

Lathrop State Park

2023 MANAGEMENT PLAN





Colorado Parks & Wildlife hereby states its approval of
Lathrop State Park's Management Plan.



Heather Disney Dugan, Acting Director

04.17.23

Date

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nestled in the shadow of the legendary Spanish Peaks, Lathrop State Park is one of Colorado's oldest state parks. The park opened in 1962 after Colorado State Parks' first director, Harold Lathrop, acquired the property. The park's gentle climate, beautiful campsites, excellent fishing, water recreation, unique geology and scenic views attract travelers and visitors from near and far.

Lathrop State Park's Management Plan serves as the foremost guiding document for the Park. The goals of the Park are:

- Protect, conserve, and interpret the significant natural, cultural, and historical resources.
- Maintain quality fishery, and water-based recreational access.
- Improve property appearance throughout the park through rehabilitation and redevelopment consistent with standards of a Colorado State Park and character specific to Lathrop State Park.
- Provide exceptional customer service and education to allow visitors to have safe and high-quality recreational experiences.
- Plan for anticipated future increases/changes in visitation and recreation trends.
- Implement this and other plans developed for the Park in collaboration with other CPW staff and external partners.

Included in the Plan is a broad description of the complete spectrum of recreational, cultural, and natural resources at Lathrop State Park (Chapters 2-3). Horseshoe and Martin Lakes have excellent fisheries maintained by stocking. The Park's vegetation is mostly in good to excellent condition and the wetland and riparian areas provide excellent habitat for a variety of wildlife. The Park's history includes the stories of many peoples who have inhabited southeastern Colorado, including Native Americans and early settlers of the Region.

Park Management Zones (Chapter 4) provide a framework for identifying areas with different types of visitor experiences, recreation opportunities, suitable types of facilities, land uses and management focus. Management zoning helps park managers sustainably manage the unique resources at the park. A majority of Lathrop State Park is zoned "natural" or "protected" which is a reflection of the desires of staff and the public to prioritize resource protection and maintain opportunities to appreciate nature.

Enhancement opportunities (Chapter 5) for Lathrop State Park were developed based on input from the public, professional knowledge and experience of staff, and discussions with key partners and stakeholders. The intent of these projects are to bring Lathrop State Park into its next decade with thoughtful decisions on how to address changing visitation, continued resource protection and needed improvements to property appearance and function. Park enhancements include: 1) Improvements to existing facilities and infrastructure; 2) New facilities and infrastructure; 3) Natural resource rehabilitation and restoration efforts; and 4) Management initiatives critical to the long-term operational success of the Park.

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Park Description

Lathrop State Park (Park) is 1460 acres of recreational enjoyment nestled in the shadow of the Spanish Peaks in Southern Colorado. The Park's two lakes offer a variety of boating and angling opportunities for all types of water recreation. Martin Lake offers water-based activities, such as boating and a swim beach. Horseshoe Lake is a peaceful haven for wildlife. It's also a place for visitors to enjoy bird watching, hunting, fishing, and lake access for human-powered boats, such as canoes and kayaks. Catfish, bass, trout, bluegills and species in the perch family thrive in both lakes, along with a few other species of sport fish.

Purpose of the Plan

The Lathrop State Park Management Plan (Plan) serves as the foremost guiding document for Lathrop State Park. The ultimate purpose of developing a state park management plan is to plan for both public enjoyment and protection of the state park's resources. The Plan provides a conceptual planning framework for setting management priorities and providing specific management direction for park resources. The Plan also:

- Serves as a guide and policy document for current and future Park staff, other partnering agencies, elected officials, and interested members of the public.
- Guides management of natural, cultural and recreational resources.
- Provides a framework for monitoring and maintaining resources at Lathrop State Park.
- Identifies park enhancement opportunities, including possible facility upgrades, new park facilities, restoration and rehabilitation projects, and important management initiatives.
- Serves as a guide for future park budget allocations and annual funding requests.

Included in the Plan is a broad description of the complete spectrum of recreational, cultural, and natural resources at Lathrop State Park. Implementation of the Plan will assist park staff in their efforts to preserve and enhance the Park for future recreational users.

Park managers should regularly review the Plan to evaluate implementation progress. This includes annually reviewing the document with staff and providing the Plan to new employees. Park and other CPW staff (e.g., planning, region, natural resource, and capital/region development staff) should update the Management Plan every 10 years.

This Management Plan and its implementation is also an opportunity to support Governor Jared Polis' philosophy to build a "Colorado for All." On August 27, 2020, Governor Polis signed Executive Order D-2020-175 directing the Department of Personnel & Administration to advise state agencies in integrating this philosophy into State government's workplaces, community engagement, standards of accessibility, and more. All agencies, including the Department of Natural Resources, of which CPW is a Division, have equity, diversity and inclusion goals focusing on hiring, retention, community partnerships and communication. Over the coming months and years, CPW will use related policies and guidance coming from these initiatives to refine implementation of strategies in the Plan.

Relationship to the CPW Strategic Plan

Using Colorado Parks and Wildlife's (CPW) Strategic Plan as an overall guide, the Lathrop State Park Management Plan serves as the primary "go-to" planning document for all the Park staff. Specifically, CPW's Strategic Plan is a useful guide for achieving a broad range of CPW-wide goals and objectives, while the Management Plan is the primary guidance document for Park-level planning efforts. The Management Plan is consistent with the following CPW-wide mission, vision and goals (as defined in the Strategic Plan) which are highlighted below.

Mission

CPW's mission is "to perpetuate the wildlife resources of the state, to provide a quality state park system, and to provide enjoyable and sustainable outdoor recreation opportunities that educate and inspire current and future generations to serve as active stewards of Colorado's natural resources" (C.R.S. 33-9-101).

Vision

CPW's vision is to be a national leader in wildlife management, conservation, and sustainable outdoor recreation for current and future generations.

Strategic Goals

CPW's Strategic Plan, finalized in November 2015, provides a roadmap for achieving the agency's vision and mission through concrete goals and objectives. The six CPW goals identified in the Strategic Plan are:

1. Conserve wildlife habitat to ensure healthy sustainable populations and ecosystems.
2. Manage state parks for world-class outdoor recreation.
3. Achieve and maintain financial sustainability.
4. Maintain dedicated personnel and volunteers.
5. Increase awareness and trust for CPW.
6. Connect people to Colorado's outdoors.

Park Goals

- Protect, conserve, and interpret the significant natural, cultural, and historical resources.
- Maintain quality fishery, and water-based recreational access.
- Improve property appearance throughout the park through rehabilitation and redevelopment consistent with standards of a Colorado State Park and character specific to Lathrop State Park.
- Provide exceptional customer service and education to allow visitors to have safe and high-quality recreational experiences.
- Plan for anticipated future increases/changes in visitation and recreation trends.
- Implement this and other plans developed for the Park in collaboration with other CPW staff and external partners.

Chapters 4-5 of this Plan describes how CPW will address these goals while not outpacing the operational capabilities of the Park and its staff.

Future Plan Updates

Most of the Management Plan should remain relevant for many years to come. That is, much of the information in the Plan includes historical documentation, factors that influence Park management, and recommendations that will remain static or ongoing in perpetuity. However, the Plan should still be reviewed annually with formal updates occurring every 10 years by the park and other CPW staff (e.g., CPW planning, region, natural resource, and capital/region development staff). To ensure that the Plan is a dynamic document that meets the changing needs of the Park and park visitors over time, park managers may supplement the Plan with updated information, provide minor changes to management actions, or add management actions that help the Park meet changes in recreational trends, visitor demands, adapt to changes in the natural environment, and maintain a high-quality visitor experience. In general, park management plans are to be amended when changes in circumstances are significant enough to merit updating the plan. Examples of when formal amendments to the Plan may be necessary are listed below.

- There are changes to the land base (e.g., additional lands are purchased or portions of the park are sold off).
- Major new facilities or infrastructure are planned for the park.
- A policy or directive is instituted that significantly affects park management direction.
- Major changes to land use occur within or adjacent to the park
- Changes to the management zoning.
- Significant environmental stress (i.e., fish kill, drought, etc.).

Previous Planning Efforts

The last management plan for Lathrop State Park was completed in 2001. More recent plans include:

- Resource Stewardship Plan (2017)
- Weed Management Plan (2018)
- Forestry Plan/Hazardous Tree Plan (2020)

Public Input Process

Public input is an important part of the management planning process. Members of the public were encouraged to provide initial input on the Plan using an online comment form in summer-fall 2019. The comment form was developed to learn about visitation trends, preferred activities, concerns and reactions to some proposed park projects. Overall, park visitors really enjoy their time at Lathrop and do not want to see a lot of change. The biggest concerns related to resource damage and dogs off-leash. There is some concern for crowding at the swim beach or on shorelines for fishing. Respondents indicated the highest priority for management should be trails and educational opportunities. The full survey and results are in Appendix A. Appendix E summarizes public comments on the draft version of this plan.

Key Stakeholders

Park staff partner with local organizations and agencies regarding park management and community engagement. Some of these include:

- Walsenburg Golf Course
- Spanish Peaks Regional Health Center
- Walsenburg Parks Board
- La Veta Trails
- La Veta Town Board
- Walsenburg City Council/Mayor
- State Land Board
- San Isabel Electric
- Huerfano County Commissioners
- Colorado State Patrol

Influences on Management

A majority of Lathrop State Park is in fee title ownership by Colorado Parks & Wildlife. A parcel on the northern boundary of the Park is owned by the State Land Board. It is surrounded mostly by private land and is less than 5 miles from the town of Walsenburg. Some key factors influencing park management include:

- The City of Walsenburg owns the water in the two lakes. CPW does not have water rights but has an agreement with the city that water be kept at a minimal pool suitable for recreation.

- Huerfano County is working to increase tourism to the area. The Park is involved in several efforts (ex., new trails) and has had some increase in visitation. Some of this is from general increases in Colorado's population.
 - Increasing fees have an impact on the Park's visitor demographics. Some local users may be priced out and there has been an increase in larger RVs from further away. Park pass compliance has become more of an issue with some new visitors. For others, reservations and passes are purchased all online eliminating their need to stop at the Visitor Center upon arrival. Park staff are responding by going to the campgrounds to be sure folks know which site to use and the general park regulations that apply to campgrounds, such as dogs off leash, quiet hours, unattended fires, etc.
 - Increasing visitation impacts creates a demand to repair more facilities, purchase more supplies, and hire additional staff, although budgets stay relatively constant year to year.
 - In addition, with visitors coming from further away, the call volume at the Visitor Center has increased due to customers wanting trip planning information.
- Emergency/catastrophic events involve park staff and/or impact the Park's resources and visitors. The Park's three commissioned officers may assist with law enforcement needs in the county. The Park has the county's only ice rescue suit, and the park is an evacuation route for town if a predicted flood from the Spring Fire burn scar occurs. Fires, floods, and invasive species coming in from adjacent lands impact the resiliency of the Parks' natural resources.

Management Considerations

Management considerations include issues and concerns that have been identified by park staff based on first-hand experience, knowledge, and information gathered from the public. Some of the specific key management considerations addressed in this plan are listed below. This information, in addition to the knowledge and experience of park staff, directly influenced the development of park enhancement opportunities described in Section 5.

- Horseshoe and Martin lakes have different management priorities that provide varied recreation opportunities and habitat for wildlife.
- CPW/Park staff need to have the ability to respond to changing visitation and support their long-time local users. While there have been some recent changes in visitation (noted above), the Park typically has two primary visitor groups in summer:
 - Day use from nearby communities, primarily walking, picnicking, and fishing.
 - Overnight use from Colorado Springs and Pueblo, primarily boating and camping.

- Winter visitation is usually low with walking and biking being the primary activities.
- The park's aging infrastructure needs to be replaced, repaired, or upgraded to help improve property appearance.
- A priority for visitors and staff is to control invasive/destructive species in the park, including Ips bark beetle, tamarisk, Russian olive, thistle and other non-native weeds.
- Keeping the park's lakes free of aquatic nuisance species (ANS), such as zebra mussels and Eurasian Water Milfoil, is also a priority. So far, thanks to the joint efforts of diligent ANS program leaders, inspectors at the entrance, and the boating public, the waters within the park have not become infested.

2 REGIONAL PLANNING CONTEXT

This section provides information on the regional setting in which Lathrop State Park is situated. Regional issues or considerations that may influence the management of Lathrop State Park include climate, proximity to major population centers and other geographical considerations, eco-regional issues, adjacent land ownership, and regional population trends. These areas are discussed in detail below.

Climate

The mountains to the west of the Park form a rain shadow that helps explain the modest precipitation that Lathrop State Park receives on average each year (16 inches). Most of the precipitation occurs during the late winter, early spring, or during the unpredictable summer monsoon season. The area is prone to long periods of drought. Wind is common especially during the winter and early spring (CPW 2017).

The semi-arid conditions lead to limited plant growth, which means that substantial amounts of the soil surface will be exposed to water and wind erosion, even under optimal conditions. The semi-arid conditions, coupled with the modest size of the watershed, mean that flows of water in the Cucharas River, which supplies the vast majority of the water in the park’s two lakes, are relatively small and are subject to significant reductions during major droughts.

The nearest weather station to Lathrop State Park is located in Walsenburg, CO, which sits at about 6,200 feet elevation (WRCC 2016). During one year, Walsenburg’s average daily temperatures fluctuated roughly 65°F, from a low of 21.1°F in January to a high of 87.5°F in July. Walsenburg falls below freezing for five months out of the year from November to March. The coldest month is January with an average maximum temperature of 47.1°F, and July is the warmest, maxing out at 87.5°F. Annually, the mean temperature is 51.9°F, with an average high of 66.4°F and a low of 37.4°F. Table 1 below summarizes climate data for Walsenburg, CO (WRCC 2016).

Table 1: Mean Temperatures* (WRCC 2016).

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual
Max (F)	47	50	56	64	73	83	88	85	79	69	56	48	66
Mean (F)	34	36	42	50	58	67	72	71	63	54	42	35	52
Min (F)	21	23	27	34	43	51	57	56	48	38	28	23	37
<i>*Length of record for all data is 1934 - 2016</i>													

An average of 81.8 inches (6.8 feet) of snowfall blankets Walsenburg each year, contributing to 15.87 inches of annual precipitation (WRCC 2016). Walsenburg’s precipitation oscillates between 0.66 and 1.98 inches, but the wettest months are April, May, July, and August. Snowfall is highest in March and December, and the area sees very little to no snow from May through September (WRCC 2016).

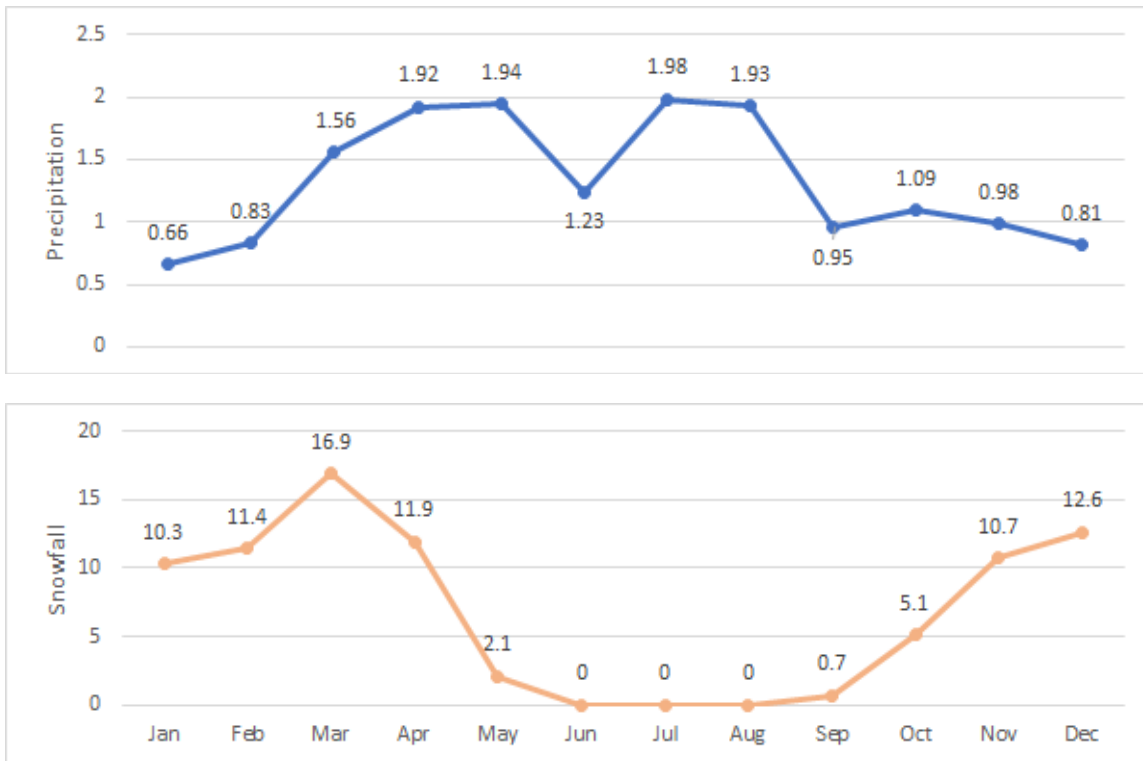
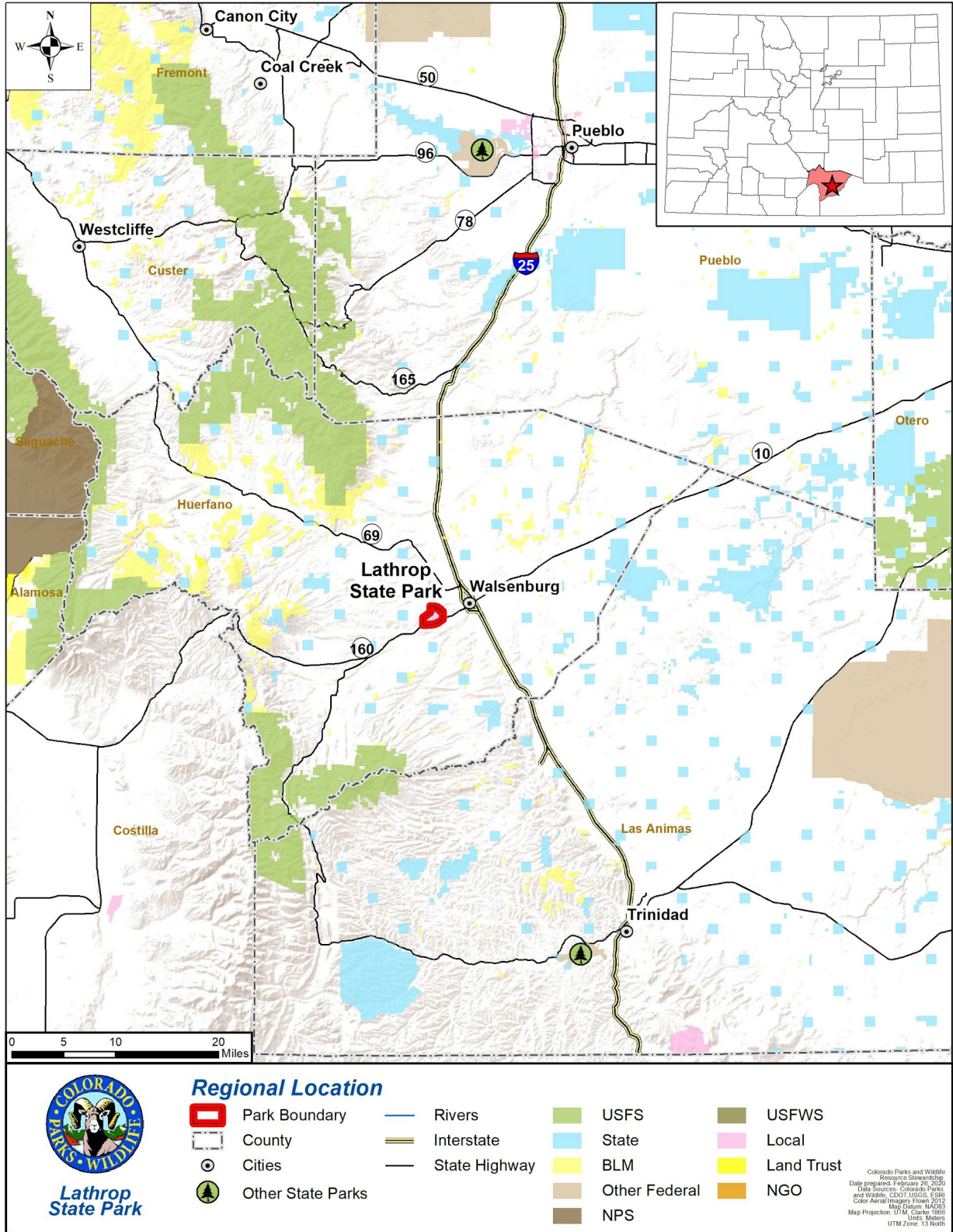


Figure 1: Average Precipitation Totals (inches) of Walsenburg from 1934 - 2016 (WRCC 2016).



Map 1. Regional Location of Lathrop State Park

Physical Setting

Lathrop State Park is located about five miles west of Interstate 25 and about three miles west of Walsenburg on the northside of US Highway 160 in Huerfano County (Map 1). It is also about 93 miles south of Colorado Springs and 52 miles north of the Colorado-New Mexico state line.

The Park encompasses 1,140 acres of land and 320 acres of water. The principal features are Horseshoe and Martin Lakes, two of the largest reservoirs in the area, with 140 and 180 surface acres, respectively. Unlike most other reservoirs in the region, the lakes have relatively stable water levels, which makes for excellent fishing, boating, and a safe shoreline for a swim beach. The vegetation of the Park is largely pinion-juniper woodland, with interspersed areas of grassland and other habitats described in section below.

The elevation of the Park ranges from 6,350 ft. to 6,640 ft. The majority of the Park is composed of relatively flat terrain to moderate to gentle slopes in the zero to 8 percent range. Steep slopes of 25 percent and greater are associated with the igneous Hogback Ridge located along the northern boundary of the Park.

