RING THE PEAK MASTER PLAN

CLOSE THE GAP

TELLER COUNTY

CRIPPLE CREEK

VICTOR

EL PASO COUNTY

DRAFT - APRIL, 2019
SECTION 01
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS & EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
The Ring the Peak trail (Ring) is part of the "Colorado 16" initiative to fulfill the Governor's Colorado the Beautiful vision and create the connections that link us to the natural splendor that sets Colorado apart. This designation is the catalyst that set in motion the planning efforts to create the Ring the Peak Master Plan (Plan). On behalf of the Trails and Open Space Coalition (TOSC), Friends of the Peak (FOTP) and the City of Colorado Springs, the Plan was prepared by the N.E.S. Inc. led Consultant Team. This Plan will guide the completion, future use, development and management of this unique trail that will circumnavigate Pikes Peak. The Plan is the product of a collaborative effort between the Project Team, Consultant Team, key stakeholders, private land owners and local residents.

The Plan process has created the opportunity for state and federal agencies, the cities of Victor and Cripple Creek, Teller County, community organizations, and residents to meet, share information, provide input, and shape the future of the Ring. The Plan was made possible by a grant from Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO); a City of Colorado Springs administered grant. It has created opportunities to develop, connect and promote valuable natural, cultural, scenic and recreational resources throughout the Pikes Peak region.

The City of Cripple Creek and the City of Victor have been active partners in the planning process for the Ring and in creating the Plan. These communities identified and prioritized potential trails and recreation projects.
They provided extensive staff time to the Ring planning process and meeting space. Their support was invaluable in defining preferred trail corridors for the Ring.

The success of this Plan is the result of significant time, effort and energy dedicated by the Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) and United States Forest Service (USFS). Their expertise and active participation through the planning process contributed to the development of practical implementation strategies for completing the Ring that are environmentally responsible.

The Consultant Team acknowledges and thanks the community residents who contributed their insights, ideas, dreams and many hours to help create the Plan. The Plan is much more likely to endure and yield positive action as a result of their collective contributions.
The Project Team and Consultant Team recognize the following local, state and federal agencies and stakeholders for their significant commitment of time and energy towards this effort. The success of this Plan is a result of this commitment.

**Bureau of Land Management - BLM**  
(Keith Berger & Kalem Lenard)

**City of Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services**  
(Tilah Larson & Karen Palus)

**City of Cripple Creek**  
(Connie Dodrill, Bill Gray & Steve Kitzman)

**City of Manitou Springs**  
(Wade Burkholder)

**City of Victor**  
(Debra Downs & Becky Frank)

**City of Woodland Park**  
(Cindy Keating)

**Colorado Parks and Wildlife - CPW**  
(Nick Dellaca, Brian Dreher, Tim Kroening, Frank McGee, Robert Seel & Julie Stiver)

**Colorado Springs Utilities - CSU**  
(Kim Gortz & Mark Shea)

**El Paso County**  
(Jason Meyer, Stan VanderWerf & Tim Wolken)

**El Pomar Heritage Series**  
(Walt Hecox)

**Great Outdoors Colorado - GOCO**  
(Matt Brady, Emily Orbanek, Drew Stoll)

**Newmont Mining Corporation**  
(Arthur Iverson, Brad Poulson, Penny Riley, Penny Roberts & Lorna Shaw)

**Palmer Land Trust**  
(Rebecca Jewett & Amber Shanklin)

**Pikes Peak America’s Mountain**  
(Sandy Elliott & Jack Glavan)

**Pikes Peak Outdoor Recreation Alliance - PPORA**  
(Becky Leinweber & David Leinweber)

**Rocky Mountain Field Institute - RMFI**  
(Joe Lavorini)

**Southern Teller County Focus Group**  
(Mark Perdew & Ruth Zalewski)

**State of Colorado**  
(Luis Benitez & Alex Dean)

**Teller County**  
(Sheryl Decker)

**United States Forest Service - USFS**  
(Colleen Bergmanis, Jeff Hovermale & Oscar Martinez)
INTRODUCTION
Completing the Ring around Pikes Peak has been actively pursued by trail advocates, FOTP and public land management organizations for decades and a community goal for many years. When completed, the Ring will be a magnet for adventure seekers and become an economic driver for the region. The Plan process included:

• Develop a Plan to close the physical gap on the southwest side of the Ring
• Develop a Plan for long-term management, operations and sustainability of the entire Ring

The strategically chosen path to accomplishing these goals was defined by a balanced scope of services that target three primary focus areas, each carefully planned, scheduled and coordinated to bring collective results.

• Focus on closing the community engagement gap. Build excitement in our community for the Ring and define user expectations for success. Engage the community in a shared vision for the Ring.
• Focus on closing the southwest gap. Explore and evaluate trail corridor alternatives and define a preferred trail alignment to complete the Ring.
• Focus on closing the management gap. Engage stakeholders in planning a sustainable future for the Ring.

