effects.

Although each of the parks and open spaces has a management plan, and most (but not all), of which included baseline inventories, in order to accurately assess the current health of these spaces, a comparative analysis is necessary to determine priority needs and projects within each property. To that end a current and comprehensive inventory of the natural and cultural resources of each park should be undertaken.

The altering and displacement of native plant communities by non-native and invasive plants directly affects wildlife habitat, and the preparation of current and comprehensive maps and monitoring protocols of native and noxious plant communities is strongly recommended.

It must be emphasized that a continuing and expanded commitment by Parks management and staff, the city, and the citizens of Colorado Springs is required to address the range of issues identified as primary threats to our parks and open space system in order to meet the goal of promoting long-term sustainability while encouraging public access.

By using measureable factors to assess environmental indicators, annual updates of the State of the Parks report can be established as a regular activity of Regional Parks, Trails and Open Space, and will provide a benchmark for progress.



Initiatives



The series of challenges currently faced by our parks and open spaces have been met with the development of initiatives designed to mitigate pressures on the financial, ecological, and personnel resources available.

Volunteer Stewardship Program

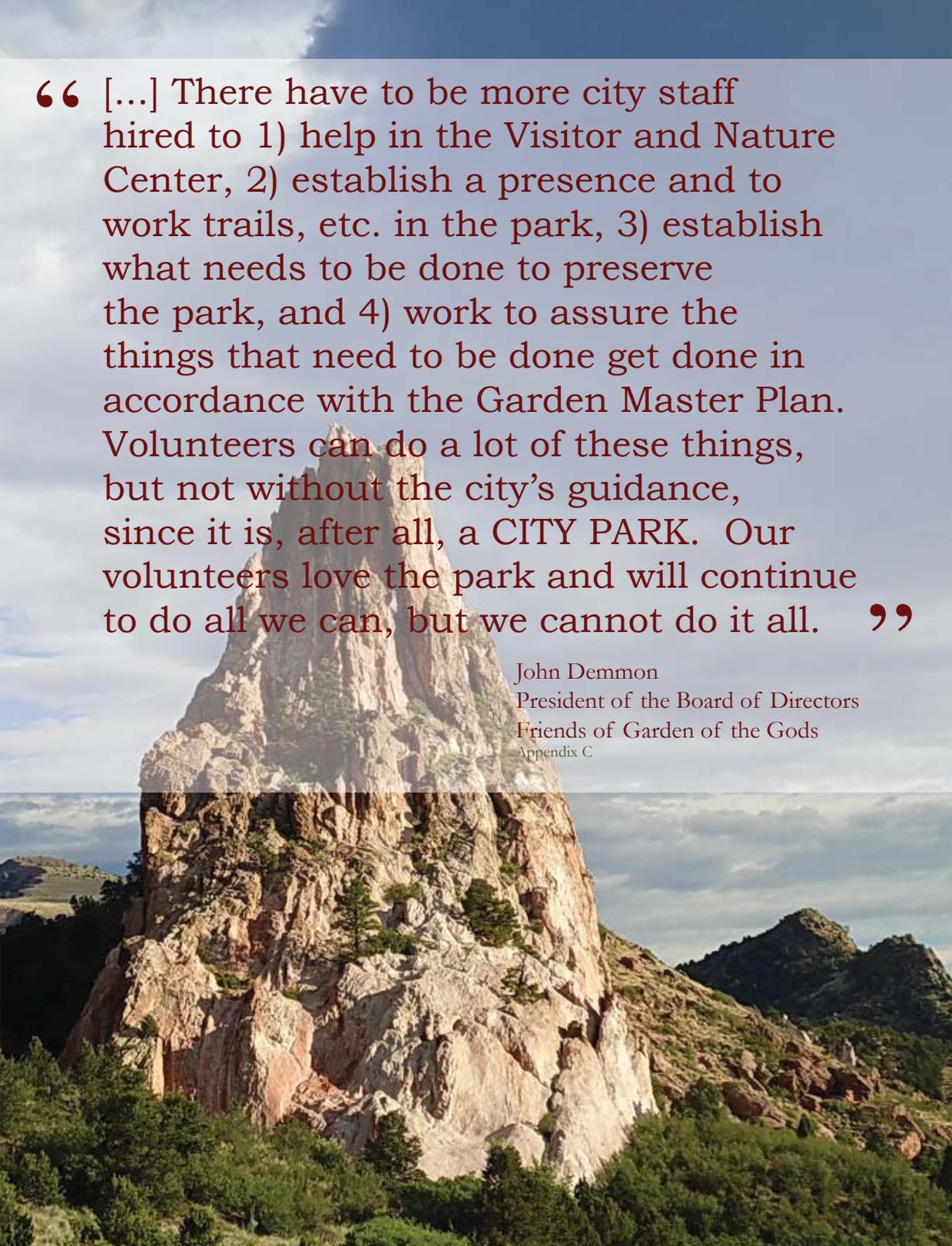
The Volunteer Stewardship Program was created at the end of 2009 when the City Council tasked the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services department to rely on volunteers to perform many of the functions Parks' staff were no longer available to complete.

At that time, several regional parks and open spaces already had an active Friends Group; however, each group was acting as a separate entity and relied heavily on city staff to prepare, assist, and finalize their volunteer projects. With the reduction in Parks staff, including the elimination of the volunteer coordinator position, it was increasingly difficult to place the hundreds of volunteers we get a year into projects.

As a result, the parks department teamed up with the **Trails and Open Space Coalition (TOSC)** to work towards creating a stronger volunteer network. With the understanding that each Friend Group is most passionate about their particular open space or regional park, our goal was to create one larger open space and regional park voice.

Representatives from each group were invited to participate in a series of forums designed to expand their networks, encourage the exchange of practical knowledge, and to discuss and define their group's changing role within the park system.

A large component of the Volunteer Stewardship Program is the Trails and Open Space Coalition-created and managed website, openspacevolunteers.org. The website links are reciprocal, with each Friends Group having their own page on the TOSC website as well as a link to the TOSC website from their own organization's webpage.



