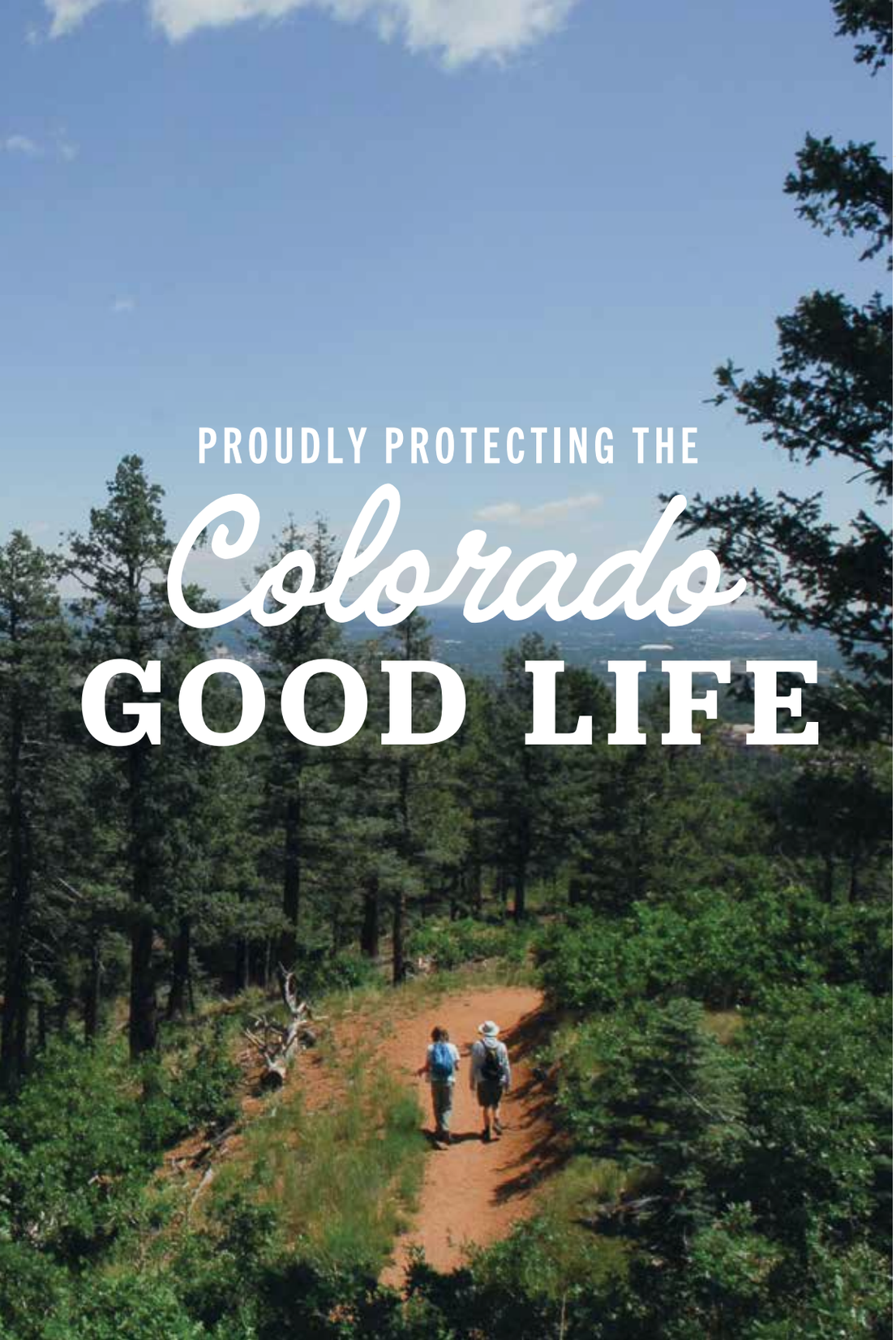
PALMER LAND CONSERVANCY

FIELD GUIDE

Protected Public Parks and Open Spaces

PIKES PEAK REGION | FIRST EDITION | 2020



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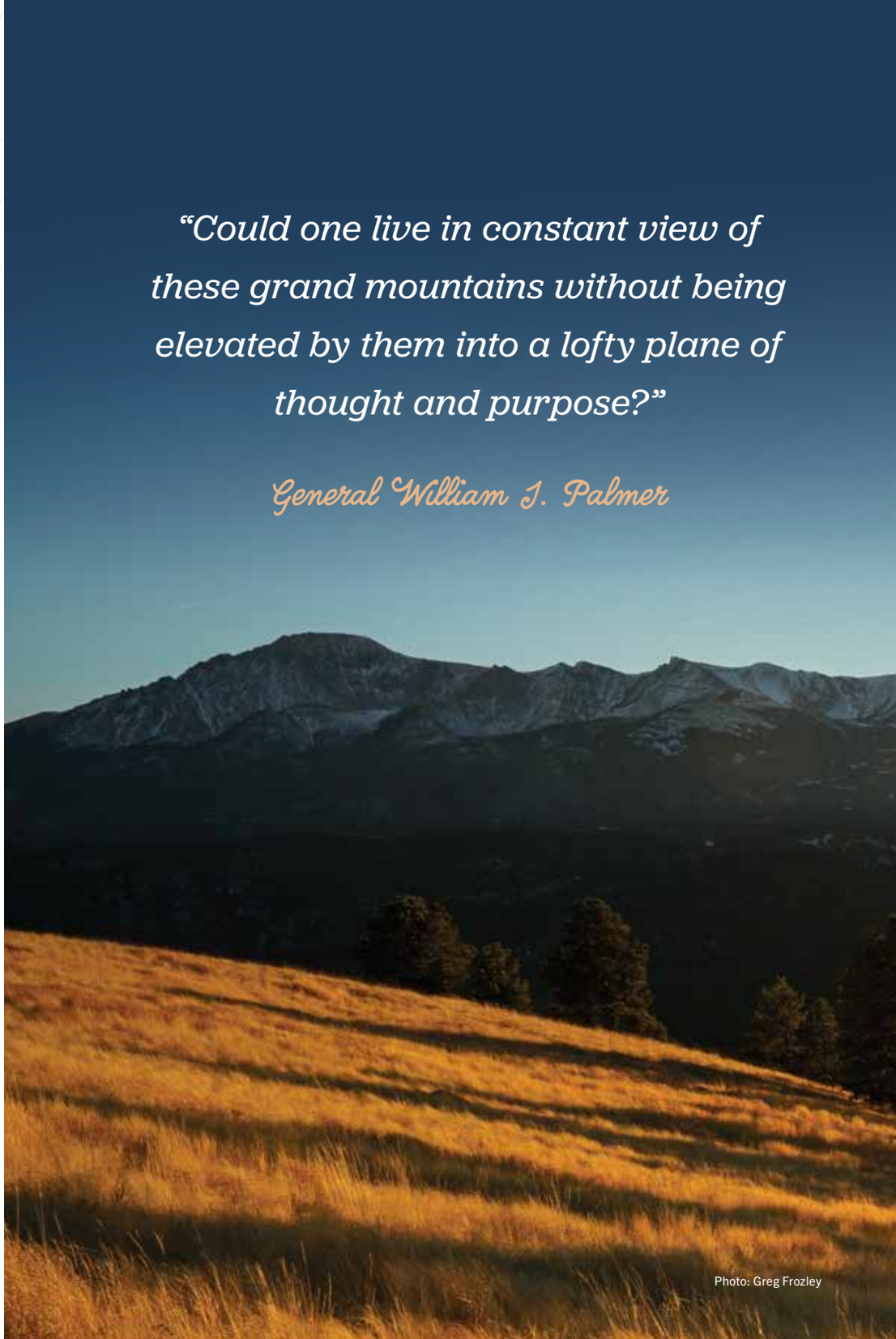
Ensuring the places we love today are here tomorrow, and for generations.

In 1870, Civil War hero General William Jackson Palmer, on first seeing the Southern Colorado region, wrote these words to his wife. His letter captures what we all know to be true about our region — our land is essential to our quality of life.

Today, more than 140 years later, people by the millions continue to come from all over the world, drawn by the same beauty and inspiration that forever changed Palmer and sparked his lifetime mission for protecting and preserving the land for future generations.

Since 1977, Palmer Land Conservancy carries on that spirit, working with individuals, private and public partners, and communities across Southern Colorado to protect our cherished land forever. Palmer promotes the conservation and enjoyment of our region's most important natural assets that define why we love Colorado: its natural beauty, locally grown food, and outdoor recreation.



"Could one live in constant view of these grand mountains without being elevated by them into a lofty plane of thought and purpose?"