AUTHORITY
The Ring was nominated by TOSC and FOTP to be part of Governor Hickenlooper’s Connect Colorado’s 16 trail initiative. Subsequently, the Ring was selected to be a Colorado’s 16 trail, officially recognizing that the completion of the Ring trail creates:

• A better connected network of trails statewide
• Improved links to expanded outdoor recreational opportunities
• Economic development opportunities for adjacent communities

TOSC, FOTP and the City of Colorado Springs were awarded a GOCO Connect Initiative Colorado’s 16 Grant to hire a consultant team who would create a Master Plan to complete the Ring. The Ring traverses many jurisdictions and land ownerships (federal, state, county, local governments and private land). Each entity has authority over the Ring as it passes through their respective property. To maintain the continuity of the Ring requires the communication, consensus and commitment of many individuals and organizations.

APPROVAL
Approval of the Plan should be vested with TOSC, FOTP and the City of Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services, the sponsors and grant recipients, upon receipt of recommendations from the Plan's Task Force (private land owners, local residents and the plan governmental, agency and organizational stakeholders). Upon adoption, amendments to the Plan shall be approved by the Ring non-profit after recommendation of the Project Manager and the Task Force. It is important to note that the Plan Process cannot substitute for the USFS’s formal planning and environmental process. Instead, the Plan will inform future decisions and actions by the USFS. Any new improvements in the future not described in the Plan will require an amendment to the current Plan.
ORIGIN OF THE RING

Beginning in 1997, a multi-agency group was formed by Colorado Springs Utilities to develop a comprehensive regional planning effort to strike a “balance between preservation of critical water and other natural resources and the desires for recreational access.” The process succeeded in engaging unprecedented public participation through a Citizen’s Advisory Group and a Technical Advisory Group to deal with complex resource and planning issues.

After two years of meetings, field work and research, a final plan was developed and adopted by public agencies and a number of non-profit organizations. The plan, titled The Pikes Peak Multi-Use Plan, Colorado Springs to Cripple Creek, became the guiding document for resource agencies and partner organizations. The final plan’s regional vision designated a Perimeter Loop Trail consisting of a system of multi-use non-motorized trails that circle Pikes Peak. This system envisioned using existing roads and trails to complete the loop. This Perimeter Loop Trail provides the backbone for the existing Ring. This single concept, though large in scale, organizes the region’s recreational elements more than any other concept expressed. The Pikes Peak Multi-Use Plan was originally funded by GOCO, Colorado Spring Utilities and the USFS. Once established as a concept, the execution of the project was passed from the USFS to FOTP who continues to dedicate countless hours to fulfilling the goals and vision of the Pikes Peak Multi-Use Plan for the Ring. FOTP has worked with Pike National Forest staff and other organizations to build and maintain those portions of the trail designated as official segments of the Ring. Although these segments make up most of the loop envisioned in the Multi-Use Plan, a gap remains on the southwest flank of the Peak in the vicinity of the cities of Cripple Creek and Victor. Through a public participation process, this Plan proposes a trail corridor and management and implementation strategies to complete the Ring.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Pikes Peak Multi-Use Plan, Colorado Springs to Cripple Creek, September, 1999, Colorado Springs Utilities
- Plan for Recreational Use on Municipal Watershed Lands, August 6, 2010, Colorado Springs Utilities
- City of Cripple Creek Community Master Plan, June, 2009, City of Cripple Creek
- Teller County Growth Management Plan, April, 1990 Teller County and Woodland Park Planning Departments
- Teller County Parks, Trails & Open Space Plan, November, 1997, Teller County Division of Parks
- Southeast Teller County Regional Plan, November, 2004, Teller County Planning Department
PURPOSE
The Plan is intended to serve as a long-term guiding document for trail advocates, government organizations, land managers, non-profit organizations and volunteers to close the southwest gap in the Ring and identify goals for the overall Ring. The Plan establishes the preferred trail corridor to close the southwest gap in the Ring. The Plan is also intended as a resource document and guide for land management agencies that reflects common interests and goals for the Ring.

VISION
Over the years, the non-profit advocacy by FOTP has served as the catalyst and community voice for the Ring implementation. In 2016, TOSC added their voice of advocacy to the project and joined efforts with FOTP to pursue funding through GOCO to develop a master plan for the southwest gap, effectively becoming the champions for completing the Ring. While the U.S. Forest Service Pikes Peak Ranger District and Colorado Springs Utilities are expressly identified as the champions of the overall vision for the Pikes Peak Multi-Use Plan, TOSC should be the keeper of the vision for completing the southwest gap in the Ring and champions for implementation, long-term management and sustainability of the entire Ring.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES
Currently, existing trails and roads around Pikes Peak have been utilized where feasible for the Ring with the expectation that trail gaps will be connected over time. Approximately 50 miles of the Ring is completed. Four new sections were built by the local volunteer group, FOTP. Two critical gaps remain for completing the Ring; a gap on the northeast side of Pikes Peak and a gap on the southwest side of Pikes Peak.

The northeast gap is being addressed by El Paso County Parks through the approved Master Plan for the Ute Pass Regional Trail. This Plan was created to address the southwest gap.