“ [...] There have to be more city staff hired to 1) help in the Visitor and Nature Center, 2) establish a presence and to work trails, etc. in the park, 3) establish what needs to be done to preserve the park, and 4) work to assure the things that need to be done get done in accordance with the Garden Master Plan. Volunteers can do a lot of these things, but not without the city’s guidance, since it is, after all, a CITY PARK. Our volunteers love the park and will continue to do all we can, but we cannot do it all. ”

John Demmon
President of the Board of Directors
Friends of Garden of the Gods
Appendix C

Volunteer Stewardship within Regional Parks and Open Spaces

Number of Projects

103

Number of Volunteers

2258

Volunteer Hours Served

8302

Total Dollar Value of Donated Labor

\$179,489.24

March through December 2011
2010 Colorado Volunteer Value \$21.62 per hour



The TOSC website maintains an event calendar listing, allowing volunteers to directly register for volunteer opportunities at the park or open space of their choosing. This system reduces the city's burden of trying to place hundreds of yearly volunteers into projects without a volunteer coordinator. The website links are reciprocal, with each Friends Group having their own page on the TOSC website as well as a link to the TOSC website from their own organization's webpage.

The Volunteer Stewardship Program began with the idea that by working together, Regional Parks and its supporting groups could make the volunteer system stronger by sharing knowledge, resources, and experiences.

The first year of the program provided a learning curve for the Friend Groups and Regional Parks; it is apparent that while the volunteer Stewardship Program reduces the need for a volunteer coordinator, much of the coordination responsibility continues to rest with the city.

Now in its second year, the program has seen some positive growth, including:

- An increase in the interaction between the groups and in resource sharing, such as Friends of the Peak sponsoring a series of free crew leader training and trail maintenance classes to all regional friends groups;
- Joint projects where groups pooled their resources, such as the closure of an illegal trail in Garden of the Gods, and in events such as National Trails Day; and
- Better communication and stronger relationships between Friends Groups and Park Rangers.

While the scope and responsibilities of the Friend Groups stewardship activities continues to be refined and evolve, it is apparent that there are elements of responsibility that the Friends Groups cannot completely take over from the city.

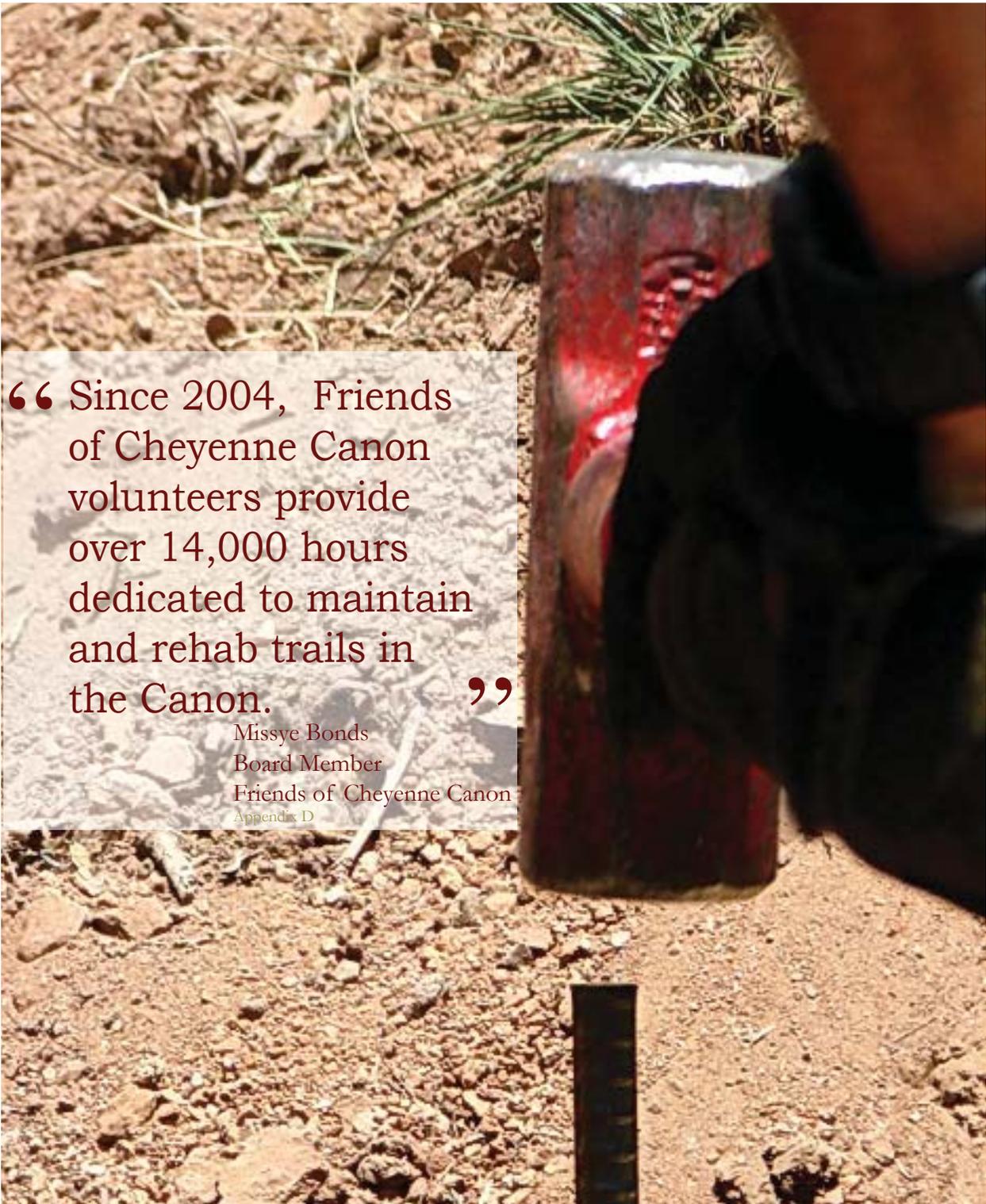
Rock Climbing Advisory Task Force

In March, 2011 work to establish a volunteer rock climbing advisory task force was begun. The task force will work to consolidate efforts to regulate and manage rock climbing activity, as well as to raise funds for equipment maintenance and replacement within the park system.

