



# PLAN JEFFCO UPDATE

SEPTEMBER 2019

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Photo by Nathan McBride

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## *New Black Bear Trail for Advanced Users Only*

Jeffco Open Space relocates the original Black Bear Trail in Deer Creek Canyon Park and makes connection to Hildebrand Ranch Park.

By Vicky Gits

With 65 switchbacks in only 6.3 miles and a stunning cliff feature with a 50-foot drop, the new Black Bear Trail is one of the most challenging in the Jefferson County Open Space park system.

The trail connects two parks in South Jeffco, Deer Creek Canyon and Hildebrand Ranch.

The Black Bear gets its name from the first attempt to build it in 1994, when workers on the downhill leg into Mill Creek at the time saw a black bear. (Mill Creek and the trail are identified on the trail map at [jeffco.us/parks](http://jeffco.us/parks), Deer Creek Canyon Park)

In 1994, trail construction came to an unexpected halt when an easement deal around the second hogback near

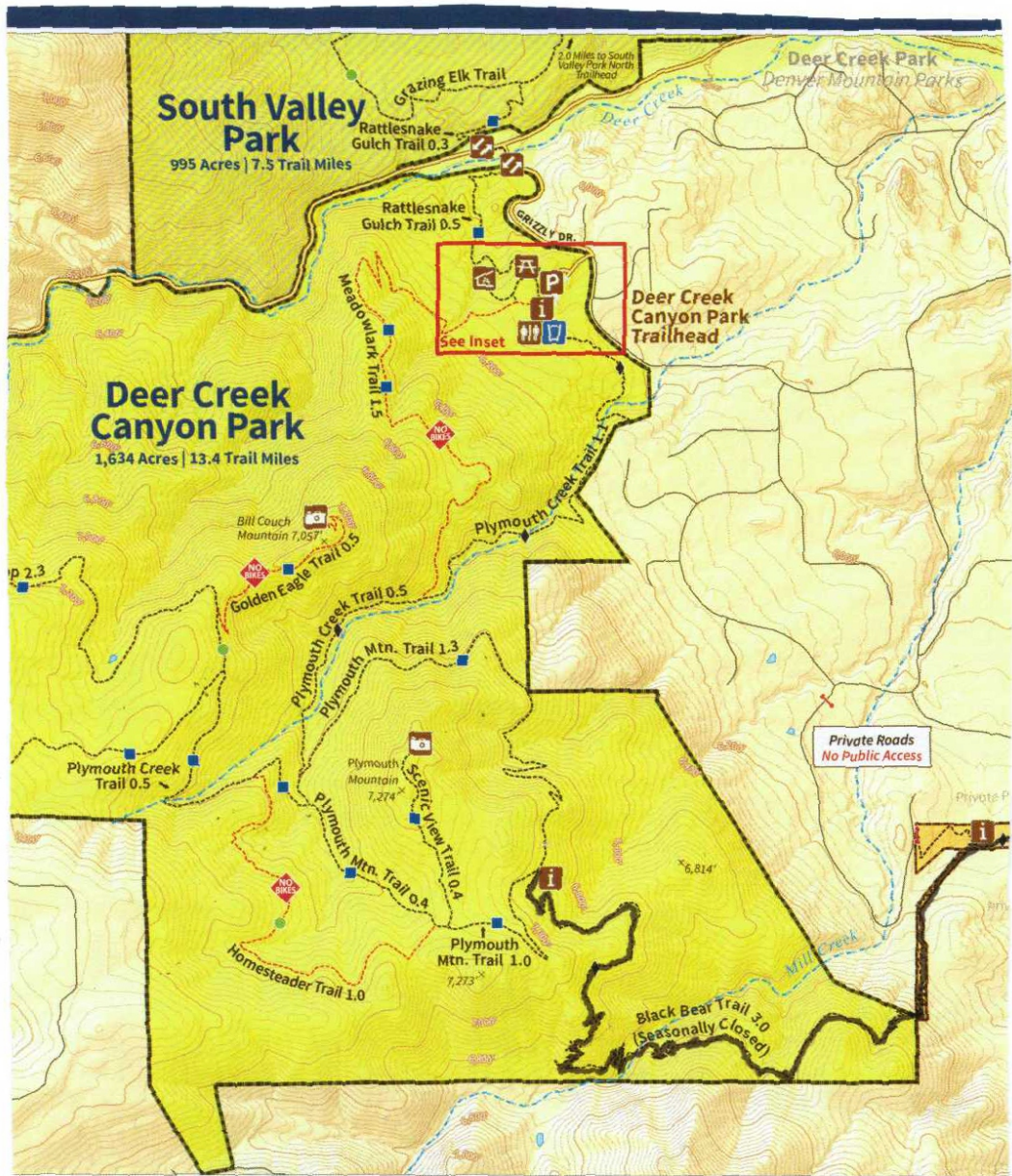
# BLACK BEAR TRAIL

*Continued*

Hildebrand fell through. Twenty years later, Open Space revisited the idea of completing the trail, but on a different path.

