



# Off-Highway Vehicle Park Project Update

## Board of County Commissioners Meeting

Presented by:  
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## OHV Park Needs Statement

The El Paso County Parks and Leisure Services Department's Master Plan includes the development of a year-round OHV Park based on the following:

- El Paso County has the highest number of OHV permits (14,214) of any County in the State of Colorado.
- OHV permits are increasing an average of 14 percent per year in Colorado.
- The number of regional riding opportunities is declining with reductions in OHV opportunities in Pueblo and the Pike National Forest.
- The number of OHV riding opportunities in El Paso County is limited with no County or City parks (20,000 acres of parkland and 185 miles of trails) allowing OHV use.
- The City and County have spent over \$55 million of tax funds over the past decade to expand non-motorized recreation facilities. No funds have been spent for OHV facilities.

## OHV Park Objectives

- The park will provide multiple trail riding opportunities for beginning through advanced riders.
- The park will be a minimum of 800 acres and provide 20 miles of trails.
- The park will be developed without tax funds (excluding staff time) and will be financially self-sustaining.
- Initially, the park will support motorcycles with the potential of adding other OHV use at a later date.
- The park will be designed to minimize environmental and neighborhood impacts.
- Extensive training programs will be provided that will include proper riding techniques, maintenance care, and respect for the environment.
- The park will serve as an economic driver for eastern El Paso County and the Highway 94 corridor by generating tourism through unique riding opportunities.

## Community Interest

- Over 1,450 individuals signed a petition supporting an OHV Park.
- 50 residents attended an OHV Park Support Group meeting in November and 70 residents attended a follow-up meeting in January.
- The Parks Department has received letters of support from Experience Colorado Springs, U.S. Forest Service, Colorado Off-Highway Vehicle Association, Rampart Range Motorcycle Management Committee, Colorado 500, Rocky Mountain Enduro Circuit, Colorado Motorcycle Trail Riders Association, Pikes Peak Enduro Club, British Motorcycle Association of Colorado, American Motorcyclist Association and numerous interested citizens.
- The Parks Department has received pledges of approximately \$26,000 and over 500 volunteer hours of support.

## Site Selection Process

- The County has the opportunity to partner with Aztec Family Raceway which will provide parking, restroom, and concession facilities saving the County approximately \$400,000 in development costs.
- Aztec Family Raceway will manage the OHV Park through a management agreement and pay the County a user fee from OHV Park participants.
- The site is adjacent to multiple private and public motor sports areas, salvage yards, and is bordered on the east by the County's largest landfill.
- The site has interesting topography that will provide for unique riding opportunities.
- The site is centrally located and easily accessible for area residents.
- The site will allow for year-round riding opportunities.

## Master Planning Process

-  We will initially create a single track trail system (18" to 24" wide) designed only for motorcycle use. If we determine the facility can accommodate wider trails at a later date, we may elect to install trails to allow other types of OHV use.
  -  We will only construct 20 miles of trails even though the overall site could accommodate significantly more miles of trails. Additional trails may be considered at a later date if it is determined that trail expansion can be accomplished without significant environmental / neighborhood impacts.
  -  All OHVs will be required to pass a stringent sound test before admittance to the park is allowed. A liability waiver will also be required from all OHV participants which will also bind the participant to certain environmental ethics.
  -  During the master planning process, we will complete an extensive site analysis to determine sensitive, natural resource areas and these areas will be excluded from OHV trail use. The analysis will include habitat research, soils and erosion studies, ecological research, archeological review, and other pertinent studies.
5. We will employ an inclusive master plan design process for this facility that will include representatives from the open space and OHV communities, staff from local park organizations, environmental and natural resource experts, neighbors, and interested citizens.
  6. We will employ a national consultant with a proven track record of OHV trail design while preserving sensitive natural resources and preventing negative impacts to the property.

## Project Update

- The County entered into a sales agreement to purchase the Case parcel and negotiated a closing date in August, 2008 to provide adequate time to complete an extensive planning process to determine whether the site is appropriate for OHV trails.
- The County obtained written agreements from landowners to provide critical easements / licenses to link Aztec to the proposed OHV trail system.
- The El Paso County OHV \$320,000 grant application was the highest rated grant application by the State Trails - OHV Grant Sub-Committee.
- The State Trails Committee recommended approval of the grant application based on the following motion:

*"Recommend approval of OHV Grant #31 El Paso County OHV Park however, with a two step process in the contract. Planning money would be made available right away to complete the site master planning process. The land acquisition money would be made available contingent on the outcome of the site master planning process presentation made to the State Trails Committee in June".*

- The State Parks Board approved the motion at their meeting on February 22, 2008.

## Planning Process Update

The planning process has included a significant environmental review including flora, fauna, cultural resources, and noise abatement. Citizen input meetings have been conducted on April 1, 15, and 29. A summary of the findings are below:

1. Preliminary archeology survey work indicates one archaeological site and three isolated occurrences of cultural material. Evaluation of artifacts indicates they likely date to 6,200 B.C. or older. Given the anticipated significance of these artifacts, testing of the identified archaeological site to determine eligibility for listing on the National Register of Historic Places may be merited. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) may require a Class III survey of the entire area. Alternatively, assuming approval from SHPO, a Class III archaeological survey may be limited to the right-of-way of the motorcycle trails and boundary fences. Should any sites be recorded during this survey, re-routing of the trail or archaeological testing for significance would then need to be undertaken.
2. The Fauna / Wildlife studies have indicated the presence of golden eagle and prairie falcon nests. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's guidance documents suggest a  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile radius buffer around the nests depending upon the time of the year.

