

# **Eldorado Canyon State Park Visitor Use Management Plan Task Force Meeting Summary**

August 5, 2019 12:30 pm to 6:30 pm  
Boulder Public Library – George Reynolds Branch  
3595 Table Mesa Drive, Boulder, CO 80305

## **Attendees**

See Appendix A

## **Objectives**

- Hear preliminary results of the capacity study and learn about baseline ecological conditions of the park.
- Become familiar with the relative success of visitor use management strategies in other public lands with high visitation and limited space.
- Work the problem being addressed by the Eldorado Canyon Visitor Use Management Plan (VUMP) by developing and combining strategies into scenarios.

## **Next Steps and Action Items**

- Task Force members should promote the public meetings, as they have connections to groups who care about the park.
- Keystone Policy Center and CPW will schedule the third task force meeting.
- Keystone Policy Center will synthesize ideas raised into a strategies working document to inform future Task Force conversations and the scenarios presented at the public meetings.

## **Meeting Notes**

### **Welcome and Introductions**

Julie Shapiro (Keystone Policy Center) opened the meeting, welcomed everyone, outlined meeting objectives, reviewed the agenda, and reminded the group of the task force purpose and VUMP objective. Julie also provided a high-level overview of the Task Force ground rules, social media protocols, and participation guidelines for alternate representatives.

### **Timeline**

Windi Padia (CPW) presented an updated timeline for the VUMP process, summarized below. The fourth Task Force meeting, scheduled for December or January, will provide an opportunity to discuss the proposed multi-use connector trail as it relates to the visitor use scenarios identified in the coming months. Windi reminded the group that the VUMP itself is intended to manage current park conditions and will not include any decision on the trail.

September 2019	Two public engagement sessions and online public comment
October 2019	First draft of Park Resource Stewardship Plan to be released
Late October/Early November 2019	3 <sup>rd</sup> Task Force meeting
December 2019/January 2020	4 <sup>th</sup> Task Force meeting (optional discussion on multi-use connector trail)
February - April 2020	Anticipated timing for release of draft Visitor Use Management Plan (VUMP)
February – April 2020	Public comment on draft VUMP through online comments and a public meeting
March/April 2020	5 <sup>th</sup> Task Force meeting
Spring	VUMP is finalized

### **Capacity Study: Fieldwork Findings**

Ellie Wachtel (SE Group) presented the preliminary findings from the Fieldwork phase of the capacity analysis. The capacity study will also include a traffic study and park visitation data, which will be shared at later dates. During the Fieldwork phase, SE group surveyed 356 visitor groups across three six-hour fieldwork sessions on June 26<sup>th</sup>, June 29<sup>th</sup>, and July 13<sup>th</sup>. Hikers made up the most popular park use, and 63% of survey respondents had visited the park before. Overall, the vast majority of visitors responded that they had an “excellent” or “good” experience at the park.

See the Fieldwork Findings Memo for more information on the results.

### **Establishing Baseline Ecological Conditions at Eldorado Canyon State Park**

Jeff Thompson (CPW) shared CPW’s resource stewardship process for Colorado State Parks.

Data for the report includes:

- Existing ecological data, including information from CPW species activity mapping, CO Herpetofaunal Atlas, eBird, Audubon Christmas Bird Count, Geology Mapping, Web Soil Survey, and plant lists
- Citizen science from the Colorado Native Plant Society and the Eldorado Canyon Plant Society
- A park specific resource inventory

Compiling the park specific resource inventory requires a complex and comprehensive resource stewardship process. Data for the inventory includes:

- Mapping, condition assessment, and revegetation and restoration data on vegetation communities
- The 2015 Breeding Bird Survey

- Significant wildlife species, such as the Preble’s Meadow Jumping Mouse and the Yellow-faced “Botta’s” Pocket Gopher
- The 2019 Reptile and Amphibian Survey
- The geology mapping and geo hazards report project (launching Fall 2019)
- Soil study
- Well management plan
- Cultural resources based on the cultural surveys and research update project (launching fall 2019)
- Significant features

The draft Resource Stewardship Plan will be completed by October 2019 and will include a significant features map, ecological sensitivity data, vegetation conditions, cultural sensitivity information, and management prescriptions. The cultural and geological chapters of the report will be added upon completion of the corresponding mapping and surveying projects.

