

Dalla Mountain Park Management Plan



Adopted by Durango City Council
February 7, 2006



I. INTRODUCTION

Dalla Mountain Park, located on the southwestern slope of Animas Mountain, is a 177.8 acre tract rich in natural and biological diversity, and unique to the Four-Corners Region. Highly visible from many parts of the community, the Open Space Park serves as a transition area between the structured, formalized city and the natural landscape of the San Juan National Forest. Its proximity to Town and surrounding public lands, as well as its significant natural, wildlife, and passive recreational values, makes the property a valuable open space for the community. With the City's purchase completed in 2005, preservation of Dalla Mountain Park has been ensured for the betterment of the environment as well as future generations of the community.

Working in coordination with the City's Open Space Advisory Board and Parks and Forestry Advisory Board, this plan has been prepared to provide a framework for the sound stewardship of the property, a plan that recognizes the importance of Dalla Mountain Park to both man and environment.

II. DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA

The property is a mix of steep terrain and relatively flat benches; large rock outcrops and cliffs; massive standing boulders; and extensive scenic vistas. It is an immediate neighbor to the 1,200 acre Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Animas Mountain property; and the City of Durango Birket Open Space to the southeast. West of Dalla Mountain Park is several private holdings on the valley floor of the Junction Creek Drainage. Directly west of these private holdings, is the State of Colorado Perins Peak State Wildlife Area managed by the Colorado Division of Wildlife.

Although the Dalla property had always been in private ownership, it has historically been used for passive recreational activities such as hiking, rock climbing and wildlife watching. The property is laced with an assortment of trails. Many of the trails serve as viable routes to recreational and viewshed destinations.

An ecological assessment of the property was conducted by the Fort Lewis College Biology Department in 2001. The study found the area to be rich in ecological value, with hundreds of species of plants and animals documented. Some even considered very unique and rare. Among those noted in the report were the hybrid "Live Oak"; the "Claret Cup Cactus"; the "Plateau Striped Whiptail Lizard"; and the "Tassel-Eared Squirrel". The report is available for review at the City of Durango Parks and Recreation Department.

Dalla Mountain Park is important wildlife habitat serving as a bridge between the Perins Peak State Wildlife Area and Animas Mountain. This corridor provides critical forage and cover for an assortment of wildlife including black bear; mountain lion; a variety of birds including band-tailed pigeons, jays, woodpeckers, mirriam turkeys, black-capped chickadees, and rufous-sided towhees; squirrels; porcupines; deer mice; chipmunks; hares; rabbits; shrews; and voles. The area is recognized by the

Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW) as a critical winter range for mule deer and elk.

The bands of cliffs that rise above the property and serve as a backdrop to it meander over property lines with the adjacent BLM land. On those cliffs are a number of historic Indian petroglyphs.

In the mid 1970s a residential development plan was approved. While no lots were ever sold, a gravel access road was built. This road provides access into the upper reaches of the property.

A baseline assessment of the property has been prepared and is available for review at the City of Durango Parks and Recreation Department.

III. MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

It is the intent of the City of Durango to manage the Dalla Mountain Park in order to:

- Maintain the site in a largely undeveloped and natural state as wildlife habitat and as a passive recreational open-space area;
- Identify and protect unique natural and archeological features of the site;
- Uphold the requirements of the conservation easement held by La Plata Open Space Conservancy;
- Restore the site to a condition more representative of its natural historic condition by eliminating non-native plant species and invasive weeds; thinning of the Gamble Oak under-story; and correcting erosion and drainage problems;
- Establish a formalized trailhead at the property's access road intersection with Junction Creek Road;
- Provide a trail system, with signage, that allows for functional, appropriate, and sustainable access to destinations within the site and to adjoining public lands;
- Minimize impacts to or conflicts with the adjacent public and private lands;
- Provide opportunities for local outdoor education;
- Provide permitted access into the property using the existing access road for physically challenged and handicapped individuals.

