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This email newsletter is published four times per year — February, May, August, and November.

It is in page format so, if you wish, you can print it off and read it at leisure or offer it to a friend who doesn't do email.

Friends of the Peak

Preserving
Restoring
Appreciating

Pikes Peak

Dear Friends of the Peak,

May 2010

Spring is now in full swing and judging by the emails we have received, everyone is ready to get out and do some work on the Peak. Take a look at page 3 for a complete list of all the projects and go to www.fotp.com to register. Another way you can get involved is by checking out Mary Burger's article about the opening of the South Slope, page 4. Friends of the Peak has been active in the development of the concept plan so we are very excited to see the final version, due out at the end of the May. You can read the complete plan at <http://www.csu.org/residential/environment/recreation/watershed/item2989.html> and the comments from the board of FOTP at www.fotp.com.

Even though the concept plan is not finalized, work to open the South Slope is moving forward and Friends of the Peak is taking an active role. The Colorado Springs Parks and Recreation Department has been designated by the City Council as the agency that will manage the area for recreational use. Friends of the Peak (FOTP) and the Trails and Open Space Coalition (TOSC) are partnering with Parks and Recreation to get the space open to the public. This is a huge effort and we will need your help to make it happen.

The City Council has set a very strict timeline for when the area should be open. However, there are no trails or other facilities in place to accommodate visitors to the area. To help address both of these items, FOTP and TOSC are partnering to provide guided tours in the area for this year. This will allow the public access to the area, but give FOTP a chance to guide that access and provide some education. FOTP will put out a call for guides and announce tour dates in the coming weeks so keep an eye out for further announcements. Expect to see work days on the South Slope next year.

More =>

I want to let everyone know about one final item. FOTP has agreed to pay for a port-o-let on the South Slope so that people who are taking tours have somewhere to "go." This is not a glamorous issue, but one that is worth mentioning because of our other efforts with other port-o-lets. For a long time FOTP has been providing port-o-lets at the Barr Trail trailhead during the winter months. We have finally been able to provide electricity to the permanent restrooms at the trailhead that will allow those restrooms to stay open year-round. These are both small items that generally go unnoticed unless they are not there. These efforts were made possible by the generosity of our members and donors.

Thank you to all of our members, donors and volunteers. You make everything we do possible!



mike@fotp.com
473-0158

Sincerely, Michael Cotter, President, Board of Directors, FOTP

Steve Jennings

This past winter Steve Jennings, a long time Board member and former President of The Friends of the Peak, decided to step down in order to have more time to pursue his work with the Colorado Geographic Alliance and his teaching at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs.

The Board would like to express our sincere thanks to Steve for his dedication to Friends of the Peak and all the sweat equity he has put in over the years to help care for the trails on Pikes Peak. We wish him continuing success in all that he does.

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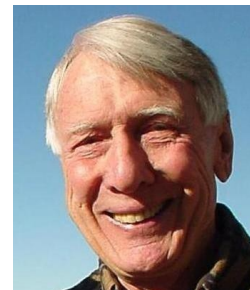
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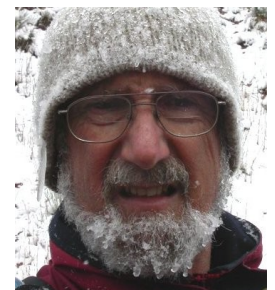
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2010 PROJECTS

TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROJECTS BELOW, PLEASE GO TO www.fotp.com TO REGISTER.

Barr Trail

The Barr Trail is probably the most used trail in the Pikes Peak Region. Friends of the Peak will continue its ongoing efforts to address drainage and grade issues on the trail. In addition, Friends of the Peak will be working with volunteers to provide regular maintenance on the trail so additional dates may be added throughout the summer.

August 7th and 8th

Buffalo Creek Trail

This is also known as the St. Mary's Falls Trail. Maintenance on it was neglected for 30 years, which has created a unique opportunity to improve a great trail. Friends of the Peak began work on this trail last year and were able to complete the first 1.25 miles. The remaining sections of trail are generally in good shape, but need work to reduce further rutting. The trail-head will be accessed via the closed section of Gold Camp Road.

