

# FISHERS CANYON

## *Open Space Master & Management Plan*

2025 Report

1/23/25 Draft



parks · recreation · cultural services





# Welcome Letter

The Fishers Canyon Open Space Master and Management Plan is a comprehensive blueprint that will guide the stewardship and enjoyment of this incredible public space for years to come. This plan is the culmination of countless hours of collaboration, dialogue, and shared vision among community members, stakeholders, and our dedicated staff.

I would like to extend my gratitude to the diverse citizens who participated in this process. Your commitment and enthusiasm have been the driving force behind the creation of this plan. Through numerous public meetings and discussions, you shared insights and ideas that have helped shape the future of Fishers Canyon Open Space. It is your passion for our community and its natural spaces that has made this plan possible.

I also want to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of our Stakeholder Engagement Group. Your expertise and perspective were instrumental in ensuring that the plan reflects the needs and aspirations of our community. Thank you for your guidance and support throughout this process.

Additionally, I would like to express my appreciation to Park staff and the consultant team for their dedication to bringing this vision to life. Your professionalism, hard work and commitment to excellence have resulted in a master plan that is not only functional but also deeply rooted in the values and desires of the community.

Thank you once again for your unwavering support and dedication.

Sincerely,

Britt Haley,  
Director, Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department, City of Colorado Springs

# Acknowledgments

The community-guided Fishers Canyon Open Space Master and Management Plan will set the future of this spectacular public Open Space and its connectivity to surrounding public properties. We acknowledge and are thankful for the committed participation and engagement of the diverse citizen participants. All participants gave valuable input through many public meetings and reviews with the consultant team and the City staff. Their thoughtful ideas have informed and shaped this plan.

We acknowledge and are also thankful to the Stakeholder Engagement Groups. They provided invaluable information that has helped shape this Master and Management Plan. The Agency Partners provided input on how they interface with the Open Space. We want to thank the following members for their contributions:

## **Agency Partners:**

Carl Bauer, District Ranger, Pike-San Isabel National Forest & Cimarron and Comanche National Grasslands (USFS)  
Samantha Gouch, Recreation Planner, Pike-San Isabel National Forest & Cimarron and Comanche National Grasslands (USFS)  
Jason Hagen, Cheyenne Mountain State Park Manager, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW)  
Lisa Walters, Colorado Springs Utilities  
Cory Ashby, Colorado Springs Fire Department  
Jim Voige, Cheyenne Mountain Propagation  
David Kelley, Natural Resource Manager Cheyenne Mountain Space Force Station  
John Sanders, Chief of Master Planning, Fort Carson  
Roger Payton, Chief of Conservation Branch, Fort Carson  
Elaine Freeth, Fire Protection Specialist, Fort Carson

## **TOPS Working Committee:**

Wendy Howe, Chair,  
Jeff Davis, Vice Chair,  
Emily Danti,  
Chelsea Gondeck,  
Paula Krantz,  
Hank Scarangella,  
Bob Shafer,  
David Bundrick,  
Randy Courduff.

## **Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Advisory Board:**

Sarah Bryarly, Chair,  
Abby Simpson, Vice Chair,  
Amandla Atilano-Roque,  
Larry Bogue,  
Stephen Harris,  
Steve Lenzo,  
Andrea Perry,  
Julia Sands De Melendez,  
Greg Thorton.  
Alternates: Kimberly Sherwood, Mike Sullivan, Debbie Swanson.

The City of Colorado Springs staff played a significant role in the creation of the Fishers Canyon Open Space Master and Management Plan. The following staff members are recognized for their contributions:

Britt Haley, Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Director  
Kim King, Assistant Director  
Eric Becker, Parks Operations and Development Manager  
Lonna Thelen, Design Development Manager/ TOPS Manager  
Matt Mayberry, Cultural Services Manager  
David Deitemeyer, TOPS Senior Program Administrator /Project Manager  
Cassie Melvin, City Communications  
Stephanie Adams, Community Engagement  
April Allen, Marketing & Internal Communications Specialist  
Daniel Gould, Senior Landscape Architect  
Anna Cordova, Regional Parks Manager-Garden of the Gods Park, Lead Archaeologist  
Mark Cervantes, Archaeologist  
Scott Abbott, Regional Parks, Trails and Open Space Supervisor  
Cody Bear Sutton, Natural Resource Specialist  
Emily Duncan, Trails Development Coordinator  
Dan Allen, Trail Project Specialist  
Larry Kitt, Senior Park Ranger  
Stephanie DeVos, Park Ranger  
Dennis Will, City Forester  
Todd Frisbie, City Traffic Engineering Division Manager  
Kerry Childress, City Traffic Engineering Multimodal Program Manager

The City was also fortunate to have a focused professional consultant team led by Studio Campo. We are very pleased with their public engagement, research, professionalism and creativity in developing this plan.

Studio Campo: Amanda Jeter, Cali Pfaff, Morgan Bonnem

GEI Consultants: Lucy Harrington, Denise Jurich, Madeline Bowen, Sarah Skigen-Caird, Amy Wolpert, Kyle Brudvik, Carol Maxwell, Cole Russell

Atkins-Réalis: Anna Ericson, Oisin Carroll

Once again, we wish to acknowledge the over 1,900 community members who committed time and effort to provide input in the public meetings and work sessions. Their feedback was extremely helpful in ensuring that we addressed the needs of Fishers Canyon Open Space and the community. I especially want to recognize and celebrate the respectful productive manner in which our community provided their thoughts and concerns to our team. This courteous approach goes a long way in balancing diverse interests and values.



*“Open space protection will need to be a focus over the next decade to protect many high-quality natural areas threatened by development expansion to meet the needs of a growing population.”*

*-2014 City of Colorado Springs Parks and Recreation Master Plan*



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# Preface

## What is an Open Space Master & Management Plan?

The plan is a visioning document that describes physical improvements and management strategies that the Colorado Spring's Parks Recreation and Cultural Services Department (PRCS) can implement within Fishers Canyon Open Space over the next fifteen to twenty years. The plan also sets priorities, projects, future planning efforts, monitoring, management, research needs, and adaptive thresholds that guide the work of planners, rangers, scientists, and volunteers. Of note, rangers provide important site maintenance, cultural resource, and natural resource protection.

## Who Informed the Master & Management Plan?

Over 1,900 community members provided thousands of comments that informed the plan's projects and priorities. Technical studies, best practices, field work, and partnerships with adjacent land managers also influenced the management strategies. These findings are woven throughout the document to transparently illustrate how input shaped the master and management plan.

## Key Concepts

Five key concepts form the foundation of the master and management plan and create a shared

understanding between the community, scientists, recreationists, and land managers. Key concepts for this plan include:

**Project Givens** (see following pages): The givens identify elements of the plan that are not negotiable. They represent the responsibilities of the PRCS and provide the parameters for the decisions made for Fishers Canyon Open Space.

**Sustainable Trail Framework:** Focus groups identified themes of ecosystem health and resilience as well as sustainable recreation access as top planning objectives.<sup>1</sup> Reflecting on top goals for Fishers Canyon Open Space, focus group participants included thirty-three recreation, neighborhood, PRCS staff, and regional land management organizations. The majority of community participants (including 177 youth) reinforced these same values for Fishers Canyon Open Space.<sup>2</sup> This document introduces a sustainable trail framework to help staff and the public evaluate the success of the master plan trail system.

**Adaptive Management:** The U.S. Department of the Interior states that "adaptive management focuses on learning [how we manage natural areas] and adapting through partnerships of managers, scientists, and other stakeholders on how to create and maintain sustainable resource systems."<sup>3</sup> The 2024 Blodgett

<sup>1</sup> Studio Campo. *Fishers Canyon Open Space Master and Management Plan Focus Group Engagement Summary, February 1, 2024.*

<sup>2</sup> Studio Campo. *Fishers Canyon Open Space Master and Management Plan TOPS & PAB Presentation, October 12, 2024.*

<sup>3</sup> Williams, Byron, and Robert Szaro and Carl Shapiro. *Adaptive Management: The U.S. Department of the Interior Technical Guide, Adaptive Management Working Group, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, DC. 2009.*



Open Space Master and Management Plan initiated PRCS’s goal to use adaptive management and provides a process framework. Following Blodgett’s framework, this plan provides flexible directives to help PRCS adapt to changing conditions and natural disturbances that may occur at Fishers Canyon Open Space over the next 15-20 years. To ensure adaptive management of natural and cultural resources, PRCS will need to increase future capacity or partnerships for monitoring and research.

**Thresholds:** Conditions may occur in the next 15 to 20-year time frame of the master and management plan that will require unforeseen actions from PRCS to ensure sustainable recreation. Thresholds could prompt adaptive actions. These actions could range from a

series of options that may or may not include additional public process, monitoring, site closures to protect resources, site improvements to accommodate future visitation demand, and/or adaptive practices.

**Priority Projects:** The plan recommendations are divided into high (1-4 years), medium (2-7 years) and low (5-10 years) priorities that reflect input from the community, staff and allied land managers.

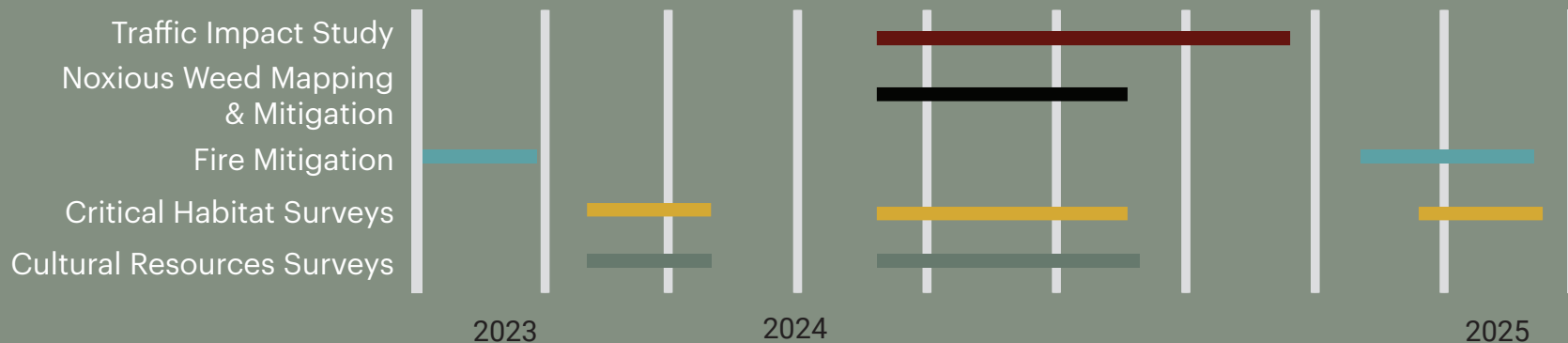
**How Do I Use this Document?**

The document includes high-level chapters and an appendices that includes additional information and engagement reports. Large format maps are also included in the Appendices.

## Fieldwork

In conjunction with community engagement, the planning team conducted important field work that influenced proposed enhancements to Fishers Canyon Open Space that impacted the management plan recommendations.

The master and management plan is anticipated to use best-practice, adaptive strategies in order to proactively respond to changes in habitat and field conditions and to provide sustainable recreation access.



## Project Givens

The givens identify those elements of the Master and Management Plan that are not negotiable. They represent the responsibilities of PRCS and provide the parameters for the decisions that will be made through the Fishers Canyon Open Space master planning process.

- PRCS is legally responsible for design, maintenance, operations, and management of all resources for Fishers Canyon Open Space.
- The Master and Management Plan must conform to provisions in the Trails, Open Space (TOPS) and Parks Regulations Ordinances.
- The Plan must honor HOA and utility easements currently in place.
- PRCS's stewardship and recreation decisions will be based on collected data, changing conditions, and industry best management practices.
- As defined by the City of Colorado Springs Parks System Master Plan, an open space is a natural area that can range from 10 to over 1,000 acres.
- Only 10 percent of open space property can be enhanced with improvements like trailheads, picnic areas and trails. Open spaces provide natural areas

for passive recreation and habitat conservation. These guidelines define what enhancements are possible at Fishers Canyon Open Space.

- All decisions regarding lands under the jurisdiction of adjacent agencies including the United States Forest Service (USFWS), Colorado State Parks and Cheyenne Mountain Space Force Station (CMSFS) are the jurisdiction of those agencies.
- Decisions regarding sensitive and federally protected wildlife management, habitat and protection will be made with guidance from Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).
- Many groups and individuals are interested in and encouraged to help develop the best possible Master and Management Plan; all voices will be equal in the decision-making process.
- Implementation of the Fishers Canyon Open Space Master and Management Plan will occur as funding allows.
- The recommended Master and Management Plan will be submitted to the TOPS Working Committee for recommendation and to the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (PAB) for approval.



# Executive Summary

## Background

In October 2021, City Council unanimously approved the proposal to acquire 343 acres of open space known as Fishers Canyon. The property was acquired through two-phases (November 2021 and March 2022) with PRCS partners at The Conservation Fund. This property was funded by revenues from the TOPS sales tax (\$2.95 million) and a \$1.25 million acquisition grant from the Land Water Conservation Fund.

## Plan Process

The Fishers Canyon Open Space Master and Management Plan is the result of contributions from over 1,900 community members and thousands of comments. Engagement activities have included four online surveys, three community meetings, neighborhood site tours, and youth engagement. Over 30 agencies and homeowners' association groups have been involved over the last year, providing guidance and input to the plan.

Close coordination with Cheyenne Mountain State Park, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been extremely important in ensuring habitat protection and consideration for potential threatened and endangered species. These efforts have also been crucial in identifying recreation and conservation partnership areas. These partnerships will continue to be important and will shape future implementation of the plan.

Cultural, environmental, and traffic impact analyses have identified parameters for trail enhancement, trailheads, passive recreation opportunities, parking, and conservation areas.

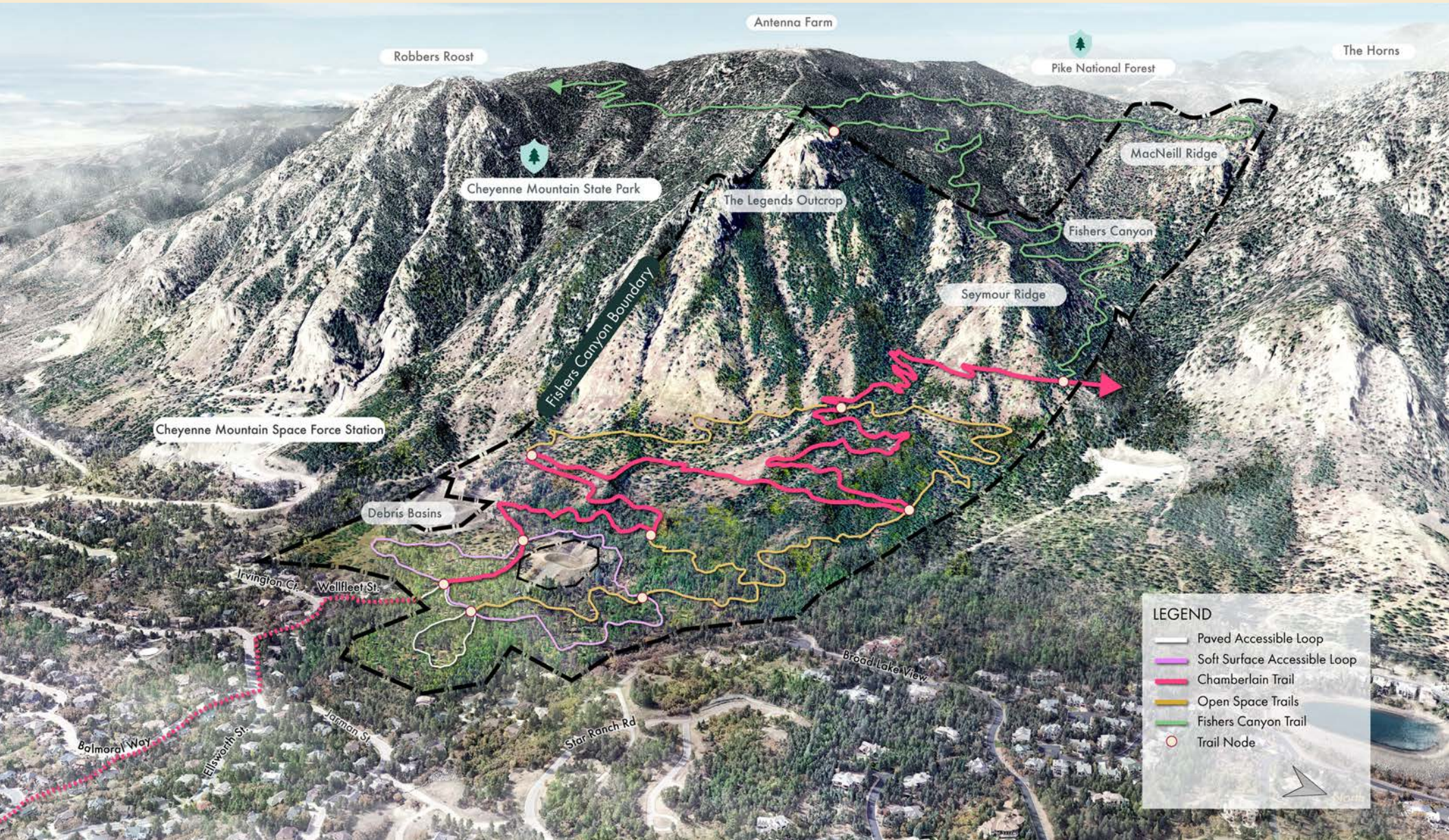
## Master Plan

A new trail system is proposed to introduce approximately 9 to 10 miles of trail enhancements in a “wilderness-like” setting that caters to multiple uses like hiking, biking, and horseback riding. The plan unlocks a key 3 mile section of the regional Chamberlain Trail. The property also includes zones designated for bouldering and rock climbing. Notably, over 220 acres are preserved as a natural preservation area, while 89 acres have undergone fire mitigation treatments, reportedly reducing insurance premiums for neighboring properties.

## Management Plan

The management portion of the plan creates adaptive recommendations for wildlife conservation, erosion control, and the management of invasive species. Additionally, it addresses visitation management to ensure that the area remains accessible and enjoyable for all users without compromising its ecological integrity. The plan also includes design guidelines for trail enhancements and infrastructure to support a sustainable trail system, ensuring that the trails are resilient and can withstand the test of time and usage.