### **Shuttle Pilot update**

CPW and Boulder County Transportation are considering a pilot test program for a shuttle service to and from Eldo. The pilot program is still in development. The organizations will test proposed shuttle drop-off and pick-up locations to help determine feasibility. As with any management strategy tested in the coming years, CPW will measure how the introduction of a shuttle impacts traffic flow and safety in the park. CPW and Boulder County Transportation are also still considering many program elements, including the reservation system, fee structure, and times of operation.

John Carson (CPW) acknowledged that marketing and education around the shuttle system will be essential and will require advanced planning. CPW plans to pursue a multimedia outreach approach before launching the pilot program.

Alex Hyde-Smith (Boulder County Transportation) confirmed that running the shuttle will have an estimated annual cost between \$130k and \$150k, depending on the shuttle schedule and route.

The shuttle pilot is one component of the VUMP process and will not limit the consideration of other management strategies.

### **Case Study: Visitor use management at Hanging Lake (Presented by Kay Hopkins, USDA Forest Service, White River National Forest)**

White River National Forest, home to Hanging Lake and Maroon Bells, receives more than 17 million visitors per year. Visitation at Hanging lake increased 126% over five years. In 2018, the

park had 184k visitors, all on a single 1.5-mile trail. Increased visitation at Hanging Lake resulted in increased safety concerns, degradation of visitor's experiences, and damage to the trail.

To address over-visitation, the Forest Service assessed visitor use management strategies for Hanging Lake and the Hanging Lake Trail. During the process, the trail's capacity was determined to be 615 visitors per day. To keep trail use at capacity, the parking lot is closed during the peak season (May 1 – November 1). During this period, the shuttle is the only way to access the park. The parking lot will open during the shoulder seasons, but capacity will still be capped at 615 visitors per day.

The Forest Service began its outreach and education effort 3 years prior to implementing the shuttle system, and uses virtual message boards along I-70 to inform visitors how to reach the shuttle pickup location and welcome center.

Kay described some of the key considerations they addressed while planning for visitor use management, including finding balance between the needs of the park and the desires of the public. She also offered her suggestions for the VUMP process based on her experience:

1. Have an involved stakeholder group that is committed to the process from beginning to end.
2. Be conscientious about how you communicate aspects of the VUMP to the public. Ensure that the information is accessible to all groups.
3. Use a mix of short-, mid- and long-term solutions to signal to the public that the process is moving forward, and progress is being made.
4. Use all data resources available to make informed decisions and communicate with stakeholders.
5. Let the process work. Get comments early and incorporate them throughout.

### **Case Study: Overparking (Presented by Mary Ann Bonnell, Jefferson County Open Space)**

Mary Ann gave a presentation on how Jefferson County Open Space (JeffCo) has been addressing overparking. The JeffCo Open Space system receives 7 million visitors each year, most of whom are unsupervised. Overparking has been a significant concern for the visitor services managers, as it impacts safety, natural resources, and the wellbeing of local community members.

The organization has considered multiple options and alternatives to address overparking, including improved demarcation, parking enforcement, and web cameras to show visitors parking conditions. JeffCo has partnered with Lot Spot, a parking management system start-up that uses a camera to track parking lot occupancy as cars enter and exit a parking lot. The equipment (pole, camera, and solar panel) has a minimal footprint, however it does require a strong and consistent cell signal to operate. Lot Spot computes the data and communicates it using a dashboard and mobile app. The data can be distributed both to managers and potential

visitors. JeffCo will also feed Lot Spot data to Google so when potential visitors search for a park, they will see information on peak visitation times. The goal of using Lot Spot and a data-heavy approach is to enhance visitors' access to information so that they may make more informed parking and visitation decisions.

### **Small Group Strategy Workshop**

The Task Force broke out into smaller groups for the strategy workshop. Ahead of the meeting, Task Force members were asked to submit a worksheet identifying visitor use management strategies. Keystone Policy Center compiled the responses, and identified two focus areas for discussion:

- Access to the park: Roads and parking availability
- Use within the park: Trails, picnic areas, and climbing routes

Each group spent time discussing both of the problems identified above. The groups reviewed the compiled worksheet responses then reviewed and discussed strategies to address problems, including weighing the potential advantages and limitations of each strategy. Keystone Policy Center will compile the initial worksheet responses and ideas from the small group discussions into a single visitor use strategies working document.

