



Castle Rock
**PARKS &
RECREATION**
*Lost Canyon Ranch
Open Space
Management Plan*

*Prepared for
Douglas Land Conservancy
May 2025*



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Note: This is a living document. Updates and amendments may be made in accordance with evolving conditions, management needs, and by mutual agreement between the Town of Castle Rock and Douglas Land Conservancy.

SECTION 1

Introduction

1.1 Summary

The Town of Castle Rock Parks and Recreation Department manages 25 developed parks, over 100 miles of paved and soft-surface trails over 4,000 acres of public open space, land set aside for its conservational, educational, cultural, scenic and recreational values, neighborhood and community buffers, preservation of unique geology or wildlife habitat potential. These parks, trails and protected properties are scattered across the Castle Rock landscape that features steeply sloping terrain, grasslands and woodlands, meandering creeks and gulches, buttes and ridgelines. Castle Rock's average elevation of 6,200-feet offers residents and users at most of the sites panoramic views of the Rocky Mountains extending from Pike's Peak to Longs Peak.

Parks, open space areas and trails are managed and maintained by the Town Parks and Recreation Department. Within that department, property planning, trails planning and construction are conducted by the Parks Planning and Construction Division while the operations and maintenance activities are conducted by the Parks Maintenance Division, with assistance from volunteers from the POST Partners Volunteer Program. The Parks and Recreation Department provides input and recommendations to the Parks and Recreation Commission, which advises the Town Council regarding parks, open space, recreation and golf issues within Castle Rock.

This management plan follows guidance established in the 2015 Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trails Master Plan, which is a subset of the 2030 Town of Castle Rock Comprehensive Master Plan, adopted in 2017. The Lost Canyon Ranch Open Space (LCROS) Management Plan provides a long-term strategy for preserving the ecological, scenic, recreational, and cultural resources of the 681-acre property in Douglas County, Colorado. The plan ensures activities on the site are consistent with the Deed of Conservation Easement held by Douglas Land Conservancy (DLC) and incorporates best practices for natural resource stewardship and public enjoyment.

It will focus on visitor management, current and future resource management, as well as property operations, including staffing and budget to implement the management plan. The management plan also follows the general direction and concepts developed by Landscape Architectural Firm Wenk Associates Inc., which are included within the Master Plan.

1.2 Background

Acquired in 2024 by The Conservation Fund with funding from the Town of Castle Rock, Douglas County, and a grant from Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO), LCROS was once targeted for residential development. Now permanently preserved as open space, the property buffers Castlewood Canyon State Park and Prairie Canyon Open Space and contributes to regional ecological connectivity by providing over 4,000 acres of connected open space. Its natural, scenic, and cultural resources are the foundation of Lost Canyon Ranch's conservation values. The property includes the undisturbed forested canyon created by Willow Creek, a tributary of Cherry Creek flowing southwest to northeast, which widens in the northeast corner of the property. The creek is a narrow drainage with cottonwoods, peachleaf willows, willow shrubs and cattails that was dammed more than 60 years ago. The southern slope of the canyon is a denser mix of ponderosa pine, Douglas fir and junipers than the northern slope. Both canyon side slopes lead up to outcroppings of sandstone and Castle Rock conglomerate that make up the edge of the mesas on either side of the creek. Both the northwest and southeast corners are open shortgrass prairie with exposed caprock and include prairie dog towns. The remainder of the property is a mixture of scrub oak-pine woodland habitat. The property provides habitat for many wildlife species including mountain lion, bobcat, bear, mule deer, coyote, fox, golden eagles, owls and other raptors, wild turkeys, migratory songbirds, prairie dogs, porcupine, elk and others.

The site is guided by the Lost Canyon Ranch Open Space Master Plan and the Trails Plan, which inform future development, restoration, and public access. All site plans must be reviewed and approved by the Conservation Easement holder, Douglas Land Conservancy.

1.3 Operations

Management and maintenance of the property, including activities such as mowing, weed control, sign installation, trail building, trash removal, resource monitoring and fencing repairs will be conducted by the Parks Maintenance staff, Parks Planning staff, other Town departments or licensed contractors under the supervision of Town staff. Volunteers with the established POST Partners Volunteer Program, under the direct supervision of the Volunteer Coordinator and Town staff can assist with trail building and maintenance activities, restoration activities and general park trash removal. Castle Rock Water will perform any maintenance activities as needed on the flood control pond and/or dam structures. Funding for maintenance and operations will be provided through the Town's General Fund for Parks operations, or other funds and grants as needed, as approved by Town Council. DLC will retain oversight authority to ensure all activities comply with the Conservation Easement, which grants to DLC the authority to prevent any activity on or use of the Property that is inconsistent with the Purpose or express terms of the Conservation Easement. The Purpose of the Conservation Easement is to protect the Conservation Values (specifically, the protection of relatively natural habitat for plants and wildlife, scenic open space and open space for agriculture, outdoor recreation and education of the general public, and preservation of historically important land) and limit the uses of the Property to those uses expressly permitted therein or those uses that do not materially adversely affect the Conservation Values, as determined by DLC. Any express provision of the Conservation Easement which restricts particular activities on or uses of the Property are contained in the Conservation Easement and may be referenced in the appropriate sections of this management plan. Prior to engaging in any activity on or use of the Property which might materially adversely impact the conservation values, the Town will obtain the approval of DLC in accordance with the terms of the Conservation Easement.



1.4 Objectives

The 2015 Master Plan Update for Parks, Recreation, Trails and Open Space has recommended the development of management plans for all significant open space properties to serve as a guide for prescribing appropriate types and levels of use as well as preservation and maintenance of landscapes and ecosystems. This management plan will provide a guide to balance natural resource protection and public recreation while adhering to the Town's guiding principles and policies. The management plan is focused on the following principles:

- Conserve high-quality wildlife habitat and ecological features
- Provide safe and sustainable low-impact public access
- Restore and protect degraded landscapes
- Preserve scenic, educational, and cultural values
- Coordinate management through stakeholder partnerships

1.5 Goals and Priorities

The initial management goal is preserving the natural, open space, scenic, educational, cultural and recreational values and the surrounding natural environment. Future public education and or other municipal uses within the three established building envelopes that are consistent with the Conservation Easement may be developed in accordance with the Master Plan. Management priorities are as follows:

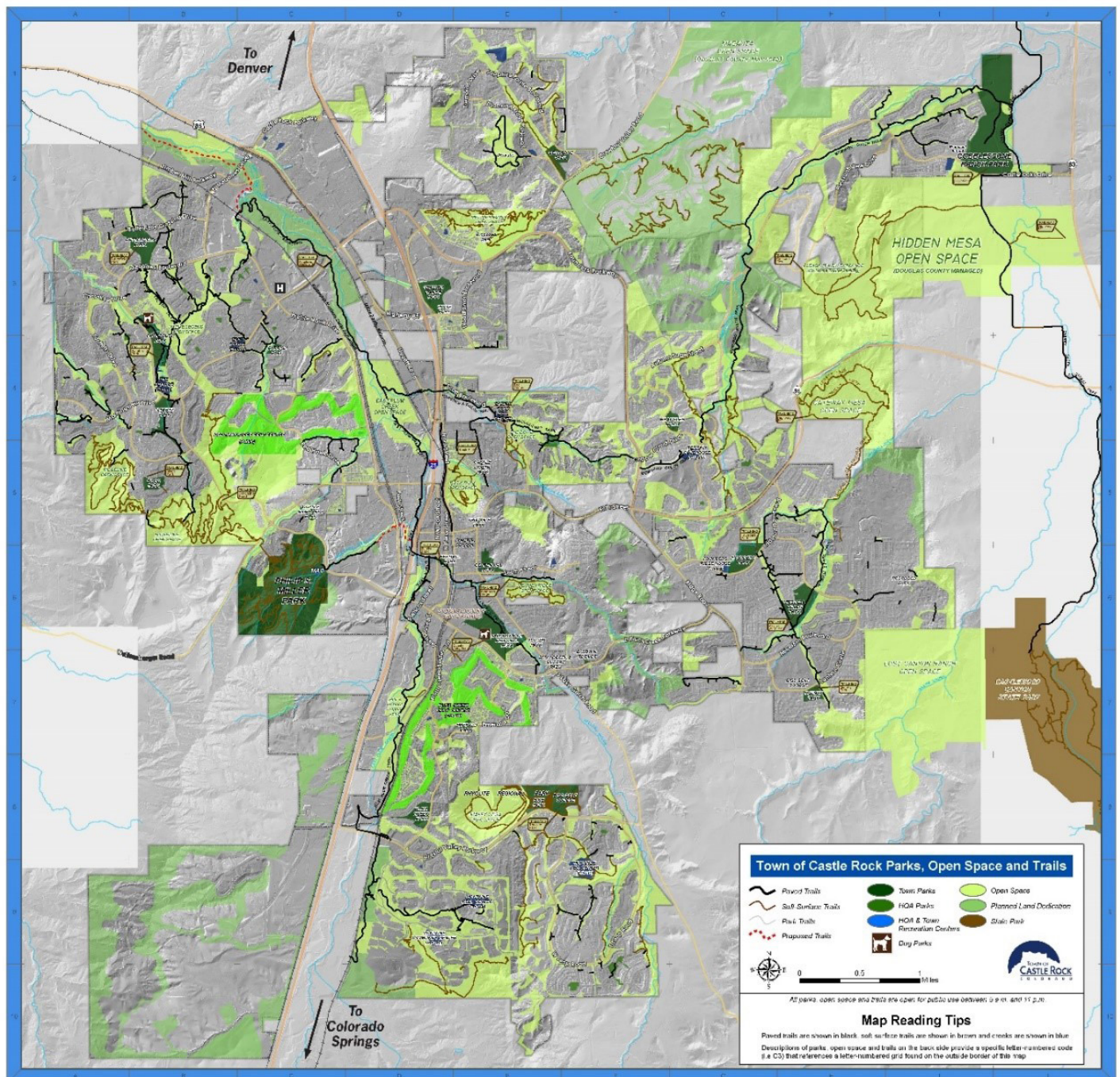
- Public safety and resource stewardship
- Protection of native vegetation and wildlife
- Controlled public access compatible with conservation values
- Ongoing monitoring and adaptive management

SECTION 2

Property Information

2.1 Physical Description and Location

The 681-acre LCROS lies on the eastern edge of Castle Rock on the Palmer Divide. Its property boundaries are described within the ALTA survey included within the baseline inventory. Elevations range from 6,600 feet on the uplands to 6,300 feet along Willow Creek. Vegetation includes grasslands, woodlands, shrublands, riparian, wetlands, and rare rock gardens. Its location within a transition zone between plains and mountains supports high biodiversity.

