

# Recreation and Trails Element

*“Cycle trails will abound in Utopia.” -- H.G. WELLS, English novelist*

**Vision: Develop an integrated recreation system within the County that provides diverse, developed and undeveloped, recreational opportunities for all residents and visitors while protecting unique scenic and natural areas.**

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## Background and Existing Conditions

The County has a rich heritage of outdoor recreation and trail use. The County’s immense scenic beauty and mix of geography, public lands, and tourism has combined to provide the area with world-class recreational amenities and opportunities. By and large, recreation remains the most important aspect to a vital economy in the County.

Both the County’s permanent population and tourist visits have been growing steadily, generating more demand for recreational opportunities. The importance and popularity of the County’s recreation and trails system continues to increase. This pressure for increased recreational opportunities should be designed to utilize resources in ways that benefit all users. Thus, the need to provide appropriate land uses, guidance and insightful management for establishing and maintaining the recreation and trail systems throughout the County is critical.

Adequately providing for these resources requires interjurisdictional cooperation as the demand and services are countywide in scope. Moreover, almost all developed recreational facilities are outside of the County’s jurisdiction. Therefore, it is important to maintain and strengthen relationships between government entities and the private sector for the effective development of well-planned and managed recreation and trail systems. Establishing partnerships and intergovernmental coordination may help to ensure the efficient allocation of resources and a minimization of redundancies.

## Recreation

There is a wide variety of existing developed recreational facilities owned and managed by local governments in the County. However, beside the Blue River ballfields, the County’s role in providing for and maintaining developed recreational facilities is not well defined. The County’s involvement is with a couple facilities that are not considered appropriate for use within town limits and impractical to locate near urban densities (e.g., shooting range).

Whereas the importance of recreational facilities is paramount to the general welfare for residents and visitors, the County’s overall involvement is minimal. New revenue streams, services, or programs would need to be established to better develop and manage needed recreational facilities in unincorporated portions of the County. To achieve this, practical alternatives to consider include developing public/private agreements or local improvement districts.

In regards to athletic fields, there is no surplus in the County, as use capacity is estimated to be near 100 percent. The total number of athletic fields number approximately 27 and vary in size, quality and purpose (e.g., soccer, baseball, softball, rugby, lacrosse, and frisbee). Most are used by youth and adult organizations, mainly during the months of June through September. With a multitude of purposes there are also a variety of amenities including bleachers, playgrounds, shelters, restrooms, water, parking, dugouts, lights, and concessions. While some athletic fields have many amenities, others have limited or

no amenities. In addition, the County and each town have their own set of policies for maintenance, reserving fields, and fees for usage.

<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>Field Type</b>	<b>Outdoor Field(s)</b>	<b>Indoor Field(s)</b>
Breckenridge	Volleyball	2	2
	Softball/Baseball	5	
	Basketball	1	2
	Tennis Courts	10	2
	Football/Soccer	3	
Frisco	Volleyball	2	
	Softball/Baseball	2	
	Tennis	2	
	Football/Soccer	1	
Silverthorne	Volleyball	2	2
	Softball/Baseball	3	
	Basketball	1	1
	Tennis	4	
	Football/Soccer	1	
Dillon	Softball/Baseball	1	
	Basketball	1	
	Tennis	4	
Summit Schools	Volleyball		11
	Softball/Baseball	7	
	Basketball		10
	Football/Soccer	2	
Summit County	Softball/Baseball	4	
<b>Total</b>		<b>58</b>	<b>30</b>

<sup>1</sup> The inventory does not include Summit School District RE-1 facilities. The Upper Blue Elementary School field is considered a joint use facility with the Town of Breckenridge.

Sources: Inventory of Developed Recreation Facilities in Summit County, Colorado and Background Information on Recreation Special Districts, June, 1999; Summit County Planning Department.

<b>Type</b>	<b>Number</b>
Archery Range	1
Disc Golf Courses	3
Equestrian Centers	7
Golf Courses	5 (90-holes total)
Ice Rinks	1 indoor; 3 outdoor
Kayak Park	1
Marinas	2
Nordic Centers	5
Recreation Centers or Athletic Clubs	4
Shooting Range	1

Type	Number
Skate Parks	3
Total	37

Source: Summit County Planning Department.