General William J. Palmer

Photo: Greg Frozley

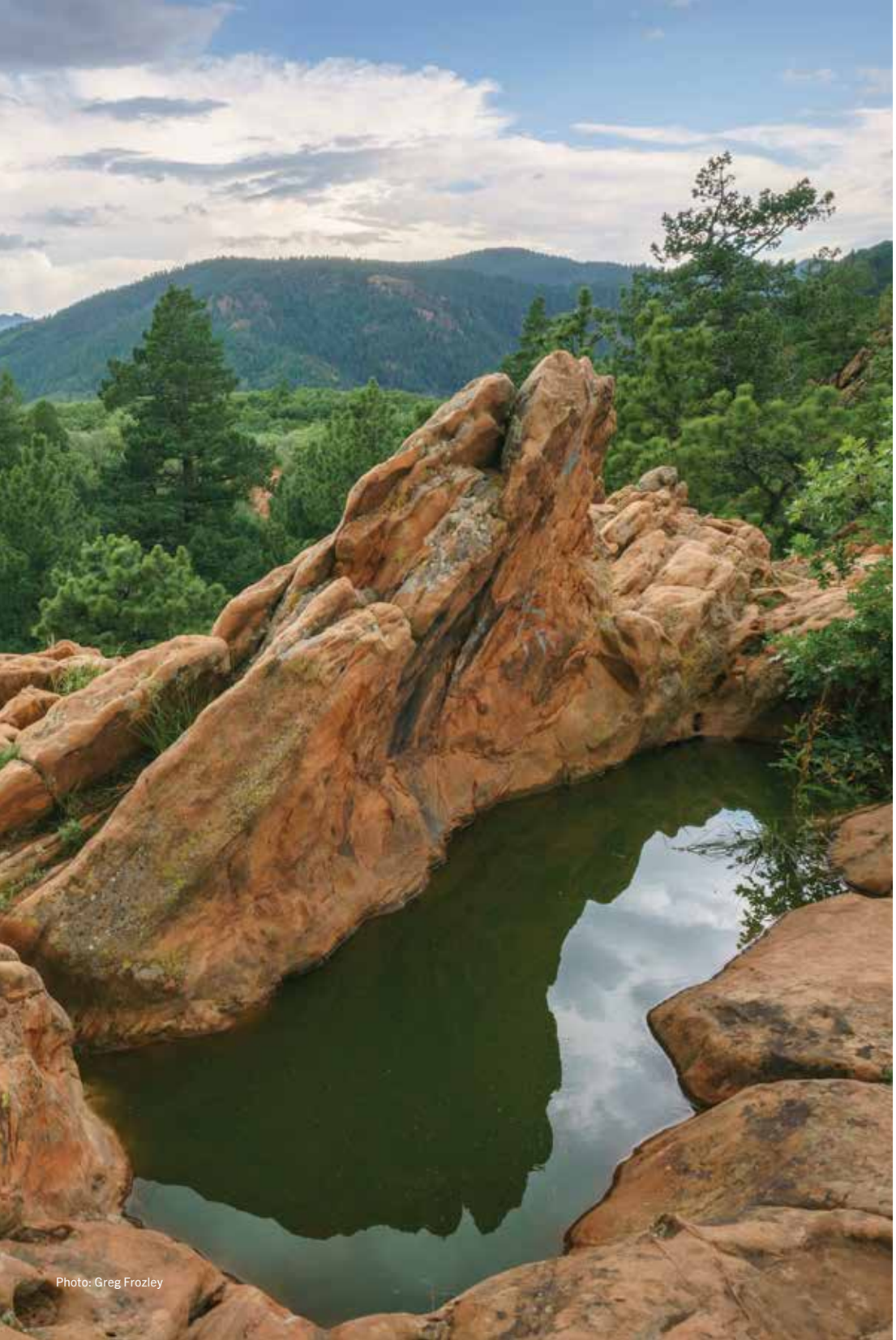


Photo: Greg Frozley

OUR HISTORY & FUTURE TOGETHER

The legacy of the land that we all enjoy today has been embraced by residents and visitors of southern Colorado for millennia.

Many have come before us, and many more will follow. We believe it is important to understand the history, stewardship, guardianship, and ownership of the land over the years in order to appreciate the treasured landscape we have today.

We feel privileged to be the present-day guardians of the lands described here in this field guide and would like to share some of the history of the land and region with you as best as we know it. We'd also like to honor the people who have had an imprint on the land's story.

This field guide is our invitation to join us in becoming part of the story of the landscape, now and into the future, by being an advocate, supporter, and admirer of this immense natural beauty.

OUR HISTORY & FUTURE TOGETHER

Indigenous Tribes of the Pikes Peak Region

PEOPLE OF THE SUN MOUNTAIN

Before it was America's Mountain, Pikes Peak stood at the center of the Tabeguache band of the Nuche (known to most today as Ute) tribe's geography and identity. They were the "People of the Sun Mountain," placed there by Sunif (the wolf) to grow and flourish amid the foothills of the majestic peak.

For hundreds of years, they did. While the Ute people ranged across Colorado and parts of Utah, the Tabeguache band (one of about 10 bands of the tribe, including the Moache, Capote, Weeminuche, Grand River, and Uintah bands) centered themselves around Tava, or Pikes Peak.

Even as neighboring tribes including the Kiowa, Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapahoe entered their territory (possibly in search of buffalo) and then European colonization forced other tribes toward Colorado, the Utes returned every season to their storied homeland.

They used Ute pass, stretching from Manitou Springs to the area near South Park, which allowed them to follow buffalo herds and escape the frigid winters in the higher elevations. They called the pass the "doorway to the red earth mountains."

The red-dirt parks of Garden of the Gods and Red Rock Canyon Open Space (where they referred to the jutting rock formations as "the bones of Mother Earth"), the dense woods of Black Forest, and the bubbling waters of Manitou Springs were their sacred spaces, their home, and their origin.

In an 1868 treaty, the Tabeguache were forcibly removed from their lands and sent to a reservation on the western slope of Colorado. As their identity and name was tied to place, they then became known as the Uncompahgre band of the Ute tribe.

Even before the Ute tribes, Paleo-Indian people hunted and lived in the shadow of the mighty mountain as early as 10,000 BCE. Evidence of their lives—tools, etchings, and fire pits—are left in the places we recognize as iconic parks and open spaces. They tell an enigmatic tale of how and where these first inhabitants lived. In some local parks, culturally modified Ponderosa trees, either stripped of bark or bent, evince a sacred relationship between nature and myth.

For additional reading and information, please see American Indians of the Pikes Peak Region, Celinda R. Kaelin and the Pikes Peak Historical Society. Arcadia Publishing, 2008.

Photo: Ute Indian Camp, Garden of the Gods, Shan Kive, 1913.Buckskin Charlie, with a mustache, stands near center and holds a sheath of white feathers. His wife, To-wee, stands in the front and holds the hands of two girls. She wears a feather bonnet. Chipeta, widow of Chief Ouray, sits in the front row near Buckskin Charlie. Photo Courtesy of Denver Public Library

European Settlement

PROSPECTORS & THE COLORADO GOLD RUSH

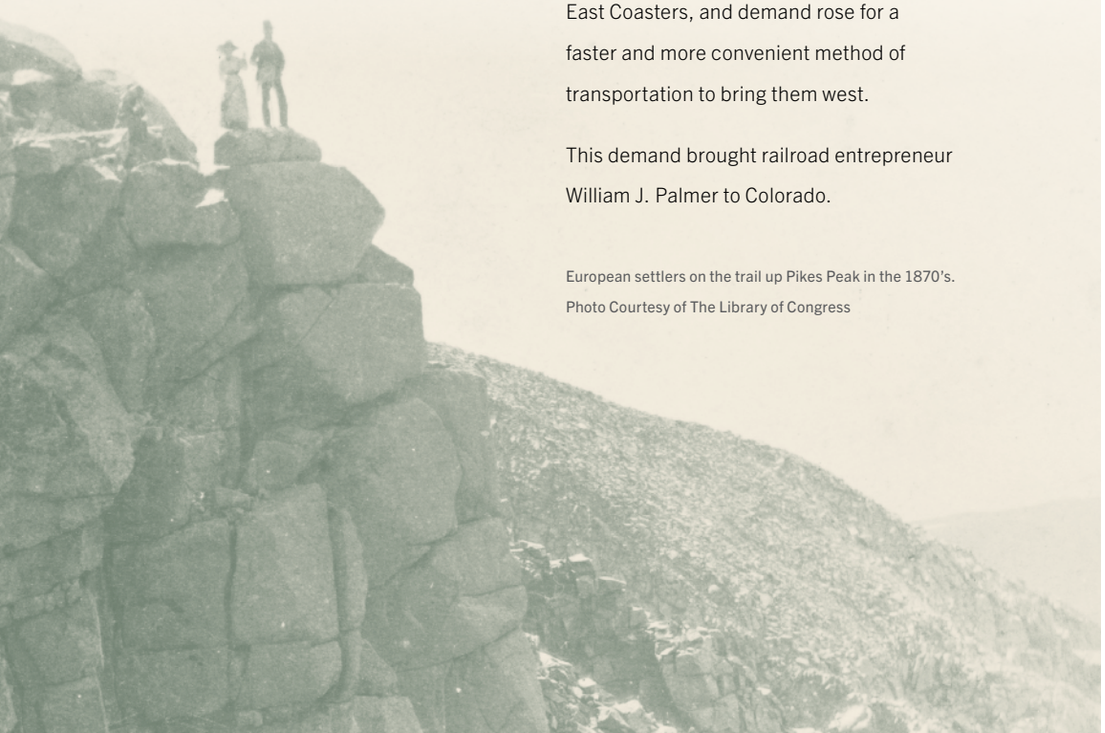
Zebulon Pike first tried and failed to summit what would become known as Pikes Peak in 1806. In the years that followed, the attractions of gold, silver, and land would lure many more White Europeans to the Pikes Peak region.

This movement west started slowly, but snowballed in the mid-1800s with the frenzy of the Colorado Gold Rush and the Homestead Act of 1862, which gave 160 acres to eligible settlers.

This alone resulted in ten percent of the total land area of the United States transitioning to predominantly White private ownership.

The prospects of mineral wealth and free land were irresistible to many ambitious East Coasters, and demand rose for a faster and more convenient method of transportation to bring them west.