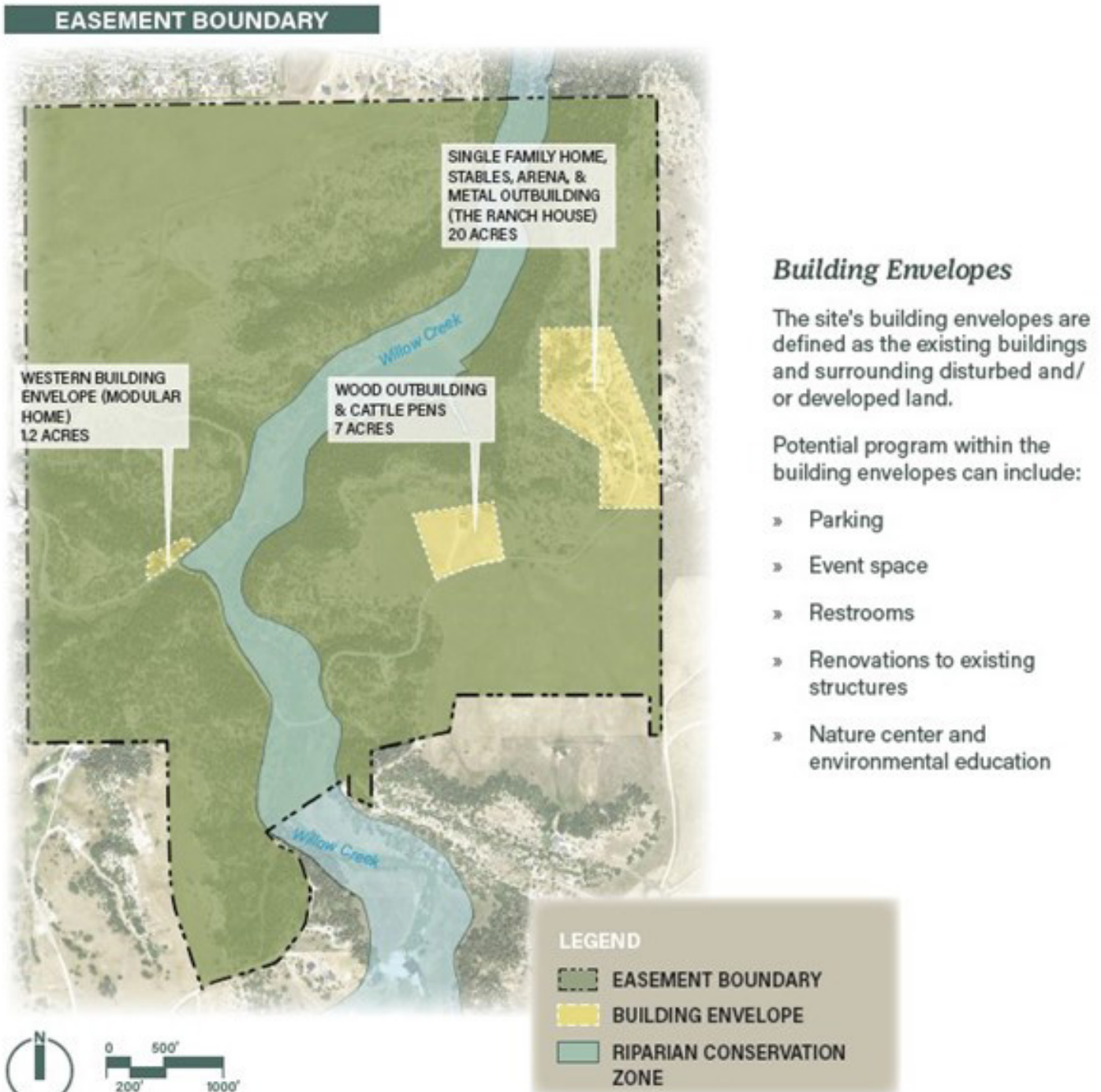


2.2 Easements and Legal Considerations

The Lost Canyon Ranch property is encumbered by a Conservation Easement held by the Douglas Land Conservancy (DLC), which serves as a legally binding agreement to protect the land from future development and ensure that all site plans, infrastructure, and land use activities align with conservation values. The easement includes specific restrictions on land use, limiting construction, grading, and vegetation removal to protect critical habitats and maintain the site's ecological integrity.

The construction, maintenance, repair, etc., of improvements is allowed within the building envelopes subject to the specific limitations set forth in the Conservation Easement.

The Conservation Easement encumbers the entirety of the Lost Canyon Ranch property, and any activity on the property must be in compliance with the Conservation Easement. Prior to engaging in any activity or use of the property that is not expressly permitted and that might materially and adversely impact the conservation values, the Town will obtain the approval of DLC in accordance with the terms of the Conservation Easement.



2.3 Conservation Values

The Lost Canyon Ranch property is recognized for its diverse natural and cultural resources, which contribute to its conservation value. Key conservation priorities include:

- **WILDLIFE AND WILDLIFE HABITAT:** Habitat preservation for species such as the Preble's meadow jumping mouse, raptors, and other sensitive species.
- **STREAMS AND RIPARIAN AREAS:** Protection and restoration of wetland and riparian corridors, which provide essential habitat for aquatic and semi-aquatic species.
- **UPLAND PRAIRIE:** Conservation of native grasslands that support a range of plant and animal species.
- **CLIFFSIDE HABITAT:** Protection of steep slopes and rocky outcrops that provide nesting and roosting sites for raptors and other cliff-dwelling species.
- **PREBLE'S MEADOW JUMPING MOUSE HABITAT:** Preservation of designated riparian conservation zone areas to maintain population stability and connectivity.
- **ARCHEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE:** Cultural resource protection, including the Franktown Cave site and other potential sites identified in the 2025 Cultural Resources Survey.
- **SCENIC VISTAS:** Preservation of scenic views from trails and key vantage points, maintaining the area's natural character.
- **RECREATIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES:** Facilitation of passive outdoor recreation and educational programs that align with conservation goals.



2.4 Building Envelopes

- **RANCH HOUSE AREA:** This area is designated as a potential future nature center and educational hub, leveraging the existing ranch house structure for adaptive reuse to provide interpretive programming, visitor services, and administrative offices.
- **FEED BARN AREA:** Proposed as a future picnic area or event space, this area offers a centralized location for public gatherings, environmental education programs, and potential event rentals.
- **WESTERN ENVELOPE - CREEKSIDE TRAILHEAD:** The western envelope will serve as the primary trailhead for public access, incorporating a parking area, trail signage, and visitor orientation materials. Site improvements will be designed to minimize environmental impact while enhancing visitor accessibility.

2.5 Fencing

Fencing throughout Lost Canyon Ranch is a critical management component, delineating property boundaries, protecting sensitive habitats, and directing visitor access. Existing property fencing is documented in the Alta survey within the Lost Canyon Ranch Baseline Inventory.

SECTION 3

Property Resources

3.1 Existing Land Uses

The recent historical use (since 1960s) of Lost Canyon Ranch for equestrian activities and livestock operations has significantly shaped current site conditions. Numerous structures, including barns, corrals, and fencing, remain from the ranch's operational era, though many are in fair to poor condition. Additionally, the 1963 flood control dam, constructed to mitigate flooding risks, has created approximately 13 acres of wetland habitat upstream, fostering diverse wetland and riparian ecosystems. Downstream areas are influenced by the dam.

The ranch also contains approximately 2.5 miles of gravel roadways, initially established to support agricultural and residential activities. These roads now provide access to key points throughout the property, including the ranch house, caretaker's residence and riding arena. Residential structures and associated materials reflect the human impacts on the site, but the focus is now shifting toward conservation and public use as part of the Master Plan's implementation strategy.

3.2 Facilities and Improvements

Existing structures as of May 2025 include a ranch house, modular caretaker's residence, wooden stable, metal loafing shed and an indoor riding arena. The modular caretaker's residence will be removed prior to the property's official opening to the public, eliminating a redundant and deteriorating structure.

The ranch house, riding arena, and other structures may be preserved for potential future improvement and adaptive reuse. Options for adaptive reuse include converting existing facilities into educational or interpretive centers, administrative offices, or visitor amenities to support conservation education and public outreach. Improvements located within the building envelopes are subject to cumulative square footage restrictions established in the Conservation Easement. Any additional square footage must be approved by DLC.

A flood control dam on Willow Creek, previously administered and maintained by Douglas County, is now under the jurisdiction of Castle Rock Water. The small body of water created by the dam is called the Franktown Parker FPW-1 Reservoir, but it is not stocked with fish and there is very little open water due to years of silt deposits. The dam and its associated structures lie within a 200-acre easement, and ongoing maintenance will focus on ensuring structural integrity, regulating water flows, and protecting downstream properties from flooding risks.