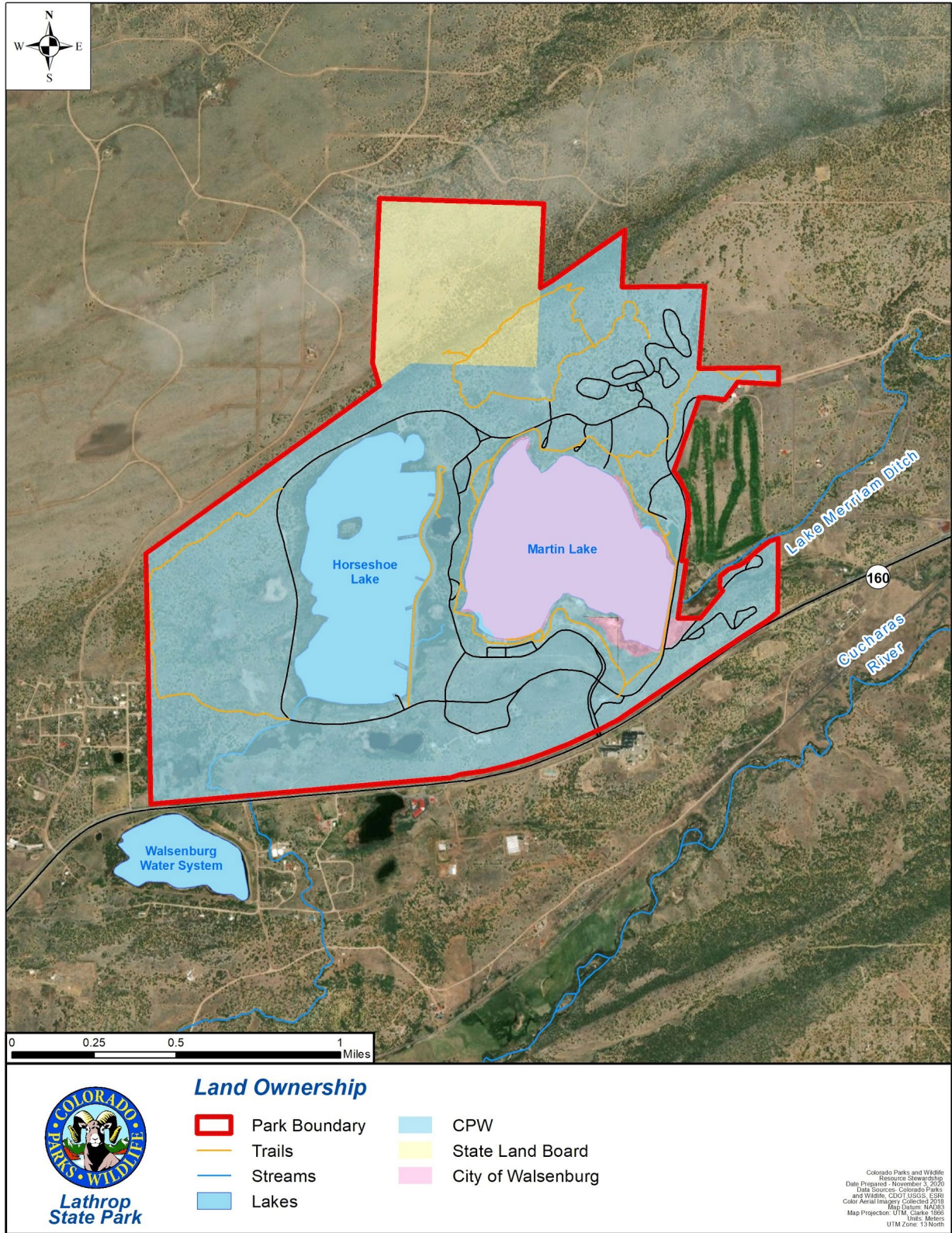
Major landforms visible from the Park include the Great Plains to the east, the Spanish Peaks to the south, and the Sangre de Cristo Range to the west. The West and East Spanish Peaks are two mountains that were formed by igneous intrusions, or dikes, that pushed up from the Earth's surface. They are older than the nearby Sangre de Cristo Mountain Range. They rise to elevations of 13,625 and 12,683 feet, are located about 17 miles to the southwest and provide a scenic backdrop for the Park. For thousands of years, the distinct mountains were used as landmarks, camping, hunting, exploring, and mining for travelers through this area. The core of the Spanish Peaks was designated as a Wilderness Area by Congress.

Eco-Regional Setting

Lathrop State Park lies mainly within the Huerfano sub-basin with a small northern portion in the Sandy Arroyo watershed and the southern portion that contains most of the park water features within the Upper Cucharas River watershed. The Park encompasses a wide range of habitat types, allowing wildlife to flourish. Primary habitats for wildlife at the Park include pinyon-juniper woodlands, grasslands, mixed foothills shrubland, cottonwood riparian woodland, riparian shrubland, and wetland marsh communities. Further, the two large lakes provide suitable habitat for many birds and fish (See "Natural Resources" in Section 3).

Adjacent Land Use and Land Ownership

The Park is located west of the I-25 corridor and is almost completely surrounded by private lands (Map 2). Much of this private land has already been developed or is in the process of being developed as residential properties and subdivisions. Regionally, many federal lands are present, including the Pike and San Isabel National Forests, Great Sand Dunes National Park, Comanche National Grasslands, and the Spanish Peaks and Greenhorn Mountain Wilderness Areas.



Map 2. Land ownership within Lathrop State Park

Adjacent Jurisdictions

Lathrop's closest and most interactive neighbor is the Walsenburg Golf Course to the east of the Park. The two entities share a fence on Lathrop's eastern boundary, and the public uses a county road within the Park to access the golf course. The Park and the golf course work in partnership on marketing and advertising opportunities to campers and the public at large.

Lathrop's other boundaries are surrounded by private property on the north, the Spanish Peaks Subdivision is on the western boundary. The Spanish Peaks Regional Health (SPRHC) Center/Hospital/Emergency Room sits across Highway 160 to the south. For several years, the (SPRHC) has been an active partner in providing a July 4th fireworks show both from their property and over the lake.

Transportation/Roads

The Park is accessed via US Highway 160 from Interstate 25. The Park roads provide access to Park trails, parking lots, and facilities. The main Park road is designated as County Road 502 in the section that runs from Highway 160 to the city golf course. Park roads do not provide access to any other adjacent lands or properties. However, there is a gate behind the golf course leading to a dirt road (that becomes Second Ave. in Walsenburg) that could be used as an evacuation route for the park visitors in an emergency.

CPW owns all of the roads within the Park except the county road stated above. CPW maintains all roads in the Park, including CR 502. In exchange, the County helps with grading unpaved roads near Horseshoe Lake and Yucca campground. Appendix B is the agreement between CPW and Huerfano County regarding road maintenance.

Regional Recreation and Tourism Trends, Needs, and Opportunities

In 2018, the Colorado Tourism Office (CTO) released its Regional Branding Initiative. This effort aims to create more cohesive regional identities to promote unique travel experiences and help generate local marketing strategies. Lathrop State Park lies within "The Mystic San Luis Valley" region (Region 4), which covers the south-central region of Colorado (CTO 2018).

In South-central Colorado, the Mystic San Luis Valley region contains the largest alpine desert valley in the world, with views that span 100 miles (CTO 2018). A ring of mountains, some more than 14,000 feet high, tower over sand dunes in one area of the valley floor, with small towns scattered throughout the region. The region is rooted in Native American heritage and known as the birthplace of modern Colorado. This region is also home to vibrant Hispanic and religious histories (CTO 2018). See the "History" section of CTO's report for more context and background in this area.

CTO's plan includes recommendations for tourism development. The top three are: 1) Focus should be approximately 50 percent on destination development and 50 percent on destination promotion; 2) Create a destination development plan based on a regional identity (Spanish influence with community spirit); and 3) Build a niche marketing plan (start with one niche or two niches).

The 2019-2023 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), based on CTO's previous travel management zones, offers valuable insight into the recreation trends in this area. For the purposes of the SCORP, Lathrop State Park belonged to the "Southeast" region, which includes Pueblo and Trinidad as the two largest cities within the region and also encompasses the large shortgrass prairie, Comanche National Grasslands (CPW 2019).

The Southeast's top three recreational activities are: 1) walking; 2) RV camping/cabins; and 3) fishing. This region generates around \$1.6 billion of direct economic output each year from recreation and provides the second lowest economic contributions out of all the regions in Colorado (although region sizes must be considered) (CPW 2019). See the "Economic Value" section of the SCORP for more information on the Southwest Region's contributions.

Although the Park is surrounded by private lands, federal lands are in close proximity to the region. Portions of the Pike and San Isabel National Forests are located north, south, and west of the Park. These forests provide year-round recreation, including hiking, backpacking, camping, horseback riding, and OHV riding. To the south of the Park lies the Spanish Peaks Wilderness Area, which is part of Pike and San Isabel National Forests. The Spanish Peaks are prominent landmarks along the eastern front of the southern Rockies with two large summits reaching up to 13,623 feet. To the north lies Greenhorn Mountain Wilderness area, also located within the Pike and San Isabel National Forests. Great Sand Dunes National Park is approximately one hour west of the Park. It has a unique ecosystem and contains the tallest dunes in North America, spreading across 30 square miles in an uncommon high-altitude desert environment (NPS 2020).

The Scenic Highway of Legends features the Spanish Peaks and links Trinidad, La Veta, Cuchara, Walsenburg and Aguilar. This byway is designated as both a Colorado Scenic and Historic Byway and a National Scenic Byway indicating their outstanding scenic and historic attributes for travelers and potential economic development. This 82 mile corridor is also the Southern Mountain Loop of the Colorado Front Range Trail (CFRT) under study by Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) and the South Central Council of Governments (SCCOG) for a long-term investment plan for highway safety, bicycle/recreation trail, cultural/heritage and nature-based tourism infrastructure improvements. CDOT and SCCOG will have a set of projects and an implementation plan and will become a part of CPW's initiative for the CCRT (<https://cpw.state.co.us/aboutus/Pages/TrailsCFRT.aspx>)

The local non-profit, La Veta Trails, aims to transform La Veta and the surrounding region in Huerfano County into a healthier community through establishing trail routes, promoting conservation of natural resources, and encouraging outdoor activities. The organization recruits volunteers, organizes trail work days, provides information about trails, forms collaborative partnerships, develops programs for youth and adults, and raises funding for trail development and maintenance. The non-profit is currently working on several trail projects in the vicinity of the Park and other CPW properties in Huerfano County (La Veta Trails 2020).

Population Trends

Colorado’s population as of 2018 was estimated to be 5.694 million people, which increased almost 150,000 from 2016 (CDLA 2020a). Most of the population growth in the state from 2016-2018 was in the Front Range (88 percent), and 49 percent was within the Denver Metro Area (CDLA 2020a). Colorado’s population is forecasted to grow but at a slowing rate. The population was estimated to grow by 1.5 percent again in 10 to 15 years (CDLA 2020b). The slowing growth rate is due to a predicted slowing economy, slowing birth rates, aging population, and slowing labor force growth (CDLA 2016).

Population trends and predictions are provided in Table 2 for Huerfano County. As of 2018, Huerfano County was the 44th fastest growing county in the State out of 64 counties (CDLA 2019). The population of Huerfano County increased by 7 percent, from 2014 (6,376) to 2018 (6,851) people (CDLA 2020b). Growth is expected to slow in the near future. However, Colorado’s growth is still much faster than the rest of the country.

Table 2: Population Estimates for Huerfano County (CDLA 2020b).

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2020	2025	2030
Population	6,376	6,385	6,563	6,611	6,851	6,775	6,791	6,705

The 2019 SCORP cites population increases and demographic changes as important considerations in the future management of Colorado’s public lands. Undoubtedly, the quality of life Colorado offers plays a key role in attracting new residents. However, as our state’s population increases, there are associated challenges to conservation and outdoor recreation. While the population of Colorado continues to grow, the amount of land available for recreation and wildlife habitat is finite. The consequence of a growing population is a related decline in per capita protected areas. In addition, as the demographics change within the state, outdoor recreation must be culturally relevant and planners must evaluate the different ways in which people recreate. For many years, we have provided the same types of recreation options. These may not accommodate the unique needs and interests of different racial and ethnic groups, people with disabilities, an aging population, and more (CPW 2019).

The population of Colorado’s citizens aged 65 and older is growing as a result of aging and in-migration (Kemp 2014) and displays a strong interest in an active lifestyle and travel during retirement (CPW 2014). In 2000, people aged 65 and over represented 9.7 percent of the total population of Colorado. By 2010, this percentage had increased to 10.9 percent. In Huerfano County, the trend towards an older population has been more pronounced. The total number of people aged 65 and over in 2010 was 1,688, representing 25 percent of the total county population (US Census Bureau 2010).

Statewide, Hispanic populations have increased by 41.2 percent from 2000-2010 (US Census Bureau 2011). Within this growing population, the under-18 population growth has outpaced the 18 and older population growth. In Huerfano County, the Hispanic population in 2010 was 2,368 which accounts for 35.3 percent of the total county population estimate (US Census Bureau 2010).

Citations

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3 PARK SETTING & RESOURCES

This section provides an overview of the current condition of resources and various ongoing factors within the Park (e.g., visitation, budget, and staffing trends) that affect management efforts. Included in this section is a detailed description of current land use and land ownership; Park administration and special functions; visitation; existing recreation, natural, and cultural resources; and other information that either directly or indirectly influences management of Lathrop State Park. This information provides: 1) a contextual framework for better understanding management needs and constraints and 2) a “baseline” from which to identify Enhancement Opportunities and Implementation Priorities (included in Chapter 5). Unless otherwise noted, references for the information presented in this chapter are from the Park’s Resource Stewardship Plan.

Park Land Ownership

CPW owns most of the property on which Lathrop State Park lies except for a 161.98 acre parcel that is owned by the State Land Board. The City of Walsenburg owns the water in the two lakes. Prior to 2020, the City of Walsenburg leased CPW land next to the Park that was operated as a golf course, and CPW leased land from the city that was operated as Yucca Campground. In 2020, CPW completed a land exchange in which the City of Walsenburg obtained ownership of the golf course land from the state, and CPW obtained the Yucca campground land from the city. The transaction required termination of leases by both governments that were originally created in 1965 to allow use of the other’s property. The lease of the Yucca campground also gave CPW lease rights to an inactive Youth Camp across Highway 160 from the Park. With the termination of the leases, the Youth Camp and its surrounding land reverted back to ownership by Walsenburg.

CPW purchased the golf course property in the 1960’s using funding provided by the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). A stipulation to the LWCF funding is that the golf course land is to always be used for public recreation. It is written into the land exchange that if the golf course ever fails as a business, the land reverts back to state ownership and will be used for recreation. The land can never be sold or developed for other purposes.

The State Land Board owns the E2SW, W2SE in Section 12 of 28S 67W (160 acres), and lot 24 in Greenhorn Village Tract 1 in Section 13 of 28S 67W (1.98 acres). The property owned by the State Land Board is part of the “Internal Improvements Trust” and the legislature has designated the beneficiary of the Internal Improvements and Saline Trust as “State Parks.” As such, the State Land Board allows use and management of the property by CPW, as part of Lathrop State Park, through an existing Beneficiary Use Agreement (see Appendix C). Before any new improvement, personal property or attached fixtures are placed on the trust land, or before any existing improvement is removed, CPW should obtain prior written permission from the State Land Board via an improvement form.

Natural Resources

The Park has mostly gently rolling terrain that ranges in elevation between 6,350 and 6,640 feet. Martin and Horseshoe Lakes are the two most significant water features within Lathrop State Park. The water that supplies the lakes is diverted from the Cucharas River and conveyed by the Coler Ditch (Lake Merriam Ditch) to Horseshoe Lake. The vegetation of the Park is largely pinyon-juniper woodlands, with interspersed areas of grasslands. Hogback Ridge is a prominent rock formation that lies along the northern boundary of the Park.

Significant Features

The significant features outlined in this section are rare, unique, or important vegetation, wildlife, water, and cultural resources found in the Park.

Significant vegetation characteristics:

- Wetlands and riparian areas around the lakes and along inlet and outlet streams contribute to vegetation diversity in a dry landscape and provide excellent wildlife habitat.
- A large acreage of the Park's vegetation is considered to be in good to excellent condition.
- A rare plant species, dwarf milkweed (*Asclepias uncialis*), was previously identified on-site and habitat for the species exists within the Park. Rocky Mountain bladderpod (*Physaria calcicola*) is another rare plant documented by Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP) in the vicinity of the Park and habitat exists in areas of the Park.

Significant wildlife resources that are of particular interest:

- Horseshoe and Martin Lakes have excellent fisheries maintained by stocking. Both lakes offer fishing opportunities for cold- and warm-water species.
- The wetlands and riparian areas around the lakes and around the inlet ditch and outlet streams provide excellent habitat for a variety of wildlife species.
- Lathrop State Park provides winter range habitat for bald eagles. Red-tailed hawks and osprey have been found to nest in the Park. CNHP-tracked species have been found in the Park, including fringed myotis, northern leopard frog, white-faced ibis, and American white pelican.

Significant water resources in the Park:

- Horseshoe and Martin Lakes cover 140 and 180 acres, respectively.
- Water, wetland, and riparian areas provide important habitat for wildlife and plant species.

Significant geophysical, or soils and geology, features:

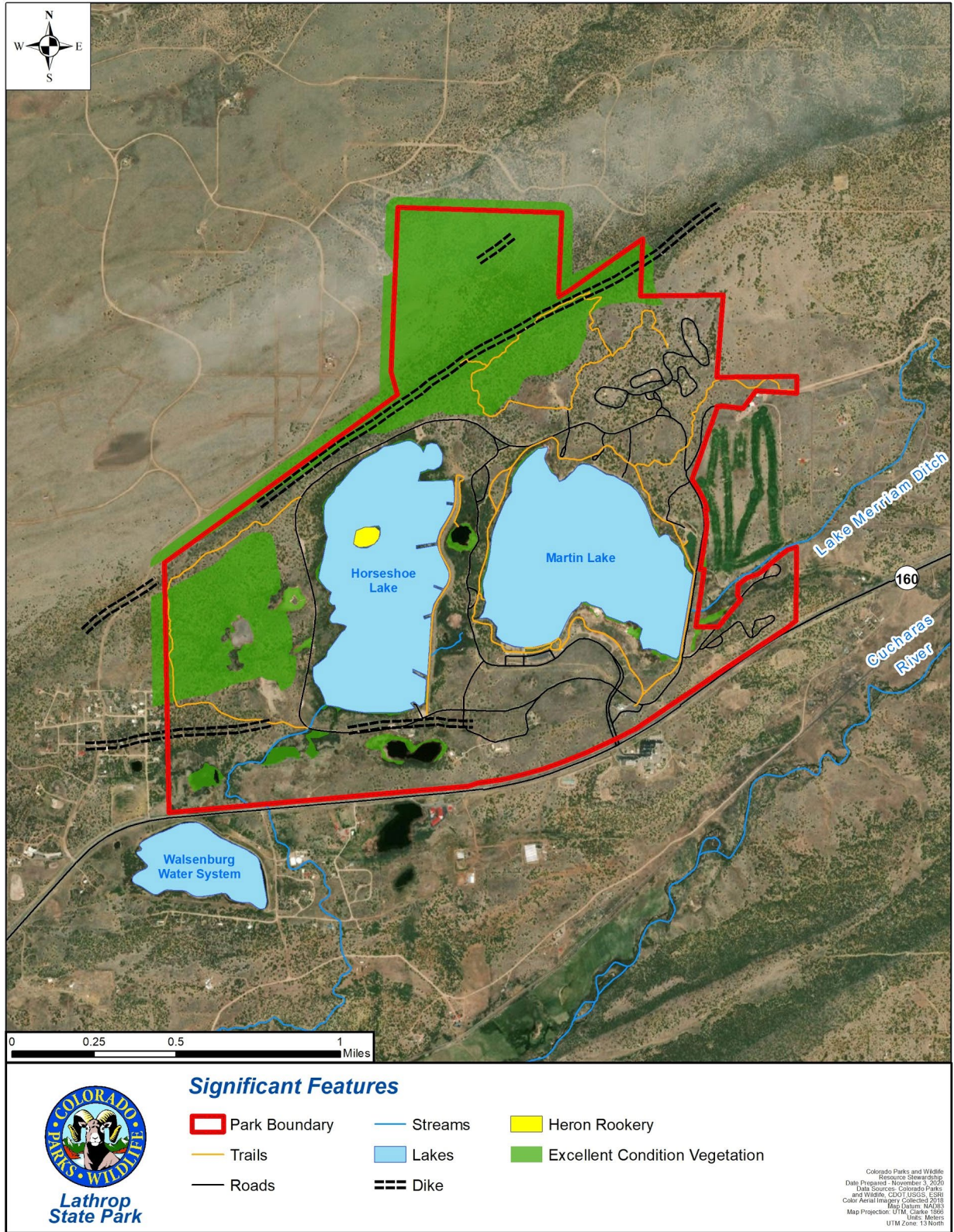
- A variety of soils provide, in concert with different local geologic units, substrates for upland and wetland plant communities and associated wildlife species.
- Wetland soils act as a filter between surface and groundwater and trap sediments that would otherwise enter the lakes.

- The Hogback Ridge, an igneous dike, is a significant visual feature for the Park along with two other dikes recently highlighted in geological surveys.

There are also several cultural/historical resources at the Park:

- The Park has a history that incorporates the stories of many peoples who have inhabited southeastern Colorado, including Native Americans and early settlers of the Region.
- Nine cultural sites have been documented in the Park.

The following sections provide more information about some of the key natural and cultural resources that occur at Lathrop State Park. Map 3 highlights several significant natural resources that occur in the Park. A more extensive description of natural resources is available in the Stewardship Plan.