This demand brought railroad entrepreneur William J. Palmer to Colorado.



European settlers on the trail up Pikes Peak in the 1870's.
Photo Courtesy of The Library of Congress

General William Jackson Palmer

& THE FOUNDING OF COLORADO SPRINGS

William Jackson Palmer, the founder of Colorado Springs and namesake of Palmer Land Conservancy, played a significant role in the history of the land in southern Colorado.

Born in Delaware in 1836 and raised near Philadelphia, Palmer was a Quaker and a passionate abolitionist. He consistently risked his popularity, comfort, and safety to fight to end slavery. Before the Civil War, he organized a series of anti-slavery lectures in Philadelphia that incited violent riots by pro-slavery mobs. When the Civil War began, although Quakers are pacifists and oppose war, Palmer broke with tradition to sign up to fight, arguing that "slavery is a greater evil than war." Palmer served with great distinction in the Civil War, rising from relative anonymity to the rank of general by the end of the war, earning a Medal of Honor and praise from his superiors along the way.

STORY CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE →

General William Jackson Palmer
Photo Courtesy of Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum

→ CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

After the Civil War, it was Palmer's work on the railroads, a lifelong fascination, that brought him to Colorado. In July of 1871, he and his business partner Dr. William Abraham Bell founded the City of Colorado Springs. Palmer founded many notable institutions in the area, from the City of Manitou Springs, to the Colorado Springs Gazette, to Colorado College. True to form, he remained a lifelong advocate for equality.

In addition to Colorado College, he was also a major benefactor of Hampton College in Virginia, an important historically Black educational institution. He also worked to protect the 15th amendment and ensure the segregation happening in other cities across the U.S. was not part of the planning or practice of Colorado Springs.

While he benefited from the ability to acquire land in the West, he was a staunch defender of Indigenous people. One contemporary account describes him inciting a heated argument on a train when another traveler made a remark in support of the Sand Creek Massacre. At the City's 40th anniversary, Palmer invited members of the Ute tribe to revisit the Garden of the Gods area to celebrate Shan Kive, where they performed sacred dances.

At Palmer Land Conservancy, we are grateful for General Palmer's foresight and generosity in donating and protecting land. After all, it was his love of the land that kept him in Colorado.

Palmer was devoted to philanthropy and donated at least half of his wealth during his lifetime, possibly more as he often gave anonymously. Many of his gifts were properties, and his letters show a zeal for protecting native trees and flora. He donated the land for the first park in Colorado Springs and many more thereafter, making him a fitting namesake for Palmer Land Conservancy.

Thank you to Leah Davis Witherow of the Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum for providing invaluable information on General William J. Palmer

Palmer Hall at Colorado College | Photo Courtesy of Pikes Peak Library District

Conservation makes it possible.

Land conservation has the power to transform communities. At pivotal times throughout history, the outdoors has remained a constant source of inspiration, respite, and refuge. Now, more than ever, we experience its importance.

We also believe our beautiful landscape can be a place that unites our community. As we move into our future, we want to explore how we can continue to look to nature for the tools and inspiration to build an inclusive community; how land conservation can help ensure our whole community thrives; and how we can compassionately acknowledge our history and chart a courageous and bold path forward together.

Palmer is committed to charting a path for 21st century conservation for everyone who lives here — because in nature, everyone is welcome.

Our Conservation Priorities

OUTDOOR RECREATION

LOCAL FOOD & WATER

ICONIC VIEWS

NORTHERN REGION | PROTECTED SINCE 2003

Santa Fe Open Space

1

LAND OWNERSHIP

EL PASO COUNTY

CURRENTLY NOT OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

In the 1870s, General William J. Palmer acquired property north of Colorado Springs. Passing through the hands of a series of landowners, the property has now come to be conserved through the efforts of Palmer Land Conservancy and the conservation vision of the previous and current landowners.

Now known as Santa Fe Open Space, the 60-acre property features views of Elephant Rock, a well-known landmark. Santa Fe Open Space, along with adjacent properties that offer wide-ranging views and wildlife habitat, will soon offer recreation users an additional place to relax and restore, even as surrounding urban areas continue to grow.

While not currently open to the public, there are working plans to create public access trails.

NORTHERN REGION | PROTECTED SINCE 1985

Pineries Open Space 2

LAND OWNERSHIP

EL PASO COUNTY

ABILITY LEVEL

EASY-MODERATE

Some Short, Steep Climbs

CONNECTS TO

BLACK FOREST SECTION 16

ACTIVITIES ALLOWED

Originally part of a 16,000-acre cattle ranch, the Pineries property was owned by the Farrar family since 1958. Cattle operations ceased in the 1970s, and the land was subsequently used for tree farming and lumber. Evidence of the property's ranching background, including a historic loading chute, dot the trail. As is often the case with large ranches, the property was divided and repurposed over the years.

In 1985, Palmer Land Conservancy worked with the property owner to conserve 1,040 acres of the original ranch. In 2006, the landowners transferred the property to El Paso County, who envisioned eventual public access. A master plan was completed in 2010 that laid out plans for trails and the opening of the property, but project progress was hindered by the 2013 Black Forest Fire. In 2020, an 8.5-mile loop trail was opened to the public through diligent efforts by local organizations.

At the Pineries Open Space, you'll find a smooth loop with minimal elevation gain that winds through both meadows and densely wooded areas. Tall, old-growth pine trees provide ample shade and wildflowers grow beside the singletrack path. Various ponds provide swaths of riparian oases. The 8.5-mile trail is great for beginner to intermediate bikers and hikers. Be aware that there are no mid-trail access points, so venture only as far as your ability allows. Watch for wildflowers, a diverse array of birds, and deer throughout.

NORTHERN REGION | PROTECTED SINCE 2001

Paint Mines Interpretive Park

3

LAND OWNERSHIP

EL PASO COUNTY

ABILITY LEVEL

EASY

ACTIVITIES ALLOWED

The otherworldly landscape of the Paint Mines Interpretive Park is a colorful conglomerate of hoodoos and gullies. One of only three Badlands geology formations in the United States, the Paint Mines Interpretive Park is a truly uncommon and remarkable natural wonder. Used as a cattle ranch in the early 1900s and as a mine for brick and pottery materials in the middle of the century, the land was eventually purchased by El Paso County in order to preserve its significant geological, cultural, and aesthetic value.

There are only four miles of trail at the 750-acre Paint Mines Interpretive Park, but the area deserves hours of exploration. You'll see layers of selenite clay and jasper, once collected by tribes such as the Apache, Arapahoe, Cheyenne, Comanche, Kiowa, and Ute, to serve as dye for ceramics. In the early 20th century, clay from the Paint Mines was used to make firebricks and pottery. Selenite crystals and jasper walls protrude from shale—part of the Dawson formation—deposited after the uplift of the Rocky Mountains 65 million years ago. Today, the Paint Mines Interpretive Park is one of the most popular public spaces in the area. Extra care must be taken to avoid damaging the geologic wonders, and it's important not to climb on or mark the formations.

NORTHERN REGION | PROTECTED SINCE 1999

Tudor Trail & Greenway Open Space

4

LAND OWNERSHIP

CITY OF COLORADO SPRINGS

ABILITY LEVEL

EASY

CONNECTS TO

SANTA FE TRAIL

VARIOUS PARKS & OPEN SPACES

ACTIVITIES ALLOWED

The Tudor Trail property forms the northernmost portion of the Pikes Peak Greenway, a fourteen-mile system of urban, multi-use trails extending north-south throughout Colorado Springs, including the popular Sante Fe Trail. Providing crucial links to trail systems across the county, this public access pathway also provides for natural grasslands, ponderosa pine woodlands, and riparian wildlife habitat.

The 37-acre Greenway Open Space area offers trail users visual respite from the dense urban surroundings. Purchased by the City of Colorado Springs in 1999, the natural qualities of the land are protected by Palmer Land Conservancy. The area is notable as a probable habitat for Preble's Meadow Jumping Mouse - a federally listed threatened species.

FIND YOUR WAY WITH

Colorado Trail Explorer

Finding your way around Colorado's great outdoors is often difficult. Use a trail app, like Colorado Trail Explorer (COTREX), to help guide you along your hike and also let you know where you are, how far you've gone, and where you can explore next.