IV. SPECIFIC MANAGEMENT POLICIES

1. Management authority for the Dalla Mountain Park shall be the City of Durango Parks and Recreation Department. Specific management activities shall be consistent with this adopted Plan and the conservation easement held by La Plata Open Space Conservancy. Proposed activities deemed inconsistent with the management plan or easement shall be reviewed and considered by the City of Durango's Open Space Advisory Board and Parks and Forestry Advisory Board; and the La Plata Open Space Conservancy. Proposed improvements which prove controversial shall be referred to City Council for a final decision with a recommendation from the Advisory Boards.
2. Proposed changes to the Management Plan shall be circulated to the appropriate City Departments, Advisory Boards, outside agencies, and La Plata Open Space Conservancy for review and comment prior to formal action by the Open Space Advisory Board.
3. The site shall be maintained in its natural state with public recreational use limited to non-motorized trail-oriented activities consistent with the requirements of the conservation easement (walking, hiking, jogging, rock climbing, mountain biking, environmental education, winter recreation provided there is no seasonal closure, etc.).
4. All uses/activities within Dalla Mountain Park shall be subject to City Park and Open Space rules and regulations. The City shall be responsible for enforcement of all regulations. The following uses/activities shall be specifically prohibited within the Dalla Mountain Park:
 - Overnight camping
 - Fires of any kind
 - hunting or discharge of firearms/weapons
 - dogs not on a leash
 - injury to or molestation of birds, game or wildlife
 - unauthorized motorized vehicles
 - Destruction of natural vegetation (except for purposes of property maintenance consistent with the management plan and conservation easement)
5. Substantial development of facilities within the Mountain Park is not anticipated. Improvements on the property are envisioned to be limited to:
 - A. **Trails:** The existing trail system shall be evaluated on a routine basis to determine functionality, appropriateness and sustainability. The maintenance, closing and/or rerouting of existing trails, and the development of new trails, shall be based upon this evaluation and the participation and input of the Open Space Advisory Board and Parks and Forestry Advisory Board.

B. Signage on the property may include:

- Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) Recognition
- Rules/regulations
- Dalla family recognition placard placed on large boulder
- Trail routing signage
- Interpretive/educational signage
- Identification of perimeter boundaries
- Seasonal closures, if appropriate
- Other temporary or seasonal signage as deemed appropriate

C. Trailhead improvements: The trailhead located at the property's access drive intersection shall be improved and formalized. This may include paving of the parking area, trailhead signage, restroom; picnic tables, and other amenities and/or improvements consistent with standards for such facilities, and intent of the management plan.

6. The general public shall have non-motorized access to the property in accordance with this Management Plan. The trail system and access drive, as maintained or improved, shall be available for non-motorized recreational activity. The access road shall also be available to motorized emergency vehicles and motorized City maintenance vehicles in accordance with this Management Plan.
7. The City, at its discretion, may elect from time to time to temporarily close the property, or selected areas of the property, when it is deemed necessary for the protection and/or rejuvenation of specific resources, including wildlife and vegetation. This may include seasonal closures for habitat protection based on a coordinated management policy for the larger Animas Mountain as determined through consultation with Bureau of Land Management and the Colorado Division of Wildlife.
8. A detailed property assessment shall be undertaken to determine the specific location, type, and quantities of unique plant and animal habitat/species, and unique natural or archeological features in advance of any fire mitigation, trail system modification, or other stewardship activities consistent with this Management Plan.

V. AMENDMENT/UPDATE

This Management Plan shall be amended from time to time as necessary, (but not less than every 5 years) due to significant changes in use patterns and/or changes in land use policies on adjacent public lands, provided the Plan continues to protect the intent of the original acquisition and the conservation easement. The City will consult with the Open Space Advisory Board and Parks and Forestry Advisory Board in the amendment and/or update process.

If additional adjacent lands are acquired, these lands will be added to the Dalla Mountain Park. As these properties are acquired and formally designated, they shall be automatically subject to this Management Plan.

VI. NEAR-TERM STEWARDSHIP GOALS: 2006

Detailed Biological Site Assessment: A detailed property assessment shall be undertaken to determine the specific location, type, and quantities of unique plant and animal habitat/species, and unique natural or archeological features to be preserved, in advance of any fire mitigation, trail system modification, or other stewardship activities consistent with this Management Plan.

Wildfire Fuels Reduction: The City received a \$10,000 grant from the San Juan Public Lands Center to undertake fire mitigation of up to 80 acres. The City, in partnership with Southwest Youth Corp will undertake a fuels reduction effort in the spring of 2006. This work will be undertaken consistent with mitigation standards set forth by the Colorado State Forest Service.

Noxious Weed Abatement: The property will be added to the existing weed mitigation program currently administered by the City of Durango Parks and Recreation Department. Weed abatement efforts will occur annually, as needed.

Erosion Control: The access drive into the property will be evaluated by City staff and an erosion control plan will be implemented to reduce runoff from the access drive.

Trailhead Improvements: The trailhead at Junction Creek Road will be formalized. This may include grading, drainage and road access modifications. Other items that may be considered are a restroom; picnic tables, trailhead signage; and other amenities and/or improvements consistent with the management plan.