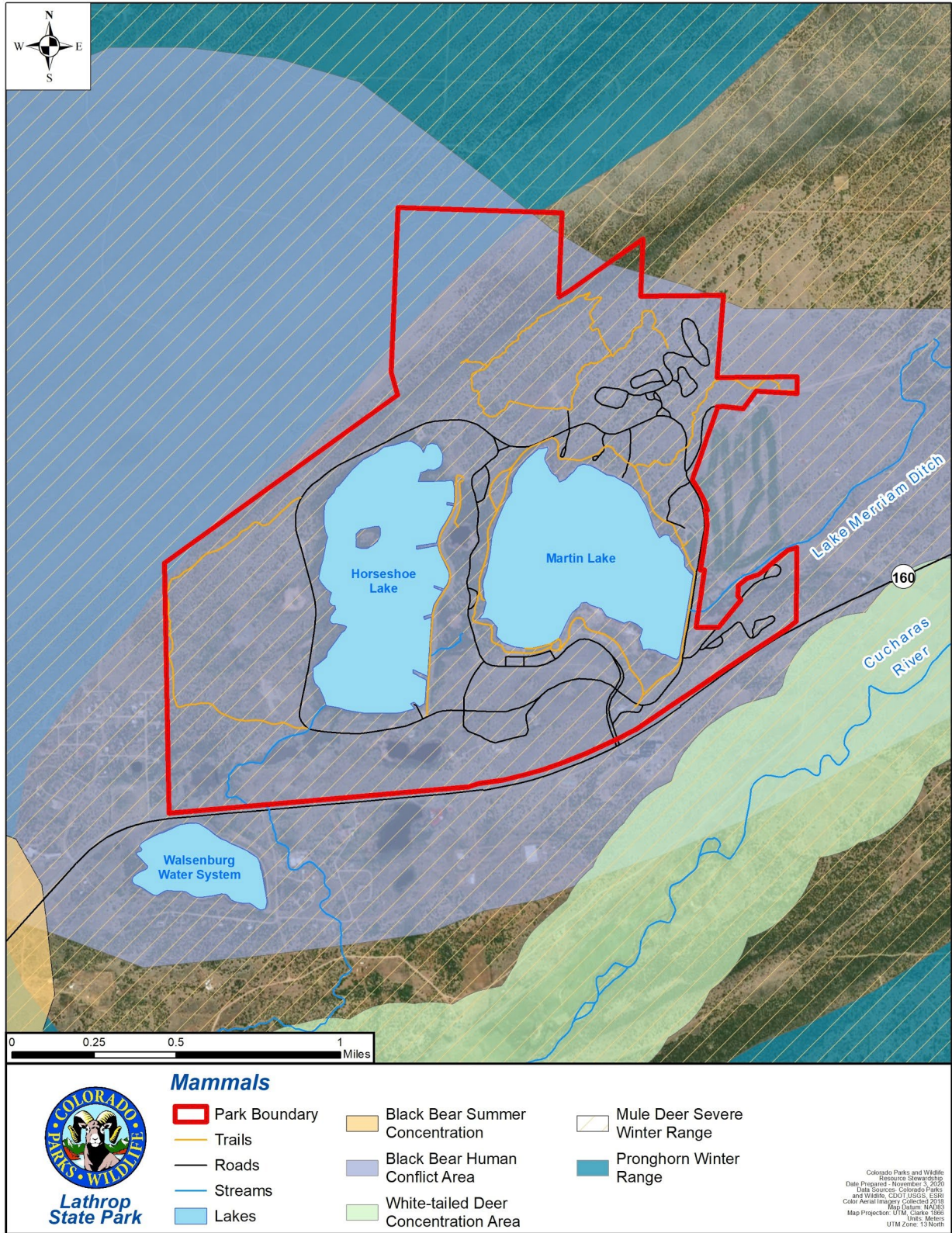


Map 3. Significant Features

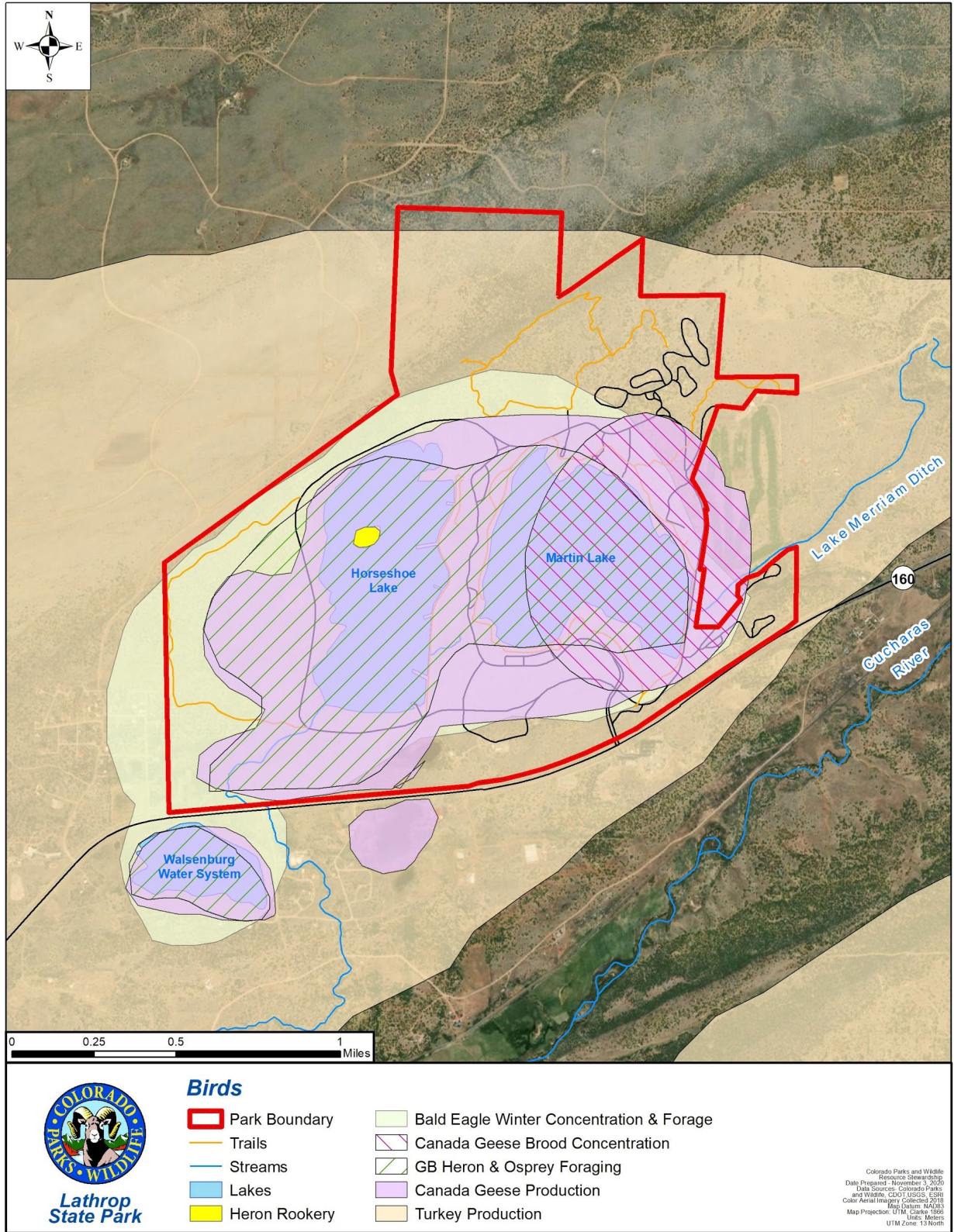
Wildlife

Lathrop State Park protects a wide variety of habitat types and thus provides opportunities for the public to observe both wildlife and outstanding scenery within close proximity of large towns and cities. Primary habitats for wildlife at Lathrop include pinyon-juniper woodlands, grasslands, mixed foothills shrubland, cottonwood riparian woodland, riparian shrubland, and wetland marsh communities. Further, the two large lakes provide suitable habitat for many birds and fish. Horseshoe and Martin Lakes are stocked with a large variety of recreational fish species.

Maps 4 and 5 (below) show approximate boundary lines within the Park for mammals and birds respectively.



Map 4. Significant habitat for large mammals



Map 5. Birds

Mammals

Although no formal mammal surveys have been conducted in the Park, mammals are commonly observed by staff and visitors. Coyotes and a variety of small mammals are the most regularly seen. They include striped skunk, raccoon, desert cottontail, muskrat, bobcat, and red fox. Mountain lion, elk, and black bears are occasionally sighted in the Park.

The Park provides ample habitat for elk, mule deer, and pronghorn antelope. CPW's Species Activity Mapping (SAM) data identifies summer, severe winter, winter, and overall range for mule deer within the Park. Elk overall range is present throughout the Park and the summer range is present just south of the Park. Pronghorn antelope overall and winter range lies outside of the Park and staff have noted this species is typically seen east of I-25 but not within the Park. White-tailed deer overall range also overlaps with the Park and a concentration area is located south of the Park along highway 160.

Black bears and mountain lions have been seen in the Park, and habitat for both species exists throughout the Park in the coniferous and deciduous woodlands and riparian areas. CPW SAM data for black bear and mountain lion overall range overlaps with the entire Park. Additionally, black bear-human conflict data all overlap with the Park, and summer concentration data lies approximately 0.5 miles southwest of the Park boundary.

CPW SAM data for black-tailed prairie dog overall range overlaps with the entire Park. Although prairie dogs were historically recorded in the Park, they have not been seen for at least ten years.

Several bat species are likely to be present in the Park. This includes the rare species, fringed myotis, which was confirmed to be present within the Park during 2015 CNHP surveys (CNHP 2015). The species was recorded at both the duck ponds west of Horseshoe Lake and the pond south of Horseshoe Lake. The rock formations of the hogback along the north boundary of the Park and the associated pinyon-juniper woodland offer roosting habitat and important foraging habitat for the fringed myotis and other bat species.

Birds

Lathrop State Park supports a diverse assemblage of migratory and breeding birds, including a great blue heron nesting colony, at least one pair of potentially nesting green herons, bald eagle roosting, and several relatively natural ponds and marshes populated by nesting waterfowl, Virginia rails, soras and other marsh-dependent birds. Pinyon-juniper woodlands in the northern section of the Park provide nesting habitat for mountain chickadee, pinyon jays, western scrub-jays, juniper titmice, bushtits, and other species typical of this ecosystem.

Bird surveys were completed in 2014 and found 83 species of birds, with the total number of birds just over 350 individuals. Of the 83 documented, 21 were confirmed to be nesting (Jones 2014). The highest average number of species and greatest species richness occurred in riparian and wetland areas of the Park.

Based on available habitat, the Park could provide habitat for several birds that are tracked by the CNHP. These species are listed in the "Threatened and Endangered Species" section in Table 3 below.

Fish

Horseshoe and Martin Lakes were originally natural lakes, but are now reservoirs. Prior to their conversion into reservoirs, the area surrounding the lakes was largely upland, possibly with small seeps or riparian areas along the drainage bottoms. Fisheries were non-existent prior to the expansion of the lakes.

Both lakes now typically have excellent fishing. The lakes are stocked multiple times each year to support the demand for cold- and warm-water fishing. Fish species that are stocked regularly include rainbow trout, channel catfish, largemouth bass, crappies, bluegills, sauger, walleye, saugeye, tiger muskie, and wiper (*refer to the Recreational Resources Section for 2019 stocking records*). The fishery of Martin Lake is similar to Horseshoe Reservoir but receives a greater variety of species of fish. Gizzard shad are also periodically stocked into Horseshoe and Martin to maintain a good forage base for predatory fish. The fisheries management goal of Horseshoe Reservoir emphasizes catchable trout with over-winter growth potential, the use of tiger muskies to control white sucker numbers, and the removal of northern pike. Saugers are stocked when available, providing anglers with a unique opportunity in southern Colorado to catch this species (only a couple of lakes in the NE region provide opportunities for catching sauger). The fisheries management goal of Martin Lake also emphasizes catchable trout with over-winter growth potential and a diversified warm water fishery. Both saugeye and walleye are stocked, as well as wipers, black crappies, and occasionally yellow perch.

Reptiles and Amphibians

Lathrop State Park has a good, stable, and seemingly healthy population of amphibians and reptiles. The Park provides potentially very important and sensitive habitat areas for amphibians and reptiles, including reservoirs, ponds, ephemeral wetlands, and the hogback area. Amphibian and reptile surveys were conducted in 2014, which yielded 28 observations of two amphibian species and five reptile species (Vernalis Environmental 2014).

These observations included an occurrence of a CNHP-sensitive amphibian species, the northern leopard frog. The frog was documented west of Horseshoe Lake within cottonwood riparian habitat. It is believed that the northern leopard frog could thrive within Lathrop State Park because the park provides a mosaic of habitats that meet the requirements of all of the frog's life stages, including wet meadows, banks of shallow marshes, ponds, lakes reservoirs, streams, and irrigation ditches.

Vegetation

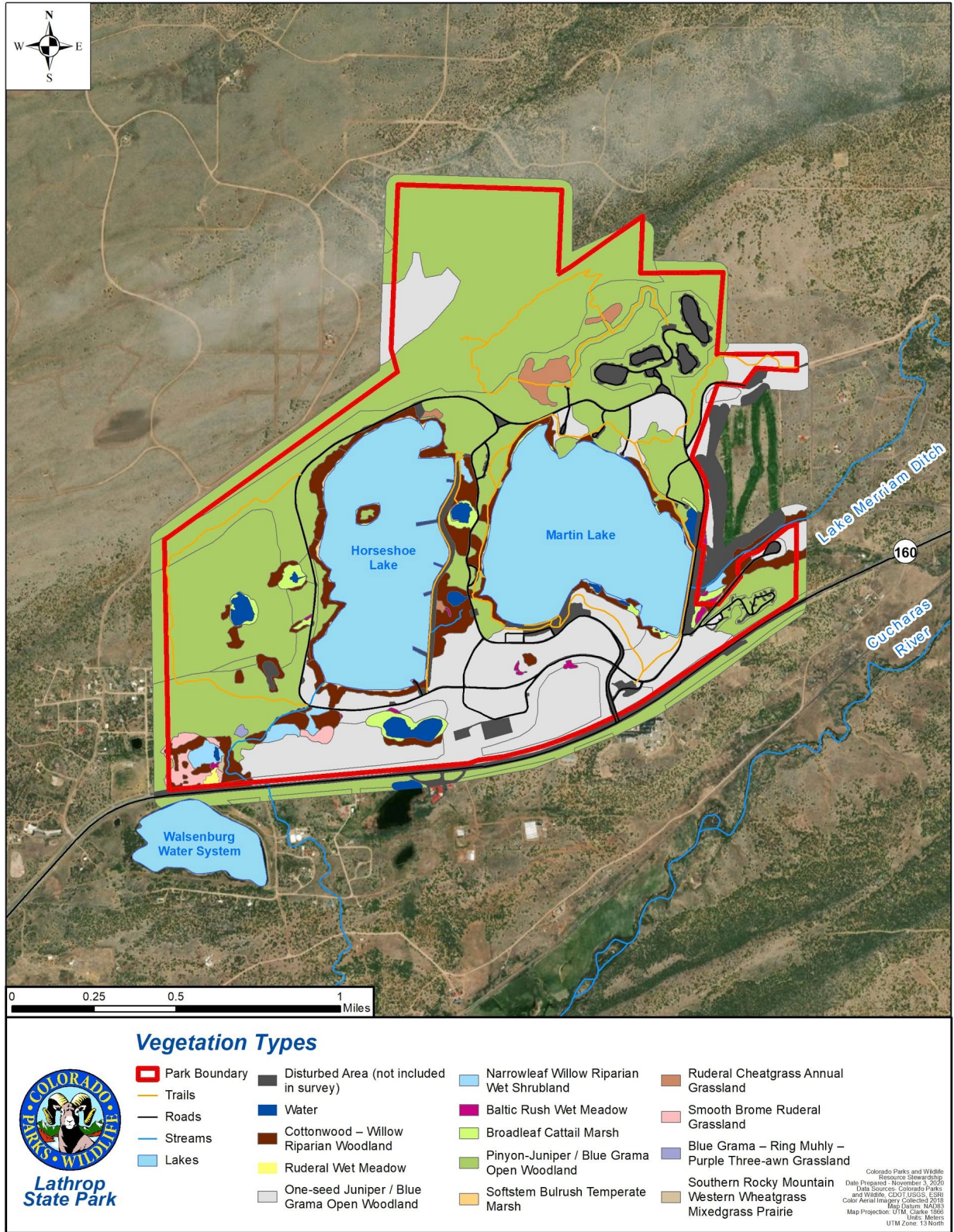
Lathrop State Park contains 12 distinct vegetation communities, as defined by the National Vegetation Classification System (NVC), including four forest and woodland, six shrubs and herb, and one desert and semi-desert. The prominent natural community types in the Park are pinyon-juniper forest, mixed-grass prairie, willow riparian shrubland, and cottonwood riparian forest.

Pinyon-juniper open woodlands are present throughout much of the Park and contain a diverse graminoid and forb understory. Juniper and open grasslands are also present, and trees in this community are much more widely-spaced than in the pinyon-juniper woodlands. Mixed grasslands occur in open areas between stands of trees and in the

deeper soils of park meadows. Riparian communities are established along the periphery of the two lakes and along portions of drainages throughout the Park. Emergent wetlands surround the two lakes and are present in depressional landforms in the Park.

The plant communities are generally in “good” or “excellent” condition relative to the rest of the Park’s vegetation. For example, areas where infrastructure and trails exist are generally in fair to poor condition. They have high levels of non-native species, dense vegetation/poor structure, or trampled vegetation from human use. Fair and poor vegetation is concentrated around the two lakes, campgrounds, and near wetlands and riparian areas.

There are eight permanent vegetation monitoring plots around the Park to monitor changes in vegetation over time. Five plots were created in 2001 and three were established in 2017. Vegetation communities, vegetation condition, and the plots were identified and evaluated in 2017 (Greulich 2017).



Map 6. Vegetation Types

Forest Communities

Pinyon-juniper woodlands are the most dominant vegetation community at Lathrop State Park. Pinyon pine grows at 5,200 to 9,000 feet in elevation in open areas alone or with junipers on dry rocky foothills, mesas, and plateaus (CSFS 2020). The two tree species dominated one community in the Park, totaling 740 acres. One-seed juniper was also present throughout much of this community and by itself in more open areas with a less dense tree canopy (325 acres). The tree-dominated communities contain a variety of understory components, including shrubs, herbaceous plants, bare earth, and rocks. Common plant species associated with these tree-dominated communities include yucca, tree cholla, plains prickly pear, silvery lupine, broom snakeweed, rubber rabbitbrush, scarlet globemallow, and cheatgrass.

Deciduous tree forests and communities are also present in the Park. Peachleaf willow, narrowleaf cottonwood, plains cottonwood, and Russian olive were documented in the Park and are found predominantly in riparian areas. These habitats are discussed in more detail below.

Wetland and Riparian Communities

A vast majority (nearly 75 percent) of all Colorado wildlife depends in some part on riparian areas. Surrounding the Park's lakes, streams, and depressional landforms, water inundates soils and supports unique wetland and riparian plant communities that are essential to wildlife survival. These areas could also support two rare plants, autumn willow and American currant, although neither have been historically documented. Riparian and wetland communities comprise approximately 140 acres within the Park, along the periphery of Horseshoe and Martin Lakes and ephemeral drainages. These communities are at the highest risk of further degradation and reduced conditions as they are particularly conducive and vulnerable to the invasion of noxious weed species.

Riparian communities in the Park are dominated by peachleaf willow, narrowleaf willow, Russian olive, plains cottonwood, and narrowleaf cottonwood. These areas are found along the periphery of the lakes, ephemeral drainages, or in depressional areas that may only be inundated part of the year. Shrub and herbaceous species also found in these areas include cattails, common spikerush, smooth brome, saltgrass, and softstem bulrush.

Wetlands harbor incredible benefits for ecosystems and people, such as flood and erosion control, increased water quality, spawning/rearing habitat, waterfowl habitat, groundwater recharge, and recreation and educational opportunities. Three native wetland communities were specifically identified in the Park. The majority of other wetland areas are contained within riparian communities on the periphery of water sources or in depressional areas. Some dominant species present include cattails, common spikerush, softstem bulrush, and horsetail.

Shrublands

Shrubland-dominant communities are not common in the Park, although the shrubland stratum is present in most forest upland and riparian communities and some grassland areas. Narrowleaf willow is the only shrub-dominant community in the Park and is found in some wetland and riparian zones. These willows communities contain an understory of sedges and rushes.

Grasslands

Two native grassland communities are present in the Park and are dominated by western wheatgrass, needle-and-thread grass, blue grama, and purple three-awn. Other associate species present in the grassland areas include plains prickly pear, scarlet globemallow, cheatgrass, and alyssum. Much of the grassland areas contain non-native species, such as cheatgrass, alyssum, and smooth brome, which dominate many areas. Some communities identified in the Park are considered ruderal because non-native grasses are the dominant species.

Sensitive Species

Lathrop State Park may provide habitat for approximately 21 sensitive wildlife species, of which five have historically been documented in the Park. Additionally, the Park provides habitat for five rare plant species, of which only one has been historically documented in the Park. Table 3 lists the sensitive wildlife and plant species that could occur in the Park as identified by the 2017 Stewardship Plan.

Species identified are considered sensitive or at risk according to various species conservation lists. Lists and conservation rankings considered include the Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA), NatureServe, CNHP, and the Colorado State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP).

There are no federally listed threatened or endangered species identified under U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Endangered Species Act guidelines.

CPW utilizes NatureServe's and CNHP's conservation status ranks to identify and manage threatened species (NatureServe 2019; CNHP 2013). The following definitions pertain to either global or state populations:

- Critically Imperiled (S1, G1): At very high risk of extinction due to very restricted range, very few populations or occurrences, very steep declines, very severe threats, or other factors.
- Imperiled (S2, G2): At high risk of extinction due to restricted range, few populations or occurrences, steep declines, severe threats, or other factors.
- Vulnerable (S3, G3): At moderate risk of extinction due to a fairly restricted range, relatively few populations or occurrences, recent and widespread declines, threats, or other factors.
- Apparently Secure (S4, G4): At fairly low risk of extinction due to an extensive range and/or many populations or occurrences, but with possible cause for some concern as a result of local recent declines, threats, or other factors.
- Secure (S5, G5): At very low risk of extinction due to a very extensive range, abundant populations or occurrences, and little to no concern from declines or threats.

Colorado's State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) identifies Tier 1 and Tier 2 Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) for conservation priorities in the state. The Tier 1 list represents the species that are truly of highest conservation priority in the state, and to which CPW will likely focus resources over the life of the plan. Tier 2 species remain important in light of forestalling population trends or habitat conditions that may lead to a threatened or endangered listing status, but the urgency of such action has been judged to be less (CPW 2015).

Table 3: Sensitive Species with Potential to Occur at Lathrop State Park.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Conservation Status		Occurrence year documented
		CNHP	CPW	
American currant	<i>Ribes americanum</i>	G4 / S1		
Autumn willow	<i>Salix serissima</i>	G5 / S2		
Dwarf milkweed	<i>Asclepias uncialis</i>	G3G4T2T3 / S2		1977
Front Range milkvetch	<i>Astragalus sparsiflorus</i>	G2 / S2		
Rocky Mountain bladder pod	<i>Physaria calcicola</i>	G3 / S3		
Northern leopard frog	<i>Lithobates pipiens</i>	G5 / S3	Tier 1	2014
American White Pelican	<i>Pelecanus erythrorhynchos</i>	G4 / S1B	Tier 2	2014
Bald eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	G4 / S1B, S3N	Tier 2	2013
Barrow's Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala islandica</i>	G5 / S2B	Tier 2	
Burrowing Owl	<i>Athene cunicularia</i>	G4 / S4B	Tier 1	
Ferruginous Hawk	<i>Buteo regalis</i>	G4 / S3B, S4N	Tier 2	
Forster's Tern	<i>Sterna forsteri</i>	G4 / S2B, S4N		
Lewis's woodpecker	<i>Melanerpes lewis</i>	G4 / S4	Tier 2	
Mountain Plover	<i>Charadrius montanus</i>	G3 / S2B	Tier 1	1962
Ovenbird	<i>Seiurus aurocapilla</i>	G5 / S2B		
Peregrine falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	G4T4 / S2B	Tier 2	
Prairie falcon	<i>Falco mexicanus</i>	G5 / S4B, S4N	Tier 2	
Rufous-crowned Sparrow	<i>Aimophila ruficeps</i>	G4 / S2		
Snowy Egret	<i>Egretta thula</i>	G4 / S2B		
White-faced Ibis	<i>Plegadis chihi</i>	G5 / S2B	Tier 2	2014
Willet	<i>Catoptrophorus semipalmatus</i>	G5 / S1B		
Willow Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax traillii</i>	G5 / S4	Tier 1 subsp. <i>extimus</i>	
Wilson's Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus tricolor</i>	G5 / S4B, S4N		
Mottled duskywing	<i>Erynnis martialis</i>	G3 / S2S3	Tier 2	
Fringed myotis	<i>Myotis thysanodes</i>	G4 / S3	Tier 1	2015
Gunnison's prairie dog	<i>Cynomys gunnisoni gunnisoni</i>	G5 / S5	Tier 1	

Threats to Habitats and Wildlife

Recreational Impacts on Wildlife

Lathrop State Park is a popular recreational destination for southern Colorado cities and continues to grow. Recreationists have the potential to displace wildlife, cause trail erosion, impact water quality, and spread noxious weeds. Vehicles, foot traffic, and use of non-certified weed free seed mixes in the Park or on neighboring properties can introduce noxious weeds. Coloradans are also recreating more year-round and in more places, meaning wildlife must tolerate direct and indirect human disturbance for a longer amount of time and over greater geographic areas. In order to mitigate recreational impacts to wildlife, the Park can enforce seasonal closures to protect breeding, wintering, and migratory areas.

Shifting Habitat Conditions

In addition to recreation pressures, severe weather, increased frequency and severity of fires, and altered habitat conditions are changing species' normal dwelling places. Many species present in the Park could be impacted by these changing environmental conditions, especially rare and imperiled wildlife and plants. Future monitoring and management decisions should consider these factors.

Forest Insects and Disease

There are very few insect and disease issues at the Park that require immediate attention. One main issue that has affected the Lathrop upland woodland has been an epidemic outbreak of the Pinyon Ips Beetle. The past forty years have seen an increase in the density of the pinyon-juniper woodlands in the Park. Small numbers of pinyon die-off were attributed to pinyon decline or winter kill where in fact the Pinyon Ips Beetle was most likely present. The major drought of 2002 precipitated the major outbreak of Pinyon Ips and a large loss of pinyon in the Park and areas just outside of the Park. Foresters did not detect any beetle activity during the summer 2019 surveys. Continued monitoring of pinyon for signs of beetles should occur and Park staff should be familiar with characteristics of an Ips Beetle infestation. The Park should consider preventive spraying of high value trees in years when significant outbreaks occur (CPW 2019).