Jurisdiction	Total Parks and Open Space Acres Developed	Total Park and Open Space Acres Undeveloped	Total
Breckenridge	204.77	24	228.77
Dillon	58.5		243
Frisco	259.97	27.29	106.8
Silverthorne	36	124.5	160.5
County	149.19	1,747.33 <sup>2</sup>	1,896.52
<b>Total</b>	<b>708.43</b>	<b>1,923</b>	<b>2,635</b>

<sup>1</sup> Summit County Government, Town of Breckenridge, and Town of Frisco have adopted open space protection master plans.

<sup>2</sup> 1,208 acres of mining claims to be designated as open space.

Source: Inventory of Developed Recreation Facilities in Summit County, Colorado and Background Information on Recreation Special Districts; June, 1999; TOS 2003.

The following provides a bulleted list of key recreation system issues/concerns:

- Increasing use and demand for more traditional recreational facilities (e.g., baseball fields).
- Need for revenue to support developed recreational facilities.
- Athletic fields use at 100 percent of capacity and increase in competition for field usage (e.g., need for field time, pressure on turf, maintenance costs, use of volunteer staff and turnover).
- Identifying future significant recreation facilities needed to serve future populations (e.g., no easy formula for determining facilities).
- Need and possibility of the towns and Summit County Government to work cooperatively on future recreation facility development.
- Level of public support and the extent to which true stakeholder relationships exist for expanded or new facilities.
- Determining community's predominant focus in terms of recreation and leisure.
- Demand for a year-round indoor special event venue that is weatherproof.
- Need for dog parks.

### Trails

The County has hundreds of miles of trails that include backcountry single-track, jeep roads established during the mining era, trails within communities, and the Summit County recreational pathway (i.e., paved bikepath). The U.S. Forest Service, County, and towns have all been heavily involved with establishing these trail systems and protecting existing trail networks. In terms of management, the County's primary role with trails is better defined than for recreation. Generally, it is one of providing a seamless system to access trails located on public lands throughout the County.

The recreational pathway system has grown substantially since the first segment connecting Frisco to Vail Pass was completed in the late 1970's to include over 40-miles of paved trail. Today the system links the towns of Silverthorne, Dillon, Frisco and Breckenridge, Keystone and Copper Mountain resorts, and Vail in Eagle County. The Town of Silverthorne completed construction of an improved route (the Dillon Link Trail) in 2003 to link the town to the pathway system.

One of the most popular bicycle excursions for County residents and visitors is the loop around Dillon Reservoir. Currently no recreational pathway exists on the southeast side of the reservoir to connect the Snake River and Blue River Inlets around Swan Mountain, and recreational pathway users are forced to turn around. Many bicyclists do ride on Swan Mountain Road to complete the reservoir loop; however, because of its heavy traffic volume, numerous curves, lack of shoulders, and steep grades, Swan Mountain Road is not well suited for such bicycle traffic. To date, the Forest Service has approved the County's plan for a grade separated/detached recreational pathway to connect Summit Cove to Farmer's Corner (as outlined in the submitted Environmental Assessment). The next steps include finding funding to construct and design this last connector segment.

The following provides a bulleted list of key trail system issues/concerns:

- Increasing recreational use fueling the desire for a larger trail system.
- Potential funding sources available for recreational pathway/natural surface trail construction and maintenance.
- Greater impacts to trail system caused by growing permanent population and increased visitors (e.g., overcrowding and user conflicts).
- Providing for the orderly expansion of the trail system.
- Developing standards for uniform trail construction and providing for coordination with the individual towns and their trail system(s).
- Providing adequate accessibility to significant summer and winter trailheads and trails.
- Developing trail systems to be in concert with natural and cultural resource protection.
- Improvements to the paved recreational pathway system, specifically a connection around Dillon Reservoir (Swan Mountain Road) and a safe connection between the towns of Dillon and Silverthorne.
- Evolving and expanding recreational use types.
- Trailhead parking.

### Winter Travel Management

The increased use and demands on the County's trail systems is also a winter use issue. How to better manage winter recreational uses and amenities across jurisdictional boundaries throughout the County is an area of concern. A high level of confusion regarding inconsistent regulations and enforcement across these boundaries exists (e.g., uncertainty by public of where winter recreation activities are allowed or prohibited). In addition, there are a number of areas that have high user conflicts between motorized and non-motorized uses on winter trails.