### **Public Engagement Process**

In September, CPW will engage the public in the VUMP process with two public meeting sessions in Boulder and an online comment period. The meetings will provide more information on the project and invite attendees to discuss, in small groups, a series of future park management scenarios. Ideas raised in these groups will help inform the development of the VUMP.

#### Session 1

Monday, September 9, 2019

6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Unity of Boulder

2855 Folsom St., Boulder, CO 80304

#### Session 2

Tuesday, September 17, 2019

6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Avalon Ballroom

6185 Arapahoe Rd., Boulder CO 80303

The online comment option will be available at

<https://cpw.state.co.us/placestogo/parks/EldoradoCanyon/Pages/Visitor-Use-Management-Plan.aspx>

between September 9<sup>th</sup> and September 30<sup>th</sup> and has been designed to approximate the information and questions at the public meetings.

The Task Force highlighted the following questions and consideration for the public engagement process:

- Would the public accept a permitting/reservation system and shuttle outright, or would there be pushback on these initiatives? If so, how resistant would the public be?
- How much would visitors be willing to pay in additional fees for permits or a shuttle service?
- How can CPW engage people in the Denver Metro area on the VUMP process?

### **Outreach and Communications**

Kacie Miller (CPW) informed the group that the Eldo website has been updated to include a page on the VUMP. The page includes all public information on the VUMP process, an option for site visitors to sign up for email updates, a FAQ page, and a list of the organizations represented by the Task Force. Kacie asked the Task Force to share the website with their networks.

Kacie also asked the Task Force for their assistance in advertising the upcoming public meetings (September 9 and 17) and online public comment period. CPW will develop and distribute a bilingual (English/Spanish) flyer advertising the public engagement process. Participants will only need to attend one meeting or submit their feedback on the online survey in order to participate in the process. The online survey will also be available in Spanish. A press release and other outreach will be shared widely in the Denver Metro area.

Task Force members are invited to participate in the public engagement process in ways that further the VUMP process.

## Appendix A – Task Force Members, Staff, and Guests in attendance on 8/5

### Primary Task Force Members

Organization	Name
Action Committee for Eldorado (ACE)	Mike Schlauch
Boulder Climbing Community (BCC)	Kate Beezley
Boulder County Nature Association (BCNA)	Gerry Kelly
Boulder County Parks & Open Space	Marni Ratzel
Boulder County Transportation	Alex Hyde-Smith
Boulder Mountainbike Alliance (BMA)	Marcus Popetz
City of Boulder Open Space & Mountain Parks (OSMP)	Kacey French
Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT)	Dan Marcucci
Colorado Mountain Club	Emily Bresko
Colorado Parks & Wildlife (CPW)	John Carson
Colorado Parks & Wildlife (CPW)	Jeff Thompson
Eldorado "Valley" Residents	Maggie Fox
Eldorado Artesian Springs, Inc.	Doug Larson
Eldorado Springs - east residents	Laura Tyson
Eldorado Springs - Kneale Road (west residents)	Neil Blank
Islamic Center of Boulder	Malika Lahmam
Rocky Mountain Fire	Aaron Peavey
Rocky Mountain Rescue Group (RMRG)	Dale Wang

### Task Force Alternates

Organization	Name
Boulder County Nature Association (BCNA)	Sue Cass

### Facilitators and Technical Consultants

Organization	Name
Keystone Policy Center	Jonathan Geurts
Keystone Policy Center	Julie Shapiro
Keystone Policy Center	Tori Thompson
SE Group	Tyler Ford
SE Group	Gabby Voeller
SE Group	Ellie Wachtel

### Additional CPW Staff

Organization	Name
Colorado Parks and Wildlife	Lisa Gill
Colorado Parks and Wildlife	Kacie Miller

**Guests and Observers**

- Mary Ann Bonnell (*case study presenter*)
- Mike Browning
- Kay Hopkins (*case study presenter – remote*)