Construction began Oct. 2016. Most of the work was in summer 2017. The trail opened in 2018.

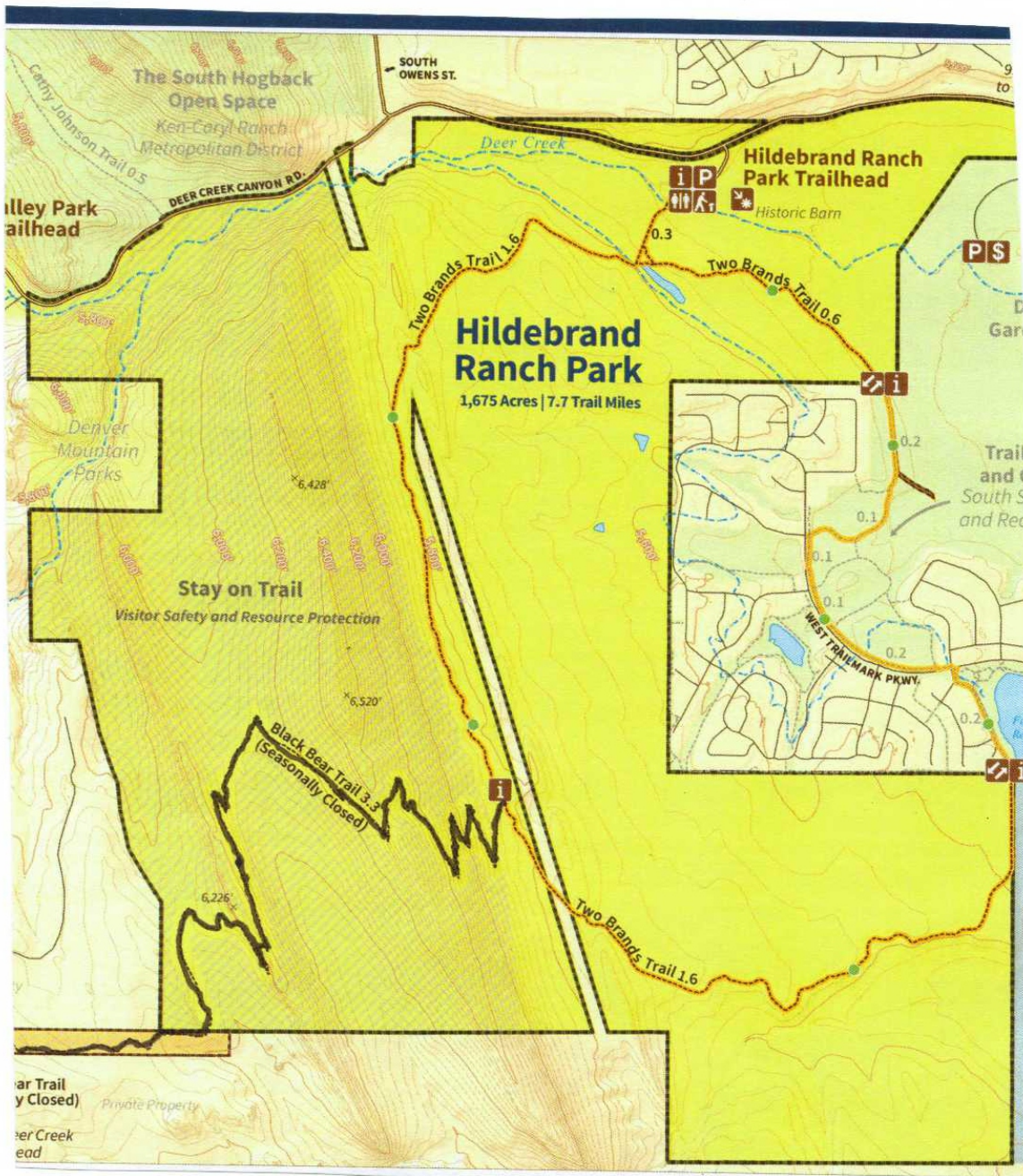
The route starts near the summit of Plymouth Mountain and goes east, across two hogbacks, mostly downhill to Hildebrand Ranch trailhead.