Pinyon needle scale pests have been observed at Lathrop and were found to be the more prevalent issue documented during the 2019 forest survey. This pest does not usually kill the tree but the trees may require treatment depending on the severity of defoliation. Simple washing of the tree or chemical insecticides can be used as control methods. It is thought that infested trees are more susceptible to Ips Beetle infestation and Pinyon Decline (CPW 2019).

Cytospora Canker has been found recently on several of the cottonwood trees at Lathrop. This is a fungus that kills healthy bark tissue, exposing the tree to further disease. None of the recently observed infected trees are heavily infected, so they do not need removal at this time (CPW 2019).

Whirling Disease

Whirling Disease (WD) is caused by a microscopic parasite, *Myxobolus cerebralis*, that attacks the head and spine of trout. Whirling disease was detected in water bodies

within Lathrop State Park in 1988, however, records for more recent information do not exist. The Cucharas River just outside of the Park tested positive when last tested in 1997 (Fetherman 2017). This disease limits the number of trout, particularly rainbows, that are available for stocking in the lakes. However, Lathrop contains Class “C” waters that are suitable for stocking trout from hatcheries classified as being “whirling-disease positive.” CPW supports continued research on WD in Colorado to understand the contribution of habitat on the WD spore levels, the possible immune response in exposed salmonids and the identification of species and strains that show resistance to clinical symptoms of WD, and management strategies to minimize WD spore levels in positive hatcheries and wild salmonid populations. Fish tested positive for, or exposed to, the WD parasite on positive salmonid fish culture facilities may be used to provide recreational fishing opportunities in WD exposed waters that do not pose a threat to self-reproducing populations of salmonids or other aquatic species (PWC 2019).

Drought

Extended drought is the most serious of the environmental conditions facing Lathrop’s forests. Lack of moisture contributes to tree stress, inviting insect or disease problems. Seasonal precipitation, especially adequate snowpack, is critical to runoff and lake levels. During drought, lake levels are further affected by calls for stored irrigation water, increased evaporation, or use for drinking water. As expected, lower lake levels can have an extreme effect on shoreline riparian forests and fish survival. As lake levels decrease, water temperatures tend to increase, which can cause stress on many fish species, particularly trout, which then can lower their survival rate. In addition, there may be potential for algal blooms due to drought. This has not occurred at Lathrop but is a concern and monitoring for algal blooms should happen during drought conditions.

Wildfire

Fire is a natural occurrence in healthy forests and grasslands. As part of a natural disturbance regime, fire processes occur in cycles but do not have catastrophic effects on structure or species composition. The suppression of fire leads to denser forests where wildfire, mistletoe, spruce budworm, and pine beetle can all have very dramatic impacts on the ecosystem. Fire suppression also leads to a change in vegetation species composition over time.

The overall risk to Lathrop State Park from wildland fire is rated as moderate, although Lathrop falls within the wildland-urban interface shown to be at high wildfire risk. There are periods of low fuel moisture, low relative humidity, high winds, and high temperatures where the risk of wildfire can become extreme. The area is subject to many red flag warning days and county imposed fire bans. The majority of Lathrop State Park is covered by pinyon-juniper woodlands and grasslands. Fuel ladders are abundant because of the low to the ground growth of both pinyon and juniper trees. There are large areas of cheatgrass in previously disturbed sites, which is a significant wildfire hazard due to its aggressive early spring growth then early browning. There remains a fair amount of standing and downed Ips Beetle-killed pinyon. The riparian forested areas of Lathrop show moderate amounts of downed deadwood, forest litter, mixed with wetland grasses and shrubs. These areas are subject to fire during the months when these plants are dormant (CPW 2019).

Noxious Weeds

Plants that are not part of Colorado's native vegetation are considered exotic species, and those that outcompete native species are considered noxious weeds. A noxious weed survey and management plan were completed for the Park in 2018 and covered all campsites, trails, roads/roadsides, parking areas and structures managed by CPW (CPW 2018). Noxious weeds are having significant negative impacts on the riparian, wetland, and upland communities at Lathrop and have the potential for much greater impacts. Over time, with dedicated control efforts, it is possible to minimize the effects of noxious weeds on wildlife and sensitive plant species. Efficient control should emphasize minimizing the spread of new weeds, attacking weed patches that are not yet well established, and consistently treating large growth areas.

Aquatic Nuisance Species

CPW has led a program to keep aquatic nuisance species (ANS) from invading the lakes in the state. The most common ANS that the program is working to prevent is the zebra mussel. Zebra mussels have several characteristics that make them detrimental to natural resources, water supplies, and state and city budgets. Zebra mussels multiply by the millions and, with no natural predators outside of their native Europe, can easily take over a lake. Zebra mussels are filter-feeders, which means they filter plankton out of the water, thereby increasing water clarity and eliminating plankton as food for young fish. This can adversely affect fish populations. They attach themselves to any hard substrates such as boats, water lines, pipes, etc., and can clog water supply systems. They are almost impossible to eradicate from a lake once it is contaminated. Zebra mussels have invaded lakes in most every state around Colorado, so the ANS program is expected to be extremely important for several years. There is an ANS inspection station at the entrance to Lathrop to prevent the introduction of ANS into these waters, and they follow a strict protocol of cleaning any boats that are suspected of having ANS.

A second ANS that has already invaded both Horseshoe and Martin Lakes is Eurasian Water Milfoil (EWM). Although the lakes still thrive, it is a non-native plant that is a nuisance to boat props, fishing, and shorelines. To prevent spreading EWM to other lakes, boats are inspected as they are leaving Lathrop so any plant material can be removed from the boats and trailers. EWM "reproduces" by fragmentation, so even one small piece of the plant can cause a new introduction. EWM cannot be eradicated without completely draining the lakes, but the ANS program pays for treatment to prevent the plant from spreading even more. Treatments are done each spring and fall if the budget allows.

Other Threats

Land development and pollution pose additional challenges for Lathrop State Park's sensitive and vulnerable species. The Park's past management zones were reconsidered in this plan to better protect these species and accomplish the desired future vision of the Park (see the "Management Zoning" section for more).

Hydrology

Martin and Horseshoe Lakes are the two most significant water features within Lathrop State Park. Martin Lake has a surface area of 180 acres and Horseshoe Lake has a surface area of 140 acres. On some maps, Horseshoe Lake is referred to as Meriam

Lake, and Martin Lake is shown as Oehm Lake. The water that supplies the lakes is diverted from the Cucharas River and conveyed by the Coler Ditch (Lake Merriam Ditch) to Horseshoe Lake. Water in Horseshoe Lake then flows through a channel into Martin Lake. Water flows from Martin Lake through the Lake Merriam Ditch to the east, eventually reconnecting with the Cucharas River.

The City of Walsenburg owns all of the water stored in the lakes. City water managers have consistently kept the lakes at high levels for recreation unless drought allowed only for low water storage in the lakes. However, even in drought years, both lake levels have always been at a minimum pool that is usable for recreation and boating per an agreement between CPW and the city. Water from Martin Lake is also diverted through an irrigation system to water the neighboring golf course.

Horseshoe Lake has been identified as an impaired water body and is listed on the state of Colorado's 303(d) list due to high concentrations of mercury in sampled fish tissue within the lake (CDPHE 2016a, 2016b). However, Horseshoe does provide functions similar to wetlands in that the heavy metals settle to the bottom, and water flowing to Martin is then higher quality. Consequently, fish from Martin do not have high levels of mercury.

In addition to the two main lakes, 2012 National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) data identified five freshwater ponds within the Park. Three of the ponds are located to the west of Horseshoe Lake. These ponds were created when dirt was removed and used to expand the Horseshoe Dam in 1997. For many years, they were manually filled by a pipe that connects to the Coler Ditch, but they have sat empty in the years prior to 2021 because there is not a water agreement in place as of 2021 that allows water rights to them. At the time of the writing of this management plan, park management and the CPW Water Specialist for the Southeast Region are working with the Walsenburg City Administrator and City water attorneys to create an agreement that will allow water rights in the west ponds. Once water rights are established, the ponds will still be subject to natural conditions where they will go empty, such as drought or lack of water in the Cucharas River.

The fourth pond is south of Horseshoe Lake. It exists because of seepage from the city water supply lake south of the Park on Hwy 160. The city lake recently underwent a major dam reconstruction, which may have repaired the cause of the seepage, which may ultimately dry this pond. The fifth pond sits just below Horseshoe Dam. It exists because of seepage from the weir in the dam. It has consistent water levels and different types of waterfowl are often found on it. This pond is also the destination point of a short trail called wetlands walk. The pond has wetland interpretive signage and seating.

No major rivers or watercourses are present within Lathrop State Park. Coler Ditch and Lake Merriam Ditch are connected upstream and downstream to the Cucharas River, which is present south of the Park and runs east. Other unnamed streams and tributaries are present within the Park and are connected to the two ditches.

Prior to settlement and the creation of Horseshoe and Martin Lakes, wetlands were likely absent from the Park. Wetlands present are supported by seepage from the transport and storage of domestic water supplies and water introduced for waterfowl habitat. When wetlands were last surveyed in 1995, they were documented to be of good quality and were found present near inlet and outlet ditches, seeps, and pond and reservoir shorelines.

Geology, Soils, & Paleontology

Geology

Lathrop State Park lies at the junction of the Great Plains and the foothills of the southern Rocky Mountains. Major landforms visible from the Park include the Great Plains to the east, the Spanish Peaks to the south, and the Sangre de Cristo Range to the west. The Spanish Peaks and their 500 plus associated igneous dikes are internationally renowned as the world's most impressive collection of igneous dikes (Abbott & Cook 2012). Lathrop State Park is fortunate to have three of the dikes within its boundaries, including a particularly large and well-known one (the Walsen Dike [Hogback Ridge]), which lies near the northern boundary of the Park (Houck 2016a). The Park itself has mostly gently rolling terrain that ranges in elevation between 6,350 and 6,640 feet.

The geology of the Lathrop State Park consists of sedimentary and igneous materials. The Park's rock formations formed in the last 66 million years, during the Cenozoic Era, also known as the Era of Modern Life. At that time, Earth's climate was much warmer than it is today. The average global temperature was 22° C, compared to today's average global temperature of 14.5° C (Scotese 2016). Colorado was also much rainier than it is today. Walsenburg was in a low-lying area that was at times very swampy and covered with rainforests (Lee & Knowlton 1917; Flores & Pillmore 1987). More information about the geology of the Park can be found in the Stewardship Plan (Houck 2016a).

Soils

According to the custom soil survey report, there are seven soil types at Lathrop State Park, which are listed below in Table 4 (NRCS 2017). In most areas of the Park, soils are sandy loams or loams that have high erosion hazard. Soils on Hogback Ridge are finer textured, reflecting the finer parent material from which the soil is derived. These soils fall under Pinyon-Juniper Woodlands, Loamy Foothills, and Sandy Foothills Range sites.

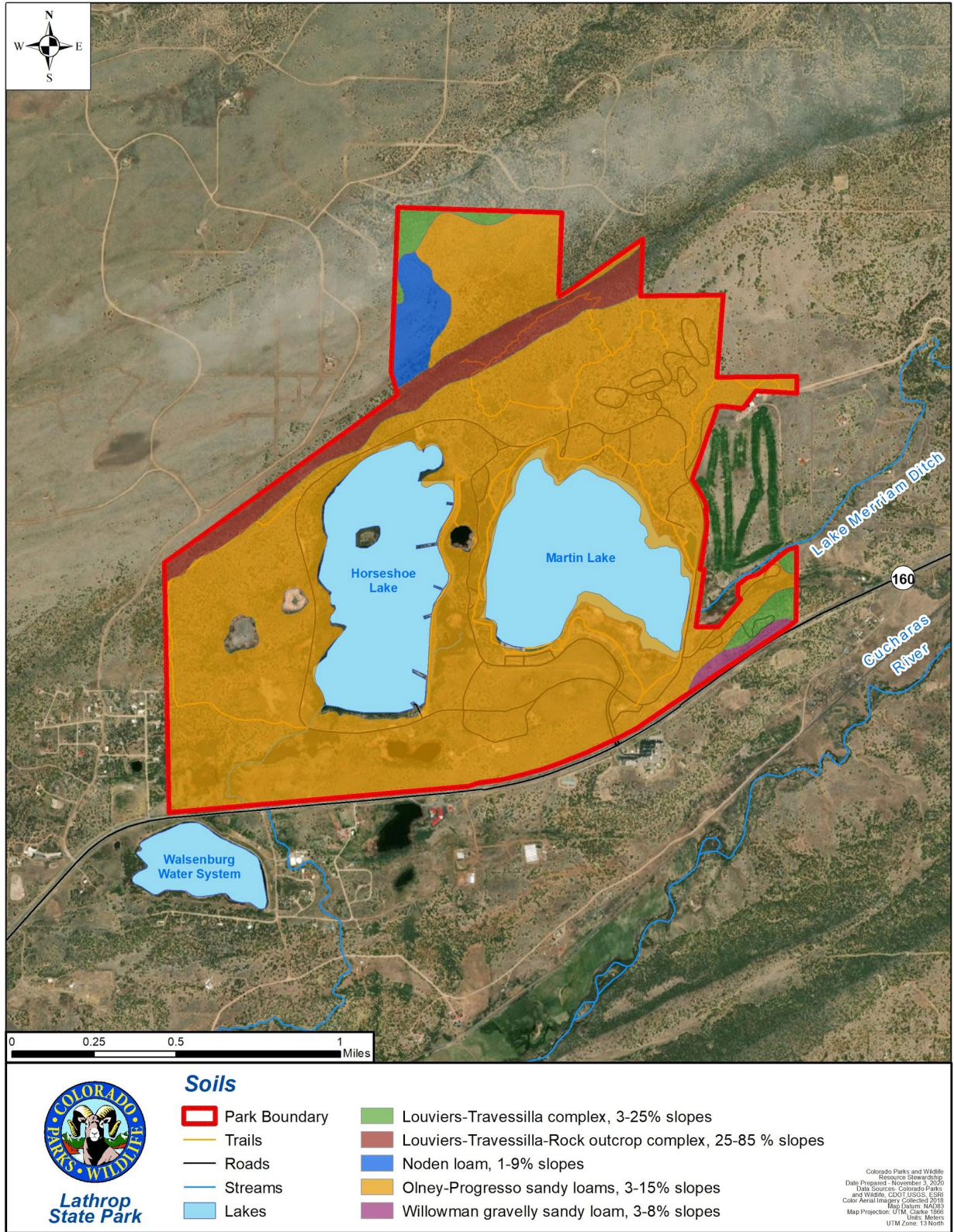
Alluvial soils are present throughout most of Lathrop State Park, with six of the seven identified soils having alluvial origination. Alluvial soils originate by being deposited from running water and may occur on terraces well above present streams or in the normally flooded bottomland of existing streams.

Table 4: Soils of Lathrop State Park

MUSYM	Soil Complex	Landform	Soil Origination (Parent Material)	Erosion Hazard ¹
36	Louviers-Travessila complexl, 3-25% slopes	Hills, plateaus	Clayey slope alluvium and/or residuum weathered from clayey shale	Severe
37	Louviers-Travessila - Rock Outcrop, 25-85% slopes	Hills, plateaus	Clayey slope alluvium and/or residuum weathered from clayey shale	Severe
43	Manzano loam	Flood plains, stream terraces	Fine-loamy alluvium	Slight
53	Noden sandy loam, 8-15% slopes	Fan remnants	Fine-loamy slope alluvium and/or eolian deposits derived from sandstone	Severe
54	Noden Loam, 1-9% slopes	Fan remnants	Mixed sediment	Moderate
61	Olney-Progresso sandy loams, 3-15% slopes	Hills, pediments	Calcareous alluvial material	Moderate
92	Willowman gravelly sandy loam, 3-8% slope	Fan remnants	Cobbly and gravelly alluvium	Slight

Source: (NRCS 2017)

¹Erosion hazard given for Roads, Trails



Map 7. Soils

Paleontology

The sedimentary rock formations at Lathrop State Park were deposited in river channels and on floodplains in the early part of the Cenozoic Era (about 66 million years ago). Most of the rock outcroppings in the park are sandstone and conglomeratic sandstone that formed in river channels (Flores & Pillmore 1987). Modern river channels commonly contain pieces of wood and bone, and marks left in the sand by crawling or burrowing invertebrates. The same was true of prehistoric river channels, so fossil wood, bone, and invertebrate burrows are the most common fossils found in the Park. Plants living in the area at the time included ferns and warm-climate trees like palms, figs, cinnamons, laurels, magnolias, sweetgums, and breadfruits, but also trees found today in more temperate regions, such as sycamores, poplars, chestnuts, walnuts, oaks, and beeches (Lee & Knowlton 1917). Animals included fish, amphibians, and mammals, most of which were relatively primitive (Lucas 2001).

Six fossil localities were found in the Park during surveys conducted in 2016 (Houck 2016b). Four are in the Raton Formation, and the other two are in the Poison Canyon Formation. Six feature fossil wood or leaves and are thus rated medium significance; the seventh features wood, invertebrate burrows, and bone, and is thus rated high significance (Houck 2016b).

Cultural Resources

Lathrop State Park has a history that incorporates the stories of many peoples who have lived in this region of southern Colorado. While the Park itself does not contain the wide variety of historical sites found in this region, it is surrounded by them. Within roughly one mile of the Park there are the former locations of early Hispano settlements, coal mines, and mining camps.

One of the fascinating aspects of the cultural history of Lathrop State Park is the fact that it has always been a place where humans found food, water, and shelter. It has been a perfect place to camp for thousands of years, and remains relatively untouched by historic settlement or modern development. The history of Lathrop State Park is documented through archaeological surveys and historical documents. These resources provide an opportunity to enhance Lathrop State Park guest experience through interpretive/educational information about these cultural resources.

Cultural resources on state lands are protected by federal (National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA); Public Law 89-665; 16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.) and state (CRS 24-80-401 et. seq) laws giving the State of Colorado title to all historical, prehistorical, and archaeological resources. "To knowingly disturb a historical, prehistorical, and archaeological resource on public land" is illegal under the National Historic Preservation Act, and the Colorado Historical, Prehistorical, and Archaeological Resources Act.

Cultural Sites

There are nine cultural resources recorded within the boundary of Lathrop State Park, this includes six prehistoric archaeological sites and isolated artifacts, two sites with both prehistoric and historical archaeological components, and one historic/historical archaeological site (see Table 5). There are three significant Native American sites within the Park. All three are in the same general area, and in close proximity to two rock outcrops located between the lakes and the hogback (Carr 2016).

Table 5. List of cultural resources at Lathrop State Park

Site Number	Resource Type	Eligibility Determination
5HF.1162.4	Historical Archaeology / Historic	Field eligible
5HF.1174	Archaeological	Officially not eligible
5HF.2175	Archaeological (isolated find)	Field not eligible
5HF.2176	Archaeological (isolated find)	Field not eligible
5HF.2177	Archaeological / Historical Archaeology	Field eligible
5HF.2178	Archaeological / Historical Archaeology	Field eligible
5HF.2179	Archaeological	Field eligible
5HF.2180	Archaeological (isolated find)	Field not eligible
5HF.2181	Archaeological	Field not eligible

Prehistoric and Historic Native American Land-use

There is clear evidence that Prehistoric Native American peoples occupied locations within the boundaries of Lathrop State Park, including two sites with rock shelters, and other open campsites. Unfortunately, none of these sites contain artifacts or features that have shed any light on what particular prehistoric cultures they might be associated with. The only clue in the archaeological literature is a reference to five sherds of Late Prehistoric pottery observed in 1943 by University of Denver Archaeologist E. B. Renaud, as reported by Gunnerson in 1960.

A prehistoric cultural chronology for the Huerfano Park area and Cucharas River is provided in *Colorado Prehistory: A Context for the Arkansas River Basin* (Zier & Kalasz 1999). Table 6 is a summary of the chronology and the names that archaeologists have assigned to these past human inhabitations of the region. No substantive evidence has been documented for the Paleoindian State of Native American inhabitations in this part of Colorado. Aboriginal peoples during this time period were highly mobile and used spears to pursue and hunt large game animals, such as bison, over great distances. There have been surface discoveries of Paleoindian spear points to the northwest at the headwaters of the Huerfano River, and to the northeast in the Red Top Ranch area.

Table 6: Cultural Chronology for the Arkansas River Basin

Cultural Time Period Name	Chronological Range
Paleoindian Stage	>11,500 to 7800 years before present (B.P.)
Pre-Clovis Period	Greater than 11,500 years B.P.
Clovis Period	11,500 to 10,950 years B.P.
Folsom Period	10,950 to 10,250 years B.P.
Plano/Late Paleoindian Period	10,250 to 7800 years B.P.

Archaic Stage	7800 to 1850 years B.P.
Early Archaic Period	7800 to 5000 years B.P.
Middle Archaic Period	5000 to 3000 years B.P.
Late Archaic Period	3000 to 1850 years B.P. (A.D. 100)
Late Prehistoric Stage	A.D. 100 to A.D. 1725
Developmental Period	A.D. 100 to A.D. 1050
Diversification Period	A.D. 1050 to A.D. 1450
Apishapa Phase	A.D. 1050 to A.D. 1450
Sopris Phase	A.D. 1050 to A.D. 1200
Protohistoric Period	A.D. 1450 to A.D. 1725
<i>Source:</i> (Zier & Kalasz 1999)	

Following the Paleoindian Stage, groups of aboriginal people became more sedentary and reliant on smaller game animals and local plant resources. This is called the Archaic Stage and is characterized archaeologically by smaller projectile points that were likely attached to darts as opposed to spears. Darts were highly effective weapons thrown by hunters with a device called an atlatl or throwing stick. Evidence for Archaic Stage occupations and/or use of the park area is equally undocumented as the Paleoindian Stage.

The Late Prehistoric Stage in Colorado begins around A.D. 100 and lasts until around A.D. 1725. Archaeologists divide this stage into three different periods, the Developmental, the Diversification, and the Protohistoric. As with all of the previous stages, there are no clear occupancies that can be dated to this time period. As mentioned previously there is a record of pottery discovered at a site designated 5HF213. The site was minimally recorded by University of Denver archaeologist E. B. Renaud in 1943, but it's exact size, location, and boundaries are unclear. Most agree that it covers a large area in the vicinity of the Hogback, and that it likely included all of the resources in the vicinity of the occupation sites that have been recorded in the park. Gunnerson (1960) states that the five sherds "look very much like Dismal River mica tempered pottery." This suggests a Late Prehistoric State, Protohistoric Period occupation for the area. Other sites with similar ceramic fragments have been documented in the Turkey Creek area at site 5HF1093, approximately 23 miles to the northwest of the park (Gulley 2000). It can be stated with relative certainty that the occupation sites within the park are most likely Late Prehistoric in age, but that's about as specific as can be stated.

Historic Plains Indian tribes and the Ute tribes also called this area home during the Protohistoric Period and on into contemporary times. Some tribes began to move into southeastern Colorado trying to get away from the Spanish occupation of what is now New Mexico, as well as to escape the American occupation of the Midwest and Great Plains. The Spanish and Comanche Indians did battle approximately 20 miles from Lathrop. Comanche Chief Greenhorn was killed in a battle at the base of Greenhorn Mountain, located to the north of the park.