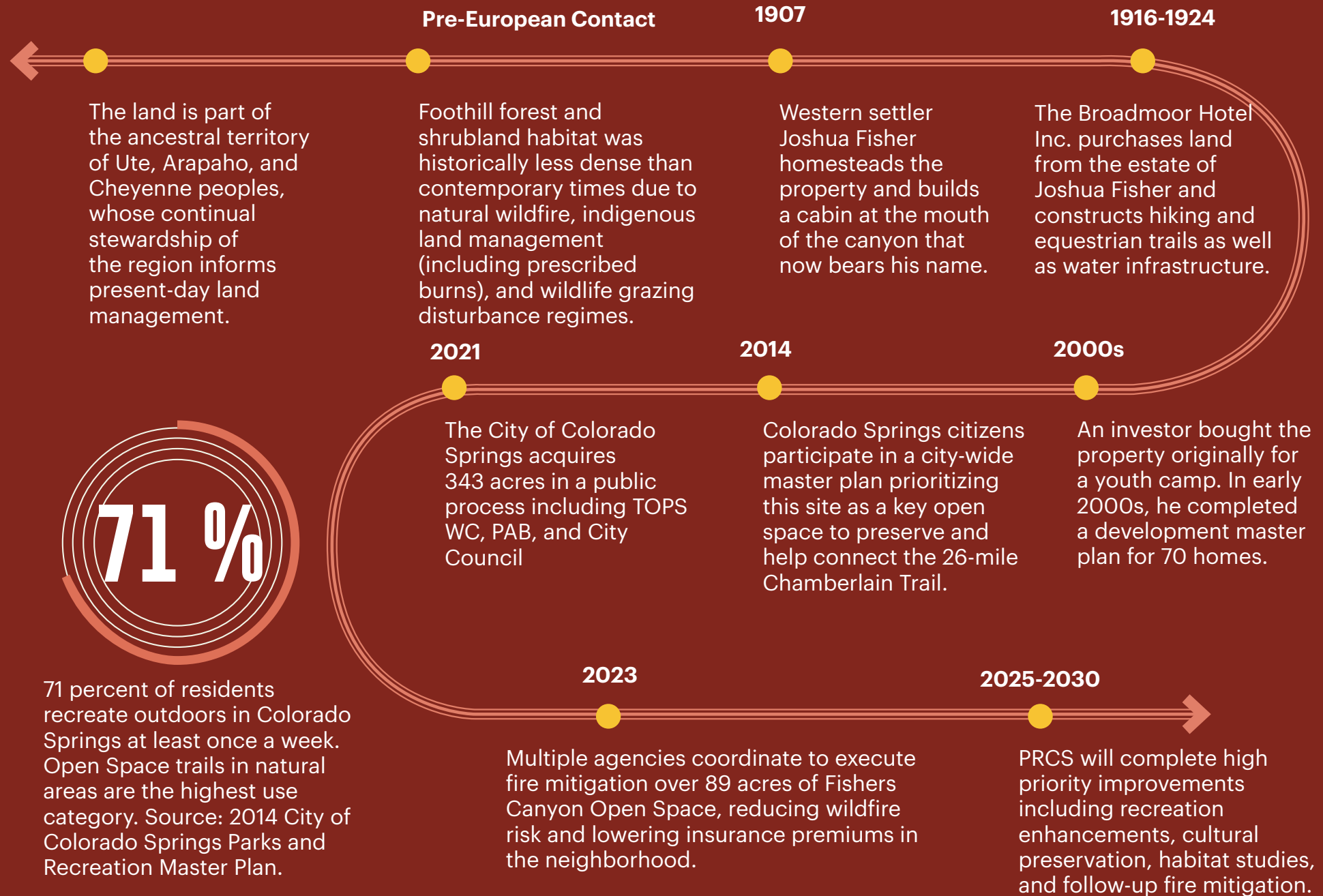
# Master Plan Birdseye Illustrative







# Site Timeline





# CHAPTER 1: Site Introduction

*O beautiful for spacious skies, / For amber waves of grain, / For purple mountain majesties / Above the fruited plain!*

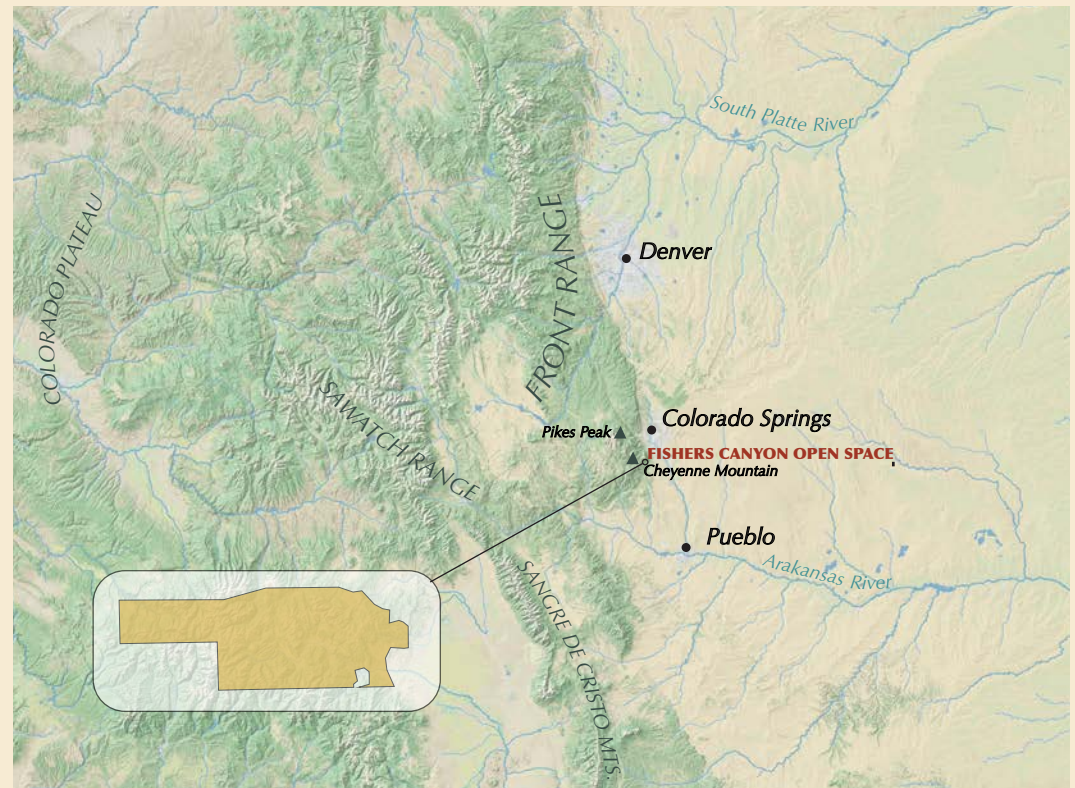
*From America the Beautiful by Katharine Lee Bates, inspired by mountain views from Colorado Springs.*

## Welcome to Fishers Canyon Open Space

Fishers Canyon Open Space sits in the southwestern most corner of Colorado Springs, Colorado, due west of the Broadmoor Bluffs and Spires neighborhoods. Bordered on the west by Pike National Forest, to the north by holdings of the Broadmoor Hotel, and to the south by the Cheyenne Mountain State Park and the Cheyenne Mountain Space Force Station. The property is owned by the City who will partner with diverse stakeholders to manage the open space as a regional, natural, and cultural resource.

## Site Context

Imagining the property as pan-shaped, Fishers Canyon Open Space drapes across steep terrain that ranges from 6,650 feet along the eastern edge (pan body) to 9,000 feet at the northwestern point (pan handle). The landscape features ravines, granite cliff faces, mixed conifer forests, and Gamble oak savanna. The land has welcomed wildlife, Native Americans, and settlers over time. The site has no access except for a small network



Colorado Site Context Map with Fishers Canyon Open Space Site Key Map.

of social trails used by neighboring residents and 20th century tourism trail remnants from the Broadmoor.

### A History of Trails

Throughout the Colorado Springs region, indigenous nations, including the Ute, Cheyenne and Arapaho, transformed game trails into trail networks for hunting, defense, ceremonial, trade, and migration routes. A layered indigenous tradition imbues local mountains with cultural significance and European settlers appropriated Native American words for landmark names (e.g., Cheyenne Mountain).



*19th and 20th century trails that encircled Cheyenne Mountain served as wood routes to provide resources for city development. These “wood trails” eventually transformed into recreation sight-seeing routes.*

19th and 20th century trails that encircled Cheyenne Mountain served as forestry roads to provide natural resources for city development. These “wood trails” eventually transformed into recreation sight-seeing routes. Old trails in the area include the Blackmer Trail, MacNeill Trail, Fishers Canyon Trail (to homesteader Joshua Fishers

1900s cabin site), Dixon Trail (a toll trail to Swisher/Dixon Cabin) and the Sunrise Trail.<sup>1</sup>

In 1924, Spencer Penrose bought the properties in and around Fishers Canyon. Penrose, looking to enliven the offerings of the Broadmoor Hotel, commissioned the construction of foot and equestrian trails encircling Cheyenne Mountain to keep up with popular recreation of the time.<sup>2</sup> In the 1920s, the longest and most popular trail for hotel guests was a two-day trek that began at the Broadmoor, traversed the mountain face of Fishers Canyon, then climbed to the peaks of Cheyenne Mountain, and traveled upward to what is now Cloud Camp, before

turning along the Old Stage Road back to the hotel. The master plan considers old trail routes in the context of resource protection and recreation experience as well as honoring policies of neighboring land managers, including the U.S. Forest Service, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and the Cheyenne Mountain Space Force Station. For instance, U.S. Forest Service undesignated trails (e.g., portions of the unofficial MacNeill Trail located west of the open space property line) are not open to public access.

### Housing Development to Open Space

An investor originally bought the Fishers Canyon Open Space property to develop a youth camp. The development vision morphed into a plan to build 70 single-family and multi-family homes (see Appendices

<sup>1</sup> Anderson, P.J. And Patrick Anderson, *Cheyenne Mountain: Here's Looking at You*, Rhyolite Press LLC, Colorado Springs, Colorado, 2024.

<sup>2</sup> Swab, Eric. 2024. “Trail Historian Eric Swab: Where's Fisher's Canyon.” April 30, 2024. Available at: [https://www.trailsandopenspaces.org/2024/04/30/trail-historian-eric-swab-wheres-fisher-canyon/#\\_edn6](https://www.trailsandopenspaces.org/2024/04/30/trail-historian-eric-swab-wheres-fisher-canyon/#_edn6). Accessed July 22, 2024.

for development plan). In the development plan, the neighborhood entrance at the public right-of-way of Wellfleet Street led into a network of roads and homes, with a secondary neighborhood exit at Star Ranch Road (the Star Ranch Road access did not transfer to the City with the purchase of the open space.) Platted through City Council, the development stalled out with the Great Recession in 2007-2008.

The 2014 Park System Master Plan identified this area as a valuable candidate property for the City's open space system. Interested in leaving a natural legacy, the investor endeavored to find an appropriate buyer. PRCS partnered with The Conservation Fund to purchase the initial acquisition. The City closed on the property in two phases in 2021 and 2022.

As part of the city's 8,900-acre portfolio of open space, PRCS manages Fishers Canyon Open Space. PRCS must follow the City Ordinance that keep the space as a natural area with potential enhancements (e.g., trails, parking, etc.) limited to 10 percent of the total property area (34 acres maximum for Fishers Canyon Open Space). As defined by City Ordinance, open space provides natural areas for passive recreation and habitat conservation, protecting plants and wildlife. Examples of passive recreation include hiking, mountain biking, rock-climbing, and horseback riding.

### Unlocking the Chamberlain Trail

As one of Colorado Springs' newest open spaces, the 343-acre parcel boasts soaring city and mountain views and unlocks a key connection for the Chamberlain Trail. The envisioned 26-mile master-planned trail will traverse through Blodgett Open Space, Red Rock Canyon Open Space, Bear Creek Regional Park,

Stratton Open Space, North Cheyenne Cañon Park, and Fishers Canyon Open Space. This alignment will also advance the future development of the Cheyenne Mountain Heritage Trail, the 30-mile trail envisioned to circumnavigate the base of Cheyenne Mountain. This trail will replicate the historic riding trails used by Spencer Penrose and complement the Ring the Peak Trail, ultimately creating a unique "figure eight" of back country trail opportunities.

### Landmarks

Gazing at the western mountain range, most Colorado Springs inhabitants can view scenic landmarks within Fishers Canyon Open Space.

**Cheyenne Mountain** is the "easternmost expression of the entire Rocky Mountain Cordillera [extensive mountain chain]" formed of 1.7-billion-year-old igneous rock thrust over younger sedimentary rocks.<sup>3</sup> The top of Cheyenne Mountain crests 9,570 feet.

**Robbers Roost** sits at 9200' at a hiking-only trail accessible from Cheyenne Mountain State Park's Dragon's Backbone Trail.

Framing the northern edge of the property, **The Horns** or Devil's Horns, are jagged rock formations named after indigenous oral histories of a "fight between God Manitou and the devil, which Manitou won."<sup>4</sup>

The **Antenna Farm** is another notable landmark framing Fishers Canyon Open Space that features a group of TV and communications antenna visible from Interstate 25 and much of the City.

---

3 Anderson.

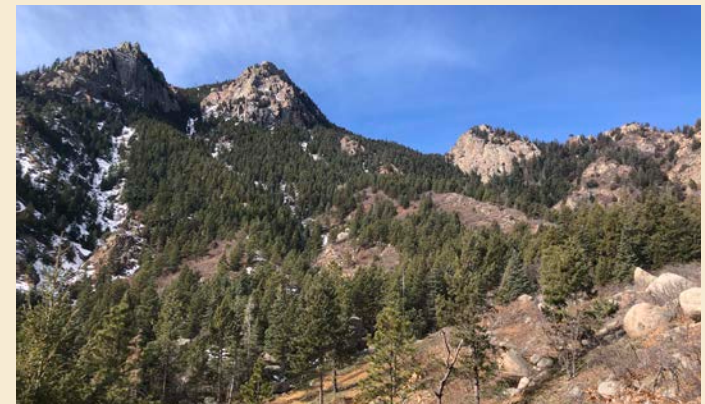
**Ridgeline Views into Pike National Forest:** The western ridge top of Fishers Canyon Open Space offers soaring ridgeline views of the City to the east and westerly views of Pike National Forest and landmarks including Old Stage Road.

**Fishers Boulders:** Large, erratic boulders appear in native grasses throughout the site, moved over time through flood and landslide events. Boulder sizes range from desk to house-sized rock.

**Fishers Canyon** is nestled between the middle and north peaks of Cheyenne Mountain and runs approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  miles with a roughly 2,000-foot elevation change from base to crest.

**Fishers Outcrops** Within the property, planners have named several notable geologic features for orienteering in the master plan (see map on following page). At the southern end of the property, the Legends Outcrop formation supports raptor bird habitat and has potential for regionally unique views and rock-climbing destinations. In the middle of the property, Seymour Ridge, is named after the first Western artist, Samuel Seymour, to paint Cheyenne Mountain in 1820.<sup>4</sup>

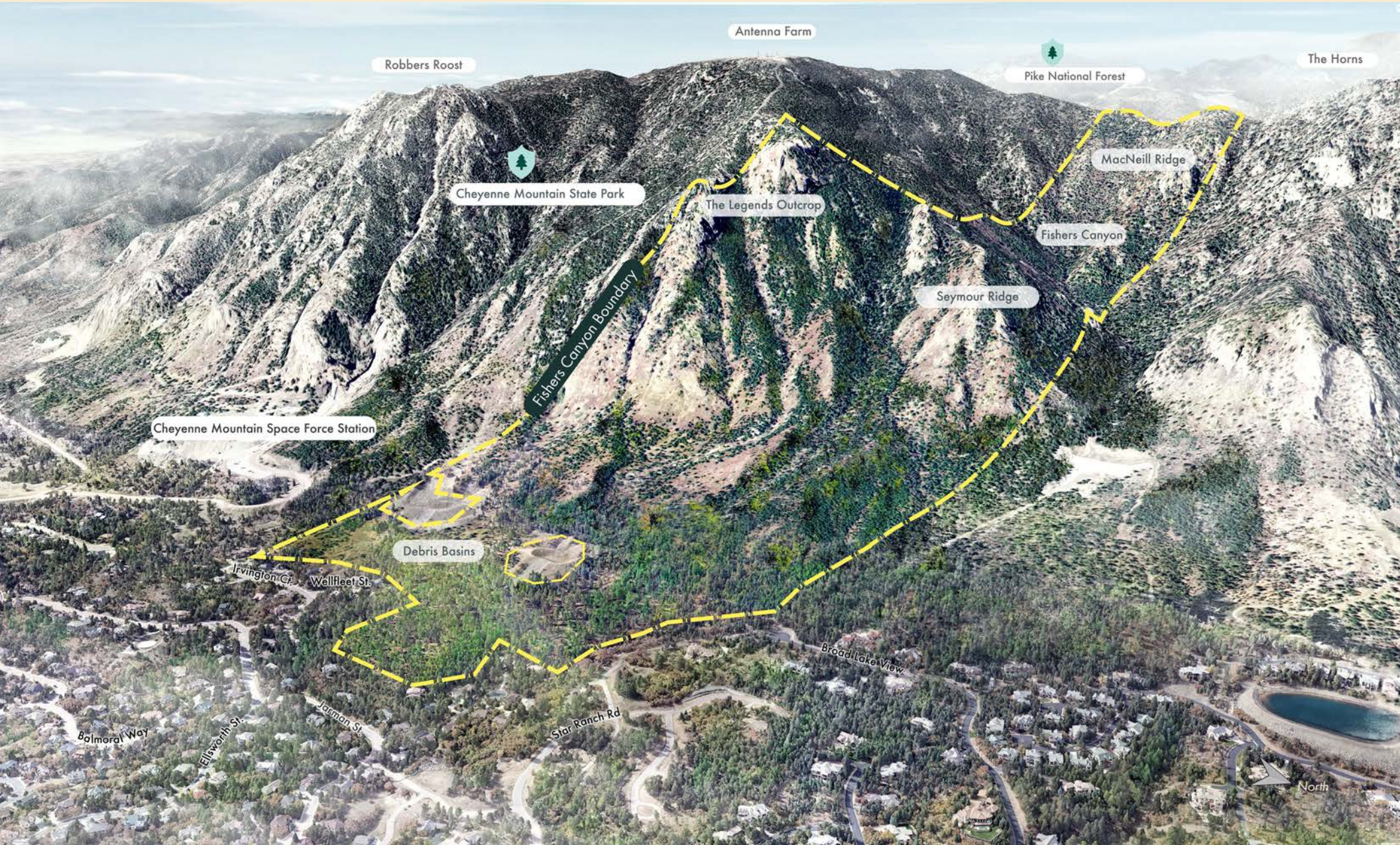
Two **Debris Basins** are found at the lower portions of the site. The basins are engineered facilities to capture debris and sediment that could occur in a landslide. The debris basins are currently owned and managed by the Spires HOA.



