

# JONES PARK MASTER PLAN

December 17, 2024

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## SECTION I: ROLE OF JONES PARK MASTER PLAN

Defined by extensive groves of mature aspens, vast expanses of conifer forests, high rugged peaks, broad meadows, and the cool, clear rush of Bear Creek, Jones Park is a remote property of profound beauty and great historic, cultural, recreational and ecological importance to the Pikes Peak Region. The 1,191-acre Jones Park property is located approximately six miles west of Downtown Colorado Springs.

On January 13, 2015, the City of Colorado Springs conveyed ownership and management of Jones Park to El Paso County. That transfer helped to ensure that recreational access, local management, and continued environmental stewardship would remain central in the future of Jones Park. This Master Plan will comprehensively address these and other issues by creating a strategic guiding document that will shape the next seven to ten years of oversight and management in Jones Park. Sustainable enhancement of recreational opportunities; historic, cultural and environmental interpretation; long-term natural resource stewardship; and continued protection of the Greenback Cutthroat Trout will be discussed at length within this Master Plan.

In addition to these goals, the purpose of the Master Plan is threefold:

### 1) COMPLIANCE WITH AND SUPPORT OF THE JONES PARK CONSERVATION EASEMENT

As a condition of the Jones Park transfer, El Paso County and the Palmer Land Conservancy established a Conservation Easement for Jones Park. The February 2017 Jones Park Open Space Conservation Easement stipulates:



VIBRANT FALL DAY IN JONES PARK

*“Before constructing any new improvements on the Property not required by the Final Decision Notice (including without limitation, building, structures of any nature, new trails or roads), the County shall prepare and submit to Grantee for its approval.... a Master Plan”.*

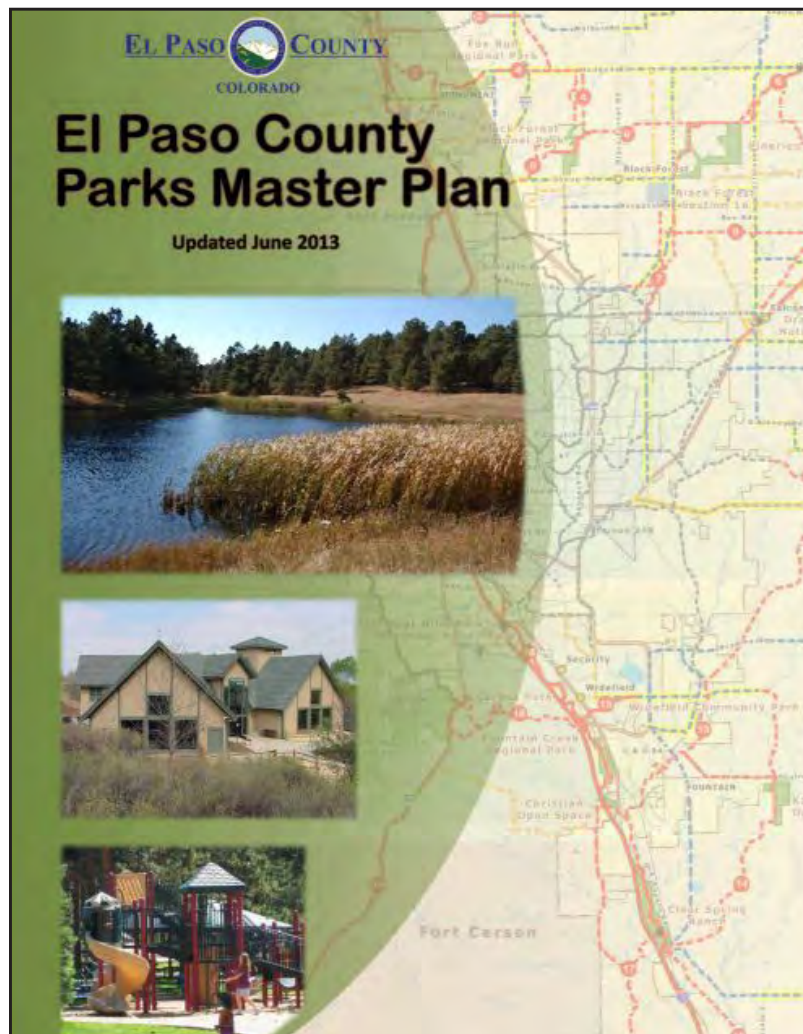
## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

The intention of this Plan is not simply to fulfill the Conservation Easement requirement for a Master Plan, but to support the protection, enhancement and enjoyment of the unique natural resources and conservation values that make Jones Park special. In order to fully achieve this goal, this Master Plan recognizes the potential future need for further studies, investigations, and compliance actions to meet the requirements of the Conservation Easement as well as other state and federal laws that may have jurisdiction over some proposed actions in Jones Park.

## 2) ALIGNMENT WITH EL PASO COUNTY PARKS MASTER PLAN

The 2013 El Paso County Parks Master Plan defines the mission of the El Paso County Parks as “Enhancing Quality of Life in El Paso County by”:

- Acquiring, developing, maintaining and preserving regional parks, trails and open space.



EL PASO COUNTY MASTER PLAN

- Providing responsible resource management for open space lands characterized by unique natural environments.
- Providing natural and cultural history interpretation, education, and information services.
- Supporting major community events and festivals that celebrate our County's heritage and culture.
- Providing and managing visitor destinations and experiences.

This Master Plan seeks to bring the newly acquired Jones Park property into alignment with El Paso County's broader goals for the use, management and enjoyment of their park, trail and open space amenities.



### 3 PLAN FOR THE UNIQUE CHALLENGES AND SIGNIFICANT OPPORTUNITIES OF JONES PARK

The section of Bear Creek that flows through Jones Park is currently home to the only known population of wild breeding, genetically pure, Greenback Cutthroat Trout. This population of Greenback Cutthroat Trout is currently listed as a Federally Threatened Species under the Endangered Species Act. Continued protection and preservation of this population of trout is a paramount concern and a high priority of this Master Plan. By managing recreation sustainably, planning proactively, and by recognizing that preservation, access, and recreation can work together in concert, the unique environmental assets of Jones Park can be preserved and enhanced in the years to come.

The Jones Park Master Plan endeavors to provide a sustainable approach to allocation of resources for the next seven to ten years. The planning process reaffirms essential goals and objectives of the previous Jones Park planning efforts (such as the US Forest Service Final Decision while incorporating a detailed analysis of Jones Park, as it exists today. Further, input, guidance, and recommendations from citizens and stakeholders will be strongly considered and incorporated, where possible, in the Jones Park Master Plan. Critically, this Master Plan will focus on Jones Park as a singularly iconic property within the El Paso County Park system; one with its own unique set of challenges and opportunities.

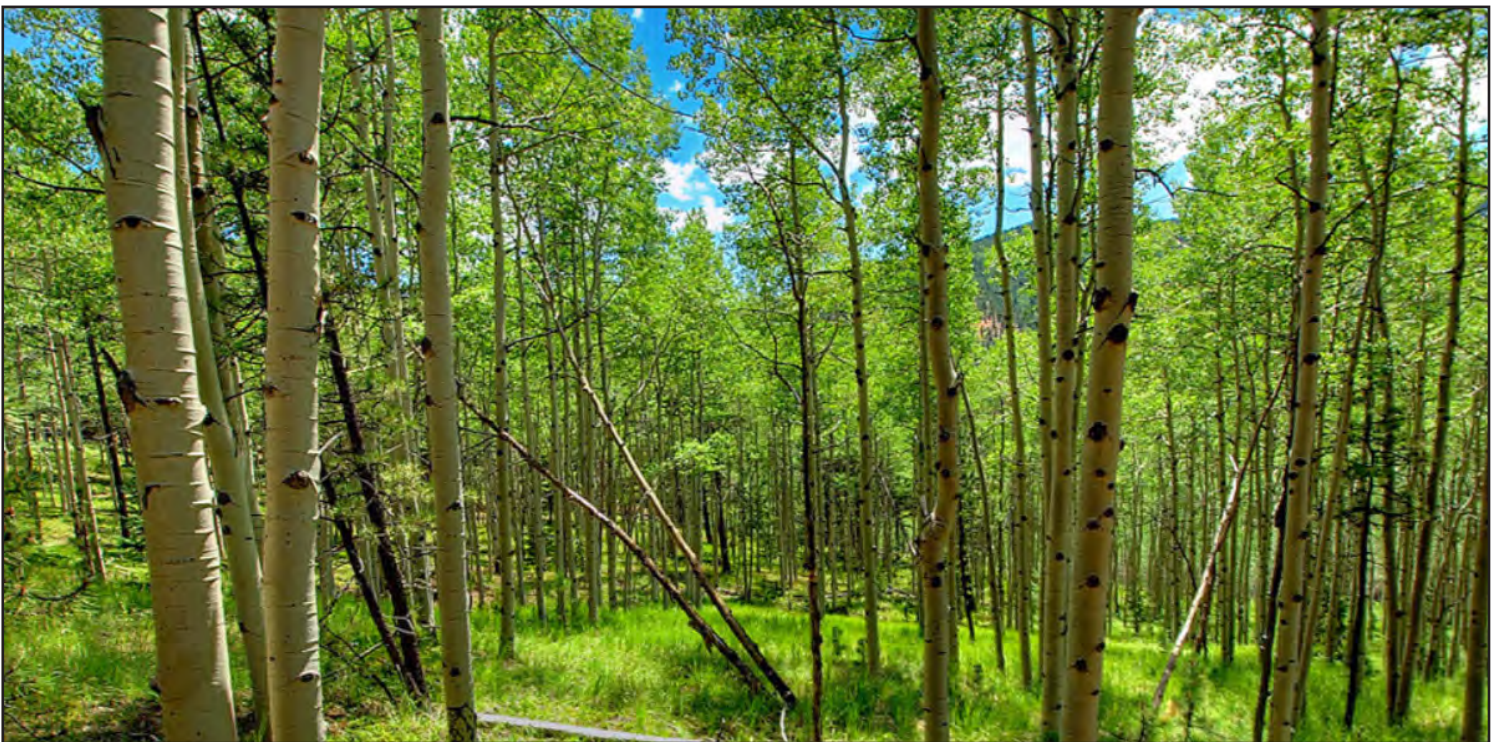
This Master Plan will guide the County’s efforts to continue to provide a high quality of parks, recreation, and natural, historical, and cultural interpretation services that are valued by citizens of El Paso County and the Pikes Peak region.

## SECTION 1: MASTER PLAN ORGANIZATION & OVERVIEW

The Jones Park Master Plan is intended to be a user-friendly document that clearly describes goals and recommendations for Jones Park. The document is organized to present information in a logical sequence that enhances understanding of the property, its history, and the unique management opportunities and challenges that are present in Jones Park.

**Section 2: Planning Process** will detail the development of the planning process; define Project Givens and Project Vision; and present the public engagement process as well as feedback received from community members and stakeholder partners. This Section will serve to illustrate the methods by which the community was able to help shape this Master Plan.

**Section 3: Prior Planning Initiatives** will present a synthesis and summary of many of the prior planning initiatives that have occurred over the last several years in Jones Park and the larger Bear Creek Watershed. These prior plans include multiple Federal, State, and non-agency plans. These prior planning initiatives were, almost universally, undertaken in response to the discovery of a genetically pure population of Greenback Cutthroat Trout in the upper reaches of Bear Creek as it flows through Jones Park. The discovery of this federally threatened population of Greenback Cutthroat Trout had large implications for the management of Jones Park. The continued survival of this population is critically important and ensuring that outcome is a central goal of this Master Plan.



TYPICAL EXTENSIVE ASPEN GROVE IN JONES PARK



Most of the prior planning initiatives for Jones Park and the Bear Creek Watershed focused on this topic, and the analysis, recommendations, and guidance provided have informed many of the recommendations contained within the Master Plan.

In addition to providing a summary of relevant prior planning initiatives, Section 3 will highlight the management and jurisdictional implications of prior Jones Park and Bear Creek Plans. In some cases, the decisions and recommendations of these prior plans mandate or restrict certain actions and activities within Jones Park. Section III will highlight those cases and explain how the Master Plan incorporates required actions, key findings, and recommendations.



FISH INVENTORY IN BEAR CREEK

**Section 4: Existing Conditions and Site Assessment** summarizes research, data and analysis conducted within Jones Park on the condition, character, quality and make-up of the property. A variety of methods of



TRAIL CLOSURE WITHIN JONES PARK

analysis including numerous site visits, aerial and spatial analysis, surveys and interviews, and previously completed resource studies help to inform our understanding of Jones Park. The Existing Conditions and Site Assessment focused primarily on the three areas of physical resources, biological conditions and resources, and social and cultural resources.

In conducting an Existing Conditions and Site Assessment of Jones Park, the planning team seeks to provide a foundation of understanding that will inform decisions and provide a basis for the balanced management of recreation; cultural and historic resource preservation; and environmental protection in Jones Park.

Section 4 will additionally provide a brief overview of the history of Jones Park. Historical use, settlements, ownership, and management will be discussed with a

## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION



particular focus on the social and cultural history of the site. The recent history focuses on the discovery and implications of the Greenback Cutthroat Trout and will be discussed in greater detail in Section III: Prior Planning Initiatives. The historical review provided within this plan will further expand the body of knowledge on which this Master Plan's recommendations are based.

**Section 5: Master Plan Recommendations** provides the bulk of the management, planning and site development recommendations for Jones Park. Recommendations will be broadly organized within the following categories:

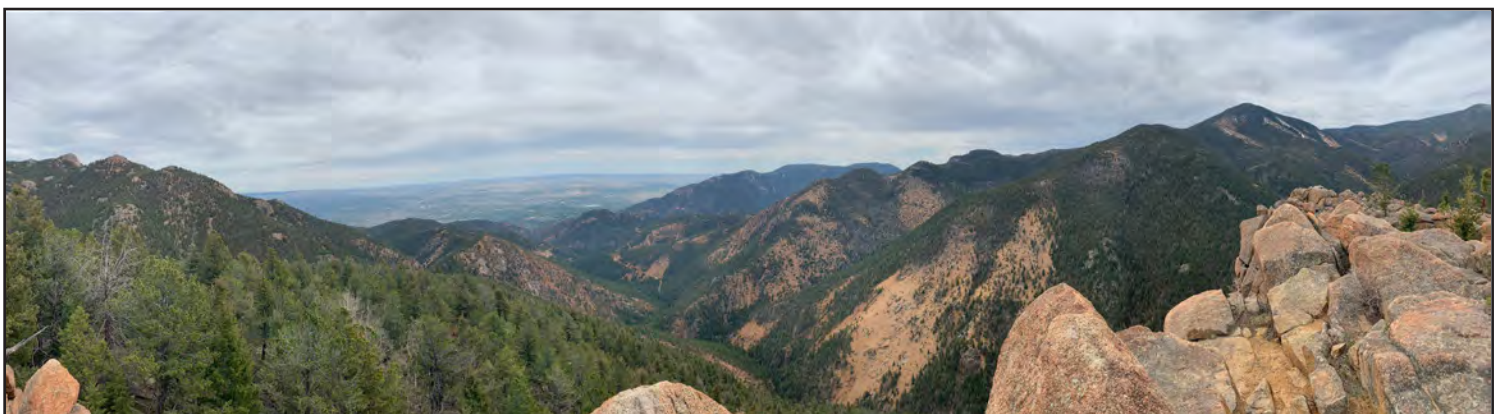
- Environmental Resource Protection
- Trail System Recommendations
- Interpretive and Educational Opportunities
- Partnership and Community Engagement
- Regulation and Policy Recommendations
- Historic and Cultural Stewardship
- Access and Use
- Site Development



TRAIL WITHIN JONES PARK

**Section 6 & 7: Trail Recommendations and Maintenance Guidelines** will present recommendations on the maintenance and management of existing site amenities. A particular emphasis will be placed on guidelines for the maintenance of system trails to ensure they provide dynamic, diverse and enjoyable recreational experiences in an environmentally sustainable manner. Additional recommendations will be provided for interpretive elements, features and amenities to support environmental protection, and other site amenities recommended within this plan.

**Section 8: Natural Resource Management** will outline recommendations to protect, enhance, and sustain the natural environment of Jones Park. Particular consideration will be given to protection of the Bear Creek Watershed and Greenback Cutthroat Trout habitat within the park.



VIEW FROM THE PEAK OF MT. KINEO

## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION



**Section 9: Implementation Priorities** will present implementation priorities based on a matrix that includes: expected benefit of an action; the difficulty or ease in implementing the action, and the degree of coordination required; and financial impacts of the action. Recommendations will be shown as high, medium, or low priority actions. The recommendations presented in this section prioritizing improvements and actions will be critical to the success and effectiveness of this Master Plan. A thoughtful approach to implementing recommendations will help to ensure that recreation, preservation and environmental stewardship are managed in an efficient, effective, and proactive manner.

The Jones Park Master Plan will conclude with an Appendix containing supporting documents, relevant data, and all public input collected throughout the planning process.



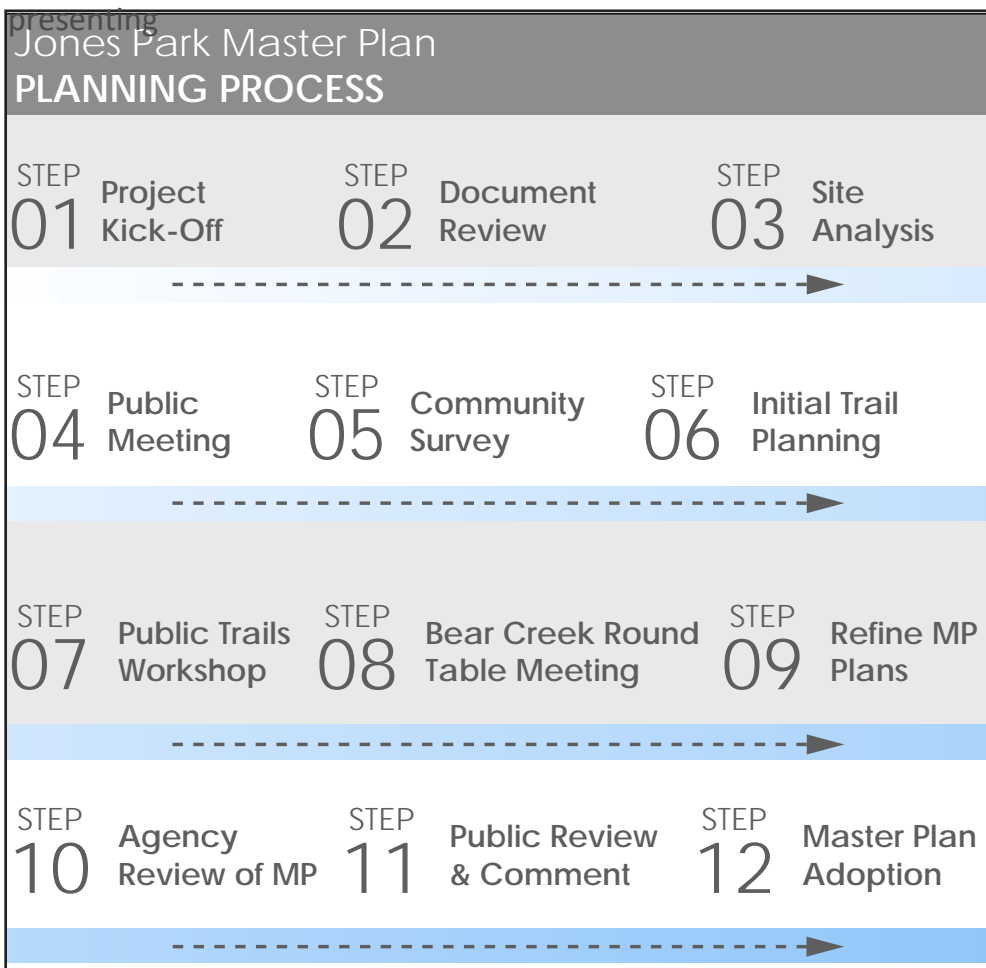
VIEW FROM THE PEAK OF MT. KINEO

## SECTION 2: COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Active and robust public participation was integral to the development of the Jones Park Master Plan. This plan would not be an effective tool without input from the people and organizations who use, visit, love, and know Jones Park. The Park is a unique property with a very particular set of challenges and opportunities. The time, input, and insights the community provided during this planning process were critical in effectively planning for these challenges and opportunities.

The planning process for Jones Park was designed to engage the passion and insights of the public in a process that was open, transparent and welcoming to all perspectives. This was achieved, in part, by providing a variety of venues, methods and opportunities for members of the community to participate in the Jones Park Master Plan. Throughout the planning process, more than 900 citizens were engaged through multiple public meetings, one-on-one interviews, a community survey, interactive planning workshops, and formal presentations. All community input will be retained for future planning efforts.

The Community and Stakeholder engagement process was designed to identify issues and resolve conflicts; to provide a range of options for public participation; to create an informed public by



relevant data and findings; and to develop a plan that incorporates the public's desires and 'on the ground knowledge' with recommendations from prior plans and with the planning team's technical knowledge.

This planning process was intended to go beyond soliciting public opinion, seeking instead to create an atmosphere of trust and understanding out of which an informed public consensus could be ascertained and responsive and responsible recommendations could be created. Significant community and stakeholder engagement events within the planning process include:

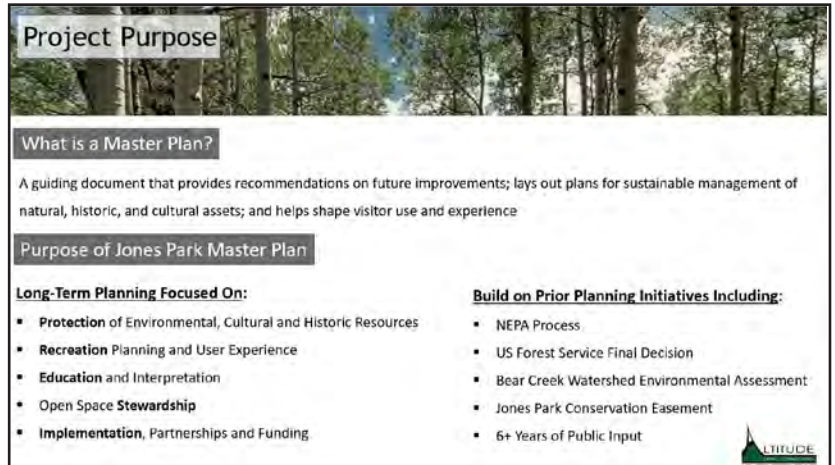


## COMMUNITY MEETING 1

**Meeting Date:** November 29, 2018

**Meeting Purpose:** Community Meeting 1 served as an introduction to the Jones Park Master Plan process.

**Meeting Content:** Meeting participants were provided with information on the location, character, and environmental, social and historic assets of Jones Park. A summary of prior planning initiatives, impact of the discovery of Greenback Cutthroat Trout, and the history of Jones Park was discussed.



SLIDE FROM THE INITIAL COMMUNITY MEETING IN THE PROCESS

The public and the planning team discussed the need, purpose and intention of the Jones Park 'Project Givens'. A presentation of project opportunities including, education and interpretation, sustainable management or recreation, trail opportunities, and environmental stewardship were provided.

Community Meeting 1 continued with a robust discussion of the unique qualities and characteristics that make Jones Park such a highly regarded park property for so much of our community. The meeting concluded with input from the public on what works well today in Jones Park and what participants felt should be improved.

### Community Input Themes:

- Jones Park's beauty, remoteness and rugged character make it special
- The history and historic uses of Jones Park should be celebrated and highlighted through an interpretive plan
- Greenback cutthroat trout need to be protected and celebrated
- The planning and community consensus that developed after the discovery of the greenback cutthroat trout is a testament to our community
- Multi-use recreation (including off-road motorcycle access) is valued by many users and should be preserved
- Continued environmental restoration, protection, and stewardship is necessary in Jones Park



DISCUSSION FROM A COMMUNITY MEETING AT THE BEAR CREEK NATURE CENTER

## SECTION 2: PLANNING PROCESS

- A desire for a technical trail with more ‘soul’ and ‘personality’ was expressed by many participants
- Expectations about the amount and types of recreation that is appropriate in Jones Park (because of sensitive environmental conditions) must be carefully managed
- Jones Park is a ‘hub’ for regional trails like Ring the Peak and the Missing Link Trail
- It is important the Master Plan continues to bring different user groups and stakeholders together for the long-term benefit of Jones Park.

## COMMUNITY SURVEY

**Survey Date:** February 11th-February 25th

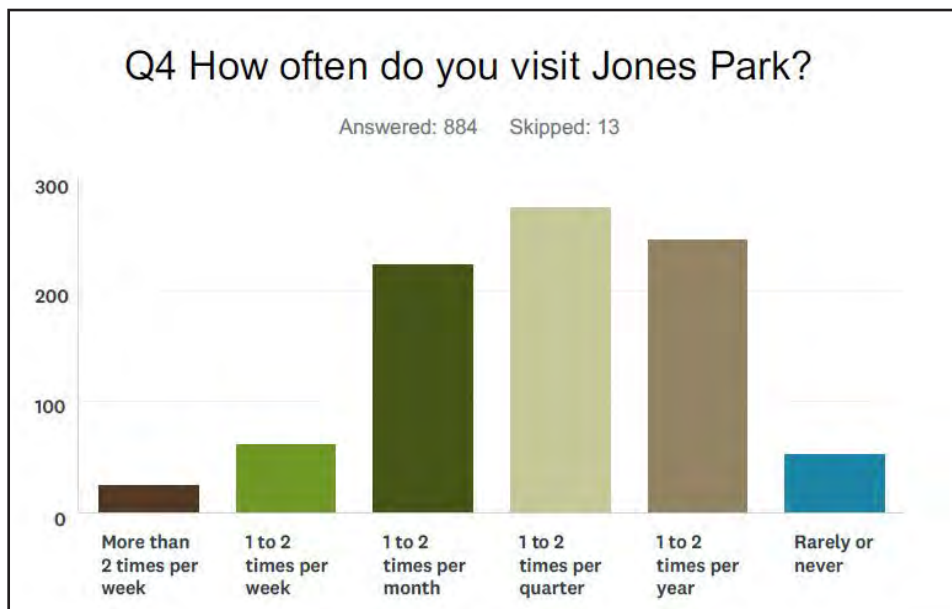


**Survey Purpose:** The community survey was an opportunity for the public to share their views on the project and provide detailed input on the future of Jones Park. The intention of the survey was to receive input from a broad audience, including community members who may not have had an opportunity to attend a project meeting, those who wished to provide anonymous input, or those who wished to provide more detailed or extensive information than is practicable at the other public forums.

**Survey Content:** The Jones Park Community Survey included twenty-four questions on a variety of topics relevant to the Jones Park Master Plan. The questions included information on the respondent’s background, how often they recreate in Jones Park, how and when they recreate, what the respondent believed is unique or special about Jones Park, and what they think would improve Jones Park in the future. The intention of these questions was to better understand the background, interests, and desires of survey respondents to help ensure that the Jones Park Master Plan is a responsive document that is better able to meet the desires of visitors as well as the environmental needs of Jones Park.

Survey questions were asked in a variety of formats including open-ended responses, to ensure that respondents had ample opportunity to share their thoughts on the future of Jones Park.