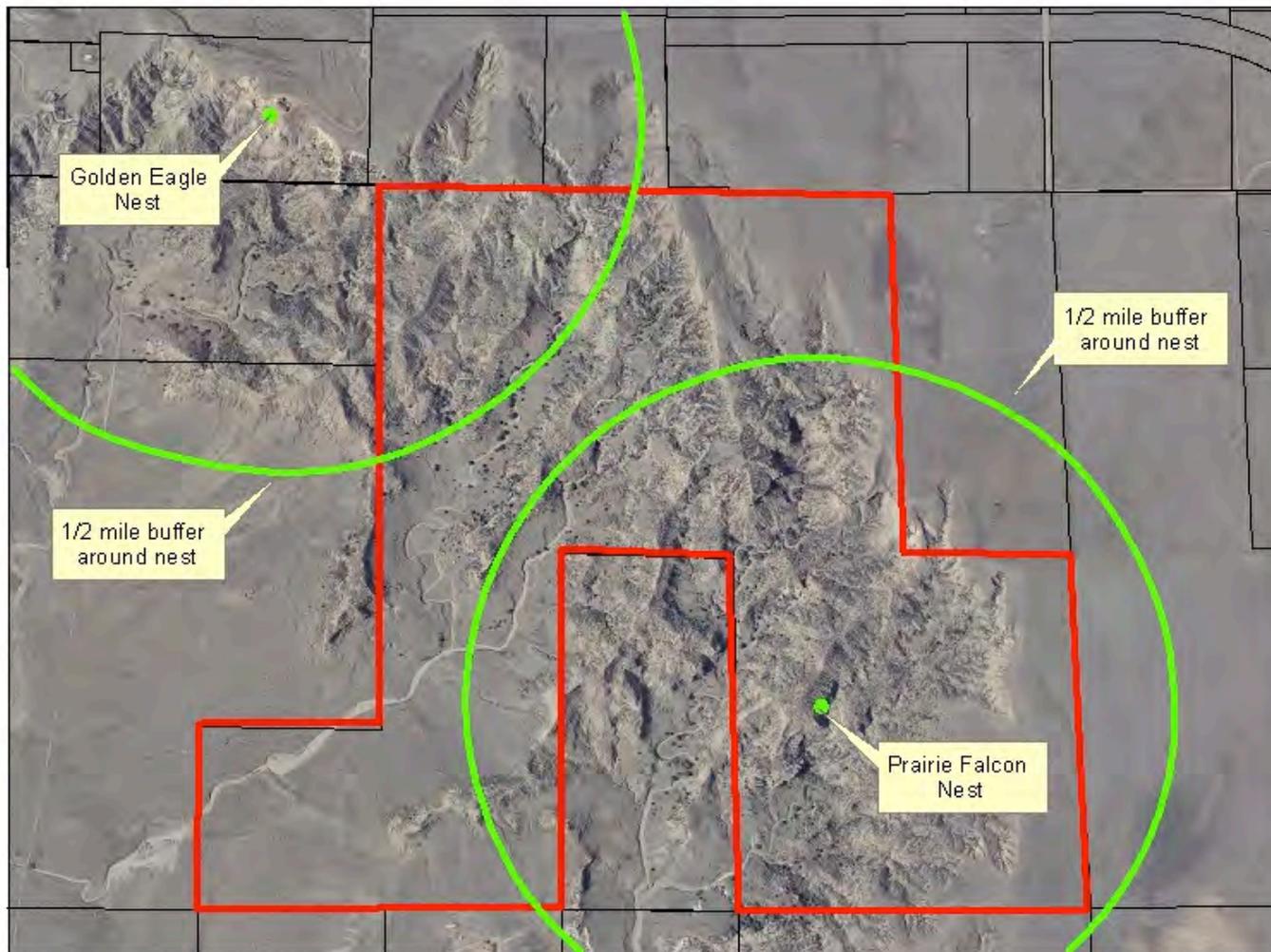
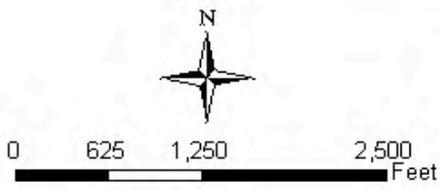


Figure 1.  
Raptor Nest Locations with Buffers

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## Paleontology Preliminary Report

- 1) The density of fossil occurrences in the Corral Bluffs area is high, and it has yielded well preserved fossils of plants and early Paleocene reptiles and mammals.
- 2) The Corral Bluffs area is particularly noteworthy from a scientific perspective because it contains a well-exposed and relatively thick sequence of the Denver Formation, including the rarely exposed K-T boundary (*K-T Boundary indicates the presence of the geologic features that distinguishes the end of the age of dinosaurs and the start of the age of mammals*).
- 3) The Corral Bluffs Denver Formation sequence is so well-exposed within the Case Property that it is extremely relevant to ongoing National Science Foundation scientific research.
- 4) Without mitigation, ground disturbance associated with development within the Case Property will undoubtedly result in the destruction of scientifically significant fossils.

## Recommendations

1. As indicated in the environmental studies conducted on this site, the Case property contains a variety of natural resources that are both sensitive and unique. El Paso County has a long history of preserving our County's "special places" that contain unique natural environments. Staff is concerned that the cultural and natural resources found in the Corral Bluffs area may be jeopardized with the installation of an OHV trail system. In addition, the wildlife and noise ordinance issues will restrict the ability to design an effective trail system. With this in mind, staff recommends that we discontinue the assessment process for an OHV trail system at this site.
2. Staff recommends the Board of County Commissioners instructs the Park Advisory Board to appoint a citizen advisory committee to continue the search for potential sites for the OHV Park. It is further recommended that staff approaches the State Trails Committee and the Yamaha Corporation to consider allowing our existing planning grants to be used for the site research.