(Top to Bottom) Views from Fishers Canyon Open Space: typical site boulder and view of the City; the Legends Outcrop; and view from the Legends Outcrop with Fishers Canyon in the foreground and the Horns and Pikes Peak in the distance.

<sup>4</sup> Anderson.

# Site Landmarks



Colorado Springs landmarks around Fishers Canyon Open Space (view looking southwest).





**LEGEND**

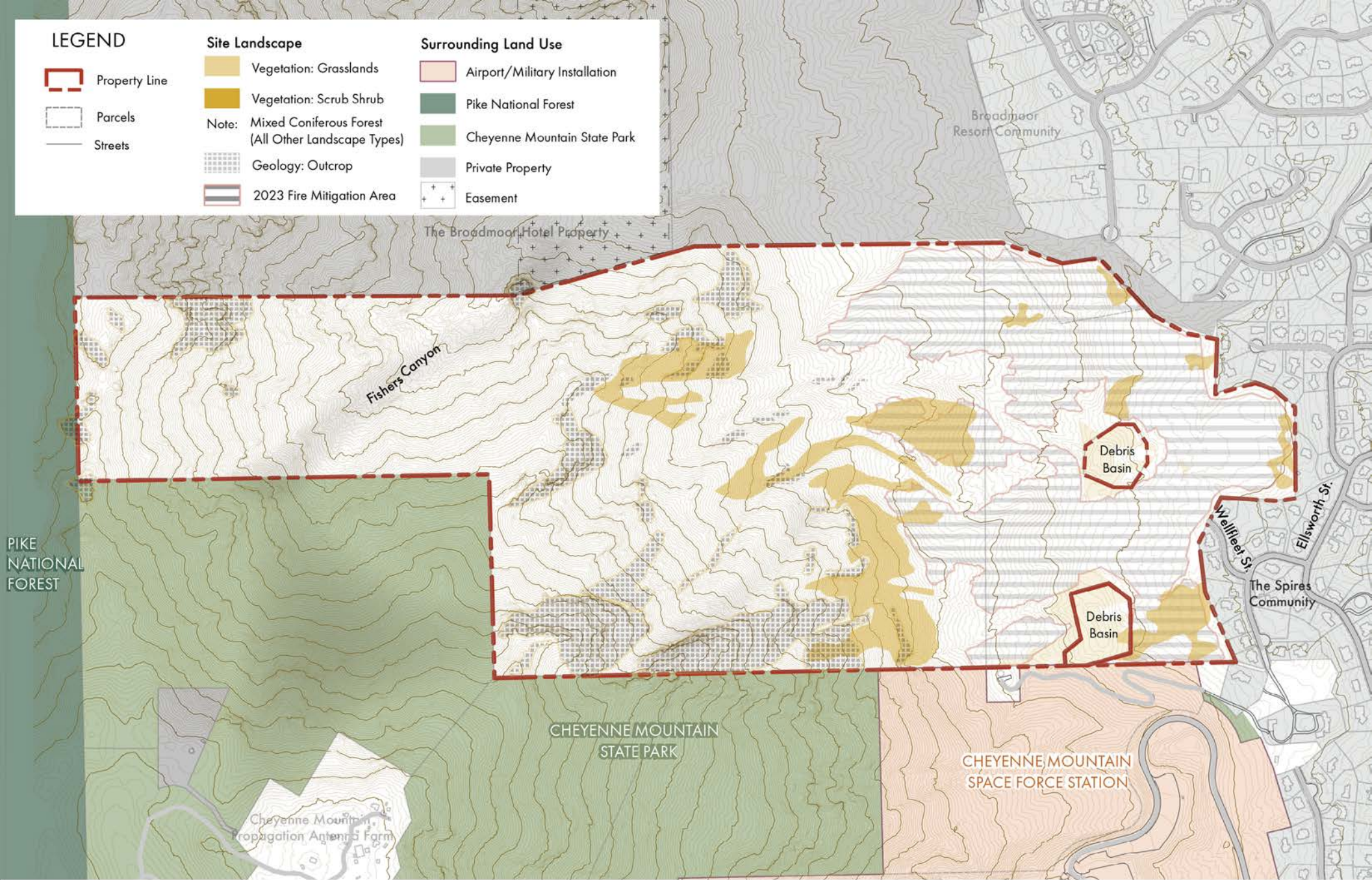
-  Property Line
-  Parcels
-  Streets

**Site Landscape**

-  Vegetation: Grasslands
-  Vegetation: Scrub Shrub
-  Note: Mixed Coniferous Forest (All Other Landscape Types)
-  Geology: Outcrop
-  2023 Fire Mitigation Area

**Surrounding Land Use**

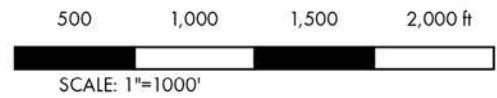
-  Airport/Military Installation
-  Pike National Forest
-  Cheyenne Mountain State Park
-  Private Property
-  Easement



**FISHERS CANYON OPEN SPACE**

Existing Conditions Base Map

City of Colorado Springs  
 Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services  
 Consultant Team: Studio Campo, GEI, Atkins  
 April 2024





## CHAPTER 2:

# Opportunities & Constraints

*People need wild places. Whether or not we think we do, we do. We need to be able to taste grace and know once again that we desire it. We need to experience a landscape that is timeless, whose agenda moves at the pace of speciation and glaciers.*

*From 'Small Wonder' by Barbara Kingsolver.*

### Current Conditions

The Fishers Canyon Open Space occupies a steep landscape at the exurban interface between large protected areas and dense urban development.

This juxtaposition provides a unique opportunity for recreational users to explore an area with a “wild feel,” while still being easily accessible from the City’s urban center and major roadways, such as Interstate 25.

Plan scientists evaluated five key elements of the site’s current conditions to identify opportunities and constraints for recreation access. These elements include:

**Geology:** Soils and slopes affect erosion potential and resulting impacts to water and vegetation.

**Water:** Drainages are essential to supporting diverse wildlife and plants. Riparian corridors are classified as “core” habitat in recently approved City master and management plans.<sup>1</sup>

**Vegetation:** Plants provide forage and cover for wildlife and reduce erosion. Mixed-conifer forests are also described as “core” habitat in recent City master and management plans.<sup>1</sup>

**Wildlife:** Fishers Canyon is home to a wide range of resident and migratory animals, including mammals, reptiles, birds, and insects.

**Cultural Resources:** Chapter 1 discussed the historic context for Fishers Canyon Open Space. Themes of infrastructure, remnant homestead and other built environment resources are under review for potential further evaluation under National Register of Historic Places, or NRHP. PRCS prioritizes protection of cultural resources and organizes tribal consultations to inform the Tribes about the site’s natural and cultural resources as well as the master and management plan.

<sup>1</sup> Blodgett Open Space Master and Management Plan, Colorado Springs, Colorado, 2024.

## Geology, Soils & Slopes

The Fishers Canyon Open Space slopes range extends from 0 to 10 percent along the eastern boundary and increases to more than 60 percent along the western-most portions. The foothill region of the site contains undulating topography, providing the opportunity to build a trail network for a diverse set of users with varying abilities. The summary below provides information on the three primary soil types found within the project site:

- **Jarre-Tecolote complex, 8 to 65 percent slopes.** This complex underlies much of Colorado Springs, extending west into the foothills, north to Broadmoor Valley Park and south into Fort Carson. It consists of well-drained, and moderately permeable gravelly soils. Erodibility is medium to high.
- **Kutler-Broadmoor-Rock outcrop complex, 25 to 90 percent slopes.** This complex is the dominate soil in most of the project site and occurs on the most severe slopes within the project site. This soil is a combination of gravelly loam, and un-weathered bedrock outcrop. Steep slopes should be avoided in areas with a forest canopy to prevent erosion of the soil.
- **Rock Outcrop-Coldcreek-Tolman complex, 9 to 90 percent slopes.** Found on steep slopes, this complex is a loamy soil and is generally shallow and coarse textured. Shallow soil in this area of the project site can make trail building difficult.

### Debris Basins



*One of the debris basins within Fishers Canyon Open Space.*

In July 1965, the Pikes Peak Regional Building Department reports, that “boulders [dislodged] from Cheyenne Mountain and crossed Highway 115 into Fort Carson.” The Colorado Geologic Survey has qualitatively identified portions of Fishers Canyon Open Space within the Colorado Springs Landslide Susceptibility Zone (as a qualitative study, the mapping does not predict risk, however, it informs design standards and calls for added risk assessment for structures requiring foundations).<sup>2</sup> A follow-up study evaluated Area 1, which includes portions of Fishers Canyon Open Space.<sup>3</sup>

To mitigate landslide risks, neighborhood developers

<sup>2</sup> Colorado Geologic Survey Landslide Susceptibility Map. Available at: <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=5e7484a637c4432e84f4f16d0af306d3>. Accessed June 1, 2024.

<sup>3</sup> Yeh and Associates. “Geotechnical Data Report Colorado Springs Southwestern Region Engineering Geology Study.” April 18, 2019. Available at: <https://coloradosprings.gov/geologystudy>. Accessed June 1, 2024.

built two debris basins (engineered facilities to capture debris and sediment) currently contained within the Fishers Canyon Open Space. As of December 1, 2024, the City is in negotiations with The Spires Drainage Homeowners Association, Inc. to take over ownership and management of the debris basins. Safety, soil stability and erosion are key considerations for the master plan and recommendations are discussed in more detail in the master and management plan chapters.

## Water

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife (USFWS) National Wetland Inventory (NWI) identifies potential riverine features within the property, ephemeral, unnamed tributaries of Fountain Creek. For the master plan, the tributaries are named: Water Tank, South, Middle, Sleeping Bear Creek, and Fishers Canyon Turkey Foot Drainages, which connect off property to North Fishers Canyon Tributary.

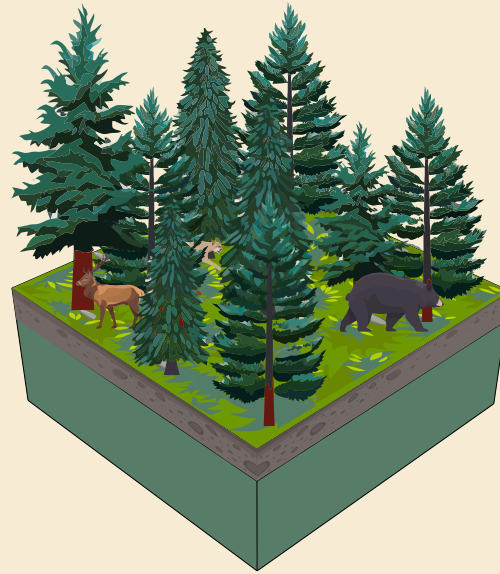
The main channel of the Fishers Canyon tributary is derived from three “turkey foot” gulches at its headwaters that have intermittent water flow regime, supporting terrain surface hydrology as it enters the adjoining properties to the north. Researchers have observed perennial water flow and potential year-round surface water in Sleeping Bear Creek, Water Tank Tributary, and portions of the North Fishers Canyon Tributary.

Access into these tributaries could cause erosion and damage to the channel banks, making these areas subject to scouring and water quality damage when large storm events do occur. Protecting the water quality of the headwaters of these tributaries is an important consideration in trail planning and management strategies outlined in later chapters. Minimizing trail crossings, especially along Sleeping Bear Creek and Fishers Turkey Foot Drainages, are also critical.

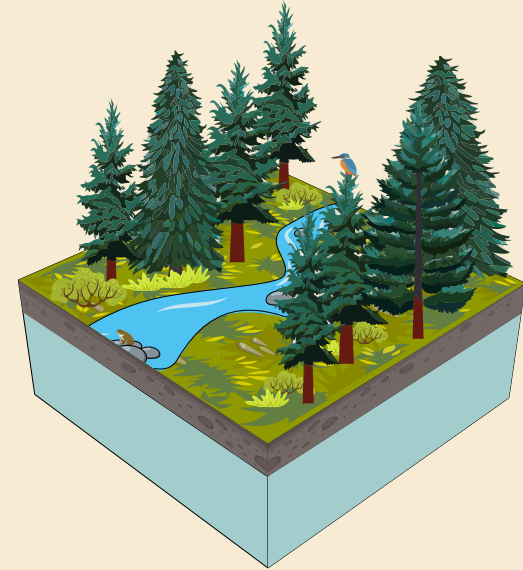


Map diagram of the water features within Fishers Canyon Open Space.

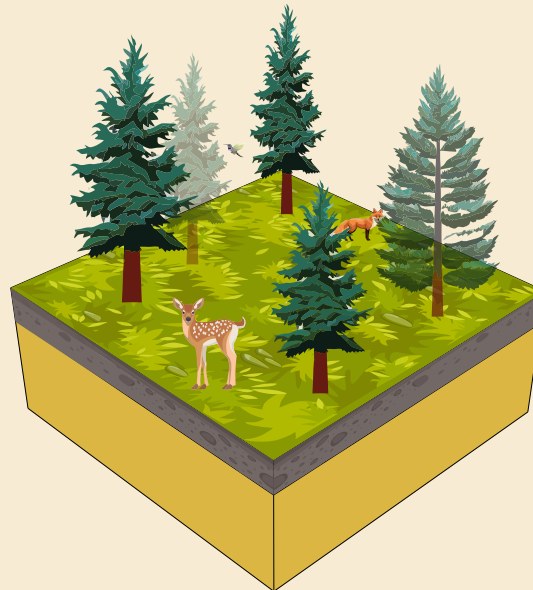
**Dry (Xeric)  
Mixed Conifer Forest**



**Seasonally Wet (Mesic)  
Mixed Conifer Forest**



**Ponderosa Pine Savanna**



**Gamble Oak - Mixed Montane  
Shrublands**



# HABITAT TYPES

*This steep and varied elevation gain allows for diverse botanical communities ranging from mixed conifer forest, Gamble oak shrublands, ponderosa pine savanna, and seasonally wet forests along the four main tributaries that exist within the property boundaries.*

## Vegetation

The site's steep and varied elevation gain allows for diverse botanical communities ranging from mixed conifer forest, Gamble oak shrublands, ponderosa pine savanna, and seasonally wet forests along the four tributaries that exist within the property boundaries. The xeric and mesic mixed conifer forests are core to supporting regionally important habitat for wildlife, including raptors.

A review of sensitive species identified by the USFW found that Ute Ladies Tresses flower (*Spiranthes diluvialis*) has a low potential for growing on site likely due to lack of persistent wet conditions.<sup>4</sup> 2023 fieldwork identified milkweed species (*Asclepias* spp.). Cheyenne Mountain Space Force Station land managers are actively conserving milkweed species on their property to encourage monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) habitat.<sup>5</sup> On Dec. 10, 2024, U.S. Fish and Wildlife officials announced they will add the monarch butterfly to the threatened species list by the end of 2025.

## Wildfire Mitigation

Recent wildfire mitigation activities on site, consisting of the removal and mulching of approximately 89 acres of ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*), Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), white fir (*Abies concolor*), and Gamble oak (*Quercus gambelii*) reduced overall fuel loads of the open space in 2023 (see map on at beginning of chapter).<sup>6</sup>

A top priority identified by stakeholders and the community, fire mitigation reduces wildfire risk, protects critical infrastructure, and conserves wildlife habitat and recreation resources.<sup>7</sup> Neighborhood stakeholders anecdotally reported their insurance premiums decreased after the mitigation efforts. Post-mitigation field observations revealed native vegetation emerging. While this disturbance, or significant change in the structure of an ecosystem, reduced overall fire risk, invasive trees including Siberian elm and invasive weeds including knapweed, thistle, mullein, clover, and cheat grass are prevalent in certain areas.<sup>8</sup> Ongoing and future weed mitigation is an important part of the management plan.

## Vegetation and Social Trails

Fishers Canyon Open Space vegetation provides valuable food, forage, and cover for wildlife. Threats to native vegetation health include social trails. The National Park Service defines social trails as “an unofficial, user-created path that forms over time, as visitors take detours off of designated trails.” Social trail use has been observed on site near existing residential development and in the more remote Fishers Canyon areas. Trespassing has occurred over the years, creating a small network of social trails.

The unofficial MacNeill Trail, situated on the highpoint of the property, is a remnant of Spencer Penrose's historic equestrian trail system for Broadmoor Hotel

<sup>4</sup> Appendices: Baseline Inventory, Preliminary Trails Assessment and Constraints Report. GEI Consultants, Inc. Feb. 9, 2024.

<sup>5</sup> Appendices: Fishers Canyon Open Space Master Plan Engagement Summaries

<sup>6</sup> 2023 wildfire mitigation funded in partnership with TOPS, Colorado Springs Utilities and the 2D TABOR Mitigation funds.

<sup>7</sup> Appendices: Fishers Canyon Open Space Master Plan Engagement Summaries

<sup>8</sup> Appendices: Invasive Weed Map. GEI Consultants, Inc. July 26, 2024.

guests. The trail was also used to develop the waterline pipe that provided water to the original Cheyenne Mountain Lodge (now Cloud Camp). Currently a social trail within Fishers Canyon Open Space, coordination on this trail's legitimacy and



connectivity is ongoing with the Broadmoor Hotel and the U.S. Forest Service, who maintains that the trail is undesignated on their property.

The master plan needs to carefully curate a trail system that protects habitat blocks while minimizing the risk of social trails development and subsequent damage to plant communities that can be exasperated in the absence of sustainably planned and designed recreational opportunities on site.

## Wildlife

The site's water, vegetation and geology support several wildlife and insect species including

<sup>9</sup> Amy Eckert, "Where the Wild Things Go: Exploring Wildlife Corridors

mountain lions (*Puma concolor*), black bear (*Ursus americanus*), and mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), all of which have been observed or documented on site. The property also supports a wide array of migratory songbirds, including western tanagers (*Piranga ludoviciana*), mountain bluebirds (*Sialia currucoides*), and lesser goldfinch (*Spinus psaltria*). Raptors, or birds of prey, enjoy the site's rocky outcrops and plunging flight paths down the mountainside to hunting grounds.