It is necessary to clarify the rules, regulations and policies for all agencies involved with managing winter recreation (e.g., trailhead improvements, better signage, grooming, and plowing). An underlying premise to this is the need to separate motorized and non-motorized winter uses as much as possible, without losing reasonable access for any particular user group. Solutions and management prescriptions to clarify uses in the majority of the winter recreational activity areas will be largely dictated by and hinge on the Travel Management Plan for the White River National Forest.

The following provides a bulleted list of winter travel management key issues/concerns:

- Public information on winter recreation that is consistent and accurate.
- Uniform signage.
- Uniform and consistent enforcement across jurisdictional boundaries.
- Clarification of snowmobile ordinance (e.g., status of County roads).
- Determining appropriate winter uses of the recreational pathway.
- Securing public access for winter travel.
- Adequate separation of motorized and non-motorized winter travel.

## Regulatory Framework

Planning and construction of recreational facilities has a tendency to be more jurisdictional and subjective than that of trail systems. As most developed recreational facilities exist within town boundaries, the County is only minimally involved with developing and managing facilities not necessarily appropriate for uses within town limits.

There are several key reasons why recreation and trail system development and management is an interjurisdictional endeavor. Almost all potential funding sources to benefit and implement recreation and trail system recommendations are made available through federal and state resources. Moreover, park, recreation, and trail policies and criteria are developed by state, regional, and local planning agencies.

How the trails in the County are constructed and managed is guided by uniform industry standards. These standards are used by the County and contained in Chapter 5 of the Land Use and Development Code. For recreational pathway standards, the County defers to the Federal Highway Traffic Safety Administration Guidelines known as "AASHTO." For natural surface trails, the County defers to current standards used by the U.S. Forest Service as outlined in the latest editions of USDA Forest Service publications. These publications include Trail Construction and Maintenance Notebook (4E42A25-Trail Notebook), Trails management handbook (FSH 2309.18), Standard specifications for construction and maintenance of trails (EM-7720-103), and Standard drawings for construction and maintenance of trails (EM-7720-104).

Existing Recreation and Trails Plans for Summit County include:

- *United States Forest Service Forest Plan and Travel Management Plan*; USDA Forest Service.
- *Town of Breckenridge Trails Master Plan*, 1996; Town of Breckenridge.
- *Town of Frisco Parks and Recreation Master Plan*, May 9, 2001; Town of Frisco.
- *Silverthorne Parks, Trails, and Open Space Master Plan*, January 2001; Silverthorne Department of Recreation and Culture.
- *Summit County Recreational Pathways Master Plan*. September 12, 1988; Prepared by: Summit County Planning Department.

## Goals, Policies/Actions

### Recreation

**Goal A. Develop and manage recreational facilities to meet the growing needs of County residents.**

Policy/Action 1. The County shall better define its roles and responsibilities in providing for developed recreational facilities.

Policy/Action 2. To the extent practicable, additional developed recreational facilities should be constructed to meet the growing recreational needs of County residents.

Policy/Action 3. Work with the Summit School District to make school recreational facilities, especially playgrounds and multi-use fields, available for community use to reduce the pressure for the development of additional recreational areas.

Policy/Action 4. Consider forming a multi-jurisdictional entity to manage developed recreational facilities and address public/private interest throughout the County (e.g., Blue River ballfields).

4.1 Use cooperative agreements and form local improvement districts to manage and develop recreational facilities.

Policy/Action 5. Explore the feasibility of funding a countywide recreation district and local improvement districts.

## Trails

**Goal B. Maintain, preserve, and where appropriate, enhance trail management through providing for character, design, access, parking guidelines and protection of environmentally sensitive areas.**

Policy/Action 1. Secure trail easements in efforts to carry out community visions, implement basin or subbasin master plans, and create a complete network of interconnected trails.

Policy/Action 2. Maintain the character of existing trails and trailheads using the following guidelines:

2.1 Promote trail design and construction standards, which preserve buffers between trails and developed areas, protect the natural terrain, provide for natural vegetative screening, and have minimal environmental impact.