The survey was available online through the El Paso County website, with printed hard copies available on request. The survey was promoted to the community through social media, the County’s website, by partner and user organizations, and through

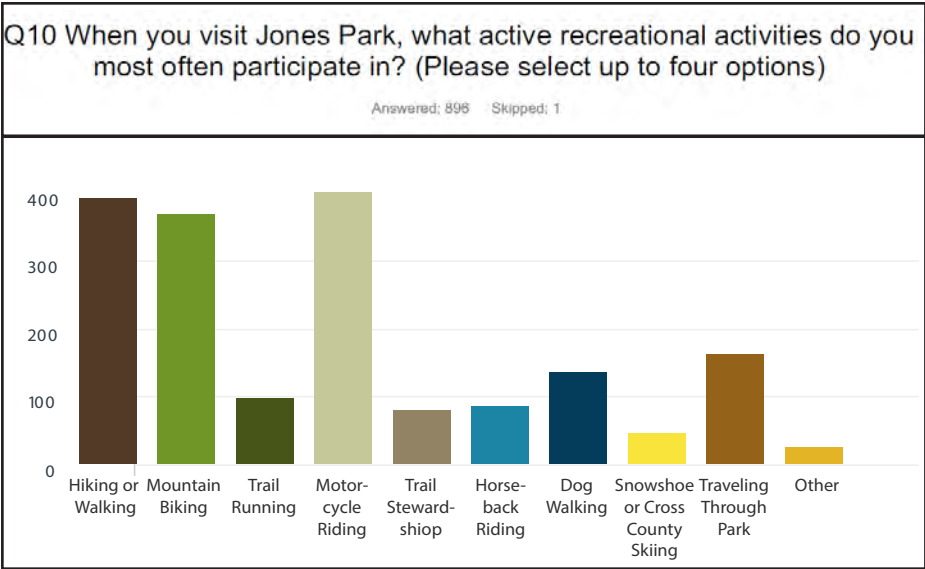


## SECTION 2: PLANNING PROCESS



coverage in local media such as the Gazette newspaper.

**Survey Input Themes:** Over three weeks, 894 individuals from 13 states across the nation and 29 counties in Colorado completed the survey. The large volume of responses speaks to the popularity, renown, unique beauty and one-of-a-kind environmental conditions of Jones Park. A highlight of some the key themes and major findings of the survey are listed below:



The typical Jones Park survey respondent visits a park or open space at least once a week (66% of respondents visit a park or open space 1-2 times per week or more than 2 times per week).

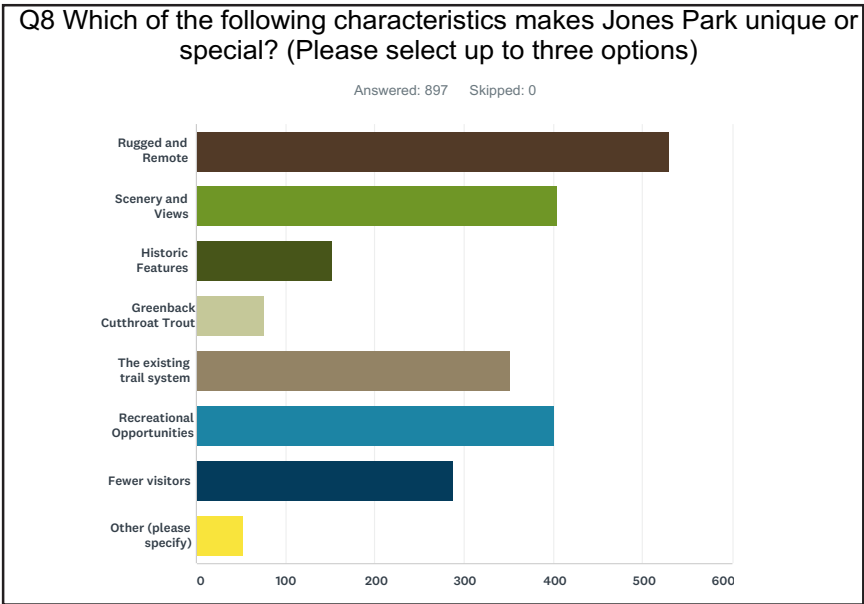
35% of survey respondents visit Jones Park at least once per month. Nearly 10% of respondents visit Jones Park at least once per week.

When survey respondents visit Jones Park, their primary mode of access is by:

- Motorcycle (40% of responses)
- Mountain Bike (26% of responses)
- Walking or Hiking (21%)
- Horseback (9%)

When asked to select up to four active recreational activities they most often participate in while visiting Jones Park, respondents answered:

- Motorcycle riding (45%)
- Hiking or walking (44%)
- Mountain Biking (41%)
- Traveling through Jones Park by multiple modes (18%)
- Walking their dog (15%)
- Trail Running (11%)
- Horseback Riding 10%)
- Trail Stewardship (9%)



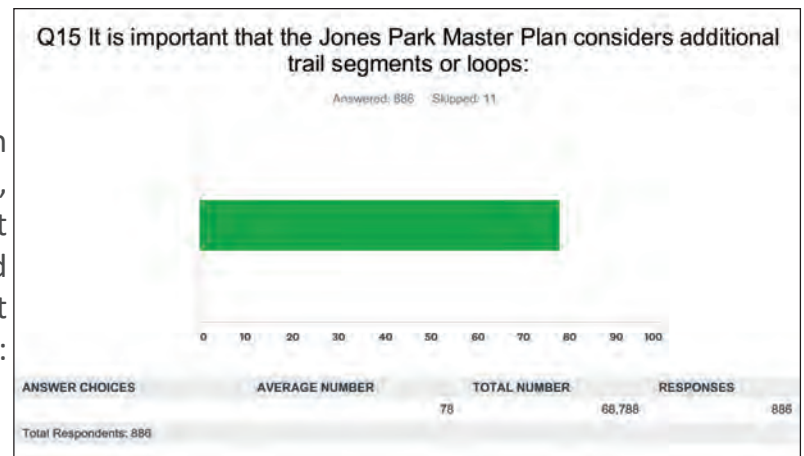
## SECTION 2: PLANNING PROCESS

Survey respondents were then asked what the top four passive recreational activities they most often participate in while visiting Jones Park. The respondent's top activities were:

- Simply enjoying nature (80%)
- Photography (42%)
- Enjoying the fall leaves (37%)
- Wildlife Viewing (32%)
- Exploring historic sites (28%)

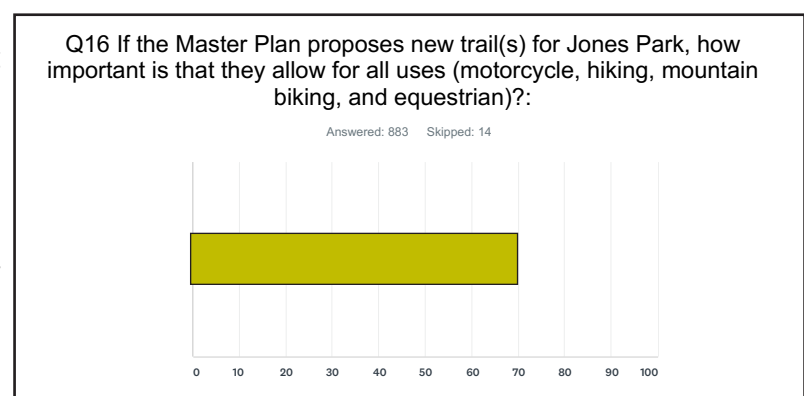
Inherent in many of these answers are an appreciation of the unique environmental, recreational and historic opportunities present in the property. When respondents were asked more specifically about the characteristics that make Jones Park unique or special, they answered:

- The rugged and remote character (59%)
- Scenery and views (45%)
- Recreational opportunities (45%)
- The existing trail system (39%)

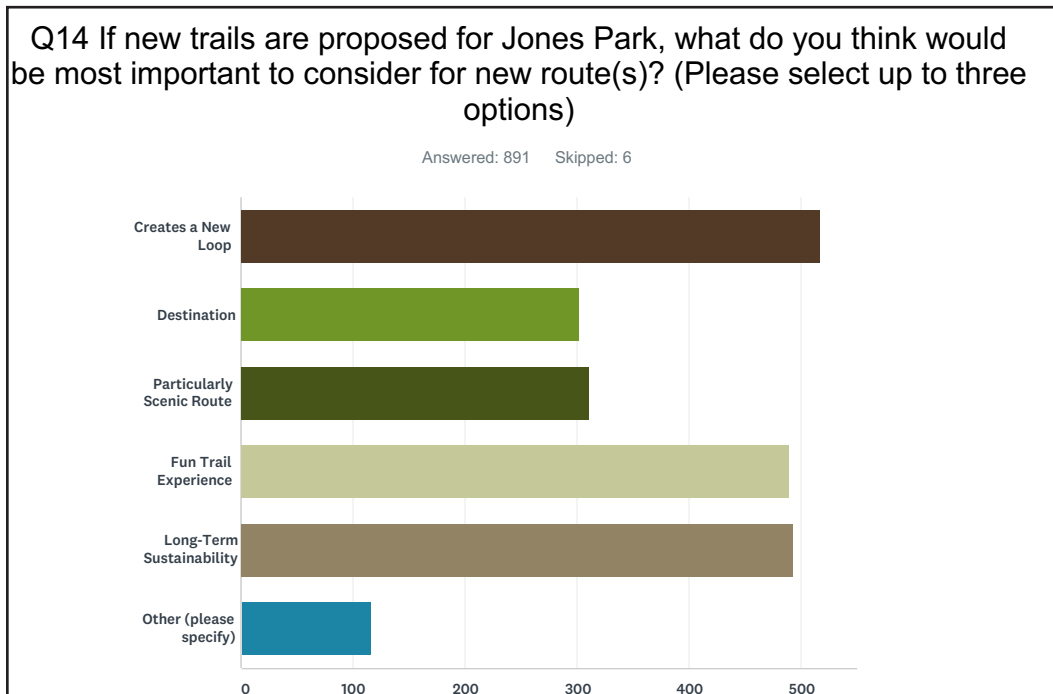


Survey Respondents were asked to describe, in their own words, the activities and experiences they hope Jones Park will offer in the future. Answers ranged from *“better protection and education [about] Greenback Cutthroat Trout”* to *“more trails”* and more *“trail improvements”* to *“I hope [Jones Park] is left is alone”*. The most common themes about the experiences and activities survey respondents desire were:

- More sustainable trails
- Continued protection of Greenback Cutthroat Trout and the natural environment of Jones Park
- Improvements to the existing trails to make them more fun and sustainable
- A desire among many for trails to be multi-use (including equestrian, motorcycle, hiking, and mountain bike access)
- Better wayfinding and educational signage in Jones Park
- A desire among some to limit certain uses (such as motorized access) within Jones Park
- Improved trail etiquette among visitors
- A desire to limit development to elements like sustainable trails, educational signage, and benches to limit environmental impact and keep the rugged nature of Jones Park intact.



## SECTION 2: PLANNING PROCESS

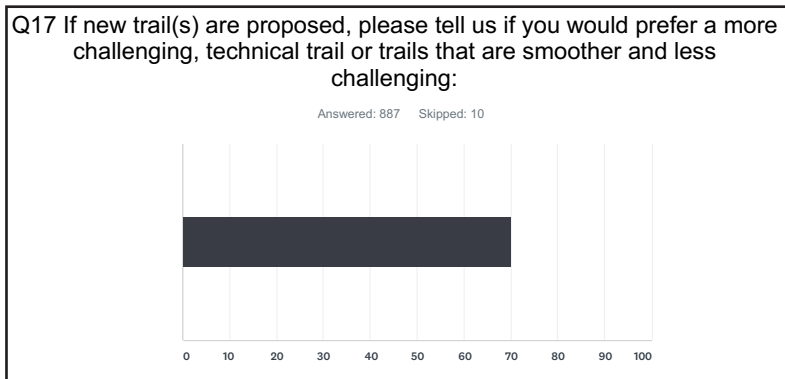


Many of the open-end responses showed a desire by respondents to improve or expand the trail network in Jones Park. When survey respondents were asked (on a sliding scale of 1 (no support) to 100 (extreme support)) if it was important that the Master Plan consider additional trail segments or loops, the average response score was 78--indicating a strong desire for additional trails or loops to be considered in Jones Park.

Survey respondents were asked the follow up question, *“If new trails are proposed for Jones Park, what do you think would be most important to consider for new route(s)?”*. Respondents were allowed to select up to three choices and their answers, which generally mirrored input received at the public meetings, are as follows:

- A desire for trails that create a new loop (58%)
- A fun trail experience (55%)
- Long term sustainability (55%)
- A particularly scenic route (35%)
- A trail that reaches a destination (34%)

On a scale of 1-100, respondents were asked the following additional questions about potential Jones Park trails:



On a scale of 1-100. How important is that new trails support all uses (motorcycle, hiking, mountain biking and equestrian use): **69**

If new trails are proposed, please tell us if you would prefer a more challenging, technical trail (100) or trails that are smoother and less challenging (0): **70 (More Technical)**

I support single-directional trails in Jones Park, if it helps to limit user conflict (0=No Support, 100=Strong Support). **67**

## SECTION 2: PLANNING PROCESS

Collectively, the insights gained from the 894 public survey responses paint a broad picture of the community's desire for Jones Park. This data, combined with the input received from one-on-one interviews, community meetings, input from project partners, and the information provided by key stakeholders, is an invaluable tool for determining the public's wishes for Jones Park.

Based on the survey results, it appears that there is a broad consensus on the three topics. First, the survey results suggest that the community strongly values the beauty, rugged character, and remote feel of Jones Park. They hope that this Master Plan will help preserve, protect and enhance these characteristics in years to come.

Secondly, the community generally supports improvements and development in Jones Park that are sustainable and has a low impact, that enhances visitor experience, and that supports efforts to protect the Greenback Cutthroat Trout population.

Finally, the survey results show a majority of respondents desire an expansion of the trail network in Jones Park. More specifically the public desires technical, multi-use loop trails that are both fun and sustainable. However, at this time, additional trails are not supported by the USDA Notice of Final Decision or the Conservation Easement which governs management and public access of Jones Park. Future aspirational trails are addressed in the appendix.

## TRAIL WORKSHOP

**Meeting Date:** March 28, 2019

**Meeting Purpose:** The Trail Workshop provided an opportunity for the public to discuss, explore, and design trail segments in Jones Park. The community was given a chance to debate the appropriateness of new trails in the park, discuss their desired trail experience (on existing or on proposed new trails), and design new trails, where appropriate, in Jones Park.



VIEWS FROM A HIGH POINT IN JONES PARK

## SECTION 2: PLANNING PROCESS



## SECTION 3: GUIDING DOCUMENTS & RELEVANT PRIOR PLANS

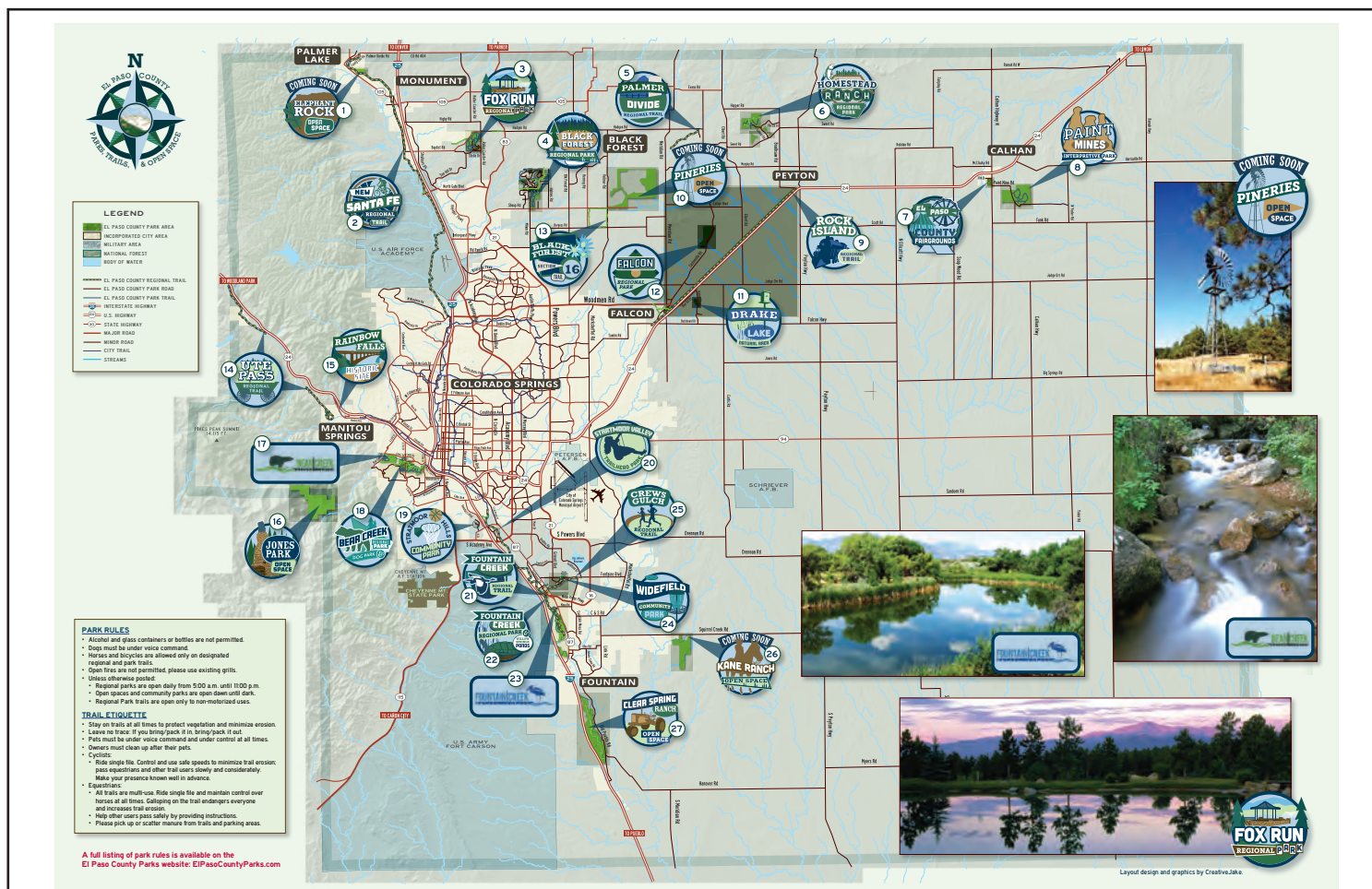
### EL PASO COUNTY PARKS MASTER PLAN

**Planning Agency:** El Paso County (Community Services Department)

**Report Date:** June 2013

**Planning Area:** El Paso County

**Jurisdiction:** The El Paso County Parks Master Plan (Plan) is a guiding document that provides strategic recommendations on outdoor recreation, protection of open space, and historic and cultural resource interpretation in El Paso County. The Master Plan is an element of the County's Comprehensive Plan (statutory master plan) and was approved by the Board of County Commissioners. It is El Paso County's intention that future park and open space plans should align with the recommendations of the Master Plan.



EL PASO COUNTY PARK MAP

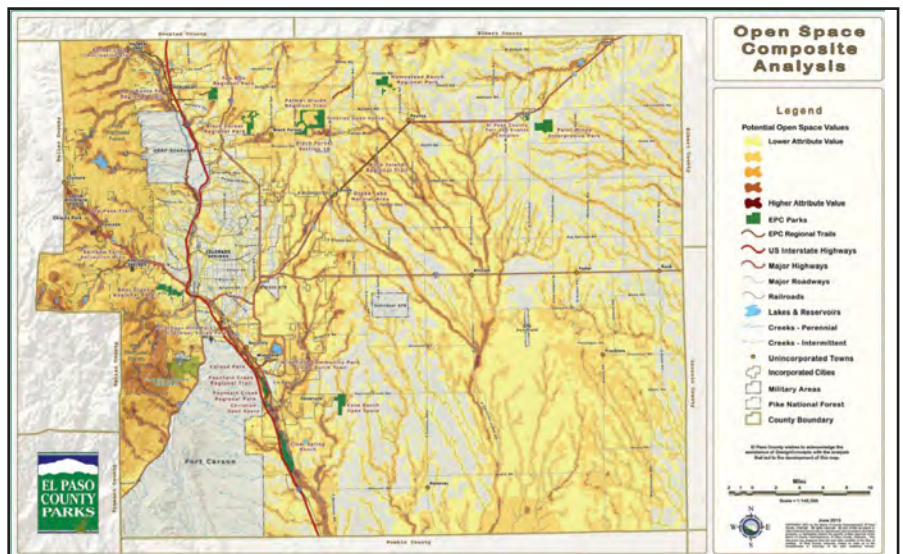
## SECTION 3: PREVIOUS PLANNING INITIATIVES

**Purpose of Plan:** The El Paso County Parks Master Plan, “guides the County’s efforts to continue to provide a high quality of parks, recreation, and natural, historical, and cultural interpretation services that are valued by citizens.” It serves as a strategic framework that informs future El Paso County Parks plans, including the Jones Park Master Plan.

**Key Findings:** The El Paso County Parks Master Plan developed a range of goals and objective to guide park and open space development across the El Paso County park system. These recommendations were based upon extensive public input, in-depth research and analysis, and a clear understanding of future needs within the County. The Plan affirms the importance of a sustainable and accessible park system, the need for preservation and protection of open space as the County population continues to grow, and the importance of cultural, historical, and environmental assets to enhance the quality of life within our region.

The plan additionally highlights the importance of a balanced approach to recreation and preservation within a sustainable park system. The plan describes the need for community partnerships and public support, along with fiscally responsible planning as important ingredients for a successful park system.

More specifically, the Plan defines the County’s Mission for Park as, “enhancing quality of life in El Paso County by:”



OPEN SPACE COMPOSITE ANALYSIS

- Acquiring, developing, maintaining and preserving regional parks, trails and open space;
- Providing responsible resource management for open space lands characterized by unique natural environments;
- Providing natural and cultural history interpretation, education, and information services;
- Supporting major community events and festivals that celebrate our County’s heritage and culture;
- Providing and managing visitor destinations and experiences.

**Relevance to the Jones Park Master Plan:** Though the El Paso County Parks Master Plan was completed two years before El Paso County was conveyed ownership and management responsibilities of Jones Park,

## SECTION 3: PREVIOUS PLANNING INITIATIVES



the Master Plan provides both a planning framework and specific recommendations that are fundamental to the Jones Park Master Plan.

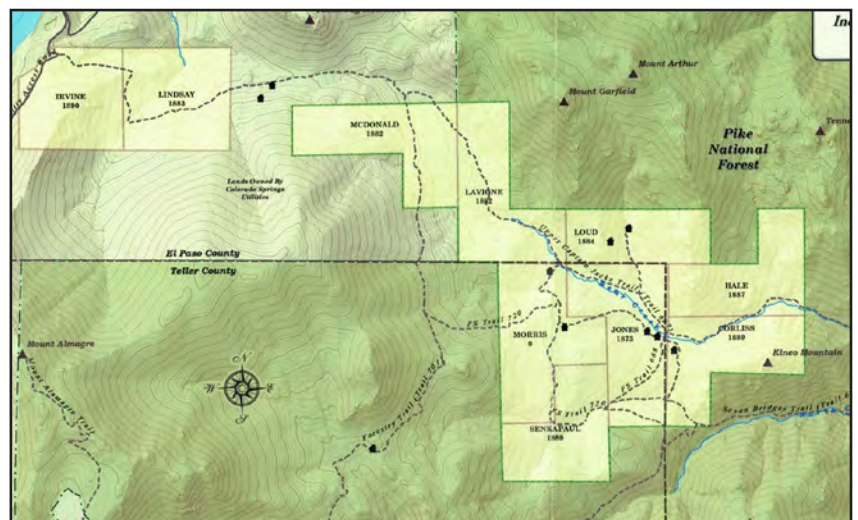
The following Plan goals and objectives are particularly relevant to the Jones Park Master Plan:

- Provide regional parks, recreation areas, trails, and open space that meet the needs of residents and that respect the significance of the natural and cultural resources present (Overall System: Goal 2, Objective A);
- Balance passive/active use of county parks and open space and determine what is most appropriate for individual sites based on community need and master planning processes (Overall System: Goal 3);
- Provide an overall vision for the recreation and resource preservation network (Overall System: Goal 4);
- Provide appropriate recreational access while protecting the natural character and environmental quality of the County's parks and open space (Regional Park and Recreation Areas: Goal 1, Objective A);
- Work collaboratively with others to create a continuous, connected system of regional trails. (Regional Trails: Goal 1);
- Protect and enhance El Paso County's legacy of unique natural features and areas and cultural resources, working in collaboration with others to conserve high priority open space areas in the county (Open Space: Goal 1);
- Provide high quality recreation and educational experiences for users of county park facilities and recreational areas (Recreation and Cultural Services: Goal 1).

The Jones Park Master Plan acknowledges the central role that the El Paso County Park System Master Plan plays in the development and management of parks managed by the County and endeavors to achieve these goals within this plan.

## JONES PARK HISTORIC DISTRICT SURVEY FOR THE BEAR CREEK WATERSHED RESTORATION PROJECT

**Planning Agency:** Prepared for El Paso County by ERO Resources Corporation



HISTORIC OWNERSHIP MAP OF JONES PARK

## SECTION 3: PREVIOUS PLANNING INITIATIVES

**Report Date:** January 30, 2017

**Planning Area:** Jones Park Historical District (Study area included approximately 255 acres across Teller and El Paso Counties)

**Jurisdiction:** The Jones Park Historic District Survey was completed as a required condition of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the United States Forest Service, the Colorado State Historic Preservation Office, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, pursuant to USDA Final Decision Notice Finding of No Significant Impact.



HISTORIC LOUD'S CABIN

**Purpose of Plan:** As described above, the Jones Park Historic District Survey was completed as a condition of a Memorandum of Agreement between multiple Federal and State agencies and was a condition of the USDA Final Decision Notice of No Significant Impact. The Final Decision Notice required the closure and reroute of several trails within Jones Park and it was determined that these actions, “constitute(ed) a federal undertaking as defined under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act” and therefore necessitated a Historic District Survey.

The goal of the survey was to identify any undocumented historic or cultural elements of the district, combine those results with prior survey results, and define the district. These findings were cataloged within the Jones Park Historic District Survey and constitute one of the most complete historical records of Jones Park.

In addition to fulfilling the requirements of the MOA and the Notice of Final Decision, the Historic District Survey serves as a primary tool in the preservation, protection, and interpretation historic and cultural elements in Jones Park.



CAPTAIN JACK AND HER PARROTS

**Key Findings:** The Jones Park Historic District Survey presented three key findings, broadly categorized. First, the Survey researched, compiled, and verified a thorough written history of the Jones Park area. The survey focuses much of its research on the years following the 1806-1807 expedition of Zebulon Pike to the Pikes Peak region.

## SECTION 3: PREVIOUS PLANNING INITIATIVES

### 3-4 RELEVANT PRIOR PLANS



Secondly, the Historic Survey investigated and documented sites of historical significance within Jones Park. The Survey team identified eight new sites and ten new isolated finds during their investigations. In addition to previously known and identified historic sites, these historic and cultural resources paint a picture of an area rich in history, abundant and varied in historical use, and prime for both historical preservation and interpretation. The eight new identified sites are, “historic and are related to settlement, recreation, transportation and mining” typical of the history of Jones Park. One of the identified sites is officially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NHRP) and five more are identified as field eligible.

The third category of finding described by the Jones Park Historic District Survey are preservation and management recommendations for historic and cultural artifacts in Jones Park. The survey provides recommendations on whether sites should be studied further, protected, or left as-is. These recommendations are based upon many factors including, historical significance, condition of the site, and sensitivity of the resource.

**Relevance to the Jones Park Master Plan:** The Jones Park Historic District Survey has provided a rich historical understanding of Jones Park that informed Jones Park Master Plan recommendations on educational and interpretive opportunities, cultural and historic preservation and maintenance and management needs.