Hispano and Euro-American Land-use

Present day Huerfano County was initially part of New Spain from 1540 to 1700, and again from 1763 to 1800. France laid claim to the area from 1700 to 1763, and again from 1800 to 1803, when it was included as part of the Louisiana purchase by the United States of America. The Spanish had begun exploring the area by the early 1600s. Near Greenhorn Mountain, located in Pueblo County about twenty miles to the north of the Park, a Spanish military party engaged and defeated a large band of Comanche Indians. This defeat led to a somewhat stable peace with the Comanche that persisted into the 19th century. In 1821, Mexico gained its independence from Spain and controlled much of what is now southern Colorado prior to the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.

During this time, the Santa Fe Trail was established as a major trade route between Missouri and New Mexico. In the early years of the trail, a connecting fur trade route, called the Trappers/Taos trail, led from the upper Arkansas River along Huerfano Creek and over Sangre de Cristo Pass in the San Luis Valley, then down to Taos. Concurrently, a few Mexican families established farms along the Huerfano River and its tributaries. Many fur traders married Mexican women and settled in the Cucharas, Huerfano, and the Apishapa watersheds.

The City of Walsenburg was initially established by Don Miguel Antonio Leon and a group of other settlers from northern New Mexico in 1858. This settlement was called Plaza de los Leones and was located on the north bank of the Cucharas River. Other small settlements also appeared around this time, including Hermanes Plaza, which was located west of present day Walsenburg, just southwest of Walsen Camps and about one mile east of Lathrop State Park. It was also known as Red Camp because the houses were painted red. In 1904, there were ten families living here. In 1861, Colorado became an official United States territory, and Huerfano was one of the original 17 counties established.

The development of the steel industry in Pueblo and Denver led to the development of the coal industry in southeastern Colorado. In 1876, the first coal mine was established in Huerfano County. This was the Walsen mine, and by 1900, Huerfano County had 19 operating coal mines. At this time, the population of Walsenburg was 1,033 people, with many more living in coal mining company towns and camps. About a mile north of the current location of Lathrop State Park was the town of Pictou (5HF388). This was a Colorado Fuel and Iron (CF&I) company town that housed workers who worked the Caddell and Pictou mines. Just over a mile to the east of the Park is the site of the Walsen Camp (5HF1697). This was another CF&I company town that housed miners who worked the surrounding coal mines and the Loma, Robinson, and Walsen mines. The camp operated between 1902 and 1935. The structures were removed from the site beginning in the late 1930's and the final structure, a school, was removed in the early 1960's. The location of Walsen Camp is immediately adjacent to the old Trinidad Electric Transmission, Railway & Gas Company Power Plant (5HF2132). The plant operated from around 1910 to the 1950s. Just across State Hwy. 160 is the Mutual Mine and townsite (5HF535), another coal mining resource from the early 1900s. While most other camps in the area were completely dismantled and/or relocated, Mutual still retains a number of its original homes, with their typical square shape and four section pointed roofs.

A landscape worth protecting

In the late 1800's, the area around Walsenburg and the Park was sparsely populated and had not been the site of any large settlements or industry. Historic photos of what would become Lathrop State Park show Horseshoe Lake as a series of separate small lakes alongside a very small Martin Lake. Around 1920, if you stood on Walsen Crag, the tallest feature along the volcanic hogback north of the Park, and looked to the southeast, you would have seen an industrial landscape. At the same time, by simply turning to the southwest, you would have seen almost all pastoral landscape. The amazing contrast of these landscape perspectives speaks to why ancient and modern peoples recognized the area around Lathrop for its natural beauty and natural resources.

As population, ranching, and industry increased in Huerfano County, the need for clean water also increased. Dr. Thomas Martin (the namesake of the lake) addressed this need when he moved to Walsenburg in 1880. In addition to being a postmaster, drugstore operator, and opening a bank, Dr. Martin purchased the land around the future Martin Lake and sold real estate in what he named the Twin Lakes subdivision. He developed Martin Lake to impound water, which he used to service the City of Walsenburg. Dr. Martin also developed a resort called Tourist City which had a hotel, cabins, and orchards (the fruit trees still grow at the West Beach Picnic Area.) Tourist City was eventually disassembled and the hotel was moved to Walsenburg.

After changing private ownership multiple times, Martin Lake opened as Huajatolla Park in 1946. It was owned by the city of Walsenburg and patrolled by a man named Milton Utt, who also owned sections of the property. In 1961, the Director of the Colorado Parks and Recreation Board, Harold Lathrop, led the initiative for the state to purchase the Park. Director Lathrop did not live long enough to see the Park opened in his name a year later on July 1, 1962.

Scenic Resources

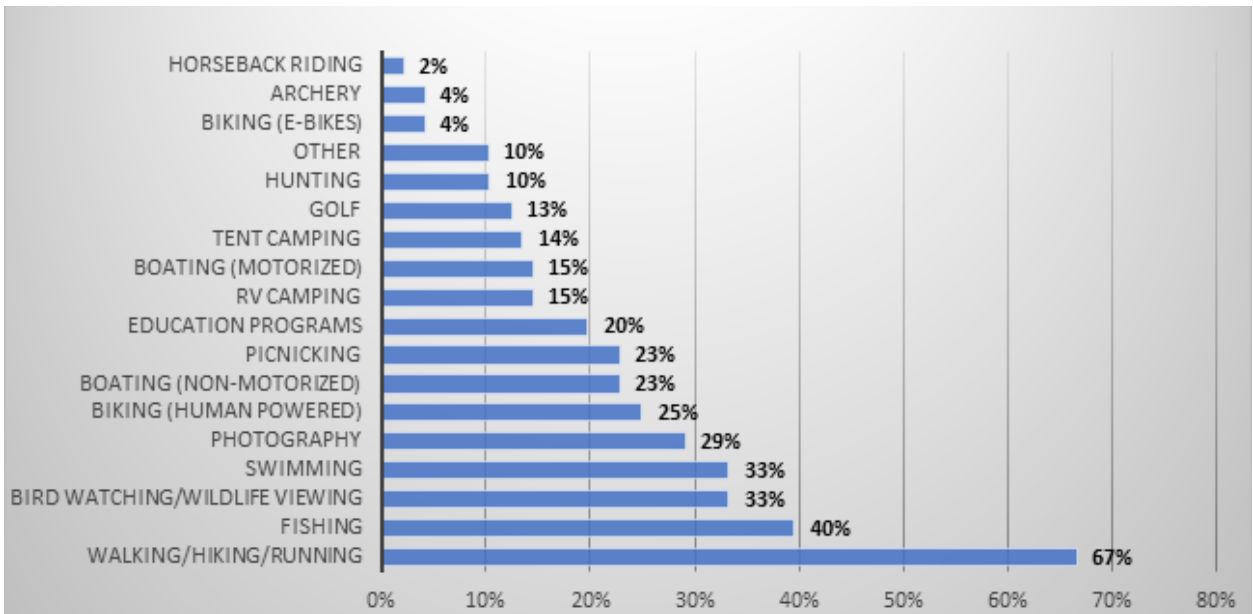
Lathrop State Park lies at the junction of the Great Plains and the foothills of the southern Rocky Mountains. Major landforms visible from the Park include the Great Plains to the east, the Spanish Peaks to the south, and the Sangre de Cristo Range to the west. Lathrop's two main trails, the Hogback Trail and the Cuerno Verde Trail, offer visitors exceptional views of the Spanish Peaks, Greenhorn Mountain, and Mt. Blanca.

Recreation Resources

Lathrop State Park is a popular destination with a diverse array of recreational opportunities, bringing approximately 107,062 visitors to the Park every year. These recreational opportunities include walking/hiking, biking, boating, camping, golfing, horseback riding, picnicking, sightseeing and wildlife viewing, swimming, water skiing and jet skiing, hunting, archery, and fishing. A recent survey found that most park visitors come to the Park for walking/hiking/running opportunities, followed by fishing, wildlife watching, and swimming. Future management and safety decisions about recreation on the lakes (especially Martin) will need to factor in the explosive increase in paddle sports, categorized under non-motorized boating in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2 also displays the other results of a 2019 survey (Appendix A) that asked what activities visitors partake in while at the Park.

Figure 2. Lathrop State Park Recreational Activity Survey Results



Trails

Lathrop State Park has six trails for non-motorized recreational use. The trails offer a diversity of experiences and have varying levels of difficulty. All trails are open to hiking, and two trails are open to biking. Dogs are welcome on all trails provided they are on a six-foot or shorter leash at all times, are under control, and their waste is properly disposed of.

Table 7. Lathrop State Park Trails

Trail Name	Description	Permitted	Total Distance
Hogback Nature Trail	The Hogback Trail winds through sandstone formations and then climbs up the rocky Hogback Ridge that forms the park's northern boundary. As the trail follows the top of the ridge, majestic views of the Spanish Peaks, Sangre de Cristo, and Wet Mountain Ranges can be enjoyed. Along the two-mile trail, marker posts have been installed to	Pedestrians	2 miles round trip

	<p>accompany a self-guided brochure containing information about the area's plant and animal life and its history. This trail is rated moderate in difficulty. Some sections have stairstep rocks and narrow widths. It also has a .5 mile connection trail, D Loop, that leads to Piñon Campground.</p>		
<p>William Henry Jackson Trail</p>	<p>The William Henry Jackson trail is moderate in difficulty and is located approximately .5 miles west from the Hogback trailhead. This spur trail connects the park's popular two-mile Hogback Trail to the location where, in 1885, famed photographer William Henry Jackson took a historic photo of two ponds that would later connect to become Horseshoe Lake.</p>	<p>Pedestrians</p>	<p>1.2 miles round trip</p>
<p>Cuerno Verde Trail</p>	<p>The Cuerno Verde Trail is an easy, scenic, multi-use, non-motorized trail that is a combination of concrete paralleled by a natural surface trail. The 3-mile trail is a closed loop that encircles Martin Lake. This handicap accessible trail is popular with the bicyclists as well as pedestrians and is within walking distance from the Park's two campgrounds.</p>	<p>Pedestrians, bikes</p>	<p>3.0 miles round trip</p>
<p>Equestrian Trail</p>	<p>Located west of Horseshoe Lake with nearby trailer parking and is rated easy. It travels from the road at the southwest corner of Horseshoe Lake along the park's western fence line and ends at the northwest corner of Horseshoe Lake.</p>	<p>Pedestrians, equestrians, bikes</p>	<p>1.5 miles</p>

Nature Watch Trail	This trail on the east side of Horseshoe Lake Dam is concrete surface and leads to a wildlife viewing pond. The viewing area at the end of the trail has benches and signs that interpret wetlands and the wildlife that inhabit them.	Pedestrians, ADA access	.25 mile
Connection to Walsenburg Trail	This natural surface trail connects the Walsenburg Trail (which starts in town, follows Second Street to the park, and ends behind the golf course) to the Cuerno Verde Trail on the north side of Martin Lake. It starts where the Walsenburg Trail ends behind the golf course in the northeast corner of the park.	Pedestrians, bikes	.65 mile
Campground Connector Trail to Golf Course	This short natural surface trail gives campers a short route to walk over to the golf course and miniature golf course from C Loop without having to walk on any roads.	Pedestrians, bikes	.17 mile or 900 feet

Camping

Lathrop has 103 campsites within two campgrounds. The campgrounds accommodate motor homes, trailers and tents, and offer either a basic or improved camping experience. Yucca campground is smaller, more rustic, and offers basic camping in 21 sites without electrical hook-ups. The Piñon Campground has electrical hook-ups at all 82 sites, a dump station, flush toilet restrooms, and shower facilities. As of June 2020, campsites must be reserved by calling 1-800-244-5613 or via cpwshop.com. Sites can be reserved from 6 months in advance up to the day of arrival. Table 8 provides a summary of the two campgrounds.

Table 8. Lathrop State Park Campgrounds

Campground Name	Campsites (Electric)	Campsites (Basic)	Features
Yucca Campground	0	21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gravel roads ● Vault toilets ● Water hydrants ● Sites have sheltered picnic tables and fire pits ● Accommodates tents, small pop-ups, camper vans, and small RVs ● Trash receptacles, water hydrant, and self-service pay kiosk at campground entrance
Piñon Campground	82	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Paved roads ● Pay showers ● Vault and flush toilets ● Water hydrants ● Sites have up to 50 amp electrical hook-ups, picnic tables, and fire pits ● Accommodates large RV's, pop-ups, camper vans, and small RVs, tent campers ● Trash receptacles at A, B, and D loops ● Dump station ● Four handicap accessible campsites ● Amphitheater ● Playground (new structure was installed in 2020) ● Hogback and Golf Course trail access

Group Camping

Lathrop State Park offers three group campsites that can accommodate 6 to 50 people at one time. One of the three sites offers electrical hook-ups and the other two are more rustic sites. Table 9 summarizes the four group camping sites available.

Table 9. Lathrop State Park Group Campsites

Campground Name	Max People	Features
Group Site A	30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No electricity ● Tents only ● Vault toilet (new toilet added in 2020) ● 5 large (16 x 16) tent pads ● 3 picnic tables ● Grill and fire pit ● Shaded by cottonwood trees ● Water hydrant ● Additional parking loop was added in 2021
Group Site B	50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No electricity ● Space for up to 7 trailers or RVs and 6 other vehicles ● Space for tent camping ● 4 Picnic tables, two have shelters ● Grill ● Water hydrant ● Vault toilets nearby ● This campground has funding to be upgraded to an electric group area with a pavilion in 2022
Los Alamos	50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Electricity ● Space for up to 7 trailers or RVs ● Space for tent camping ● Covered pavilion with electrical outlets, lighting, fireplace, and 7 tables ● Volleyball sand court ● Horseshoe pit ● Large stand up grill and firepit ● Near Martin Lake shore and beach

Picnicking

Lathrop's picnic areas, which received an outdoor recreation award for America's Top 15 Picnic Areas, are situated around both Martin Lake and Horseshoe Reservoir. The Park has a total of 24 picnic tables throughout the picnic areas. Each table sits lakeside, has a stand-up fire grill, and most tables are shaded. Picnic tables are on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Fishing and Hunting

Lathrop is a popular fishing area with many warm-water species. Martin and Horseshoe Lakes are stocked with rainbow trout, channel catfish, tiger muskie (in Horseshoe only), walleye, bluegills, sauger, and crappies. Saugeye, bass, and wipers are stocked in Martin. In the winter, ice conditions are considered unsafe and ice fishing is not recommended. A youth fishing area is located near the Martin Lake Dam. Fishing licenses are required for everyone 16 years and older. The swim beach, ski beach, boat docks, the dam on Martin Lake and boat ramps are closed to fishing. In 2020 CPW stocked the lakes as shown in Table 10 below. Northern pikes were discovered in the Carp Cove area of Martin Lake in 1997. CPW did not deliberately stock pike, so an angler most likely introduced them. Today, Northern Pike is one of the most frequently caught fish in Martin Lake. In 2016, northern pike were discovered in Horseshoe Reservoir. Again, CPW did not stock pike, so an angler (or several) most likely transported them from Martin Lake. The hope is that northern pike won't be able to establish a large population, as they have in Martin Lake, especially with the continued stocking of tiger muskies. No direct pike management actions are planned and any changes to this approach will need additional public outreach and input.

A 2019 Park visitor survey found that 43 percent of those surveyed have previously or regularly fish at the Park. Most individuals surveyed fish for rainbow trout (73 percent).

Table 10: Stocking Records for Horseshoe and Martin Lakes in 2020

Fish Species	Horseshoe Lake (# of fish)	Martin Lake (# of fish)
Bel-Aire rainbow trout	9188	5773
Black crappie	9734	9566
Bluegill	18176	8390
Channel catfish	11020	11766
Gizzard shad	200	229
Jumpers rainbow trout	2739	5229
Largemouth bass	0	4289
Mt. Shasta rainbow trout	2777	1932

Palmetto bass (wiper)	0	4334
Psychrophilum resistant rainbow	2549	2549
Saugeye (walleye x sauger hybrid)	0	6
Sauger	50368	0
Tiger muskie	405	0
Total	107156	54063

Only the posted areas around Horseshoe Lake are open for waterfowl and small game hunting during regular seasons. Hunting is prohibited from the Friday before Memorial Day until the Tuesday after Labor Day. Only shotguns, bows and arrows, and crossbows are permitted during open seasons. Hunting licenses are required. Fishing and hunting licenses can be purchased at the Visitor Center during business hours.

Water Activities

Lathrop’s two lakes offer something for every water recreationist, from the power boater and canoeist to the sailor, swimmer, and angler. Because of Lathrop’s location in southern Colorado between the foothills and plains, the lakes’ water is often warmer than most mountain lakes and reservoirs at higher elevations. The lakes’ water temperature averages 75 degrees Fahrenheit in the summer.

Martin Lake, a 180 surface-acre lake, offers a swim beach, water-skiing, fishing, power and sail boating, and paddle boating. Swimming is permitted only in the designated swim beach area and is at the individual's own risk. The swim beach is open from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day and has covered picnic tables and grills. Pets, fishing, and glassware are not permitted at the swim beach area. Children 12 and under must be supervised by an adult.

Martin Lake picnic area, formerly known to regulars as the Martin Ski Beach, is a grassy area with six covered picnic tables and stand-up grills. Glassware and fishing are prohibited in this area. The picnic tables and shelters were upgraded in 2020. A playground structure was also built next to the picnic in the same year.

Horseshoe Lake, a 140 surface-acre lake, is managed for wildlife-based recreation, including fishing with trolling motors and hunting (species that can be hunted with shotgun pellets, such as waterfowl, rabbit, coyote, turkey, and doves). Since boating is only allowed at wakeless speeds, it is a perfect haven for kayakers and canoeists. Horseshoe Lake is closed to boating from November 1 through the end of waterfowl hunting season.

Sightseeing and Wildlife Viewing

With views of the Spanish Peaks and two beautiful lakes, Lathrop State Park provides a diversity of scenic landscapes and habitat for visitors and wildlife to enjoy. Many visitors seek out wildlife viewing and sightseeing opportunities on their own or in

conjunction with other Park activities. Lathrop State Park has a large amount of bird diversity, and visitors specifically come to the Park to bird watch. Mule deer, elk, turkey, pronghorn, black bear, red fox, coyote, bobcat, roadrunner, and mountain lion live within or proximate to the park.

Other Activities

Lathrop has an archery range where archers can practice at either a twenty, fifty, or eighty yard target. The range entrance is located approximately one-half mile west of the main park entrance on Highway 160. Broadheads, smoking, firearms and overnight camping are prohibited at the archery range. The Park offers archery and fishing clinics periodically.

Walsenburg Golf Course offers nine-hole, eighteen-hole, or all-day rates as well as a full-service restaurant and bar. A miniature golf course was added in 2018.

Lathrop State Park has an easy-rated equestrian trail west of Horseshoe Lake. Established equestrian parking areas are available within walking distance of the horse trail. This trail (and the Cuerno Verde Trail) is also open to bicycles. There is a bike rack with bicycles for free rent at the Visitor Center.

Interpretation and Environmental Education

Interpretive Themes/Messages

The following subjects educate, promote stewardship of natural resources, and create an ongoing interest for visitors while at the Park and/or as a result of their visit. These should be developed into interpretive themes and messages as part of efforts to update programming and signage in the park.

- Unique natural features of Lathrop State Park
 - Geology: the history of the Hogback, other dikes in the Park, and the Spanish Peaks
 - Sensitive ecology: riparian and wetland areas, the two lakes, and rare plants and animals
 - Water Resources: erosion control of the shoreline, water quality; boat safety
 - Bird diversity: the high number of species that are residents or migratory species that use the many habitats at the Park
 - Climate zone ecosystem of the park
 - Wildlife that live in the Park and their habitat
 - Wildflower, plant, and tree identification
 - Fishing clinics and fish biology/habitat

- Cultural resources and history
 - Prehistoric Native American peoples occupied locations within the boundaries of Lathrop State Park
 - Hispano and Euro-American land-use of the area
 - The history of the Santa Fe Trail as a major trade route in the region
 - The history and settlement of the City of Walsenburg

- The history of mining in the area, including the first established coal mine in Colorado located in Huerfano County
- People have “camped” here for a long time
- “First” state park
- Yucca Road to group camping was Highway 160
- Ethical Recreation/Leave No Trace
 - Pack it in pack it out
 - Encourage stewardship of the Park by its visitors

Interpretive Facilities

The Park Visitor’s Center is the primary location for interpretative information and events. It contains interpretive displays, wildlife mounts, fish descriptions, hands-on displays for children, animated displays, and a map of the Park that lists the variety of recreation opportunities for visitors. The Visitor Center also has a public room that can accommodate up to 50 people for meetings and educational programs. The room is also used to display historical interpretive exhibits, including a large panel about the history of mining in Huerfano County. The room also has a historical exhibit of numbered panels that wraps around the entire room. Each panel describes an era of history in the Huerfano County region from ancient inhabitants through the 1900’s. These panels are unique in that they were painted by a Disney animator. The paneled display also has an accompanying brochure. The Visitor Center patio and courtyard have mounted animated panels that show names of the mountains observable from where the visitor is standing. To the west of the visitor center is a large panel with its own rock courtyard that shows the visitor the route and history of the nearby Highway of Legends.

Interpretive and Educational Programs

Lathrop State Park’s interpretive and educational programs run from early May to just after Labor Day. During this time, a seasonal employee leads the following types of programs based on the themes listed above: hikes on the Hogback Trail (topics are usually about Park flora and fauna or activities for children), school field trips in May, Junior Ranger programs on weekends, bird walks, boat safety programs, and evening campfire programs. The campfire programs are held at the amphitheater on Friday and Saturday nights and are hosted by the Park interpreter, a guest speaker, or a Park Ranger. The programs vary in how they are presented and may include PowerPoint, hands-on skins and skulls, art, and instruments. The Park also puts on small concerts and a movie night.