# BLACK BEAR TRAIL

*Continued*



The trail is open now but is closed seasonally for nesting raptors from Feb. 1 to July 31.

## “Not for the squeamish”

The person in charge of trail building is Jason Crum, Trails Team Lead, South Region. “When it first opened, people were pretty much amazed by it, especially when they hit the area called The Ledge.” Crum said.



## BLACK BEAR TRAIL

*Continued*

The Ledge looks precarious in photos, but is manageable at least 3- to 4-feet wide, Crum said. The stretch that comprises the ledge is naked rock, no trees and nothing to halt a falling hiker or bicycle, as a warning sign amply illustrates.

Jeffco outdoor writer and avid hiker Steve Knapp said his favorite part of the trail is the ecological and geological variety. “From dense pine forests you pass through high meadow before beginning to climb the first of two low hogbacks that stand in the way of Hildebrand.

“These two ridges offer a taste of high prairie, well-seasoned with flavors of the Southwest. Climbing the first ridge, the trail passes along a lofty stone ledge that, while not for the squeamish is unique within the JCOS system,” Knapp said.

The construction team consisted of about 10 people per day and included members of the Jefferson County Trail Stewardship Team, Team Works and the Mile High Youth Corps.

### **50 to 60 percent of steep**

“The most difficult aspect of the build was the steepness of the side slope,” Crum said. “We shot anywhere from 50 to 60 percent (steepness) on up.” But with so many switchbacks the trail averages only about 10 percent grade, which is a system standard.

Another challenge was chewing through hogback bedrock. “We had to use a thing



called Boulder Blaster, which uses water to fracture the rock, and a lot of jack-hammering,” Crum said.

The Ledge route is daunting but less steep and more sustainable than the alternative.

As Crum explains its genesis, before the Ledge route was discovered, a contractor built a section that was lower on the rock face. “There was a section of about 100 feet that was over 20 percent grade in the steepest place. The soils are not the best and it was going to be a maintenance issue. ... While searching for an alternative some of the trail staff came across a ledge that

## BLACK BEAR TRAIL

*Continued*

was closer to the standard 10 percent and put us farther up the ridge with no added switchbacks. It was a lot of jack hammering but a better alignment all around.”



from Hildebrand Ranch to Plymouth Mountain and Deer Creek Canyon Park. But many hikers start at Hildebrand, which entails a 15.8-mile journey to the start of Black Bear at the top of the mountain and back again. Hikers can save a couple of miles by staying on the road.

Crum didn't intend for the trail to be so roller-coaster-like. The builder hoped to use easement deals for multi-use trail to get around both hogbacks rather than go over them.

But at different times, the easement deals fell through and the crew was forced to implement more difficult Plan B's.

The original Black Bear Trail stopped at the hogback, was open to the public, although seldom used.

The result is the new Black Bear Trail, a serious workout for bikers, hikers and especially the adventurous, but with plenty to offer the energetic nature-lover, as well.

### No bailing out

Black Bear is not for the beginning hiker. It is rated difficult or black diamond in the park system's rating system, primarily because it is so long.

Endurance is the main issue, especially if it's hot weather. Once you commit, there is no place to bail out, Crum said.

It's about a 10-mile trip to make the circle

### TIMELINE

Black Bear Trail  
 Connecting Hildebrand Ranch Park to Deer Creek Canyon Park  
 Jefferson County Open Space

1994: Black Bear Trail built from Plymouth Mountain to Mill Creek and terminated at the second hogback from top. Trail was open to public but seldom used.



# BLACK BEAR TRAIL

*Continued*

Oct. 2016: Construction begins again

Summer 2018: Trail opens for mountain bikes, hikers and equestrians

## TRAIL FACTS

Info and Map: [jeffco.us/parks](http://jeffco.us/parks), Hildebrand Ranch Park and Deer Creek Canyon Park. See both maps before setting out on hike.

