

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 1976, Colorado State Parks entered into a lease agreement with the Army Corps of Engineers for the management of Trinidad Lake. Many skeptics felt that the Purgatoire River would never provide much of a lake for recreation. To their surprise, the park was opened to the general public in 1980 with a 1200 surface acre lake. The lake, with a backdrop of the Culebra Range of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, provides a spectacular setting for outdoor recreation.

Over the last twenty years, two regional changes have impacted the park significantly. First and foremost, the Kansas/Colorado lawsuit over the Arkansas River Compact changed water storage practices at Trinidad Lake forever. Over the years, lake levels have fluctuated from an all-time low of 278 surface acres in 1989, to an all-time high of 1,423 surface acres in 1999.

Secondly, during the first half of the century, coal mining fueled a booming economy in southern Colorado. By 1995, there were no operating coal mines left in Las Animas County. Much of the land that was owned by the coal companies, including a 10,000-acre parcel adjacent to the park's southern boundary, was sold to developers.

The last twenty years would see little change in the park's infrastructure. The existing boat ramp was extended in 1986, and a small visitor center was added in 1995. Aging electrical, sewage and road systems, along with the need for renovation of existing facilities, are major concerns.

Trinidad Lake is a park in transition. We are currently in search of the last piece of the puzzle that will eliminate low water conditions at the lake forever. The management agreements with the Army Corps of Engineers will expire in 2003. It is our hope to move forward in partnership with the Corps to meet the renovation and development demands of the future, which include:

- Renovation of the sewage plant and campground electrical system.
- Replacement of sanitation facilities and the camper services building.
- A new maintenance shop, an additional campground and a swimbeach.
- Improved access to the lakeshore.

Success in these two efforts will guarantee a bright future for the park, the region and its visitors. Trinidad Lake has the potential of becoming a destination playground that would offer a quality water-based experience on a consistent basis. This plan sets a course for the renovation of existing facilities and the development of new ones to meet the demands of the future.