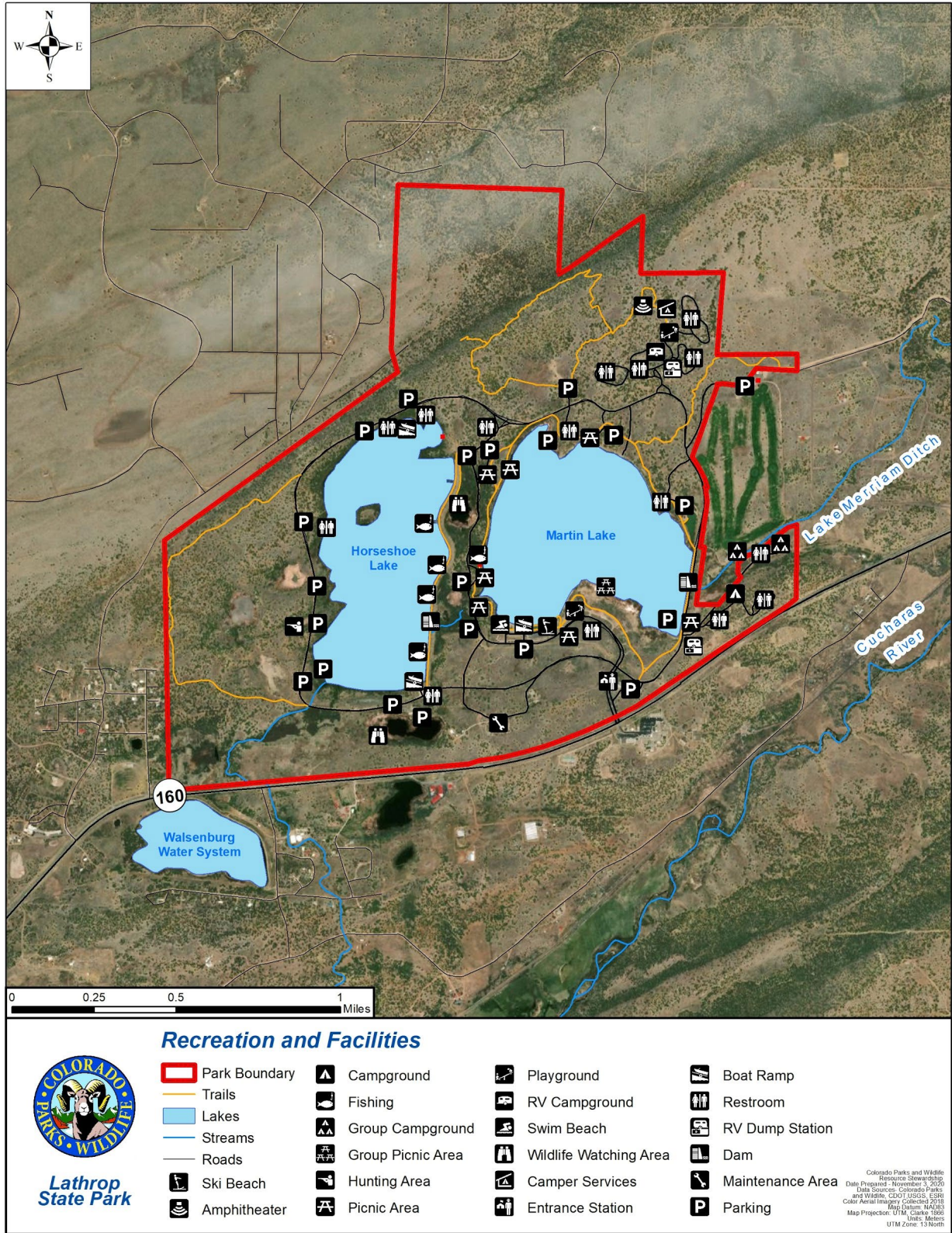
Facilities and Infrastructure

The Park includes the following facilities listed below in Table 11 and seen in Map 8. The following sections provide more details about major facilities.

Table 11: CPW Owned or Managed Improvements

Facility Category	Improvement Name	Year
Visitor Facility	Visitor Center	1968
Visitor Facility	Visitor Center Remodel	2001
Visitor Facility	Amphitheater	2006
Visitor Facility	ANS Station/Entrance Station	2009
Visitor Facility	Yucca Campground Self-service Kiosk	2019
Visitor Facility	Piñon Campground Self-service Kiosk	2019
Maintenance / Staff Facility	Shop Storage	1967
Maintenance / Staff Facility	Maintenance Shop	1968
Maintenance / Staff Facility	Residence	1968
Maintenance / Staff Facility	Tool Shed	2018
Maintenance / Staff Facility	Mow Shed	2018
Restroom / Shower	West Beach Vault Toilet	1970
Restroom / Shower	Youth Pond Vault Toilet	1970
Restroom / Shower	Martin Beach Facility	1983
Restroom / Shower	Yucca Vault Toilets (2)	1985
Restroom / Shower	Piñon Campground Showerhouse	1992
Restroom / Shower	Horseshoe Boat Ramp Vault Vault Toilet	1994
Restroom / Shower	North Martin Inlet Vault Toilet	1994

Restroom / Shower	Culebra Cove Vault Toilet	1997
Restroom / Shower	Yucca Group Camp CXT	2000
Restroom / Shower	Piñon Campground CXTs (4)	2005
Restroom / Shower	North Horseshoe CXT	2006
Restroom / Shower	South Horseshoe CXT	2011
Restroom / Shower	Martin Beach CXT	2015
Restroom / Shower	West Horseshoe CXT	2015



Map 8. Recreation and Facilities

Park Office / Visitor Center

The Park office and Visitor Center is located at the entrance of Lathrop State Park. The building was constructed in 1968 and renovated in 2001. The building serves as the location for visitors to buy park passes, obtain park information, and register for campsites. A drive-up window is available at the Visitor Center so park visitors may buy park passes and get park information on their way into the Park. The Visitor Center contains a shop that sells ice, firewood, ice cream, soda, water, books, souvenirs, and clothing items. The building houses interpretive displays about the natural and cultural resources unique to the region. The Visitor Center houses the offices for park staff and contains a large conference room available for rent. The building is 2,500 square feet in size, with 300 square feet of office space, and 2,200 square feet of visitor service and display space. A room off the conference room was the original office before the 2001 renovation. It is now rented out to Colorado State Patrol as their Walsenburg substation.

Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) Inspection Station

The Park ANS station was constructed in 2009 and serves as an entrance station if the ANS program ever becomes unnecessary. Currently, visitors with a boat must be cleared through the ANS inspection station before using their boats in either lake.

Maintenance Shop

The 2,904-square foot maintenance shop is located at Township 28 Range 67 and was built in 1968. This facility houses a variety of equipment used by maintenance personnel. It also contains a freezer for deceased animals saved for scientific collection and interpretive mounts. The facility serves as a general maintenance shop for welding, vehicle/equipment repairs, and storage.

Maintenance equipment included in the maintenance shop includes the following: 5400 John Deere tractor/backhoe with a brush hog and fork attachments, 110 John Deere Tractor/Backhoe, two Grasshopper riding mowers, Honda push mower, DeWalt Power hand tool, Milwaukee power hand tools, Milwaukee metal Chop saw, Craftsman Grinder wheel, Kobalt Air compressor, Craftsman table saw, DeWalt miter saw, Stihl saws, Skil Weed Whips, Skil blower, Skil Weed sprayers, 25-gallon sprayer tanks, Arc welder, Tig welder, Drill press, Skil auger, pipe bender, Craftsman chop saw, brooms, mops, Scrapers, Kubota riding mower, snowplows, snow blower, shovels, rakes, Pulaskis, McLeods, generators, and cement mixers.

Residence

The residence is a 2,719 square foot, one-story ranch home with four bedrooms, two bathrooms, and a full basement. The building was constructed in 1968 and traditionally was used as the park manager's residence. It is on the service road that leads to the shop and sits on a hillside that overlooks Martin Lake. It has both large front and back yards that are mowed by the resident employee or volunteer. The utilities consist of city water, propane tank, and a meter serviced by San Isabel Electric Assoc. It is currently used as housing for temporary employees (mostly summer months) and volunteers who donate at least 20 hours per week (mostly in winter).

Volunteer Sites

Two gravel campsites sit just outside the yard of the residence and are also on the maintenance shop road. The sites have a shared driveway that splits into two large areas for trailers that have full hookups, campfire rings, and picnic tables. The volunteers who use these sites are typically in the behind-the-scenes position called “work camper,” and they help with maintenance and cleaning duties during the high use season.

Flush Toilet Facilities

Flush toilets are present in the Visitor Center and Martin Ski Beach. The Piñon Campground has five facilities with flush toilets. Each loop in Piñon Campground has a men’s and women’s restroom. The Piñon showerhouse, (this was the original shower building when Piñon Campground was built in the 1960’s) across from the playground before the entrance to D Loop, has a men’s and women’s bathroom, each with two toilets.

Vault Toilet Facilities

The Piñon Campground has one facility in B Loop that is used at the campground restroom in the winter. The Yucca Campground has two facilities, and the Yucca group camp sites A and B each have vault toilet. Additionally, the Horseshoe Lake boat ramp, North Horseshoe Lake, West Horseshoe Lake, South Horseshoe Lake, the Swim Beach, North Martin Inlet, Culebra Cove, West Beach, and the Youth Pond all have vault toilet facilities.

Shower Facilities

The Piñon Campground has five restroom/shower facilities. Each loop (A,B,C,D) has a building with two separate unisex showers on one side of the building, and two separate toilets with sinks designated as men’s and women’s on the other side of the building. Another shower/toilet building sits just outside of D Loop across from the playground. It has men’s and women’s showers, toilets, and sinks on each side of the building. This was the original shower facility when the campground was built, and it was the only shower building until the facilities were added to each loop in 2005.

Dump Station

The Park currently has one dump station located in Piñon Campground that has two sewage holes, two non-potable water hydrants, and one potable water hydrant. It uses a leach field/septic tank system. The septic tank must be pumped at least once every two years.

Camping

Lathrop State Park offers its visitors 103 campsites in two campgrounds (Piñon and Yucca Campgrounds) and three group camping areas. Campgrounds accommodate motor homes, trailers and tents, and offer non-electric sites at Yucca Campground, or electric sites (with 20, 30, and 50 amp) at Piñon Campground.

Amenities at Piñon Campground include showers, dump station, community hydrants (no hookups), and trash receptacles. A picnic table, fire ring and grill are located at both electric and non-electric campsites. Some sites in Piñon Campground have tent

pads, but tents are allowed at all sites even if it does not have a pad. Piñon Campground has mostly pull-through sites that accommodate large camping units.

Yucca Campground sites are all back-in, and their short length accommodates tents or camping units up to 25 feet in length. Camping is only allowed in designated sites in these two campgrounds. There is no backcountry or walk in camping in the Park.

Boat Ramps

Two paved boat ramps exist at the Park. Horseshoe Lake has a boat ramp on the north side of the lake. Martin Lake has one boat ramp located near the swim beach area that has a dock with rails and bumpers to accommodate ADA accessibility. An old unusable boat ramp on the southside of Horseshoe Lake was re-purposed to be an ADA accessible kayak/canoe launch in 2021. Picnic tables and an ADA accessible sidewalk were also added to the old boat ramp area.

Amphitheater

The amphitheater is located just north of the Piñon Campground at the entrance to D Loop. It is also the starting point of a spur trail to access the Hogback Trail. The Park utilizes it for the many educational programs offered to day visitors and campers. The amphitheater has a stage for live presentations and a white backdrop for electronic presentations. It is also rented by groups for weddings and church services. The capacity is approximately 100 people. The facility was upgraded in 2006.

Operations and Maintenance

General Park Operations

All of the Park's major facilities are operational year-round. The park and facilities, including trails, roads, and buildings, close as needed for natural disasters, severe weather, wildlife, and visitor safety.

The Visitor Center is designed to provide service to visitors in two ways. First, the lobby serves walk-in visitors with a gift shop, customer service desk, meeting room, and interpretive displays. Visitors can also buy park passes, registrations, and licenses during staffed hours.

Second, the drive-up window at the Visitor Center serves the same purpose as entrance stations at other parks. It is open and staffed during normal business hours but stays open later on Friday nights to accommodate arriving campers. Typical hours throughout the year are as follows.

Winter:

- Daily: 8 a.m.-4 p.m.

Spring/Fall hours:

- Sunday-Thursday 8 a.m.-5 p.m.
- Friday and Saturday 8 am-7 p.m.

Summer hours:

- Sunday-Thursday 8 a.m.-6 p.m.
- Friday and Saturday 8 a.m.-8 p.m.
- The drive up window stays open until 9 p.m. daily

Self-service day passes are available at the three self-service Iron Ranger stations (Piñon campground, Yucca Campground, and Visitor Center) during the hours that the entrance station or Visitor Center is not open.

Vehicles

The Park has eight full-time fleet vehicles: seven pickups and one SUV. All of the vehicles belong to the Colorado Fleet program and they approve most repairs and maintenance to be done at a vendor (tires, windshields, dents, oil changes, etc.). When feasible, the Park will do cosmetic repairs (seat cover, replace a knob, etc.). Other equipment includes two snowmobiles, four utility terrain vehicles (UTV's), two all-terrain vehicles (ATV's), two patrol boats, and one pontoon boat.

Campgrounds

The Piñon Campground has one loop and a bathhouse that stays open all year. The remaining three loops within the campground have staggered openings beginning in April. All of the loops stay open through October. The Yucca Campground is open from April through October. The Los Alamos group campground and non-electric group campgrounds are open from May through September.

The Piñon Campground has two sets of campground hosts. Each set (either individual or couple) is responsible for the care of two loops. This includes caring for visitors and bathrooms. Neither the Yucca Campground nor the group sites have hosts.

Camp hosts, rangers, and maintenance staff assist in the cleaning and maintenance of the Park's 103 campsites. While the campgrounds were renovated in 2005 and are generally in good condition, common repairs include cleaning restroom/shower buildings, plumbing, electrical, road maintenance, sewer, construction, carpentry, sign installation, removing trash, replacing site markers and their numbers, and cleaning firepits. Each loop in Piñon Campground (electric sites) has a showerhouse/restroom building (CXT) that must be cleaned daily, winterized after the season, and receive standard repairs to the plumbing and electrical systems as needed. The electric pedestals at each site must be maintained, and that can include replacing breakers, switches, covers, and sometimes replacing the pedestal itself if a camper damages it. Each site, at both the electric and non-electric campgrounds, receives the following maintenance: picking up litter, cleaning out fire pits, weed removal, replacing fire pit rings and bases, and replacing site marker posts and their numbers as needed. The campground roads occasionally need potholes filled or shoulder work. The trash dumpsters are also emptied two times per week during the high season. Water hydrants and water lines must also be repaired or replaced as needed.

Picnic Sites

Maintenance staff performs the cleaning and maintenance of the Park's picnic sites daily during peak season and as-needed during the off-season. This includes picking up trash and cleaning the grills next to tables. Picnic sites are available year-round on a first-come, first-served basis and are not reservable.

Boat Ramps

The Horseshoe Boat Ramp is closed when the waterfowl season starts. Similarly, the Martin Boat Ramp is closed at the end of November, before the lake freezes. Maintenance requirements for the ramps are very low, other than Park staff occasionally moving the docks as water levels change in the lakes, remove and put in the docks in between lake freezing season, and to remove gravel from the Martin Beach Ramp. Dock parts, such as floats and walkways, occasionally need to be replaced when they are damaged by boats.

Swim Beach

The swim beach is located on the southwest side of Martin Lake and is open mid-May through mid-September. The beach has undergone major renovations in recent years. In 2014 and 2015, a parking lot, grass area, picnic tables, vault toilet, changing room, and a shower tower were added to the area around the sand. Volunteers removed trees and brush along the western edge of the beach, and more sand was added to expand the size of the beach area. In fall of 2020, the swim beach area was extended even further around the southwest corner of the lake to connect to the lap lane entrance on the west shoreline. Maintenance in this area includes putting marker buoys out each summer season, picking up litter, emptying trash cans, adding sand, maintaining tables and grills, and cleaning the restroom and changing room.

Archery Range

To maintain the archery range, the maintenance staff mows around the target lanes and tables, sprays weeds, maintains the table and shelter, checks the fence, and cleans litter in the area. Park rangers check the backing and change out targets on the 3 target stands as needed.

Roads and Parking Lots

Overall, there are approximately seven miles of roads in the Park. CPW owns all of the roads within the Park except the road that goes from Hwy 160 to the golf course (County Road 502). The agreement to make this section of road into a county road was created so that golfers would not have to pay a park pass fee to get to the course. Most of the park roads are paved. The road around Horseshoe Lake and in Yucca Campground are gravel. Park staff manages and maintains the roads as needed. Martin Lake and the campgrounds have paved roads and contractors are hired as needed to perform repairs, such as seal cracks, striping, shouldering, and other maintenance. In 2020, the Park received funding to repave a patch of road on the “Y” intersection leading to Horseshoe Lake. Funding for paving all of the asphalt park roads is listed as a five-year request for the park. Huerfano County grades the gravel roads for the Park as needed. When necessary, Park staff complete erosion repair on the Yucca Campground roads and shoulder work around the asphalt roads. Snow removal on the roads is done by plowing only. No salt is used on the roads to melt snow.

There are numerous parking spaces distributed throughout the Park’s parking lots. The main parking lots that accommodate several cars are located at the Visitor Center, the swim beach, and at the lake boat ramps. Additional parking spaces and smaller lots are located throughout the picnic areas, off roads that surround the lakes, and in the campgrounds.

Trail Access

Park staff and volunteer groups (ex., Mile High Youth Corp) generally maintain Hogback Trail. Park staff maintains the equestrian trail and the Cuerno Verde Trail. In the future Park staff will apply for trail repair and erosion control projects from agencies such as Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado.

In 2018, the Cuerno Verde Trail that runs in a 3-mile loop around Martin Lake was changed from asphalt (that was deteriorated and in poor condition) to a concrete trail of concrete paralleled with a gravel trail. With a final cost of just over \$1 million, funding for the trail renovation was provided by the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO), and CPW. It gets much more use since the concrete and natural surfaces were added, and has been very popular, especially as a walking trail. Park staff maintains it with weed control, plowing, keeping the concrete clear of debris, and erosion control.

Trash and Waste Disposal

Dumpsters are present at the campgrounds from March through October and two additional ones are located at the maintenance shop year-round. Waste Collections collects trash from the dumpsters twice a week in the busy season. Trash cans are present around the park in buildings and parking areas around the lakes. Park staff collect trash from the cans and dispose of it in the maintenance shop dumpsters.

Fencing and Wayfinding

The Park boundary has a barbed wire fence, except where the park runs next to the golf course. Split rail fence divides the park from the golf course. There is also a split rail fence at the group camp areas. There is a barbed wire fence that runs north-south between Martin and Horseshoe Lake that marks the boundary of allowed hunting. In 2021, wire fence is also going to be installed around Highway 160 on the north side of the park. Staff periodically checks fence line around the park boundaries and repairs it as needed. Colorado Department of Transportation is responsible for fence that runs along Highway 160.

Noxious Weeds

The maintenance staff and associated volunteers perform noxious weed management and control. Every five years, the CPW Resource Stewardship Program maps noxious weeds and updates the Park's Noxious Weed Management Plan. The process of eliminating noxious weeds includes spraying weeds in developed and landscaped areas, such as campgrounds.

Information Technology

Cell phone service in the Park includes Verizon, Cricket, AT&T and T-Mobile. The Internet provider for the Park is CenturyLink with 56k lines. Faster internet service would be beneficial to Park staff and visitors.

Four of the five permanent employees has a desktop computer, and the Park Ranger, Senior Ranger and Park Manager each have a laptop. There is one additional desktop computer at the front desk, and a laptop for seasonal employees. There are also two desktops for IPAWS use only. In total, the Park has seven desktops and four laptops.

Utilities

Electrical Service

Electrical services are provided by San Isabel Electric and provide power to all electrical needs at the Park. Within the Park, there are power lines, transformers, main boxes, and meters.

Propane

The Visitor Center, the maintenance shop, and the residence each have a propane tank for heating the buildings. All other buildings with plumbing are winterized, with the exception of the bathroom/shower building in D Loop. An electric heater is used for this building in the winter.

Water Supply and Wastewater Treatment

The water that supplies the lakes is diverted from the Cucharas River and conveyed by the Coler Ditch (Lake Merriam Ditch) to Horseshoe Lake. Water in Horseshoe Lake then flows through a channel into Martin Lake. The City of Walsenburg owns the water stored in the lakes. CPW does not own any water in the lakes. The water that is used to irrigate the Walsenburg golf course comes from Martin Lake. The City of Walsenburg has an agreement in place with CPW that the city will keep water in both lakes at levels suitable for safe recreation unless extreme drought conditions exist. The lakes are maintained at relatively consistent levels every year. The City maintains Coler Ditch and coordinates with the Park ahead of removing any woody debris.

Water used in park buildings and infrastructure comes from the Walsenburg City Water System. There are no wastewater treatment facilities on the Park. Pinon Canyon Campground's bathroom/shower house is connected to the City of Walsenburg's sewer system. All other facilities with water have leach fields and septic tanks that are pumped by a commercial service. The Park's 14 vault toilet are also pumped by a commercial service.

Circulation

All traffic is routed through the Visitor Center parking lot off of Highway 160. Most vehicles travel to Martin Lake since it offers more recreation. The highest volume of traffic turn right out of the Visitor Center to Yucca Campground, the golf course, or Piñon Campground. During high use seasons, most vehicles that turn left out of the Visitor Center lot travel to the Martin Lake parking areas. The Martin Lake swim beach/boat ramp parking lot is the most congested during the summer. It is the parking lot for the most popular lakeside picnic area, boat ramp, and swim beach. The swim beach parking lot, in particular, will reach capacity every weekend in summer.

The Visitor Center parking lot becomes congested on busy days because all traffic is routed one way in an effort to direct visitors to the Park's drive-up window. The exit to the parking lot is at the far end of the lot, and visitors must take a series of blind left turns around the Visitor Center to either enter the Park or return to the highway.

Consequently, people who park at the Visitor Center often are confused about how to leave the parking lot and exit the Park. They often go the wrong way on the one-way entrance road to leave. Also, traffic leaving the drive-up window is routed to where vehicles have to drive around parked vehicles and pedestrians to maneuver their way

out of the parking lot. Since the layout of the Visitor Center is designed to have the drive-up window face the parking lot, the walk-in Visitor Center entrance that accesses the lobby, gift shop, and restrooms, is on the opposite side of the building from the parking lot. Visitors are often seen looking around for the entrance doors or walking up to the drive through to ask how to get in.

Name	Description	Miles	Surface	Condition
SH 502	Park entrance (Hwy 160) to golf course	1.4	Asphalt	Fair
NA	SH 502 4-way intersection, northeast, past Martin Beach Parking and Facilities	0.5	Asphalt	Fair
NA	From SH 502 golf course turn off, north of Martin Lake	0.7	Asphalt /Gravel	Fair
NA	Road between Martin and Horseshoe Lakes to southernmost road in Park	0.9	Asphalt /Gravel	Fair
NA	SH 502 4-way intersection southeast of Martin Lake	0.5	Asphalt	Fair
NA	From SH 502 to Yucca group campsite	0.3	Gravel	Fair
NA	From road in between 2 lakes, around Horseshoe Lake	1.9	Asphalt /Gravel	Good/fair
NA	From southernmost road to maintenance facilities	0.5	Gravel	Fair
Total Miles		6.7		

Most roads in the Park are considered to be in “fair” condition. Paving these roads is part of a five-year maintenance plan. In addition, the Visitor Center parking lot could be redesigned to reduce confusion. See Chapter 5 for more information.

Visitation

Visitor Demographics

To inform this Management Plan, CPW developed and implemented a comment form in the summer of 2019. Appendix A has the full questionnaire, methods, and results. Anyone with the link could participate, therefore the following information provides a helpful snapshot of the demographics for respondents (and is not fully representative of park visitors).