This gap on the southwest side of Pikes Peak is located amidst rugged terrain, with public ownership by the cities of Cripple Creek and Victor, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), USFS and BLM, plus an estimated 10 to 15 private property owners. In addition, Cripple Creek and Victor have critical reservoirs currently off limits to public use. CPW manages a Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep habitat in the area of the southwest gap and has designated a significant portion of the area where the trail corridor might be located as lands for big game animal winter habitat.

The main objective of the Plan is to develop a strategy and recommendations to complete the Ring by closing the southwest gap from Pancake Rocks on the west side of Pikes Peak (north of Gillett, Colorado on HWY 67), to USFS Road 376 on the south side of Pikes Peak (northeast of Victor, Colorado at the entrance to the Colorado Springs Utilities South Slope watershed).

The establishment and implementation of management and maintenance strategies for the entire length of the Ring are an important goal of this Plan. To protect and preserve the Ring this Plan will act as a guide for trail maintenance decisions affecting the Ring and user experience along the Ring. This Plan also seeks to provide a holistic approach to trail management along the diverse ownership and situations spanning the length of the Ring including specific recommendations for economic development, education and promotion, special events and permitting, and funding and financial sustainability.
MASTER PLAN GOALS

The goal of the Plan is to develop a strategy and recommendations to complete the Ring. The southwest gap, as depicted in exhibit 1.1, is from Pancake Rocks on the west side of Pikes Peak to USFS Road 376 on the south side of Pikes Peak at the entrance to the Colorado Springs Utilities South Slope.

The recommendations of this Plan build upon the 1999 Pikes Peak Multi-Use Plan recommendations, including management strategies for the overall Ring and specific strategies that are necessary for closing the southwest gap. Consistent with the 1999 Pikes Peak Multi-Use Plan, each governmental agency will be responsible to implement the Ring within their respective jurisdiction. Annual trail maintenance will be critical to sustaining the Ring. Maintenance of the Ring will be accomplished through the joint effort of many volunteer, local, state and federal agencies. While maintenance of the Ring trail is the responsibility of each respective jurisdiction, maintenance will largely be carried out by volunteer groups and supported by land managing agencies when possible. In addition, the Plan outlines a clear leadership role for non-profit partners including:

- Vision
- Leadership
- Fundraising
- Trail construction and trail maintenance

The Plan seeks to leverage the energy and strengths of existing agencies and organizations in the Pikes Peak Region that value the Ring.
**PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY**

**ENGAGEMENT**
- Consistently engage the public and trail users for feedback on the Ring
- Prioritize recommended improvements for recreation sites, trailheads and trails
- Secure funding and implement recommended improvements
- Formally establish partnerships for ongoing maintenance and improvements to the Ring
- Develop trail maintenance volunteers that have completed basic trail construction and maintenance training
- Establish an Adopt-A-Trail program to ensure that trails are monitored and documented on an annual basis
- Utilize and coordinate with volunteers and user groups to accomplish relevant tasks

**MANAGEMENT**
- Accomplish uniformity of administration and management through cooperation
- Conform management and maintenance needs to the requirements of the specific land manager
- Prepare written policies and procedures to guide the maintenance efforts of volunteers, land managers, government agencies and community groups
- Establish a team to provide oversight and coordination on tasks performed by local governments and volunteer groups
- Coordinate outreach efforts to gather information on trail needs
- Protect private property through signage, fencing and enforcement
- Maintain, promote and enhance relationships and communications between land managers, government agencies, trail users and surrounding communities
- Coordinate efforts to secure approvals needed from government agencies and private property owners and to construct needed trail
- Coordinate regular inspections and maintenance of trails to identify and correct existing or potential issues
- Provide trail and trailhead signs and other wayfinding information
- Provide and update trail maps, trail descriptions, directions to trailheads, GPS tracks and other basic trail information on a website or otherwise

**MAINTENANCE**
- Repair trails to be as sustainable as possible while maintaining aesthetic, natural and cultural resource values
- Assess annual maintenance needs and determine the best course of action
- Leave trails and trail connections open as much as possible during maintenance activities
- Provide ways to designate locations along a trail for maintenance and EMS
- Prioritize correcting deficiencies in trails as opposed to providing continued maintenance

**MARKETING & FUNDING**
- Build community support for outdoor recreation tourism and emphasizing the economic benefits
- Provide marketing information, photos, press releases, and social media kits to magazines, media outlets, tourism bureaus, etc.
- Track the positive impact of the Ring tourism in the surrounding community to garner and maintain local support
- Create a marketing toolkit for local businesses to promote the Ring and increase user traffic in their business
- Connect to “beyond the trail” opportunities and become a “destination” trail people are willing to travel a considerable distance to use
- Create and develop a strong social media and internet presence so users may find opportunities searching the internet and social media
- Seek support from tourism and recreation taxes and fees
- Apply for allocations from municipal governments and grants from non-profit foundations, state and federal agencies
- Seek and secure funding for trail property and easement acquisition and for trail construction and maintenance
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