



Parks & Open Space

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PARKS & OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Time/Date of Meeting: 6:30 p.m., Thursday, Nov. 17, 2022

Location: Boulder County Courthouse
1325 Pearl Street, Third Floor, Boulder

TO:	Parks & Open Space Advisory Committee
FROM/PRESENTER:	Heidi Wagner, Resource Planning Manager Jeff Moline, Senior Planner
AGENDA ITEM:	East Boulder Creek Site Plan, Initial Meeting
ACTION REQUESTED:	Feedback Requested

Introduction

Boulder County Parks & Open Space is beginning the planning process for the East Boulder Creek Site and wants to introduce both the management planning process and the area itself to POSAC and the public. This meeting will serve as the kickoff for the project and staff will detail the major components that will go into the development of the department's newest site management plan. Following a short presentation, staff will welcome questions and discussion about both the process and site at the meeting.

Site Management Planning

Following a number of staffing changes in the department, the Resource Planning Division is moving to create an evolved management planning process that builds on the success and foundation of our past, and more traditional, "property" management plans. (Staff is also pivoting away from the term "property" in these public, site management planning efforts, due to its less inclusive meaning, and the term's references and uses in the past.) The new process will focus on outcomes in engagement, guidance, and connection for the community in this site. The process will move through several stages (discover, refine, finalize, and implement) in the next year and into early 2024 that will gather all the baseline information about the site, create conservation and people priorities, provide for decision-making, and move onto the refinement of tactics to achieve those priorities. The plan will have final meetings and approvals before heading into the department's project implementation system. A hallmark of this process will be its transparency and outreach efforts that are now commencing with a robust stakeholder and public involvement program reaching out to neighbors and stakeholders (including the Town of Erie and Weld County) with surveys, a website, site visits, and open houses. Materials will be bilingual (Spanish), and comments will be received in either language as well. The department intends this to be the most inclusive management planning process it has ever conducted and anticipates that it will lead to the most successful outcomes as well.

East Boulder Creek Site

This 1377-acre site is composed of five properties (a label staff will still use to identify individual land units) that contain a dozen ponds and five miles of perennial stream along Boulder and Coal Creeks. The department purchased or acquired most of the properties (Alexander Dawson, Bailey-Kenosha Ponds, Doniphan, Wheeler Ranch, and Wise) in the

late 1990s and has been managing them since although Wise is owned jointly with the Town of Erie. The site is in East-Central Boulder County and shares a border with Weld County at East County Line Road. The area is also bounded by State Highway 52 on the north, US 287 generally on the west, and Jasper and Kenosha Roads on the south. The Town of Erie lies just to the south, Niwot several miles to the northwest, and Longmont about five miles to the north. The site includes a number of BCCP designations including a proposed county trail corridor, riparian habitat connectors, wetland occurrences, a critical wildlife habitat, a zone for restoring Preble's Meadow Jumping Mice, and a portion of the East County Environmental Conservation Area.

The site presents a variety of opportunities in its conservation values and options for experiencing both the natural and human community. This portion of the Boulder Valley has been an important part of the region for its streamside riparian gallery and habitats, irrigated farmlands, open water bodies, scenic vistas, and place in this rural and agricultural community. Due to its relatively level topography and position on the western Great Plains, this site offers expansive views of the Front Range and Indian Peaks. However, the area is not without constraints; it has been and remains a source of oil and gas operations and, coupled with aggregate mining, these extractive industries have left an impact of disturbed topsoil and weedy uplands. An additional challenge is the current lack of adequate water for pond augmentation along with Clean Water Act impairment ratings for the streams.

Since acquiring the properties composing this site, the county has been working to restore the area. The department started by developing the Lower Boulder Creek and Coal Creek Open Space Master Plan which was approved in 1998. Efforts to implement that plan began shortly thereafter with the development of a reclamation plan for the county's Kenosha gravel pit that ceased production in 2005. The department successfully met the state's reclamation standards in 2019 and continues to monitor and revegetate areas of the site. Due to the extent of past aggregate mining, the site continues to provide ongoing opportunities for restoration. In another example of restoration following the 1998 plan, the county partnered with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to fully restore a one-mile segment of the Boulder Creek floodplain east of US 287 before the 2013 flood. Following the flood, the partners were able to fund and complete the project, broadening the channel in order to build resilience into the landscape and to offer a larger riparian habitat footprint. A more recent example of restoration includes a partnership with the Mile High Flood District and the City of Boulder to design a resilient repair and replacement of the Howell Ditch diversion on the Doniphan property.

Conclusion

BCPOS staff is excited to embark on an updated site management process for this East Boulder Creek area. Staff feels the new planning methods will provide more public and stakeholder involvement in the creation of a plan that serve the community and protect the important agricultural and natural values of the site.

POSAC Action Requested

Staff is looking forward to the committee's feedback on both the process as outlined and described as well as any questions concerning the site itself.

Attachments:

1. East Boulder Creek Site Vicinity Map