Trails: The existing trail system will be evaluated for its functionality, appropriateness and sustainability. The system will be plotted using a GPS system to locate all existing trails. An action plan will be established which prioritizes immediate maintenance and/or reroute needs. The establishment of new trails will be considered a longer term task.

Potential Management Integration: The City will undertake discussions with the Bureau of Land Management and the Division of Wildlife relative to the potential integration of the management and closure policies for Dalla Mountain Park with the existing Animas Mountain Management Policies established as part of the existing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

VII. ONGOING STEWARDSHIP GOALS

Annual Maintenance: Annual and ongoing maintenance will be based on routine inspection and need. Typical ongoing maintenance shall include weed mitigation, fire mitigation, trash removal, erosion control, vandalism repair, trail system repair and improvements, and routine maintenance and improvements required to address normal wear and tear of amenities.

Habitat Protection and Enhancements: Based on the finding of the baseline assessment and other research efforts undertaken from time to time, habitat protection and enhancement efforts consistent with this Management Plan may be undertaken to improve the ecological and biological diversity and health of the property.

Property Annexation: The property shall be annexed into the City limits of Durango in order to designate the City of Durango Police Department as the entity responsible for providing law enforcement responsibilities on the property. Additionally, prior to annexation the existing subdivision plat for Jacob's Cliffs shall be vacated.

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Welcome

Established in 2005 with generous support of area residents and a grant from Great Outdoors Colorado, Dalla Mountain Park provides passive recreational opportunities in a natural setting within minutes of downtown Durango. Dalla Mountain Park is home to mule deer, black bear, elk, mountain lions, and a variety of birds and small mammals.

Please respect the balance between recreation and the natural world as you enjoy Dalla Mountain Park.

To ensure a pleasurable experience and to protect the natural, cultural, wildlife, and recreational values of the park:

((O)) Be courteous of neighbors and other park users.

PACK IT IN / PACK IT OUT Pack out all trash and dispose in a proper receptacle.

SHARE THE TRAIL Share the trail.

LEASH AND CLEAN UP Leash and clean up after your pet.

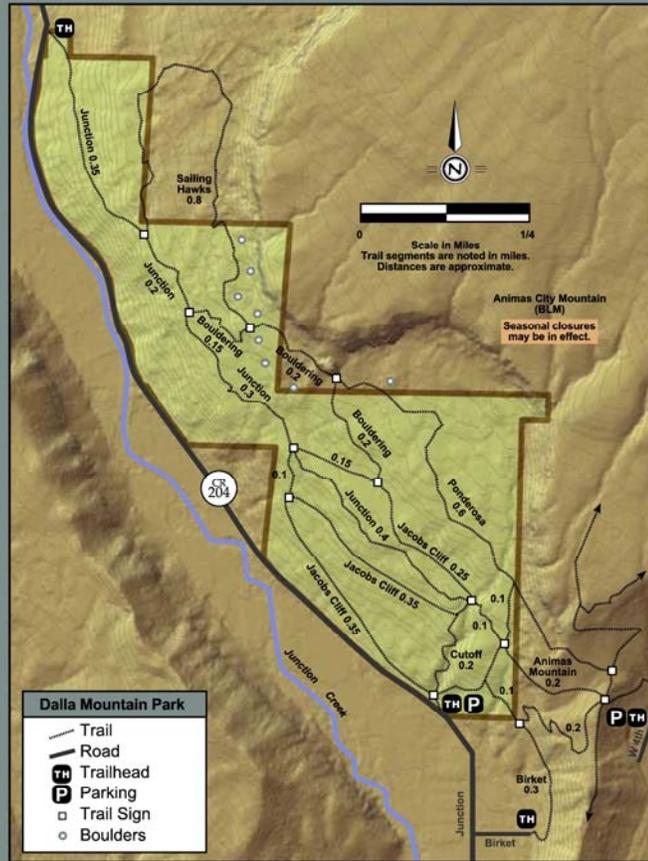
NO MOTOR VEHICLES Motorized vehicles are not permitted.

NO ALCOHOL Alcoholic beverages are not allowed.

NO FIREARMS Discharging firearms or weapons, or hunting is not permitted.

NO CAMPING Open fires, fireworks, camping or overnight parking is not allowed.

PERMIT Organized groups and special events by permit only.



Thank You

Protect Your Park — Please Stay On Designated Trails. For additional information, contact Durango Parks and Recreation