DOWNLOAD THE COTREX APP

App Store Google Play

NORTHERN REGION | PROTECTED SINCE 2000

University Park Open Space

5

LAND OWNERSHIP

CITY OF COLORADO SPRINGS

ABILITY LEVEL

MODERATE

Sustained climbing

CONNECTS TO

AUSTIN BLUFFS OPEN SPACE

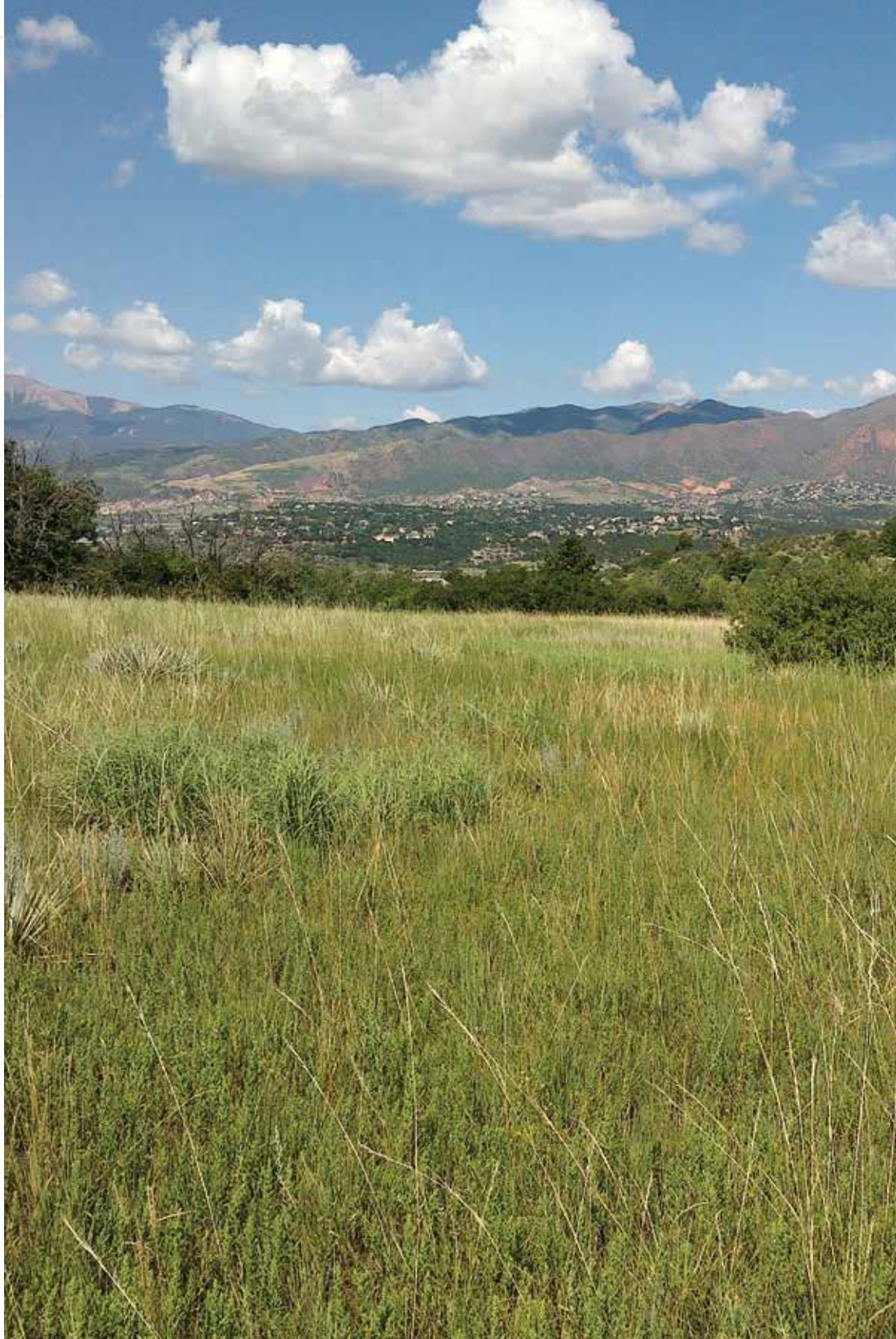
PULPIT ROCK PARK

ACTIVITIES ALLOWED

University Park overlooks the City of Colorado Springs, with wide views across prairie grass and scrub oak. This crucial park was the key to creating a vast and welcoming open space enjoyed by people and wildlife alike.

Slated for development, the 74.6-acre property was purchased by the City of Colorado Springs in 1999. Together with adjoining public lands at the northwest (Pulpit Rock Park) and southeast (Austin Bluffs Open Space), visitors to the park are now able to enjoy a total of 523 acres of open space.

This creates not only a wealth of trails and open space, but also critical contiguous wildlife habitat. Without the foresight of the park's advocates, the three properties would have been separated and the habitat fragmented.



NORTHERN REGION | PROTECTED SINCE 2013

Ute Valley Park

6

LAND OWNERSHIP

CITY OF COLORADO SPRINGS

ABILITY LEVEL

EASY-DIFFICULT

CONNECTS TO

ROCKRIMMON OPEN SPACE

ACTIVITIES ALLOWED

Ute Valley Park is an oasis of natural beauty in the heart of Colorado Springs' Rockrimmon community. With 17 miles of trails, ranging from easy to white-knuckle difficult, walkers, runners, and bikers of all abilities will find a route to enjoy. From brilliant white sandstone formations to the breathtaking heights of the Ridge Trail, Ute Valley Park is truly a jewel. Find the sandstone arch on Yucca trail and wonder at the wind and water that slowly carved this magnificent feature. Gaze over the iconic crimson fins of Garden of the Gods. Wind your way through low meadows and wildflowers. The choices are many in this unique geological wonder.

Evidence of early use of the park can be found not only in artifacts, but also in the unique marks of culturally modified prayer trees and medicine trees throughout this and other area parks most likely left by the Tabeguache band of the Ute (Nuche) tribe.

After some history with intermittent mining, the original Ute Valley property was donated to the City in 1969. Eventually, an adjoining 200-acre property was threatened with development, and a coordinated community effort was made to acquire and conserve the property. The acquisition brought the full acreage to 538 and created what is now known as Ute Valley Park. Subsequent efforts allowed the public to enjoy the beautiful open space that it provided via established trails. The natural landscape of the Popes Bluff area allows wildlife to roam, including mule deer, mountain lions, coyotes, and hawks.

NORTHERN REGION | PROTECTED SINCE 1996

Sinton Pond Open Space

7

LAND OWNERSHIP

CITY OF COLORADO SPRINGS

ABILITY LEVEL

EASY

CONNECTS TO

PIKES PEAK GREENWAY TRAIL

ACTIVITIES ALLOWED

In the 1880s, Melvin Sinton and his family traveled from Ithaca, NY to make their home in Colorado Springs. Though the site of their original dairy and homestead has been diminished, the pond and 13 surrounding acres remain as an open space oasis.

Sinton Pond is now protected forever as an aquatic and wetland habitat as well as a connection to the Pikes Peak Greenway. There is a path that connects Sinton Pond Open Space to Goose Gosage Skate Park.

NORTHERN REGION | PROTECTED SINCE 1980

Mesa Valley Wildlife Preserve

8

LAND OWNERSHIP

PALMER LAND CONSERVANCY

ABILITY LEVEL

EASY

ACTIVITIES ALLOWED

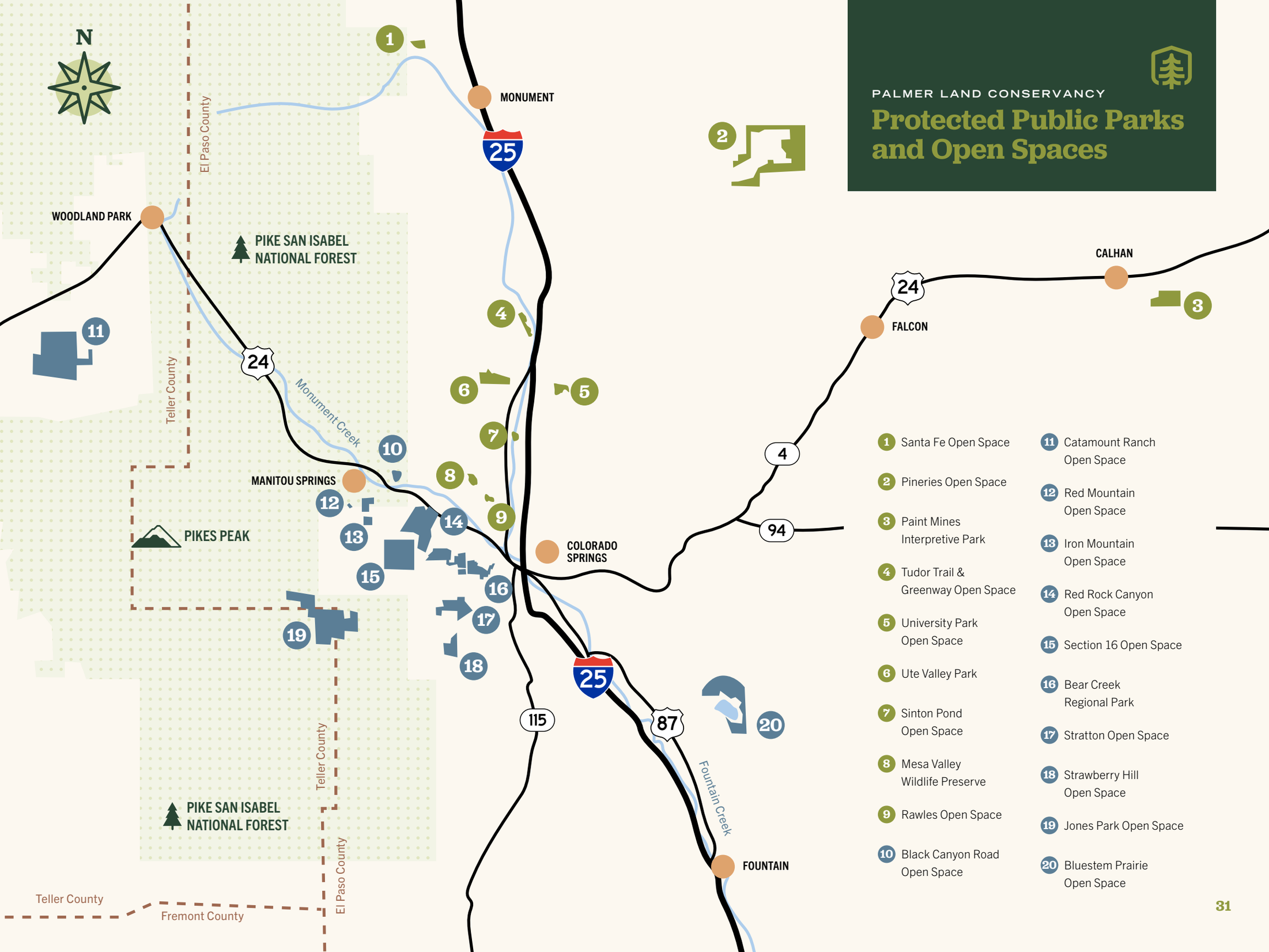
In 1980, Wilbur S. Marshall and Stewart A. Bliss, on behalf of a group of neighbors who raised funds to purchase the property, donated 19 acres to Palmer Land Conservancy.