3.2.1 ROADWAYS

Access to the property is controlled through a primary entrance located on Lost Canyon Ranch Road, where an electronic gate regulates vehicular access. Once inside, approximately 2.5 miles of native surface or graveled roads traverse the property, providing access to the north and south rims of the canyon. These roads will be evaluated for necessary upgrades to ensure safe public access, minimize erosion, and facilitate emergency response capabilities. Construction of any new roads outside of the building envelopes requires the approval of DLC as to location and materials. The Conservation Easement requires that new roads located outside of the building envelopes not be any wider than necessary to provide access or to meet local codes for width of access to permitted improvements.

3.2.2 UTILITIES AND WELLS

Utilities and well infrastructure are documented in the baseline inventory and Alta survey. Two wells serve the ranch house and former caretaker's residence, both of which are equipped with permitted residential septic systems. The Creekside parking area is planned to be located near the former caretaker's residence, where single-phase electrical power is currently available. Additionally, single-phase power is accessible at the ranch house and riding arena, providing potential connections for future facility improvements. Additional wells exist on the property and are identified on the Alta Survey.

Phone lines are present on the property, though their condition is unknown and will require assessment prior to public use. Telecommunications infrastructure may require upgrades to accommodate emergency communications, security systems, and potential public Wi-Fi access in key areas. The enlargement or construction of any telecommunications infrastructure outside of the building envelopes requires the approval of DLC.

3.3 Neighboring Properties

Lost Canyon Ranch is bordered by Castlewood Canyon State Park to the east, providing an ecological and recreational buffer that aligns with the conservation objectives of the master plan. To the west and northwest, suburban-density residential neighborhoods within the Town of Castle Rock are juxtaposed with the ranch's open space character. To the north and south, 35-acre rural unincorporated County subdivisions further define the transition from urban to open space, presenting opportunities to engage neighboring landowners in conservation efforts, wildlife corridor connectivity, and wildfire mitigation planning.

SECTION 4

Natural Resources

4.1 Wildlife

The site is home to black bear, elk, bobcats, mountain lions, pronghorn antelope, porcupines, raccoons, Abert's squirrels, wood rats, coyote, mule deer, raptors, prairie dogs, the Preble's meadow jumping mouse and other species. A rich diversity of nesting avian species, including Golden Eagles, Turkey Vultures, Prairie Falcons, Great Horned Owls and Red-tailed Hawks are supported by varied vegetation types and microclimates.

4.2 Vegetation

A variety of habitat types are found on the property, including canyon, riparian, forest, open grassland, caprock and cliff outcroppings that contribute to a mosaic of vegetation types. There are ponderosa pine and Douglas fir forests, mixed oak-juniper woodlands, shrublands, short and mid grasslands, riparian, wetlands, and rare hanging gardens. Native plant communities are highly diverse and should be preserved and studied.

4.3 Noxious Weeds

Noxious weeds are present on the site, but have not become detrimental to the overall native plant communities. Most invasive plant establishments have occurred in previously disturbed areas, including the ranch house area, riding arena and outdoor corrals. The most significant noxious weed problems are diffuse knapweed, leafy spurge, Canada thistle, musk thistle, Russian thistle and Russian knapweed.

4.4 Wetlands & Riparian Areas

Willow Creek provides perennial flow and supports cottonwoods, willows, sedges, and bulrushes with some naturally occurring aspen trees. Wetlands are limited but do exist on the site. The water seepage from the top of the cliffs have created wet habitat, forming natural plunge pools and grottoes. The dense vegetation found in this habitat, which is not typical for this region of Colorado, includes a relatively high diversity of rare plant communities, including non-vascular plants such as mosses, lichens, fungi, ferns and liverworts.



SECTION 5

Cultural Resources



The Franktown Cave archeological site provides exceptional evidence of over 8,000 years of Indigenous occupation. The cave, or rockshelter, developed at the contact between two sedimentary rock units: the harder Castle Rock Conglomerate above and the softer, finer-textured Dawson Arkose formation below. At Franktown Cave, the softer Dawson Arkose eroded from under the Castle Rock Conglomerate, leaving an overhang that was attractive as a shelter to prehistoric people and dry enough to preserve delicate artifacts made from perishable materials. More than 4000 artifacts made from hide, wood, fiber and plant material represent a significant quantity and quality of perishable artifacts, uncommon in the Platte River Basin. Due to the cave's cultural and historical significance, it has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 2006 and will be strictly protected. The Town will consult with the University of Denver Anthropology Department and DU's Museum of Anthropology (current home of artifacts), and potentially other historic experts such as the Office of the State Archeologist, to consider the best resources to create and provide future interpretative opportunities.



A cultural resources survey was performed by HDR Engineering Company of Denver, Colorado in April and May 2025. The study identifies key areas that may yield historical artifacts with further investigation or excavation. Trails and other proposed improvements to the property should consider impacts to cultural resources.

A comprehensive Class III cultural resources survey was conducted on the 681-acre Lost Canyon Ranch Open Space to identify, document, and assess the significance of archaeological and historical resources. The survey recorded 46 cultural sites, including precontact and historical archaeological sites, built environment resources, and isolated finds. Notable resources include the Franktown Cave (5DA.272), a National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)-listed site with high sensitivity to disturbance.

Resource Sensitivity and Preservation Recommendations:

- **HIGH SENSITIVITY:** Sites with a high potential for significant subsurface cultural material, including Franktown Cave and rock alcoves with evidence of precontact use. HDR recommends a minimum 50 ft buffer to prevent damage from trail construction and visitor access.
- **MODERATE SENSITIVITY:** Sites with potential subsurface cultural material or moderate artifact diversity, which may be impacted by increased foot traffic but are less vulnerable to vandalism. A 50 ft buffer is also recommended.
- **LOW SENSITIVITY:** Surface artifacts or ephemeral finds with limited research potential. No specific management actions are recommended for these resources.



SECTION 6

Natural Resource Management Issues and Recommendations

6.1 Protection

Prioritized in Riparian Areas, Raptor Nesting Sites, and Archeological Sites Protection of sensitive natural areas is a cornerstone of management at Lost Canyon Ranch. Riparian corridors, areas with known raptor nesting sites, and potential archeological sites will be prioritized for protection and management. Preservation efforts will focus on preventing habitat degradation, minimizing human disturbance, and implementing strategies that promote the natural integrity of these areas and providing public education regarding any closures. Signage, fencing, and seasonal access restrictions may be employed to prevent unauthorized access and minimize impacts.