Personnel

2011 saw the promotion of Nate Hook to Park Ranger at Palmer Park, and brought two new Park Rangers to the system: Bob Hawley at North Cheyenne Canon and Bernard "Snook" Cipolletti at Garden of the Gods.

Volunteer Stewards	Adopt-a-Park 2011	Spaces In Need
<p>Austin Bluffs Conservation Association</p> <p>CATS (Coalition of Addicted Trail Builders) Trail Repair Club</p> <p>Cheyenne Commons (Stewards of Stratton Open Space)</p> <p>Corral Bluffs Alliance</p> <p>Colorado Mountain Club</p> <p>Friends of Blodgett Peak</p> <p>Friends of Garden of the Gods</p> <p>Friends of North Cheyenne Canon</p> <p>Friends of Red Rock Canyon Open Space</p> <p>Friends of the Peak</p> <p>Garden of the Goddesses Club</p> <p>Guardians of Palmer Park</p> <p>Intemann Trail Committee</p> <p>Medicine Wheel Trail Advocates</p> <p>Trails and Open Space Coalition</p> <p>Rocky Mountain Field Institute</p> <p>Trails, Open Space and Parks (TOPS) Working committee</p> <p>Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado</p>	<p>Austin Bluffs Open Space adopted by Douglas Kennell</p> <p>Bear Creek Road adopted by The Equal Justice Foundation</p> <p>Cresta Open Space adopted by Fred Dickman</p> <p>Homestead Trail No. Carefree to So. Care-free adopted by Vosier NCO Academy</p> <p>Palmer-Mesa Trail adopted by Gretchen Graham</p> <p>Rock Island Trail No. Howard to Jefferson Park adopted by the Smith Family</p> <p>Section 16 Trail adopted by Colorado Mountain Club</p> <p>Sinton Trail adopted by HP</p>	<p>Austin Bluffs Open Space (Austin Bluffs Conservation Association helps maintain trails in the open space but no friend group has adopted the park)</p> <p>Bluestem Prairie Open Space</p> <p>High Chaparral Open Space</p> <p>Ute Valley Park (Medicine Wheel Trail Advocates help maintain trails in the open space, but no friend group has adopted the park).</p> 



“ Since 2004, Friends of Cheyenne Canon volunteers provide over 14,000 hours dedicated to maintain and rehab trails in the Canon. ”

Missye Bonds
Board Member
Friends of Cheyenne Canon
Appendix D



On average, Regional Parks' employees interact with

415

park visitors every 30 days.

In addition to annual equipment and safety training, in June all Regional Parks, Trails and Open Space personnel received CSPD-provided training on defusing hostile situations.

Internship

Cy Johnson from Pikes Peak Community College is a sophomore in the Natural Resource Technology program. In addition to working with Ranger Bob Hawley in North Cheyenne Canon, he gained experience working on trail rehabilitation with Friends of the Peak, safety patrolling with the Friends of Garden of the Gods Rock Safety Patrol, and worked with other Parks personnel learning to identify noxious weeds and how to evaluate the sustainability of designated trails within the system. Cy promoted from his internship to working within the Garden of the Gods in September.

Social Media and Outreach

In March 2011, Regional Parks, Trails and Open Space began a campaign to increase public outreach and education through the city Facebook account. Topics have included volunteer recognition, stewardship opportunities, event promotion, outdoor safety, and ordinance awareness information.

In December, additional outreach programs were deployed through the use of QR codes and other smart technologies. These programs will continue to be strengthened throughout 2012 with the dual goals of supporting our community partners, and to encourage park user stewardship.



Want to Volunteer?



www.openspacevolunteers.org

Garden of the Gods



1367+ Acres located at 3130 N. 30th St.
20.85 miles of trail with bike lanes
14.4 miles of unpaved trails and 2.4 miles of paved (concrete) walkways.

National Natural Landmark
Annual Visitors: 2+ million

Survey Item	Most Recent Inventory
Cultural Features of Concern	2000
Geologic Features of Concern	2000
Invasive and Non-Native Vegetation	2010 Summary A grant through El Paso County Environmental Services allowed noxious weed surveying, mapping, and mitigation. In addition to identifying and mapping State and County A, B, and C List noxious weeds, a maintenance protocol was developed in order to continue suppression and control of noxious weed species within park boundaries beyond the 2010 season.
Rare, Threatened and Endangered Plants	1999
Rock Climbing	1997 - Fixed Protection Report

Survey Item	Most Recent Inventory
Social Trail Inventory	2000, 2003 Trail Review and Recommendations; Garden of the Gods Restoration Report Rocky Mountain Field Institute.
Traffic Volume Count (City of Colorado Springs) Traffic Operations)	2011 The study began on Saturday, August 13 at 12:00 a.m. and concluded on Monday, August 15 at 5:00 a.m., a non-holiday weekend with no special events planned. Two of the five park entrances were studied: Gateway (both east and west bound lanes), and Balanced Rock (both north and southbound lanes).
Trail Inventory	<p data-bbox="883 751 938 777">2010</p> <p data-bbox="883 779 992 804">Summary</p> <p data-bbox="883 806 1432 1062">Due to the heavy use of all park trails, and because of the rehabilitation efforts of city personnel and advocacy groups, trail conditions vary from very good to very poor. Erosion is the primary form of degradation noted, with short cuts, social trails and braiding contributing significantly to soil and vegetation loss. Many unpaved trails suffer from significant deep trenching, severe compaction, and poor water drainage.</p> <p data-bbox="883 1094 1432 1178">On multi-use trails, there is a significant degree of washouts, rutting, undercutting, trail widening, and poor drainage.</p> <p data-bbox="883 1209 1432 1318">Hard-Surface (paved) trails within the Park are themselves in primarily good shape, but areas adjacent are damaged by social trails, shortcuts, and trail widening.</p> <p data-bbox="883 1350 1084 1375">Recommendations</p> <p data-bbox="883 1377 1432 1461">A prescription inventory including GPS markers every one-quarter mile for establishing ground location reference points.</p> <p data-bbox="883 1493 1432 1549">The development of a prioritized trail maintenance and rehabilitation master plan.</p>
	
Deep trenching on Ute Trail	
User Survey	1993
Vegetation	2000
Wildlife Inventory	2000



Park Ranger Bernard “Snook” Cipolletti

“ The native vegetation in the Garden of the Gods is crucial in protecting the park from severe erosion. We need to reduce social trail activity. The Bighorn sheep are a huge draw when they are in the park, so protecting their habitat is important.

