



27 May 2024

El Paso County Parks & Community Service Department
El Paso County
2002 Creek Crossing Street
Colorado Springs, CO 80905

SUBJECT: Public Comments, Jones Park Master Plan draft, El Paso County

Please accept these comments from the Trails Preservation Alliance (TPA) and our partner Colorado Off-Highway Vehicle Coalition (COHVCO) regarding the Jones Park Master Plan draft.

The TPA is a Colorado based 501(c)(3) nonprofit advocacy organization created to be a viable partner to public lands managers; working with agencies like the United States Forest Service (USFS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to preserve the sport of motorized trail riding and multiple-use recreation. The TPA acts as an advocate for the sport and takes the necessary action to ensure that land managers allocate a fair and equitable percentage of public lands access to diverse, multiple-use trail recreational opportunities. The Colorado Off-Highway Vehicle Coalition (COHVCO) is a grassroots advocacy organization with over 2,500 members seeking to represent, assist, educate, and empower all OHV recreationists to protect and promote off-highway motorized recreation throughout Colorado. COHVCO is an environmental organization that advocates and promotes the responsible use and conservation of our public lands and natural resources to preserve their aesthetic and recreational qualities for future generations.

We appreciate the opportunity to engage with this process and recognize the issues that are challenging El Paso County (the County) in the Jones Park area west of Colorado Springs and causing resource concerns associated with all forms of recreation currently ongoing in Jones Park and the adjoining areas. The TPA is committed to helping the County find reasonable solutions to provide high quality recreational opportunities for multiple-use and especially motorcycle recreation in the Jones Park area.

The TPA along with our local partner, Colorado Motorcycle Trail Riders Association (CMTRA) were both stakeholders in the original Bear Creek Roundtable and worked cooperatively with the USFS, Pikes Peak Ranger District, the City of Colorado Springs and Colorado Springs Utilities to find cooperative solutions to protect the Bear Creek Watershed, Jones Park and the Greenback Cutthroat trout in Bear Creek. The issues the County is now facing since taking ownership of Jones Park are not new to us and we have been supporting reasonable solutions for decades. It is also noteworthy that both the TPA and CMTRA have both been instrumental in securing grant funds from the Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW), Off-Highway Vehicle grant fund for multiple-use trail work both in the Bear Creek Watershed and Jones Park. The amount of these grant funds is not insignificant and has provided substantial resources to protecting the trout along with maintaining and building sustainable, multiple-use trails in the area.

The TPA along with our partners have several concerns about this Master Plan draft and the proposals that the County is currently proposing for Jones Park. Our concerns have been based upon documents prepared by/for the County and posted to the County website, titled Jones Park Master Plan – Draft, April 2024.

1. General Comments:

- a. Despite engaging with the public for input to the Jones Park Master Plan draft, the County is choosing to disregard the need and desire to provide for additional trail based recreational opportunities in the Jones Park area within an identifiable timeframe.

- b. The Public Community Survey results clearly show and demonstrate that the Multiple-use trail recreational community, namely the motorcycle community (40%-45% of responses) was the predominate respondent to the survey and very engaged in the public planning process to provide enhanced, multiple-use trail based recreational opportunities within Jones Park. Yet the County has disregarded the desire and need for enhanced trail opportunities (e.g. looped routes, new trails, etc.) in the Master Plan draft and not included even as a long-term goal a pathway to meet this specific need identified by a very large number of both motorized and non-motorized respondents (58% of responses). The Master Plan draft states on page 2-7: *“Finally, the survey results show a majority of respondents desire an expansion of the trail network in Jones Park.”* However, the Master Plan does not speak to or provide a viable route forward that credibly enables the vision of future trails to be realized.

- c. In Section 5 of the Master Plan draft, we find it difficult to clearly and succinctly identify what specific and tangible recommendations the County is proposing within this portion of the Plan. This section would benefit from the inclusion of comprehensive descriptions for all of the recommendations for improvements and developments in Jones Park. Perhaps this section has been mislabeled and should simply be titled as Interpretative and Education Opportunities rather than Master Plan Recommendations.
- d. In Section 9 Implementation Priorities, the “Short Term” and “Medium Term” Recommendations have been identified, but what is lacking are “Long Term” priorities or any sort of implementation timeframe or schedule.
- e. The TPA and our partners must spotlight the inequity and unbalanced amount of diverse singletrack opportunities available to motorized users/motorcycles vs non-motorized users in the Colorado Springs area. This inequity and lack of opportunity can be addressed by the County and specifically, Jones Park provides an excellent opportunity for the County, along with their partners at the USFS and City of Colorado Springs, to collaborate with the motorized community, the TPA and our partners and begin to correct this unbalanced availability of an underserved and unique recreational opportunity.
- f. The design and construction of diverse, sustainable multiple-use trails is not unique, difficult, or unprecedented within the Pikes Peak Region. New trails or trail connections to form loops that are indeed sustainable, that reduce erosion and control sediment can be achieved within the Jones Park area and should not be overlooked or omitted from the Jones Park Master Plan. The TPA along with our partners is willing to offer our expertise in trail design and provide the County with a copy of the National Off-Highway Vehicle Conservation Council’s Great Trails Guidebook and the separate Great Trails Field Guide upon request.
- g. We generally support the proposed Trail Rating System for Jones Park as described in Section 7. For this to be successful we feel it will be imperative that the trail network provides a spectrum of diverse trails that both meet user expectations and provide opportunities for multiple levels of user ability. If the preponderance of key trail sections remain “Difficult” (e.g. numerous portions of Trail 667, Captain Jack’s Trail) without alternatives for less skilled users (e.g., beginners and intermediate users) the area will continue to be challenged by rouge trail building, braided trails and off trail use.

- h. We support and endorse the comments prepared by our partners at CMTRA that will be submitted separately.

2. Conclusion

The TPA, COHVCO and our partners would like to thank El Paso County Parks for reviewing and considering our comments and suggestions. However, we feel that our input and that of our constituents to the Jones Park Master Plan draft has largely gone ignored and disregarded. The Master Plan lacks any sort of clear path forward to realize the need and desire for additional sustainable trails in Jones Park. We feel the County has put forth little effort to develop or seek solutions to provide the much needed and unambiguously stated desire (by multiple user groups) to enhance and improve the trail based recreational opportunities within Jones Park. Together we look forward to continuing to work with and partnering with the County to develop a reasonable and achievable plan for additional trail opportunities in the Jones Park area. We look forward to a revised Plan that provides recreational opportunities for off-highway motorcycles, enhances the recreational experiences of motorcyclists and other users, sustains the health and conservation of Jones Park, protects the Greenback Cutthroat trout and most importantly provides opportunities within Jones Park that simply do not exist today or are clearly underserved.

Sincerely,



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