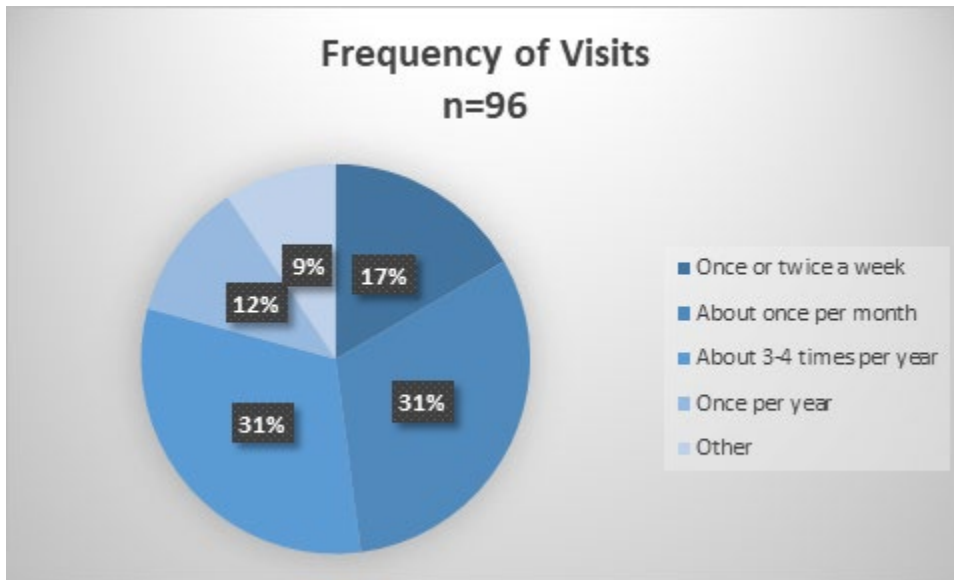


Figure 3. How often respondents visit the Park

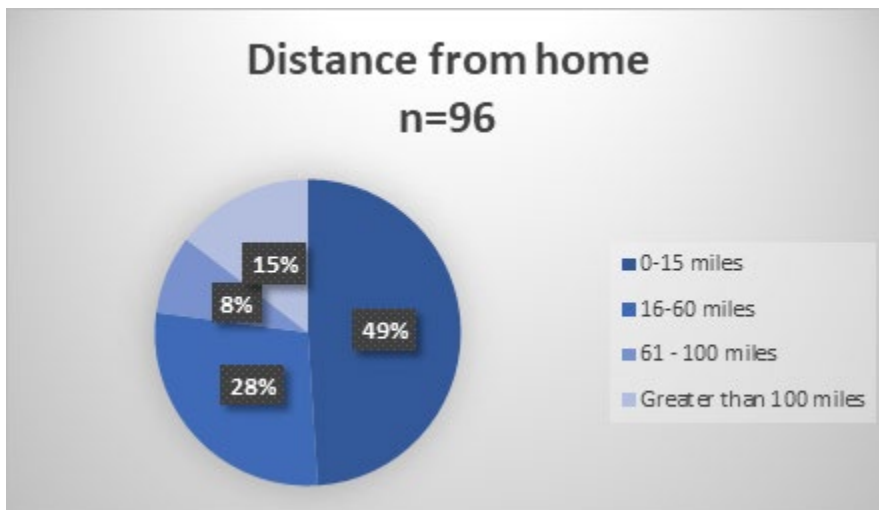


Figure 4. How far respondents live from the Park

Most visitors who travel 60 miles and over to visit the Park are campers who also engage in other activities during their visit. Reservation data shows that a large number of campers travel from the Colorado Springs area, with an increase of visitors from the Denver area in 2020.

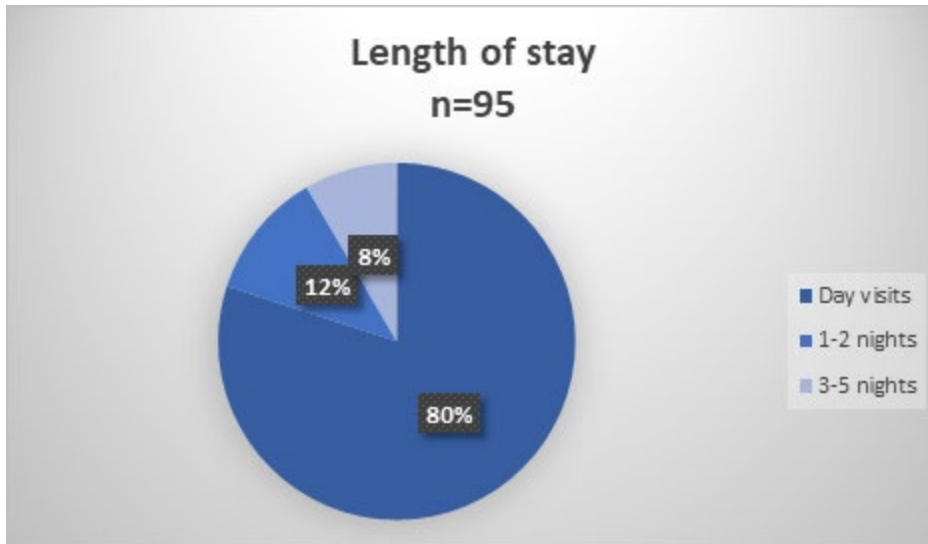


Figure 5. How long respondents stay at the Park

Visitation Trends and Patterns

For many years Lathrop’s peak use seasons were sandwiched between Memorial Day and Labor Day weekends. The highlights of peak season meant that both electric and non-electric campgrounds filled up on weekends with up to half of the electric sites being filled on weekdays. Another popular area was the Martin Beach Boat Ramp parking area with its shoreline picnic area and ski beach. The picnic area/ski beach picnic tables filled up early, and most boat parking spaces filled up. In some years, Martin Lake would have more boats than parking spaces, so additional boat trailers parked at an overflow parking lot.

In the last few years, boating has decreased to where the overflow parking is not needed for boats. Although there are several boaters, the boat trailer parking typically fills up only on holiday weekends. However, camping has become very popular. Both electric and non-electric campground have been full every night throughout the summer, including weeknights.

The year 2020 will be the year remembered for the COVID pandemic, which caused drastic increases in visitation and camping numbers at most state parks. Why the increase? While many businesses, gyms, and other forms of recreation closed for months during the pandemic, state parks remained open. Thankfully Lathrop did not have capacity issues that other parks had, but camping and boating both spiked in numbers. ANS inspectors reported that they checked 78 percent more boats than the previous year. Camping was closed all of April and May of 2020, but the visitation for the rest of the camping season balanced out that loss of visitation and revenue. The electric campground was full every night from May through mid-September, and weekends were booked through the end of October. The electric campground always had vacancies on weeknights in previous years.

Other activities in the Park, such as swimming at the swim beach, fishing, paddleboarding, and kayaking also increased in 2019 and 2020. In fact, kayaking and paddleboarding have become so popular that future planning for both lakes will need to include the management of both motorized and non-motorized boating on Martin and Horseshoe Lakes.

Table 12. Monthly and Annual Visitation

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2017	3,075	2,014	5,164	5,322	7,203	20,391	19,066	14,107	11,109	5,992	3,641	3,764	100,848
2018	2,652	3,068	5,406	5,050	11,767	17,915	16,386	15,217	8,299	2,246	1,824	1,154	90,984
2019	2,419	4,495	4,583	6,777	1,252	20,242	19,561	21,195	8,810	10,838	1,844	1,197	103,213
2020	2,500	3,243	3,071	8,250	4,760	19,727	22,596	21,005	13,760	15,692	9,840	6,207	130,651
2021	5,358	2,409	5,368	10,062	4,456	20,240	25,386	21,122	14,845	10,703	4,706	3,951	128,606
Average	3,201	3,046	4,718	7,092	5,888	19,703	20,599	18,529	11,365	9,094	4,371	3,255	110,860

Table 12 above shows our visitation as calculated by CPW’s visitation database. The numbers are calculated by entering numbers from vehicle counters located under the road and then a formula in the database calculates visitor numbers based on the average number of people in vehicles entering the park. The formula also accounts for how many vehicles may not be visitation related (employee vehicles, golf course patrons, deliveries, etc.)

By looking down the columns of the chart, it is easy to see that the peak use months are June, July, and August, as would be expected. There has also been a trend of increased visitation in the shoulder months of April, May, September, and October. For full time park staff, the shoulder seasons are an even busier time because the campgrounds still fill up on weekends, but most seasonal staff is not yet hired or has already been laid off.

Visitation has increased in recent years and it is expected these numbers will continue to go up. The visitation numbers for 2018 were lower due to the “Spring” Fire, which burned within 16 miles of the Park and at the time was the largest wildfire in state history. Most campers cancelled reservations for the summer, and smoke kept many day users away. In 2020, the campground was closed for a month and a half in springtime due to the COVID pandemic, but the summer and fall numbers were significantly higher than in the past.

Park Administration and Special Functions

Full-time and Seasonal Staffing

There are currently five full-time permanent employees assigned to the Park. These include a Park Manager (PM V), an Administrative Assistant (AA III), Senior Ranger (PM III), Park Ranger (PM II), and Maintenance Park Resource Technician (Tech IV).

The Park also typically employs approximately 14 seasonal staff during the high use season and one volunteer in the off-season. Seasonal staff includes three Aquatic Nuisance Species technicians, five maintenance technicians, two rangers, three Visitor Center attendants, one intern, and one interpreter.

Volunteers

The Park has two sets of “work campers” during the peak season, either an individual or a couple, who are hired to clean vault toilets and campground restrooms, empty trash cans around the park, clean firepits and grills, and other assigned duties, such as tree trimming. Another volunteer group comes on Earth Day to do an annual clean up around the lakes. A third set of volunteers works on removing invasive trees around the lakes.

Volunteers also serve as camp hosts. The Piñon Campground has two sets of volunteer camp hosts. Each set (either individual or couple) is assigned two loops each to take care of visitors and bathrooms. Yucca Campground or the group sites do not have hosts.

The Raptor Monitoring Program has occurred at the Park since 2016 under the direction of the Resource Stewardship Program Coordinator. Currently, the program has one to two individuals that monitor raptor activity in the Park. The program adheres to the CPW Raptor Monitoring Volunteer Program Handbook and engages more Huerfano County locals with CPW, while increasing the Park’s annual volunteer hours.

Enforcement/Public Safety

Enforcement issues at the Park are not nearly as significant as they are at other larger parks. When enforcement is necessary, park ranger actions are guided by three priorities (ordered from highest to lowest):

- Ensure the safety and well-being of the public
- Protect and the Park’s natural and man-made resources
- Enforce administrative functions, such as issuing fees or permits

Compared to other parks on the front range parks, there are very few citations and arrests at Lathrop. However, as visitation has increased, so have law enforcement encounters for the rangers. If there are minor violations, rangers are generally able to rectify the problem and gain compliance without the need to issue citations. Resource damage or wildlife violations are primarily addressed with citations. The top three enforcement issues that result in citations are speeding, not having a Park pass, and illegal dumping of residential trash. Rangers are also dealing with more incidents that involve arrests, including DUI enforcement and illegal substance use.

Due to the Park’s close proximity to a hospital, the Park staff typically are only involved in one to two medical assists per year. Park staff also assist the local

community during emergencies (ex., accidents on Highway 160) and catastrophic events (i.e., fire, floods). The Park has the only ice rescue suit in the county and the Park itself has been used as an evacuation route—most recently it was a designated evacuation route for expected floods in 2019 following the nearby 2018 Spring Creek Fire in La Veta (fortunately there were no flooding issues).

MOUs, IGAs or Other Agreements

Agreement for Management of Horseshoe Lake

Prior to the merging of the Division of Parks and the Division of Wildlife to become Colorado Parks and Wildlife, the two separate agencies created an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) to keep Horseshoe Lake established for wildlife-based recreation. Now with CPW as one agency, Lathrop State Park manages Horseshoe Lake with input from the Area Wildlife Manager and District Wildlife Manager in a manner consistent with long-term wildlife habitat and wildlife-based recreation purposes (see Appendix D).

Colorado State Patrol Office Space Lease

The Park has an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA), lease, with Colorado State Patrol, which allows them to rent an office in the Visitor Center as their Walsenburg substation. The agreement renews every five years. Discussions have come up in the past about discontinuing this lease so the park staff can have more office space, but, CSP has requested to keep this space, so they do not lose the Walsenburg substation and the officers assigned to this area. The Park also benefits from having CSP on site. Park rangers typically have a backup CSP officer nearby, and park officers help CSP with incidents on Hwy 160 outside of the park.

Termination of leases involving Yucca Campground

Until 2020, there were three intertwining lease agreements among the City of Walsenburg, CPW, and Department of Human Services. The first lease, which was set to expire in 2064, gave use of city property to CPW for the Yucca Campground in the Park and a youth camp on property across Highway 160. The second lease allowed the Department of Human Services (DHS) to lease the Youth Camp buildings and land to run the youth camp (which was closed several years ago) under their agency. The third lease, which expired in 2015, allowed the City of Walsenburg to lease land from CPW to operate as a golf course next to the Park. In 2014, before the golf course lease was set to expire, all three agencies began work to terminate the 99 year leases on Yucca Campground and the Youth Camp and allow CPW and the City of Walsenburg to actually own the land on which they operated their recreational activities. After six years, the lease to DHS was terminated, and the 99 year lease of Yucca Campground/Youth Camp property from the city was terminated. Paperwork was completed, signed, and filed that designated Yucca Campground (and some sections of Martin Lake shoreline) to CPW, and the City of Walsenburg assumed ownership of the golf course. The agreement also states that the golf course property reverts back to CPW ownership if the golf course ceases operations, ensuring that the property will always be used for public recreation.

Partnership Agreement with City Golf Course Board

In 2021, Lathrop Management established an agreement with the golf course board (which oversees the operations of the golf course under a lease with the city) to have guidelines of use of each of the properties. The agreement gives guidelines on issues such as maintenance of shared fence lines, quiet hour compliance, and emergency access through the golf course gate if park staff needs to evacuate visitors.

Huerfano County Road Maintenance Agreement

The written agreement states that the Huerfano County will grade the unpaved roads (around Horseshoe Lake and in Yucca Campground). In exchange, Lathrop staff maintains County Road 502 (beginning on Hwy 160 and ending at the golf course). Maintenance includes but is not limited to: plowing, shoulder work, pavement repair, and paint striping.

Table 13: Partnerships

<i>Local</i>	
Town of La Veta	Various
City of Walsenburg Government	Various
City of Walsenburg Water Department	Water management in the Park
City of Walsenburg Golf Course	CPW works the most with this partner since the golf course sits right next to the Park and it is accessed through the Park. CPW partner in marketing and will work in the future on providing camp/golf packages.
Huerfano County Administrator and Commissioners, Director of Economic Development and Tourism	Various
Huerfano County Emergency Services and Fire Department	Health and safety incidents in the Park.
Huerfano County Sheriff's Department	Backup Law enforcement and critical incident assistance in the Park.
La Veta Fire Department	Secondary response to Park medical, fire, and emergencies.
La Veta Library	Posts Park flyers in the library, works with Park on community relations.
La Veta Marshal	Secondary response to emergencies on Park.
Local District Attorney's Office	Processes Park citations and warrants.
Local school districts	Provide Park programming to students.

Spanish Peaks Library	Has Park pass checkout and posts Park flyers in the library.
State	
Colorado Department of Transportation	Road management of owned roadways in and out of the Park, gives guidance on posting highway signage and provides signs to the Park.
Colorado State Forest Service	Prepared Park forest management plan, gives guidance on forest issues in the Park.
Colorado State Patrol	Has a substation at the Visitor Center. Park uses dispatch, and troopers provide backup assistance to Park officers.
Colorado State University Extension	Holds plant identification classes and provides volunteers to plant native vegetation in the Park. Gives direction on planting native vegetation.
Division of Fire Prevention and Control	Fire management (including controlled burns) in and near the Park.
Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO)	Provides funding for educational programs and Park facilities. Most recently, contributed funding to the new Cuerno Verde Trail in 2018.
Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)	Paid for half of the new Cuerno Verde Trail and is providing funding for the upcoming non-electric group B campground upgrade.
Federal	
Division of Homeland Security and Management	Source for helping with safety and security issues, helps agencies coordinate with one another
US Forest Service	Office in La Veta coordinates with the Park on providing trail, campground, and fire information to the public.
Private	
Americorp	Volunteers from this organization work on projects and help with programs in the Park.
Chae Organics	Private business across highway 160.
Cuchara Foundation	Partner in providing recreation in Huerfano county.
Francisco Fort Museum	Provides mutual support to promote visitation to our facilities. Museum employees offer programs at the Park.
La Veta Trails	Non-profit trail maintenance/construction organization that coordinates with us on trail and education projects.

Southern Colorado Hunter Retrievers Club	Coordinates an annual dog trial event in the Park.
Southern Mountain Loop of the Colorado Front Range Trail	Trail that will go from Walsenburg to Trinidad via Hwy 12 (it will run through the Park).
Spanish Peaks Chamber of Commerce	Promotes tourism in Huerfano County. Included the Park in Spanish Peaks Country publications and as a stop on a Highway of Legends audio tour.
Spanish Peaks Regional Health Center	Hospital across Hwy 160 from Park. Partner on events such as 4th of July fireworks and employee health program. Helps with implementation of individual park pass requirements (this pass will be required for walk-in and bike-in visitors).
Walsenburg Mining Museum	Provides mutual support to promote visitation to our facilities. Museum employees offer programs at the Park.
Youth Corps	Does two projects a year in the Park: removing Russian olive trees and trail maintenance.

Special Uses

The Park issues approximately six special activity permits per year: The Southern Colorado Hunting Retriever Club holds a dog trial event with approximately 100 people, and the Southern Colorado Runners Club has held a triathlon in the past with plans to hold more in the future. Other events such as fundraising walkathons, and memorials, weddings, and graduations are also held in the Park. The Park manager also issues two special use agreements per year: to a private business that rents out non-motorized boats and standup paddleboards.

Park Budget and Finances

Revenue from all 41 State Parks go into a general “Parks Cash Fund” and budgets are allocated at the statewide and regional level. The Park relies on various budget allocations (i.e., General Operating, Permanent Personnel Services, etc.). These are commonly referred to as agency Budget Buckets or Categories, which are summarized in the table below. Budgets are requested through various CPW processes on an annual or ad-hoc basis based on the nature of the type of request. The following tables summarize two Fiscal Years (FY) to demonstrate a snapshot of Lathrop State Park’s annual expenses. The state FY runs July 1-June 30.

Table 14 provides a breakdown of the Park’s total expenses in FY 2019-20 and FY 2020-21.

Table 14: Park Expenses (FY 2019-20 and FY 2020-21)

	FY 2019-20	Percent of Total	FY 2020-21	Percent of Total
General Operating	\$ 298,860.94	25%	\$ 339,930.89	31%
Permanent Personal Services	\$ 402,632.12	34%	\$ 409,130.49	37%
Retail Operations	\$ 20,278.88	2%	\$ 20,758.58	2%
General Donations		0%	\$ 1,552.45	0%
POTS (Excluding Leased Space)	\$ 20,465.75	2%	\$ 23,053.17	2%
Boat Safety And Boat Education	\$ 6,507.60	1%	\$ 7,734.37	1%
Parks Large Capital Projects Over \$100,000	\$ 317,056.50	27%	\$ 197,421.50	18%
Parks Small Capital Projects \$5,000 - \$100,000	\$ 112,566.14	10%	\$ 113,211.39	10%
Total	\$ 1,178,367.93	100%	\$ 1,112,792.84	100%

Sections below highlight some of the recent budget allocations and expenses for the primary budget categories shown above.

General Operating Costs

The majority of the operating budget is spent on temporary employees' salary and benefits, followed by utilities, property repair, maintenance, and improvements.

Table 15: General Operating Expenses (FY 2019-20 and FY 2020-21)

	FY 2019-20	Percent of Total	FY 2020-21	Percent of Total
Benefits	31,870.11	10.7%	34,386.02	10.1%
Communications	4,969.24	1.7%	5,138.19	1.5%
Equipment	3,467.14	1.2%	2,438.66	0.7%
Motor Vehicle	16,845.44	5.6%	16,493.67	4.9%
Other Miscellaneous	410.61	0.1%	230.92	0.1%
Overtime	1,036.50	0.3%	289.50	0.1%
Property Maintenance	24,144.40	8.1%	33,309.88	9.8%
Publication	204.00	0.1%	53.75	0.0%
Purchase Services	1,626.30	0.5%	2,009.90	0.6%
Shipping	204.05	0.1%	151.45	0.0%
Supplies	13,719.73	4.6%	16,621.21	4.9%
Temporary Staff	145,047.03	48.5%	153,222.01	45.1%
Travel	349.99	0.1%		0.0%
Utilities	54,966.40	18.4%	75,585.73	22.2%
Total	\$ 298,860.94	100%	\$ 339,930.89	100%

Temporary Staff Resources

In addition to Lathrop State Park's 5 full-time employees, the Park hires an additional 14 temporary employees during the summer months as seasonal rangers, GOCO interpreter, intern, visitor center attendants, ANS inspectors, and maintenance workers.

**Table 16: Temporary Employee Expenditure Detail (Salary and Benefits)
(FY 2019-20 and FY 2020-21)**

	FY 2019-20	Percent of Total	FY 2020-21	Percent of Total
Customer Service	\$ 35,764.44	20%	\$ 40,518.52	22%
Environment & Wildlife Education	\$ 11,127.52	6%	\$ 5,662.22	3%
Fishing Recreation	\$ 74,745.32	42%	\$ 70,084.78	37%
Habitat Management	\$ 13,311.03	8%	\$ 11,537.00	6%
Hunting Recreation	\$ 2,164.05	1%	\$ 5,755.35	3%
Organizational Support	\$ 26,160.32	15%	\$ 43,743.80	23%
Park Recreation	\$ 13,644.46	8%	\$ 10,306.36	5%
Total	\$176,917.14	100%	\$187,608.03	100%

Large Capital Construction Projects

Large capital construction projects are high-dollar improvements to the Park that are considered on an annual basis. These expenses do not come directly out of the Park's funds.

Table 17: Large Capital Projects in FY 2019-20 and FY 2020-21

Category	FY 2019-20	FY 2020-21
Dam Maintenance	\$5,377.50	\$2,475
Day Use Area Improvements	\$306,301.50	\$194,946.50

Table 18: Large Capital Project Requests (2021) in the 5-year plan.

Category	Estimated Cost
Water system upgrade	\$1,202,970

Concessions

There are no true concessionaires currently operating at the Park. However, the Park has one special activity permit with a private business to rent out non-motorized boats (canoes, kayaks) and paddleboards. The Park receives 5 percent of total gross income from the business.

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4 MANAGEMENT ZONES

CPW's management zoning scheme provides a framework for identifying areas that provide for different types of visitor experiences and various recreation opportunities, based on the resource constraints that occur within the Park. Within each management zone, suitable types of facilities and land uses are also identified, along with the suggested visitor experience and management focus. In addition, management zoning helps park managers avoid conflicts among visitors seeking different types of activities, identify management needs, sustainably manage the unique resources at the park, and more effectively plan future park development.

The first step to establishing management zones at Lathrop State Park involved members of the park management planning team reviewing maps presented in this plan and the Resource Stewardship Plan that examines the spatial context for determining management zones. The four types of zones and their definitions (Table 19) are used throughout the Colorado State Park system. However, the defining of zones for each park happens at the park scale, i.e., the park's resources determine its zones.

Some of the features identified for consideration in Lathrop's zoning included:

- Miriam Ditch was built in 1884 and is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.
- Fringed myotis is a rare bat species documented in 2015 west and south of Horseshoe Lake and likely roosts on the Hogback. Other sensitive species and significant features discussed in Chapter 3 were included in zoning decisions.
- Based on geology in the Park there is a moderate expectation for significant fossil resources. Some fossils were found in the 2016 paleontological survey.
- There are significant cultural sites within the Park that should be protected. Some also provide opportunities for visitors to learn about area history.
- There are geohazards in the Park with the most significant being radon. Because of the potential for high levels of radon throughout the Park, there should be ongoing monitoring and mitigation measures in all habitable structures but no zoning or other management decisions are affected.
 - Without a floodplain, there are no flood hazards within the Park.
 - There are no fault lines, landslide hazards, or expanding/collapsing soils.
 - The rockfall hazard at Hogback is high (but not severe).
- There are wakeless zones for the lakes.

