



Parks and Open Space

5201 St. Vrain Road • Longmont, Colorado 80503
303.678.6200 • Fax: 303.678.6177 • www.bouldercounty.org

June 2009

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY ***Betasso Preserve Management Plan***

The *Betasso Preserve Management Plan* sets forth the future management direction for Boulder County Parks & Open Space's (BCPOS) Betasso Preserve, which includes the original Betasso Preserve property, the Betasso Homestead property, the Benjamin property, and other adjacent BCPOS properties that have been acquired since 1977. It replaces the current management plan for Betasso Preserve, which was written in 1985 and amended in 1988, as well as the Benjamin property's interim management plan, which was approved in September 2007. The 1181-acre open space property, with its many unique and important natural, cultural, and recreational resources, presents a number of potential, yet somewhat divergent, management objectives. The following is an overview of BCPOS staff's recommendations for the future management of the property. These recommendations are based on the results of natural and cultural resource surveys, a trail feasibility study, public input throughout the planning process including that of the Betasso Preserve Stakeholders Group, the policies of the *Boulder County Comprehensive Plan*, and the mission and goals of the Parks & Open Space Department.

Betasso Preserve will be managed for its unique natural and cultural resources, significant habitat values, and exceptional recreational potential. A balanced approach that provides new and diverse visitor use opportunities, while setting aside the most significant land for plants and wildlife, will allow BCPOS to meet multiple management objectives. The more remote, steep, and undisturbed habitat will be preserved as the Arkansas Mountain Habitat Conservation Area, which will be closed to the public and managed for ecological preservation. A new trail system extending off of the existing Canyon Loop Trail will allow visitors to explore new territory and provide diverse experiences. The new trail system, which includes a potential future connection to Fourmile Canyon for mountain bikers and others, will double the available trail mileage by adding 4.6 miles of additional trails, thus creating a total of 9.3 miles of trails throughout Betasso Preserve, one of the highest densities of trails on any Boulder County open space property.

BCPOS will manage the habitats throughout Betasso Preserve to help maintain and perpetuate native plant and wildlife diversity. This will include the preservation of the 202-acre Arkansas Mountain Habitat Conservation Area. Where necessary and feasible, staff will actively manage the natural resources in accordance with the ecological processes that have shaped the area's landscapes and plant and wildlife species, as well as to achieve any desired future conditions for the site. BCPOS resource staff will utilize the best available science and an adaptive management approach to contribute to the longevity of the property's ecosystems and their long-term adaptation to environmental changes. Periodic natural resource surveys will occur to track changes over time.

To increase BCPOS's presence at Betasso Preserve, help manage user conflicts, increase enforcement of regulations, and help to build better partnerships, a new Betasso Preserve

caretaker position will be created for the site pending budget approval and will be staffed by a ranger or deputy. This individual would live on-site and provide daily patrol and enforcement, as well as work with the diverse user groups and neighboring property owners in a collaborative approach to help preserve, protect, and manage Betasso Preserve more effectively.

The existing rules and regulations at Betasso Preserve will remain in place for the time being. The alternative day use regulation, which allows mountain bike use on the Canyon Loop Trail five days a week, but prohibits them on Wednesdays and Saturdays, will be continued and be applied to the new trail system for at least two years following the construction and opening of the new trail system. After two years, a Betasso Preserve user survey will be conducted to evaluate public opinion about the alternative day use regulation. If a majority of the public shows support for continuation of the alternative day use regulation, then the regulation will remain in effect. If not, then a public review process of the regulation will occur. In addition, the directional use (one-way) regulation for mountain bikers will continue for the Canyon Loop Trail, but will not initially be applied to the new trail system. However, BCPOS will have the option at any time to institute the directional use regulation on all or part (e.g. the west side of the loop only) of the new trail if the need arises.

Other future improvements at Betasso Preserve will include improvements to horse trailer parking, rehabilitation of all highly erosive social trails, including those within the Habitat Conservation Area, upgrades to the Canyon Link Trail where possible, an interpretive trail from the existing Canyon Loop Trail trailhead to the Betasso Homestead, and potential future expansion of the Canyon Loop trailhead parking lots if increases in visitor use numbers warrant it. In addition, if an opportunity arises, BCPOS will investigate the feasibility of a potential new trail in the southeast corner of Betasso Preserve that would provide a new link between Boulder Canyon and the Canyon Loop Trail. The goals of this new trail would be to eliminate the need to hike or bike on Boulder Canyon Drive to access Betasso Preserve from the Boulder Canyon Trail and to provide a more sustainable trail system compared to the existing Canyon Link Trail. A new trail at this location would provide a safer, easier, and potentially more environmentally sound connection between the City of Boulder and Betasso Preserve. If the opportunity arose for a new trail at this location, extensive resource surveys would be required to avoid and minimize impacts to natural resources, and the existing Canyon Link Trail would be closed and rehabilitated.