## USDA FINAL DECISION NOTICE FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT BEAR CREEK WATERSHED RESTORATION PROJECT

**Planning Agency:** United States Forest Service (United States Department of Agriculture)

**Report Date:** June 17, 2016

**Planning Area:** Bear Creek Watershed (Approximately 10,350 acres)

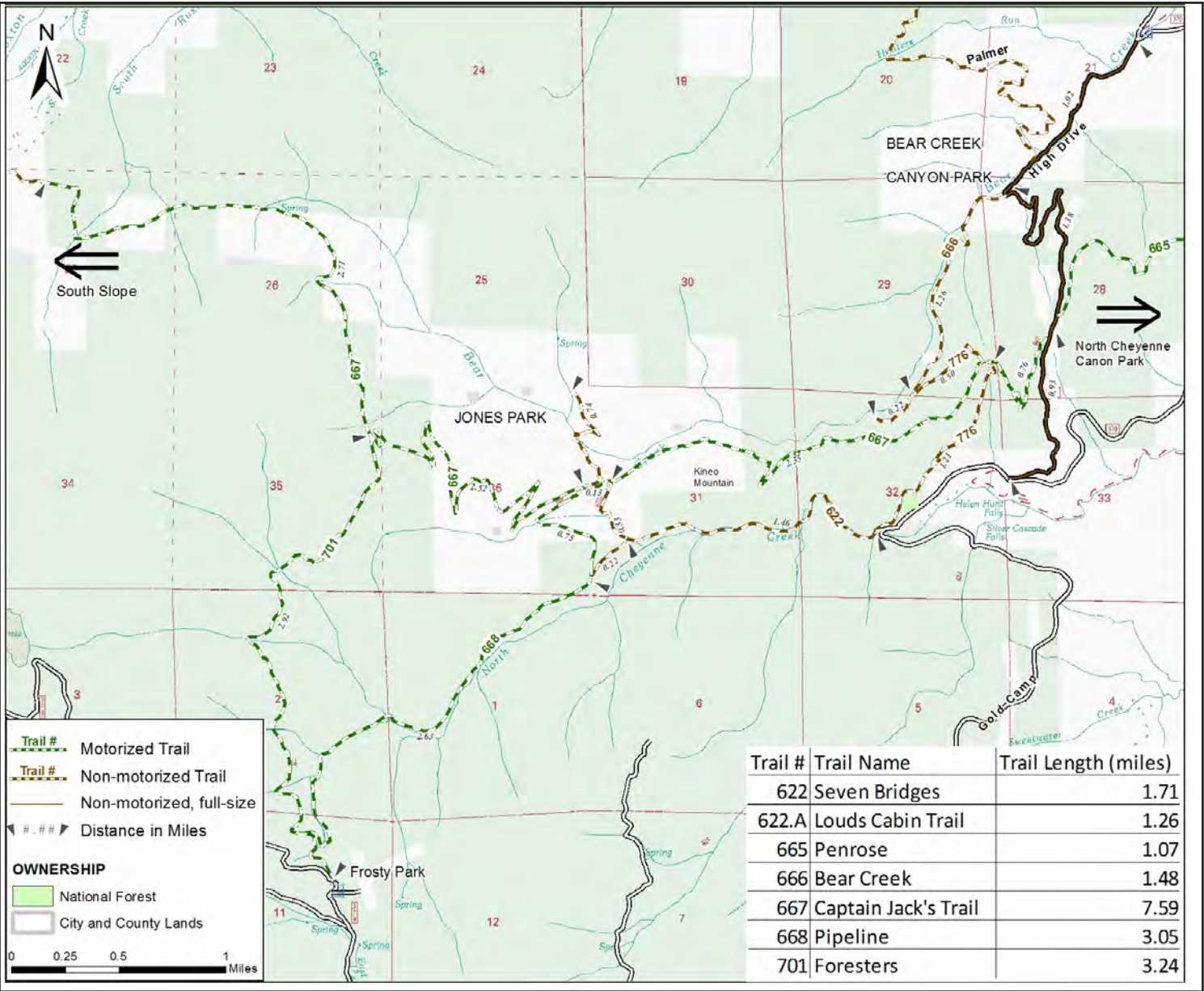
**Jurisdiction:** The USFS Final Decision Notice applies to Federally-owned National Forest Lands and, “only makes management decisions on National Forest System Lands.” However Final Decision Notice provides guidance and recommendations for the entirety of the Bear Creek Watershed, including Jones Park. Further, the Final Decision provides the basis for much of the Deed of Conservation Easement for Jones Park Open Space (held by the Palmer Land Conservancy) which is a legally binding document that applies to Jones Park.

**Purpose of Plan:** The Final Decision Notice was initiated to develop plans and recommendations to help manage and protect,” the sole known remaining naturally producing population of genetically pure Greenback Cutthroat Trout.” The Final Decision Notice includes trail system recommendations, habitat conservation guidance, and management and monitoring recommendations.

### SECTION 3: PREVIOUS PLANNING INITIATIVES

At its broadest level, the Final Decision Notice exists to “better manage the Bear Creek Watershed” and was prompted by concerns about the vulnerability of the Greenback Cutthroat Trout. The plan seeks to, “find a solution to protect the fish while allowing for appropriate and sustainable recreation in [the Bear Creek Watershed].

**Key Findings:** USDA Final Decision Notice reviewed potential environmental impacts; comments received from the public, tribes, adjacent landowners, and other agencies; and available scientific information to develop a Proposed Action for Implementation. The Proposed Action for Implementation includes recommendations on:



UNITED STATES FOREST SERVICE (USFS) REGIONAL TRAIL MAP

### SECTION 3: PREVIOUS PLANNING INITIATIVES



- **Aquatic Species/Riparian Habitat/Watershed Health:** Including measures to protect and improve the quality and condition of Bear Creek;
- **Existing System Trails:** Including recommended trail system closures, improvements and reroutes;
- **Non-System Trails (Rouge Trails):** Includes guidance and strategies for closing and restoring non-system trails within the Bear Creek Watershed;
- **Forest Service Regulations:** Provide guidance on use and management designed to reduce potentially harmful impacts to greenback cutthroat trout and the larger Bear Creek Watershed;
- **Monitoring:** Provides a framework to monitor compliance and effectiveness of recommendations proposed within the USFS Final Decision Notice; and
- **Analysis of Alternatives:** The Final Decision Notice analyzed several management alternatives including non-action and an alternative that would have dramatically limited recreational use within the Bear Creek Watershed.



COLORADO DIVISION OF WILDLIFE PROVIDING HABITAT ANALYSIS IN BEAR CREEK



BEAR CREEK IN JONES PARK

A critical finding of the Notice of Final Decision is that the recommendations outlined above, “*will not have a significant effect on the human environment*” and, “*therefore an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.*” Further, the Final Decision Notice states, “*system resiliency is achieved when trails and roads are improved, and when trail drainage, and system and non-system trail rehabilitation occurs. Bear Creek system resiliency is further enhanced by decreasing the number of stream crossings, the length of trails, and the extent of ground disturbance in the Bear Creek Water Influence Zone.*”

## SECTION 3: PREVIOUS PLANNING INITIATIVES



**Relevance to the Jones Park Master Plan:** The Final Decision Notice provides both clear recommendations as well as a framework that balances recreation with preservation that have helped to inform the Jones Park Master Plan. Many of the USDA Final Decision Notice’s recommendations have already been fully implemented within the Bear Creek Watershed and Jones Park. Additional recommendations are in progress or will be implemented in coming years.

Of particular relevance to the Jones Park Master Plan are recommendation regarding trail use (such as motorized or non-motorized access) and recommendations on specific trail closures and reroutes. Key trail system changes described within the Final Decision Notice include:

- Decommission 0.55 miles of Trail 666 (Bear Creek);
- Decommission 1.2 miles of Trail 667 (Jones Park);
- Decommission 0.2 miles of Trail 668 (Pipeline);
- Construct 2.0 miles of new Trail 667 (Jones Park).

For more information on the trail system recommendations described within the Final Decision Notice, please see the attached graphic/map below.

While the US Forest Service and El Paso County recognize that the USDA Final Decision Notice applies to management of Federal lands and does not have jurisdiction over County-owned lands, the Jones Park land transfer documents with the City requires the County to honor the Final Decision recommendations.



Typical Channel Substrate in the Reference Reach  
Note the rooted vegetation and moss.



Typical Channel Substrate in the Study Reaches  
Note the “brightness” of the channel substrates.

### SECTION 3: PREVIOUS PLANNING INITIATIVES

## 2016 BEAR CREEK AQUATIC HABITAT ASSESSMENT

**Planning Agency:** United States Forest Service (United States Department of Agriculture), in partnership with Fin-Up Habitat Consultants, Inc.

**Report Date:** September 2016

**Planning Area:** Five separate reaches of Bear Creek from upper Bear Creek in Jones Park to the intersection with Gold Camp Road on the outskirts of Colorado Springs. Reach 5 includes 1,000 ft of Bear Creek within Jones Park.

**Jurisdiction:** The Aquatic Habitat Assessment has been determined by the County to not have jurisdictional authority over the Jones Park Master Plan. However, the Assessment was produced in collaboration with the United States Forest Service and the findings of this report helped to inform many of the recommendations contained within this plan.

**Purpose of Plan:** The Aquatic Habitat Assessment was undertaken in cooperation with the USFS, Colorado Department of Parks and Wildlife, and El Paso County to, “collect long term monitoring data for use in assessing habitat condition trends and to provide a baseline of aquatic habitat condition in this critical cutthroat trout stream.” This data will be used in the future to, “determine the effectiveness of treatments” within the Bear Creek Watershed.

**Key Findings:** The Bear Creek Assessment studied Bear Creek hydrology, habitat, sedimentation, vegetation cover, bank stabilization, and other conditions that might impact the quality and quantity of Greenback Cutthroat Trout habitat in Bear Creek. Reach 5 is the only study area located within Jones Park.

Within Reach 5, the 2016 Assessment found, “*significant sediment in storage within the channel*” and “*the pools in Reach 5 exhibited moderate in-filling of sediment, mostly consisting of smaller particles of decomposed granite.*” The assessment further concluded, “*that Reach 5 exhibits generally limited quality aquatic habitat.*” However, the Assessment also found that, “there were only ten feet of actively eroding stream banks in the reach directly contributing sediment into the stream, and these were associated with run-off from the trail on the north side of the stream” [which has since been realigned farther away from Bear Creek].



JUVENILE GREENBACK CUTTHROAT TROUT

## SECTION 3: PREVIOUS PLANNING INITIATIVES

These findings are significant, but the greater value of the Assessment is that it provides baseline information on the condition of Bear Creek. This information can be analyzed over time to help make informed management decisions and to determine the long-term impact of actions in the Bear Creek Watershed.

**Relevance to the Jones Park Master Plan:** The Aquatic Habitat Assessment provided a baseline of information that helped inform the Jones Park Master Plan with respect to the relationship between erosion, sedimentation, and the quality and quantity of trout habitat in Bear Creek. This study helped to confirm the importance of sustainable trail design, the importance of locating new trails a safe distance from Bear Creek, and the need to consider which recreational uses are appropriate within the Jones Park. Further the Assessment makes clear that a robust maintenance, management, and monitoring program is a critical step in ensuring the sustainable management of Jones Park.

## DEED OF CONSERVATION EASEMENT JONES PARK OPEN SPACE

**Planning Agency:** Palmer Land Conservancy

**Report Date:** February 28, 2017 **Planning**

**Area:** Jones Park (1,192 acres)



**Jurisdiction:** A conservation easement is a voluntary, legal agreement between a landowner and a qualified land trust that protects land in perpetuity. The conservation easement is recorded in the county records and binds all current and future owners of the land. As a qualified land trust, Palmer Land Conservancy holds the conservation easement, but does not become involved in day-to-day management.

The logo for the Colorado Springs Independent newspaper, featuring the word "Independent" in a large, bold, black serif font, with "COLORADO SPRINGS" in a smaller, black, all-caps sans-serif font above it.

### Jones Park to be protected under conservation easement

By J. Adrian Stanley @JAdrianStanley1

The 1,193-acres Jones Park property, last home in the wild of the threatened greenback cutthroat trout, is expected to be protected under a conservation easement by El Paso County Commissioners following a unanimous vote.

A close-up photograph of a greenback cutthroat trout being held gently by a person's hands. The fish has a brown and black mottled pattern on its back and sides, with a lighter underbelly. The background is slightly blurred, showing some green foliage.

click to enlarge

Doug Krieger

In Jones Park, the Conservation Easement describes the conservation values of the park, the allowed uses, activities, and actions that may occur within Jones Park, as well as the decision-making process as it relates to actions with relevance to the Conservation Easement. The Conservation Easement establishes the USFS’s Final Decision Notice for the Bear Creek Watershed as a guiding document whose recommendations inform many of the dictates of the Conservation Easement.



Notably, the Conservation Easement requires that certain actions or activities that may be undertaken by El Paso County in Jones Park require approval by the Palmer Land Conservancy prior to implementation. Further, the Conservation Easement “does not permit a degree of intrusion that threatens the Conservation Values of the Property”.

Critically, the Jones Park Conservation Easement will remain in effect in perpetuity.

**Purpose of Plan:** The Jones Park Conservation Easement places permanent restrictions on the use or development of the land in order to protect specific conservation values that are unique to Jones Park and prevent any use of the Property that will substantially diminish or impair the Conservation Values of the Property. Significantly, the Conservation Easement will “assure that the Property will be retained forever predominantly in its scenic and open space condition, to preserve and protect in perpetuity the aesthetic and recreational values of the Property.”

To accomplish this goal, the Conservation Easement describes specific site improvements, trail improvements, habitat management actions, recreation and education uses, and other actions that are deemed compatible with the objectives of the Easement. Additionally, the Conservation Easement describes procedures to evaluate impact of potential actions and the role the Palmer Land Conservancy will plan in approving proposed actions in Jones Park.

This balanced approach of preserving the land, protecting habitat, and supporting recreation is consistent with the goals laid out in the El Paso County Parks Master Plan as well as the vision of the Jones Park Master Plan. The specific goals and dictates of the Conservation Easement have been incorporated into the recommendations provided within this Plan.

**Key Findings:** The Conservation Easement provides both broad goals and specific guidance that will impact Jones Park in the future. The Easement further describes rights reserved for the County and rights reserved for the Palmer Land Conservancy in the oversight of Jones Park. This break down of responsibility is important for the future of Jones Park and has bearing on many of the recommendations made within this plan.

The Conservation Easement additionally describes the following ‘Conservation Values’ that make Jones Park worthy of protection.

- **Public Recreation/Education:** *“The property will provide public access for outdoor recreation and education for the use and enjoyment of the public”. Further, “a conservation easement will ensure continued enjoyment of the unique character of the Property in perpetuity.”*
- **Habitat and Ecosystem:** The Easement describes the unique environmental feature that make Jones Park special for so many visitors. From a *“diverse mix of vegetation and habitat,”* to a 1.62 mile section of Bear Creek that is, *“currently home to the only population of wild breeding, genetically pure greenback cutthroat trout,”* the Easement describes environmental feature that make Jones Park worthy of preservation.

- **Open Space:** Largely due to the inherent habitat and ecosystem attributes described above, the Easement identifies Jones Park as qualifying open space *“because it is being preserved for the scenic enjoyment of the general public and will yield a significant public benefit.”* The Easement recognizes that Jones Park has been identified by the State Wildlife Action Plan as a, *“high priority habitat for protection from disturbance”* and there are recreation, education, and historic values that provide, *“significant public benefit”*.

With the goal of protecting the Conservation Values described above, the Conservation Easement describes the rights reserved to El Paso County in the management of Jones Park. Many of these Reserved Rights are dependent upon the completion of the Jones Park Master Plan. A summary of the most relevant Reserved Rights to the County in Jones Park includes:

- **Specific Site Improvements:** the conservation easement allows, *construction*, use, maintenance, repairs, elimination of benches, kiosks, trail signs, trail shelters, fences and other similar improvements.



TRAIL TO LOUD'S CABIN

## SECTION 3: PREVIOUS PLANNING INITIATIVES

### 3-12 RELEVANT PRIOR PLANS



- **Trail Improvements:** The Easement allows the County to, *“construct, relocate, decommission, maintain or repair trails on the Property as may be desirable to conduct open space management, outdoor education and recreation, park purposes or activities...as long as any such trail improvements comply with the Final Decision Notice or an approved Master Plan.”*
- **Habitat Management:** El Paso County may, *“conduct activities to create, maintain, restore, or enhance wildlife habitat and native biological communities...consistent with the Final Decision Notice or an approved Master Plan.”*
- **Recreational and Educational Uses:** The Conservation Easement specifically allows recreational activities including, *“hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, and other recreational uses...that are inherent to park purposes.”* The Easement also states that *“motorcycles may be allowed on designated trails within [Jones Park]”*.
- **Greenback Cutthroat Trout:** El Paso County has the reserved right to *“establish/create habitat for the benefit of the greenback cutthroat trout...to perpetuate the existence of this threatened species.”*

**Relevance to the Jones Park Master Plan:** The Jones Park Conservation Easement may have the greatest impact on long-term planning, management and operations within Jones Park. The goals of preservation, protection, and balanced recreation described within the Conservation Easement are critical to the Jones Park Master Plan and will help to shape the future of Jones Park for many years to come.

The Reserved Rights granted to El Paso County (described in the key Finding Section) have great relevance to this Master Plan as they articulate the roles, responsibilities and allowable actions that can be undertaken by the County within Jones Park. This Master Plan acknowledges the role, jurisdiction, and authority that the Jones Park Conservation Easement will exercise, in perpetuity, over certain aspects of Jones Park.

The Conservation Easement discusses the relationship between a Jones Park Master Plan and the Easement in detail. The Conservation Easement states that the recommendations of the USFS Final Decision shall help to govern actions within Jones Park and that actions beyond those recommendations require an approved Master Plan. Further, should the USFS Final Decision cease to be relevant, the Conservation Easement states that an approved County Master Plan will govern all actions and activities in Jones Park.

More specifically, the Conservation Easement states, *“Before constructing any new improvements on the Property not required by the USFS Final Decision Notice...the County shall prepare .....a Master Plan.”* Any future trails are addressed in the Appendix.

The Conservation Easement requires that the Jones Park Master Plan be submitted to the Palmer Land Conservancy for their approval before the plan can be formally adopted by El Paso County. In accordance with this requirement, the Jones Park Master Plan was submitted to and Approved by Palmer Land Conservancy on October 15, 2024.



## SECTION 4: EXISTING CONDITIONS AND SITE ANALYSIS

### JONES PARK EXISTING CONDITIONS

Jones Park is located on the eastern slope of the Colorado Front at elevations ranging from 8,800 to 10,400 feet. The Property is defined by its remote and character, (relative to other El Paso County Parks) by its exceptional recreational opportunities, and typification of a mountainous Pikes Peak ecosystem. With nearly 1.6 miles of Bear Creek flowing through Jones Park, the property has exceptional environmental significance as it is home to the only known location of wild breeding, genetically pure Green Back Cutthroat Trout.

### TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

The highest elevations are found in the northwest quadrant of the park. The lowest elevations are located on the eastern property line within the Bear Creek drainage channel. Between these elevation extremes, steep, mountainous slopes and smaller areas of flatter meadows and riparian areas typify Jones Park. Slightly more than eighty-five (85%) percent of slopes in Jones Park exceed twenty (20%) percent.

Aside from being a defining feature of Jones Park, the prevalence of steep mountainous hillsides presents unique management challenges in the trail maintenance and permitted uses must be carefully considered to ensure the long-term sustainability of recreation within the Park. Erosion and sedimentation are the primary concerns associated with trail use. These forces must be managed to limit impacts within the park generally and to Bear Creek and the Greenback Cutthroat Trout population specifically.



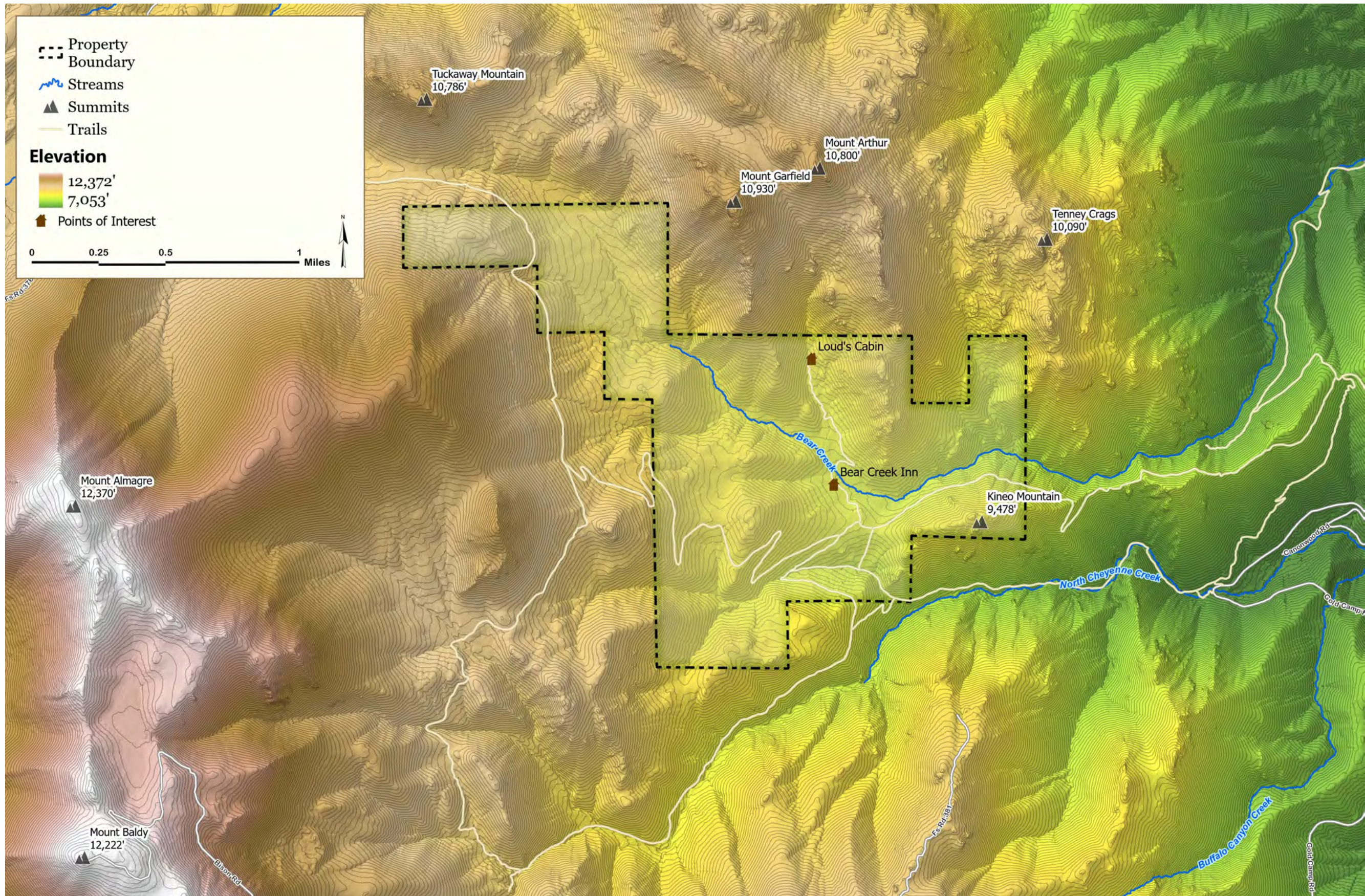
VIEW TO MT. ROSA FROM JONES PARK



PIKES PEAK GRANITE OUTCROPPING

Geologically, Jones Park is located with the Pikes Peak Batholith and is primarily composed of Pikes Peak granite. Pikes Peak granite is a coarse-grained biotite and hornblend-biotite granite, typically pink or red-brink in appearance. The pink coloration present throughout soils, scree fields and rock formations in Jones Park comes from the presence of potassium rich feldspar, a common mineral through out the Pikes Peak Batholith.





JONES PARK TOPOGRAPHY AND ELEVATION

# SECTION 8: Design Guidelines



Pikes Peak Granite typically results in erosive, granitic soils, which can be highly susceptible to weathering. This is true across much of Jones Park. Within the park, many of the soils are shallow, rocky, with thin organic layers. Common soil types in Jones Park include Sphinx, Catamount, Ivywild, and Garber, most of which have a parent material of weathered granite or glacial till from granite. These types of soils can be vulnerable to erosion on steep slopes or if protective vegetation or ground cover is removed.

## CLIMATE

Located in a montane environment on the slopes of Pikes Peak, Jones Park receives nearly 250 days of sunshine. Temperatures are moderate to cool and are typically 15-20 degrees cooler than temperatures in Colorado Springs. Historic data from the nearest Western Regional Climate Center weather station (located at Lake Moraine, approximately 1.5 miles west of the western boundary of Jones Park) shows that the area typically receives just under 24 inches of rainfall per year. This is historically supplemented by an average snowfall of just over 152 inches per year. The majority of rainfall occurs between the months of May and August.

At the nearly 10,500' Lake Moraine weather station, the historic high temperature in July is 66 degrees and the historic low temperature in January is 10 degrees. Temperatures in Jones Park, located at a lower average elevation than the Lake Moraine Station, can be expected to be consistently warmer than the figures cited above.

## HYDROGRAPHY



PRIME TROUT HABITAT IN BEAR CREEK

Jones Park is located within the Fountain Creek Watershed, near the western edge of this drainage basin. The 927-square mile watershed drains south into the Arkansas River in Pueblo, Colorado.