Table 19. Management Zone Classification Scheme and Characteristics

Zone Classification	Visitor Experience	Recreation Opportunities	Potential Facilities	Management Focus
Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High social interaction ▪ Low opportunity for solitude ▪ Low opportunity for challenge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High-density recreation ▪ Emphasis on providing opportunities that rely on motor vehicle access via roads, such as picnicking, and at some parks could include RV and tent camping, and potentially motorized uses in designated areas. ▪ Some fishing, boating, equestrian use, mountain biking, hiking, and watchable wildlife may occur in this zone. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Typically parking areas, paved or high-use roads, utilities, group picnic areas, visitor services, restrooms, concessions, interpretive facilities, and developed camping areas at overnight parks. ▪ Less typically this could include marinas, motorized use areas, and dog off leash areas at some parks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Intense management needs. ▪ Manage to provide sustainable recreation and aesthetic qualities ▪ Prevent weed spread, erosion, or other degradation. ▪ Intense fire prevention mitigation ▪ Revegetate with natives where possible or with non-invasive landscaping.
Passive Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Moderate social interaction/low opportunity for solitude. ▪ Moderate degree of interaction with the natural environment. ▪ Moderate opportunity for challenge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Medium-density recreation. ▪ Emphasis on providing hiking, fishing, equestrian use, mountain biking and other dispersed recreation. ▪ Some picnicking or backcountry camping, canoeing and other non-motorized boating, watchable wildlife. Interpretive opportunities are likely to occur in this zone. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Typically trails and interpretive facilities and individual picnic areas. ▪ Less typically this could include dirt roads or light use roads, limited motorized uses (in larger parks only), hike-in campgrounds, or yurts. ▪ Minimize utilities to the extent possible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Moderate to high management needs. ▪ Manage to maintain the natural character and provide sustainable recreation. ▪ Actively manage weeds in order to eradicate or suppress, and prevent erosion or other degradation. ▪ High level of fire prevention. ▪ Revegetate with native species.

<p>Natural</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Low social interaction/moderate opportunity for solitude ▪ High degree of interaction with the natural environment ▪ Moderate to high opportunity for challenge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Medium- to low-density recreation. ▪ Emphasis on providing low impact, non-motorized and dispersed recreation. ▪ All recreation opportunities in the Passive Recreation Zone are likely to occur here with the exception that there be more of an emphasis on providing non-motorized dispersed recreation. ▪ Hunting also permissible at some parks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Primarily trails and some interpretive facilities ▪ Minimize utilities to the extent possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Moderate to low management needs ▪ Manage to maintain the natural character, the native flora, the wildlife habitat, and the ecological functions ▪ Actively manage weeds for eradication, prevent erosion or other degradation ▪ Moderate to high level of fire prevention ▪ Revegetate with native species
<p>Protection</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Typically unmodified natural environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ None, or heavily restricted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ None 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Least intense management needs ▪ Preservation of very sensitive resources or restriction of visitor use for legal or safety reasons.

Description of Management Zones

The purpose of establishing management zones at the Lathrop State Park are to provide some broad, yet useful parameters to help guide its future use, development, and management. Using the above zoning scheme, a zoning map was developed for the Park that identifies appropriate management zones (Map 9). In addition to maps, other factors influencing park zoning included historical activities, established land uses, and other issues that affected the overall compatibility of outdoor recreation in specific areas within the Park.

Water-based recreation is a primary activity for park visitors. Therefore, motorized boating and wakeless areas are included on the map. Hunting in the Park is allowed west of Horseshoe Lake’s eastern shore, except at the boat ramp and pond near Highway 160. Horseshoe Lake is closed to boating November 1 through the end of the waterfowl hunting season. The park’s recreation opportunities are expected to continue to be nature-based especially outside of Development Zones. A majority of

park land is zoned as “natural” or “protected” and only 200 acres is considered “development.”

Following are key features of the zones.

Development (200 acres):

- Main Park facilities and areas of high visitor concentration, including Visitor Center, maintenance shop, boat ramp, power line, swim beach, and campgrounds.
- Low ecological sensitivity due to built infrastructure and/or presence of invasive species, such as Russian olive.
- There is a small area of native grasses between the entrance station and maintenance shop that should remain undisturbed.

Passive Recreation (139 acres):

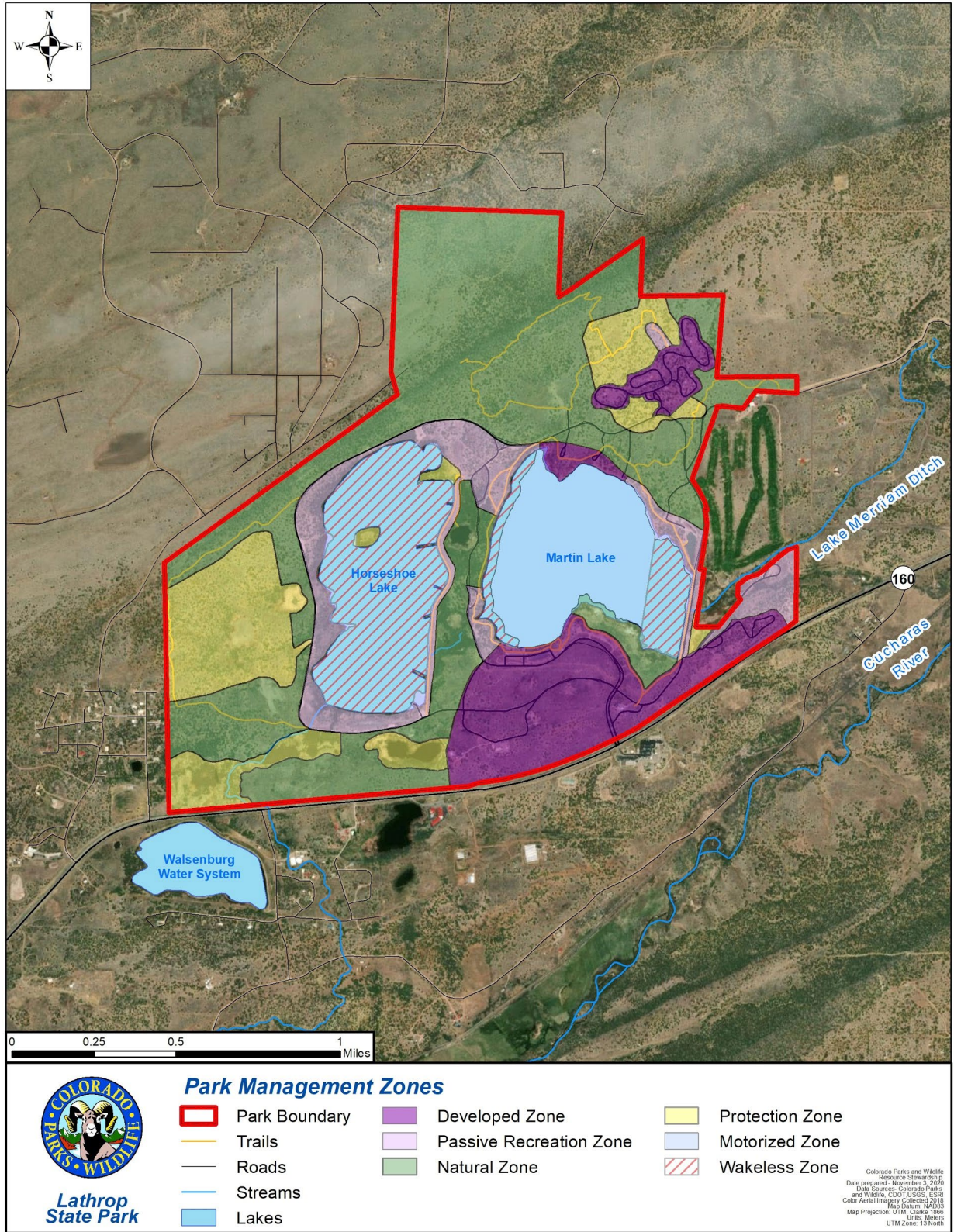
- Paved lots that provide access to the lakes.
- Shorelines.
- Picnic areas.
- Amphitheater in Piñon Campground.

Natural (568 acres):

- Areas between lakes with good wildlife habitat and where visitors may pass through but do not congregate.
- Wetlands in the area between lakes provide habitat for the rare species, northern leopard frog, which was documented in 2014.
- Archery Range.
- Entire Hogback Ridge.

Protected (200 acres):

- Cultural resources.
- Merriam Ditch.
- Rare plant habitat in the western section.
- Ponds in southwest.
- Heron rookery in Horseshoe Lake.
- Legal/safety needs (i.e., spillways).



Map 9. Management Zones

5 PARK ENHANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES & MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES

This section highlights specific park enhancement opportunities and management initiatives that will help meet Park goals. Enhancement opportunities and management initiatives support the goals outlined previously in the plan and are situated within appropriate management zones. It is important to note that new development should be balanced with maintaining and conserving what already exists and with resource conservation.

Enhancement opportunities and initiatives are not “commitments” and implementation is contingent on adequate financial and human resources that are considered or weighed within the context of other CPW-wide needs. In addition, new opportunities may need to be added as conditions, recreation trends, and other changes occur over time. Park and Region staff use a project tracking database for requests and approval of upcoming projects.

Enhancement Opportunities

Enhancement opportunities for Lathrop State Park were developed based on input from the public, professional knowledge and experience of staff, and discussions with key partners and stakeholders. The intent is to meet the goals of the Park and CPW’s strategic plan. Park enhancements include:

1. Major rehabilitation or improvements to existing facilities and infrastructure.
2. New facilities and infrastructure.
3. Natural resource rehabilitation and restoration efforts.
4. Management initiatives critical to the long-term operational success of the Park.

For each category the following criteria were used to determine priority levels (i.e., potential weight of consideration in annual planning/funding requests):

- High priority actions (H) are considered extremely important to maintaining the quality of recreation experience and protecting natural resources in the Park. These actions are central to preserving, maintaining, and enhancing park resources and the visitor experience. Many of these projects will be implemented in the next few years or are part of ongoing maintenance.
- Medium priority actions (M) are considered important, but not urgent, and meet a combination of other resource goals and objectives. Many of these projects are on the Southeast Region’s 5-year Capital Plan and are generally part of a framework for the next 10 years.
- Low priority actions (L) are considered important, but not critical. Low priority actions do not need to be completed in the immediate future.

Enhancement opportunities are organized below by the 4 categories listed above, management zones (from Chapter 4), and priority level (H,M or L).

1. Existing Facilities and Infrastructure

Development Zone

- *Reduce crowding on Martin shoreline (H).* Access to the shoreline for anglers is a growing concern. In addition, trampling of vegetation and erosion is occurring at some parts of the shoreline. The following actions will address these issues:
 - To not reduce habitat or increase erosion, locations for increased access will be carefully chosen.
 - Willows should remain for bank stabilization.
 - Russian olive removal will provide some access.
 - Upgrade picnic site and erosion control on the north shore of Martin Lake.
 - Make these “hardened” sites with buck & rail to clearly delineate picnic areas and prevent trampling of nearby vegetation and erosion.
 - Build up parking lot and wall in Huajatolla Cove to prevent erosion.
- *Ongoing monitoring and mitigation of high radon levels (H).* Radon testing with simple kits placed in areas without a lot of airflow as well as radon detectors should be used in all buildings. To mitigate areas where staff, volunteers, and others spend significant time, drill under foundations where there are pockets of air and add a fan to pull the radon out through the roof.
- *Annual maintenance and removal of debris off the Horseshoe Dam per state safety requirements (H).* Maintenance includes keeping weir boxes clear of debris and removal of rodents and vegetation on the dam face that can compromise its structure; Youth Corps help with removing Russian Olives from the dam and its outlying area every year.
- *Expand the swim beach (H).* Add half an acre to the north and west of the existing area to the buoy line. Visitors will be able to access the beach via parking at South Martin. Work began in 2021.
 - Allowing swimming at West Beach was considered. This would require the Park to double samples of water testing. Currently the Park does not have the funds to do so.
- *Improve Campgrounds (M):*
 - Yucca:
 - Upgrade both Group Campsites A (tent only) and B.
 - Group A upgrades include additional tent pads, repairs to old tent pads, vault toilet, and additional parking. A vehicle turn around will also be added so that Group A vehicles won't have to use the cul-de-sac in Group B to turn around. The turnaround will reduce disruptions to group B campers from Group A vehicles.
 - Group B upgrades will include accessible concrete walkways, parking, concrete back-in sites with electric pedestals, a group pavilion (with large shade structure) and tables. Design was completed in 2021.

- Explore how to make the individual campsites more user friendly, such as adding a shower building, replacing the old vault toilets, and adding two dishwashing stations (since campers in this campground aren't typically self-contained), and finding a way to reduce traffic noise from the nearby highway (which is the main complaint by campers in Yucca). Other potential projects may include:
 - Building 15-21 non-electric sites elsewhere in the Park relatively close to Piñon Campground (which has a shower house) and within appropriate management zone(s). This will allow for non-electric and tent camping away from the highway and in a quieter/more natural setting.
 - Convert Yucca Campground into an electric campground. Visitors camping with trailers are less likely to be disturbed by highway noise or need facilities close-by.
- Piñon:
 - Rename loops from letters to animal names (i.e., Antelope, Deer, Bear, and Cougar).
 - An additional water tank fill station was added in 2021. Need to include a security fence to prevent use by non-campers.
 - Maintenance and repair to 5 campground shower/toilet facilities
- *Renovation of maintenance shop complex (L).* Improvements to this area may include the following in the coming years:
 - New ceiling/roof
 - Fire sprinkler system
 - Internal and external LED lighting
 - Perimeter security fence and cameras
 - Eye wash station and water fountain
 - New work benches
 - New HVAC unit
 - Paint interior walls and floor
 - New double paned windows
 - Pavement around shop and compound
 - Pole barn (approved in small capital request in 2021)
 - New phone line and internet access
 - More storage space and tool room expansion
- *Remodel seasonal residence kitchen (M):*
 - New cabinets, counters, appliances, and flooring

- *Other facility upgrades, repairs and ongoing maintenance that are included in the Southeast Region’s 5-year maintenance plan (M).*
 - Pinon Campground Lift Station Equipment Repair.
 - Repave park roads.
 - Wastewater system upgrade.
 - Water System upgrade (includes updating pump house equipment that supplies city water to the Park).

Passive Recreation Zone

- *Upgrade/maintain Youth Fishing Pond (M):*
 - Add picnic tables and shade structures.
 - Keep the access ditch (Martin outlet) cleaned out of roots and vegetation and work with City of Walsenburg and CPW water experts to ensure water will flow through to the pond regardless of water level in Martin Lake. This will allow for year-round water and improve fishing opportunities.
 - Add vegetation/habitat to provide shelter for fish.
 - The rock bottom limits making changes to depths of the pond.
 - Plant vegetation and trees to replace weeds in the area.
- *Work with an engineer to redesign the Visitor Center parking lot (L).*
 - See “Circulation” in Chapter 3 for a description of the congestion and confusion occurring in this lot.

Natural and Protected Zones

- *Modify and upgrade bike/horse trail (H):*
 - Almost one third of the comment form respondents (see Chapter 1) indicated they come to the park to watch birds and other wildlife. The trail is seldom used by equestrians as the total distance is likely too short to be worth the effort of bringing a horse by trailer.
 - The trail will remain open to equestrians and bikes but shift to focus on watchable wildlife.
 - The trail may extend south, add a spur (i.e., out and back to a high spot) and/ or a boardwalk while considering sensitive habitat and a desire to not displace wildlife in this unique section of the Park.
- *Work with volunteer groups such as Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado or Rocky Mountain Youth Corps to work on erosion issues on Hogback Trail (H).*

2. New Facilities and Infrastructure

Development Zone

- *Add a fish cleaning station (M).* Put in shade, table, and septic system on the southeast side (overflow lot) of Martin Lake. Money was donated toward this project in honor of Connor Williams out of New Mexico who passed away at age 16. His family donated toward a memorial of Connor because Lathrop was his favorite park.
- *Move the ANS inspection station away from the front entrance to the park and locate it near the fish cleaning station in the overflow lot at Martin.* Having the inspection station away from the front entrance would reduce confusion for visitors who often think the station is a booth where park passes are sold. The overflow lot would also provide more space for inspectors to conduct decontaminations without leaving their post. With the current set up, inspectors have to leave the station to perform decontaminations and may miss other boats entering the park. Also, by putting the fish cleaning station and ANS station near each other both stations can share a water line.
- *Redesign and add improvements to increase use of West Beach and minimize conflict between anglers and non-motorized boats (M).* The West Beach area of Martin Lake has low visitation, and the traditional fishing areas on the north side of Martin Lake are getting crowded. The beach will work well for visitors who request a group day use area.
 - Construct two parking lots closer to the shoreline, add more covered picnic tables to the area, and construct a group picnic pavilion (with parking).
 - Add kayak and paddleboard amenities, such as a launch and air compressor station for inflatable boats. This will attract non-motorized watercraft users to the area and keep them out of motorized boat traffic.

Passive Recreation and Natural Zones

- *Develop a plan for visitor use of the State Land Board parcel north of the hogback (L).* The Park is in the process of fencing the perimeter of this parcel to identify the park boundary and proactively limit access from adjacent private property via unauthorized connections into the park (i.e., social trails). However, to allow more use of this area, the Park is considering adding a hiking trail from the Hogback Trail to the northern boundary. This would provide limited access to the parcel north of the hogback and unique experience in the park for solitude and interaction with nature. Coordination with the State Land Board and public input should be part of this planning process. The “priority” of this effort may change once a plan has been developed. While there is interest in park visitors using this area of the Park (in a Natural Zone), safety and fire are primary concerns. Enforcing a fire ban or other safety related

regulations would be challenging. There is no current access by vehicle for the public and vehicle access would have unacceptable resource impacts.

- *Add minor amenities to Horseshoe Lake (M):*
 - The new boat launch on the old south ramp will provide (ADA compliant) access for non-motorized use outside of the hunting season
 - Add a few picnic tables for quiet and scenic places to sit.
 - Install interpretive signage to explain why and when hunting occurs in this part of the park and why the lake is managed without development (unlike Martin) (L).
 - Create more fishing access on the underutilized north and south shorelines by adding natural surface trails and parking and removing shoreline vegetation.
 - Build an ADA compliant fishing pier on the south side of Horseshoe Lake (L).

- *Add a kayak and paddleboard launch on the northeast side of Martin Lake (H)*

3. Natural Resources - Rehabilitation/Restoration Efforts

Unless otherwise noted, these efforts are parkwide, ongoing and considered high-medium priority.

- Implement Resource Stewardship Plan, Noxious Weed Management Plan, and Forest Management Plan. The recommendations in these plans are critical to maintaining and improving the condition of resources. Inventory data also serves as a baseline to compare future surveys and to guide management decisions.

- Revegetation, erosion control, weed control, and other best management practices should be followed for all construction and management actions impacting the Park's natural resources. Consult CPW Resource Stewardship staff for recommendations.

- Manage Horseshoe Lake and hunting opportunities in collaboration with CPW Area wildlife staff.

- Maintain the excellent cold- and warm-water recreational fisheries in Horseshoe and Martin lakes in collaboration with CPW Area aquatics staff.

- Maintain the natural character of undeveloped areas of the Park. Use Management Zone Map (Chapter 4) as guidance.

- Continue ongoing efforts to reduce/prevent invasive species.
 - Keep ANS program fully operational each year.
 - Remove Russian olive and other nonnative plants and proactively promote habitat improvement with planting native species.

- Continued monitoring of pinyon for signs of beetles should occur and Park staff should be familiar with characteristics of an Ips Beetle infestation. The Park should consider preventive spraying of high value trees in years that significant outbreaks occur.
- Replace roadside trees between the lakes that were/are removed during sewer line construction.
- Construct osprey nest platforms with power poles donated by San Isabel Electric.
- Implement an annual seasonal closure (March 1 - July 31) of Horseshoe Lake to protect the heron rookery.
 - Add signage on the island and at launch areas that includes:
 - To protect nesting Great Blue Herons and their habitat, visitors are not allowed on the island and watercraft is not allowed within 100 feet of the island between March 1 and July 31.

4. Management Initiatives

The following sections describe potential ideas for understanding Park visitors, strengthening the volunteer program, and increasing interpretation efforts. As each initiative is refined priority actions may then be determined.

- Visitation. Understand trends in visitation and how to adapt as needed
 - Participate in CPW “Visitor Satisfaction” studies.
 - Develop outreach/communication tools for the local community.
 - Support longtime Park visitors to learn how to make camping reservations and use other technology/new methods for park access and recreation opportunities.
 - Encourage more winter and off-season use.
- Volunteer Program. Recruit, retain and manage volunteers to support park operations and provide meaningful experiences for volunteers to connect with the Park’s resources and visitors. Volunteer management is limited as each FTE already manages 10-12 temporary staff and volunteers during the summer.
 - Use “targeted recruitment” to help the Park with existing needs and activities. For example, host an open house to promote existing needs (i.e., attendees are given a list of projects/roles needing volunteer help). SE Region Volunteer Coordinator can help with advertising and planning an open house. Consider offering opportunities for “being neighborly,” which may resonate better than “volunteering” and allowing volunteers to use the Park for free the day of a volunteer event (ex., volunteers for a “Weed Warrior Day” would remove mullein in the morning and then stay to recreate the rest of the day).
 - Use partnerships within CPW (e.g., aquatics and education) and with external groups (ex., La Veta Trails) to plan volunteer opportunities.

- Potential volunteer projects include:
 - Forest management
 - Annual gill netting (has been a school group in some years)
 - Monthly water quality monitoring of each lake
 - Weed warrior days
 - Customer service (ongoing opportunity for folks wanting to volunteer for more than a single event) especially on winter weekends
 - Archery instructors
 - Trail work
 - Interpretive programs and assisting with field trips
 - Assisting with off-park programs such as career fairs
 - Fence installation, removal, and repair
 - Raptor Monitoring
- Work campers: help with basic maintenance duties, such as trash collection, restroom cleaning, and firepit cleaning. There are two campsites near the maintenance shop for work campers typically used by two couples between May and September.

Additional needs include:

 - Add two more sites near the maintenance shop to accommodate more work campers. The Park would like to have at least 1-2 sets (couples or individuals) of work campers between March and May, and then again between Labor Day and the end of October.
 - Ideally there would be 4 sets of workers between May 1 and Labor Day.
 - The additional camp workers could be the “hosts” for Yucca Campground. There are currently no camp hosts or sites for hosts in Yucca.
- Camp hosts: There are usually plenty of applicants
 - There is currently space in the electric campground for two sets (couple or individual) of hosts.
 - Seasons needed for at least one host would be March-April.
 - Two sets of hosts would be needed May-October.
 - Seasons could be broken into small increments for hosts who don’t want to commit to 6 months stays.
- Friends Group
 - Recruit board members to run a group to fundraise for the Park and establish non-profit 501(c)(3) status.
- Volunteer Retention Ideas: Offer networking and “continuing education” (trainings, presentations) of interest to volunteers, as well as volunteer appreciation activities.

- Interpretation. Increase and upgrade signs, programs, etc., using Interpretive Themes identified in Chapter 3. James Masek - DNR <james.masek@state.co.us>
 - Rock shelter near campground and amphitheater
 - Use this cultural site to demonstrate how people have used this landscape historically and explore the theme of “people have been ‘camping’ here for a long time.”
 - Keep site open to the public viewing but use buck and rail fencing and signage to prevent vandalism. Regular monitoring is needed to protect this resource.
 - State Historic Preservation Office and archaeologists can help guide this effort.
 - Develop signage/brochures/website explaining why Horseshoe and Martin are managed differently (e.g., water quality and habitat type affects fisheries management in each lake; Horseshoe is wakeless only, etc.)
 - Update Visitor Center displays
 - Have roving interpreters during summer