Our regional parks and open spaces hold adventure and pure scenic beauty...there is great mountain biking, rock climbing, hiking trails, high altitude running, ice climbing, birding and wildlife corridors for big game sheep, mountain lion, bear, two types of deer, bobcat...incredible photo opportunities, plus rare geological and historical value. As a Park Ranger, my mission is protecting and preserving our natural resources for generations to come.

”

Ranger Cipolletti's Property List:
17 Properties
2047.85 acres

Garden of the Gods
Ute Valley Park
Sinton Pond
Mesa Valley
Blair Bridge
Mesa Open Space
Sonderman Park
Oak Valley
Mountain Shadows
Woodmen Valley Open Space
Promontory Point
Peregrine
Vindicator Knob
Westend
Silent Rain
South Face
Broadview



Along with Garden of the Gods Foundation, it is the goal of FOGG to help maintain, preserve and educate visitors to the treasure that is Garden of the Gods.

2011 focus continued on funding and delivering youth and adult education programs.

Trail work for the season focused on completion of step installation on Buckskin Charlie trail and rehabilitation of Dakota Trail in the northernmost section of the park.



In 1994 the Garden of the Gods Foundation was created as a 501(c)(3) charity to preserve and protect the Garden of the Gods park. It receives contributions from the public and funds projects for the Garden identified by the Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department.



Cheyenne Canon

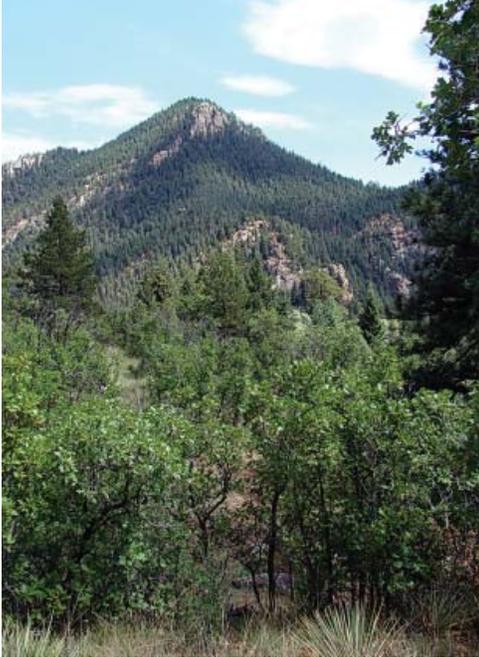


1,626 acres, including the Stratton Open Space,
located at 2110 N. Cheyenne Canon Road
6.55 miles of trails

National Register of Historic Places
Annual Visitors: 500,000+

Survey Item	Most Recent Inventory
Cultural Features of Concern	2004
Forest Health	2004 - Mountain High Tree, Inc.
Geologic Features of Concern	2004
Insects and Diseases	2004
Invasive and Non-Native Vegetation	2004
Rare, Threatened and Endangered Plants	2004
Rock Climbing	1997 - Fixed Protection Report
Social Trail Inventory	No Record Located
Trail Inventory	2004
User Survey	2004
Vegetation	2004
Wildlife Inventory	2004

Spring Creek Trail Construction Report Excerpt



SRAM volunteers on July 20, 2011.

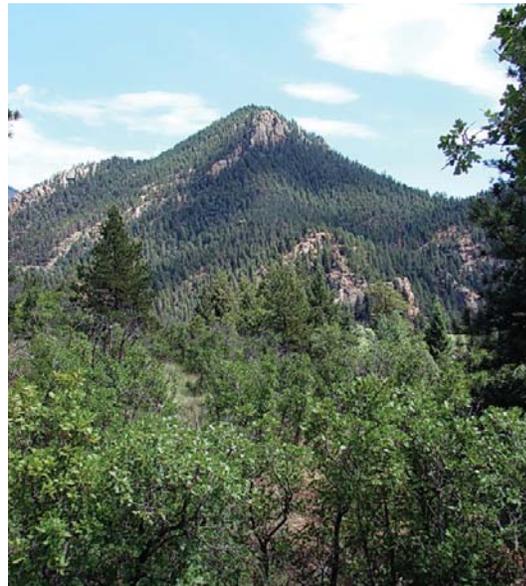


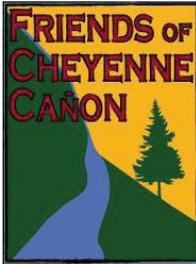
Ranger Hawley's Property List:
6 Properties
2133.08 acres

North Cheyenne Canon Park
Bear Creek Canyon Park
Cheyenne Meadows Open Space
Cresta Open Space
Harlan-Wolfe Park
Neal Ranch Open Space

Park Ranger Bob Hawley

“ What I hear from many of the visitors in my park is that Colorado Springs has the most beautiful open spaces in the country. I believe that as a Park Ranger my job is to serve people who enjoy my park, while keeping their personal safety as priority number one. I also feel it is my duty to do what I can to maintain the integrity of the land by attempting to keep it in its most natural state. ”





Friends of Cheyenne Canon provide environmental education programs and experiences through the Starsmore Discovery center and the Cub at Helen Hunt Falls, as well as offering stewardship opportunities to help clean up and maintain the canyon and its trails.

Fundraisers for 2011 included the release of Cheyenne Canon Ale through Bristol Brewing Company, the Springs Beer Fest, and the annual Hummingbird Festival

Major stewardship events included Comcast Cares Day, which saw nearly 100 volunteers from Comcast band together to perform clean up and maintenance tasks throughout the canyon.