The Conservation Easement requires that the property be operated, managed and maintained in a manner that is consistent with the purpose of maintaining the conservation values and promotes the continued viability of the natural resources on the Property while maintaining any permissible uses of the property. Pursuant to Section 6 (C) of the Conservation Easement, any activities to create, maintain, restore or enhance wildlife habitat and native biological communities on the property cannot have a material adverse effect on the conservation values. DLC must be notified of and approve any activities which might have a material adverse effect on the conservation values.



6.2 Noxious Weeds Management

Targeted invasive species management will be implemented to control and eradicate noxious weeds that threaten native plant communities. Management will employ a combination of mechanical, chemical, and biological control methods tailored to each species and site conditions. An annual monitoring and mapping program will track invasive species spread, assess treatment efficacy, and inform adaptive management strategies. Additionally, educational programs will engage the public and adjacent property owners in identifying and managing invasive species.

An integrated weed management approach guided by the Town of Castle Rock Noxious Weed Management Plan will be applied on the homestead property to reduce or control the non-native species and encourage native species. The noxious weeds, especially various non-native thistle species found around the pasturelands, should be controlled with herbicides or pulled and removed from the property, following a full inventory and mapping of the different weed species found on the property. Other noxious weed species commonly found in Douglas County, including Diffuse and Russian knapweed, Leafy spurge and Dalmatian toadflax should be monitored if they need to be sprayed or pulled and removed from the property. A licensed contractor or Town Parks Maintenance staff in consultation with the Colorado Noxious Weed Act, Colorado Weed Management Association, Colorado Department of Agriculture and the Douglas County Weed Inspector will conduct any management activities involving herbicides. The maintenance and operations standards for developed parks will be followed if and when the recreation envelope is developed.

The control and reduction of noxious weeds are especially high priorities and a wide range of strategies should be considered, while protecting the native plants that live among the invasive ones. Weed management strategies on the property may include the following measures:



- **CHEMICAL CONTROL (HERBICIDE APPLICATIONS):** Use of herbicides is an effective control strategy for many noxious weeds. Timing and application rates are critical for increasing the effectiveness of the application.
 - Milestone, Curtail, and 2,4-D are generally effective in controlling diffuse knapweed (*Centurea diffusa*) and biennial thistles. They are most effective when applied in late spring and early summer. Fall applications can also be effective on rosettes.
 - Telar and Milestone are most effective on Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) and Russian knapweed (*Centurea repens*), especially when applied in the fall.
- **MECHANICAL CONTROL:** Appropriately timed mowing of thistles, cheatgrass, and knapweed can effectively reduce seed production.
- **BIOLOGICAL CONTROL:** Many insect species have been approved by the Colorado Department of Agriculture for controlling diffuse knapweed, leafy spurge and other noxious weeds, such as Knapweed Lesser Flowerhead Weevil (*Larinus minutus*) and Root Boring Weevil (*Cyphocleonus achates*). The Town has used these control agents on other Town-owned properties and may consider this site for future releases.
- **RESEEDING:** Planting native grasses, forbs and shrubs is another technique to control noxious weeds by providing competition for water, sunlight, and nutrients.
- **PRESCRIBED FIRE:** Well-timed controlled fires can significantly reduce noxious weed infestations and restore native vegetation, especially around the corrals and grazed pastures on site. Any prescribed burns will be coordinated with all relevant agencies and jurisdictions.
- **LIVESTOCK GRAZING:** Livestock grazing can be effective management tool if used correctly and overgrazing is not allowable. Director of Parks and Recreation will consider the use of sheep, goats or cattle to control weeds with discretion. The Conservation Easement specifically prohibits unsustainable livestock grazing practices and any use of livestock to manage noxious weeds may require the approval of DLC.

In addition to noxious weeds, insect pests may become a problem for the mature ponderosa pine forest. Mountain pine beetles (*Dendroctonus ponderosae*, MPB), although not common in Douglas County, are probably the most significant insect pest issue of Colorado's pine forests, killing large numbers of trees annually during outbreaks. The pine trees at LCROS may be stressed due to poor (rocky) soil conditions and/or overcrowding, and thus may be more susceptible to attack by the more common group of Ips bark beetles that

damage unhealthy pine and spruce trees. The site should be inspected regularly (at a minimum, annually) to monitor for both MPB and Ips beetles and determine additional infested trees. For long-term control, the site may need to be thinned to leave only well-spaced healthy trees. For short-term control, it may be necessary to spray, cover, burn or peel attacked trees to kill the beetles. Any dead trees located adjacent to a trail will be inspected for rot and may be removed if they pose a safety hazard to users. All control measures will be conducted by Town staff or licensed contractors, employing technical references and beetle management recommendations from the Colorado State Forest Service.

6.3 Erosion Control

Erosion-prone areas identified through baseline assessments and annual monitoring will be stabilized using a combination of revegetation, erosion control best management practices (BMPs), and trail alignment best practices. Techniques may include native plant restoration, installation of erosion control blankets, and construction of water diversion structures to reduce sediment transport and prevent further soil loss. Priority areas for erosion control include steep slopes, riparian corridors, and heavily used trails. Any erosion control efforts will meet the minimum restoration standards established in Section 5(D)(xi) of the Conservation Easement.

6.4 Wildfire Mitigation

Wildfire mitigation at Lost Canyon Ranch Open Space will align with the Douglas County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP), Updated 2022. While wildfire is a natural ecological process, the Town will implement limited, conservation-minded strategies to reduce risk to adjacent properties and public access areas. Per the Conservation Easement, DLC approval will be obtained prior to any large-scale mitigation activities.

Vegetation management may include selective thinning or other low-impact treatments near access routes and trailheads, in coordination with Douglas County wildfire mitigation staff and the Colorado State Forest Service. All actions will prioritize the protection of native ecosystems and open space values.

The property will not be extensively modified for fire suppression but will remain consistent with CWPP recommendations for fuel reduction, defensible access, and public education. Interpretive materials will promote awareness of fire-adapted landscapes and responsible stewardship.

6.5 Wetlands and Water Resources

The protection of wetlands and riparian areas is essential to maintaining hydrological function and biodiversity at Lost Canyon Ranch. Wetlands and associated buffers will be clearly delineated, and encroachment will be prohibited to prevent degradation. Invasive species removal, coupled with natural regeneration and strategic replanting of native wetland species, will be employed to restore habitat quality. Monitoring of water quality and hydrological patterns will occur annually to assess resource health and inform management decisions.

