

MEMORANDUM

TO: Open Space Board of Trustees

FROM: Dan Burke, Interim Director, Open Space and Mountain Parks
Jeff Haley, Deputy Director, Trails and Facilities
Ilene Flax, Senior Landscape Architect

DATE: January 11, 2023

SUBJECT: Written Information: Gebhard Integrated Site Plan Implementation Status

Introduction

The OSMP-managed Gebhard property alongside South Boulder Creek is within a Colorado State Natural Area, a designation that emphasizes the state-wide ecological importance of habitat conservation and restoration in this area. This high-value habitat supports riparian nesting birds, federally listed species and rare plant communities, and serves as an important movement corridor for other species. For many years, neighboring community members have also enjoyed using this space to walk along and access South Boulder Creek.

Staff has managed access to the creek and habitat improvements through native plantings, erosion control, signage, and fencing. These approaches have sought to improve habitat quality and improve visitor awareness of the importance of riparian natural resources while still meeting community desires for creek access. Despite these efforts, undesignated trails along the west side of South Boulder Creek impact habitat for Preble's meadow jumping mouse, a federally listed species. Another federally listed species – the Ute ladies'-tresses orchid is known to occur within the area. In addition, a globally rare mesic tallgrass community is impacted by patterns of use, as are wetlands and a population of the Northern leopard frog, a Colorado Tier 1 Species of Greatest Conservation Need.

Based on existing guidance in the 2010 Grassland Ecosystem Management Plan and the 1998 South Boulder Creek Area Management Plan, the current Gebhard Integrated Site Project updates and confirms a sustainable management approach for the future. Staff has worked closely with community members to develop alternative approaches for managing this area and to select a preferred alternative that best meets project goal and objectives. Please visit the website to remind or familiarize yourself with the project. <https://bouldercolorado.gov/projects/gebhard-integrated-site-project>

Overview

Goals for the project include: 1) Restoration of riparian habitat along the west side of the creek between East Boulder Recreation Center and South Boulder Road as part of the ongoing larger restoration project along all South Boulder Creek and 2) Providing access to the existing

designated trail system on the east side of the creek in a way that aligns with the neighborhood's interests and values.

Gebhard Implementation

Implementation of the Gebhard Integrated Site Project preferred alternative paused when New Zealand Mudsnails were discovered in South Boulder Creek and a management response plan to the snail's presence was developed and reviewed by the OSBT. Open Space and Mountain Parks is now back at work on implementing the Gebhard project.

Implementation plans will detail the design described in the preferred alternative and final management guidance provided by the Open Space Board of Trustees (OSBT) in January 2020.

- The designer for the bridge that will link the west side trail to the east side trail system has identified a precise location that minimizes grading and impacts to the area so that bridge construction does not impact the floodplain. Design detailing will be like the bridge near the East Boulder Community Center.
- Trail design will connect the Greenbelt Meadows neighborhood to the new bridge along the route of a portion of the existing social trail through that area.
- Conversations with the Howard Ditch company on developing a new accessible crossing are underway.
- Access to the creek at the existing bend will include bank stabilization to support diverse vegetation and allow people to access the creek without harming the riparian zone. Interpretive features around living with New Zealand Mudsnails will help make this a place to linger.
- Restoration efforts will remove invasive species like crack willows and teasel, and add new cottonwood trees and other plantings that support the wetland and riparian systems.
- Volunteer projects that engage community members in active stewardship of the area may include seed collection, invasive species removal, and volunteer ranger activities.
- The fish passage design is moving forward. This new structure will replace the existing concrete dam with a series of boulder steps that will allow fish to move freely through South Boulder Creek.
- Assessing the feasibility of all aspects of the Final Management Guidance. We are working to provide community access in ways that support and protect the very things that make the place so beloved.

There are some new staff members at work on this project, including Ilene Flax, Senior Landscape Architect as project manager. We look forward to sharing our plans with you early in 2023, with construction anticipated to begin in Fall 2023.

Opportunities for Public Information:

OSMP plans to continue meeting with the Greenbelt Meadows HOA board as needed throughout the project to build a stronger relationship and to continue to provide clear and transparent goals for the project during the implementation phase. Project updates will

continue to be provided in many forms such as the Field Notes, social media updates and OSBT memos as necessary when project milestones are reached and a more comprehensive project update to the OSBT is planned for Q2 of 2023.