Their generous and altruistic efforts yielded a natural oasis in an otherwise urban setting. As part of a series of parks in the area, including Monument Valley Park, Sondermann Park, Pioneer Park, and Garden of the Gods, Mesa Valley Wildlife Preserve provides wildlife habitat for a variety of mammals, reptiles, and birds.

Those who wish to enjoy the landscape and observe animals can wind through the property on a quiet trail, suitable for walkers and leashed dogs.

PALMER LAND CONSERVANCY

Protected Public Parks and Open Spaces



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19 Jones Park Open Space
20 Bluestem Prairie Open Space

NORTHERN REGION | PROTECTED SINCE 1995

Rawles Open Space

9

LAND OWNERSHIP

PALMER LAND CONSERVANCY

ABILITY LEVEL

EASY

ACTIVITIES ALLOWED

The generous donation of 6.8 acres of land by Tish Rawles created the Rawles Open Space.

Due to its prominent location on the mesa, visitors can enjoy panoramic views of Pikes Peak and the Colorado Springs area. The 3.5-mile Palmer-Mesa Trail passes alongside the property along Mesa Road.

The property is also close to Sondermann Park, Mesa Valley Wildlife Preserve, and Garden of the Gods. This provides a valuable wildlife corridor nestled within an ever-growing urban area that allows deer, birds, and other animals to flourish.

SOUTHERN REGION | PROTECTED SINCE 2016

Black Canyon Road Open Space

10

LAND OWNERSHIP

CITY OF MANITOU SPRINGS

ADJACENT TO

GARDEN OF THE GODS

CURRENTLY NOT OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Adjacent to Garden of the Gods, the 33 acres of the Black Canyon Road Open Space are uniquely untouched in an area often marred by mining, development, and forestry. The native grasses and wildlife that flourish there have done so for generations. Only a historic wagon road and scattered artifacts indicate the presence of travelers in a foregone era.

This pristine property was acquired by the City of Manitou Springs in 2016 and will forever remain so thanks to the diligent efforts of the City and surrounding community.

While developed trails do not currently exist, there are plans to create a sustainable, responsible system of trails that will showcase this beautiful area and also maintain the integrity of the wild property.

SOUTHERN REGION | PROTECTED SINCE 1997

Catamount Ranch Open Space

11

LAND OWNERSHIP

TELLER COUNTY

ABILITY LEVEL

EASY-MODERATE

CONNECTS TO

NORTH SLOPE RECREATION AREA

PIKE NATIONAL FOREST

ACTIVITIES ALLOWED

The Catamount Ranch Open Space comprises 1,320 acres in the heart of Teller County. Homesteaded and logged in the 1890s and used as a cattle ranch until the 1950s, it was eventually sold to the YMCA by landowner and conservation advocate Roger C. Holden.

When the property was threatened with development and subdivision in the 1990s, the Trust for Public Land and Palmer Land Conservancy (and assistance from GOCO and other funding partners), Teller County were able to purchase the ranch and 640 acres of adjacent State Land Trust Board land.

Ponderosa and limber pines, along with wildflowers and montane grasses line the trails and hillsides of this beautiful space. You'll also find aspens at elevations of 9,200 to 10,200 feet—a particular treat in autumn. Birders will delight in the many species found in the area.

Catamount Ranch Open Space also provides excellent winter cross-country skiing, in addition to nature study, hiking, and mountain biking. Nearby North Catamount and South Catamount Reservoirs offer paddleboarding and fishing.

SOUTHERN REGION | PROTECTED SINCE 1997

Red Mountain Open Space

12

LAND OWNERSHIP

CITY OF MANITOU SPRINGS

ABILITY LEVEL

DIFFICULT

Sustained Climbing

Exposure

Loose Surfaces

CONNECTS TO

IRON MOUNTAIN OPEN SPACE

SECTION 16

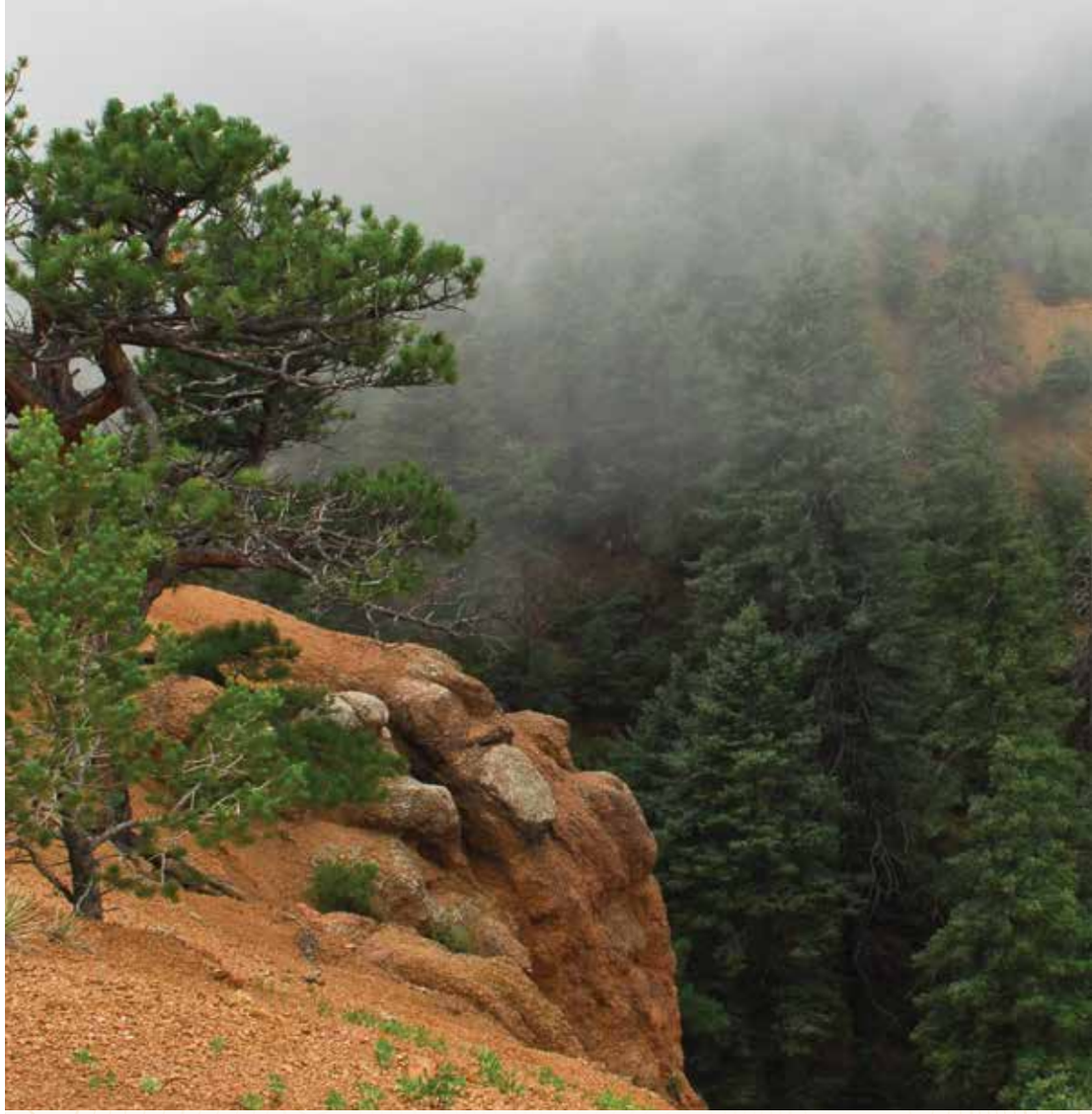
RED ROCK CANYON OPEN SPACE

ACTIVITIES ALLOWED

Red Mountain holds not only a geographic place of honor in Manitou Springs, but also a historic one. The wooded mountainside was frequented by the Ute, Arapahoe, and Cheyenne tribes, who used various springs in the area. Later the site of an incline railway and summit dance hall, Red Mountain has seen the boom and bust of the tourism and mining industries of the 20th century.

Today, the 101-acre hillside is protected and offers hikers views of the area—as far as Garden of the Gods and Pikes Peak—for those willing to climb the roughly 800-foot ascent to a summit elevation of 7,375 feet. The Intemann Trail (part of the Ring the Peak Trail) allows access to the 0.8-mile Red Mountain Trail, a steep and often rocky trail that winds to the top. Carefully make your way to the summit (where the cog railway once brought adventurous tourists) or climb the extra 0.2 miles of the Ridge Trail for additional views.

You can begin your hike at the Spring Street entrance or at the Pawnee Avenue (no public parking) entrance. Either direction will lead you to the Red Mountain Trail via the Intemann Trail. Free public parking is available in Manitou at the Hiawatha Gardens lot (you'll have to walk about 0.7 miles to the trail start) or throughout the city.