65 switchbacks

6.3 miles length

6800 feet elevation at start on mountain

5750 feet elevation at Hildebrand Trailhead

10 percent average grade of trail

50 to 60 percent average grade of slope (90 to 100 percent is a vertical wall)

Surface and width: natural surface, 3 to 4 feet wide

The Ledge: 2.1 miles from the start of Black Bear Trail and Two Brands Trail to The Ledge

4,071 feet of chain link fence removed

3,443 feet of installed wildlife friendly HTF range fence

The wildlife-friendly fence is 3 ½ ft. tall with six strands of smooth wire vs. chain link fence that is 6 ft. tall. The wildlife fence is designed to allow easier movement for animals back and forth across the fence line.

2,885 feet of installed chain link fence

4.8 miles of trail on Open Space property

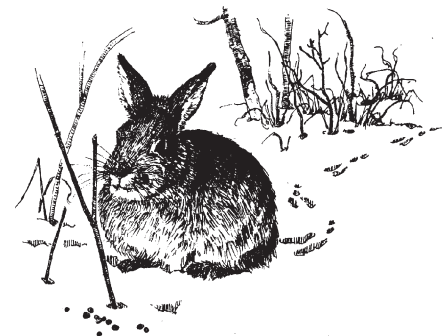
1.5 miles on Lockheed Martin property using an easement agreement (mostly contained by new fence)

2.6 miles of trail built by contractor Arrowhead Trail

3.7 miles built by Jeffco Open Space



Bobcat



Cottontail with scats and chewed twigs

## *PLAN Jeffco will live on in history!!!!*

About 18 months ago, the PLAN Jeffco Board began wondering what was going to happen to the files retained by three of the Board members who have been members of the Board since 1972. These collections also contained material from other persons who had served on the Board.

During the discussion we wondered if a museum would be interested. But at the time the Golden History Museum was undergoing remodeling and was not in position to consider the files.

Then the Denver Public Library, Western History and Genealogy Department asked if we could include them with our newsletter distribution. In the communications about the newsletters, we discussed the potential for the files being included in their archives.

Members of the Board met with Library staff bringing samples of what was available. Their response was very encouraging, and John Litz took on the task of combining the collections into a single, chronological file.

After sorting, purging, and arranging, the files filled six, 18-inch boxes. These were delivered to the Library in late May. The Library staff cataloged the contents, and created a Finding Aid (Index) for each year. The Finding Aids for the 47 years total 14 pages.

The files were officially gifted to the Library on July 19, and are identified for perusal and research as "PLAN Jeffco Records, WH2437."

The Finding Aid for 1998 - the year of the bond election - lists the following:

- Easton Park (Leslea) Development status,
- Survey results,
- Master Plan summary,
- Jeffco land use update,
- Revised Open Space policies,
- Resolution on backdrop properties,
- PLAN Jeffco Board Minutes,
- South Table Press on NREL acquisition and easement,
- Clear Creek Legacy Grant Concept application,
- Press clippings on award,
- Nike Press clippings,
- Potential to negotiate on Coors and Quaintance South Table properties
- Press Clippings not related to bonds or above items,
- SOS, "Save Open Space"
- Steering Committee - April to August Minutes, treasurers reports, budgets, correspondence,
- Steering Committee - September to November Minutes, treasurers, reports, budgets, correspondence,
- Steering Committee memos,
- Financial models,
- PR Info,
- Resolution,
- Banner,
- Script, Brochures, Data,
- Speakers Kit,
- Overhead slides,
- Election PR,
- Press Clippings,





## *Tunnel Number One - Here We Come!!*

Work on the trails at the mouth of Clear Creek Canyon has begun. Concrete Express is cutting the base for the trail along the south side of Clear Creek to get to where they will build the abutment for the bridge crossing just east of Tunnel Number

One. Figure 1 shows the back hoe cutting in the trail and Figure 2 shows the cut-in trail going back toward Golden. The bridge abutments will be the next major task.



Figure 1



Figure 2



## *OSAC Notes, OSAC Notes, OSAC Notes*

### **April 4, 2019**

#### Study Session

Mary Ann Bonnell did a presentation on Open Space's need for guidelines with respect to "artwork" being brought into Open Space parks. She showed examples of art in public parks. Jeffco will issue special use permits for the art. The art must be temporary, culturally or ecological significant, must be a juried piece, and must not be a memorial.

Gina Barton presented a five-year financial plan. The significant items are that the payments on the \$100 million bond issue will be complete in 2019 and the payments on the two, \$30 million bonds end in 2021 and 2023. Because of the end of the \$8.4 million bond payment JCOS will have funds to do some catching up on deferred expenses. Also included is a potential change to the local grants program. Acquisitions would not be separate grants but could be submitted whenever final terms on a property have been reached. Open Space would participate up to 50% on properties of regional significance and up to 25% for locally significant parks. A grant program will be started in 2021 for trails, trailheads, restrooms, historic sites, and capital maintenance. Requests should be submitted at the beginning of the year. The funds available would be determined in that year's budget preparation.