Nearly 1.6 miles of Bear Creek, a tributary to Fountain Creek, flow west to east through Jones Park. Approximately 842 acres, or roughly 75%, of Jones Park drains into Bear Creek. North Cheyenne Creek, a tributary to Cheyenne Creek, flows west to east immediately south of the Jones Park property boundary. Approximately 273 acres, or roughly 25%, of Jones Park drains into North Cheyenne Creek. The areas of the park that drain into North Cheyenne Creek are located near Jones Park's

## SECTION 4: Existing Conditions and Site Analysis

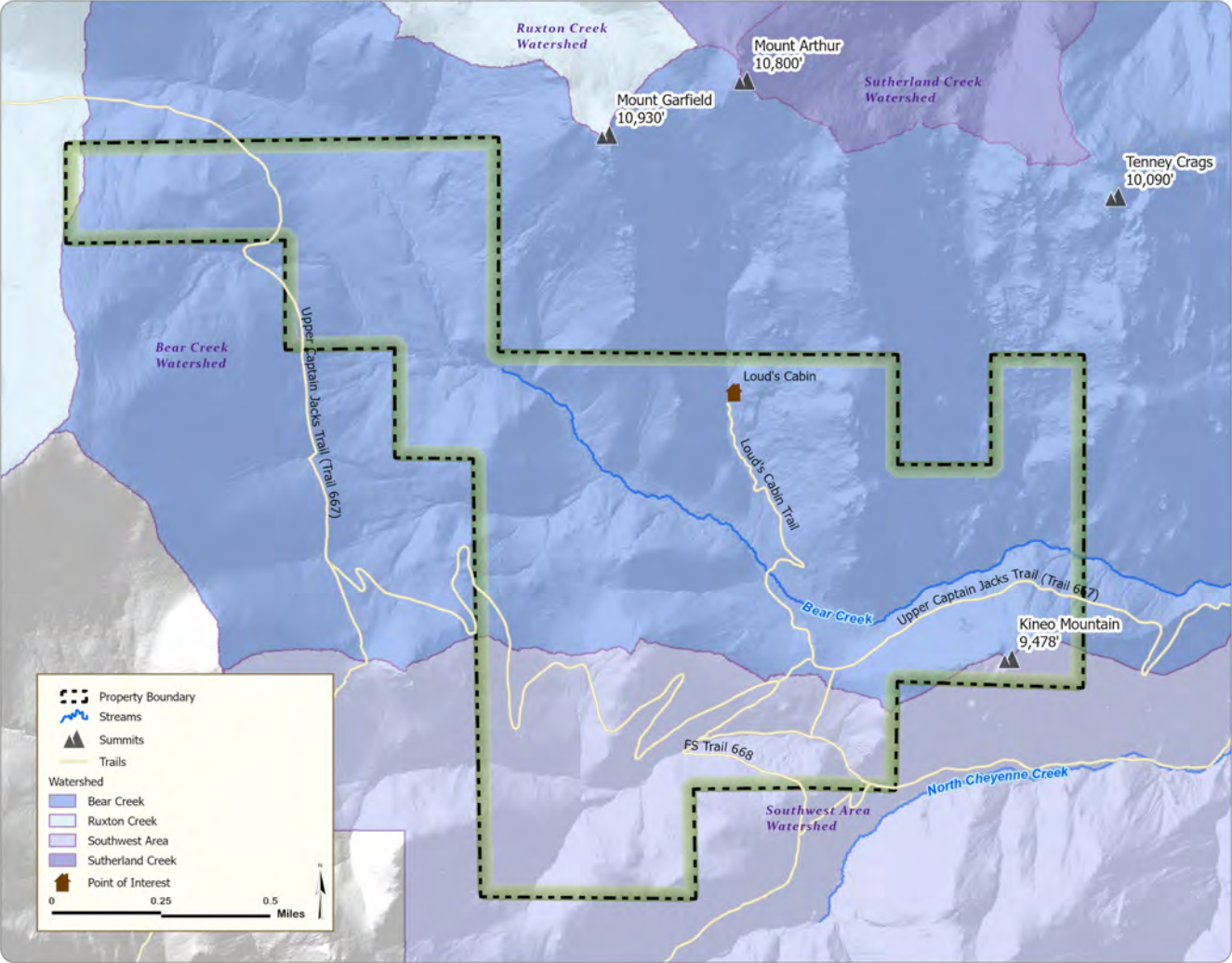


southern property line.

Bear Creek begins as a series of small tributaries above (west of) Jones Park. From Jones Park, Bear Creek descends steeply through a rock canyon before exiting the canyon near Gold Camp Road in Colorado Springs. The creek eventually flows through Bear Creek Regional Park before meeting Fountain Creek near the current site of the Martin Drake Power Plant, just east of Interstate 25.

North Cheyenne Creek begins as a series of small tributaries flow off of the east side of Almagre Peak. North Cheyenne Creek cascades south of Jones Park and continues east, parallel to the popular Seven Bridges trail, before flowing through Cheyenne Canon Park. North Cheyenne Creek eventually flows into Fountain Creek, south of Bear Creek.

In addition to the two first-order (Strahler Stream Order Classification) creeks listed above, Jones Park is also home to several unnamed seasonal or ephemeral drainages. These drainages typically have surface



BEAR CREEK WATERSHED MAP

SECTION 4: Existing Conditions & Site Analysis

water flows only in severe rainfall events.

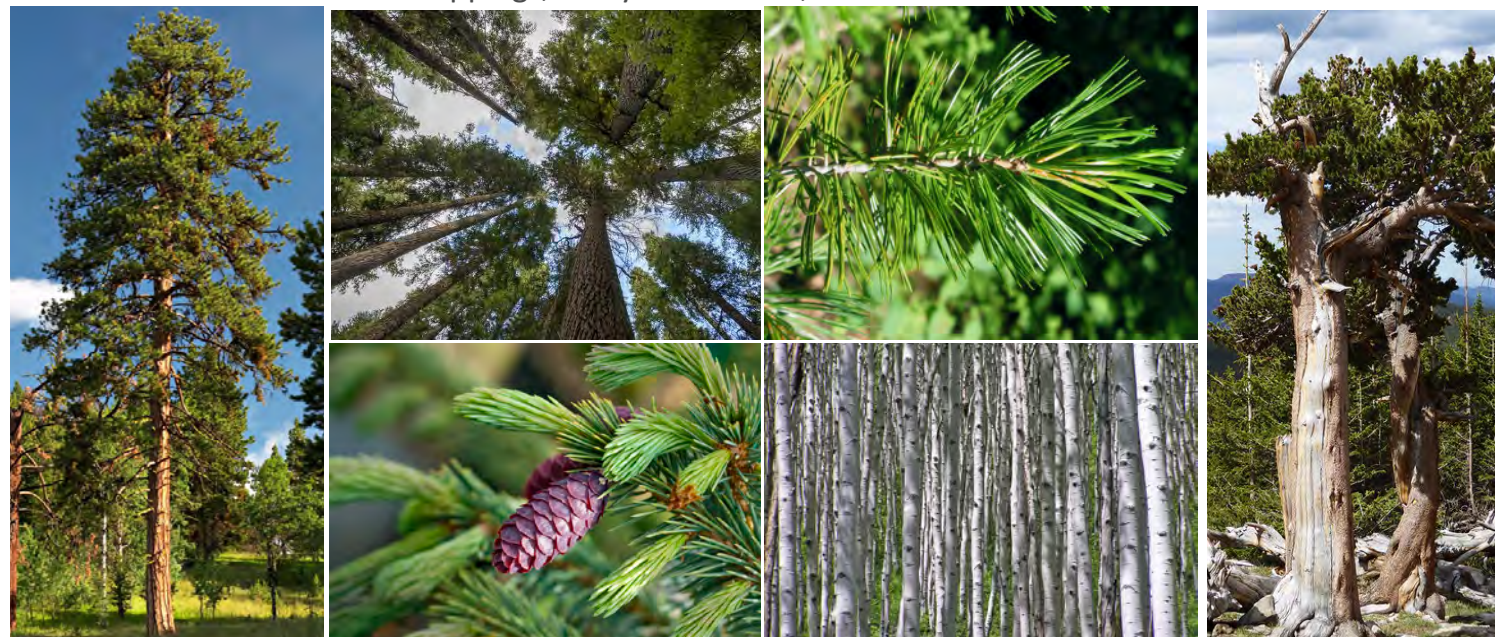
For the purposes of this Master Plan, the Bear Creek drainage is the most significant hydrologic feature in our planning efforts. Bear Creek is home to the only known wild-breeding, genetically pure population of Greenback Cutthroat Trout. This population, measured recently at approximately 800 fish, is listed as a Federally Threatened Species. Due to the sensitive nature of Bear Creek as it relates to the Greenback Cutthroat Trout habitat, the utmost prudence must be exercised for any proposed action occurring within the Bear Creek Drainage.

## VEGETATION AND WILDLIFE

Jones Park has been identified by Palmer Land Conservancy as having a “diverse mix of vegetation and habitat,” and a “relatively natural ecosystem.” The most abundant vegetation type in the property is ponderosa pine woodland. Additional vegetation types within Jones Park include aspen forests and woodlands, dry-mesic mixed conifer forests, lodgepole pine forests, montane-mesic mixed conifer forests, and lotic wetlands.

At the highest portions of Jones Park, located near the north west corner of the property, subalpine tree species such as bristlecone pine, Engelmann Spruce, limber pine, and aspen are common. Farther east, at the relatively lower elevations (8,000-9,000’) that comprise the majority of Jones Park, montane tree species dominate. These include ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir, white fir, limber pine and aspen.

Slightly less than twenty-five percent of Jones Park and surrounding areas is comprised of non-forest cover. This includes rock outcroppings, rocky scree fields, montane meadows and barrens areas.



NATIVE PLANT SPECIES



The ecosystems and tree species described above are common throughout moderate to higher elevations across the Pike Peak region. The abundance and diversity of vegetation within Jones Park suggests a healthy and relatively undisturbed landscape. The mosaic mix of vegetation types is an indicator of a healthy forest ecology and contributes to the beauty of the park.

Wildfires are a natural component of the ecological region encompassing Jones Park. A wildland fire is defined as any fire that is burning in a natural environment. Fire ecologists recognize that fire is a natural process, and that it often operates as an integral part of the ecosystem in which it occurs. In recent history, there is no evidence of large-scale wildfire in Jones Park or in the immediate forests surrounding the park. In part this may be due to the widespread suppression of forest fires over the last 80 to 100 years.

These suppression efforts have led to a substantial accumulation of fuels in much of Jones Park. This can increase the risk of catastrophic fires as well lead to forest densities that higher than would be the case with an uninterrupted fire regime. The US Forest Services has identified Jones Park to be in Fire Regime Condition Class 3, which historically entails a 35-100+ year fire frequency (sufficient to replace forest stands).

Despite the interrupted fire regime found within Jones Park, the overall quality and condition of the natural ecosystems within the property creates a rich environment for a variety of wildlife species within



## SECTION 4: Existing Conditions & Site Analysis



the property. The diverse environment provides food, shelter, breeding grounds, migration corridors and habitat that support, among other animal species, the following:

- Elk
- Mule Deer
- Mountain Lion
- Moose
- American Black Bear
- Peregrine falcon
- Swainson's Hawk
- Mountain Plover
- Prairie falcon
- Snowy Plover
- American Bittern
- Fringed Myotis Bat
- Hoary Bat
- Olive-sided Fly Catcher
- Flammulated Owl
- Mexican Spotted Owl
- Greenback Cutthroat Trout

Both the Mexican Spotted Owl (*Strix occidentalis lucida*) and the Greenback Cutthroat Trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkii stomias*) are listed as Threatened Species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1971. The ESA defines 'Threatened Species' as, *"any species which is likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range"*. The ESA Threatened listing is second only to an 'Endangered' listing in terms of the threats posed to the long-term survival species and the protections afforded to support the species.

## MEXICAN SPOTTED OWL



MEXICAN SPOTTED OWL

The Mexican Spotted Owl is one of three sub-species of spotted owl that include the northern spotted owl and the California spotted owl. It is one of the largest North American owl species, typically growing to 16-19 inches in length. The owl is distinguished by its brown plumage and irregular brown and white spots on its abdomen, back and head.

The Mexican spotted owl is listed as a threatened species by both the U.S. and Mexican governments, and is considered threatened in Colorado and Utah, and is listed as a species of Concern in Arizona and New Mexico. Their populations have been negatively affected by the loss, degradation, and fragmentation of their habitat as a result of even-aged timber management, urban and suburban development, agricultural encroachment, water development in riparian areas, mining, and other habitat losses.

The Mexican Spotted Owl's preferred habitat is mixed-conifer forests that include Douglas fir, white fir,

## SECTION 4: Existing Conditions and Site Analysis

southwestern white pine, limber pine, and ponderosa pine. The highest densities of Mexican spotted owls occur in mixed-conifer forests that have experienced minimal human disturbance. Common nesting sites also include rocky canyons or rock out-croppings interspersed among mixed-conifer terrain.

The US Forest Service, Palmer Land Conservancy, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service have identified Jones Park as highly productive potential habitat for the Mexican Spotted Owl. Further, the US Fish and Wildlife Service has identified 4.6 million acres of critical habitat, areas that are, *“essential for the conservation of a threatened or endangered species”*. This critical habitat includes Jones Park.

Based on guidance provided by U.S. Forest Service’s Final Decision Notice for the Bear Creek Watershed, it is not anticipated that the proposed actions outlined within this Master Plan will have an adverse impact on Mexican Spotted Owl habitat or resident populations.

## GREENBACK CUTTHROAT TROUT

The Greenback Cutthroat Trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkii stomias*) is the state fish of Colorado. It is the easternmost sub-species of the cutthroat trout. The Greenback Cutthroat Trout is currently listed as a Threatened species under the Endangered Species Act.

The trout was once widespread throughout much of the Platte and Arkansas River drainages, but today occupies less than 1% of its historic range. Currently, the only known population of genetically-pure, wild-breeding Greenback Cutthroat Trout reside in 4-mile stretch of Bear Creek, a portion of which flows through Jones Park. A recent Colorado Parks and Wildlife population survey estimated the number of Greenback Cutthroat Trout living in Bear Creek at 750.



HEALTHY GREENBACK CUTTHROAT TROUT POPULATION

## SECTION 4: Existing Conditions & Site Analysis



Though the Greenback Cutthroat Trout was once prolific in many of Colorado's rivers and streams, by the 1930's the species was thought to be extinct. Mining operations, water diversion, development and settlement, and the introduction of non-native fish species (which out-competed and interbred the native Greenback Cutthroat Trout) caused the trout's population to plummet.

In 1953, small populations of what were believed to be Greenback Cutthroat Trout were discovered in small, higher elevation creeks across Colorado. While the population was still imperiled, the rediscovery of the species was widely celebrated. However, the population and habitat pressures that lead to the Greenback Cutthroat Trout's population decline remained and in 1973 the species was listed as 'Endangered' under the Endangered Species Act. In 1978 the Greenback Cutthroat Trout was downlisted to 'Threatened' allowing limited catch and release fishing. This move led to great public support for the trout as anglers came into more contact with the rare species. Funding for recovery efforts continued to grow and by 2005, Greenback Cutthroat Trout were reestablished in 58 streams and lakes across Colorado.

For many in the environmental community, the recovery of the Greenback Cutthroat Trout was heralded as a great success of the Endangered Species Act.

In 2007, as technology and scientific advancements progressed, the ability to conduct accurate genetic testing greatly improved. A young Ph.D. candidate, Jessica Metcalf, conducted genetic tests on Greenback Cutthroat Trout populations across Colorado and discovered that none of the reintroduce fish population were genetically pure Greenback Cutthroat Trout. Rather the presumed Greenback Cutthroat Trout were Colorado cutthroats from the western slope of the Continental Divide. With this discovery the Greenback Cutthroat Trout, recently thought to be a triumph of environmental recovery, was effectively extinct.



GREENBACK CUTTHROAT TROUT

In an effort that might have relied more on hope than on scientific probabilities, continued genetic testing was undertaken across Colorado's streams and lakes to locate any remaining Greenback Cutthroat Trout. In 2012, the now Dr. Jessica Metcalf, discovered a single genetically pure population of Greenback Cutthroat Trout in a small mountain stream near Pikes Peak. This stream is Bear Creek and the location of the discovery in Jones Park and the forest lands immediately east of the property.

Today efforts are being made to reintroduce the Greenback Cutthroat Trout to streams and lakes across

## SECTION 4: Existing Conditions and Site Analysis



Colorado. The process proceeds slowly, and lessons of the misguided 1953-2007 reintroduction effort are at the forefront of biologists' minds. Offspring of the Bear Creek population are being bred at the Leadville National Fish Hatchery for reintroduction. Currently, Greenback Cutthroat Trout have been reintroduced at Zimmerman Lake and Sand Creek, west of Fort Collins, Dry Gulch and Herman Gulch near the Eisenhower Tunnel, and Rock Creek in South Park. While these reintroduced populations are surviving, evidence of successful wild breeding is minimal.

Barring a new discovery of Greenback Cutthroat Trout, the wild breeding Bear Creek population of the trout will remain the most genetically diverse population. This fact means that the Bear Creek population Greenback Cutthroat Trout will be critical to the continued survival of the species.

The consideration of the Greenback Cutthroat Trout informs many of the recommendation in this Master Plan. A central objective of this Plan is to provide sustainable recreation, continued preservation of Greenback Cutthroat Trout, and an emphasis on long-term stewardship of Jones Park. Within this framework, we believe that appropriate, sustainable recreation can strengthen and support Greenback Cutthroat Trout preservation and reintroduction efforts in Jones Park and around Colorado.

## TRAIL NETWORK

The Jones Park trail network is a popular and highly-valued recreational amenity in the Pikes Peak region. The multi-use trail network currently includes nearly fourmiles of trails. Popular recreational uses of the trail system include hiking and walking, mountain biking, motorcycle use, trail running, and horseback riding. Jones Park is unique among El Paso County Park properties in allowing motorcycle use throughout much of the trail network. These trails are also included in the Ring the Peak trail.

The characteristics of trails in Jones Park, are described by the public in the survey, are "rugged

and remote character" and the "scenery and beauty" of trail options.

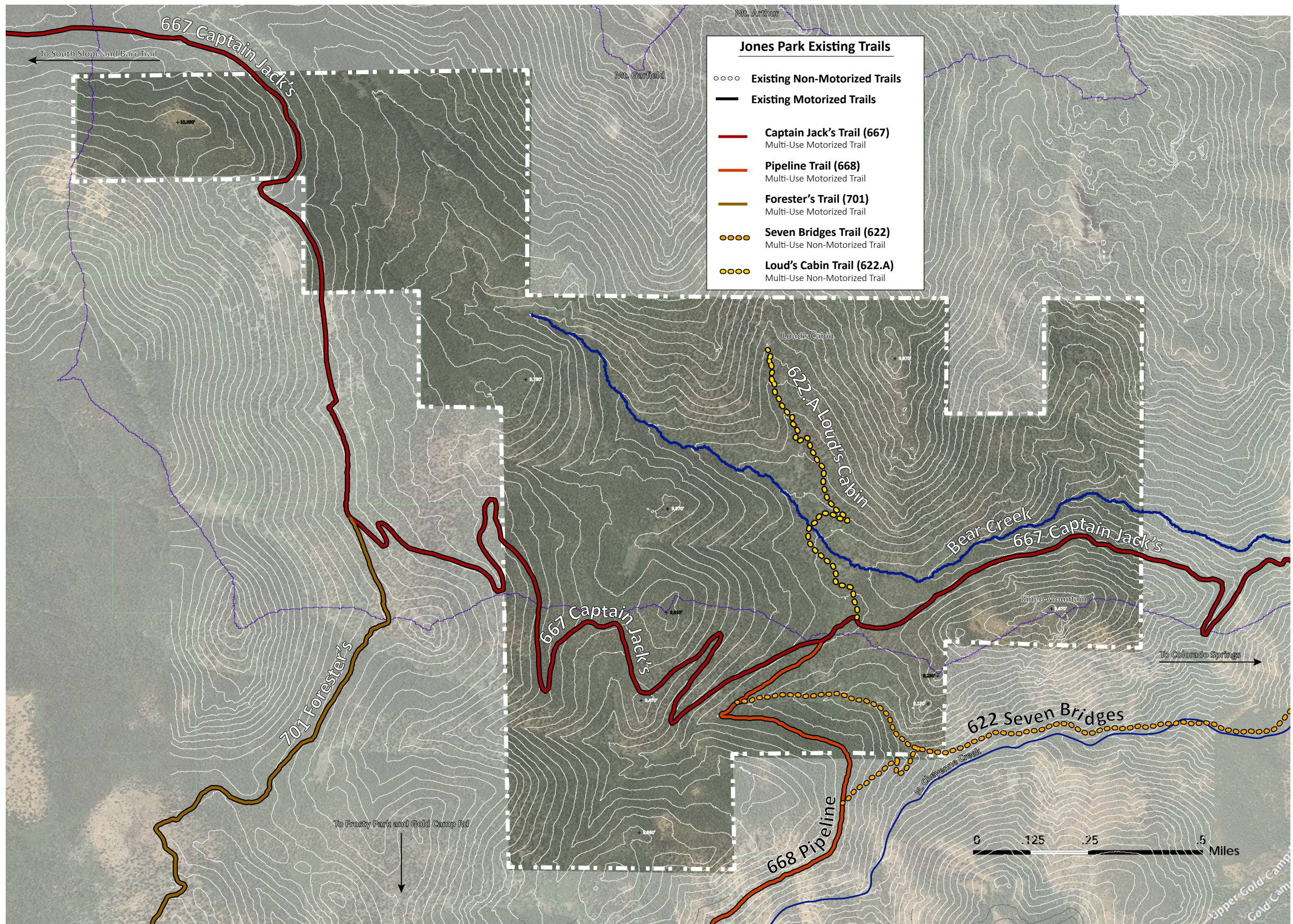


CAPTAIN JACK'S TRAIL IN JONES PARK

Access to the Jones Park trail system is physically challenging and requires traveling two more miles on single-track trails before reaching the trail system. The nearest trailheads are located outside of Jones Park in Cheyenne Canon (High Drive and Gold Camp Trailheads) located approximately two miles east of the park, or in Frosty Park (Rd 379 Trailhead) located approximately three miles south of Jones Park. Additional trail access is provided by the Lake Moraine Trail located northwest of Jones Park. Three of the four access points are under the management of the City of Colorado Springs.

## SECTION 4: Existing Conditions & Site Analysis





JONES PARK EXISTING TRAIL NETWORK



In a community survey, more than fifty percent of respondents said they typically use the multi-use (including motorized access) Captain Jack's trail to access Jones Park. An additional thirty five percent of respondents identified Seven Bridges (primary used as a hiking-only trail) as their primary trail access for Jones Park.

The difficulty in reaching Jones Park's trail system has the impact of reducing recreational use relative to nearby parks. The solitude, quiet, and remote-feel of Jones Park was often cited as a reason the public values Jones Park.

The Jones Park trail system has evolved significantly in recent years. Following the discovery of Greenback Cutthroat Trout in Bear Creek, the US Forest Service, along with several other agencies, made the determination that several trails in Jones Park were not sustainable and could be detrimental to the continued viability of the threatened Greenback Cutthroat Trout. Beginning in 2012, system and non-system (rouge trails) were decommissioned and rerouted to create a more sustainable trail network in Jones Park. The U.S. Forest Service's Notice of Final Decision provided much of the guidance for this work.

Presently, the Jones Park trail network is comprised of the following trails:

- **Seven Bridges (622)** 3,905 LF (.74 miles)
- **FS Trail 668** 1,792 LF (.34 miles)
- **Upper Captain Jack's Trail (667)** 9,335 LF (1.77 miles)
- **Captain Jack's Trail (667)** 3,354 LF (.63 miles)
- **Loud's Cabin Trail** 4,259 LF (.81 miles)
- **FS Trail 622.A** 887LF (.16 miles)

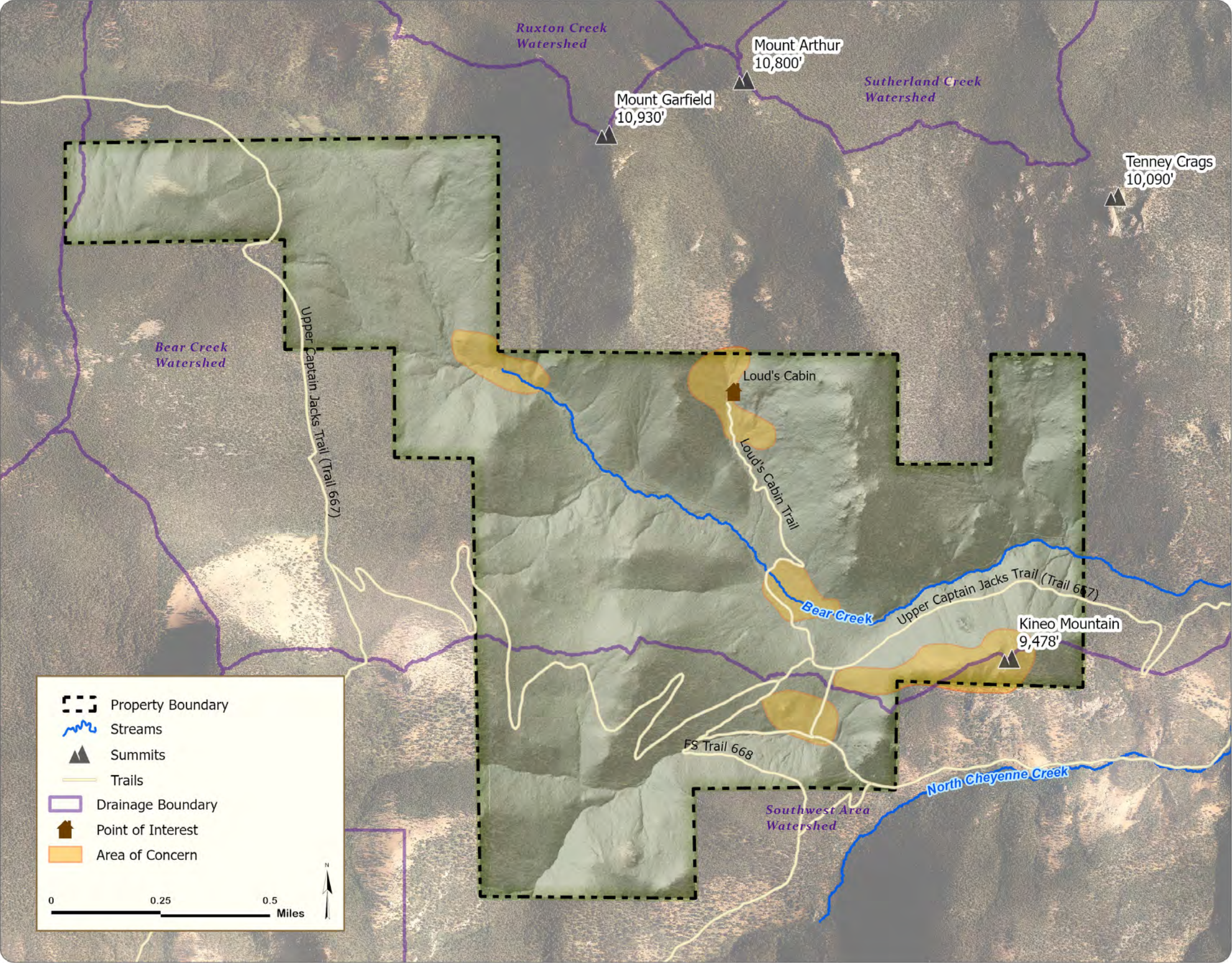
The overall condition of trails in Jones Park is generally acceptable with relatively sustainable and well-maintained trails as the base-line condition. The public generally agrees with this assessment based on their responses to questions about trail conditions, giving Jones Park trail maintenance a score of 56 out of 100. In the course of creating this Master Plan, consultant team conducted an assessment of the Jones Park trail network and found the following:

- Jones Park soils are primarily composed of Pikes Peak granite and are highly erosive, requiring periodic maintenance on trails not adhering to sustainable design/construction principles. Trail conditions in these areas are less than ideal, and erosion and sedimentation are risks that must be monitored.
- Despite the fairly extensive trail network in Jones Park, unsustainable rogue trails continue to be identified in the Park. Many of these rogue trails include short sections that 'cut' the system trail at switchbacks. However several unsustainable rogue trails of significant length have been established in Jones Park. Non-system rogue trails create erosion and sedimentation, and destroy vegetation within the Park. They are a concern for the health and protection of Greenback Cutthroat Trout in



the Bear Creek watershed, for the maintenance of the trail network, and for environmental protection throughout Jones Park.

- Some trails in Jones Park exhibit an overly wide trail tread that does not match the intended use of the trail. This can result in high motorcycle and mountain bike speeds, creating possibilities of unsafe conditions and potential user conflict. Additionally, trail-widening can be both a cause and symptom of trail erosion and should be monitored and addressed to improve overall trail sustainability.
- Several trails in the eastern portion of Jones Park, exhibit below standards trail outslopes (cross slopes) leading to trail cupping and entrenchment, erosion, and trail widening. If a trail does not have a consistent outslope of 3-5% or greater, water will often flow downhill on a trail tread causing high rates of erosion and leading to trail damage. This is a particular concern within the Bear Creek drainage, where trail erosion may lead to sedimentation in the creek that can degrade Greenback Cutthroat Trout habitat.
- The field survey identified multiple trail sections that are beginning to exhibit erosion characteristics. The primary cause of erosion in a trail network is substandard drainage management. However instances of user-caused erosion (including





rogue trail ‘short-cuts’, soil disturbance caused by heavy motorcycle throttling, and two-abreast walking) are also present within the trail network.