2.2 Locate buildings and other improvements in a manner that retains the character of the trails and avoids road and driveway crossings (e.g., utilizing setbacks from roads and buildings).

2.3 Consider the following characteristics when making recommendations on permanent trail closures:

- Environmentally sensitive areas;
- Geologically hazardous areas;
- Winter wildlife habitat;
- Proximity to residential development.

Policy/Action 3. Design trails or trailheads using the following guidelines:

3.1 County standards should be developed to address setbacks for buildings, roads, or other features that may present a safety or aesthetic issue.

3.2 Keep trails in their historic alignments and provide trail access to the greatest extent possible. Relocations may be considered if the relocation is intended to avoid trail user conflicts and conflicts with adjacent land uses or other environmentally sensitive areas. Where trail relocation occurs, the new trail realignment should maintain the trail's original function and character and should promote the long-term sustainability of the trails.

3.3 Protect nationally designated trails or trails of state recognized importance to the maximum extent possible, by using wide buffers, protecting visual resources, and considering the user experience.

- 3.4 During the development review process, incorporate internal trail systems into the identified trail system of major development projects.
- 3.5 Design and build trailheads with the use type, volume of use, and capacity of the resource in mind.
- 3.6 Ensure adequate capacity is provided at trailheads to meet the needs of both recreational use parking and property owners.

Policy/Action 4. Acquire property for trails and trailheads using the following guidelines:

- 4.1 Work proactively to secure trail easements before or during the development process.
- 4.2 Negotiate, develop incentives, and work with property owners and developers to provide easements.
- 4.3 Pursue alternative routes or access points if significant routes or trailheads close.
- 4.4 Pursue prescriptive right for access to identified significant routes and trailheads when all other options for access are exhausted.

Policy/Action 5. Provide for access to trails using the following guidelines:

- 5.1 Ensure that access to significant summer and winter routes identified in basin master plans is maintained.
- 5.2 In the event that public land is privatized through land exchanges or other methods, preserve existing access and trails.

Policy/Action 6. Where appropriate, provide for adequate parking to accommodate trailhead needs in a manner which is compatible with surrounding land uses.

Policy/Action 7. Provide for new trail construction in environmentally appropriate areas:

- 7.1 New trail construction should minimize impacts to environmentally sensitive areas.
- 7.2 Utilize seasonal closures and rerouting of trails to avoid impacts to environmentally sensitive areas.
- 7.3 Emphasize seasonal closures of trails rather than year-round closures.

**Goal C. Continue to develop and manage a complete network of interconnected and multi-use trails in cooperation with other public and private entities.**

Policy/Action 1. The County should work in cooperation with private and public entities to provide for appropriate trail connections beyond Summit County and maintain appropriate significant summer and winter routes as identified in basin master plans.

- Policy/Action 2. Work with the U.S. Forest Service, other agencies, developers, and user groups in a cooperative manner to develop and maintain trails, trailheads and support facilities.
- Policy/Action 3. Work with the Summit Stage and Chambers of Commerce to provide transit loops to high use trailheads to minimize parking area impacts.
- Policy/Action 4. Increase enforcement of motorized restrictions, both summer and winter, in designated non-motorized areas to reduce severe damage to backcountry resources. This could be done by combining field personnel and user groups.
- Policy/Action 5. Develop/negotiate incentives and work with property owners and developers in acquiring and providing trail easements and access to significant summer and winter routes.
- Policy/Action 6. The County should review their land use regulations to ensure they have mechanisms in place to require the dedication of trails, trailheads and public access to streams, lakes, and public lands where appropriate.

**Goal D. Develop a unique set of strategies to handle the impacts associated with urban interface areas and the national forest in order to manage impacts from high-density recreational use.**

- Policy/Action 1. Create functional trail networks in current urban interface areas that accommodate higher concentrations of use.
- Policy/Action 2. Formalize existing social trails, where appropriate and sustainable, in urban interface areas to connect neighborhoods to regional trail systems, and to ensure compatibility with existing land use and natural resource values.