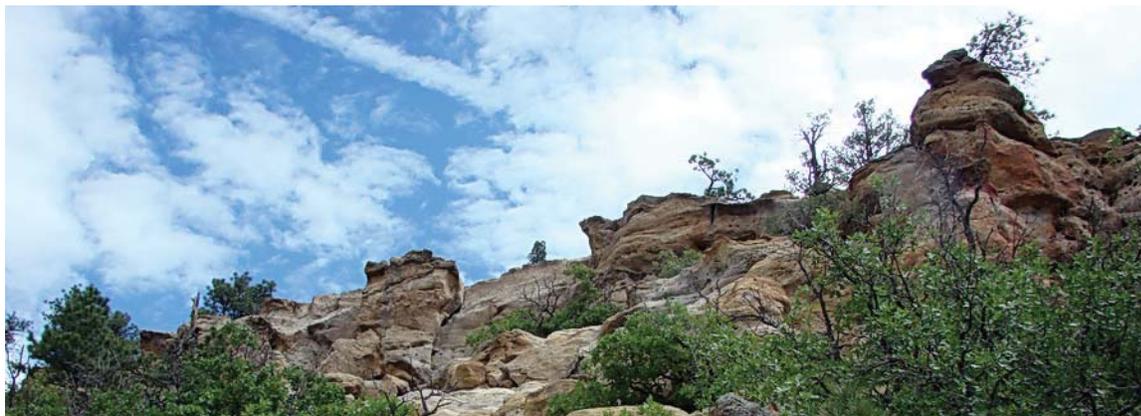
Medicine Wheel's mission is "To maintain and expand trail access for mountain bikers and all trail users in the Pikes Peak region."

In 2011, the Friends of Cheyenne Canon and Medicine Wheel Trail Advocates are working together in order to build a new trail in the canyon, the Silver Springs trail.

Medicine Wheel also helps to maintain trails in Palmer Park, Ute Valley Park, and Garden of the Gods.



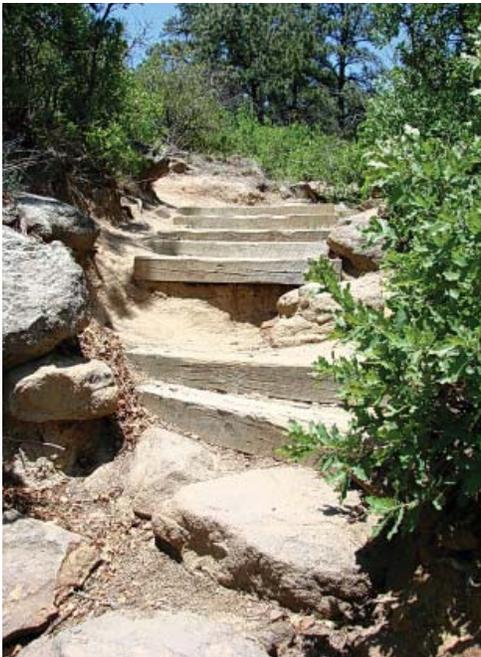
Palmer Park



Description
 738 acres located at 3650 Maizeland Road
 22.66 miles of trails
 Landmark Park
 Annual Visitors: Unknown

Survey Item	Most Recent Inventory
Cultural Features of Concern	1983
Forest Health	No Record Located
Geologic Features of Concern	1983
Insects and Diseases	No Record Located
Invasive and Non-Native Vegetation	No Record Located
Rare, Threatened and Endangered Plants	No Record Located
Rock Climbing	No Record Located
Social Trail Inventory	1997 Tapis Associates Technical Report
Traffic Volume Count (City of Colorado Springs) Traffic Operations)	2011 The study began on Wednesday, August 17 at 9:00 p.m. and concluded on Monday, August 22 at 5:00 a.m., a non-holiday weekend with no special events planned. Two of the five park entrances were studied: Maizeland Road and Chelton.
Trail Inventory	1997 Tapis Associates Technical Report
User Survey	1996
Vegetation	1983
Wildlife Inventory	1983

Trail Status Report Excerpt



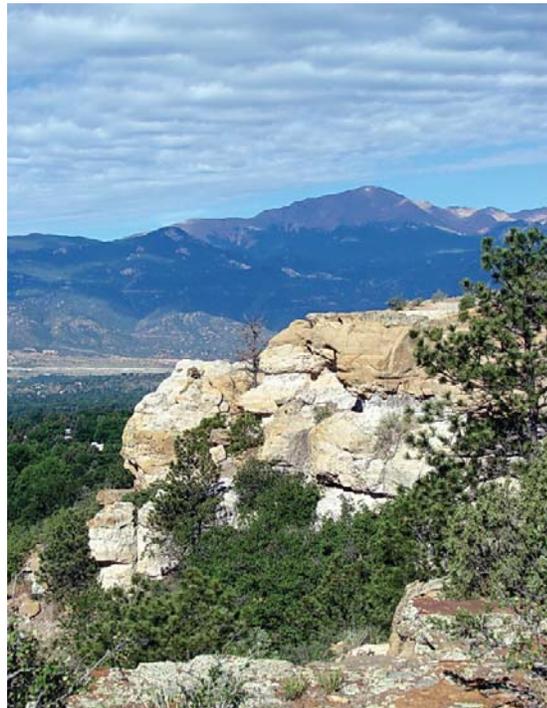


Park Ranger Nate Hook

“ My mission as a Park Ranger includes protecting our natural resources as well as maintaining the upkeep, cleanliness, and the safety of our parks. This work ensures that families can enjoy an improved quality of life for generations. ”

Ranger Hook's Property List
6 Properties
2102.67 acres

Palmer Park
Austin Bluffs Open Space
Garden Ranch Open Space
Iron Horse Open Space
Jimmy Camp Creek Park
Sunset Mesa Open Space





Guardians of Palmer Park

The organization's mission is:

- To enhance, protect, defend and maintain the physical integrity, natural beauty and physical resources of Palmer Park in Colorado Springs, Colorado.
- To raise and spend money for upkeep, maintenance, and protection of park land and facilities, and the native flora and fauna.
- To encourage responsible use of the park by hikers, bicyclists, dog-walkers (with and without leash), , kite-fliers, frisbee-throwers, play-ground-users, picnickers, sports participants, and persons involved in any other non-motorized recreational use that does not negatively impact park resources.
- To assist the City of Colorado Springs to maintain the park in all ways that do not conflict with the other elements of GOPP's mission statement.