- Select trail markers, Ring the Peak signs, and occasional signs and several maps are present in Jones Park but wayfinding is an identified area of improvement for the park.
- Several trails in Jones Park exhibit a limited number of technical features that can enhance user enjoyment and create a more ‘fun’ trail experience. Technical features are often desired by hikers, mountain bikers, and motorcycle riders, because they create trail variety and challenges that can make the trail more interesting. These technical features can also be employed improve trail sustainability and manage use. Select enhancement of technical features in Jones Park’s trails is recommended.

## HISTORIC FEATURES



LOUD'S CABIN

Jones Park has a long and rich history stretching back to the early days of the Tabeguache Ute peoples use and habitation in the area, through the late 1800's development of the park, into present day where resource management and recreational uses define Jones Park. With such a long history of use and settlement, it



should come as no surprise that historical features and amenities abound in Jones Park.

In 2017, the Jones Park Historic District Survey for the Bear Creek Watershed Restoration Project (Historic Survey) was completed for El Paso County. The survey was produced by ERO Resources and its findings were reviewed by the Colorado State Historic Preservation Office. The Historic Survey identified 29 separate historic features of note within Jones Park. These features help to tell the story of Jones Park's history, as well as the broader trends of use and settlement in the Pikes Peak region. This Master Plan recommends that these historic features remain protected and that public education and interpretation is provided at strategic historic sites within Jones Park.

Perhaps the most visible historic feature in Jones Park is Loud's Cabin (Loud's Homestead). The cabin is currently accessible via the Loud's Cabin Trail. The historic homestead is located in the north-central portion of Jones Park near the base of a deep canyon. The cabin was constructed by Dr. Frank Herbert Loud shortly after he claimed property in Jones Park in 1884. Dr. Loud was notable as Colorado College's first Head of Mathematics. While the cabin is the most prominent historic feature remaining in Jones Park today, it was not the only or the largest of the historic homesteads/hotels in the park.



MT KINEO SUMMIT

## SECTION 4: Existing Conditions and Site Analysis



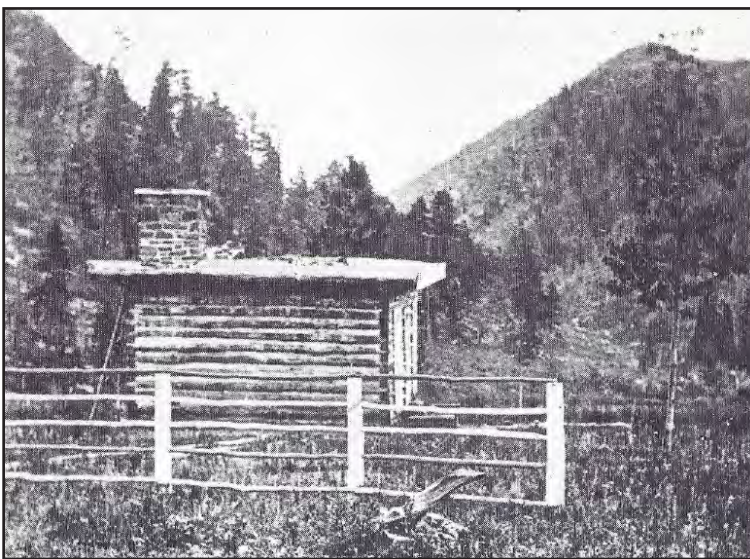
Because of the existing trail access, somewhat intact historic structure, and open setting, Loud's Cabin provides excellent opportunities for education and interpretation. This Master Plan proposes protecting the homestead with split rail fencing, adding unobtrusive educational signage related to the cabin's history, and providing rustic seating for visitors who wish to linger at the site.



LATE 1800'S VISITOR TO JONES PARK

### Additional historic features of note in Jones Park include:

- A historic fence line constructed of wood posts, wire nails and what appears to be telegraph wire.
- Several root cellars constructed of stones and set into the ground. The root cellars are primarily found in the vicinity of historic homestead sites.
- Several historic roadbeds associated with past homesites. These roadbeds were typically excavated several feet into the ground at a width of five eight feet. Today the remains of these road beds are heavily vegetated and may be unrecognizable to the untrained eye.
- Rock foundations for several historic homesteads, including Joseph C. Jones and Mr Pebbles' cabins. In several locations timbers and other building materials are still present, but the rock foundation is often the most visible feature of the historic homestead sites. Given the advanced decay and remote off-trail location of many of these homesites, this Master Plan recommends avoiding and protecting these areas to limit user disturbance.



HISTORIC JONES PARK HOMESTEAD

- Historic paths are present in several locations throughout Jones Park. These paths were used to access historic homesites, including the Jones, Henry and Pebbles homesteads. In several instances, low rock retaining walls are visible, suggesting that in years past, as today, sustainable trail construction was a priority for settlers and visitors.

- Jones' Fish Ponds. These historic water control structures were located in proximity to the historic Jones Homestead, south of Bear Creek's current channel. The ponds appear to have been feed by diverting water flows from Bear Creek, channeling water through a drainage

## SECTION 4: Existing Conditions & Site Analysis



ditch before feeding into the small ponds. It is believed that Joseph C. Jones himself constructed the ponds and associated infrastructure. The ponds are minimally visible today but they may have played a large role in today's management of Jones Park. It is speculated that Mr. Jones stocked his ponds with Greenback Cutthroat Trout he captured during a visit to waters in the South Platte drainage. These fish eventually found their way into Bear Creek and it is believed they became the original brood stock of the threatened Greenback Cutthroat Trout described throughout this plan.

- Historic segments of the original Bear Creek and Pikes Peak trails are present. These trail segments are some of the original trails leading into Jones Park and beyond to the summit of Pikes Peak. The Bear Creek trail was constructed by the US Signal Service to provide access to the summit of Pikes Peak where the United States government later constructed a weather station and signal station. Construction of the Bear Creek trail was completed in 1873. In 1874 the trail was improved and opened to the public as the Pikes Peak Wagon Road. In recent years portions of these historic trails were decommissioned to help protect Greenback Cutthroat Trout in the nearby Bear Creek.



HISTORIC HOMESTEAD VIEWED FROM MT KINEO

- Additional historical features in Jones Park include isolated Tabeguache Ute tool flakes, small mine prospect pits, and small collections of historic refuse such as glass or tin.

This Master Plan has not identified the location of many of this historic features described above. This is done intentionally to protect the historic integrity of these features and to limit off-trail exploration that could result in rogue trails and damage to the natural environment. However, the history and historic features of Jones Park is a rich element of the Park's character and should be both celebrated and protected.

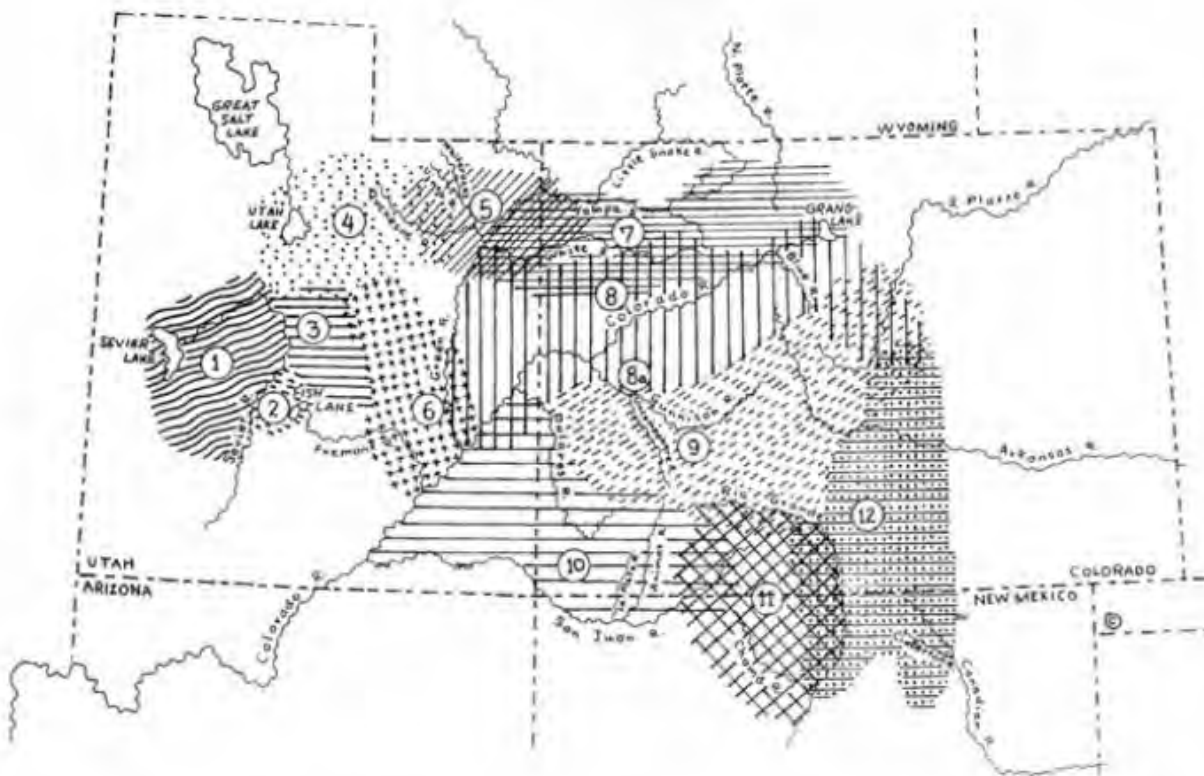
## SECTION 4: Existing Conditions and Site Analysis



## EARLY JONES PARK HISTORY

Long before the United States' Westward Expansion, the Ute Nation were some of the first people to explore, settle, and inhabit the area now known as Colorado. The band that surrounded the Front Range area were known as Tabeguache, or "People of the Sun Mountain," as Pikes Peak was traditionally known as Tava or Tavakiev, meaning "sun mountain." This band was the largest of the ten nomadic Ute bands that historically inhabited Colorado.

Word was spread quickly in Europe of the beautiful area known as Colorado by early Spanish explorers scouting for trade routes and mineral sources from the 1500s to 1700s. The Front Range area was owned by



Distribution of Ute Indian bands: 1. Pahvant, 2. Moanunt, 3. Sanpits, 4. Timpanogots, 5. Uintah, 6. Seuvarits, 7. Yampa, 8. Parianuche, 8a. Sabuagana, 9. Tabeguache, 10. Weenuche, 11. Capote, 12. Muache. © University Press of Colorado.

## SECTION 4: Existing Conditions & Site Analysis



ZEBULON PIKE

both the Spanish and the French before being sold to Early America as part of the Louisiana Purchase. As American explorers were sent west on expeditions to find what was within and beyond the Louisiana Purchase, many were interested in the ascent and exploration of Pikes Peak in the front range. Among them were Zebulon Pike and Stephen H. Long.

Zebulon Pike and his men were sent by the United States Army in 1806 to find the headwaters of the Arkansas River and establish the western boundary of the newly acquired Louisiana Purchase. Pike saw what he thought was a floating blue cloud in the distance from where his men were camping. Upon further exploration, he found that the cloud was a large mountain. Although he and his men never successfully summited the mountain that now bears his name, the expedition was a success with the finding of the Arkansas River headwater. Stephen H. Long and company were funded by the United States Government to create maps and write reports of the area in 1820.

The reports and maps from Pike and Long enticed trappers, fur traders, and miners to come explore the area. Trappers established trade routes throughout the area and a trace

amount of gold found in the area in 1858 sparked a mass migration to the area. By the 1860s there was a clearly defined route up the mountain from trappers and Colorado gold miners although a path had never been formally constructed.

The first formal, constructed, and maintained trail to the summit of Pikes Peak was built in 1873 in conjunction with the construction of the U.S. Army Signal Service Observatory. By 1874 the Bear Creek and Pikes Peak Trail, more commonly referred to as the Bear Creek Trail, was open for public use and had enough traffic to support a hotel near Lake Moraine.

In 1880, a new, shorter trail to the summit of Pikes Peak was created that reduced the travel distance



ORIGINAL PIKES PEAK SUMMIT HOUSE

## SECTION 4: Existing Conditions and Site Analysis



from 18 to 10 miles by going through Englemann Canyon. This quickly reduced the use of the Bear Creek and Pikes Peak Trail.

In 1891 there was a renewed interest in the Bear Creek Canyon route and the Bear Creek Canyon Toll Road Company was established to construct a toll road from the mouth of the Bear Creek Canyon to the Seven Lakes Hotel and eventually to the summit of Pikes Peak, although the road was never finished to the Seven Lakes Hotel and was abandoned after the completion to Lake Moraine. The intent was to construct a toll road from the Bear Creek Canyon mouth along Bear Creek, and the old Bear Creek and Pikes Peak Trail and end at the Seven Lakes Hotel. This toll road cut through Jones Park which was recorded as being green and fertile. Parts of this toll road are still around today and form Bear Creek trail (Trail #666) and Jones Park Trail (Trail #667), also known as Captain Jack's Trail.

## NOTABLE PERSONALITIES IN JONES PARK

It could be argued that Jones Park's early history focused on the recreation, tourism, transportation, and settlement of the Bear Creek Canyon route up Pikes Peak. Many individuals contributed to the establishment of Jones Park and the creation of the tourism and hospitality features that left remains in the park today.



TYPICAL JONES PARK CABIN DURING THE LATE 1800'S

The 1859 Colorado Gold Rush brought many prospectors to Colorado. Among them was Joseph C. Jones. After arriving in Colorado, Jones realized that he could make more money offering services to new settlers and pioneers. In 1873, Jones filed a Declaration of Occupancy as the first homesteader in the area now named after him. He proposed to have a restaurant and hotel for those who were traveling up the peak. Jones constructed a log house, gardens, bird houses, and fishing ponds that he stocked with Greenback Cutthroat Trout from the South Platte River.

Mr. Jones also kept a small number of grazing livestock. Jones brought in greenback cutthroat trout by donkey and bucket from outside the Bear Creek Drainage after a forest fire killed the native fish population in the mid-1800s. The greenback cutthroat trout that Jones introduced represented the first generation of the greenback cutthroat trout and today's population are the last known genetically pure greenback

## SECTION 4: Existing Conditions & Site Analysis

cutthroat trout left in the wild.

The Giles family, homesteaders in Jones Park, became great contributors to the overall development of Bear Creek Canyon. Edward S. Giles moved to Jones Park in 1890 and married Edith Corliss who had been living in Jones Park since 1889. Both had moved to the area to capitalize on the economic opportunities that tourism brought to the area. The couple built many cabins in the Bear Creek Canyon and turned Corliss' cabin into the Bear Creek Inn. Giles and Corliss gave up the Inn in 1902/1903 just as the Bear Creek Toll Road was opening and the Inn was leased, sold, and occupied intermittently between 1905 and 1926 by various private landowners and entrepreneurs.

Another pioneer of Jones Park was Frank H. Loud, a partner of Edward S. Giles. Loud was the original head of the Colorado College mathematics department. Loud also came to own and plat 108 acres within Jones Park. Chipmunk Lodge became one of Loud's greatest structural contributions to the park. After the construction of Chipmunk Lodge and a second cabin named Ruby Gleam in 1902 there were no other major developments within the Jones Park boundary. None of the structures built in Jones Park are still functionally standing today. Between 1948 and 1952 the City of Colorado Springs received ownership of all the privately-owned land in Jones Park. The land was then used for multiple purposes including recreation and as a lumber mill.



THE CAPTAIN JACK'S TRAILS' NAMESAKE: ELLEN E. JACK

The current Captain Jack's trail that runs through Jones Park was named after Ellen E. Jack (Captain Jack) who moved to America with her husband Captain Charles E. Jack from England. When her husband died she adopted his title. In the early 1900's she settled in a small cabin off High Drive and kept a winter house in Colorado Springs City limits. Captain Jack also hoped to capitalize on the tourists looking to travel along the Bear Creek trail and established a tourist shop with lodging and a curio shop but struggled to keep constant business. She was a woman prospector and miner, handy with pistols, rifles, and the pick-ax and was arrested many times during her life for shooting men who attempted to cheat her, steal from her or kill her.

## SECTION 4: Existing Conditions and Site Analysis





JONES PARKS' ORIGINAL WAYFINDING SIGNAGE

## MORE RECENT JONES PARK HISTORY

The logging industry emerged to meet the needs for nearby mining, homestead development, and railroad development. Jones Park was home to one of two known small-scale sawmill operation in the Southern Pikes Peak region. Deforestation of the area occurred for over 20 years. Between the logging and natural disasters such as forest fires and avalanches, much of Jones Park's vegetation was decimated.

The Forest Reserve Act of 1891 was established by the United States Congress with the intention of preserving timber covered public lands for public reservation. As Jones Park was included in the Pikes Peak Timber Land Reserve, logging, homesteading and declaration of occupancy was abruptly stopped. In 1904, the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service leased a small tract of land on the South side of Bear Creek within Jones Park to be used as an experimental nursery, but the project was abandoned a few years later, much like many of the other projects and developments in the park before it. The goal of the experiment was to start a small project that would eventually lead to finding the most efficient and effective way to reforest the Pikes Peak Region.

The trails that were established when the U.S. Army set up the Signal Service and the trails created by early homesteaders allowed the City of Colorado Springs to create easy routes in order to access municipal water from potential mountain lake sources. In 1891 the first pipeline was built in Jones Park, but the line was used scarcely as the City did not have the water rights to the area. In 1948, Colorado Springs Utilities finalized the purchase of Frank H. Loud's property, the last private land holding in Jones Park and of Seven Lakes outside of Jones Park. The City then acquired the rest of the privately-owned land in Jones Park in 1952. In the years that followed, Jones Park became a place primarily for recreation. Hiking, horseback riding, and in later years mountain biking and motorcycle use became common uses in Jones Park.

In 2007, a genetic study of trout populations in Colorado was released that called into question the genetics of what was previously thought to be genetically pure Greenback Cutthroat Trout. Further testing determined that in early 2012, 750 of the only known genetically-pure Greenback Cutthroat Trout were found in an approximately four-mile stretch of Bear Creek that runs through Jones Park. In September 2012, the Center for Biological Diversity filed a lawsuit against the Pike and San Isabel National Forest for violating the Endangered Species Act, to protect the threatened Greenback Cutthroat Trout found in the Bear Creek.

## SECTION 4: Existing Conditions & Site Analysis

The old Jones Park Trails allowed for motorcyclists to ride along the creek which was causing erosion problems that filled in the deep water pools the fish need to survive. The National Forest responded by closing one of the most popular multi use trails in the area. Colorado Springs Utilities donated Jones Park to El Paso County, CO in January 2015, as the County hoped that having local ownership would allow for some, although limited, continued public recreational access. After being closed to motorcycles for five years, Jones Park was reopened to all of its previous uses, in July 2017. The reopening included newly modified trails located further from Bear Creek to reduce sedimentation issues.

Today, Jones Park is a multi-use park open to hikers, bikers, horseback riders, and motorcyclists. The focus may have shifted from the original focus of recreation, tourism, transportation and settlement to focus more on recreation, tourism and environmental conservation. Many of the key ideas that Jones, Loud, and the Giles family envisioned when they first came to the area still define Jones Park today.



THE BEAR CREEK INN FIRST WELCOMED VISITORS TO JONES PARK BEGINNING IN 1888

## SECTION 4: Existing Conditions and Site Analysis



## SECTION 5: MASTER PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

### INTERPRETIVE AND EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

Jones Park, with its long and rich history of settlement, use and development, contains unique cultural and historic resources. In addition, the diverse ecology and unique environmental resources contribute to Jones Park's outstanding natural resources. These cultural and natural resources present excellent opportunities for education, interpretation, and continued environmental research in the park. A meaningful education and interpretive plan can enhance user experience for visitors to Jones Park, expand knowledge about the area, and create new points of interest along the trail network. In addition, providing interpretive information can help build public/user support for protection, stewardship, and preservation of the unique history and environment assets in Jones Park.

A public survey conducted in the course of developing this Master Plan showed a desire among many respondents for improved signage and additional interpretive opportunities in Jones Park. When asked, *"If new interpretive and educational opportunities are proposed for Jones Park, I would like to see information about: (please select all that apply):"*, the public identified the following as their top three choices:

- The history of Jones Park (59%)
- The ecology of Jones Park (39%)
- (Current) Information on Jones Park (35%)

A desire for interpretive information on the park's greenback cutthroat trout received twenty three percent of the votes.

This Master Plan recommends focusing interpretive and education efforts on these themes. Information on the plants, wildlife and broad ecological and environmental conditions in Jones Park can help visitors better understand the natural elements that make Jones Park such a special County Park. Specific information on the Greenback Cutthroat Trout can inform visitors about the importance of protecting this threatened species as well as helping visitors understand how the



GREENBACK CUTTHROAT TROUT INTERPRETIVE SIGNAGE

trout contributes to the overall uniqueness of Jones Park. Finally, interpretation of the historical assets of Jones Park will help to reveal the long and rich history of human use and settlement in this area.

Despite Jones Park's relative isolation and remote location, there are opportunities for interpretation, research, and periodic educational programs within the park. Throughout the planning process, community members shared their desire for unobtrusive and limited interpretive signage. One community member shared, "educational improvements should add to, not take away from, the environment in Jones Park." The Consultant team agrees with this sentiment and proposes a restrained interpretive and educational signage program for Jones Park.

## JONES PARK INTERPRETIVE THEMES

Interpretive and educational programming in open space parks is often most effective when it addresses both broad themes and site or location-specific information. **The following themes have been identified as significant ecological/natural topics suitable for interpretive and educational signage:**

- Greenback Cutthroat Trout restoration and recovery
- Animal species common to Jones Park and the Bear Creek Watershed (including the threatened Mexican Spotted Owl)
- Vegetation species common to the upper montane ecosystem of the park
- Forest health, wildfire, and natural forest succession
- Non-native and invasive species
- Geology and geological processes including erosion and sedimentation
- Climate, hydrology and watersheds
- Impact of human use on the environment

**Significant historic themes identified for Jones Park include:**

- Early Ute use and habitation
- Transportation including historic trail/wagon road construction and access to Pikes Peak
- Homesteading in Jones Park
- Historic recreational use in Jones Park including early stagecoach inns and hotels
- Farming, grazing and forestry efforts
- Historic landownership and management
- Current Jones Park historic resources

## SECTION 5: Interpretive Opportunities



## Significant interpretive themes related to Jones Park today include:

- Restoration, stewardship and environmental preservation
- Greenback Cutthroat Trout management
- Recreational use including information on the evolving trail network
- Ownership and management including the role of conservation easements
- Potential environmental impact of human use

## JONES PARK INTERPRETIVE NODES

This Master Plan identifies three areas suitable for interpretive and educational signage in Jones Park. Across the 1,191 acres of the park, this represents a limited interpretive signage regime that will meet the public desire for additional interpretive/educational information with minimal development and visual clutter. It is recommended that each interpretive location provide unique information specific to its location and in alignment with the broader interpretive themes described above. Additional locations signs should be at the property boundaries.

A more specific listing of recommended educational and interpretive topics is as follows:

- **Bear Creek Crossing on Loud's Cabin Trail:**

Bear Creek and the Bear Creek Watershed are prominent natural features in Jones Park. In addition, as the home to the threatened Greenback Cutthroat Trout, they are features of great environmental significance. Additional signage and information on hydrology, riparian ecosystems, and watershed health is recommended. This interpretive kiosk should supplement the existing Greenback Cutthroat Trout informational sign located approximately ¼ mile south of this location.

- **Loud's Cabin:**

Loud's Cabin is the most prominent remaining historic feature in Jones Park. The homestead was developed by Frank H. Loud, the former head of the mathematics department at Colorado College. An educational/interpretive node should be developed in this area with specific information on Loud's Cabin as well as supplemental information on other significant homesteads (and lodges) in Jones Park. Relevant historical information may also include the history of recreation and tourism in Jones Park as it relates to early settlement and development within the Park.

Given the sensitive nature of the historic resources located at Jones Park, it is recommended that Loud's Cabin be fenced with a low, rustic split rail fence to prevent damage or degradation to the historic structure. It is also recommended to provide a rustic bench at Loud's Cabin to provide a convenient spot for visitors to rest. For many hiking visitors to Jones Park, Loud's Cabin is a the furthest most point of their hike. Creating a small interpretive node with seating and protection of the historic homestead may further establish the area as a desirable destination for visitors.

- **Captain Jack’s Trail and Loud’s Cabin Trail Intersection:**

In the trail concepts described within this Master Plan, the intersection of Captain Jack’s and Loud’s Cabin trails becomes a significant trail hub within Jones Park. Though located approximately 1/4 of mile inside the Jones Park’s property boundary (from the south and the east), this intersection and interpretive node may serve as the entrance/welcome/etc. for most visitors to Jones Park. It is therefore recommended that wayfinding, interpretive information, notifications, and park rules and guidelines be provided at this location.

Interpretive signage is recommended to include information about Jones Park such as ownership and management, a brief historical overview, the role of sustainable recreation in supporting environmental preservation, and Greenback Cutthroat Trout restoration. More detailed information on the vegetation and animal species visitors may encounter is also recommended for this interpretive node.

## JONES PARK WAYFINDING SIGNAGE

In the Jones Park community survey, 69 percent of respondents identified “More Maps” as an amenity that would improve Jones Park. An additional 55 percent of respondents said that “Trail Rating(s)” would improve their experience in Jones Park. In light of this clearly expressed desire for additional wayfinding information this Master Plan proposes adding additional wayfinding, safety, trail etiquette, and trail difficulty (rating) signs in specific location throughout Jones Park. The recommended locations include key trail intersections and major trail hubs. For additional information on the recommended locations please see the Wayfinding Map attached below:

### **Way Finding Signage should include:**

- Trail Map
- Trail Lengths
- Trail Difficulty Ratings
- Key Destinations and prominent physical features
- Distances to Key Destinations
- Trail Use (allowed Recreation)
- Trail Etiquette Information



The trail rating system proposed for Jones Park has been adapted from the International Trail Marking System, originally developed for the downhill ski industry and later adapted to back country trails. Trails in Jones Park will be rated on a 'Green', 'Blue', 'Black' (easiest to hardest, respectively) system. Trail rating is determined according to their width, grade (steepness), surface condition, and technical features. Notably, trail difficulty is not rated based upon the length of the trail. This is because the subjective difficulty trail length provides can vary greatly according to recreational mode, fitness and other personal factors.