To support wildlife within the site and regionally, it is important for the plan to consider east to west and north to south corridors for wildlife movement. These corridors vary seasonally based on climate, natural disasters and available resources. Security fences along Cheyenne Mountain Space Force Station and Broadmoor Resort Community property boundaries are corridor barriers to terrestrial wildlife. The Rails to Trails Conservancy notes that contingent on how trails are used and managed, trails can be both barriers and wildlife corridors.<sup>9</sup>



A master plan opportunity exists to minimize trails crossing drainages, an important type of wildlife corridor. Other opportunities include creating seasonal closures and buffers between trails and core habitat areas. Wildlife-friendly provisions are supported by the community with 77 percent of respondents to the third community survey supporting enhanced engineering improvements that may be more costly than traditional infrastructure to support ecosystem health.

### Raptors and Natural Preservation Areas

Both field work with planning scientists and data from Colorado Parks and Wildlife confirm that the site and surrounding landscape supports peregrine, golden

Field observations have documented increased diversity of wildlife within the recently cleared wildfire mitigation areas and expect raptor hunting grounds in these areas to increase.

Presence of raptors will impact when and where hikers, on-leash dogs, climbers, bikers and horses are allowed within potential natural preservation areas. Natural preservation areas have been identified in previous city master and management plans as habitat blocks of 4 or more acres that will be prioritized for conservation efforts with limited recreation access.<sup>11</sup> They are a tool for the City to protect habitat and build a sustainable trail system.

### Mexican Spotted Owl

Year one of the two-year site inventory effort within the Fishers Canyon Open Space was conducted in accordance with methods outlined in the MSO Protocol.<sup>12</sup> Despite the presence of diverse habitat, no Mexican Spotted Owls were observed. This may be a result of raptor presence, noise disturbance and absence of appropriate nesting substrate. Based on these findings, planning scientists believe that MSO do not currently inhabit the Fishers Canyon Open Space. Final determination if a year two MSO survey is needed is pending USFWS concurrence.

No sightings of the threatened Mexican spotted owl (MSO) have been documented on the property;



*Birds of prey, or raptors, including peregrine falcons and golden eagles are present in Fishers Canyon Open Space's mixed-conifer forests and rocky cliffs.*

eagle and other raptor nesting areas.<sup>10</sup> Nesting seasons for raptors can begin in January and last through the summer, with some young still in nests in mid-July.

Along America's Trails." Rails to Trails Magazine. July 8, 2024

10 2018 Colorado Parks and Wildlife species information on wildlife distribution, GEI 2023-2024 project field work, PRCS and partner agency field work.

11 Austin Bluffs Open Space Master and Management Plan. June 11, 2020.

12 Appendices: MSO Year 1 Protocol Survey Report; Fishers Canyon Open Space Master Plan. GEI Consultants, Inc. September 30, 2024.

however, the site contains suitable habitat for this species and MSOs have been found south of the site in the Turkey Creek vicinity. Per the Environmental Conservation Online System (ECOS) maintained by the USFW, MSOs (*Strix occidentalis lucida*) are residents of old-growth or mature forests that possess complex structural components (uneven aged stands, high canopy closure, multi-storied levels, high tree density, e.g.). Canyons with riparian or mixed conifer communities are also important.

## Recreation Enjoyment Context

The 343-acre Fishers Canyon Open Space is the latest addition to the City's portfolio of 8,900 open space acres. As such, the planning team evaluated the City's existing recreation inventory, the site's current conditions, connectivity to regional open spaces, the 2014 Park System Master Plan, and a future visitation assessment through community events and three surveys to determine recreation opportunities for the site.

Because of the site's topography, as well as the site's adjacency to other outdoor public spaces, the Fishers Canyon Open Space provides opportunities for extended recreation, connecting to these existing public access areas to allow visitors to experience the expansive views and protected areas in the region.

These opportunities will be further augmented by the extension of the Chamberlain Trail, outlined in the 2014 Park System Master Plan, through an existing easement to the north of the Fishers Canyon Open Space, ultimately resulting in an interconnected pathway of

over 26 contiguous miles through the foothills west of the City.

## Recreation Inventory

### What types of recreation are permitted?

Fishers Canyon Open Space is a Trails, Open Space and Parks Program property (TOPS). Taxpayers have enabled the open space acquisition through a 0.1 percent sales tax. As defined by City Ordinance, open space is a natural area that can range from 10 to over 1,000 acres. Only 10 percent of open space property can be enhanced with improvements like parking and trailheads. Open space provides natural areas for passive recreation and habitat for plants and wildlife. Per City Ordinance, open space is defined as "outdoor recreation areas limited to passive recreational use, including, but not limited to, hiking, photography or nature studies, and if specifically designated, bicycling, horseback riding, or fishing."

### Citywide Planning Context

Reviewing citywide open space offerings, see Appendices, illustrates different types of recreation experiences-ranging from multi-use trails, biking-only trails to accessible trails-that are currently available to the public. The following recreation experiences are only offered at four out of the seventeen open spaces: bike only trails and rock climbing, while accessible trails and bouldering are offered at six out of seventeen open spaces. During the last citywide parks plan, Colorado Springs residents identified mountain biking, outdoor education, and rock climbing as top activities desired



for the City’s southwest district.<sup>13</sup>

## 2 and 4-Mile Radius Assessment

Fishers Canyon Open Space is the only city-owned park or open space located within a 2-mile radius of adjacent neighborhoods.<sup>14</sup> The closest spaces are North Cheyenne Cañon Park and Stratton Open Space, each approximately a 20-minute (7 to 8 mile) drive from the site. Cheyenne Mountain State Park is within a 2-mile radius of adjacent neighborhoods but has an entry fee and is managed by Colorado Parks and Wildlife.

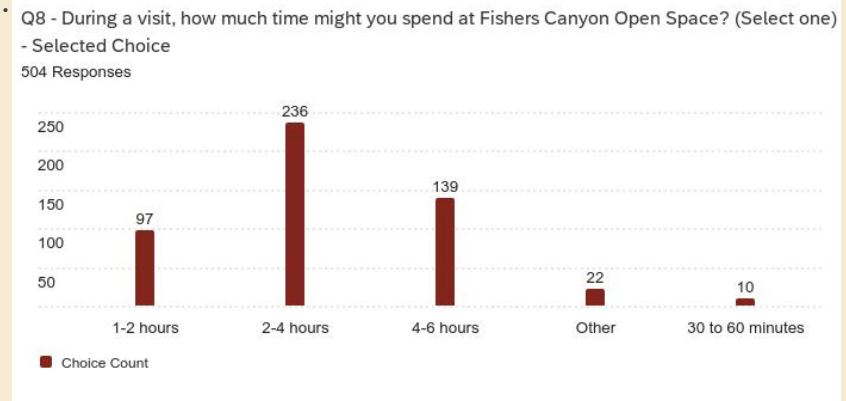
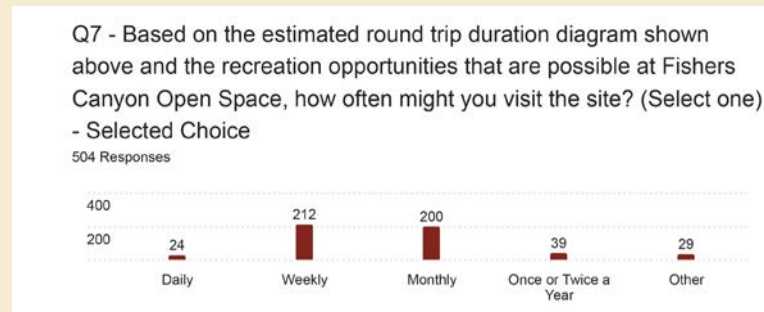
Neighborhood populations within a 4-mile radius of Fishers Canyon Open Space are comprised of 21-30 percent of people who are 62 years and older.<sup>14</sup> With trends of aging-in-place in mind and engagement support for accessible trails, having an ADA accessible open space trail with accessible parking will be an important amenity to the surrounding community. The majority of plan input from over 1,900 community members has originated from the 80906-zip code, within the 4-mile project radius.<sup>14</sup> This input has informed the future visitation trends summarized in the next section.

## Future Visitation Trends

Visitation, the amount of time and frequency an open space will be used, is an important consideration for the master plan design, engineering, and management. The site’s rugged terrain and slopes is one key factor that will impact visitation. This diagram on the following page shows estimated round-trip visitation duration for the site. More visitation with



Map diagram of estimated round-trip visitation duration.



Community Engagement Survey #3 Future Visitation Trends Results.

<sup>13</sup> 2014 Parks System Master Plan, Colorado Springs, Colorado, page 143.

<sup>14</sup> Appendices: Community Engagement Summaries.

shorter duration is anticipated at lower elevations. Higher elevations will be relatively remote with less anticipated visitation.

When asked how often and for what duration they might visit Fishers Canyon Open Space, survey participants shared they are most likely to visit weekly to monthly. Also, the top estimated time spent at the site ranges from two to four hours. The following bar graphs show the full results. These findings are used to base parking assumptions used in the traffic analysis study.

## Traffic Impact Analysis Summary

### Background

The surrounding neighborhood, comprising over 500 single-family homes, leads up to the Fishers Canyon Open Space property. Vehicles traveling from outside the neighborhood can access the site via NORAD Road to Broadmoor Bluffs from the south, or via the Academy Boulevard interchange and Broadmoor Bluffs Drive from the north. There are no existing transit services in the vicinity of the site. The site entrance is proposed via Wellfleet Street, where there is a dedicated public-right-of-way access easement. This access will include a turnaround, as the site will be closed to visitors overnight.

### Study Area

The traffic impact analysis includes an evaluation of existing traffic conditions and assesses the project's impact on the surrounding roadway network based on two proposed parking lot (Alternative 1 and 2) and usage scenarios. In coordination with City Public Works staff, data was collected at the study area intersections during the mid-day weekend period, which is when the expected highest use will occur for recreational activities. The analysis area includes Wellfleet St., Irvington Court, Ellsworth Street, and Balmoral Road. Planners studied key intersections of:

- Balmoral Road/Broadmoor Bluffs Drive
- Ellsworth Street/Broadmoor Bluffs Drive

### Level of Service

The operating characteristics of intersections are described by the concept of level of service (LOS). LOS is a qualitative description of the performance of an intersection based on the average delay per vehicle. Intersection levels of service range from LOS A, which indicates free flow or excellent conditions with short delays, to LOS F, which indicates congested or overloaded conditions with extremely long delays. LOS A through LOS D is considered excellent to satisfactory service levels, LOS E is undesirable, and LOS F conditions are representative of gridlock. The study intersections were evaluated using the Highway Capacity Manual (HCM 6th) operations methodology and Synchro 11, a transportation analysis software.

## Estimated Traffic Volumes

For many proposed projects, the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) Trip Generation Manual is utilized to project site traffic volumes. However, there is not a similar trip generation code for an open space facility with trails, and the number of trips expected to be generated will vary greatly based on site characteristics and surrounding land use. Therefore, PRCS and Traffic Engineering Staff were consulted to develop estimated trip generation assumptions. The Parks staff reviewed relevant trail counter data for other similar facilities to estimate visitation to the site when the trails have been constructed.

**Table 2.1** depicts those vehicle per day estimates based on two parking alternatives. The actual visitor use of the site and the length of stay will be dependent on many factors, including the length of trail network, the number of connection points and other off-site parking availability for the Chamberlain Trail, possible connectivity to Cheyenne Mountain State Park, other use opportunities such as rock-climbing or wildlife viewing on-site, and the general desirability of the site. Actual visitation will depend on these factors, as well as weather and other seasonal influences.

## Impact to Level of Service

In both the Alternative 1 and Alternative 2 parking scenarios, the intersections sufficiently handle the increased level of traffic with the LOS remaining at LOS A and delay increasing by less than half a second over

existing conditions on each approach. The parking levels will not significantly impact the overall level of service. However, neighbors are likely to notice an increase in traffic and are most concerned about visitors parking on the streets. The complete Traffic Impact Analysis Report can be referenced in the Appendices.

## Emergency Egress

During the public meetings held to discuss the proposed project, the public expressed concern regarding the additional traffic generated by the site in the case of an emergency evacuation, such as a nearby wildfire. The team used Synchro software to assess the outcome of evacuating all residential properties in the neighborhood with the addition of the Fishers Canyon parking lot at full capacity.

The analysis assumed that all local and site traffic would either utilize NORAD Road or the Academy Boulevard interchange to evacuate the area. The analysis showed minor additional delays at the local intersections with the additional traffic from Fishers Canyon compared to base conditions without the Open Space traffic, however, the intersections remained at capacity during the evacuation. Therefore, it is likely that the Fishers Canyon added vehicles would not significantly impact evacuations out of the Broadmoor Bluffs neighborhood. It is possible that further downstream, such as near I-115, that there could be capacity issues in the case of a large-scale evacuation, but that would occur regardless of the Fishers Canyon traffic. The recommendation to close the trailheads on fire weather days is a

combination of reasons: to respond to public feedback, traffic impacts (minor), to reduce strain on emergency responders, and to protect user safety while in remote portions of the open space.

## Potential Trailhead Parking

### Community Access Modes

Car access will be the most likely way visitors access Fishers Canyon Open Space with seventy-four percent of those surveyed noting they would drive to trailhead parking.<sup>15</sup> Limited designated bike lanes exist within a 2-mile radius of Fishers Canyon Open Space.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, there are no existing bus routes within a 2-mile radius of Fishers Canyon Open Space. The spiderweb of neighborhood roads leading from Highway 115 are very steep and would likely preclude pedestrian and cycling access to most of the Colorado Springs population. Although the Spires and Broadmoor Resort Community who are located adjacent to the site, reported they are more likely to walk or bike to the open space trailhead.

### Community Trailhead Parking Preference

The third public survey found that seventy-nine percent of the public supports an adaptive parking range of an initial 61 to 69 spots with a possible future expansion up to 110 spots.<sup>13</sup> From that same survey, support for this higher range of parking from the Spires and Broadmoor Resort Community neighbors is fifty-one percent.<sup>13</sup>

Neighborhood concerns during the outreach process

<sup>15</sup> Appendices: Fishers Canyon Open Space Master Plan Engagement Summaries.

<sup>16</sup> Appendices: Site Inventory Study Maps (2 and 4-mile Radius Project Area).

included addressing speeding and safety concerns with the added traffic. To ensure that the routes to and from the open space can accommodate the site traffic, the following measures are recommended to promote safety and wayfinding:

- The intersection of Wellfleet Road and Irvington Court was missing a stop sign on Wellfleet Road. As a result of this process, a stop sign was added on the approach to the intersection to denote which approach should stop.
- Additional speed limit signs should be added on Balmoral Road and Ellsworth Street to reinforce the 25-mph speed limit.
- Unmarked crosswalks along the access routes to the site should be formalized with crosswalk bars at intersections to draw attention to possible pedestrians in the roadway.
- “Stop Ahead” signs may be considered on the downhill approach to Broadmoor Bluffs Drive on Ellsworth Street and Balmoral Road.
- Wayfinding signs to and from the site should be added to prevent driver confusion and unnecessary additional trips within the neighborhood to and from the Fisher’s Canyon site.

Table 2.1: Fishers Canyon Open Space estimated vehicles per day for each parking alternative.

<b>Estimated Vehicles per day to Fishers Canyon Open Space</b>	<b>Trailhead Parking Alternative 1</b> 33 to 71 spots including 4 ADA	<b>Trailhead Parking Alternative 2</b> 69 to 110 spots including 4 ADA
<b>Weekday</b>	97	115
<b>Weekend</b>	161	217



Example of trailhead overnight closure gate at Cottonwood Creek Park.





# Sustainable Trail Framework





# CHAPTER 3:

# Community Engagement

*When planning with values at the forefront, success is measured not just by results, but by the integrity of the process.*

## Community Values

Fishers Canyon Open Space is the City's newest open space property and is currently not open to the public. The planning team worked to understand and document open space values and recreation desires from a diverse representation of the community. Values-based engagement is helpful for projects that are balancing recreation access with environmental conservation, as well as demands from the public for a variety of types of recreation, that may not be compatible with each other or the site. In this process, community input informs design considerations in conjunction with technical findings.

## Engagement by the Numbers

The illustration on the following pages details the engagement steps and timeline. Over 1,900 community members provided thousands of comments. Community suggestions, staff input, and site opportunities and constraints have informed the master plan and management plan recommendations.

## Sustainable Trail Framework

At the beginning of the Fishers Canyon Master Plan process, over sixty participants from thirty-three organizations from neighboring home owner association (HOA) representatives to Colorado Parks and Wildlife, took part in focus group discussions. A key question, "How can the City develop a sustainable trail system at Fishers Canyon Open Space?" The diagram on the previous page depicts the sustainable trail framework, informed by staff, stakeholders, community members, and industry best practices. Topics include recreation enjoyment, ecology, cultural resources, operations and maintenance, engineering, education, and enforcement. Evaluating site opportunities for each topic helps to choose how to enhance the site for recreation access while supporting ecosystem health, a core community value.

During survey #3, the community provided additional considerations for the framework. **Table 3.1** organizes that input into each framework topic.

# Engagement Timeline



## Fishers Canyon Open Space Acquisition

Oct. 2021 City Council unanimously approves proposal to acquire Fishers Canyon. The City partnered with The Land Water Conservation Fund and completed a public process with TOPS and PAB.

**2021-22**



## Fire Mitigation Neighborhood Communication

Regional agencies coordinated to complete fire mitigation of 89 acres of Fishers Canyon Open Space lands.

**2023**

## Engagement by the Numbers

- 1,935 Total Youth & Community Participants
- 1,349 Interactions with on-line StoryMap
- 897 Postcards mailed to neighborhoods
- 229 Project newsletter subscribers
- 75 Neighborhood site tour participants



## TOPS and PAB Approval Process

The plan is reviewed through the standard master and management plan process for adoption.

**Feb.-April 2025**



## Draft Plan Open House & Survey #4

Participants attended an open house and/or reviewed the draft plan online and provided comments through the 4th survey.

**Jan.-Feb. 2025**



### Community Survey #1

Over 950 participants completed the first public survey to share ideas about their top open space values and priorities for Fishers Canyon Open Space.

**Feb. - March 2024**



### Community Meeting #1 & Survey #2

Over 350 participants attended the first public meeting and/or completed survey #2 on emerging scenarios and access for the site.

**April-May, 2024**



### Youth Engagement

Over 177 youth from Gold Camp Elementary and PRCS community center summer camps completed a trail habitat activity and voted on their top open space values and priorities for Fishers Canyon Open Space.

**April-July 2024**



### Community Meeting #2 & Survey #3

Over 500 participants attended the second public meeting and/or completed survey #3 on visitation trends, preferred trail and parking alternatives.

**Nov.-Dec. 2024**



### Neighborhood Site Tour

Seventy neighbors and families took part in a site tour to address access and parking concerns from Wellfleet St. The community also provided input on proposed recreation use and preferences.