**Goal E. Provide public information to promote user awareness of appropriate trail use.**

- Policy/Action 1. Encourage the development of uniform and consistent signage, maps, informational and web-based materials, readily available to all visitors and residents, indicating trail opportunities on adjacent national forest lands, trailhead locations and appropriate uses.
- Policy/Action 2. The County and other land management agencies should work cooperatively with user groups to develop informational materials outlining responsible use of national forests, "leave no trace" practices, wildlife values, and ethical trail use.
- Policy/Action 3. Provide accurate information about trails and access points to publishers of trail guides and maps.
- Policy/Action 4. Develop "Adopt-a-Trail" programs and other partnerships to promote user education.
- Policy/Action 5. Improve enforcement and education of backcountry users by utilizing the recommendations outlined in the Winter Travel Management process (e.g., signage, enforcement and plowing priorities).

## Recreational Pathway

### **Goal F. Maintain and, where appropriate, enhance, connect, and expand the recreational pathway in the County.**

- Policy/Action 1. Incorporate the following into the County recreational pathway system: connectivity, adequate setbacks, vegetative screening from development, and elimination of motorized use and crossing, where appropriate.
- Policy/Action 2. A uniform requirement for improvement of shoulders to occur concurrent with improvements to state highways and other roads that are primary bicycle routes should be preserved.
- Policy/Action 3. Complete the development of a bike route that traverses the County, using a separated grade recreational pathway or where necessary highway bicycle lanes, connecting the different basins in the County and connecting to adjacent counties.
- Policy/Action 4. Ensure that the recreational pathway can safely accommodate users.
- Policy/Action 5. Provide paved bike access from public buildings to the recreational pathway, where possible.
- Policy/Action 6. Provide recreational pathway connections (summer and winter) to adjacent national forest trailheads, where appropriate.

## Trailhead & Trail Signage

### **Goal G. Maintain and improve trailhead and trail signage.**

- Policy/Action 1. Work with local, state, and federal agencies and appropriate non-profit organizations to standardize information and symbols on signage across jurisdictional boundaries to clarify land management.
- Policy/Action 2. Provide uniform signage across jurisdictional boundaries. Provide public information on regulations, enforcement procedures, fines, alternative directions, and responsible uses of winter recreation trails.
- Policy/Action 3. Improve signage to direct visitors to appropriate recreational opportunities.
- Policy/Action 4. Provide designated and signed parking spots for users and landowners at trailheads.
- Policy/Action 5. Separate day-use parking from long-term parking with proper signage at appropriate trailheads.
- Policy/Action 6. Signage should be designed to: promote and enforce a "pack it in, pack it out" protocol, educating users on rules and code of conduct, and fostering voluntary concern for etiquette and trail care.
- Policy/Action 7. Winter demarcation should clearly define motorized routes to eliminate intrusion into wilderness areas.

Policy/Action 8. Priority should be given to installing proper signage in areas identified in the Winter Travel Management process.

#### Winter Travel Management

**Goal H. Preserve, maintain, and develop winter recreational and trail opportunities.**

Policy/Action 1. Separate use between motorized and non-motorized winter travel as much as possible without losing reasonable access for particular user groups.

Policy/Action 2. Work with appropriate agencies to identify and manage legal access routes for winter motorized routes.

Policy/Action 3. Utilize maps developed in the Winter Travel Management process to guide winter travel strategies in basin master plans.

#### Trailheads/Access

**Goal I. Maintain and improve winter recreational access to trails through developing trailheads, as appropriate and to the extent practicable.**

Policy/Action 1. Separate trailheads for motorized and non-motorized uses as much as possible. Where unfeasible, provide trailer facilities as shared use trailheads.

#### Trails

**Goal J. Preserve and improve winter trails to provide for the needs of County residents and visitors.**

Policy/Action 1. Identify appropriate winter uses for the recreational pathway.

Policy/Action 2. Develop parallel, alternative ski routes in heavily used snowmobile areas.

#### Maintenance & Regulation

**Goal K. Plan and provide for the sustainable maintenance and regulations of trailheads and trails for winter travel management.**

Policy/Action 1. Where separation of use is not possible, improve experience through grooming of main collector routes.

Policy/Action 2. Establish a work plan for regular plowing of winter trailheads.

Policy/Action 3. Establish mechanisms to determine which trails and trailheads should be plowed or not plowed for winter recreation activities.

Policy/Action 4. If plowing of a significant winter route must occur, secure an alternate snow covered route that maintains the original character and function of the trail. Require plow operations to leave a minimum of 4 inches of snow on the ground on significant winter routes in the backcountry.