6.6 Wildlife and Species of Concern

Wildlife protection is integral to preserving the ecological integrity of Lost Canyon Ranch. Species of concern, such as the federally listed Preble's meadow jumping mouse and nesting raptors, will be protected through seasonal trail



restrictions, buffer zones, and habitat enhancements. Wildlife corridors will be identified and maintained to facilitate safe movement and reduce habitat fragmentation. Educational signage will be installed to inform visitors about sensitive species and appropriate conduct in designated areas. All signage will comply with the sign size limitations established in Section 5(D)(v) of the Conservation Easement. Any signs exceeding the allotted square footage will be submitted to DLC for approval. Monitoring of sensitive species populations will occur in collaboration with state and federal wildlife agencies to ensure that adaptive management strategies remain effective and responsive to emerging threats.

6.7 Cultural Resources

Cultural resources at Lost Canyon Ranch encompass archeological sites, historic structures, and potential artifact deposits that provide valuable insight into the area's cultural heritage. Protecting these resources from unauthorized collection, vandalism, and construction impacts is a key priority.

THREATS AND MITIGATION:

- **ARTIFACT COLLECTION:** Evidence of surface collection and vandalism has been observed near high-visibility alcoves, trails, and areas with known archeological significance. Strategies to mitigate this threat include the installation of educational signage that informs visitors of the cultural significance of these areas and the legal implications of artifact collection. Increased ranger patrols and partnerships with local law enforcement will also deter unauthorized collection activities.
- **CONSTRUCTION IMPACTS:** Trail construction and facility development pose risks to cultural sites, particularly in areas of high archeological sensitivity. Preservation measures will include conducting cultural resource assessments prior to construction, adjusting trail alignments to avoid sensitive sites, and implementing protective barriers where necessary. Additionally, training for construction crews will include protocols for identifying potential cultural artifacts and reporting any discoveries to the appropriate authorities.

SECTION 7

Visitor Management

7.1 Access

Access will be managed via designated entry points and trails. Parking and signage will support low-impact visitation. Three trailheads have been identified in the master plan. For any proposed trailhead located outside a designated building envelope, additional detail will be provided to demonstrate consistency with the conservation values outlined in the Conservation Easement. DLC will require a detailed list of infrastructure improvements for any planned development outside of building envelopes. Per the Conservation Easement, DLC approval will be obtained prior to any trailhead development outside of building envelopes.

Parking areas should include fencing and other barriers designed to prevent vehicles from leaving roadways and parking areas. Roadway speeds will be posted with a 20-m.p.h. speed limit to reduce the potential for wildlife collisions and prevent vehicle accidents.

The property includes an electronic gate at the entrance point along Lost Canyon Ranch Road. The gate should be closed to general public access between sunset and sunrise when wildlife are most active. A camera should be placed at the entrance to enhance visitor safety and site security.

7.2 Public Use

The Lost Canyon Ranch Open Space is managed under a Conservation Easement that emphasizes the preservation of the area's ecological integrity and natural habitat. To align with the conservation objectives and maintain the site's intended purpose as a natural, minimally disturbed open space, public use policies will focus on low-impact passive recreational activities, such as hiking and casual nature observation, while mitigating potential risks to wildlife, habitat, and visitor safety. The Conservation Easement requires that any recreational activities be passive and undertaken in a manner consistent with the purpose of the Conservation Easement.

PROHIBITION OF DOGS:

- **HABITAT AND WILDLIFE PROTECTION:** Allowing dogs within the Lost Canyon Ranch Open Space is inconsistent with the Conservation Easement's goals of habitat and wildlife protection. Canine presence can disturb sensitive ecosystems, stress native wildlife, disrupt breeding patterns, and cause habitat degradation. Additionally, the scent and behavior of dogs can lead to increased wildlife displacement, particularly in areas with sensitive species.

Creeks and riparian zones are at high risk of erosion, contamination, and vegetation loss if dogs are permitted to access these areas.

- **COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT LIMITATIONS:** Historical data from similar sites indicate low compliance with leash laws. With no full-time enforcement presence on-site, managing dog access would likely result in unauthorized off-leash activity, increased erosion, and the creation of informal trails that damage vegetation and compromise habitat integrity.
- **WASTE MANAGEMENT CONCERNS:** Dog waste introduces harmful pathogens and excess nutrients into the ecosystem, impacting water quality in sensitive riparian areas. Decomposing waste contributes to bacterial contamination, threatening aquatic habitats and degrading the overall visitor experience. Experience from other open space areas shows that visitors often fail to pick up after their dogs, leading to unsanitary conditions and litter along trails.
- **SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS:** Dogs may encounter dangerous wildlife, including rattlesnakes and large mammals, posing risks to both the dogs and their owners. Additionally, the rugged terrain at Lost Canyon Ranch includes steep cliffs and unstable ground that can lead to injuries for dogs unfamiliar with the area.
- **VISITOR EXPERIENCE:** The presence of dogs can detract from the intended quiet, natural ambiance of Lost Canyon Ranch. Barking, unexpected encounters, and the presence of unfamiliar animals can diminish the tranquil experience for hikers seeking solitude in a natural setting.

PROHIBITION OF BICYCLES:

- **CONSERVATION AND HABITAT PRESERVATION:** The Lost Canyon Ranch Open Space is designated for low-impact recreational use, with a primary focus on preserving the natural landscape. The introduction of bikes could exacerbate soil erosion, widen trails, and degrade vegetation, particularly on steep or narrow paths or during wet conditions. Mountain biking also presents risks of off-trail riding, further disturbing fragile habitats and increasing the likelihood of invasive species introduction.
- **TRAIL DESIGN AND SAFETY:** Trails at Lost Canyon Ranch are designed with a small footprint to minimize environmental impact, incorporating natural features such as rock scrambles, narrow passages, and steep terrain. These features are incompatible with biking and pose potential hazards to both bikers and hikers due to limited visibility, steep slopes and blind corners. High-speed biking can also increase the risk of collisions and accidents, particularly in areas with obstructed views.