**August 2024**

Table 3.1: Survey #3 community input on the sustainable trails framework.

<b>Sustainable Trail Framework Topic</b>	<b>Community Suggestions For Consideration</b>
<b>Recreation Enjoyment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• diverse types of trails for different user groups</li> <li>• mountain bike only trails (MTB)</li> <li>• trails to climbing areas</li> <li>• trail connectivity</li> <li>• accessibility for wheelchair/stroller/elderly</li> <li>• increasing demand of recreation opportunities due to population growth</li> <li>• appropriate density of trails and carrying capacity of the land</li> <li>• leverage challenging terrain of property to create appealing trails and reduce risk of social trails</li> </ul>
<b>Ecology</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• wildfire mitigation</li> <li>• habitat preservation</li> <li>• water quality and plant diversity</li> </ul>
<b>Cultural Resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• legacy</li> <li>• keeping the open space public</li> <li>• preservation</li> <li>• interpretation</li> </ul>
<b>Operations &amp; Maintenance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• economic sustainability</li> <li>• cost over time to maintain Fishers Canyon Open Space compared to other parks and open spaces</li> <li>• dog waste stations</li> <li>• miles of trail and trail density</li> </ul>
<b>Engineering</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• water and flood management to protect trails and drainages</li> <li>• MTB trail features (e.g., single track, berms, rock/jump features, etc.)</li> <li>• buffers between improvements and residential neighbors to ensure privacy</li> <li>• impacts to neighborhood (e.g., increased traffic, traffic control, property values, noise pollution)</li> <li>• wayfinding and trail signage</li> <li>• fencing and design standards</li> </ul>
<b>Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• user group conflicts</li> <li>• community impact</li> <li>• Leave No Trace</li> </ul>



*Community engagement photos from the neighborhood site tour, youth pop-up events, and community meetings.*

## Recreation & Maintenance Priorities

The planning team organized recreation experiences into four user types: The Everyday Explorer; The Joyful Observer; The Naturalist; and The Adrenaline Junkie. Each of these types have support broadly from the community with specific cohorts having differences in priorities. Coupled with the site's opportunities and constraints, community recreation desires help determine the types of trails offered in the master plan.



*Advocates for rock climbing and bouldering hope to access Fishers Canyon Open Space's granite boulders and unique features of The Legends Outcrop.*

Rock climbing and mountain biking were top community recreation desires for Fishers Canyon Open Space, which aligns with the system master plan for the southwest district. Residents in the surrounding neighborhoods prioritize hiking over scenic views, regional trail connections, and maintaining the

“wilderness” experience of the site (also a close second for the community). Youth participants focused their recreation priorities on hiking with their dogs (on leash) and low-barrier, accessible trails. **Table 3.2** provides a snapshot of collated community findings from the six engagement windows offered during the planning process.

While community desires are important, the 2014 Park System Master Plan theme of “Taking Care of

What We Have” highlights the “maintenance needs throughout the park system that have been deferred due to insufficient funds and lack of staff.”<sup>1</sup> Future enhancements to Fishers Canyon Open Space will need to have appropriate operations and maintenance thresholds, as noted in **Table 3.2** and the management plan, in order to ensure quality recreation experiences for the community and stewardship of the land. For example, single-use trails, a top desire from the public, can not










be accommodated at Fishers Canyon Open Space in part due to limited ranger, maintenance, and operations resources. Partnerships with land stewardship agencies like Colorado Parks and Wildlife could help bolster existing PRCS resources that currently includes 11 rangers for over 8,900 acres of open space.

<sup>1</sup> 2014 Parks System Master Plan, Colorado Springs, Colorado, page 111.

Table 3.2: Fishers Canyon Open Space Community Recreation Desires Snapshot Collated from Qualitative and Quantitative Engagement Data. Sources: Appendices: Community Engagement Summaries.

## Recreation Experiences



<b>Constituent Ranking of Recreation Desires</b>	<b>The Everyday Explorer</b> Cross country mountain biking, daily dog walking, hiking, loop trails, etc.	<b>The Joyful Observer</b> Low-barrier accessible trails, picnicking, less remote nature experiences, etc.	<b>The Naturalist</b> Horseback riding, hiking to scenic views, wilderness, regional trail connections and remote nature, etc.	<b>The Adrenaline Junkie</b> Downhill mountain biking, rock climbing, rigorous trails, etc.
<b>Youth</b>				
<b>Neighbors</b>				
<b>Community</b>				
<b>Priority for Recreation Advocacy Groups</b>	Pikes Peak Outdoor Recreation Alliance, Medicine Wheel Trail Advocates and COSMBA	Families, Disabled Veteran Groups, City of COS Therapeutic Recreation and Community Centers	Cheyenne Mountain State Park, Equestrian Community	Rock Climbing Community, Medicine Wheel Trail Advocates and COSMBA
<b>Operations and Maintenance Thresholds</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommended increase in current number of full time operations and maintenance staff per miles of trail. The upcoming system-wide master plan should provide additional direction and priorities.</li> </ul>			

## Neighborhood Considerations

From the start of the planning process, neighboring landowners and constituents have been involved through focus groups, community meetings, surveys, informational postcard mailers, and a neighborhood site tour. While many neighbors are excited about the transition of the property from a 70-unit housing development to open space, others have expressed concern for the change trailhead access and parking from Wellfleet Street may bring to their community. Top concerns include impact of a trailhead to housing values, potential safety risks for increased crime or wildfire risk, and increases in traffic.

Site enhancement thresholds, community engagement, and management strategies to address concern are crucial for the success of the plan. For example, in response to concern for increased wildfire risk due to public access of the site, the management plan includes a community-suggested strategy to close the site during Extreme Fire Weather Warnings.

There is strong consensus from the public in keeping open space visitors from parking on the neighborhood streets and providing enough parking to accommodate future visitation. Additionally, in response to neighborhood concern over a single point of access at Wellfleet Street, the master plan has identified two additional access points: 1) hiking from Cheyenne Mountain State Park to the south; and 2) a future potential parking lot and walk-in route along future Chamberlain Trail improvements to the north. Also, there is an existing South Chamberlain Trailhead in North Cheyenne Cañon Park on Mesa Ave. that is available for use.

## Community Alternatives Preference

During the November 19, 2024, community meeting #2, the public, which included approximately 50 percent site neighbors, had cordial discourse on the merits and trade-offs of master plan alternative 1 and 2 as well as two trailhead parking range alternatives.<sup>2</sup> During the evening's close, each small table group provided a report-out on discussions. Most small group participants preferred more trail and parking enhancements, but there remained some neighbors with strong concerns and preference for more limited enhancements. The majority of survey participants (75 percent) preferred more trail enhancements (alternative 2), while 60 percent supported a larger, adaptive range of parking (alternative 2). These neighborhood and community inputs helped shape the preferred master plan.



*Photo from the August 2024 neighborhood site tour where neighbors helped select preferred areas for potential trailhead and parking.*

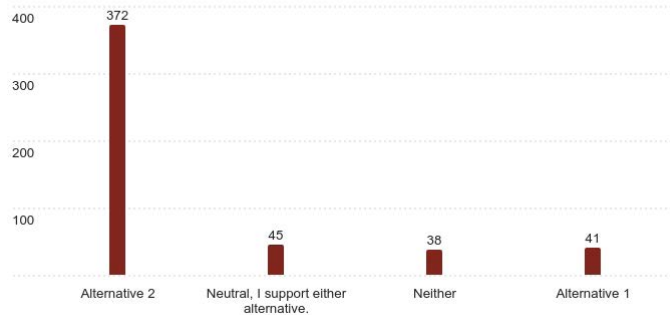
<sup>2</sup> Appendices: Community Engagement Meeting #2 Exhibits.



## Comparison of Neighborhood and General Public Preference

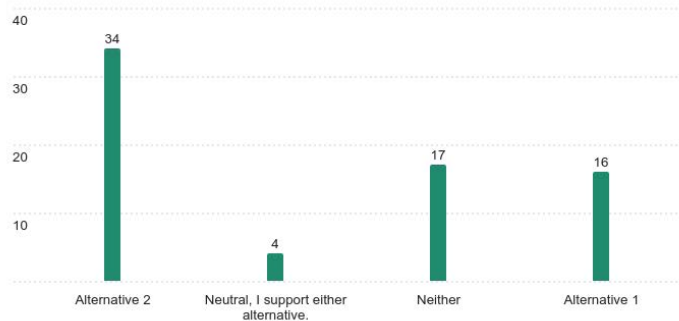
Q2 - Please take a moment to review Fishers Master Plan Alternatives 1 and 2 . These alternatives have been developed using the sustainable trails framework and input from the community to date. Based on the information provided in the presentation video and maps, which trail master plan alternative(s) do you support? (Select one)

496 Responses  
 ■ Choice Count



Q2 - Please take a moment to review Fishers Master Plan Alternatives 1 and 2 . These alternatives have been developed using the sustainable trails framework and input from the community to date. Based on the information provided in the presentation video and maps, which trail master plan alternative(s) do you support? (Select one)

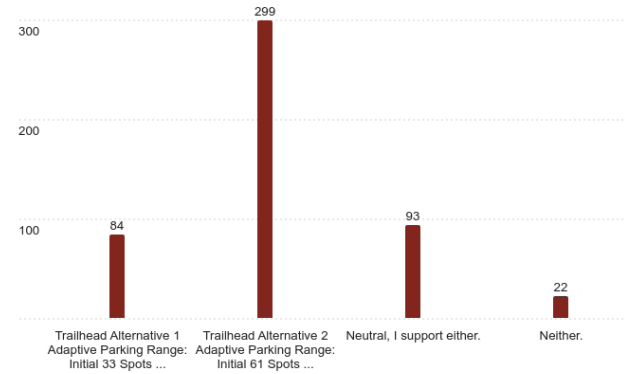
71 Responses  
 ■ Choice Count



*Community Engagement Survey #3 comparison of community preference (top) for master plan alternative 1 or 2 with results from The Spires and Broadmoor Resort Community neighborhood preference (bottom). While the community prefers alternative 2 (more trail enhancement), the neighbors directly adjacent to the property are more ambivalent.*

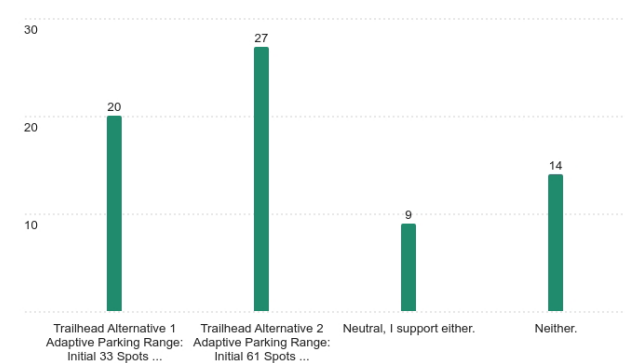
Q4 - Trailhead Parking Alternatives Please take a moment to review Trailhead parking alternatives 1 and 2 . Based on the information provided, which adaptive parking range do you support? (select one)

498 Responses



Q4 - Trailhead Parking Alternatives Please take a moment to review Trailhead parking alternatives 1 and 2 . Based on the information provided, which adaptive parking range do you support? (select one)

70 Responses

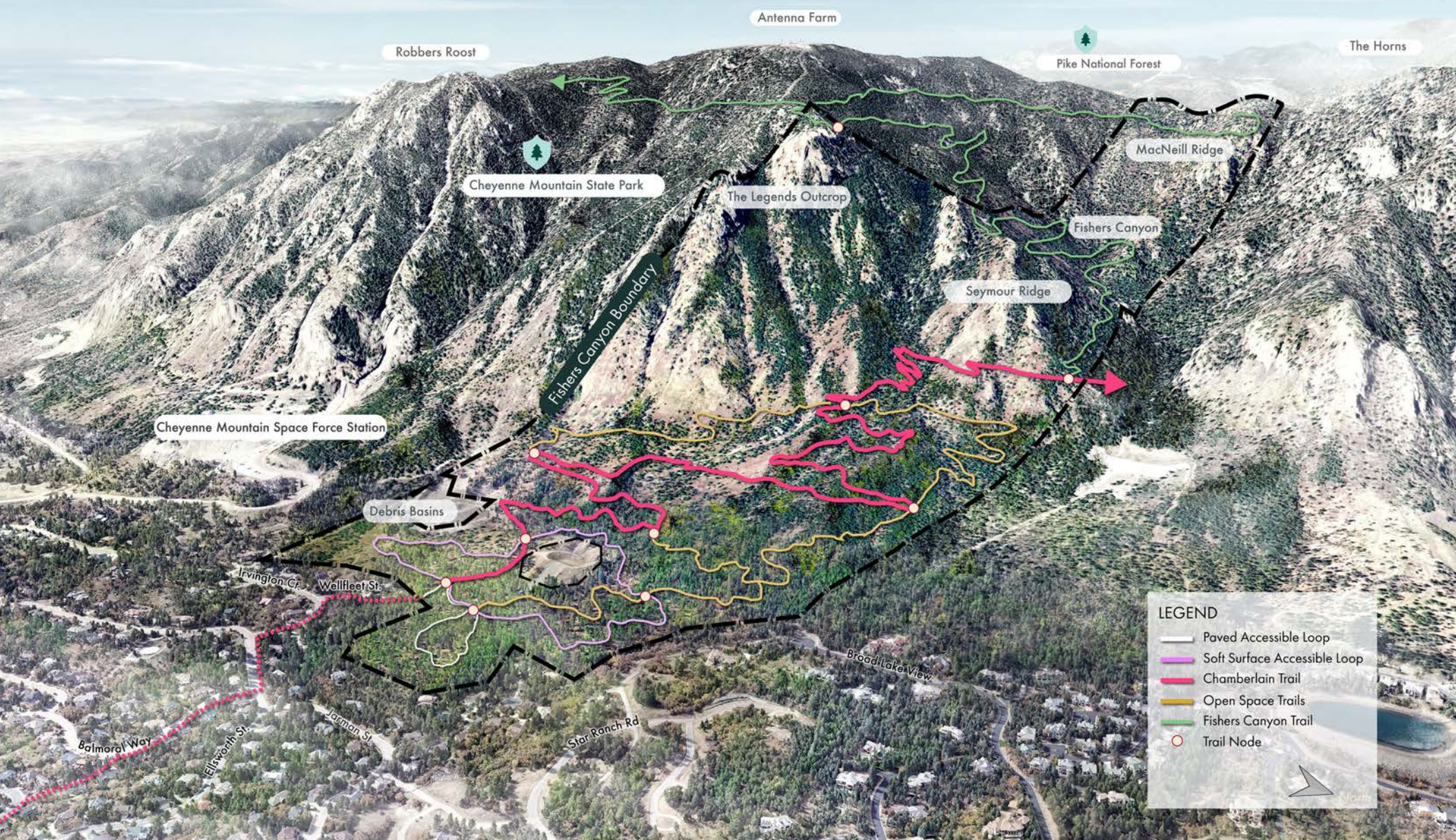


*Community Engagement Survey #3 comparison of community preference (top) for master plan trailhead and parking alternative 1 or 2 with results from The Spires and Broadmoor Resort Community neighborhood preference (bottom). While the community prefers alternative 2 (more parking), the neighbors directly adjacent to the property are more ambivalent.*





# Master Plan Birdseye Illustrative



# CHAPTER 4:

# Master Plan

*The master plan is a 15 to 20-year vision to guide site enhancements and management strategies for Fishers Canyon Open Space. Thresholds, priorities, phasing, and partnerships will determine how the plan is constructed on the ground and adapts to dynamic environmental conditions and recreation desires.*

## **Master Plan Inputs**

Planners created the master plan map, design guidelines, and management plan by weaving together technical, stakeholder, and community input for the framework topics. For example, if more opportunities for recreation enjoyment are included in the master plan, additional support for increased operations and maintenance need to be considered. With these opportunities, the plan balances focused recreation areas with discrete native plant and wildlife areas with limited recreation access.

## **Master Plan Elements**

The maps at the end of this chapter (large format available in the Appendices) provide an overview of the preferred master plan that shows a nine to ten-mile trail network. The descriptions that follow detail guidelines for the trail network, recreation opportunities, natural preservation areas, and trailhead amenities.

**Access Points:** There are three access options to the site including one from Wellfleet Street public right-of-way that leads to two on-site parking locations noted in the trailhead symbol in the map. Two additional off-site connections and parking options-noted with the purple parking symbol-show future potential access points: 1) north of the site along the future Chamberlain Trail connection and towards North Cheyenne Cañon Park; and 2) an 8-mile, one-way potential future trail to Cheyenne Mountain State Park's Limekiln parking lot.

Adaptive strategies to diversifying access to the site in the future include a possible future access point to the non-designated MacNeill Trail (in collaboration with surrounding land managers) and possible future pedestrian neighborhood access point(s).

## **Parking & Traffic**

Based on community input and planning best practices and pending funding, the parking lots will begin with 69 spots, and through monitoring and adaptive management expand up to 110 without a public process. If more parking is needed, PRCS will initiate a public engagement process with the community and neighborhood. During the design development and construction process, operations and maintenance staff should be consulted.

Currently the plan accommodates two horse-trailer parking spots (horse riders typically go in pairs on hikes for safety). Horse-trailer parking could also accommodate a youth bus for field trips or smaller shuttle, a potential future citywide transportation mode Mountain Metro Transit is envisioning, for future public access to citywide parks and open spaces.

Neighborhood concerns during the outreach process included addressing speeding and safety concerns with the added traffic. To ensure that the routes to and from the open space can accommodate the site traffic, the measures in Chapter 2 are recommended to promote safety and wayfinding. If neighborhood issues develop, PRCS will also work with Public Works Traffic and Engineering on solutions (e.g., permit-only parking, signage, etc.)

## **Trailhead**

Two trailheads with parking are envisioned for the site. Trailhead amenities should include picnicking tables, waste and dog waste receptacles, portolettes, wayfinding and interpretive signage kiosks, visitor amenities, and safety and maintenance access. The

lower trailhead provides accessible parking to the two accessible trails. Additional detail on parking, traffic and access is provided in the next section.

## **Trail Nodes**

Trail nodes, or intersections between trail routes, should include PRCS standard wayfinding markers. In specific locations, a limited number of interpretative signs indicating points of interest, scenic overlooks, climbing trails, seasonal closure information and other details that help indicate trail experiences can be utilized.

## **Trail Alignment Refinement**

Flexibility is crucial to adapting trail layouts to changing conditions and potential partnerships with neighboring land managers. This flexibility is essential during both the initial planning and throughout the trail's life cycle as environments, usage patterns, and stakeholder needs evolve. Conceptual trail alignments, designed based on current conditions, must remain adaptable to unforeseen challenges and opportunities that arise during the project's progression. As the project moves from the conceptual to the construction documentation phase, ground truthing may reveal unexpected terrain features or ecological sensitivities, necessitating layout adjustments to ensure sustainability and accessibility.