HISTORY OF THE

Intemann Trail

A LABOR OF LOVE

Following the untimely death of 30-year-old Paul Intemann, the City Planner for Manitou Springs, hundreds of volunteers built the 6-mile trail that links Barr Trail / Pikes Peak with Section 16 and Red Rock Canyon Open Space.

The unrealized trail was a dream of Intemann's, and in his memory the rolling, urban trail grants access to some of the most iconic and beautiful parks in the Pikes Peak region. Begun off-the-cuff in 1987, the trail is now part of the 63-mile Ring the Peak Trail.

SOUTHERN REGION | PROTECTED SINCE 2012

Iron Mountain Open Space

13

LAND OWNERSHIP

CITY OF MANITOU SPRINGS

ABILITY LEVEL

MODERATE

CONNECTS TO

RED ROCK CANYON OPEN SPACE

RED MOUNTAIN OPEN SPACE

SECTION 16

ACTIVITIES ALLOWED

With a summit elevation of 7,130 feet, Iron Mountain stands adjacent to its slightly taller counterpart, Red Mountain in Manitou Springs. In 1995, the local community expressed their ardent wish that the iconic 32-acre property be protected and obtained for public use.

As a key element in the continuation of the Intemann Trail, which connects Pikes Peak to Red Rock Canyon Open Space (and additional public open spaces), Iron Mountain's acquisition in 2010 was a triumph for the community.

Iron Mountain and surrounding lands served as the western boundary for the Plains Indians. As the gold rush boomed, the area became a popular trading point for those headed over the Ute Pass. Though coveted by developers, Iron Mountain never succumbed to construction of buildings or railways to its summit, like its neighbors Red Mountain and Pikes Peak.

Via the Intemann Trail, you can connect to nearby Red Mountain to the west and also Red Rock Canyon Open Space to the east.

SOUTHERN REGION | PROTECTED SINCE 2006

Red Rock Canyon Open Space

14

LAND OWNERSHIP
CITY OF COLORADO SPRINGS

ABILITY LEVEL
EASY-MODERATE

CONNECTS TO
SECTION 16
IRON MOUNTAIN
RED MOUNTAIN

ACTIVITIES ALLOWED

The towering sandstone formations of Red Rock Canyon Open Space have enthralled people since time immemorial. Artifacts from as early as the Archaic period (7,000 years before present time) have been found on the property, as well as some from Indigenous tribes who once regarded the land as sacred.

Rock mined from the area can be found in the construction of such buildings as the Midland Railroad Roundhouse, Glen Eyrie Castle, and two of the Colorado College dorms.

In the late 1900s, commercial centers, high-rise towers, and even a golf course was planned for the area. Community outcry and advocacy resulted in the City of Colorado Springs purchasing the property and restoring ownership to the public. Thus, Red Rock Canyon Open Space was created, which is now a 1,474-acre playground for those seeking outdoor recreation experiences.

With 40 miles of trail appropriate for hiking, biking, running, and equestrian access, Red Rock Canyon Open Space offers something for recreationists of all types.

HISTORY OF THE

The Fountain Formation

If you spend enough time admiring the landscapes of the Front Range of Colorado, you'll start to notice a particular trend: stunning fins of red rock jutting from the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. These massive rocks are all part of the Fountain Formation, composed of bits and pieces of granite and gneiss, remnants of the Ancestral Rocky Mountains. It was named in 1894 for its proximity to Fountain Creek. You'll see the formation exposed in all its glory in the Flatirons (Boulder), Red Rocks Park (Morrison), Roxborough State Park (Denver), Garden of the Gods (Colorado Springs), and Red Rock Canyon Open Space (Colorado Springs). The continued preservation of these natural wonders is part of the important work of conservation. Though these rocks are between between 290 and 340 million years old, their preservation for generations to come is our privilege.

SOUTHERN REGION | PROTECTED SINCE 2010

Section 16 Open Space

15

LAND OWNERSHIP

CITY OF COLORADO SPRINGS

ABILITY LEVEL

DIFFICULT

Sustained Climbing

Uneven Terrain

CONNECTS TO

PIKE NATIONAL FOREST

BEAR CREEK REGIONAL PARK

RED ROCK CANYON OPEN SPACE

ACTIVITIES ALLOWED

Above the City of Colorado Springs, in the heart of pine forests and Pikes Peak granite outcroppings, Section 16 sits as a high point of several local trails. The roughly 630-acre portion of land was originally owned by the Colorado State Land Board since Colorado's statehood. It was leased to the City of Colorado Springs since 1972 for recreation purposes and offers trail users an opportunity to breathe the fresh, juniper-scented air typical of the Rocky Mountains. Its sale and conservation in 2010 served to protect the natural qualities and recreation opportunities of the landscape forever.

Section 16 includes an intermediate to advanced trail that will lead trail users down rocky portions, some of which will require careful riding and navigating. You'll see wonderful views of Red Rock Canyon Open Space and even as far as Garden of the Gods. Toward the bottom, Section 16 intersects with Intemann Trail, allowing hikers to extend their journey. Bikers and other trail users can continue downward into the Red Rock Canyon Open Space trail system to explore the network of trails there. For a roughly 5.5-mile loop, continue on Section 16 until it reaches High Drive, and take the road back to the parking lot. This loop provides over 1,200 feet of elevation gain.

SOUTHERN REGION | PROTECTED SINCE 2014

Bear Creek Regional Park

16

LAND OWNERSHIP

EL PASO COUNTY

ABILITY LEVEL

EASY-MODERATE

CONNECTS TO

SECTION 16

PIKES PEAK GREENWAY

DORCHESTER PARK

ACTIVITIES ALLOWED

From its beginnings as a hunting ground and ranch in the early 1800s, to the community-led Poor Farm in the early 1900s, Bear Creek Regional Park has been an integral part of the community and region.

In the 1970s, residents and community members were able to make their voices heard when developers pressed the county to give up the land. When the Nature Center was lost in the 2001 fire, community support brought it back. In 2014, Palmer Land Conservancy was proud to play a small part in the community-led discussion of the park's future. Now the property is protected forever.

Bear Creek Regional Park is an extensive park with a number of amenities and opportunities for outdoor recreation. In the developed park area, you'll find picnic pavilions, playing fields, tennis courts, playgrounds, an archery range, horseshoe pits, volleyball and basketball courts, and one of the best dog parks in the state. The uppermost section includes the Bear Creek Nature Center as well as a network of walking and biking trails. From the parking lot at the park, connect to beginner / intermediate mountain bike trails for a day of exploring the total 545 acres.

Ring the Peak

A CONTIGUOUS ROUTE

Ring the Peak is a community-based initiative to create a contiguous route for multi-use, non-motorized travel around Pikes Peak. Begun in 1997 and adopted into the Pikes Peak Multi-Use Plan, the trail is an ambitious and exciting project. To date, approximately 63 miles of trail—crossing federal, state, county, city, and private lands—are available to the public. About 20 percent of the route (the southwest portion) is yet to be realized. Portals to the existing trail system include Manitou Springs, Chipita Park, Catamount Reservoir, Catamount Ranch, Raspberry, Horsethief, Gilet, FS Road 376, Frosty Park, and Bear Creek. You'll notice the Ring the Peak emblem on trails that are associated with the larger system. Green indicates counterclockwise travel, brown indicates clockwise travel.