- **WILDLIFE DISTURBANCE:** Bikes can startle wildlife due to their speed and sudden movements, causing animals to flee, abandon critical habitats, or become disoriented. This is particularly concerning for sensitive species residing in nesting, feeding, or breeding zones, where disturbances can have lasting ecological impacts.
- **PRESERVATION OF VISITOR EXPERIENCE:** The goal of Lost Canyon Ranch is to provide a serene, contemplative space for passive recreational use such as hiking. Allowing bikes can detract from this experience by introducing noise, high-speed movement, and potential conflicts between bikers and hikers. Restricting access to hikers only preserves the natural character and enhances the visitor experience.

ROCK CLIMBING:

The master planning process identified rock climbing as a potential use. Staff may work with the Castlewood Canyon State Park rock climbing advisors to identify potential climbing routes that do not harm the resource or wildlife on the property. Routes should be located in close proximity to trails to prevent erosion and social trail development. Liability and current lack of on-site safety personnel may present challenges to implementation. Any established climbing areas must be approved by DLC.



The public use policy at Lost Canyon Ranch Open Space prioritizes low-impact recreational activities that align with the Conservation Easement's focus on habitat and wildlife protection. By prohibiting dogs and bicycles, the plan seeks to maintain the ecological integrity, visitor safety, and intended natural ambiance of the area while mitigating risks associated with habitat disturbance, erosion, and user conflicts. This

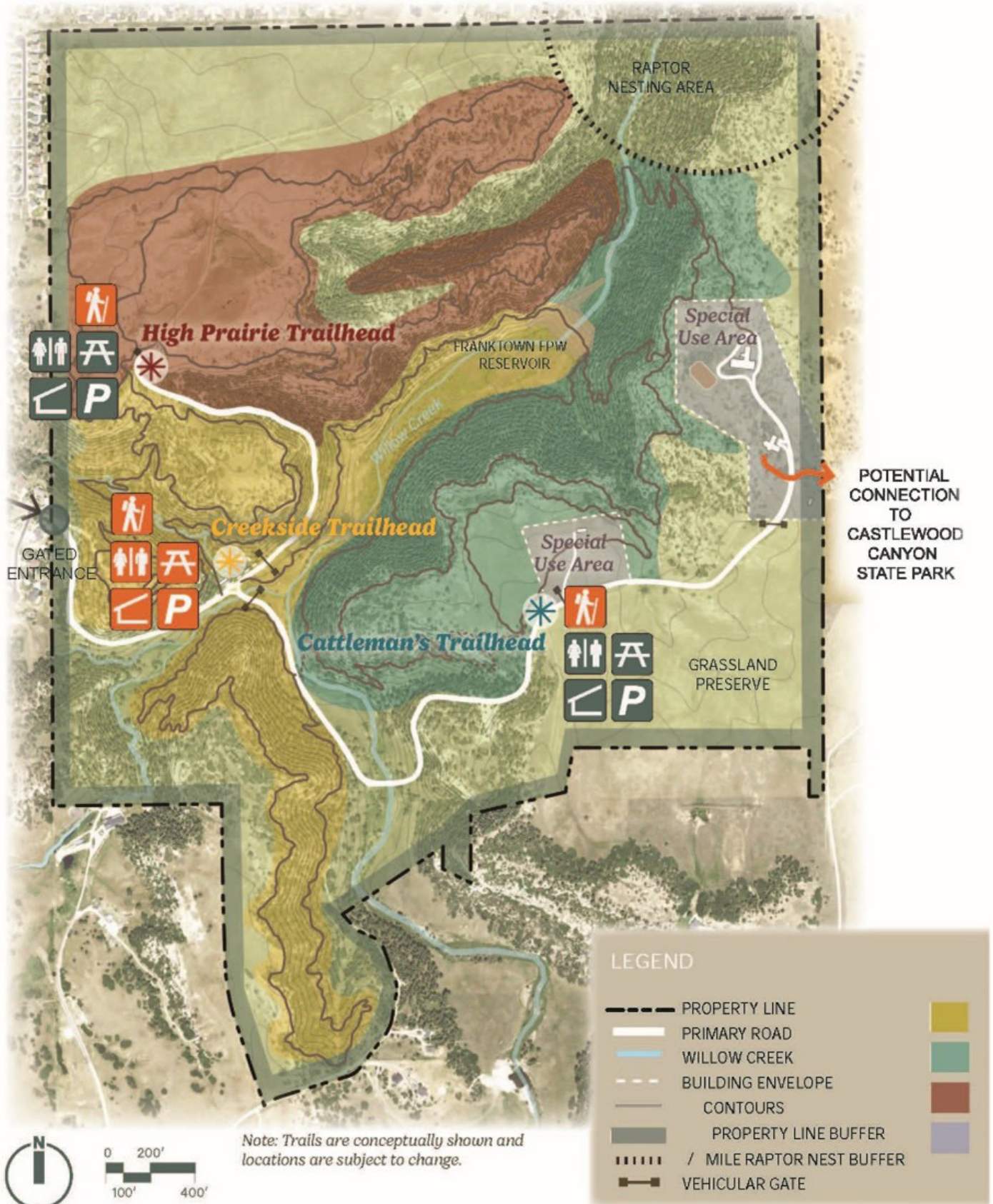
approach ensures a sustainable and enjoyable experience for visitors while protecting the ecological assets of Lost Canyon Ranch for future generations.

7.3 Trailheads and Parking

Trailheads at Lost Canyon Ranch are strategically planned to provide essential access points for visitors while minimizing environmental impact. Future trailheads will be developed to include limited parking capacity, ADA-compliant facilities, and visitor orientation signage. To reduce habitat disturbance, trailhead locations will be carefully selected to avoid sensitive habitats and areas with cultural or archeological significance. Seasonal closures may be implemented based on weather conditions, wildlife nesting seasons, or trail maintenance requirements. To the extent any trailheads are proposed outside of a designated building envelope, such trailheads will only be constructed with the prior approval of DLC, as set forth in the Conservation Easement.

The roadway to the ranch house must remain accessible to an off-site easement holder when road conditions permit. To prevent unauthorized access by park users, gates will be installed at strategic locations to protect the property from unauthorized vehicle access. Initially, gates will be placed just beyond the Cattleman's Trailhead and at the Creekside Trailhead just past the existing intersection, as depicted on the Site Concept Plan. Surveillance cameras may be integrated to monitor access points and deter unauthorized entry.