Collaborations with neighboring land managers can create new trail connections, enhancing the overall system but requiring flexible designs to incorporate these opportunities. For example, the Chamberlain Trail alignment and potential connections around MacNeill Ridge and northern property boundaries may need

minor adjustments without public process.

### Chamberlain Trail (Regional Trail)

The spine of the site's trail network is a portion of the regional Chamberlain Trail (26 miles in total) shown in solid pink. The dashed pink represents off-property connections that are planned on existing easements. The connection along pedestrian right-of-way on Wellfleet St., Irvington Ct., and Ellsworth Street is intended to ultimately connect to Cheyenne Mountain State Park. The

(two percent slope or less) trail loop with ADA trailhead parking. A dashed yellow line shows a new soft-surface trail that is envisioned to be a one-mile loop accessible to most users (two to five percent slope).

For the other trails on the site, construction design should keep mobility device accessibility in mind where feasible and cost effective. Examples of these type of considerations include the addition of rest zones and wide sweeping climbing turns.

### Open Space Trails

The solid olive-green trails are open space trails that create a stacked-loop trail system that allows users flexibility in their recreation experience through trail node connections shown as circles with red outlines in the facing map.

### Fishers Canyon Trail

The dashed olive-green trail is called Fishers Canyon Trail and includes future alignment within Cheyenne Mountain State Park, an ongoing partner with PRCS. Aligning with the state park, Fishers Canyon Trail will be hiking only, with no dog access to protect wildlife and habitat.

Continuing on the future State Park trail, hikers will be able to access a spur to MacNeill Ridge on the site's property.

Fishers Canyon Trail will provide seasonal access to regional connections and higher parts of the site including potential rock-climbing areas. Due to steepness, portions of the trail will likely include rock steps, retaining walls, and engineered elements. A seasonal closure gate may be installed and additional informational signage at the trail node to provide

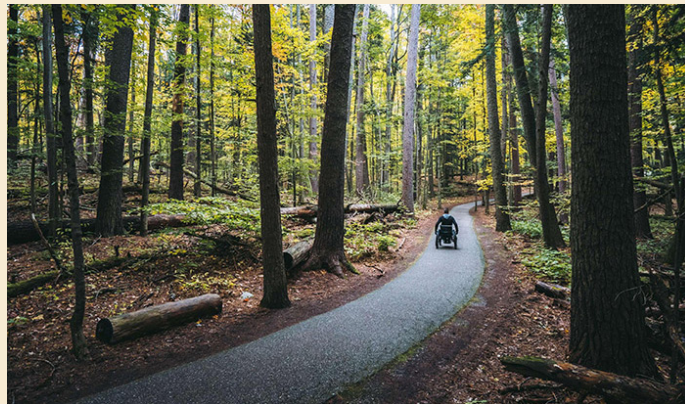


*85 percent of the community supports partially-visible trail improvements along mountainsides that will help complete trail gaps will help complete gaps in the Chamberlain Trail.*

other connection is to the north of the site along existing easement with The Broadmoor Hotel. This regional trail is intended to be multi-use and range up to eight percent slope.

### Accessible Trails

There is a hiking-only trail depicted in solid yellow that is intended to be a third of a mile. This trail should comply with ADA-approved surfaces and be fully accessible



*(Top to Bottom) Example of rugged rock steps, a soft-surface accessible (2-5 percent) trail and a paved, fully-accessible trail.*

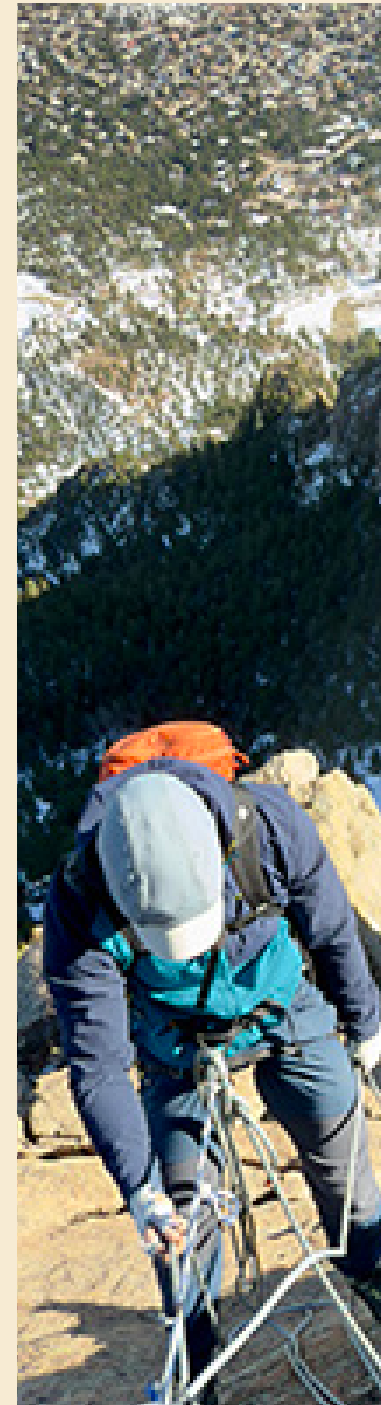
information on the seasonal closures due to raptor nesting.

### **Recreation Opportunities and Seasonal Closures**

The trail system is primarily multi-use, open to hiking, biking, equestrians, on-leash dog and bouldering enthusiasts.

The portions of the Legend Outcrop and rock features along the Chamberlain Trail easement offer potential seasonal rock climbing sites. Ongoing monitoring of raptor activity is recommended over the next 15 to 20 years. Final determination if a year two MSO survey is needed is pending USFWS concurrence. Future nesting and other types of raptor activities would prompt site closures or other management actions as directed by PRCS staff and/or USFWS officials to conserve wildlife. If permitted, seasonal closures to protect nesting raptors will be required. Additionally, rock climbing permits and safety infrastructure are required components of the master and management plan.

This plan recommends a more detailed bouldering and climbing plan be a future step before areas are opened to the public. This would ensure detailed analysis and planning of potential climbing areas. The future plan should explore proposed routes, rules, and regulations and should be reviewed by staff and stakeholders.







## Natural Preservation Areas

The green areas of the map show the potential natural preservation areas (approximately 227 acres or 66 percent of the site). As defined in chapter 2, natural preservation areas conserve habitat blocks of four acres or more to preserve the “wilderness” quality of the site that the community values. In fact, survey #3 results show that the top two ecologic goals of the community are to reduce wildfire risk and support habitat for animal species of concern.

## Drainage Crossings

Fishers Canyon Open Space has several drainages on site as depicted in the map. The Fishers Turkey Foot Drainages and Sleeping Bear Creek have higher ecologic value and thus priority in developing the master plan. The aim is to minimize crossings of these key drainages and potentially use engineering solutions such as bridges to enhance separation from visitors and wildlife. In survey #3, seventy-eight percent of the public supported using enhanced engineering improvements that may be more costly than traditional infrastructure to support ecosystem health. There are four natural preservation drainage area crossings noted in blue circles on the map. The planning team considered several other trail alignments but selected the current one depicted on the map as it minimized drainage crossings.

**Debris Basins:** As of December 1, 2024, the City is in negotiations with The Spires Drainage Homeowners Association, Inc. to take over ownership and management of the debris basins. Described in Chapter 2, the two on-site debris basins will not be open to the public. Fencing and signage should be used to keep the area safe and secure.

# Master Plan Map Legend

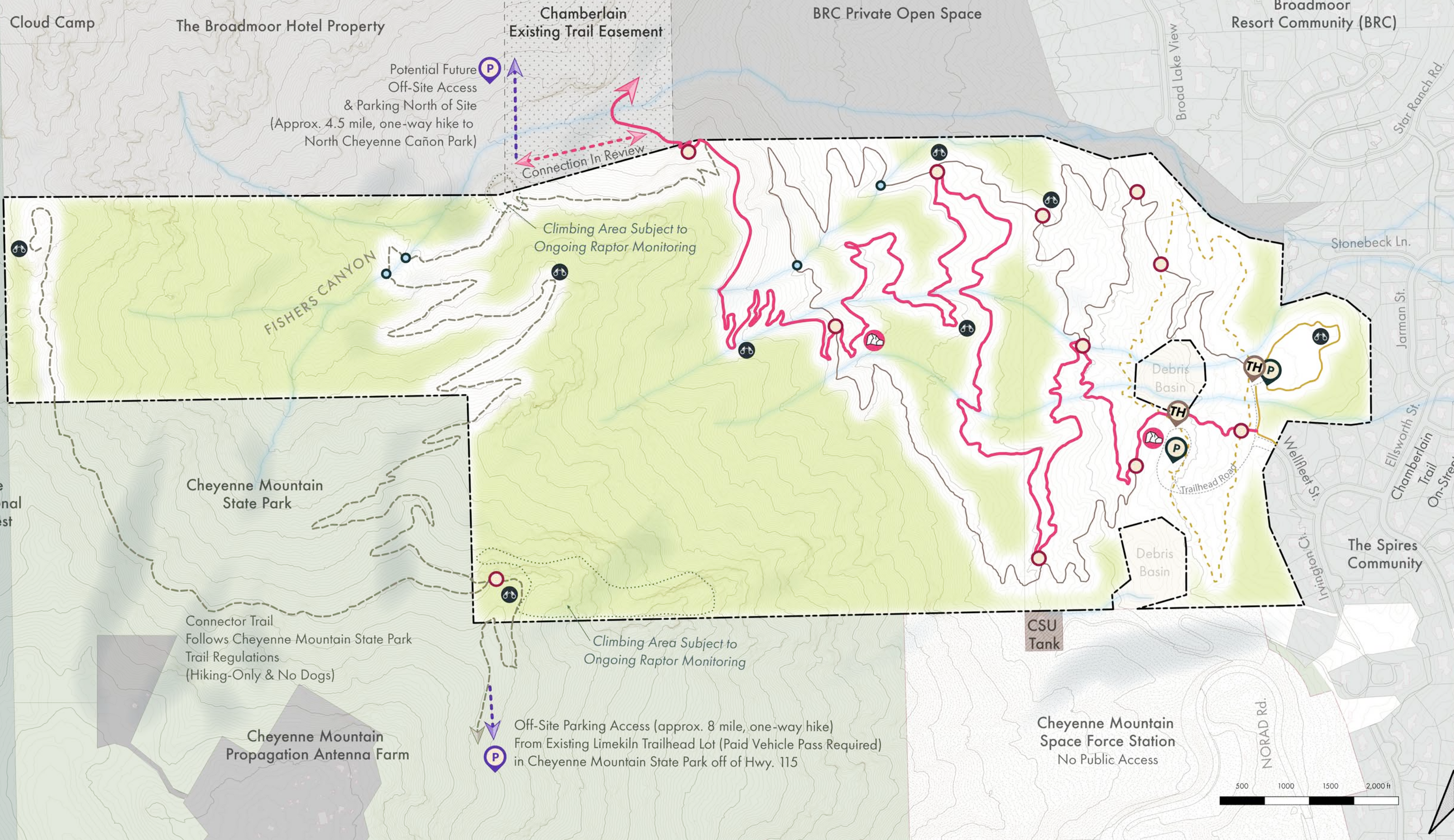
- Property Line
- Chamberlain Existing Trail Easement
- Private Property
- Military Installation - No Public Access
- Existing Drainages
- Natural Preservation Area Drainage Crossings (4)
- Natural Preservation Area (66% of site / ~227 acres)
- Scenic Views
- Trail Node Connections (10)
- Trailheads (2)
- On-Site Parking (69-110 spots)
- Off-Site Dispersed Access (2 points)
- Bouldering Opportunity
- Rock Climbing Opportunity

## Trail Key

	Hiking	Biking	Horse	On-Leash Dogs	Accessible (2- 5% slope)
Chamberlain Regional Trail (~3 miles)					
Paved Accessible Loop (~.33 miles)					
Soft Surface Accessible Loop (~1 mile)					
Open Space Trails (~3 miles)					
Fishers Canyon Trail (~1.6 miles) <i>No dogs &amp; subject to seasonal wildlife closures</i>					

Total approximate trail mileage = 9-10 miles

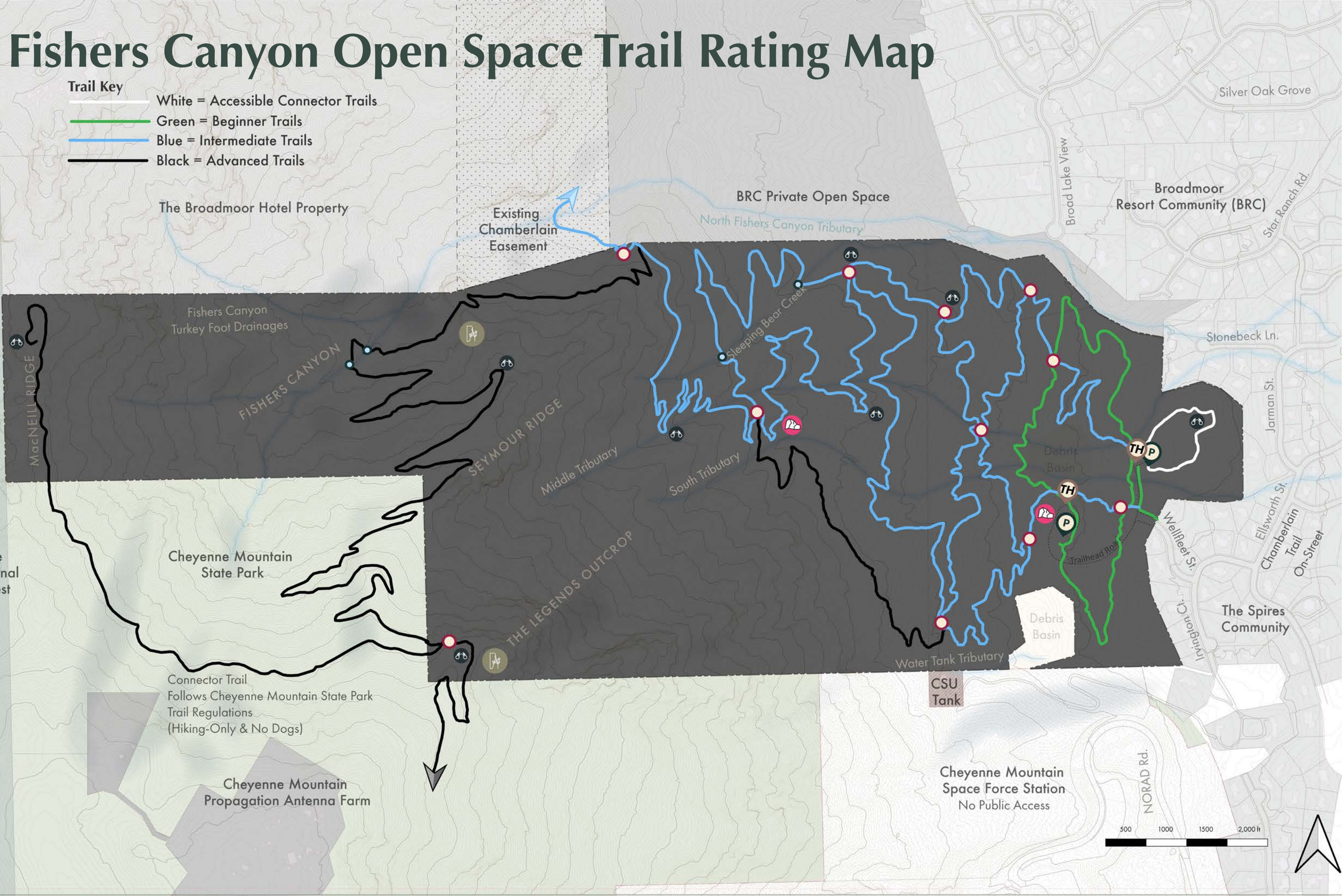
# Fishers Canyon Open Space Master Plan



# Fishers Canyon Open Space Trail Rating Map

## Trail Key

-  White = Accessible Connector Trails
-  Green = Beginner Trails
-  Blue = Intermediate Trails
-  Black = Advanced Trails



The Broadmoor Hotel Property

Existing Chamberlain Easement

BRC Private Open Space

Broadmoor Resort Community (BRC)

Fishers Canyon Turkey Foot Drainages

Pike National Forest

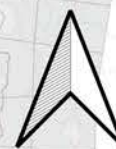
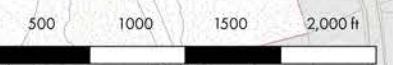
Cheyenne Mountain State Park

Connector Trail Follows Cheyenne Mountain State Park Trail Regulations (Hiking-Only & No Dogs)

