

Friends of the Peak would like to make the following comments on the “Plan for Recreational Uses on Municipal Watershed Lands” presented at the Public Open House of April 27, 2010.

1. We commend EDAW/AECOM and Colorado Springs Utilities for listening to comments from the public and adjusting the plan based on the concerns of the people.
2. We enthusiastically support the inclusion of the extension of the Ute Trail from Long Ranch Road to the point where French Creek crosses U. S. Highway 24 and believe it is of the highest importance. Not only does it utilize the current historical alignment of the trail, but it also improves the safety of those using it.
3. We feel that a 48 inch wide trail tread is too wide and recommend a 24 inch tread. This will reduce the impact on the environment, reduce the cost of construction, and enhance the backcountry experience. Other trails in the area accommodate joint use by equestrians, hikers, and bikers with a much narrower tread.
4. The current plan includes very little mention of the trail connection between the Mason/McReynolds recreation nodes and the Lake Moraine Trail. This connection is a very important enhancement to the quiet use of South Slope. It would provide reasonable access for hikers and mountain bikers from Captain Jacks Trail to the Mason/Boehmer loop trail without the need to drive 1.5 hours, reducing fuel usage and pollution. It would provide reasonable access for equestrians and fishermen to Lake Moraine from the day use and trailhead parking areas. We urge you to include this connection as a positive part of the plan, spelling out the steps for design and construction.
5. We agree generally with the priorities as listed. Providing the more central trailhead and the short trails first is sensible. However, we would put the Lake Moraine Trail as a higher priority than the Mason/Boehmer Loop Trail, and the Ute Trail extension as a high priority.
6. We urge you to consider keeping South Slope open year round, allowing for backcountry skiing and snow shoeing. Since the roads to South Slope are kept plowed all winter, the only reason for closing the area should be for the protection of the bighorn sheep. Winter access has the potential of increasing user fee revenue. If for some reason winter access from Forest Service Rd. 376 is not feasible, at least consider leaving the Lake Moraine Trail open in the winter.
7. We are glad that the plan includes explicit mention of the Ring the Peak trail (Perimeter Loop Trail) and Utilities’ commitment to continued exploration of possibilities for the Ring. We look forward to working with Utilities and City Parks and Recreation not only on the Ring but also on any other aspects of the plan with which we can help.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the plan and for being receptive to and acting on public comments. Thank you for your efforts to balance the needs for water quality, environmental protection, and recreational access.

Sincerely,

Michael Cotter
President
Friends of the Peak