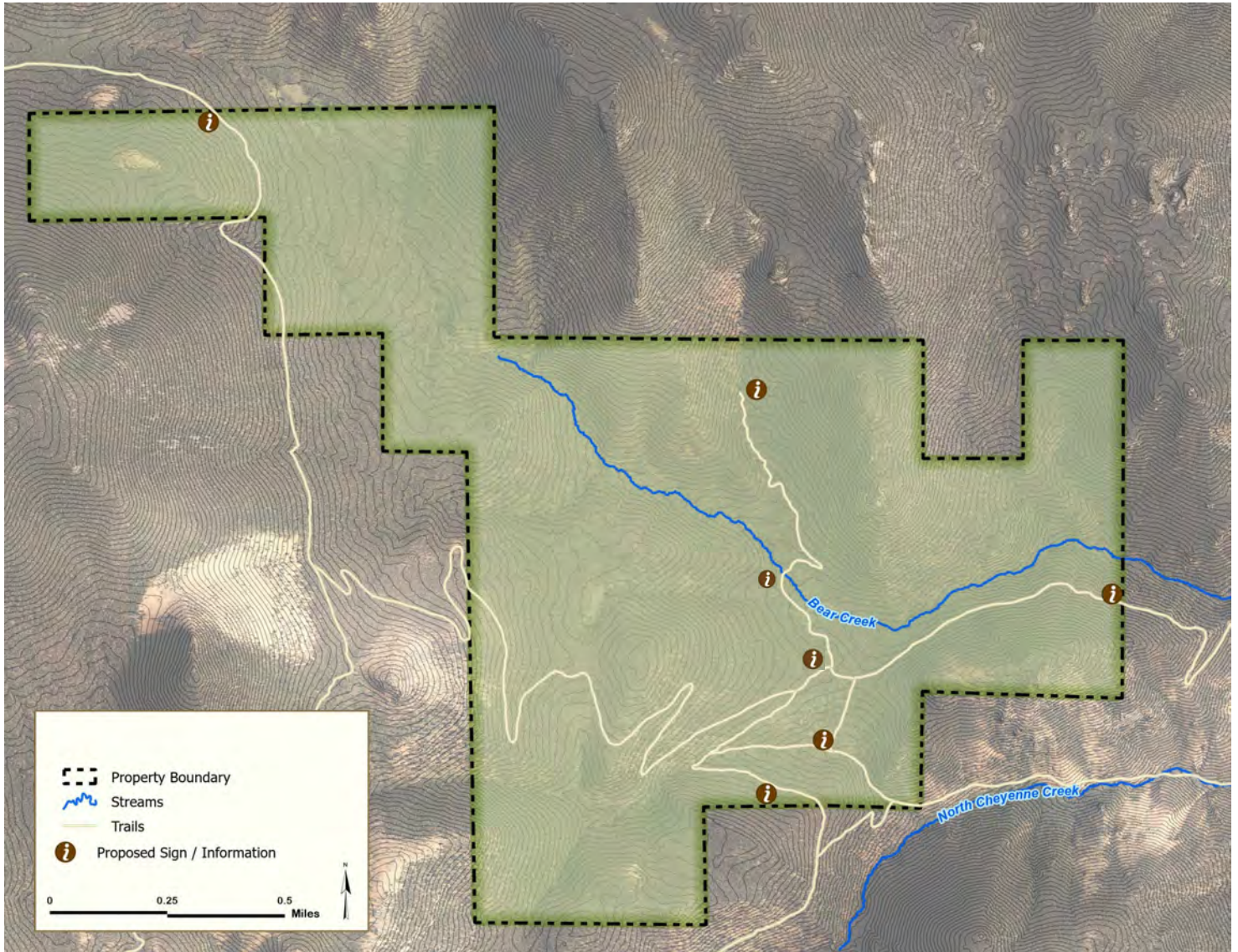
The purpose of the trail rating system proposed for Jones Park is to help users make informed decisions about the trails they visit. By providing visitors with an accurate rating of trail difficulty, users will be able to better manage risk and have a safe experience, visit trails that match their skill level, and improve their overall experience in Jones Park. It should be noted that while multiple recreational uses are allowed within Jones Park (including horseback riding, motorcycling, hiking, and mountain biking) this Master Plan proposes a single rating system for all trails. It is expected that the consistency of the trail rating across all trails will allow visitors to calibrate to their own experience level and chosen mode of recreation.



US FOREST SERVICE-LED HIKE ON SEVEN BRIDGES (TRAIL 622)

## SECTION 5: Interpretive Opportunities





RECOMMENDED WAYFINDING SIGNAGE LOCATIONS

## SECTION 5: Interpretive Opportunities



## INTERPRETIVE PROGRAMING AND RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

El Paso County has earned praise for the programming provided at many of their regional and open space parks. From nature hikes to comprehensive nature center programs and activities, the interpretive programming offered by El Paso County provides a rich educational and immersive experience for visitors of all ages.

It is recommended that El Paso County continue its tradition of quality interpretive programming by developing seasonal series of interpretive events in Jones Park. These may include park ranger or naturalist led hikes in the park, guided-photography visits, opportunities to learn about Greenback Cutthroat Trout recovery, or history tours of the park. These interpretive programming opportunities are similar to many of the offering currently available at the County's Nature Centers.

In discussions with members of the public, several citizens suggested partnering with outside organizations to help provide interpretive programming in Jones Park. This is an excellent way to leverage County resources



MIXED CONIFER FORESTS AND GRANITE ROCK FORMATIONS  
TYPICAL OF JONES PARK

and may result in a rich educational programming within Jones Park. Opportunities for partnerships should be explored and relationships with outside organizations such as US Fish and Wildlife, Trout Unlimited, Rocky Mountain Field Institute, and the Palmer Land Conservancy (to name a few), should be cultivated to enhance programming opportunities in Jones Park.

Perhaps the most timely and necessary research opportunity available in Jones Park is the Greenback Cutthroat Trout restoration efforts in Bear Creek. This Master Plan recommends ongoing partnerships with government, academic, and research organizations as they continue to support Greenback Cutthroat Trout recovery in Bear Creek. While the primary focus of his research will be driven by the specific needs of the trout, collaboration is encouraged, where appropriate, to help share progress with the general public and visitors to Jones Park. This may have the impact of building additional support and excitement among the public for recovery and restoration efforts in Jones Park.

### SECTION 5: Interpretive Opportunities



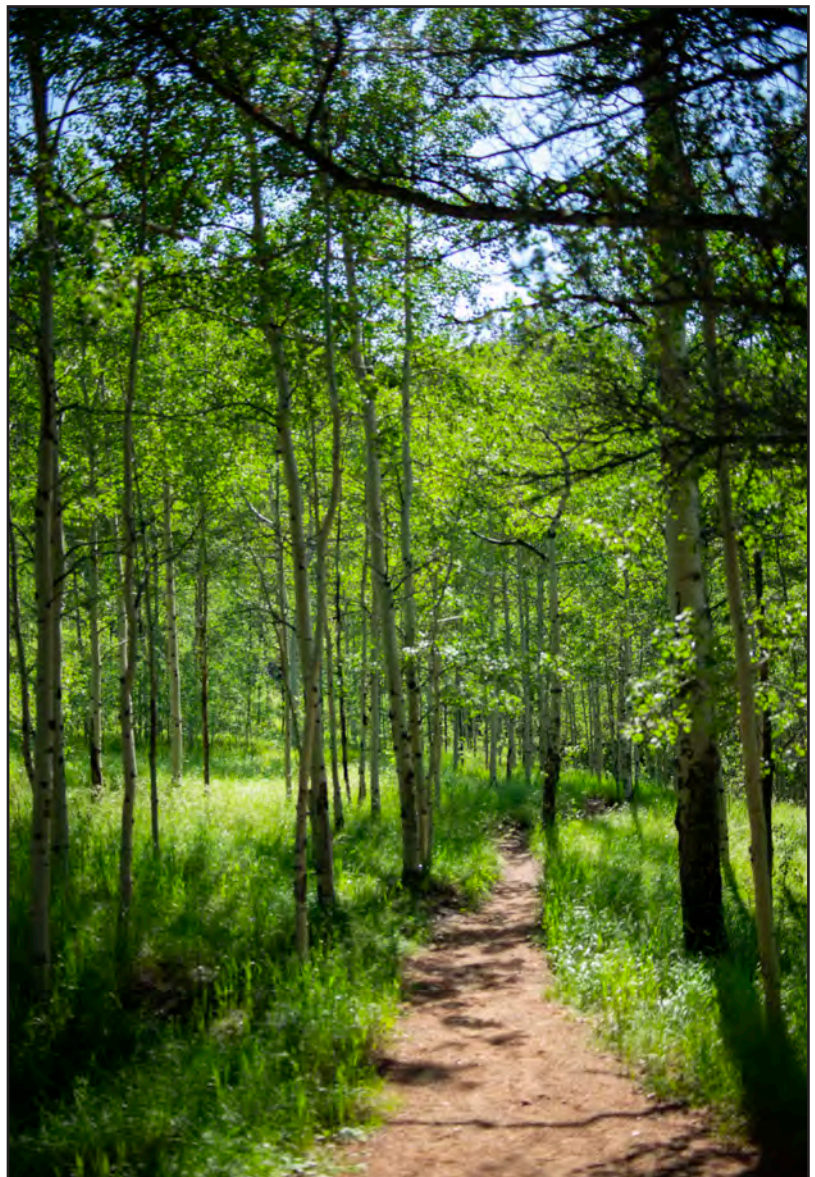
## SECTION 6: TRAIL MAINTENANCE

A trail network is one of the primary lenses by which people experience an open space property. The trail network can shape visitor experience in meaningful and significant ways. A trail network leads people through space in a focused and deliberate way; it can expand, limit, or focus access; it will shape views, it can help to educate and inspire. It provides opportunities for recreation and will determine the places, the modes, and the type of recreational experiences a visitor will have in a park. A trail system in an open space park is also one of the most effective tools to protect natural resources and create a more harmonious relationship between visitors and the environmental assets of the park. In short, a thoughtfully considered trail system is a critical component of a successfully managed, sustainable open space.

A well-designed trail system balances use and conservation by concentrating activity in appropriate, environmentally resilient areas of the park while avoiding sensitive areas that are unsuitable for recreation. A balanced approach to sustainable recreation in Jones Park can support critical conservation efforts and provide a high quality outdoor recreation experience for visitors. This balance is particularly important in Jones Park where the rugged and remote location, diversity of recreation modes, and presences of threatened wildlife species demand a well-considered, sustainable trail system.

Jones Park currently has 4.9 miles of trails. The existing trail network features several interconnected loops as well as through routes that provide regional connectivity to trails east, south and west of Jones Park. The existing Jones Park Trails include:

- **Seven Bridges (622): .74 miles** (3,905 LF)
- **FS Trail 668: .34 miles** (1,792 LF)
- **Captain Jack's Trail (667): 2.83 miles** (14,924 LF)
- **Loud's Cabin Trail: .81 miles** (4,259 LF)



TYPICAL JONES PARK HIKING TRAIL

## SECTION 6: Trail Maintenance



- **FS Trail 622.A: .16 miles** (8,87LF)
- **Multi-Use Trails: 3.2 Miles** (16,715 LF)
- **Non-Motorized Multi-Use Trails: 1.7 miles** (9,050 LF)

A majority of the existing trail network was constructed in recent years in response to the discovery of Bear Creek's Greenback Cutthroat Trout population. In many instances, newly constructed trails replaced historic, unsustainable trails that were determined to pose a risk to Greenback Cutthroat Trout habitat. The process for determining the location, alignment, and recreational mode for these new trails was exhaustive with the primary guidance provided by the United States Forest Service's Notice of Final Decision. Additional input was provided the Bear Creek Watershed Round Table, a coalition of user groups, government agencies, and non-profit organizations.

During the Master Plan process it was identified that additional trails were desired. However, at this time, additional trails are not supported by the USDA Notice of Final Decision or the Conservation Easement which governs management and public access of Jones Park. Additional trails are addressed in the Appendix.

Implicit in much of the public feedback received in the course of developing this Master Plan was the understanding that a sustainable trail system can be an extremely effective conservation and management tool. This is particularly true in the case of Jones Park where the long-term protection of Greenback Cutthroat Trout has played such an important role in the park's recent history.

The primary risk to the threatened trout population is habitat degradation. One of the leading potential causes of habitat degradation for the Greenback Cutthroat Trout is sedimentation in Bear Creek caused by upslope erosion. Erosion is the natural process through which rock and soil are worn away by wind and water. Left unchecked, erosion can destroy trails, damage the environment, and degrade habitat. Water (runoff) can compound the problem, particularly if it is allowed to channel or flow down the trail. In fact, focused runoff can do more damage to a trail (and downhill habitat) than any trail user.

If trails are poorly aligned, improperly constructed, or not matched to their intended use, recreational use of these trails can, over time, lead to unintended erosion and sedimentation. This was a concern for some of the historic Jones Park trails and it led to the US Forest Service Notice of Final Decision to call for the closure and realignment of multiple Jones Park trails. The trails that have been reconstructed in the past several years have substantially addressed these concerns.

In the assessment of the consultant planning team, the existing Jones Park trail network is a sustainable trail system that will, with proper maintenance and use, provide a sustainable trail experience with limited risk of erosion and sedimentation that could harm Greenback Cutthroat Trout populations.

## SECTION 6: Trail Maintenance

## ROGUE TRAILS

As described in the Existing Conditions section of this Master Plan, there are still concentrations of rogue trails within Jones Park. Rogue trails are created when recreational users leave designed, system trails and create their own paths and trails. These rogue trails are significant for two reasons:

First, because these trails are typically ‘fall-line’ trails that do not adhere to sustainable trail standards, they have a high potential to cause sedimentation, erosion and habitat degradation in Jones Park. This risk is often compounded by the fact that rogue trails often appear in environmentally sensitive areas, on steep slopes, or near natural or historic features that are not appropriate for recreational use. Because of these risks, it is strongly recommended that all non-system and rogue trails be closed and decommissioned at the earliest opportunity.

The second reason rogue trails are significant is because of what they signify. When rogue trails appear, it is often an indication that users do not feel they have access to the places or experiences

they desire. By creating a rogue trail, a small portion of trail users are essentially voting with their feet (or tires) to say that the existing trail system does not meet their desires. When an open space property has a proliferation of rogue trails, it is always worth considering why these trails exist. The primary reason will be that a small portion of trail users are not following open space rules and are not practicing ‘leave no trace’ trail etiquette. However, in some instances it may be reasonable to conclude that rogue trails are an important indicator of a trail system that could be improved to provide additional experiences, destination, or trail routes. We believe this is the appropriate response to rogue trails in Jones Park.



NON--SYSTEM ROGUE TRAIL IN JONES PARK

The public survey results show a large majority of respondents would like the Jones Park Master Plan to consider “additional trail segments or loops”, as well as trails that exhibit more technical or challenging segments. Additional trails are addressed in the Appendix.

## SECTION 6: Trail Maintenance

### 6-3 TRAIL Maintenance



When discussing the Jones Park Trail network it is critical to remember that one of the primary management concerns is the health and wellbeing of the Bear Creek Greenback Cutthroat Trout population. It is extremely important to limit rogue trail development as these trails pose, arguably, the greatest risk to Greenback Cutthroat Trout habitat.

## MULTI-USE TRAILS

The concept of multi-use trails is strongly supported by the public and a central component of the El Paso County Park Master Plan. A significant portion of the Jones Park trail system will be open to multi-use recreation, including motorized access.

Trails shall be marked with signage to include a difficulty rating, mileage, permitted uses, and wayfinding to help improve user experience and to ensure compliance with recommended recreational modes in the park.



TRAIL SINUOSITY TO IMPROVE RECREATIONAL EXPERIENCE

## SECTION 6: Trail Maintenance

## NON-SYSTEM TRAIL CLOSURE

The Jones Park trail system considers and balances many factors, including physical resources, natural and cultural resources, management and social influences, prior planning initiatives, and public input. The development of non-system rogue trails undermine this process and presents great risk to critical habitat in Jones Park. All trails (rogue or otherwise) not in the approved trail system are recommended to be closed.

## WAYFINDING NODES

The Jones Park trail system offers a range of trail difficulty levels and permitted recreation uses on numerous interconnected trails over varied terrain. The train network can be challenging to navigate for experienced Jones Park visitors, let alone for first time visitors to the park. Public input identified improved wayfinding as a top community priority. For this reason, wayfinding nodes are proposed at key trail intersections in Jones Park. Wayfinding nodes may include a trail system map, interpretive signage and information on the difficulty of the trail. Trail maps should contain a "you are here" notation, trail names and the trail etiquette triangle, in addition to the aforementioned information.

Trail wayfinding should be viewed as a tool that enhances visitor experience and supports compliance with trail etiquette and park rules. To the greatest extent possible, wayfinding nodes should be aesthetically



SUCCESSFUL JONES PARK TRAIL CLOSURE AND RESTORATION



compatible with the nature environment of the park and unobtrusive in appearance. Further, it should be recognized that all construction and transportation of materials in Jones Park will present challenges so signage should be concise and strategically located.

## TRAIL STANDARDS

Trail standards help to unify a trail network and provide a consistent, predictable and high quality trail experience in an open space park. Additionally, trail standards help create a sustainable trail system through thoughtfully designed trails, monitoring and maintenance regimes, and by creating a systematic approach to managing recreational use across the open space. The goal of the trail recommendations described within this plan is to help ensure that the trail network, and the recreational use trails encourage, lead to a community of advocates who know, love, respect, and care for Jones Park.

To support a quality visitor experience and to create a sustainable trail network that complements environmental preservation in Jones Park, the following trail standards for existing trails are recommended:

- Enhance sustainability and user enjoyment on existing trail segments within Jones Park with a focus on improving Captain Jack Trail to limit erosion and sedimentation and create short segments with more technical features.
- System-wide, seek to minimize user conflicts through clear signage and design techniques that limit user velocities in areas of poor visibility.
- Continue to collaborate with volunteer and stakeholder organizations to identify problem areas, opportunities for volunteer work and improvements, and set priorities.
- Continue to provide monitoring and oversight to identify environmental impacts or disturbance before they develop into larger issues.
- Consider trail armoring techniques in select locations to stabilize trail grades and limit impacts associated with wheel spin or wheel braking lock-up.
- Monitor and address areas of erosion before sedimentation can migrate downhill, particularly in with the Bear Creek Watershed Boundary.
- Future trail reroutes are addressed in the Appendix and should serve primarily to improve sustainability of the trail network.

## SECTION 7: TRAIL MAINTENANCE GUIDELINES

### TRAIL MAINTENANCE GUIDELINES

A well-maintained sustainable trail is one of the most effective tools to manage visitor impact and protect the natural environment in an open space property. A sustainable trail is defined by its success in:

- **Protecting the Environment**
- **Meeting the Needs of Users**
- **Limiting User Conflicts and Increasing Safety**
- **Minimizing Maintenance**



SEVEN BRIDGES (TRAIL 622)




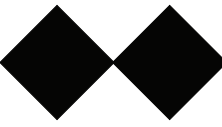
Trail maintenance within Jones Park will seek to achieve these four outcomes in a balanced manner that improves user experience, proactively protects environmental resources, and provides long-term sustainability of the trail network. Additional considerations for trail sustainability include protection of environmental, cultural and historic resources; trail safety; cost of construction; the diverse recreational modes in Jones Park; monitoring and maintenance; and limiting rogue trail development.

To achieve these goals, maintenance of trails within Jones Park is critical. This Master Plan recommends a trail classification system that defines trails by use (motorized multi-use trails, non-motorized multi-use trails, and hiking only trails) and by difficulty. The difficulty rating of trails will be based on a rating system similar to what is used within the ski industry with green for easy difficulty, blue for medium difficulty, and black for difficult trails.



## Jones Park Master Plan

### TRAIL SYSTEM DIFFICULTY RATING RECOMMENDATIONS

TRAIL SYMBOL	TRAIL WIDTH	TRAIL SURFACE	AVERAGE TRAIL GRADE	MAXIMUM TRAIL GRADE	TECHNICAL OBSTACLES
 <b>Easiest</b>	48" or More	Firm, stable and consistent	5% or Less	10% Maximum	Small unavoidable <b>obstacles (4" or Less)</b> , Occasional moderate avoidable obstacles
 <b>Intermediate (More Difficult)</b>	36" or More	Mostly stable with moderate variability	7% or Less	15% Maximum	Moderate unavoidable <b>obstacles (8" or Less)</b> , Moderate avoidable obstacles
 <b>Advanced (Difficult)</b>	24" or More	Occasionally unstable and high variability	10% or Less	15% or Higher	Large unavoidable <b>obstacles (15" or Less)</b> , Frequent Moderate to large avoidable obstacles
 <b>Expert (Most Difficult)</b>	24" or Less	Unstable and extreme variability	10% or More	15% or Higher	Large to very large unavoidable <b>obstacles (15" +)</b> , Frequent Moderate to very large avoidable obstacles

Please note that the trail rating system described on the following pages identifies Expert (Most Difficult) trails. No existing or proposed trail within Jones Park meets the criteria for Expert Trails.

## SECTION 7: Trail Maintenance Guidelines

## GREEN - EASY TRAILS

**Typical Trail Width:** 48" or less

**Average Trail Grade:** 6% or less

**Maximum Grade:** 10%

**Trail Character:** Firm, stable trail surface with few, small obstacles

**Use:** Motorized and Non-Motorized Multi-Use

Green Trails are suitable for all recreational uses within Jones Park and require minimal technical skill to negotiate. The average grade of these trails is 6% with short sections up to 10% grade. Green trails are

EXISTING Rouge TRAIL



CAPTAIN JACK'S TRAIL (TRAIL 667)

CAPTAIN JACK'S TRAIL (TRAIL 667)



TYPICAL GREEN (EASY) TRAIL IN JONES PARK

## SECTION 7: Trail Maintenance Guidelines



generally free of unavoidable technical obstacles and their trail surface is firm, smooth and consistent. Trail width will vary with maximum designed widths being no wider than 48” and no less than 24”.

BLUE – MEDIUM DIFFICULTY TRAILS

- Typical Trail Width:** 36” or less
- Average Trail Grade:** 7% or less
- Maximum Grade:** 15%
- Trail Character:** Mostly stable trail surface with moderately sized obstacles and occasional small, unavoidable technical features
- Use:** Motorized and Non-Motorized Multi-Use, Hiking only

Blue Trails are suitable for most recreational uses within Jones Park and provide a moderately challenging experience for trail users. Trails will typically have a moderate number of small (8” or less) obstacles.



BLUE RATED CAPTAIN JACK’S TRAIL (TRAIL 667)



EXISTING ROUGE TRAIL



CAPTAIN JACK’S TRAIL (TRAIL 667)

SECTION 7: Trail Maintenance Guidelines



Trail users will occasionally encounter small, unavoidable technical features or obstacles that will require intermediate ability to negotiate. The width of blue trails will be 36" or less with average grades of 7% or less. Short sections of trail may pitch up to 15% to negotiate terrain and provide a varied trail experience.

## BLACK – DIFFICULT TRAILS

**Typical Trail Width:** 24" or less

**Average Trail Grade:** 10% or less

**Maximum Grade:** 15%

**Trail Character:** Variable or loose trail surface with moderate, more frequent obstacles and occasional moderately sized, unavoidable technical features

**Use:** Motorized and Non-Motorized Multi-Use, Hiking only

Black trails provide a challenging, technical trail experience for visitors to Jones Park. These trails can be appropriate for all uses, however motorized multi-use access may present some difficulty for trail sustainability.



CAPTAIN JACK'S TRAIL (TRAIL 667)

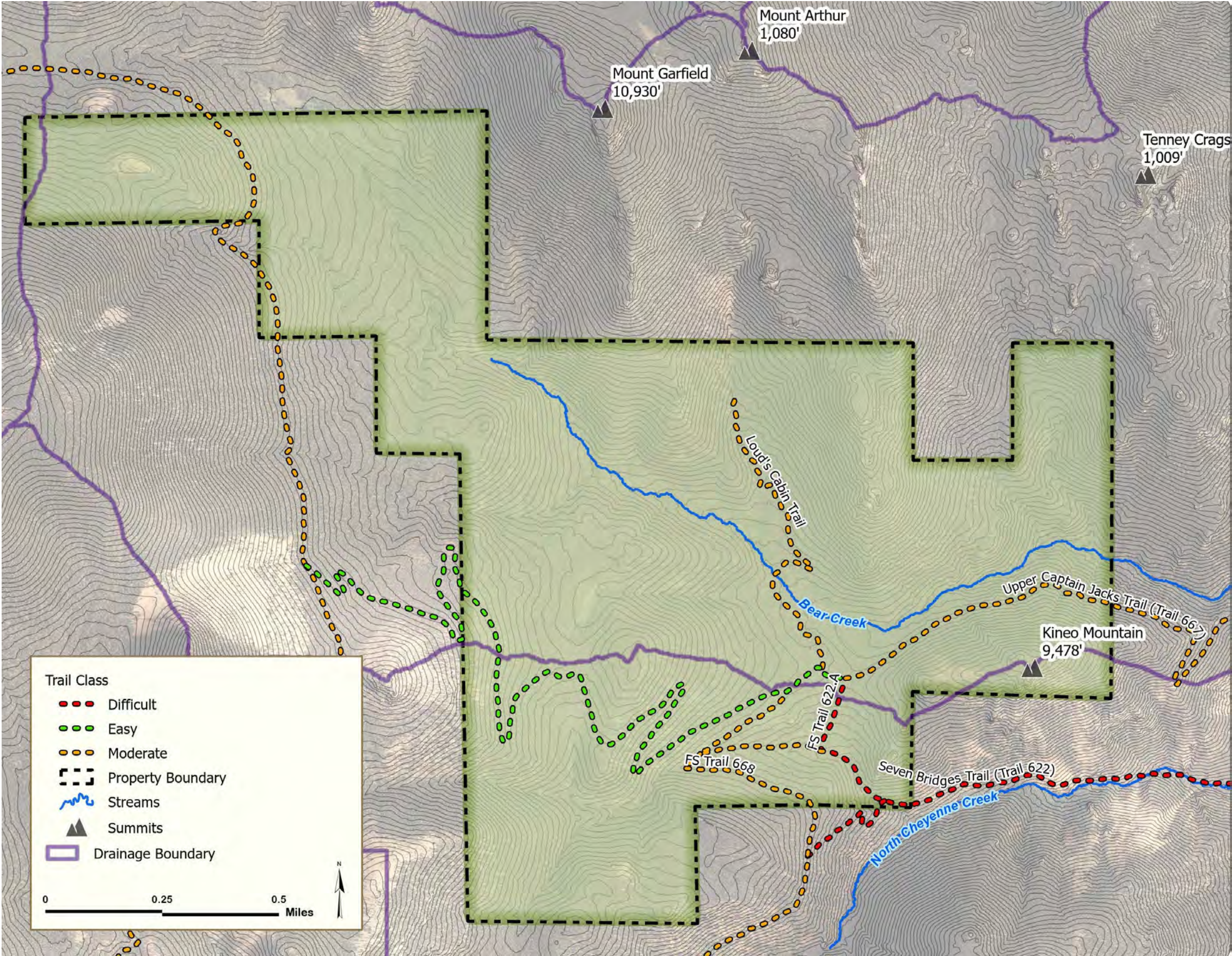
EXISTING SOCIAL TRAIL NEAR LOUD'S CABIN



CAPTAIN JACK'S TRAIL (TRAIL 667)

## SECTION 7: Trail Maintenance Guidelines







Black trails will typically have a rough, highly variable surface and a narrow trail width of 24" or less. Obstacles including roots, switchbacks, water diversions, steps and exposed rocks, may be frequent and unavoidable technical obstacles will be common. Average grades will be 10% or less with occasional short sections that rise to 15%.

## GENERAL TRAIL NETWORK GOALS:

In addition to the specific recommendations for

green, blue, and black trails, the following goals should be considered for all existing trails in Jones Park. These goals will help ensure that the trail network in Jones Park provides a high-quality recreational experience for visitors and provides long term environmental sustainability.



HIKING GROUP IN JONES PARK

### Goal 1) Understand Users and the Desired Trail Experience

When maintaining a trail, it is essential to identify who the trail is intended to serve and what kind of trail experience it is trying to create. Trails should not exist simply because land is available. This is particularly true in remote or environmentally sensitive areas. In Jones Park, each trail should serve a distinct purpose and have a clear trail experience goal in mind. This purpose may be to provide sustainable access to a new area of the park, provide a more technical

trail experience that may not currently exist (thus potentially limiting potential rogue trail formation), to meet the needs of a particular recreational group, or to disperse trail use to reduce conflict and environmental impact.

By identifying the intended users and trail experience on an existing trail, El Paso County can apply the most appropriate trail standard for a given location, trail and user.