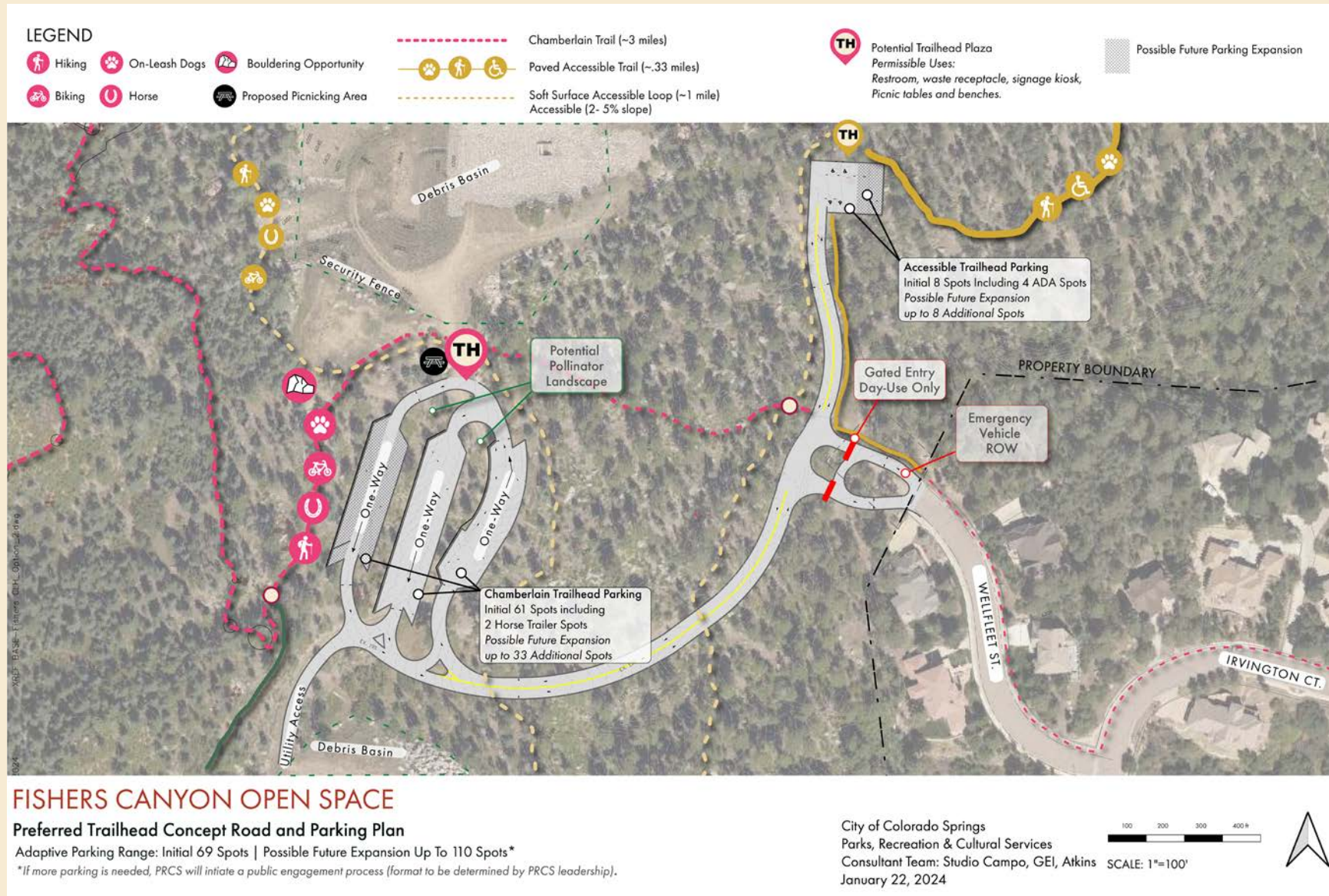
Cheyenne Mountain Propagation Antenna Farm

CSU Tank

Cheyenne Mountain Space Force Station No Public Access

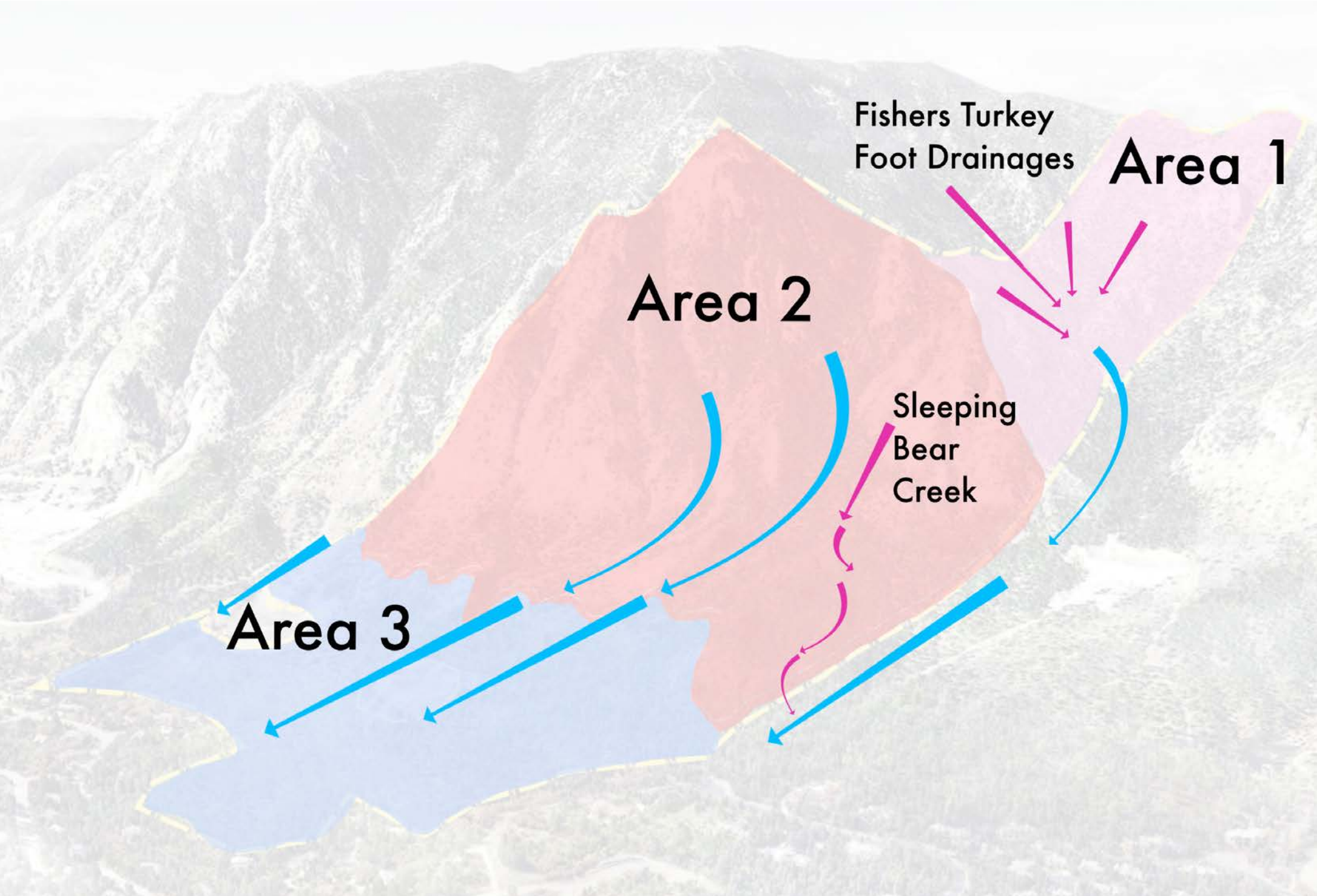


Fishers Canyon Open Space Preferred Trailhead Parking Map. See Appendices for large format map.









Map diagram of the three management areas and priority drainages (Fishers Turkey Foot and Sleeping Bear Creek) within Fishers Canyon Open Space.



# CHAPTER 5:

# Management Plan

*Fishers Canyon Open Space's 343-acres is owned by the City of Colorado Springs and managed by PRCS. The Regional Parks, Trails and Open Space Division (RPTOS) will employ adaptive management strategies following the recommendations of the master plan and the phasing and thresholds set forth herein. Continuing partnership with adjacent Cheyenne Mountain State Park, managed by Colorado Parks and Wildlife, staff, rangers, and resources is vital.*

The rugged terrain and friable soils of the site will require best management practices in trail design. Looking at engineering considerations, trails in steeper locations may require efforts to reduce erosion including retaining walls, steps or trail bridges. Solutions like bridges have ecologic benefits but will also have ramifications to costs and long-term maintenance. Education and enforcement considerations include when and where dogs, climbers, bikers and horses are allowed within the property. Seasonal closures will be required to protect nesting raptors on certain trails.

Evaluating the site, three potential management areas emerge. These areas have different conditions and requirements for operations and maintenance. They also have different habitat quality and presence of disturbances and barriers that include recent fire mitigation efforts, invasive weeds, erosion

susceptibility, and barriers to wildlife crossings with existing fencing at Cheyenne Mountain Space Force Station and Broadmoor Resort Community. The management areas and management plan help establish goals to maintain and preserve the property, to provide sustainable public access, and to adapt to changing conditions.

The following management plan outlines short-term to ongoing recommendations. PRCS staff will use annual work planning to adapt these time frames as work is completed and future priorities emerge. This dynamic management plan allows PRCS staff to effectively respond to changing circumstances and maintain a forward-looking approach.

# *Drainages and Water Quality*

The management plan recommendations for drainages and water quality are to maintain aquatic resources, minimize erosion, protect water quality, and educate the public on sustainable trail use.

## **Maintain Aquatic Resources**

1. **Short Term:** Update maps of the current footprint of drainages, wetlands, and basins. Update current conditions including vegetation type and density and identify management actions that can improve and/or maintain these conditions.
2. **Ongoing:** On an annual basis, review corridors and compare to baseline condition. Based on these findings, develop a strategy for the upcoming year to continue to protect these areas. Practices may include planting of native vegetation, establishing designated tributary crossings, pulling back trails from drainage edge, and/or temporarily closing or re-routing trails to allow aquatic resource areas to recover.

## **Minimize Erosion**

1. **Short Term:** Identify areas of high erosion based on hillslope analysis. Investigate these sites and determine if they are experiencing signs of high, medium, or low erosion and likelihood of additional erosion based on vegetation structure and recreational use.
2. **Ongoing:** Revisit erosion areas and determine

if the level of erosion has increased and determine potential causes. Develop and implement the appropriate management action to address these issues. This may include actively closing social trails, installing erosion control measures such as matting or coirs, or reseeding with native vegetation. Formal trails that may be contributing to erosion may need to be further augmented through the placement of rock to create grade reversals and/or shore up trail footprint.

## **Protect Water Quality**

1. **Short Term:** Establish water quality monitoring points in on site tributaries and wetlands where water is intermittently present (i.e., Sleeping Bear Creek and Fishers Canyon Turkey Foot Drainages). Conduct visual monitoring for sediment and contaminants.
2. **Ongoing:** On an annual basis, return to each sampling area and collect new samples for analysis. Adjust on site management as needed. This may include increasing educational signage or excluding dogs entirely from the open space. Additional practices may include increasing riparian vegetation or substrate diversity in key locations within the intermittent channels.
3. **Long Term:** Collect and analyze water samples from each of these points. Based on the findings of the lab results, in particular related to nitrogen, phosphorous, dissolved oxygen, temperature, and aquatic macroinvertebrate diversity, develop a monitoring and management plan to maintain or improve water quality in these areas. Consider partnerships with colleges, universities and/or citizen

scientists to help achieve monitoring goals.

## Educate the Public

- 1. Short Term:** Identify key areas where erosion, water quality damage, or trail cutting are likely, such as along tributaries or trailheads with significant switchbacks. Draft easy to understand approaches to address these issues.
- 2. Ongoing:** At select locations, like trailheads or points of interest, develop and install interpretive signs at previously identified problem areas to educate the community on the threats to natural resources that can result from these practices and tips to avoid damage to water quality and vegetation.



# Wildlife

The management plan recommendations for wildlife are to monitor wildlife, continue partnerships, educate the public and protect critical habitats.

## Monitor Wildlife

- 1. Short Term:** Conduct regular surveys and monitoring programs to assess the population status and distribution of sensitive species and wildlife. This may include establishing wildlife cameras at key wildlife corridors or nesting sites and/or encouraging community engagement in annual breeding bird counts.
- 2. Ongoing:** Implement temporary habitat protection measures, such as seasonal closures or restricted access, during sensitive periods, such as breeding or nesting seasons (April 1 – July 31).

## Continue Partnerships

- 1. Short Term:** Collaborate with local landholder organizations, such as Colorado Parks and Wildlife, USFS, and the DOD, as well as neighborhood organizations to develop a regional wildlife plan for monitoring and management of wildlife populations.
- 2. Ongoing:** Implement the wildlife management and monitoring program to share data, protect key areas during sensitive times of year, and maintain positive human-wildlife interactions.

## Educate the Public

- 1. Short Term:** Develop educational interpretive programs to educate the public on wildlife resources in the area. This may include bird watching courses, how to handle human/wildlife interactions, and pollinator garden programs.
- 2. Ongoing:** At select locations, like trailheads or points of interest, install interpretive signs and implement interpretive program for schools, senior centers and Tribes.
- 3. Ongoing:** Engage in public participation and stakeholder involvement to gather input, feedback, and support for sensitive species and wildlife management efforts

## Protect Critical Habitats

- 1. Ongoing:** Maintain and enhance wildlife corridors and connectivity between habitats to facilitate the movement and general flow of sensitive species.
- 2. Ongoing:** Monarch butterflies may utilize the site. To limit impacts to these species, coordinated planting and herbicide management should occur. To the extent feasible, milkweed should be avoided during herbicide application. Milkweed recruitment should be encouraged throughout the property. This may include the development of a maintained native garden that incorporates milkweed at or along trailheads and picnic areas. Milkweed should also be considered in the development of soil stabilization or revegetation mixes.

**3. Ongoing:** To the extent feasible, disruptive activities such as construction, mechanical weed removal, grading, and erosion control should be conducted outside of the migratory bird breeding period (April 1 – August 31) to reduce nest destruction and/or abandonment.

**4. Ongoing:** Collaborate with neighboring land managers to address future potential perimeter encroachments.



# Trail Management

The management plan recommendations for trail management guide trail construction, maintenance, enforcement and public education.

## Trail Construction

- 1. Short Term:** Plan trails that minimize erosion. This may include incorporating additional switchbacks, reducing trail density in areas with highly erosive soils, or limiting recreational activities.
- 2. Ongoing:** Construct sustainable trails as identified in short term actions. Where trails are developed in more erosion-prone areas, incorporate appropriate engineering practices such as grade reversals, gravel, or rock retaining walls that will maintain trail alignment.
- 3. Ongoing:** Consider mobility device accessibility on open space trails. Reference Kootenay Adaptive trail design standards.

## Trail Maintenance

- 1. Short Term:** Develop a trail monitoring and management plan that prioritizes management actions needed and approaches to take (e.g. downcutting in trails and installation of additional grade reversals). These management actions should consider trail integrity as well as protection of natural resources.
- 2. Ongoing:** Implement the monitoring plan. During each monitoring period, staff should walk the trails and identify problem areas. These areas can be

ranked based on prioritized management actions as well as budget availability for repair.

- 3. Ongoing:** Continue partnerships with Colorado Parks and Wildlife to collaborate on open space and trail operations, management, and maintenance.

## Enforcement

- 1. Short Term:** Develop clear rules and regulations for park use related to protecting natural resources and user experiences.
- 2. Short Term:** Expand efforts with Colorado Springs Police Department on Conservation Patrols. Continue efforts to add enforcement authority to PRCS Rangers.
- 3. Ongoing:** Post park regulations in a clear location. Enact ticketing or other enforcement program and to encourage compliance with trail regulations. Temporary closures or reroutes of trails may be considered when needed if trail cutting, excessive dog use, or other practices are being implemented that harm natural resources or user experiences.

## Educate the Public

- 1. Short Term:** Continue existing trail user education programs to promote responsible trail use, including Leave No Trace principles, wildlife awareness, and trail etiquette.
- 2. Ongoing:** At select locations, like trailheads or points of interest, install interpretive signs related to these approaches and post at key locations.



## Noxious Weed Control

The management plan recommendations for noxious weed control. See Appendices for noxious weed mapping.

### Map Noxious and Invasive Weeds

- 1. Short Term:** Review baseline conditions memo and associated map developed as part of the Master Plan (2024). Save mapped footprint over time to inform noxious weed management approaches the following year.
- 2. Ongoing:** Every two years, map invasive species populations during the summer growing season to determine how conditions have changed over time.

### Manage Noxious and Invasive Weeds

- 1. Short Term:** Develop an Weed Management Plan, using the El Paso County Noxious Weed Management template or similar (available: <https://epc-assets.elpasoco.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2022-EPC-Weed-Management-Plan.pdf>).
- 2. Short Term:** Continue grant efforts to fund Youth Corps weed mitigation and coordinate work days with volunteers
- 3. Ongoing:** Implement management actions based on the developed weed management plan,

targeting problematic areas identified during monitoring activities as budget allows. Track methods used on which species and areas to inform updated management plan.

- 4. Ongoing:** Update the weed management plan every 3-5 years incorporating results from bi-annual monitoring efforts and weed management methods.

### Educate the Public

- 1. Short Term:** Identify key areas where invasive species are a problem and communicate easy to understand approaches to address these issues.
- 2. Ongoing:** At select locations, like trailheads or points of interest, develop and install interpretive signs along lower reaches to identify the most noxious weeds to educate the community on threats from these plants and easy methods that can be implemented to reduce their presence.

*Refer to milkweed and herbicide management on page 68. Site image of native milkweed (Asclepias tuberosa) at right.*





# Forest Health Management

The management plan recommendations for forest health management carry forward ideas from previous open space and management plans to monitor forest health conditions, practice adaptive forest health management, and educate the public.

## Monitor Forest Health Conditions

- 1. Short Term:** Develop a compiled map of fire mitigation actions and proposed fire mitigation areas prior to open space management. Continue partnership with City Fire and City Forestry on mitigation and forest health monitoring, assessment and projects. Beginning in mid-March in year one survey for ponderosa pine ips (engraver beetle), Douglas fir pole beetle, Douglas fir beetle, and spruce ips/beetle. Sometimes large fuels projects, by virtue of the amount of biomass disturbance, terpenes and other volatiles emitted from the mulch/logs can be attractiveness to bark beetles. A small inroad one year may be detrimental to stands in subsequent year
- 2. Short Term:** Check for erosion issues in and near the treatment area, treat as needed.
- 3. Short Term:** Map areas of invasive weeds, treat with herbicides as prescribed by the label

**4. Ongoing:** Conduct a forest health survey of the site every 4-6 years to identify areas of disease, die-off, insect infestation, and high forest canopy density. This may involve on-the-ground surveys, use of drone imagery, LiDAR review, or similar methods.

**5. Ongoing:** Continue annual weed mapping and treatment and establish an appropriate budget for these activities.

**6. Ongoing:** Every year, conduct an informal forest survey for endemic populations of pests including tussock moths. Every five years, conduct a formal forest survey for endemic populations of pests including tussock moths and western spruce budworm.

**7. Ongoing:** Save mapped footprint over time to inform updates to forest management plans. Consider partnering with university or college system to have students and volunteers help build a comprehensive forest management map.

## Use Adaptive Management to Improve Forest Health

**8. Short Term:** Develop a Forest Management Plan with stakeholders and regional partners such as the Department of Defense, US Forest Service, Colorado

Springs Utilities, Colorado State Forest Service, and private landowners. State agencies such as the Colorado Water Conservation Board, the Arkansas Basin Roundtable, and others may be incorporated for planning and future funding.

Criteria for forest management prioritization should include locations in close proximity to surrounding neighborhoods, areas of heavy recreational use, tree density, and scrub-oak abundance. Plan should also include an action plan for post-fire recovery should a wildfire occur on site to facilitate a rapid response.

Add City Forestry or a consultant to the list of partners to create a management plan. Priority should be creation of budget line item to treat oak brush every 5-7 years, depending on regeneration.