June 3rd June 17th July 1st July 15th July 29th August 12th August 26th Sept 9th Sept 23rd

Devil's Playground Trail

The workday for this trail will be on the uppermost section of this trail in its approach to the summit of Pikes Peak. The trail winds through a boulder field, and in some places the trail is not well defined. This is causing confusion for hikers approaching the summit from the west. Friends of the Peak will work to correct alignment problems and make sure the trail is clearly marked.

August 28th

Maintenance Hikes

In an ongoing basis to ensure that all existing trails are well maintained, Friends of the Peak will begin offering maintenance hikes on existing trails. The goal of these hikes will be to hike the trail, or sections of it, while documenting major areas to be addressed later and fixing minor issues as they are discovered.

Seven Bridges Trail - July 24th

Barr Trail - August 14th

South Slope Guided Tours

Initial access to the South Slope will be limited to guided tours. See article on next page.

Watch for further communications and check www.fotp.com as we are currently working on a number of items that may result in projects later this year.

WOW!

WOW! The South Slope is going to be opened!

After years of talk, and several studies, Colorado Springs has declared the South Slope will be opened for recreation this year. Before you head up there, here are a few things you should know. First, until the trail system can be built, the only access will be through guided tours. There will be a fee for the tours, with the proceeds going to fund the development of the area. If you would like to take the tours or if you would be willing to be trained as a tour guide, contact us at www.fotp.com and click on South Slope. To be a guide, you will have to take some training and be available a minimum number of days this summer. The full plan for the guided hikes is still being worked out. Meanwhile, it would be helpful to know how many people are interested in taking the tours, or being guides.

Secondly, the trail alignments are being finalized, and should be finished early summer. Volunteers will be asked to build the trails. It has been a long time since we have had an opportunity on Pikes Peak to build new trails. This may be the last opportunity in a long time. We will probably have crew leader training in mid summer, with work days available late summer. Again, the details are being worked out.

Lastly, this area will be closed to dogs — all dogs, even those in your car or on a leash. No dogs will be allowed. Considering that Colorado Springs is “Dog City USA,” some explanation is in order. The reason for this ban is not that the authorities hate dogs, or think dogs are bigger polluters than say elk. The reason is that this is a critical habitat for Big Horn Sheep. Sheep see dogs as predators, and run away. When they run away they use energy, and living as they do in the alpine tundra they don't have a lot of energy reserve. Even if the dog is completely contained, leashed or otherwise not a threat to the sheep, the sheep do not know that.

This herd of sheep is an historically important herd. It was resident here on Pikes Peak before the settlers. Currently the herd numbers are declining. The reasons for this are unknown and may have nothing to do with interactions with people. But the biologists say the presence of dogs would put additional stress on the already fragile herd. If we are to keep this herd on Pikes Peak, we need to respect its territory. So please, spread the word. Come to the south slope to enjoy the wetlands and the forests, to experience the views of Pikes Peak, and to fish the reservoirs. Come in the hopes of seeing the big horn sheep. But leave the dogs at home.



Submitted by Mary Burger

SOUTH SLOPE RECREATION PLAN

On April 27th the planning firm of EDAW/AECOM held an open house to present the latest plans for opening the South Slope to recreation. To view the plan online, go to:

<http://www.csu.org/residential/environment/recreation/watershed/item2989.html>

Here you will be able to:

- ◆ View the Plan
- ◆ View the presentation shown at the Open House
- ◆ View the display boards shown at the Open House
- ◆ View the Ute Trail Alignment
- ◆ Submit your comments using the online comment form (upper right corner)

The objectives of the plan are to balance the requirements for maintaining safe drinking water, protecting the environment, and providing recreational opportunities. The recreational focus is on solitude and quiet use. The plan allows for hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, fishing in reservoirs, non-motorized boating, picnicking, and hunting.