SOUTHERN REGION | PROTECTED SINCE 1998

Stratton Open Space

17

LAND OWNERSHIP

CITY OF COLORADO SPRINGS

ABILITY LEVEL

MODERATE

Sustained Climbing

CONNECTS TO

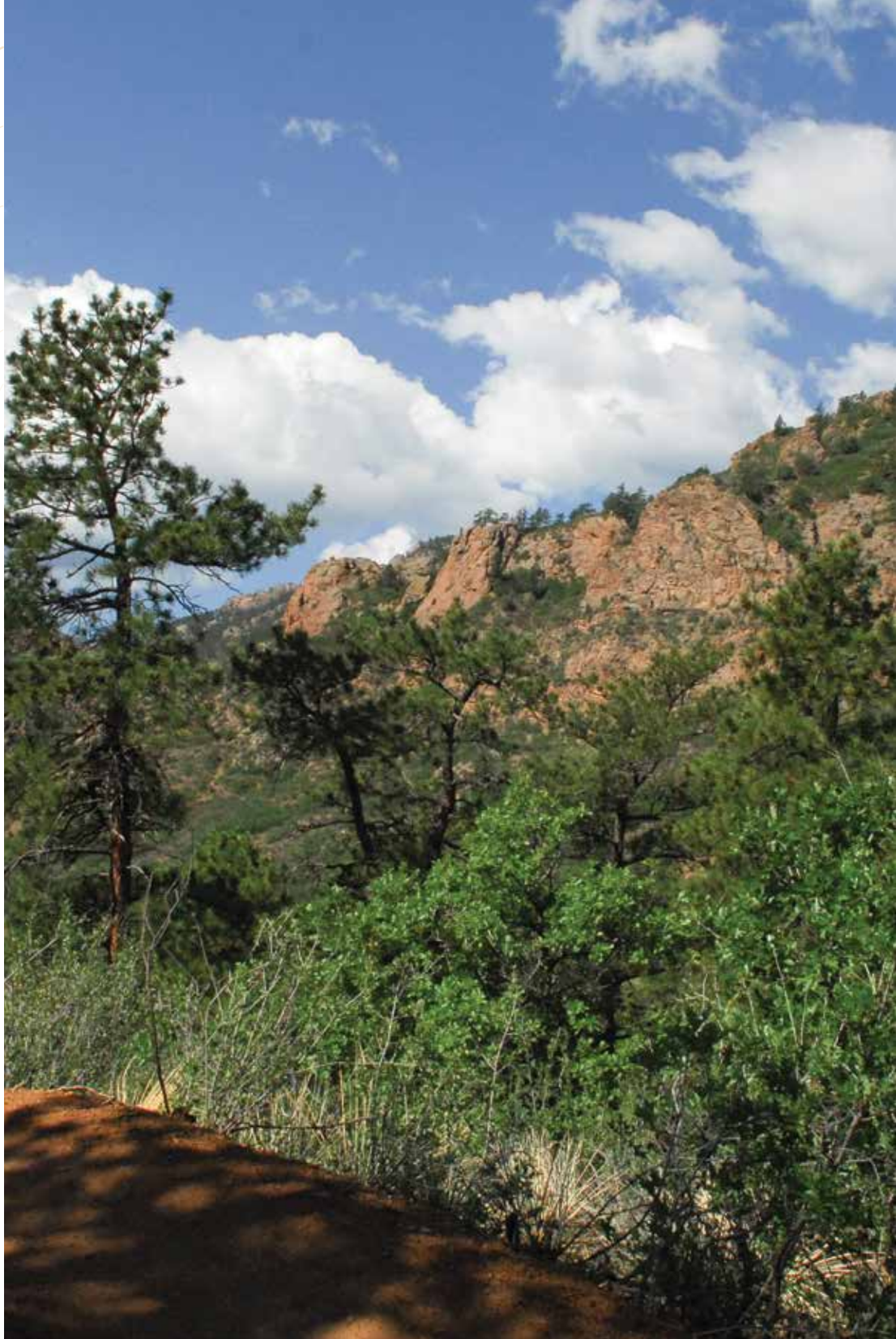
NORTH CHEYENNE CAÑON PARK

ACTIVITIES ALLOWED

The rocky, oak-strewn landscape of Stratton Open Space is punctuated by inspiring views of the surrounding mountains. Owned since 1927 by the Myron Stratton Home, the area was known to have incredible recreation and conservation potential. Led by Dr. Richard Beidleman of Colorado College, community efforts and support led to the acquisition of Stratton Open Space by the City of Colorado Springs in 1998.

Today, you'll find wide open meadows and thick pine forests in Stratton Open Space's 318 acres. From the lower parking lots, explore Upper Meadows for an easy climb into the mountain. For a challenge, take Ponderosa and Arroyo Grande to climb quickly to elevation. You'll catch views of the city below and May's Peak on your way through scrub oak and pinecone-strewn paths. One of Colorado Springs' best downhill mountain bike trails—The Chutes—offers bikers a phenomenal 1.1-mile downhill trail. Hikers and dog walkers may enjoy the shores of South Suburban Reservoir—a peaceful spot to enjoy the summer sun.

Use one of two lower-level parking lots (Stratton East or Stratton Lower) or park at Stratton Upper (Gold Camp Road) to begin your hike downward.



SOUTHERN REGION | PROTECTED SINCE 2016

Strawberry Hill Open Space

18

LAND OWNERSHIP

THE BROADMOOR

ABILITY LEVEL

MODERATE

Sustained Climbing

CONNECTS TO

NORTH CHEYENNE CAÑON PARK

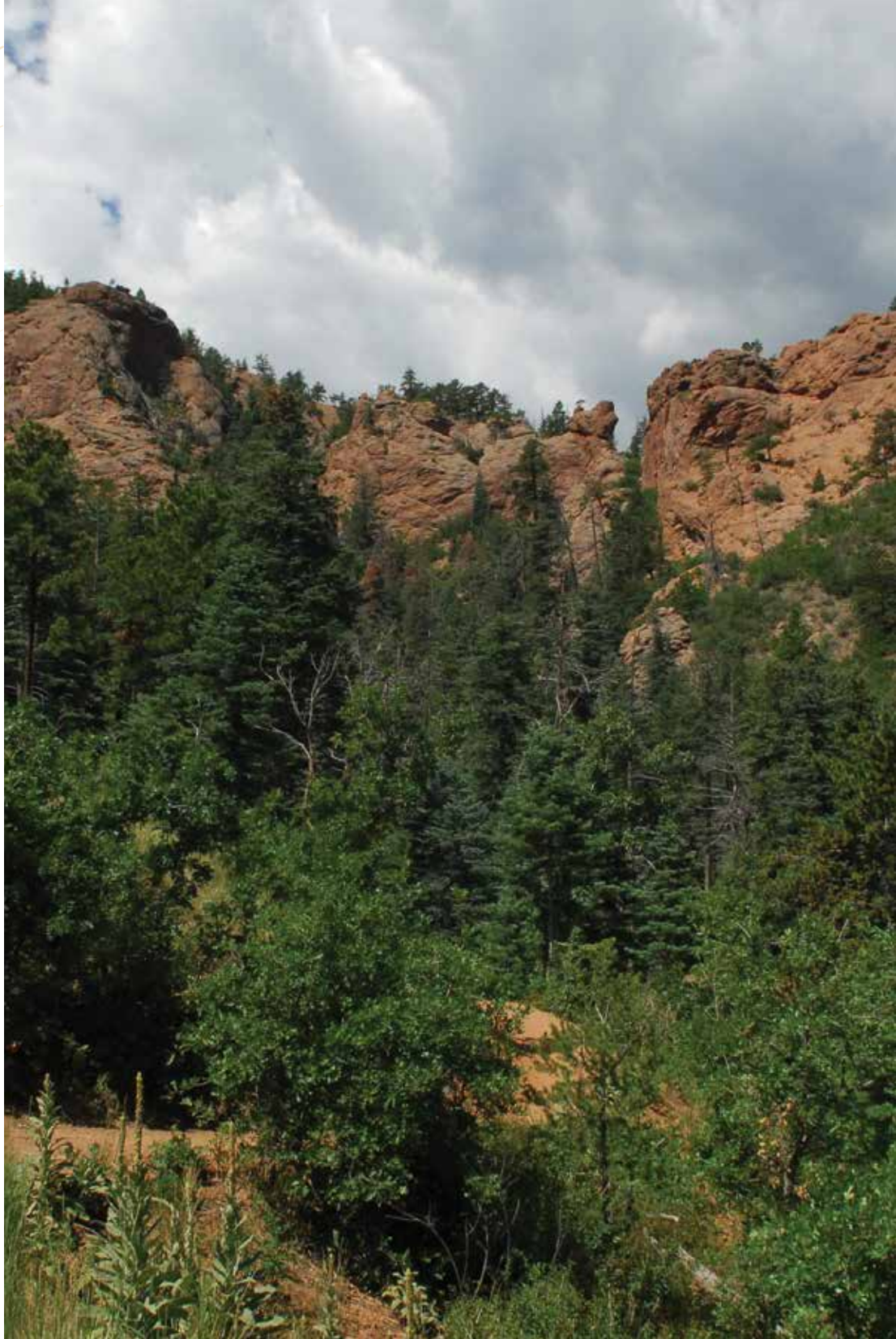
CHAMBERLAIN TRAIL

ACTIVITIES ALLOWED

Nestled in the North Cheyenne Cañon area, unassuming Strawberry Hill allows hikers and bikers to achieve superb views of the surrounding parks and open spaces in close proximity to Seven Falls. The property was originally acquired by the City in 1885, and though ownership has since changed hands, public access to the property is preserved in perpetuity thanks to a conservation easement held by Palmer Land Conservancy.

Strawberry Hill now offers an out-and-back trail that climbs over 450 feet on a well-maintained singletrack trail. You'll see nearby Stratton Open Space and views of beautiful rocky granite outcroppings. The trail ends at the top of Old Stage Road, but you can continue your hike to adjacent parks. Additionally, a portion of the Chamberlain Trail connects Strawberry Hill to properties up and down the front range. Visit nearby Starsmore Visitor and Nature Center for an after-hike educational experience.

To park near the trailhead, use the South Chamberlain lot on Mesa Avenue. Cross the road to the trailhead.



SOUTHERN REGION | PROTECTED SINCE 2017

Jones Park Open Space

19

LAND OWNERSHIP

EL PASO COUNTY

ABILITY LEVEL

MODERATE-DIFFICULT

CONNECTS TO

PIKE NATIONAL FOREST

NORTH CHEYENNE CAÑON PARK

STRATTON OPEN SPACE

PIKES PEAK

ACTIVITIES ALLOWED

Nestled in the Pike National forest, the 1,192 acres of Jones Park is miles away from the populated urban trails of other open spaces. You'll find dense pine forests and scrub oak, but none of the distractions of everyday life. In addition to this reprieve from civilization, you will find Bear Creek—a tributary to Fountain Creek and home to the sole known remaining naturally reproducing population of genetically pure greenback cutthroat trout (Colorado's state fish).

Jones Park contains 6.9 miles of hiking and biking trails that were developed in the 1950s. Popular with hikers, trail runners, and mountain bikers, Jones Park offers critical connections from nearby Cheyenne Mountain Park and Stratton Open Space to the iconic trails leading to the summit of Pikes Peak. For those unafraid of significant elevation gain and in search of a challenging course, Jones Park delivers. Enjoy stunning views of Kineo Mountain, a 9,478-foot peak, and neighboring peaks in the Pike National Forest.