Red Rock Canyon Open Space



789 acres located at 3615 So. Ridge Road,
 Colorado Springs, CO
 18 miles of trails
 Annual Visitors: Unknown

Survey Item	Most Recent Inventory
Cultural Features of Concern	2004 An Archaeological Investigation, Stephen Snyder
Forest Health	No Record Located
Geologic Features of Concern	2004 Geology of the Red Rocks Area Dr. Paul K. Grogger
Insects and Diseases	No Record Located
Invasive and Non-Native Vegetation	No Record Located
Rare, Threatened and Endangered Plants	2003 Several Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP) community types of conservation concern exist on the property.
Rock Climbing	2004
Social Trail Inventory	2004 <u>Summary</u> During the management plan development process, 15.7 miles of social trails were mapped in Red Rock Canyon Open Space; the recommendations included closing social trails providing access to the park from adjacent housing areas to both protect wildlife buffer zones and to help prevent the spread of noxious weeds.

Survey Item	Most Recent Inventory
Trail Inventory	<p data-bbox="883 401 1260 426">2004 2011 ADA Title II Inventory</p> <p data-bbox="883 430 992 455">Summary</p> <p data-bbox="883 459 1430 711">Nearly all of the trails in Red Rock Canyon Open Space have mild to severe erosion degrading their surface. the easy-level trails were designed and built to meet ADA standards, but due to significant budgetary constraints the trails have not been maintained to provide the “firm and stable” surface required by the Regulatory Negotiation Committee on Accessibility Guidelines for Outdoor Developed Areas.</p> <p data-bbox="883 743 1081 768">Recommendations</p> <p data-bbox="883 772 1430 856">A prescription inventory including GPS markers every one-quarter mile for establishing ground location reference points.</p> <p data-bbox="883 888 1430 940">The development of a prioritized trail maintenance and rehabilitation master plan.</p>
User Survey	<p data-bbox="883 1031 1130 1056">2011, July and August</p> <p data-bbox="883 1060 1320 1083">Visitor experiences and parking lot use.</p>
Vegetation	<p data-bbox="883 1184 1386 1241">2003 Plant Communities of Red Rock Canyon Open Space, Dr. Tass Kelso</p> <p data-bbox="883 1272 1325 1325">2004 Habitat Quality Report, Greystone Environmental Consultants, Inc.</p>
Wildlife Inventory	<p data-bbox="883 1436 1430 1461">Recommended in 2004: no baseline record located</p>

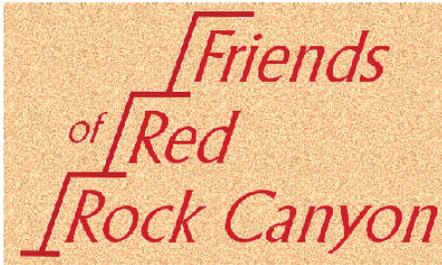


Park Ranger Mike Weeks

“ As a park ranger, my mission is two-fold — to manage the park visitors and protect the natural resources in our parks. Colorado Springs has some of the greatest natural treasures in the state and these treasures must be preserved for future generations. The greatest challenge I face is encouraging an outdoor ethic among the park visitors, in the hope that they will join in this effort. ”

Ranger Weeks' TOPS Property List
11 Properties
4336.02 acres

Red Rock Canyon Open Space
Blodgett Peak Open Space
Bluestem Prairie Open Space
Cheyenne Mtn State Park backdrop
Corral Bluffs Open Space
High Chaparral Open Space
Section 16 Open Space
Stratton Open Space
Stratton Forest Open Space
Union Meadows Open Space
White Acres Open Space



CATS Trail Repair Club

CATS, a group of experienced trail builders, work closely with Ranger Mike Weeks to complete projects on the high priority list.

Friends of Red Rock Canyon is an independent non-profit organization which supports Red Rock Canyon Open Space through stewardship, education, advocacy, fundraising, and volunteer projects.

Their efforts promote public awareness of Red Rock Canyon Open Space, provide education about the special natural and historic character of the open space, and protect and enhance its natural and recreational value.



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Appendix A

Colorado Springs, CO 80906

June 6, 2011

1401 Recreation Way
Colorado Springs, CO 80905

Mr. Scott Abbott,

Why was I so upset about the work being done on Section 16 trail –

I have been hiking trails in the Pikes Peak Region for over 25 years. Usually I set aside one day a week for a hike/run. I like Section 16 loop for reasons of safety and convenience.

I have seen a lot of changes to the trail over the years. I have also seen first hand what has happened when various groups (and they all claim to be knowledgeable about what is best for the trail) do trail “maintenance.” Work is done, and the results look good for a few years. But inevitably maintenance lapses. It is in precisely those disturbed areas where trail breakdown occurs the fastest. What was once a stable area of trail begins to disintegrate.

I am afraid that will happen to one of the areas where unnecessary steps were placed. Trail that has not been subject to erosion or water damage was disturbed and broken up for no discernable reason.

In several places in years past groups have come in to do trail maintenance and proceeded to reroute the trail to areas more unstable than the original path, leaving the trail in worse shape then it would have been if no work had been done. (Yes, one of those areas was addressed on Saturday.)

In that short segment of trail that FotP worked on on Saturday there was major trail disruption. Would less aggressive design served just as well? Rail Road ties will eventually break down. Who will maintain that trail in the years to come? No one can guarantee that any group will take on the forever job of maintaining any trail. It hasn't happened in the past. Even you cannot promise it will happen in the future.

Looking good for a year or two at the price of faster erosion later is not a bargain. When the funding for maintenance disappears and the railroad ties rot what will happen to that trail and the others that have been similarly disturbed? Trail work needs to be done, but it needs to be sustainable, not aggressive.

Engineers designing trails is a great concept. But unless that designer knows the trail and how it is used intelligent design is impossible. And I mean know the trail (each trail) throughout its seasons. Learning needs to be adapted to reality. Those railroad ties have been placed too far apart for a single step and too close together for two steps between each rise. And how are the numerous mountain bikers who use that trail supposed to navigate those steps. Trails need to be designed for all users.