**9. Ongoing:** Implement management actions based on the developed Forest Management Plan, targeting problematic areas identified during monitoring activities compared to areas of highest priority developed in the Forest Management Plan. Track pre-fire mitigation methods used at each location to incorporate into future Forest Management Plan updates. Plan should include treatments mapped out for future projects and budgets for at least 20 years (fuels, TSI, insect response, weed management, etc.).

**10. Ongoing:** Update Forest Management Plan at least every 10 years. Incorporate methods used on which species and areas to inform updated management plan.

## **Enforcement**

**1. Short Term:** Develop clear rules and standard operating procedures for closing the open space during Red Flag and Extreme Fire Weather Warnings.

## **Educate the Public**

**1. Short Term:** Identify key practices that may lead to wildfire within Fishers Canyon Open Space. This may include smoking, attempting to start a camp fire, or use a camp stove.

**2. Ongoing:** Develop and install interpretive signs at the trailhead educating the public on the danger of wildfire in the area, the fire mitigation practices implemented so far, and the previously identified actions that can lead to wildfire in the area. Include counteractions that can limit these threats.

# *Cultural Resource Protection*

Fishers Canyon Open Space contains historical resources related to homesteading and development activities. These resources are an important asset for the community and may contribute to our understanding of the natural and cultural history of the region. The best management practice is to preserve and avoid significant sites during any future ground-disturbing construction activities. Threats to archaeological sites can include looting, dismantling, vandalism, and modern uses such as camping or human waste disposal. Measures could include:

- 1. Ongoing:** Minimize direct identification or interpretation of historical sites and resources. These are best protected in place by being relatively unknown to the general public. Monitor recreational use on the trails and open space and, when necessary, address any identified issues, considering special and or temporal temporary trail closures.
- 2. Ongoing:** Plan trails and other visitor facilities to avoid direct impacts to historic sites, and to avoid impacts resulting from additional exploration and looting.

**3. Ongoing:** Monitor all known sites on a routine basis to identify resource degradation, vandalism, or new opportunities.

**4. Ongoing:** At select locations, like trailheads, interpret the history and historical features on the property at the trailhead or other destination that is away from the actual features.



# Visitation Management

Recreation enjoyment is impacted by visitation management. Community and land managers hope to maintain the “wilderness” quality of the site and maintain a peaceful neighborhood experience for the adjacent homeowners. Strategies within this topic address community concerns over user conflicts and visions for outdoor recreation.

## Visitation Monitoring

- 1. Ongoing:** Identify additional resources or partners to conduct intercept interviews or user counts at the trailheads annually during the weekend (typically busier time for open space use).
- 2. Ongoing:** Assign existing or new ranger resource to be liaison with neighborhood and document any issues. Adaptively work to address conflicts with City resources (e.g., Traffic and Transportation Engineering).

### 1. Traffic and Parking

- 1. Ongoing:** Identify additional resources or partners to conduct parking and traffic counts at the trailheads annually during the weekend (typically busier time for open space use) and evaluate if additional parking is needed. Parking needs will depend on how long the trails are and how long people spend on-site.

- 2. Ongoing:** If parking lot needs to expand past 110 parking spot threshold, conduct additional public process in a format to be determined by PRCS leadership.

## Safety

- 1. Short Term:** PRCS to work with HOAs and property neighbors to evaluate providing PRCS standard fencing along residential borders. This would be a split rail fencing or a smooth wire fencing with metal T posts. Signage can also be added.
- 2. Ongoing:** Collaborate with HOA groups and the Colorado Springs Police Department and the Colorado Springs Fire Department to collate any safety incidents that may occur in Fishers Canyon Open Space. Adaptively work to address conflicts with City resources.
- 3. Ongoing:** Future adaptive strategies for safety may include improvements such as monitoring cameras, parking lot lights and collaboration with Colorado Springs Police Department for patrols.
- 4. Ongoing:** The site and trailhead hours will match other properties (NOV- APR 5am to 9pm and MAY-OCT 5am-10PM).

## Recreation and Wildlife

1. **Ongoing:** When and where dogs, climbers, bikes and horses are allowed within the property should be balanced with conserving ecosystem health. Careful consideration should be given to allowable activities near large rock outcrops especially during the raptor nesting season.
2. **Ongoing:** Monitor the health of wildlife and habitat areas in open space. If necessary, consider temporary exclusion of dogs from open space to improve wildlife conditions.

## Volunteer Groups

1. **Short Term:** Direct interested groups or individuals interested in helping with PRCS mission at Fishers Canyon Open Space to appropriate volunteer activity. Encourage formation of Friends of Fishers Canyon Open Space group.
2. **Ongoing:** Identify monitoring, maintenance, and education activities volunteer groups could support.

## Visitation Management During Natural Disasters and Disturbances

1. **Ongoing:** Work collaboratively with Colorado Springs Police Department, Colorado Springs Fire Department, and neighboring land managers to

continue efforts to reduce risks of natural disasters (e.g., wildfire, flood, landslides, wind storms, etc.) and communicate emergency plans and regulations to visitors.

2. **Ongoing:** Potential temporary site closures may be required to reduce risk or repair damages to site after a natural disaster or disturbance event (e.g., site degradation due to erosion, habitat disturbance due to social trail development, etc.).

# *Recommended Priorities*

## **High Priority Items (1-4 years)**

- MSO Year 1 Findings Concurrence with USFWS and Raptor Monitoring
- Increase in Operations and Maintenance and Monitoring Resources and/or Partnerships
- 2025-2026 System-Wide Master Plan Process Guidance on Open Space Maintenance, Funding and Ethos
- Trailhead Infrastructure Funding, Design and Construction
- Trail & Wayfinding Funding, Design and Construction. Entire system build-out is preferred to minimize construction disturbance and maximize cost efficiency. If phasing required due to budget and operations resource limitations, the Phase 1 priority is the Chamberlain Trail and Accessible Trails. Phase 2 is the Open Space Trails and Fishers Canyon Trail.
- Traffic Control Recommendations
- Neighborhood Ranger Liaison

- Partnership and Connectivity Coordination with Cheyenne Mountain State Park
- Chamberlain Trail Easement Connection Coordination with The Broadmoor and Broadmoor Bluffs Neighborhood Association
- Forest Health Monitoring and Maintenance
- Invasive Weed Monitoring and Management
- Tribal Consultation on Master and Management Plan

## **Medium Priority Items (2-7 years)**

- Bouldering and Rock-Climbing Site Development Plan
- Phase 2 Trail & Wayfinding Funding, Design and Construction
- Interpretive Programs and Signage
- Visitation Management and Wildlife Monitoring Partnerships with Potential College, University and/or Citizen Science groups



## Low Priority Items (5-10 years)

- Update to Forest Health and Invasive Weed Plans based upon future conditions
- MacNeill Ridge Trail Connectivity Opportunities





# CHAPTER 6:

# Design Guidelines

## Creating Sustainable and Enjoyable Outdoor Experiences

Open space recreation trails, infrastructure, and amenities are essential components of the master and management plan. Effective design of these recreation elements ensures that they are sustainable, accessible, and enjoyable for a diverse range of users. This document introduces the critical elements of open space trail design guidelines.

### Objectives of Open Space Trail Design

The primary objectives of open space trail design are to:

- **Promote Accessibility:** Ensure that trails are accessible to all individuals, including those with disabilities, families with young children, veterans, and the elderly.
- **Enhance User Experience:** Create a pleasant and engaging trail experience through thoughtful design and amenities.
- **Protect Natural Resources:** Design trails in a manner that minimizes environmental impact and preserves the natural landscape.

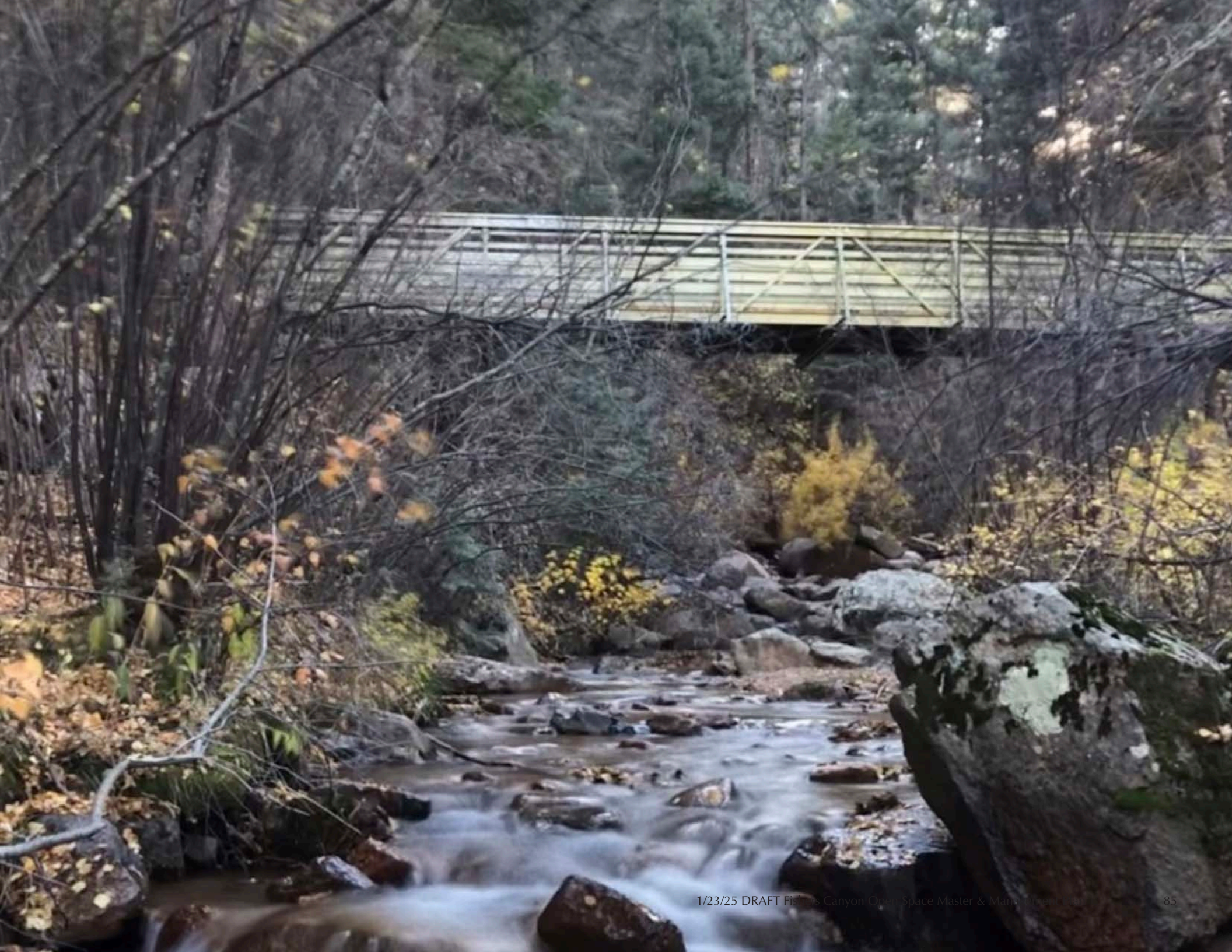
- **Encourage Physical Activity:** Promote health and wellness by providing safe and appealing trails for walking, cycling, and other forms of passive recreation.
- **Sustainable and Resilient:** Create a trail system that promotes long term lower maintenance costs, uses durable materials to withstand increasing visitation, and rebound and self-recover from use and storm events.

### Design Guidelines

The following standards should be considered for the design and construction of improvements.

- **Durable materials** including concrete, metal, stone and pressure treated wood are permitted in the open space for bridges, benches, picnic tables, trash canisters, fencing, signage, trail features, and retaining walls.
- **Consider screening or select material colors** that match existing landscape tones to help trailhead infrastructure like portolettes, fencing, and trash canisters blend into the natural landscape.

- Trails, roads, and other facilities should be located a minimum of 20 feet from the top of bank of tributaries and other aquatic features.
- Utilize a minimum of 12' width on gravel maintenance and emergency access roads.
- Ongoing efforts should be made to limit the formation of social trails by providing designated access to key visual locations or other areas of interest and implementing actual or perceived barriers to off-trail use.
- Where tributary or aquatic resource crossings are required, free span bridges are recommended. These structures will more freely allow water, sediment, and debris to pass through the tributaries during large storm events. Allowing a freer flow of water will reduce scouring and incision, leading to an increased resiliency of natural aquatic features and reduced maintenance cost.
- Additional measures to discourage entrance of open space users into tributaries, such as fencing, vegetation planting, or other barriers at each crossing should be strongly considered to reduce erosion at these access points.
- Use of bright lights should be avoided an hour before sunrise and an hour after sunset. If lighting is needed, directional lighting should be installed that avoids shining lights into trees or bushes (e.g., downward or side facing per USFWS best practices).
- Where feasible, minimize visibility of mountainside trail routes from lower elevations.
- Plantings at trailheads and entrances should use naturalistic design and native plants.



## White- Accessible Connector Trails

Slope sustained at 5 percent and up to 8 percent with required landing areas. Minimum 36" wide, if a 60" x 36" resting space and passing zones are provided every 200'.

The trail conditions are smooth surfaces without obstructions.

Improved trail surface (breeze) that is considered accessible surfacing. with no shoulders and 6' wide. Allows for small vehicle access for maintenance and emergencies.

Reference Kootenay Adaptive trail design standards in the Appendices. For the hardened ADA surfacing accessible trail on grades at 2 to 3 percent with max. grade at 5%. Surface to comply with ADA requirements.



- Keynotes:**  
1 Surface Course  
2 Base Course  
3 Compacted Subgrade

## *Green- Beginner Trails*

The slope is sustained at less than 5 percent with short sections up to 10 percent.

The trail conditions offer narrow to wide widths and smooth surfaces with minimal obstacles at relatively low grades.

Smooth surface without obstructions and 36" to 60" wide.

Reference Kootenay Adaptive trail design standards in the Appendices.



**Keynotes:**

**1 Surface Course**

**2 Base Course**

**3 Compacted Subgrade**

**4 Variable Conditions**

## *Blue- Intermediate Trails*

The slope is sustained at less than 10 percent with short sections up to 12 percent.

The trail conditions are narrower than green trails and offer frequent challenges.

Variable surface with occasional obstacles including steps, water diversions, dips, roots, and rocks and 18"-36" with the Chamberlain Trail bench up to 48".

Reference Kootenay Adaptive trail design standards in the Appendices.



- Keynotes:**
- 1 Surface Course**
  - 2 Base Course**
  - 3 Compacted Subgrade**
  - 4 Variable Conditions**



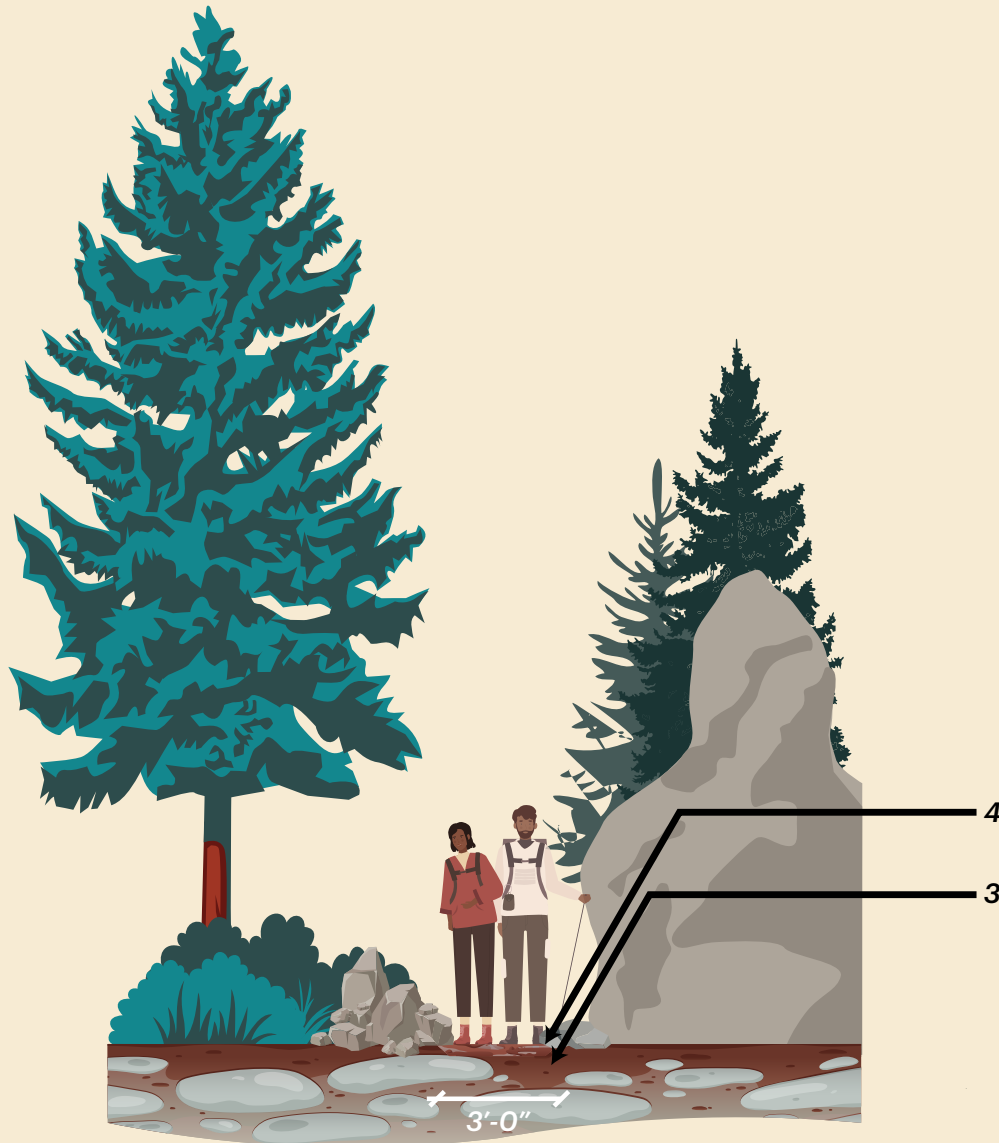
## ***Black- Advanced Trails***

The slope is sustained at 12 percent with short sections up to 15 percent.

The trail conditions offer more challenging experiences with obstacles, such as, frequent water diversions, steps, switchbacks, roots, or exposed rocks.

Rough to variable surface with frequent obstacles, limited sight distance, and 12" - 36" wide.

Reference Kootenay Adaptive trail design standards in the Appendices.



- Keynotes:**
- 1 Surface Course**
  - 2 Base Course**
  - 3 Compacted Subgrade**
  - 4 Variable Conditions**



*Fishers Canyon Open Space Master and Management Plan*