### Goal 2) Diverse Trail Network

One of the elements that define successful trail



VIEWS FROM A HIGH POINT IN JONES PARK

## SECTION 7: Trail Maintenance Guidelines



networks is a system that provides a diversity of trail types and trail experiences. A diverse trail network has several distinct advantages for an open space property. First, a diversity of trail types can better accommodate a broad range of recreational uses such as motorized use, hiking, or equestrian activity. Secondly, not every trail type is appropriate for every area of Jones Park. For example, it may be most appropriate for trails located within the Bear Creek Drainage to have a narrower profile to limit potential construction disturbance. A third advantage of a diverse trail network is that it can dramatically reduce the formation of rogue trails. If park users have the types of trail experiences they desire, the likelihood of them venturing off trail is and creating rogue, non-system trails is significantly reduced. Consequently a diverse trail network should be a goal for Jones



US FOREST SERVICE-LED HIKE ON SEVEN BRIDGES (TRAIL 622)

### Goal 3) Multi-use Trails

The El Paso County Parks Master Plan emphasizes the importance of providing multi-use trails in their park and open space properties. This goal helps to ensure that trails are accessible and inclusive to the greatest number of park visitors. Wherever possible, this should be the continued goal of the Jones Park Trail network.

## SECTION 7: Trail Maintenance Guidelines

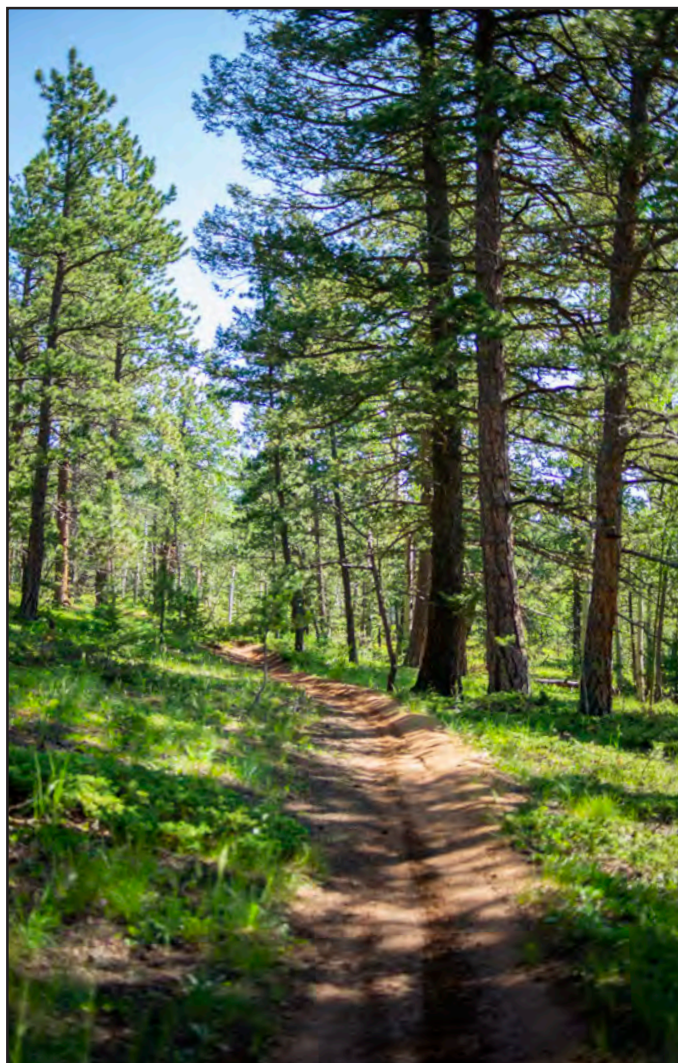


## Goal 4) Sustainable Trails that Effectively Manage Erosion and Sedimentation

A fundamental goal for all trails within Jones Park, shall be to limit trail-related erosion and sedimentation to the greatest possible degree. This is a basic goal of sustainable trails and shall be a maintenance parameter for all trails within Jones Park. There are four primary ways this goal shall be accomplished:

- Proper maintenance and construction of existing trails in Jones Park in accordance with established trail building guidelines.
- Avoid unnecessarily steep or loose slopes, and exercise diligence for all trails located within the Bear Creek Watershed.
- Match trail maintenance to the intended trail use.
- Implement a regular trail maintenance schedule in Jones Park to proactively address maintenance needs before they become an issue. Examples include debarming trails, reestablishing proper trail outslopes, and installing knick outslopes (retroactive excavation to add outslope) to ensure proper drainage along trail corridors.

These general trail maintenance goals will help to provide a quality outdoor experience for visitors to Jones Park and will mitigate many of the sustainability challenges associated with poorly designed, constructed, or maintained trails.



MULTI-USE TRAIL IN JONES PARK

## TECHNICAL TRAIL GUIDELINES

The following Technical Trail Guidelines provide specific guidance intended to complement the General Trail Guidelines listed above. These technical guidelines should help inform all maintenance activities of existing trails within Jones Park.



## Half Rule



HALF RULE EXAMPLE

The 'half rule' of trail building is one of the most effective ways to manage water flows and limit erosion within a trail corridor. Put simply, the half rule states that a trail's grade should not exceed half the grade of the hillside that the trail traverses. If the trail is constructed at greater than a 'half grade' the trail is considered a fall line trail that transports water down, rather than across, a trail. Over time this will lead to excessive trail erosion and downslope sedimentation.

## Trail Outslope

A critical trail guideline for Jones Park is that all trails shall have an outslope (downhill tilt) of four to five percent. This fundamental trail principal helps water to sheet flow across trails, rather than to funnel down the trail tread. This reduces erosion, sedimentation, and trail maintenance across the trail network.

Reestablishing a proper four to five percent trail outslope on existing trail should be a high priority maintenance goal for all trails in Jones Park.



EXAMPLE OF PROPER TRAIL OUTSLOPE

## SECTION 7: Trail Maintenance Guidelines



Priority should be given to trails that currently exhibit erosion or sedimentation characteristics.

### 10% Average Grade Guideline

The ten percent guideline is a common approach that helps to ensure that trails will have sustainable grades. The concept is that a trail at an overall grade of ten percent or less, allows for on-the-ground flexibility. A lower overall grade also helps to limit user-caused trail erosion. The maximum average grades for Jones Park trails occur on 'black trails' and these are intended to be ten percent or less. However, the majority of trails will have average grades of 7% or less.

### Sustainable Maximum Grades

While the majority of trails in Jones Park have average grades of seven percent or less, there are instances when the maximum trail grade (the steepest portion of a trail) can pitch above 10 percent. For the sustainability of the trail, it is important the maximum trail grade is matched to the intended trail use and the site specific conditions of the trail. Further, this Master Plan recommends limiting the maximum grade of trails to fifteen percent or less. In addition, the maximum trail grade shall always adhere to the half rule, described above.

Additional criteria to consider when establishing a maximum trail grade include:

- **Soil Type:** Steeper slopes should be limited on loose, erodible soils.
- **Types of Trail Users:** Trails intended for lower impact uses, such as hiking or mountain biking, can sustain higher maximum grades. However, higher-impact uses should consider lower maximum slopes to limit trail erosion.
- **Number of Trail Users:** As a general rule, lower use trails can sustain higher trail grades without erosion impacts.
- **Trail Difficulty:** Steep maximum grades are most



A SEGMENT CAPTAIN JACK'S TRAIL (OUTSIDE OF JONES PARK)  
APPROACHING AN UNSUSTAINABLE MAXIMUM GRADE



appropriate for blue (medium difficulty) and black (difficult) trails, but should be restricted on the easiest trails.

- **Grade Reversals:** Steeper slopes will typically transport more water than shallower sloped trails. It is therefore important to install grade reversals upslope and downslope of steeply pitched trail segments.

## Grade Reversals



GRADE REVERSALS BEING USED TO CREATE INTEREST AND IMPROVE DRAINAGE

Grade reversals, sometimes referred to as grade dips or rolling dips, are one of the most essential elements of a sustainable trail network. A grade reversal is a spot where a trail changes grade through a short dip to force water off of the trail tread at the low point. Without frequent grade reversals, a trail has the potential to become a funnel that carries water down its tread. Over time, this erosive action will cause damage to the trail and will lead to downslope sedimentation that can be quite harmful to watersheds.

Grade reversals have an added advantage of providing additional kinesthetic diversity for trail users. These small dips and rises can make a trail more playful and fun for many trail users. For existing trails in Jones Park, it is recommended that grade reversals be considered at current switchbacks or turns, depending on trail grade and soil conditions.

## Intentional Trail Transitions

One of the elements of trail maintenance that can greatly improve the safety and user experience on a trail network is thoughtful, intentional consideration at areas of trail transitions. This can refer to locations where two trails intersect or locations on a trail where unique situations arise that require a controlled transition, or modification of movement. An example of the second situation might be a place where a trail is approaching a steep slope or a turn with low visibility. In a transition areas such as this, it is important to provide natural trail features (like a choke point or small rock obstacle) that force a user (particularly a mountain bike or

## SECTION 7: Trail Maintenance Guidelines

motorcycle rider) to slow down so they approach the steep area or sharp turn at a safe rate of speed.

Additional areas to consider for choke point features include technical trail sections, tight turns, areas of low visibility, and any area where high user speeds could cause unsafe conditions.

In instances where two trails intersect, trail transitions can be an effective tool to manage access when 1) allowed trail use changes, or 2) where the difficulty of a trail changes at the intersection. In the first case, this Master Plan recommends clear trail signage to indicate the allowed recreation uses on each trail. In addition, a small barriers such as steps or a small pass through gate should be considered



A USFS ACCESS GATE USED TO CONTROL TRAIL ACCESS

to further limit non-allowed trail use.

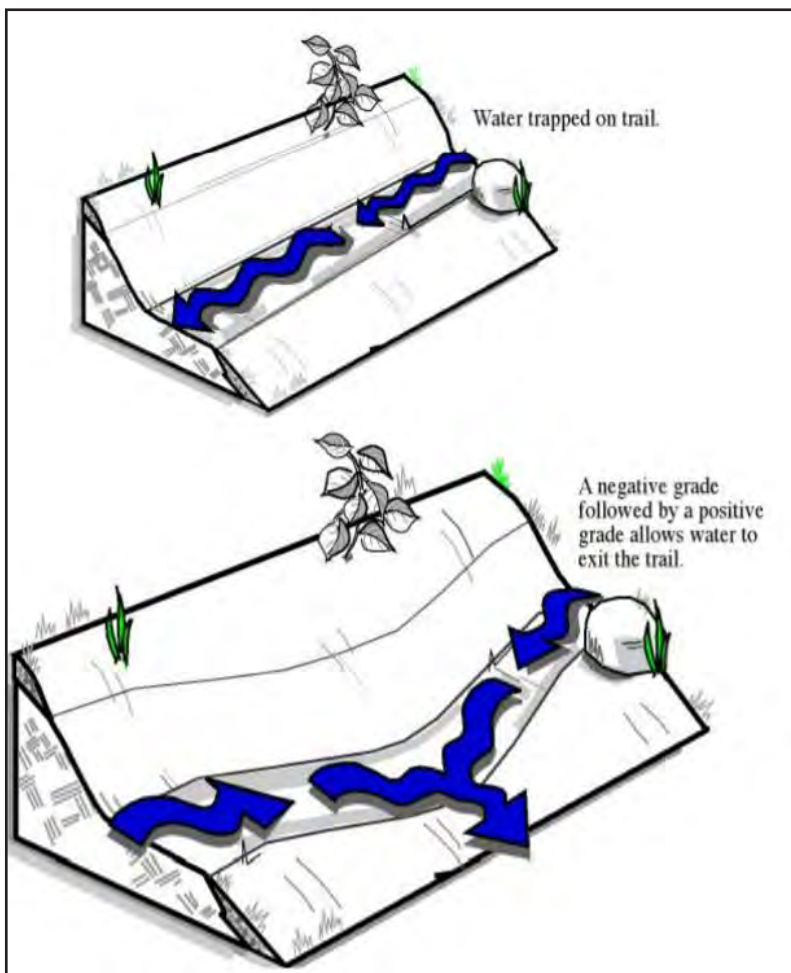


ILLUSTRATION OF THE IMPORTANCE OF PROPER TRAIL DRAINAGE

In locations where one trail intersects with a second trail with a higher difficulty rating (i.e. a 'green' trail intersects with a 'black' trail), thoughtful trail transitions can be an effective tool to enhance the visitor experience and improve safety. An example of this type of transition is a technical feature in the trail (such as exposed rocks) that is indicative of the types of obstacles that may be encountered throughout the trail. This trail transition will let park visitors know what kind of trail experience they can expect, and ensure that their skill level and expectations match with the trail can provide.

### Drainage Crossings

In Jones Park, particular care must be given to existing trails that cross drainage areas or areas where water flows may concentrate. While this is true for every open space property, the sensitive nature of the Bear Creek Watershed demands extra diligence near drainage crossings. Before discussing

## SECTION 7: Trail Maintenance Guidelines



strategies, it is worthy to emphasis that there are no new trails proposed in Jones Park. However, existing trails cross depressed areas that tend to concentrate water flows. In these situations, the following strategies are recommended.

During trail maintenance activities of existing trails, drainage areas should be clearly identified and assessed. If it appears that surface water flows are present within the drainage, specific steps must be taken (including constructing small bridges or rock culverts) to avoid contact with seasonal water flows. However, the majority of drainage areas have not exhibited water flows during the planning of this Master Plan.



AN EXISTING BRIDGE ON THE LOUD'S CABIN TRAIL INSTALLED TO LIMIT RECREATION IMPACTS TO BEAR CREEK

After assessing drainage areas, sustainable crossings should be considered when completing maintenance of existing trails. The guideline for every crossing shall be for existing trails to drop into the drainage and climb out the other side at grades of six percent or less. By routing the trail so that it descends into the drainage from both sides, natural flows within the drainage area will not be interrupted and water will not be funneled down the trail surface. As an additional measure of protection, trails shall include a grade reversal prior to descending into the drainage area.

To further limit the potential for sedimentation downslope from drainage crossings, armored crossing should be considered as an extra measure of protection. Armored crossings are a simple and effective way to strengthen trails and limit erosion. They consist of a short section of trail where rocks are set at three quarters of their depth into the trail surface creating a highly durable trail surface.

## ENHANCING EXISTING TRAILS

Most of the trail recommendations described above can be effectively applied to existing trails. There are additional specific measures that can be taken to further improve the sustainability of the existing Jones Park trail network. These recommendations should be considered as funding and manpower becomes available for projects in Jones Park:

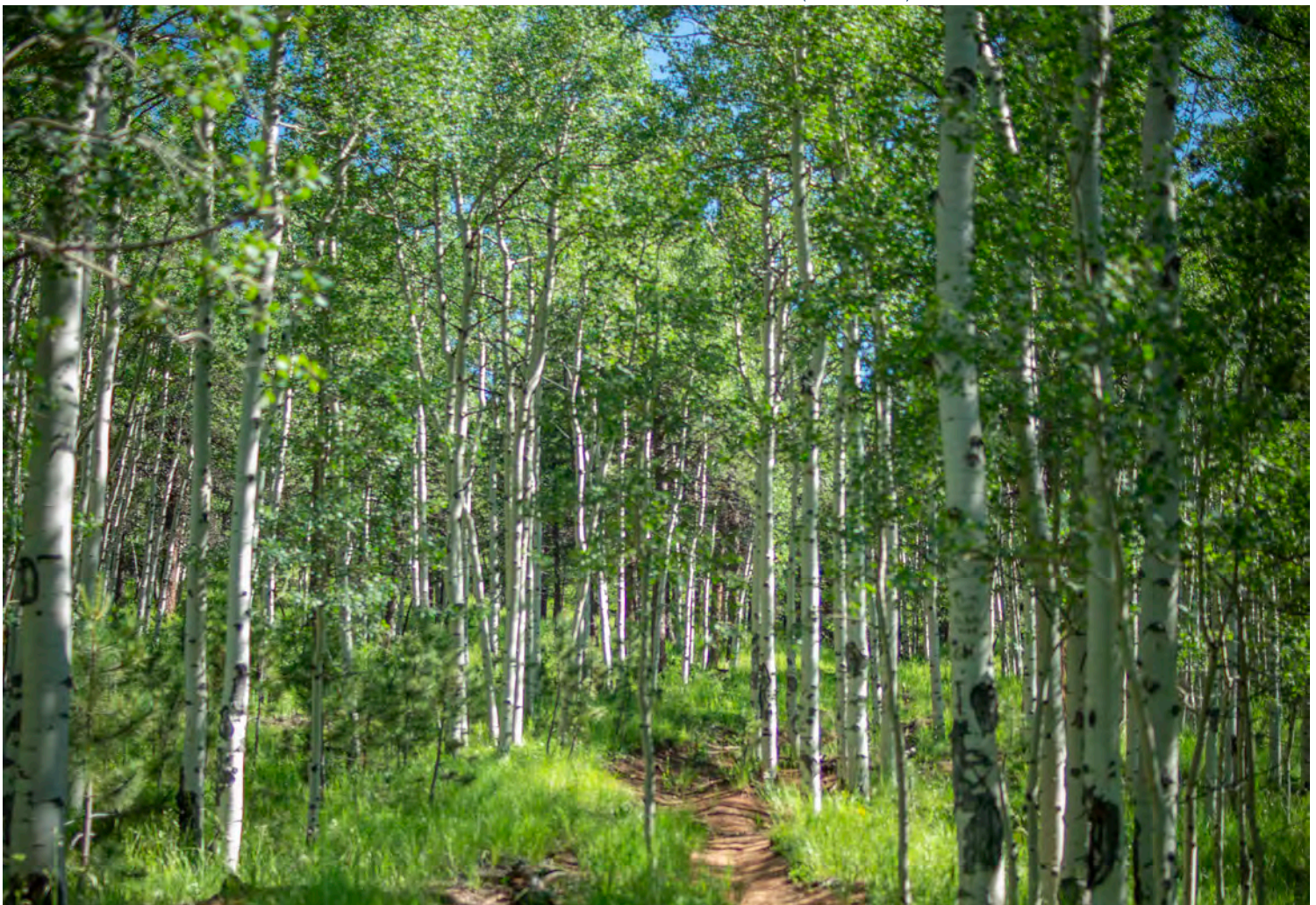
- Enhance sustainability and user enjoyment of the existing Captain Jack's trail through targeted trail improvements throughout the trail corridor. Improvement should include debarbing, reestablishing trail outslopes, and introducing small sections of technical features such as rock obstacles to further the trail character.

## SECTION 7: Trail Maintenance Guidelines



- Reduce motorcycle and mountain bike speeds on trails in Jones Park to improve safety and decrease user conflict. Focus on narrowing trails in areas of poor visibility through choke and filtering techniques to naturally reduce user velocities.
- Enhance and create additional kinesthetic diversity along existing trails to further increase the ‘fun’ factor for trail users. These enhancements may include additional technical features such as small boulders, small-scale trail realignment, and narrowed trail corridors. The enhancements will additionally help to reduce speeds in improved sections.
- Consider armoring areas of trails where evidence of trail erosion exists or may be a potential risk. Focus particular attention on trails that allow motorized access where wheel spin on steep and/or unstable slopes may lead to unsustainable trail conditions.
- Monitor and promptly address erosion and sedimentation within the trail network. Techniques for addressing these challenges include installing additional grade reversals, installing knicks to allow water to exit the trail tread, ensuring proper outslope is present, and armoring sections of trail that are exhibiting unsustainable erosion.

SEVEN BRIDGES (TRAIL 622) CLIMBING THROUGH AN ASPEN GROVE



## SECTION 7: Trail Maintenance Guidelines



## SECTION 8: NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION

### FOREST MANAGEMENT

A healthy, thriving forest ecosystem in Jones Park will be more resilient to disturbance, more supportive of native and threatened wildlife, and will contribute to the overall enjoyment of park visitors. Healthy forest ecosystems are less vulnerable to wildfire, invasive species, and pest and insect infestations. Additionally, thriving forest ecosystems are typically more adaptable to macro disruptions such as changes in climate and weather patterns. Given the environmental and social benefits of a healthy and thriving forest ecology, supporting forest health in Jones Park should be a long-term priority within Jones Park.

Jones Park today contains a diverse mix of vegetation types and species. Higher elevations within Jones Park (primarily located in the western quadrant of the property) contain sub alpine conifer species including bristlecone, limber pine, aspen, and Engleman spruce. The remaining, primarily montane environments, are home to Ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, aspen, and limber pine. The most common tree species in Jones Park is Ponderosa pine.

While the diversity of tree species may be indicative of a healthy forest ecology, the density and distribution of vegetation suggests a forest that falls short of the definition of a healthy, thriving forest ecosystem. Supporting this observation, the USFS Bear Creek Watershed Restoration Plan states:

*“The composition and structure of vegetation and fuels in [Jones Park] have also been highly altered from a natural range. Most of the project area is at risk from large-scale, high-intensity wildfire due to increases in tree density, encroachment of shade tolerant tree species, or loss of shade intolerant tree species caused*





*primarily by fire exclusion.”*

Stated more simply, the forests in Jones Park are too crowded and have a tree species mix that is more prone to fire and infestation than would be found in a more natural forest ecosystem. As stated, the primary cause of this less-healthy state is a lack of the natural forest thinning and regeneration process caused by a regular wildfire regime.

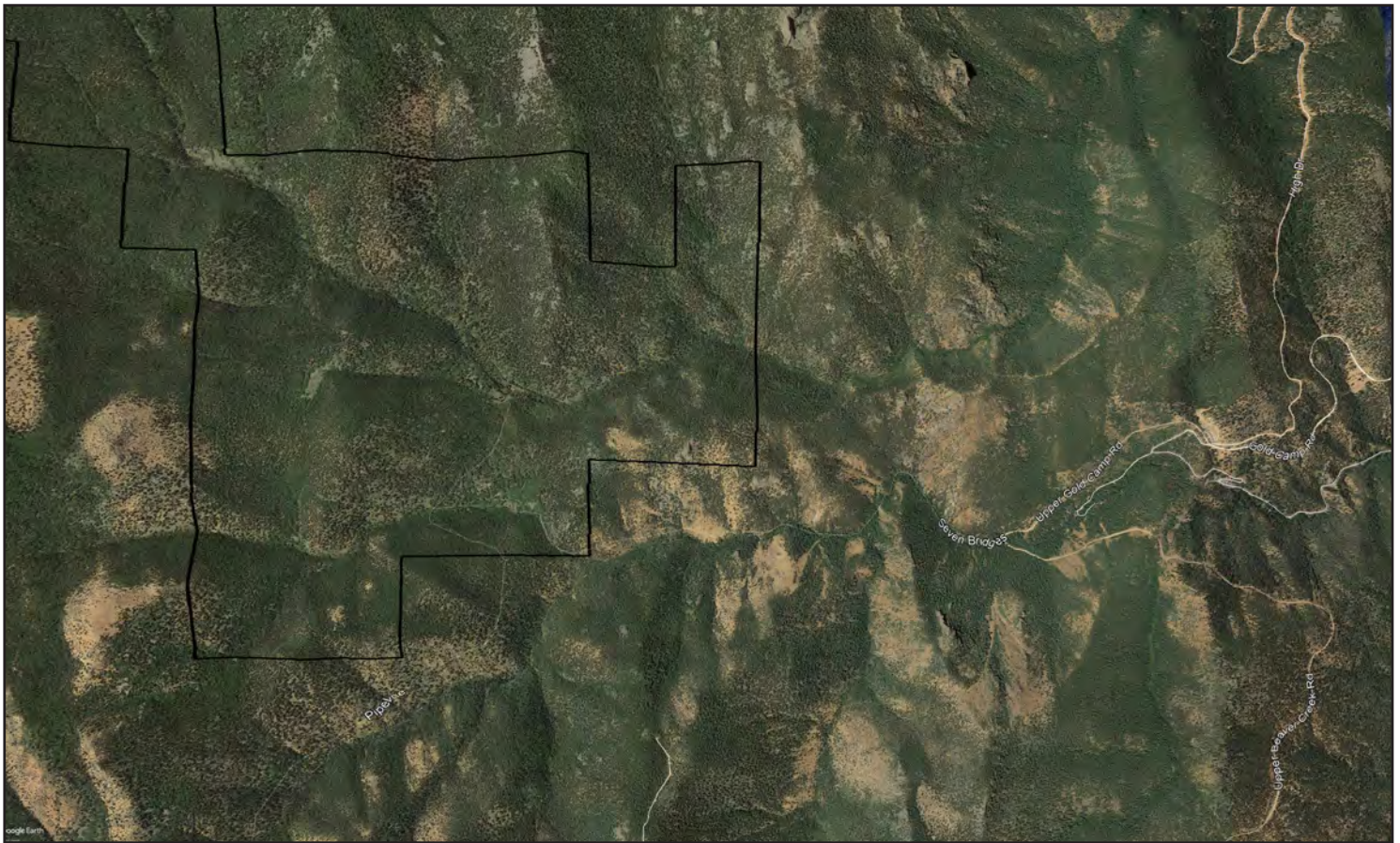


When one compares historic photos of Jones Park to photos taken today, the difference in the forest is startling. Historic photos show a forest that is much less dense with loosely grouped clumps of trees, open meadow areas, and a clear diversity of tree heights (signifying diversity in tree age). In contrast the forest today is much more dense, with many times more trees per acre than in historic photos. In addition, the

## SECTION 8: Natural Resource Management & Protection



clumps and open areas of the past have been replaced with increasing large and less diverse stands of trees. Collectively this adds up to a forest that is less healthy, less resilient and perhaps less enjoyable for visitors.



The present Jones Park forest ecology is at a higher risk for large-scale, catastrophic wildfire and pest infestation. Approximately ninety percent of Jones Park is considered to be a Fire Regime Class 3, suggesting a high risk for large-scale wildfire. In addition, the altered forest density and species distribution creates opportunities for insect infestation. Currently, a moderate-intensity outbreak of Douglas-Fir Tussock Moth (*Orgyia pseudotsugata*) is impacting Jones Park. In its larvae stage, the Tussock Moth is a defoliating caterpillar that attacks Douglas and White fir trees. The Tussock Moth can kill the trees it infests and is considered to be one of the most damaging western defoliators.

The impact of large-scale wildfire or a sustained insect infestation in Jones Park could be extremely harmful to the scenic beauty, recreational values, and environmental habitat of Jones Park. In particular, a wildfire within the Bear Creek Watershed, could have catastrophic impacts on the Greenback Cutthroat Trout population living within Jones Park.



## RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

- Strictly enforce campfire bans within Jones Park. Rely on education and peer-enforcement to help reduce the risk of human-caused fire within Jones Park;
- Develop and implement a Forest Management Plan for Jones Park;
- Partner with the USFS to improve forest health within Jones Park and the Bear Creek Watershed;
- Consider silvicultural treatments such as mechanical thinning, planting, and pruning of Jones Park forests to improve forest health, species diversity and overall forest resiliency. If this recommendation is adopted, extreme care must be taken to limit and mitigate potential erosion, and the area should be monitored for noxious weeds and treated;
- Monitor Tussock Moth populations in Jones Park and address, if necessary, through limited spraying. Consult with partner organizations to determine if spraying applications can be conducted without impact to threatened species living within the Park;
- Provide educational and interpretive signage and programming to educate visitors about forest health, forest ecology, and the general condition of forest ecosystems within Jones Park.



## SECTION 8: Natural Resource Management & Protection



## INVASIVE SPECIES AND NOXIOUS WEED MANAGEMENT

For the purposes of this Master Plan, an invasive species is defined as any non-native plant, animal, fish, or insect whose introduction could cause environmental harm to Jones Park or the surrounding Pike National forest. Invasive species have the potential to disrupt the ecological integrity of native plant and animal species, causing great environmental disruption and potentially lasting ecological harm to Jones Park.