Greenback Cutthroat Trout

A THREATENED SPECIES

The property provides significant habitat for the greenback cutthroat trout—Colorado's state fish since 1994.The only trout native to Colorado, it is listed as "threatened" under the Endangered Species Act. Jones Park is a "high priority habitat for protection from disturbance" for multiple species. A nearly 1.62-mile stretch of Bear Creek flows through Jones Park Open Space, which is home to the only population of wild breeding, genetically pure greenback cutthroat trout in the world.

SOUTHERN REGION | PROTECTED SINCE 2003

Bluestem Prairie Open Space

20

LAND OWNERSHIP

CITY OF COLORADO SPRINGS

ABILITY LEVEL

EASY

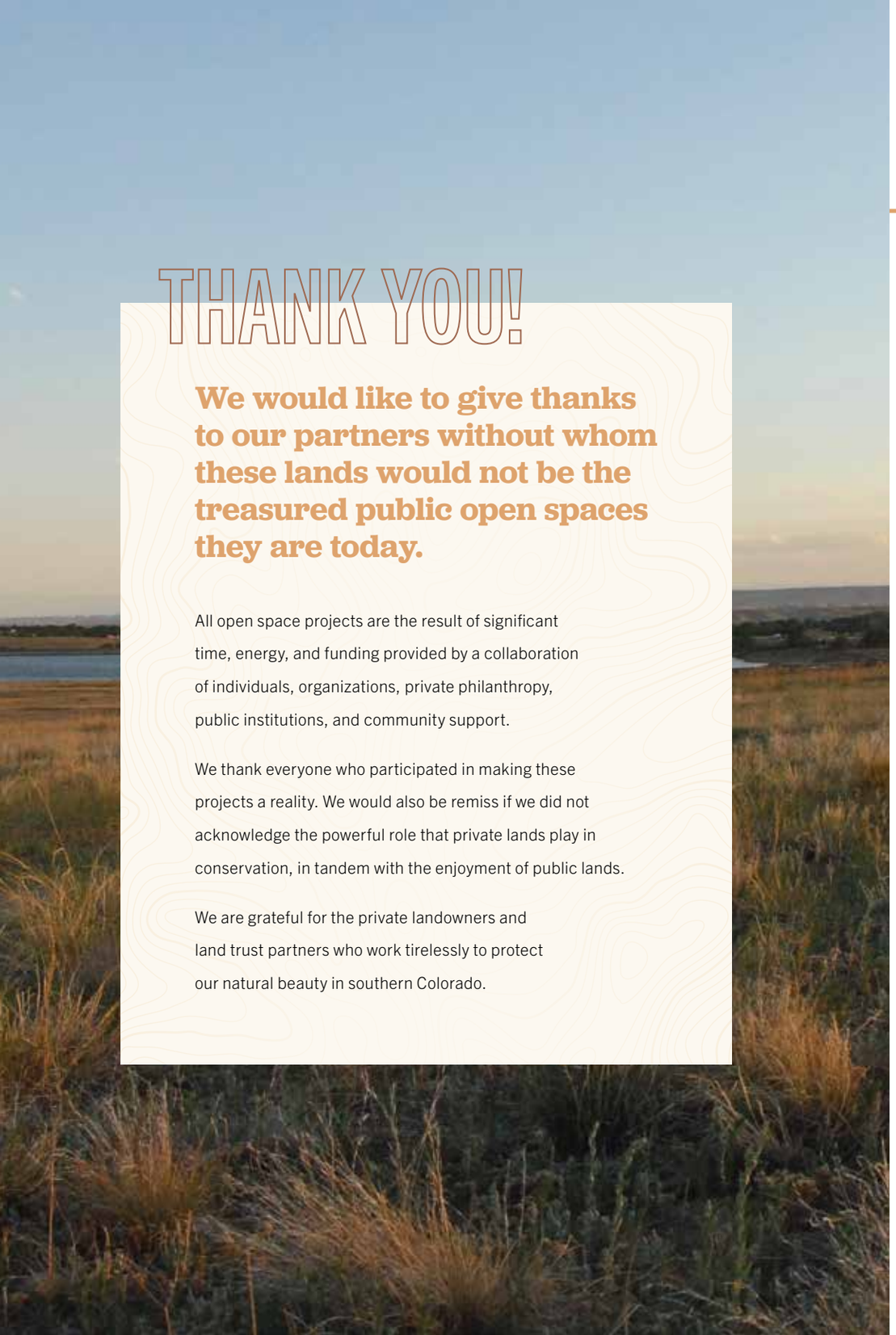
ACTIVITIES ALLOWED

At Bluestem Prairie Open Space, the rolling, grassy hills of the prairie take center stage. Hikers, runners, walkers, and bikers will find refuge in the scenic trails nestled in southeastern Colorado Springs.

Originally part of the Banning-Lewis Ranch, Bluestem Prairie comprises 650 acres of shortgrass prairie. Historic ranch buildings sit at the heart of the property, surrounded by aging fencing and a quietly stoic windmill. Birdwatchers should be on the lookout for Red-tailed Hawks, Burrowing Owls, and migratory shorebirds, among others.

Trail users can complete the whole 8-mile lollipop route, including Big Bluestem Trail and Meadowlark Loop from the south parking lot, or park at the eastern lot for immediate access to the 4.1-mile Meadowlark Loop. Both offer views of the Big Johnson Reservoir and the mountains beyond. The trails are free of technical elements and are perfect for beginner and intermediate walkers and riders.

Note that dogs are NOT allowed due to the prevalence of wildlife, including birds, prairie dogs, and even pronghorn.



THANK YOU!

We would like to give thanks to our partners without whom these lands would not be the treasured public open spaces they are today.

All open space projects are the result of significant time, energy, and funding provided by a collaboration of individuals, organizations, private philanthropy, public institutions, and community support.

We thank everyone who participated in making these projects a reality. We would also be remiss if we did not acknowledge the powerful role that private lands play in conservation, in tandem with the enjoyment of public lands.

We are grateful for the private landowners and land trust partners who work tirelessly to protect our natural beauty in southern Colorado.

Acknowledgments

PUBLIC FUNDING PARTNERS

City of Colorado Springs Trails and Open Space Funding Program (TOPS)

City of Manitou Springs Open Space Funding Program

Colorado Parks and Wildlife

El Paso County

Great Outdoors Colorado

Teller County

LANDOWNER PARTNERS

City of Colorado Springs

City of Manitou Springs

El Paso County

Teller County

The Broadmoor

LAND ACQUISITION PARTNER

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STEWARDSHIP PARTNERS

Friends of Bear Creek Regional Park

Friends of the Peak

Friends of Red Rock Canyon Open Space

Friends of Stratton Open Space

Friends of Ute Valley Park

Manitou CATS

Medicine Wheel Trail Advocates

Mile High Youth Corps

Rocky Mountain Field Institute

Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Bear Creek Watershed Roundtable

Pikes Peak Outdoor Recreation Alliance

Trails and Open Space Coalition

* Since 1977, Palmer Land Conservancy has had the privilege of working with a broad range of dedicated, passionate, and knowledgeable partners to conserve each of the properties featured in our field guide. If we've inadvertently missed an organization, we apologize. Please contact our office and we'll be sure to add you to future editions of the field guide. Thank you!

LEAVE NO TRACE SEVEN PRINCIPLES

Guidelines to preserving the outdoors for future generations.

1. KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

- Be prepared! Remember food and water, and clothes to protect you.
- Use maps to plan where you're going.
- Remember to bring a leash for your pet and plastic bags to pick up your pet's waste.
- Learn about the areas you plan to visit.

2. STICK TO TRAILS & CAMP OVERNIGHT RIGHT

- Walk and ride on designated trails to protect trailside plants.
- Avoid stepping on flowers or small trees. Once damaged, they may not grow back.
- Respect private property.
- Camp only on designated campsites.

3. TRASH YOUR TRASH & PICK UP POOP

- Pack it in, pack it out. Put litter - even crumbs, peels and cores - in garbage bags and carry it home.
- Use bathrooms or outhouses when available. If not available, bury human waste in a small hole 6-8 inches deep and 200 feet or 70 big steps from water.
- Keep water clean. Do not put soap, food, human or pet waste in lakes or streams.

4. LEAVE IT AS YOU FIND IT

- Leave plants, rocks, and historical items as you find them so others can enjoy them.
- Treat living plants with respect. Carving, hacking, or peeling plants may kill them.

5. BE CAREFUL WITH FIRE

- Use a camp stove for cooking. Stoves are easier to cook on and create less impact than a fire.
- If you want to have a campfire, be sure it's permitted and safe to build in the area. Use only existing fire rings to protect the ground from heat. Keep your fire small.
- Before gathering any firewood, check local regulations. Don't bring firewood from home. It may be contaminated with tree-killing insects or diseases.
- Burn all wood completely to ash and be sure the fire is completely out and cold before you leave.

6. KEEP WILDLIFE WILD

- Observe wildlife from a distance and never approach, feed, or follow them.
- Human food is unhealthy for all wildlife and feeing them starts bad habits.
- Protect wildlife and your food by securely storing your meals and trash.

7. SHARE OUR TRAILS & MANAGE YOUR PET

- Be considerate when passing others on the trail.
- Keep your pet under control to protect it, other visitors and wildlife.
- Listen to nature. Avoid making loud noises or yelling. You will see more wildlife if you are quiet.
- Be sure the fun you have outdoors does not bother anyone else. Remember, other visitors are there to enjoy the outdoors, too.

Leave No Trace™
Center for Outdoor Ethics

The following are a selection from the Leave No Trace Seven Principles.

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Our Land is Essential

ESTD 1977

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