#### Regular meeting;

The meeting started with recognition of Rebecca Watson's service on the Advisory Committee. Rebecca has been on OSAC since 2006 and is moving to Northwestern Wyoming. OSAC approved a resolution thanking her for her service and she was given a large park photograph.

A large group of citizens from the area near 108th and Old Wadsworth attended the meeting and expressed their concern that Westminster was considering their neighborhood open space park for a large potable water treatment facility. Westminster had evaluated 50 sites for placement of the water treatment facility. They were down to

two, one of which was the park. JCOS had participated in the purchase of the park property, and had a reverter in the deed. If the property was not going to be used for park purposes, it either would return to JCOS or be replaced by a property of equivalent value. Subsequent to this meeting Open Space staff reminded all of the cities and districts about reverters on appropriate properties. (In late May, Westminster selected the alternate site for the treatment facility.)

Eric Delynko demonstrated an interactive map that will be on the JCOS web site that will allow the park visitors to post their interactions with wildlife in the parks.

### **May 2, 2019**

#### Study Session

The study session was at the Lookout Mountain Nature Center; OSAC members were able to review the physical changes to the Center. The number of island exhibits was reduced from 3 to 2 and the two were significantly refurbished. A number of stubby wall partitions were removed as was the large, crawl-on couch. The space is much more open and lighter. A contribution through the Jeffco Outdoors Foundation covered the costs of installing a facility-wide audio-visual system. Another change is that all the staff at the Nature Center are qualified rangers.

#### Regular Meeting:

Tom Hoby told OSAC about plans to have traveling study sessions during the summer. These would include trips to Flying J, Elk Meadow, and Windy Saddle.

Gina Barton reported that staff had reviewed the latest surveys and Master Plans of the cities and districts. All confirmed that resident desires were for more open space and more trails. These desires match the philosophy of changes to the acquisition and local grant proposals made by staff in April. Requests for acquisitions can be made at any time, once the final terms have been reached. Development grants will be submitted in January

*OSAC Notes, OSAC Notes**Continued*

for funding in the following year. The amount available for the grants will be determined during the JCOS normal budgeting cycle.

The countywide trails map that is being prepared indicates that in the plains, 84% of the residents are within a 10 minute walk of a trail or park. In the mountains, 74% of the residents are within 3 miles of a trail or park (less than a 10-minute drive,)

**June 6, 2019**

Study Session

Field trip to South Valley was cancelled.

**Regular Meeting**

Matt Robbins and Mary Ann Bonnell presented a brief review of the Statewide Comprehensive Recreation Plan. Staff are using the Plan to compare priorities with items in the JCOS planning processes.

Tom Hoby and Janet Shangraw presented items for consideration to include in OSAC's presentation with the County Commissioners later in the month.

Drew Rayburn discussed Open Spaces forest management in the past, what is being done now, and what needs to be done. The Evergreen area, where JCOS has a lot of acres, is considered one of the highest wildfire hazard areas in the United States. In the past Open Space has nibbled at forest management. Last year and this year significant programs have been launched at Beaver Ranch and Flying J. Future budgets will have a line item for forest management.

OSAC approved Open Space paying \$250,000 of the \$850,000 cost of a property adjacent to the Buchanan Park in Evergreen. The balance of the cost is being paid by the district and a grant from **Great Outdoors Colorado**.

**July 11, 2019**

Study Session

Gina Barton presented the proposed 2020 budget.

The major change from 2019, is not having to pay \$8.4 million on the \$100 million bond. The budget includes \$250,000 for forest health; \$330,000 for additional staff and accommodating the new minimum wage; \$441,000 for scanning the files, printing, maintenance supplies, timing clocks, and materials for climbing access; \$181,000 for Hiwan Museum roof replacement; \$190,000 for an updated Natural Areas study; and \$14.4 million for capital projects (Peaks to Plains Trail, Dinosaur Ridge, Beaver Ranch, and other park improvements.)