Briefly, the plan includes public auto access about a half mile north of the Utilities gate on Forest Road 376 to two recreation nodes. One of these nodes will be a "Day Use Area" on the banks of McReynolds Reservoir. It will include parking for 15 cars, a restroom, picnic tables, a place to launch non-motorized boats, and fishing trails. The second node will be a trailhead near Mason Reservoir. This site will include parking for 15 cars, 7 drive-through parking spaces for vehicles pulling horse trailers, a restroom, picnic tables, and the trailhead for fisherman on Mason Reservoir and the 5 mile loop trail between Mason and Boehmer Reservoirs. A trail will connect the Mason and McReynolds recreation nodes.

A new trail will connect the "Captain Jacks" trail (FT 371) from Bear Creek and the "Mountain View" trail (FT 671), which connects to Barr Trail. This trail will be open to hikers, fisherman, mountain bikers, and equestrians.

The plan applies "Adaptive Management". While this concept has not been fully developed, in broad terms it means monitoring usage and making changes to the plan that will mitigate or improve the balance of water quality, the environment, and recreation. For example this might mean changing, closing or adding trails, changing trail width, or expanding parking areas.

A graph representing the number of comments received on the main topics of concern to the people who responded to the concept plan can be seen on page 9 of the Open House presentation by AECOM.

The plan has undergone some exciting changes since the public open house in January. These include:

1. Assigning recreational management to the City's Park and Recreation Department under a collaborative agreement with Utilities. This includes overseeing the construction of the facilities and securing funds for construction, operation, and maintenance (Utilities will fund the construction design).
2. Connecting the recreation nodes at Mason/McReynolds Reservoirs to the Lake Moraine trail. No specific trail alignment has been proposed for this, but it could be included in the final plan, due out May 28.

More =>

SOUTH SLOPE RECREATION PLAN (concluded)

3. Possibly allowing limited hunting on South Slope. The details of this still must be worked out with the Division of Wildlife.
4. Allowing mountain biking on the loop trail between Mason and Boehmer Reservoirs. (The plan already provided for bicycle use on the new Lake Moraine trail.)
5. Closing Boehmer Reservoir to fishing to protect the greenback cutthroat trout.
6. Continuing discussions with stakeholders on the completion of the Ring the Peak trail between Pancake Rocks and FR 376.
7. Extending Ute Trail northwest from Long Ranch Road to a point where French Creek crosses Highway 24. The County of El Paso will be responsible for the design and construction of improvements to the Ute Trail
8. Accelerating the design and some construction to permit some access in the summer of 2010.

Priorities for construction are spelled out in the plan as follows:

1st Priority, trailhead at Mason Reservoir, Trail to Mason Reservoir & Trail to McReynolds Reservoir

2nd Priority, loop trail between Mason and Boehmer Reservoirs & Day use area at McReynolds Reservoir

3rd Priority, Lake Moraine Trail connecting the Captain Jacks and Mountain View trails.

4th Priority, trail connecting Mason/Boehmer loop trail and Lake Moraine trail

The consultant took questions and comments from the audience, and provided some answers to the questions presented. These include:

1. How can the \$2.5 million cost be reduced? Answer: Using volunteers for trail construction and reducing the trail width are possibilities.
2. Why isn't the Ute Trail included in the priority list? Answer: El Paso County will manage those improvements, and the timing is up to them.
3. Why has a 4 foot wide trail been specified? Answer: To accommodate hikers, bikers and equestrians. This could change.
4. A website to report current trail conditions should be established, so that users would not drive to South Slope only to discover that trails are too muddy to use or that the area is closed.
5. Will motorized use on the new Lake Moraine trail be allowed? Answer: No. Motorized trail use outside the South Slope will not be affected by the Plan.
6. How can conflicts between equestrians and other users for the drive-through parking places, which are likely during high use periods, be addressed? Answer: Adaptive management could handle this need.
7. South Slope should be open for winter use also, especially the Lake Moraine connection.
8. When will the design of the improvements be complete? Answer: By mid summer 2010.
9. What will operations and maintenance cost? Answer: Approximately \$50,000 to \$100,000 per year.

Submitted by Eric Swab

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