



**Red Mountain Open Space (RMOS) and Soapstone Prairie Natural Area (SPNA)  
Public Meeting Notes and Management Response**

<b>Issues</b>	<b>Management Solutions</b>
Use volunteers to help with management.	Both the County and City currently use volunteers extensively for such management activities as trail building and maintenance, weed control, trash pick up, on-site naturalists and trailhead hosts and intend to request volunteer assistance at SPNA and RMOS as well.
Fire danger	No campfires will be allowed on RMOS or SPNA. The management plans will address prescribed burning as a management tool for vegetation management.
Grazing/Livestock Management	Grazing is a strong economic tradition and part of the western heritage in northern Larimer County. Grazing will be conducted in concert with a grazing plan developed in partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Grazing will be managed in partnership with lessees and to minimize impacts to recreation activities, encourage plant health and vigor, promote biodiversity, provide a management tool for wildlife habitat diversity (such as providing areas that are more heavily grazed and others that are less grazed, as different wildlife species benefit with these different grazing regimes), and prevent damage to riparian areas. The City of Fort Collins will consider bison grazing as a future possibility and evaluate it based on facility needs, economics and safety.
Protection of the Lindenmeier Site and other cultural/historical resources is a concern	Protecting the Lindenmeier Site and other significant cultural/historical features is a priority and one of the primary goals of the management plans. Currently, we are conducting ongoing inventories in partnership with CSU and the Fort Collins Museum. To protect the significant cultural resources on-site, archaeological sites will be regularly monitored and any at-risk artifacts will be removed for education purposes and be curated at the Fort Collins Museum. Trails, roads, livestock facilities and other surface disturbances will be located outside of culturally sensitive areas.
Education/Interpretation Opportunities	On-site education is an important management goal for these properties and opportunities may include naturalist-guided and self-guided educational tours and programs of cultural, natural, historical, western heritage, and other themes. In addition, we will be partnering with the Fort Collins Museum for future interpretation of curated items.
Do not allow motorized vehicles on open space.	Motorized recreation is not allowed per the Help Preserve Open Spaces ballot language. No motorized recreation will be allowed at RMOS or SPNA. Maintenance, ranger and other staff and livestock operators do at times require motorized access onto the open space for specific management activities.
Phasing of access/facilities over time and carrying capacity	Carrying capacity, or the number of users on site at any one time, will be set by the number of trailhead parking spaces. It is anticipated that facilities will be phased in over time to allow for starting small and then adding on to achieve this carrying capacity based on the amount of use balanced with resource protection.

Trail design/layout	Trail design and layout will take into consideration naturally and culturally sensitive resource areas and provide high quality visitor experiences and showcase significant vistas and features.
User Conflicts	Trails will be designed to meet multi-user needs as appropriate. Distance of travel, levels of difficulty and diverse experiences will be considered in trail planning as well as impacts to users (such as congestion closer to trailheads, potential for separation of some uses by trail or management zone) and resources. Multi-use ethics will be emphasized through education efforts.
Allow horseback riding, mountain biking, hiking	Equestrian, mountain biking and hiking activities will be allowed on designated trails. However, not all trails will necessarily be open to all recreation uses and will be defined by management zone.
Horses & noxious weeds are a concern	There are very few non-native plant species currently present at SPNA and RMOS. To minimize the spread of introduced non-native species all uses will be on designated trails with few exceptions (research and limited guided hiking tours). Also, some trails may be closed to horse use to help address invasive weed concerns in ecologically sensitive areas. In partnership with local equestrian groups, we will explore other management actions to minimize weed introductions from horse manure.
Permit horse-drawn carriages, buggies, etc	Due to the nature of this activity (potential speed of horses pulling buggies, needed turn around space, occupying much of a roadway, additional parking space accommodation) by a fairly specialized user group, it is not being considered as a compatible use of the open spaces. We will be meeting with equestrian representatives to discuss this issue. If requested on a special event basis, this use would be reviewed and evaluated based on the level of impact to other users and resources. According to the Larimer County Sheriff's Department, horse-drawn carriages are treated the same as motorized vehicles and allowed on roads in greater Larimer County if a yield sign is displayed on the back of the buggy. This type of use is also allowable on U.S. Forest Service two-track road systems including the nearby Pawnee Grasslands (call 346-5000 for more information).
Hunting	Hunting at Red Mountain Open Space will be allowed for wildlife management in coordination with the Division of Wildlife (DOW). Hunting will be on a limited basis as determined in partnership with the DOW in a hunting plan and lease. On Soapstone Prairie Natural Area hunting may be allowed in the future, following observation of wildlife for several years after the opening. Hunting access would be on foot for hunting and animal retrieval to be consistent with minimizing weed spread outside of existing trail corridors.
Accessibility for disabled people/ Continue guided limited tours for disabled access.	If requested as a special event, limited guided tours for disabled visitors would be evaluated based feasibility, impact to other users and resources. Restrooms will be wheelchair accessible and close-in trails may allow for wheelchair access based on terrain.