The introduction or spread of invasive species should be viewed as a potential threat to all plant and wildlife communities within Jones Park. A particular awareness of the risks posed to the threatened Mexican Spotted Owl and Greenback Cutthroat Trout should guide future invasive species remediation and monitoring efforts in the area.

Within the category of invasive species, noxious weeds have great potential to compete with native plants for environmental resources. Once established noxious weeds have proven to be very difficult to eradicate. A casual survey of open space parks in the Pikes Peak region will show a proliferation of noxious weeds that have altered the natural vegetation structure of many popular recreation areas. Common species of concern include yellow toad flax, knapweed, leafy spurge, and plumeless thistle.



Thankfully, invasive species are not currently prevalent within Jones Park. Continuing to limit the introduction and spread of invasive species should be a high-priority management goal for the property.

In a relatively healthy natural environment such as Jones Park, there are typically two conditions necessary

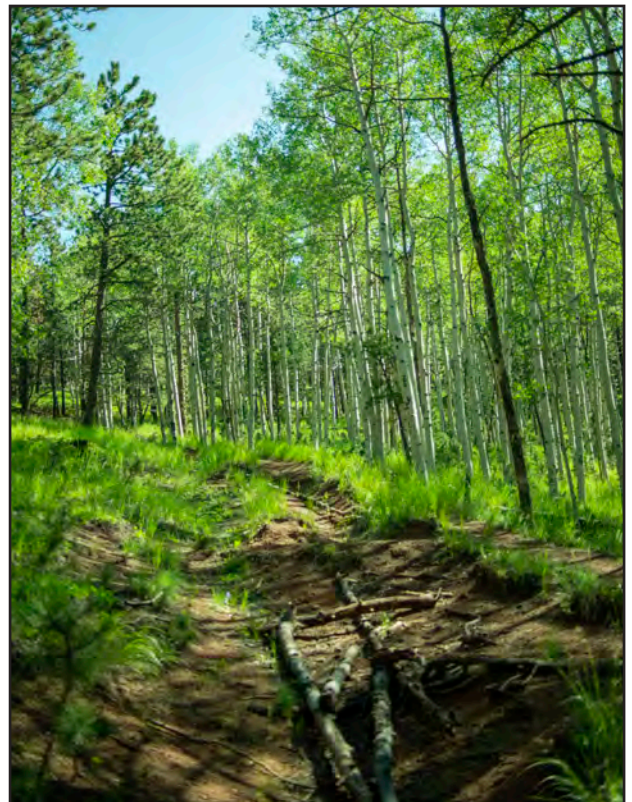
for harmful invasive species to take hold: introduction and conducive environmental conditions.

For invasive species or noxious weeds to proliferate, the invasive species must be introduced to the area. The greatest human-related factor for introduction of invasive species is recreational use. Trail corridors can be potential avenues for the introduction of invasive species. For example, hay for pack animals and the resulting excrement produced by these animals can contain invasive plant seeds. Other user groups can also spread invasive plant seeds inadvertently as they pass along a trail corridor.

The second condition necessary for the spread of invasive species is a natural environment conducive to their propagation and distribution. Typically this is a disturbed environment where native species, soils, or other natural features have been altered. These changes provide invasive species with a foothold to become established. Wildfire is an example of a large-scale environmental change that can lead to a proliferation of invasive plant species. A man-made example is non-system trail use that can cause erosion, sedimentation, and other soil disturbance.

## RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

- Limit the introduction of invasive species by regulating that only certified “weed free” hay be allowed in Jones Park. Follow established US Forest Service Guidelines and definitions to ensure regional consistency in this regulation;
- Inspect and pre-wash any construction equipment that enters Jones Park to reduce seed distribution;
- Monitor existing trail corridors for erosion and other areas of soil disturbance. Remediate as necessary to reduce soil disturbance;
- Close and rehabilitate all non-system trails within Jones Park;
- Continue to develop a trail system that discourages current and future off-trail activity by strategically expanding trail opportunities in less sensitive areas of Jones Park;
- Provide educational and interpretive signage and programming to educate visitors about the dangers of invasive species and noxious weeds in Jones Park;
- Monitor invasive species within Jones Park and document outbreaks to determine spread over time. Utilize trained volunteers to assist with periodic monitoring.



EXISTING UNSUSTAINABLE FALL LINE TRAIL

## SECTION 8: Natural Resource Management & Protection



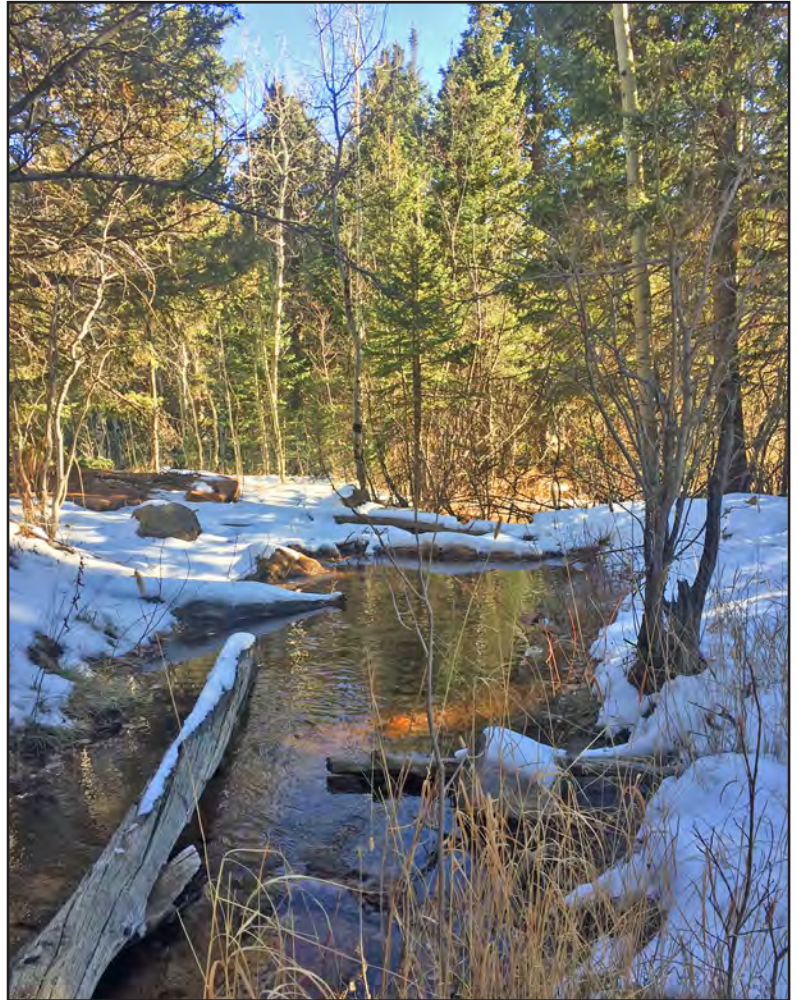
## BEAR CREEK STREAM CHANNEL MANAGEMENT

One of the defining environmental assets of Jones Park is the 1.6 miles of Bear Creek that flow through the property. Bear Creek is notable as one of the only aquatic habitats where the threatened Greenback Cutthroat Trout live and successfully reproduce in the wild (the other three current locations are project sites specifically devoted to Greenback Cutthroat Trout reintroduction efforts). As a result, Bear Creek is the source for all genetic diversity for the Greenback Cutthroat Trout and is essential for the species' survival. It is therefore critical that stream channel and riparian habitats along Bear Creek are preserved, monitored, and improved (where possible).

Stream channel elements can be broadly categorized as stream bank and bed components. The health and condition of stream banks and the streambed are two primary factors that will determine the long-term viability of Greenback Cutthroat Trout in Bear Creek. According to the Bear Creek Watershed Restoration Environmental Assessment, "perpetuating the physical, vegetative, and biological process that maintain stream configuration is a necessity." Any disruption of these characteristics may result in a stream that, "no longer performs its physical functions of floodplain access, water table maintenance, and sediment transfer," which can lead to a stream that, "may not be adequate to support viable fish populations."

One of the primary threats that can lead to the disruptions described above is sedimentation of the creek channel beyond the stream's natural transport capacity (capacity to flush sediments). In Jones Park, as with most other watersheds, the primary cause of sedimentation is land disturbance upstream or upslope of the creek. Historically in Jones Park, human-caused land disturbance and sedimentation was caused by inappropriate recreational uses in sensitive areas; recreational activity on poorly design, maintained or constructed trails; and by park visitors who stray from system trails.

While efforts in recent years to reroute, close, and rehabilitate Jones Park's historic trails have largely



BEAR CREEK FLOWING THROUGH JONES PARK



[illegible]

## SECTION 8: Natural Resource Management & Protection



## RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

- Prohibit recreational activity in the Bear Creek riparian zone (excluding existing trails);
- Limit stream crossing to the single existing bridge on the Loud's Cabin trail;
- Partner with USFS and other organizations to monitor stream conditions and conduct regular Greenback Cutthroat Trout population counts in Bear Creek;
- Close and rehabilitate all non-system trails within Jones Park;
- Consider naturalized sediment catchment basins in strategic locations downhill of trails that exhibit erosion or sedimentation characteristic;
- Prohibit construction activities and other maintenance actions that may result in sedimentation during Greenback Cutthroat Trout spawning season;
- Provide additional educational and interpretive signage in Jones Park to highlight the importance of preservation of the Bear Creek Watershed and Greenback Cutthroat Trout populations;
- Recognize that existing trails can serve as an effective management tool to focus recreational use in appropriate areas, limit off-trail activities, and create a deeper connection between park visitors and the environment of Jones Park.

## SECTION 9: IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES

### IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES

Implementation of the Jones Park Master Plan will be guided by short, medium, and long-term priorities. The goal in implementing Master Plan recommendations is to create a high-quality experience for park users; protect historic, cultural, and environmental resources; provide open space management in an efficient and cost-effective manner; and create a feasible and realistic plan for implementation. Implementation priorities are designed to provide El Paso County with flexibility to make efficient use of financial and staff resources.

The implementation priorities described within this Master Plan are designed to enhance and improve existing park conditions in the short-term before shifting focus to adding additional amenities to Jones Park in the medium to long term. In addition to improving the overall sustainability of Jones Park, this approach will provide the County with opportunities to seek out and take advantage of funding, grant, and partnering opportunities as they arise.

A final note of consideration on Master Plan implementation is the continued and ever-present need to prioritize open space maintenance and environmental stewardship in Jones Park at every stage of implementation. These are needs that will exist over both the short and long term within the Park. Before modifications to existing trails or adding additional park amenities, the prudent approach to management will be to prioritize work that protects natural, historic or cultural resources.

### GENERAL IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

The Jones Park Master Plan recommends awareness and consideration of the following general guidelines for all phases of implementation within the park. Additionally, the philosophy of balanced, measured improvements to advance stewardship, visitor experience, and recreational opportunities should be a continued priority for work within Jones Park.

- Consider prioritizing actions that protect natural, historic and cultural resources.
- Consider prioritizing actions that maintain, improve, or enhance existing park amenities over actions that build new amenities.
- Approach implementation with flexibility in order to capitalize on opportunities such as partnerships, grants, and funding opportunities. Allow flexibility to adapt to unforeseen events and challenges within the park.



- As prescribed within the Jones Park Conservation Easement, consult with the Palmer Land Conservancy on proposed actions and ensure compliance with the terms of the Conservation Easement before undertaking actions within Jones Park.
- Construction of new park amenities should be undertaken only when sufficient funding or manpower is in place to ensure resource protection, environmental restoration, and maintenance (as needed) can be completed.
- Recognizing that some implementation priorities may be resource intensive, consider pursuing partnerships and funding opportunities early in the implementation process.
- When implementing Master Plan actions, support and seek to comply with the El Paso County Parks Master Plan.
- Consider expanding medium and long-term master plan priorities as opportunity, resources, or manpower allows. Recognize that the recommendations within this plan should not be viewed as the sole actions that can or should be undertaken within Jones Park.

## SHORT-TERM IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS (PHASE 1)

For the purposes of this plan, short-term priorities are actions that are recommended to be undertaken within during Phase 1 of the Jones Park Master Plan. Prompt action on short term recommendations will improve the sustainability of Jones Park while also enhancing visitor experience through improved wayfinding and signage and through the addition of a new access trail.

**Short-Term Implementation recommendations include:**

### **Continue to Close and Restore Non-System Rouge Trails in Jones Park**

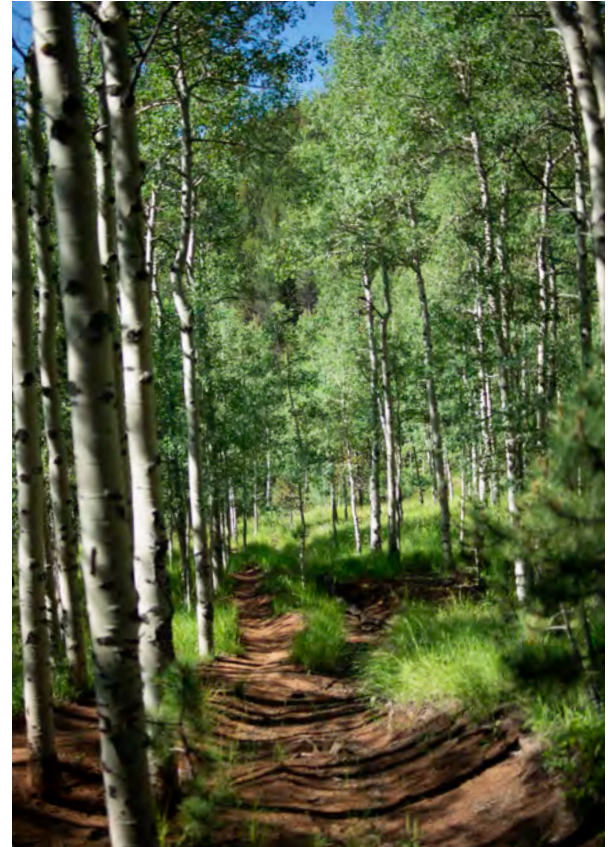
Non-System trails are defined as any non-sanctioned trail or path within the park. Over the past half-decade, great efforts have been undertaken by El Paso County staff and partners including the Rocky Mountain Field Institute to address the challenge of rogue trails in Jones Park.

To efficiently deploy limited financial and manpower resources, it is recommended that El Paso County staff prioritize non-system trail closures in two specific situations. First, prioritize closure and restoration in areas near existing trails or in areas of high visibility to reduce rouge trail formation. The second trail closure and restoration priority regard instances where rogue trails are contributing to sedimentation, run-off, or erosion within the Bear Creek Watershed. Reducing erosion impacts within the Bear Creek Watershed will help improve the sustainability of Jones Park and should be a high priority short term implementation goal.

## SECTION 9: IMPLEMENTATION

## **Construct a new Sustainable-Grade Trail and Decommission the Fall-line Seven Bridges Trail Spur**

The existing Seven Bridges Trail Spur (trail 622-A) that climbs from the Seven Bridges Trail to Captain Jacks Trail is a highly eroded 'fall line' trail that should be rerouted to create a sustainable trail. It is recommended that the new trail is built and then the existing trail be closed to limit user disruption. Restoration of the existing trail may include filling the existing trail trench with earth materials collected during construction of the new trail, reseeding, and placing of obstacles such as tree branches and trunks.



The recommended alignment for the new Seven Bridges Trail Spur is shown on the attached graphic. The recommended grade of this trail is 8% or less and the width is recommended to be 36" or less. For additional trail guidelines please see Section 7, Trail Maintenance Guidelines.

## **Continue to Improve the Sustainability and Maintenance of existing Jones Parks trails. Prioritize Erosion and Sedimentation Management, particularly along Captain Jack's Trail (667)**

In the interest of improving the user experience and sustainability of trails in Jones Park, continued maintenance of existing trails is highly recommended. In conducting maintenance work on existing trails El Paso County should prioritize work on Captain Jack' Trail (667) in order to improve drainage and reduce sedimentation within the Bear Creek Watershed. Focus should be given on continuing to improve trails to better manage erosion, limit trail tread disruption, and reducing the potential for sedimentation.



Many of the existing trails in Jones Park are in good to excellent condition. Continued periodic maintenance will help to ensure the trails continue to provide a high quality, sustainable experiences for park visitors. In some areas, however, trail conditions can be improved through targeted maintenance and trail improvements to manage sedimentation and erosion. For more detail on recommended trail improvement techniques, please see Section 8.

## MEDIUM-TERM IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS (PHASE 2)

### Loud’s Cabin Preservation and Interpretive Enhancements

Loud’s Cabin is one of the most prominent historic features in Jones Park and it is a popular destination for many visitors to the park. Unfortunately, popularity and unregulated access has led to degradation of the historic cabin. Currently there is evidence of fires that have been lit in the historic fireplace, trash is evident, and graffiti and carving has defaced some portions of the cabin. To help improve the protection, educational opportunities, and opportunity for Loud’s Cabin to function as a key Jones Park destination, several enhancements to the area proposed.

First, Loud’s Cabin should be fenced off with a low, rustic split rail fence to help protect the historic site. The fence is intended to prevent park visitors from walking on or through the cabin, protecting it from unintended damage. Secondly, an interpretive and educational sign should be installed near the fence to help educate visitors about the cabin and about its relevance to the history of Jones Park. Lastly, one to two unobtrusive rustic wood benches should be constructed to provide visitors with a comfortable place to rest, picnic, or to enjoy the view of the cabin.

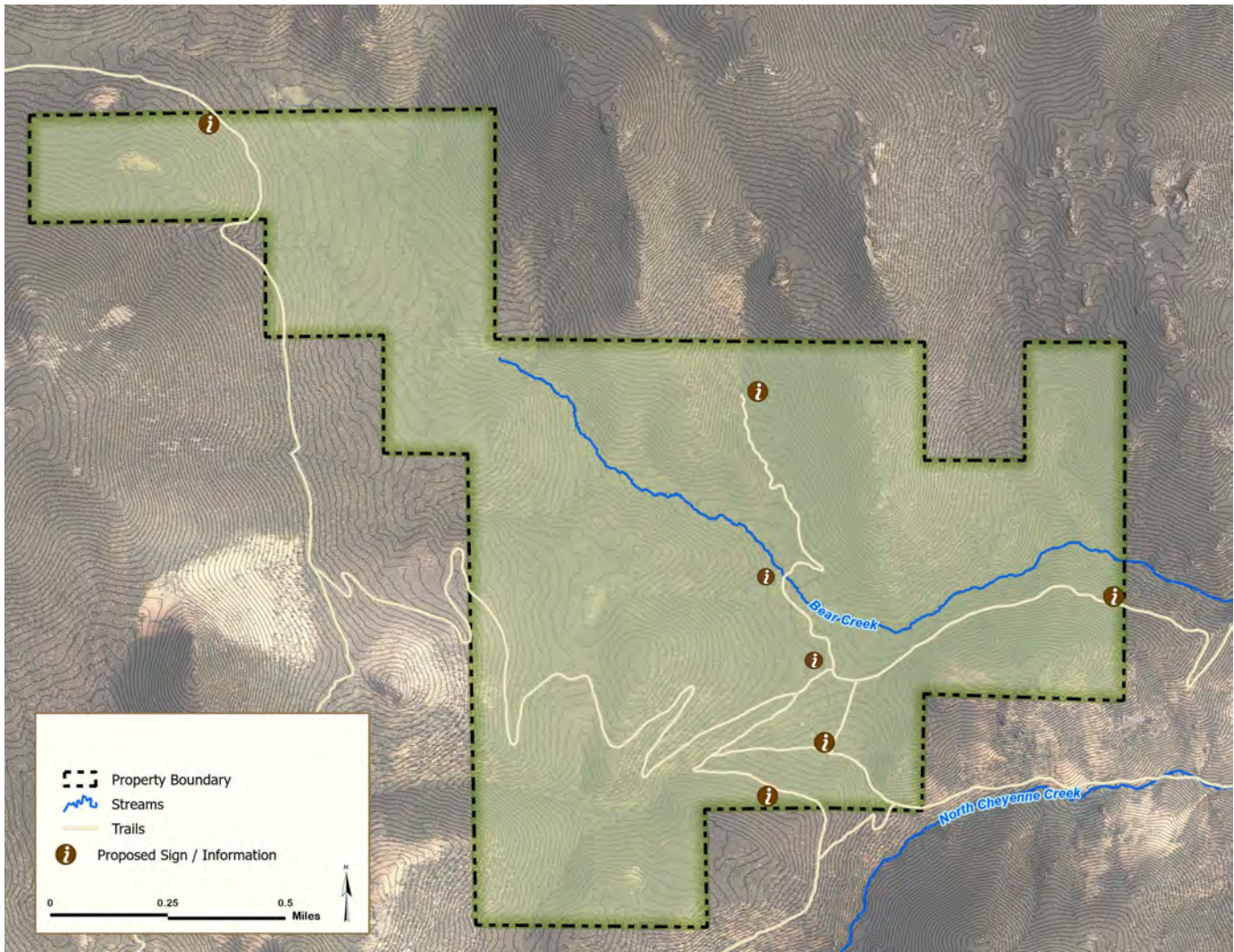


LOUD’S CABIN AREA IMPROVEMENTS

## SECTION 8: Design Guidelines



## Install Recommended Wayfinding and Interpretive Signage



JONES PARK INTERPRETIVE AND WAYFINDING SIGNAGE NODES

Improved wayfinding and educational signage was identified as a priority by the public in online surveys and in public meetings conducted during the course of the Master Plan planning process. Studies have shown that a clear and engaging signage plan can greatly improve user experience in an open space park. In addition, a well-planned educational signage plan will help to educate the public about the historic, cultural, and natural amenities in Jones Park.

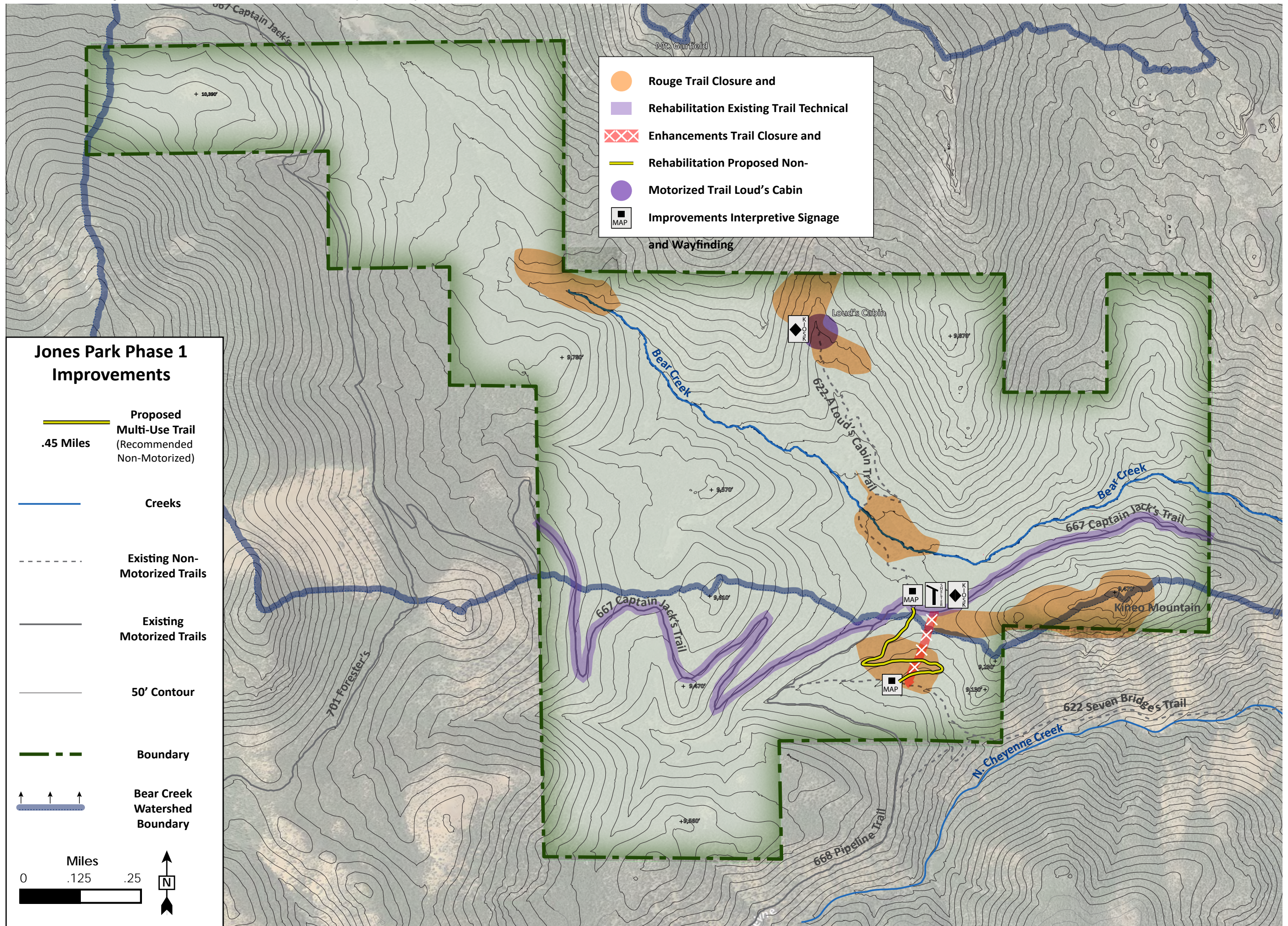
Within this Master Plan, a limited signage plan is recommended with signs and maps located at major trail intersections and key points of interest. The goal is to minimize signage 'clutter' and to focus signage in areas that have the biggest user impact. For recommendations on wayfinding and interpretive signage locations, please see Section 5, Interpretive Opportunities.

## SECTION 9: IMPLEMENTATION

### 9-5 IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES



### Short-Term Implementation Recommendations (Phase 1)





## APPENDIX

The following appendix contains depictions of four aspirational trails, which are not approved as part of the Jones Park Master Plan. These four trails are the result of public input received throughout the Jones Park planning process and depict aspirations of El Paso County residents if environmental considerations associated with Jones Park were to allow further discussions of other trail alignments in the future.

Per the Conservation Easement, which is held by Palmer Land Conservancy, to be considered for construction these four trails which are not depicted in the United States Forest Service Final Decision for the Bear Creek Watershed Restoration Project signed 2016, would be subject to the following:

1) Consultation with the United States Forest Service Pikes Peak Ranger District. This would include consideration of the Biological Opinion completed by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service signed February 2016 and the Environmental Assessment completed by the United States Forest Service, Pikes Peak Ranger District signed May of 2015. El Paso County will initiate the consultation, and Palmer Land will confirm that it has occurred, and that the results of the consultation have been considered and are consistent with the terms of the Conservation Easement.

a) The consultation with the United States Fish & Wildlife Service may require:

- i) Biological Opinion
- ii) Habitat Conservation Plan
- iii) Incidental Take Permit
- iv) Other processes as appropriate and required by federal law

b) The consultation with the United States Forest Service on the new trails that impact national forest lands to help ensure a strong proposal and may require:

- i) Environmental Assessment
- ii) Environmental Impact Statement

2) Confirmation by Colorado Springs Utilities that the proposed trails meet the requirements of the Deed Restriction that was placed on Jones Park when the property was transferred to El Paso County.

If the previously listed requirements are met, and Palmer Land Conservancy determines that future trails would comply with the Deed of Conservation Easement and would not harm the conservation values, El Paso County may engage in an additional public process. Additionally, El Paso County Parks would need to ensure there is adequate staffing and funding for construction and maintenance of any additional trails.