**Regular Meeting:**

The meeting started with a planning and projects update:

1. Staff is proceeding on the Vision to Action program that will result in producing a Conservation Greenprint that will contain most of the items of a conventional Master Plan, with it being a guide rather than a "Plan".
2. Progress is continuing on the Rocky Mountain Greenway trail from DIA to Estes Park. Soil sampling for plutonium is continuing in the trail's footprint. The trail will cross Indiana Street on an overpass, go South and West around the restricted area, then North to Highway 128. The trail will pass under Highway 128 into Boulder County.
3. A natural resources inventory is being made jointly by JCOS and City of Boulder Parks. It will be two years or so before a strategy for development is determined.
4. JCOS has assisted the Evergreen community in finding a potential location for a dog park and will assist in drafting a request to Great Outdoors Colorado for funds to develop the park. The local community will be the operator of the park.
5. The upgraded Windy Saddle trailhead will be completed by mid-July.
6. The Indiana Street trailhead for Van Bibber Park is complete. The trailhead and parking have been moved out of the flood plain. The trail has been improved with new culverts, and a bridge that flooded easily has been replaced. The Creek culvert under Indiana also was cleaned of debris.
7. The South Valley trailhead along Deer Creek



*OSAC Notes, OSAC Notes**Continued*

Road will be improved with a vault restroom and an expanded parking lot.

8. Work is continuing on the trail along the South side of Clear Creek at the mouth. Later this year work will begin on parking lots near Highway 93 and near Tunnel 1.

9. Staff are working with Friends of Dinosaur Ridge staff on a master plan for a new visitor center and potential road realignment. Plans have been made for rock mitigation above the tracks.

10. Electrical lines at Meyer Ranch are being moved underground.

11. The GIS group has been busy providing information for other projects, updating maps, and developing an Open Space dashboard that will allow self-service information on the parks, trails, etc.

12. The IT group has been working on the Cartegraph Asset Management program that will track the facilities and their management costs. They also have online the app for permits, reservations, etc. The needs of the CSU extension will be added in 2020.

Visitor experience surveys are indicating fewer trail conflicts. Volunteers are doing a lot of interviews in the parks. Apex and Mt Galbraith are the main focus of collecting user experience information.

OSAC approved waiving a portion of the reverter on Arvada's Youth Memorial Sports Complex in order to allow some flood control improvements.

Tom Hoby reported that the biker-only section of the Longhorn Trail at White Ranch was working nicely.

Mary Ann Bonnell reported that the parking lot cameras on the trailhead lots were in training to develop algorithms to determine lot usage and space availability.

**August 1, 2019****Study Session**

OSAC visited Van Bibber Park to observe the new trailhead and trail improvements.

**Regular Meeting**

Gina Barton presented Open Space's thoughts on a schedule of fees for use of the parks. The objective is to create a five tier schedule. For Community benefit activities there would be no charge; the less the Community benefit and the more the individual benefit the higher the charge. The maximum charge would be for a vendor selling something in the parks, museum, or Nature Center. The CSU extension and JCOS staff are now working on determining the cost of providing services to the upper four levels of activity.

OS staff are developing a program that would contain information regarding invasive species, forest fuels reduction, small acreage farming, water conservation, and more. They will make this available to the owners of 218,300 parcels in Jefferson County. The goal is to have it ready by the end of this year.

Gina Barton presented the proposed 2020 budget for approval. It was not changed from what was presented in July. OSAC approved.

Tom Hoby said that Bob West and Felicity Hannay will not be reapplying for OSAC; so there will be two vacancies to fill.

Mike Foster reported that 80 youth finished the Trails Stewardship Team program this summer, working for seven weeks, and maintaining about 80 miles of trail.

Gina Barton relayed that JCOS had applied for a \$40,000 grant from GOCO to assist in completing the countywide trails plan.



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Jefferson County Citizens for  
Planned Growth with Open Space

PLAN JEFFCO NEWSLETTER

## If you have not!!! Join PLAN Jeffco or renew your Membership today!

PLAN Jeffco is the county-wide volunteer citizen's group that organized and drafted the Open Space Resolution that resulted in the formation of the Jefferson County Open Space Program in 1972. We currently function as a watchdog group, observing meetings of the Open Space Advisory Committee, participating in subcommittees, and issues groups, proposing and working for important acquisitions, and keeping citizens informed of what is going on in their Open Space Program. PLAN Jeffco provided the leadership for the successful vote for bonds in 1998.

PLAN Jeffco works for open space and we work for you! Please sign up or renew your membership now! Your address label shows the date of your last renewal. Call 303.237.9493 for membership information.

**Our membership rate is:  
\$35 per year**

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