Rock climbing	Rock climbing will be evaluated to determine if it is an appropriate activity at these properties. We will be meeting with rock climbing representatives to discuss the desirability of climbing in light of the existing rock substrates, distance from trailheads, ecological considerations, and potential impacts to other users or their viewshed.
Protect Wildlife	Protection of wildlife and their habitat is a primary goal on SPNA and RMOS. Trails and other on-site features will be located to avoid sensitive wildlife areas following Division of Wildlife recommendations. Monitoring, education, keeping intact unfragmented habitats, not allowing domestic dogs, and potential seasonal trail closures will be the measures employed to protect wildlife and their habitats.
Dogs	Due to the truly <i>wild</i> nature of the properties' wildlife, the remoteness of these areas, and on recommendation from the Division of Wildlife, we have determined that domestic dogs are incompatible with the primary goal of protecting the site's native wildlife. Negative impacts of dogs on wildlife may include disease transmission, harassment, displacement, injury and death. On a limited and special permit basis, working dogs that are necessary for livestock operations under guidance of grazing tenants may be considered. In the big picture, in the Larimer County Parks and Open Lands and the City of Fort Collins Natural Areas and Parks systems there are over 96 miles of trails that allow domestic dogs; and 13 miles of trails that do not allow domestic dogs. Dog parks specifically, fit the function of a City Parks system and currently the City is exploring additional areas system-wide where it may be appropriate to provide additional dog parks to the existing 3 that are currently available.
Winter Closure of Properties	Winter corresponds with the highest periods of inclement weather, sensitive large mammal winter range, and low visitation estimates for RMOS and SPNA. There is little opportunity for winter recreational activities (such as cross-country skiing or snowshoeing) on these properties due to low altitude and high winds that result in very few days with standing snow on the ground. For these reasons, both properties will be closed seasonally in the winter time. The City is exploring the potential to close Soapstone on 1-2 weekdays corresponding to low visitation times year-round.
Backcountry Camping	The City is evaluating the possibility of designating 1-2 backcountry campsites with stoves on Soapstone Prairie Natural Area during the initial opening of the site. The City will monitor the amount of use and resource impacts to determine if backcountry camping is a compatible use. In addition, after the properties are open to public access, we will evaluate additional backcountry campsites based on demand, resource impacts and appropriateness in light of sensitive archaeological and natural resources.
Prairie Dog Management.	Existing prairie dog colonies will be monitored regularly. Protection of wildlife and their habitat is a primary goal on RMOS and SPNA and therefore, prairie dogs will be managed as a part of the larger ecosystem.

Species Reintroductions	There are specific habitat and management requirements to allow rare or endangered species to be reintroduced on new sites and we will explore the possibility of species reintroductions in partnership with the Division of Wildlife and US Fish and Wildlife Service.
CR 15 Improvements and Drainage	The City of Fort Collins Natural Area Program is designing improvements to County Road 15.
Fences	Boundary fences will be maintained in partnership with adjacent landowners. Internal fences will be maintained for the customary management of livestock as appropriate. Any new or replaced fences will be wildlife friendly (designed to allow for deer and elk to jump and pronghorn to go under).
Trespass on Private Property	Signs will be posted indicating the open space/natural area boundaries. Upon request, adjacent landowners will be given a phone number for the on-site manager/ranger staff to report any trespass issues.
Long-term management costs	Funding for long-term management of both sites comes from both the Help Preserve Open Spaces Sales Tax and City of Fort Collins Open Space Yes! Tax funds. These dollars are allocated for management activities including ranger patrols, weed control, grazing management, trail maintenance, routine maintenance, etc. In addition, the City and County regularly apply for grants and have volunteer opportunities to help off-set costs for specific resource management projects and stretch their available management dollars.
Wind Development	The conservation easement in place on Red Mountain Open Space prohibits wind development.
	 
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