Sincerely,
Carol Lyndell

Appendix B



COLORADO COLLEGE
1 8 7 4

May 30, 2011

Thank you for your request to provide comments on the current state of the Colorado Springs Regional Parks, Trails, and Open Space. Let me begin by saying that this system is a local treasure: for recreation, education, and visual appeal in a rapidly urbanizing area, the regional parks and trails systems is an unparalleled resource for which the region should be justifiably proud. The early founders of Colorado recognized that the appeal of the region lay in its landscape, and these multiple pieces showcase our landscape diversity admirably. From the Black Forest to the foothills, Fountain Creek corridor to the prairie, the park and trail system provides multi-use access to this diversity. In over twenty years of teaching biology here, and in utilizing these parks and trails for my own education and recreation, I continue to find them an ongoing pleasure both personally and professionally.

As a biologist I should also, however, share my concerns. My relatively long vantage point in looking at them and intensive study of certain areas provides me with the opportunity to think about them more analytically and in more detail than a casual user.

In part because of all that it offers local residents and visitors, the park/trail system here is under threat, and a number of park components are in worse condition now than when established. Virtually all our parks and trails get heavy use- often use that is not sensitive to landscape vulnerability. Social trails abound and are increasing. A number of the parks exist on very erodible soils, and even designated trails are in poor shape in certain instances. Some parks lack signage to direct foot traffic onto appropriate trails, or away from inappropriate areas (that is, areas with sensitive species- and many places in the park system do include areas with sensitive, sometimes rare, species). Many components of the system lack recent surveys of what their key biological or landscape features are, or in what condition they are in.

The heavy use of the system speaks to its multi-level and broad appeal, but that appeal carries the price of use in direct landscape damage. Lack of funds for maintenance and park supervision due to economic restrictions in the past few years has exacerbated these effects. As a botanist, I have viewed with concern the increasing noxious weeds and non-native elements spreading in the parks, often along the trails (social and designated), but also into previously intact zones of native vegetation. Weeds follow human disturbance, and our parks and trails are becoming disturbance zones with accompanying degradation factors. Erosion, biological pollution, trash, and signs of overuse in ways that impact natural features of the landscape are becoming more and more widespread.

We all recognize that no park landscape is pristine and that no park remains untouched by use. However, benign neglect of an urban system under heavy pressure is not a viable management option if a key objective, to encompass and protect diverse ecological systems, is to remain a priority. Without ongoing attention to caretaking needs, our parks and trails risk losing the charismatic biological and landscape elements that made them initially desirable components of the system. These elements are the reason these places hold such potential as resources for residents and visitors to learn about, and engage with, the landscape that is such a key aspect of promoting sense of place for the Pikes Peak region.

Recreation, native ecology, and erodible terrain can coexist in healthy ways, but any landscape here needs ongoing attention and care if they are to do so. Personally and professionally, I deeply appreciate the resource that the local parks and trails offer, and on both levels I am concerned that they receive the care and attention they require if they are to retain value as diverse environments that showcase our native ecologies. This care, such as weed mapping and control, social trail improvement, or designation of biologically or geologically sensitive areas from which the public is diverted, might well need to be an ongoing cooperative effort of users and managers. I hope that these efforts can accelerate and become mutual engagement in local landscape that nurtures these inherently marvelous, but vulnerable, resources.

Sincerely,
Tass Kelso, Professor of Biology
Colorado College

Appendix C



June 8, 2011

As for the Garden of the Gods, as you know it is being “loved to death.” There is a huge amount of work that needs to be done to reclaim social trails, rework and repair existing trails, close off social climbing access points, revegetate areas where there are bare spots, remove noxious species of plants, and so forth. The work that RMFI is doing in the Central Garden, and which FOGG is helping pay for, will help that area of the park, but there is loads more to be done. For example, I was hiking yesterday on Siamese twins trail where it begins across the road opposite the North end of Strausenbach trail, and that trail could use lots of work, especially up around the Siamese Twins themselves.

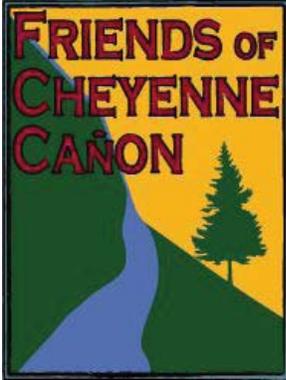
Two key issues that seem to me need to be addressed further: 1) the damage being done by the horses from Academy Riding stables and the excrement they leave on the trails (was almost impossible to get around it, there was so much on the trail in spots yesterday) and 2) the issue with policing the park to reduce the graffiti, the rock scramblers, the off-trail excursions, etc. that a small number of folks commit.

On a positive note, I am constantly amazed at the number of visitors I speak with who came to Colorado Springs for one reason and one reason only - to see the Garden of the Gods! Our FOGG volunteers do a wonderful job of greeting these visitors, telling them about the park, leading them on guided nature walks, stepping on their tour busses to conduct them through the park, giving them information on the geology and ecology of the park, providing a historical background and so forth. In addition, these volunteers are ambassadors for the City of Colorado Springs, pointing the visitors to other attractions, to lodging, to restaurants, to shopping, etc. Just yesterday, in the four hours I volunteered at the Visitor and Nature Center information desk, we recommended visitors go to 7 Falls, the OTC, the Air Force Academy, suggested they look for lodging along Manitou Avenue, and suggested they try the cuisine at Pizzeria Rustica, Amanda’s Fonda, the Tavern at the Broadmoor, Phantom Canyon, Carraba’s, and Old Chicago, among others.

One final comment - and I know I am preaching to the choir - there have to be more city staff hired to 1) help in the Visitor and Nature Center, 2) establish a presence and to work trails, etc. in the park, 3) establish what needs to be done to preserve the park, and 4) work to assure the things that need to be done get done in accordance with the Garden Master Plan. Volunteers can do a lot of these things, but not without the city’s guidance, since it is, after all, a CITY PARK. Our volunteers love the park and will continue to do all we can, but we cannot do it all.