- Policy/Action 5. When all other strategies are exhausted, require winter trailhead or access points to be relocated to the end of snow maintenance.
- Policy/Action 6. Seek state trails funding for grooming of high volume non-motorized winter trails (e.g., recreational pathway).
- Policy/Action 7. Create a countywide regulation addressing snowmobile speeds and hours of operation to minimize impacts in residential areas. Speed limits should vary for rights-of-way versus trails.
- Policy/Action 8. Require a conditional use permit for new winter plowing in the backcountry zoning district on significant winter routes to ensure over-snow uses (i.e., cross-country skiing) are accommodated and safety issues are addressed.

Basin Specific

**Goal L. Develop basin or subbasin plans to address and incorporate unique or specific trail issues.**

- Policy/Action 1. Identify and map significant summer and winter routes for various recreational purposes in basin master plans.
- Policy/Action 2. Coordinate with the U.S. Forest Service and other appropriate agencies to acquire and develop important trailheads and trail links identified in basin or subbasin plans.

**Sustainability Measures**

Sustainability measures will be used as a means to assess progress toward achievement of specific goals and policies/actions outlined in this element. The indicators are quantitative and qualitative measurements that reflect data available from a number of resources. While there are many forms of measurements, these indicators are representative of specific issues and concerns throughout the County. The representative data from each indicator corresponds to the outlined goals within this element and can be tabulated and presented to illustrate trends or progress. Analysis of these annually can serve as a basis to support County management decisions.

An extensive network of natural surface trails and recreational pathways exist in the County; of which the majority of the natural surface trails are within the jurisdiction of the U.S. Forest Service. Table 4 is intended to track additional recreational pathways built, maintained and managed by the County and Towns.

<b>Basin</b>	<b>Total Miles Year 2003</b>	<b>Total Miles Year 2008</b>	<b>Total Miles</b>
Lower Blue <sup>1</sup>	1.3		1.3
Ten Mile <sup>1</sup>	17.9		17.9
Snake River <sup>1</sup>	5.4		5.4
Upper Blue <sup>1</sup>	3.8		3.8
<b>Total County</b>	<b>28.4</b>		<b>28.4</b>

<b>Table 4. Paved Trails Built, Maintained and Managed in Summit County</b>			
<b>Basin</b>	<b>Total Miles Year 2003</b>	<b>Total Miles Year 2008</b>	<b>Total Miles</b>
<b>Total Towns</b>	<b>27.3</b>		<b>27.3</b>
<b>Total</b>			<b>55.7</b>

Can include cooperative maintenance with a Town jurisdiction.  
Source: Summit County Open Space & Trails and GIS Departments.

## Implementation Strategies

Many of the policies and actions identified in this element propose some future work in order to see their successful implementation. The table below identifies specific strategies recommended to fully implement the Recreation and Trails Element. Priorities are identified to give an indication of the current relative importance of a particular implementation strategy. These priorities are provided as guidelines only.

<b>Goal, Policy/Action</b>	<b>Project/Description</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Priority</b>
A.1, A.3, A.4	Initiate discussion with the Board of County Commissioners to clearly define the County's roles and responsibilities in providing for developed recreational facilities. This would require further discussions with the County Managers Office, Open Space and Trails Department, towns, and School District in terms of specific facilities, feasibility and options (e.g., needs study, funding, and formation of a multi-jurisdictional entity).	1 year	Medium
F.1, F.3	Complete/connect the recreational pathway around Dillon Reservoir (grade separate segment from Summit Cove to Farmer's Korner). The County should take the lead in seeking and applying for funding through state and federal agencies to complete the connection.	Ongoing	High
G.1, G.2	Standardize information and symbols on signage across jurisdictional boundaries to clarify regulations and land management. A cooperative program needs to be developed between all towns and the U.S. Forest Service to garner cooperation between entities. The County shall take action to initiate discussion.	1-2 years	Medium
H.1, H.2	Preserve, maintain, and develop winter recreational and trail opportunities. Through the County's Managers Office, continue to work toward accomplishing the key winter travel management consensus goals as identified in the "Summary of Key Areas for Improved Interjurisdictional Winter Travel Management."	Ongoing	High

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