John Demmon
President of the Board of Directors
Friends of Garden of the Gods

Appendix D



June 26, 2011

The one half million visitors to North Cheyenne Canon Park (NCCP) annually become part of the 126 year history of this miniature Colorado Springs National Park. NCCP began its impact on the quality of our community's life with the first purchase of land by William Dixon (1867) and Colorado College Land Company (640 acres called Colorado College Park). Another major land holder was Burton C. Myers who had a 750-acre farm in 1875. In the final two years of her life, authoress, Helen Hunt Jackson spearheaded the campaign urging the City of Colorado Springs to purchase North Cheyenne Cañon from the Colorado College. This effort succeeded in 1885 when the citizens of Colorado Springs voted for North Cheyenne Canon to be a city park. General William Palmer, founder of Colorado Springs, believed in preserving the natural environment, especially along creeks and rivers, through designation as parks. Before 1875, Palmer purchased for the Colorado Springs Company, his real estate development firm, some 160 acres in the area of the North Cheyenne Creek up to and including the falls (later known as Helen Hunt Falls). From the start, Palmer intended this land to be set aside as a park and by purchasing the land he aimed "to prevent the cutting down of trees in the canon for timber." Palmer sought "to preserve the canon intact and keep it to the great point of scenic interest it then was." Among his many gifts of land which he purchased, meant to be used as city parks, were an additional five hundred acres of natural cañon land donated to the City of Colorado Springs in 1907. For his effort to preserve the upper cañon, Palmer remains a significant figure in the history of the park.

This 1600 acre city wilderness park, listed in the National Register of Historic Places in the areas of Conservation and Entertainment/Recreation, has an annual budget that has decreased from over \$155,492.00 in 2007 to \$107,051.00 in 2010. Over these four years our city has suffered severe economic setbacks. Between 2007 and 2010 the city has provided \$352,144.00 with the Friends of Cheyenne Canon stepping up to partner with our community by providing over \$300,000.00 over the same period of time. While the property is essentially a natural environment and not the product of a designed landscape plan it supports two Visitor Centers, Starsmore Discovery Center and Helen Hunt Falls Visitors Center. Over 16,000 students have attended environmental educational programs in the NCCP Visitor Centers since 2004. Several of the children's programs are approved for Teacher Recertification by the Colorado Board of Education. The Park and its educational programs were honored with an El Pomar Award for Excellence.

Appendix D, cont.

By 2004, NCCP's 11 miles of trails had fallen into disrepair due to inadequate City maintenance. The Friends of Cheyenne Canon (FOCC) formed a Trails Committee and began their positive, on-going impact by requesting and receiving \$7500 in City funding for materials and provided volunteer labor.

This effort included a \$110,000 grant garnered by the FOCC and City from the State. FOCC efforts also rehabilitated the Mt. Cutler Trail. This included a re-route and installation of a 60 foot bridge. to recover Silver Cascade Falls Trail above Helen Hunt Falls. During 2005-2009, FOCC organized, partially funded and provided volunteers to completely rehab the 4.5 mile Columbine Trail.

Presently volunteers are re-routing the 0.5 mile Spring Creek Trail. Since 2004, FOCC volunteers provide over 14,000 hours dedicated to maintain and rehab trails in the Canon. Consequently, trails in the Canon are recognized as the best trails in the city. Since 2007 the FOCC have generated and returned to the park over \$300,000.00 toward land rehabilitation and educational programs,

In their twentieth year, the FOCC promote a stewardship ethic working with neighbors and city and state government, Ft. Carson, Two Cor, and businesses such as Comcast who give 2000-3000 volunteer hours annually to protect the NCCP land. In 2010-11 volunteers in NCCP donated over 9000 hours of time to care for habitats, land conservation, preserve historic structures, protect water quality in streams and water falls, teach classes and staff visitor centers. Recently the FOCC have taken on fire, flood and crime mitigation in NCCP by removing graffiti, and patrolling sights used for bonfires and picnics. The combined value of these efforts is nearly \$196,000.00 annually. These partnerships have also created a financial architecture to provide and care for the park. Aggressive fundraising enables the FOCC to deliver the message of stewardship through park programs among them, Canon Clean Up, Trail Maintenance Days and The Hummingbird Festival. The 2011 the Hummingbird Festival generated over \$5000.00 which returns directly into services and needs of NCCP. This year the event featured the Pueblo Raptor Center, Hummingbird Association and the American Birding Association.

Cheyenne Canon has been a gauge for athletic excellence for decades. When a cyclist determines how fast they are, the first question asked is, "How fast do you do Cheyenne Canon?". The current record is 13:34 by Tom Danielson and superstars Lance Armstrong and Any Hamston have gauged their fitness in the Canon since the 1980's. NCCP is now the sight of annual time trials in running and cycling for athlete's pursuing an Olympic dream. In 2009 Carmaichael Training Systems Cheyenne Cañon Time Trial, featured 220 athletes from 9 states, American Cycling Association Sanctioned, Ranked for 'Best All Around Rider' in Colorado Points. In 2010 North Cheyenne Cañon Park was the site of the time trial series featuring 4 events with 120 riders. This USA Cycling sanctioned event established NCCP as a premier site for time trials for amateur and professional athletes. In 2011 NCCP will host the 26th street time trial Series 3 USA Cycling Sanctioned ancillary event to the USA Pro Cycling Challenge. This event will feature 300 world class athletes. All of these events are staffed by the FOCC volunteers.

Beneficiaries of the City of Colorado Springs Parks and FOCC land preservation partnership include hikers, cyclists, equestrians, Colorado Springs residents and tourists who number over 500,000 annually. In 2009 NCCP was placed on the National Register for Historic Places. This created a new partnership with the University of Colorado to use NCCP to offer Summer Field Schools to teach land assessment and preservation. NCCP is an urban forest that has become a classroom. NCCP is creating a community that understands the ecosystems in the urban forest—people, land, animals and plants—and provide tools so NCCP will be valued and endure for generations.

Myssye Bonds
Member of the Board
Friends of Cheyenne Canon