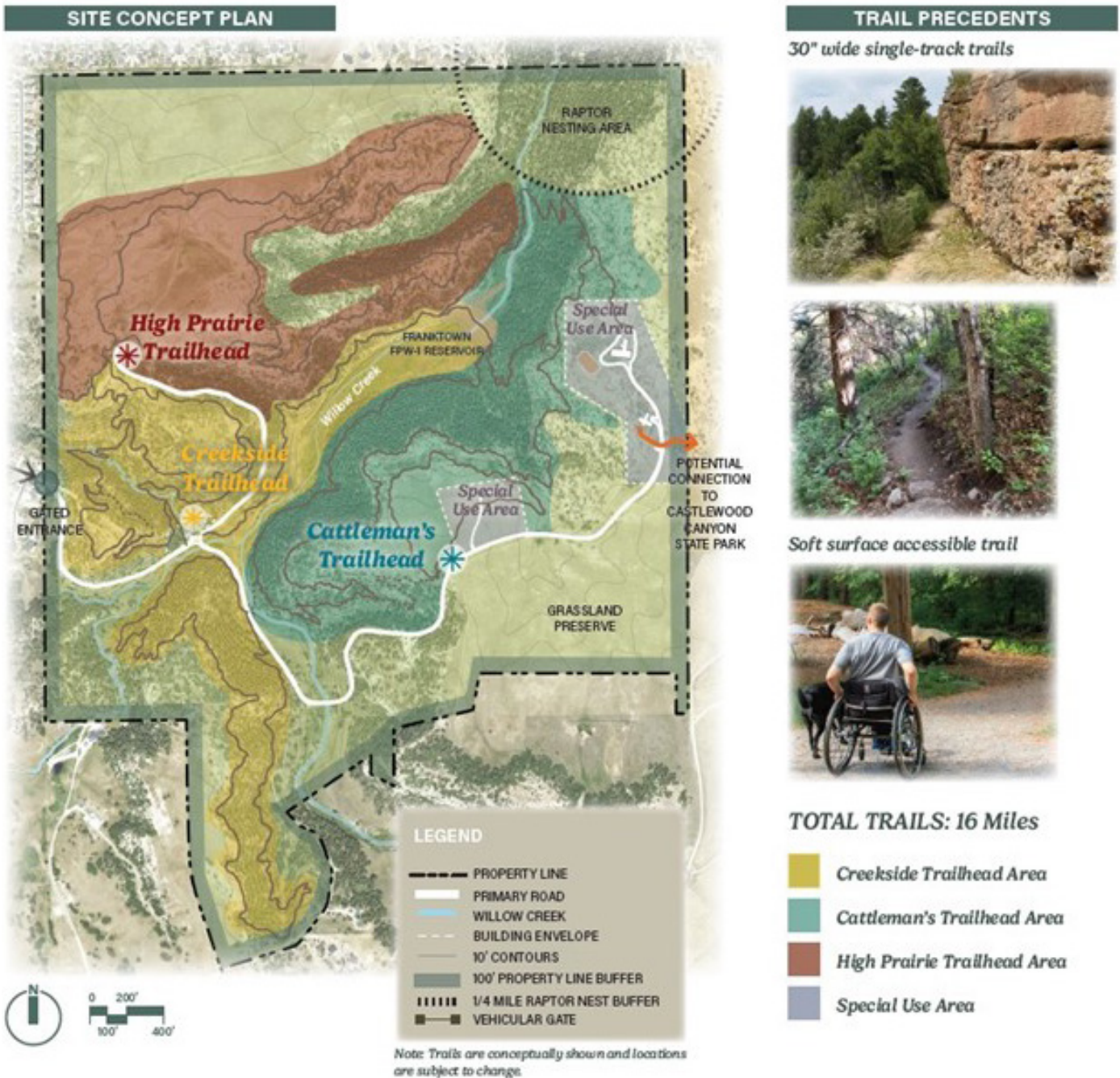
SITE CONCEPT PLAN



7.4 Trails

The Lost Canyon Ranch trail network is designed to provide visitors with a natural, immersive hiking experience while protecting sensitive habitats and cultural resources. Trails will generally consist of narrow, natural-surface paths intended for hiking only, except for planned accessible trails that will be constructed to ADA standards. A total of 15–16 miles of trails are envisioned, with alignments carefully designed to disperse use, reduce erosion potential, and provide diverse recreational opportunities. Trail routing will prioritize avoiding sensitive habitats such as riparian zones, cliffside raptor nesting sites, and archaeologically significant areas.

The Lost Canyon Ranch Master Plan will serve as the Trails Plan for Lost Canyon Ranch Open Space and is depicted in the Site Concept Plan shown below. The trail system envisioned in the Master Plan and referenced in this Management Plan is not final. Because the Conservation Easement permits the construction of new trails only in accordance with the Management Plan or as otherwise approved by DLC, any deviations in the final trail plan from the Master Plan must be approved by DLC prior to construction. Once approved and constructed, trails may be maintained without further approval from DLC.



7.5 Trash

Due to the presence of black bears on the property and to reduce the potential for human-wildlife conflicts at the trailheads and the ranch house area, a bear-resistant trash container or dumpster will be used. All trash containers used on site, including around the ranch house site, will have a lid that can be securely closed and latched. Colorado Parks and Wildlife will be consulted for their list of acceptable bear-resistant containers. Additionally, educational and warning signs regarding bear activity should be installed at all trailheads.

7.6 Signage and Fencing

Signage throughout Lost Canyon Ranch will play a critical role in educating visitors, promoting stewardship, and enhancing wayfinding. Educational signage will provide information about local flora, fauna, cultural resources, and conservation efforts. Wayfinding signs will clearly mark trailheads, trail intersections, and key access points. Interpretive displays will include “Leave No Trace” messaging to encourage responsible recreation. Sign concepts, including material specifications and thematic design, are included within the Lost Canyon Ranch Open Space Master Plan.

The location or construction of any interpretive displays, including kiosks, signs and trail markers requires the prior approval of DLC if located outside of a building envelope.

Key fencing objectives include:

- **BOUNDARY ALIGNMENT:** Align all fencing with updated property boundaries to prevent encroachment and clarify land ownership.
- **INTERNAL FENCE REMOVAL:** Remove obsolete internal fencing that no longer serves a functional purpose, prioritizing areas where habitat connectivity can be restored.
- **WILDLIFE-FRIENDLY DESIGN:** Utilize three-strand smooth wire fencing to facilitate wildlife movement and reduce the risk of injury to deer, elk, and other large mammals.
- **GATE RESTRICTIONS:** Prohibit private gates and unauthorized access points along property boundaries to maintain secure and controlled access.
- **SURVEY REQUIREMENTS:** Require property surveys for all new fencing installations to ensure proper alignment and prevent conflicts with adjacent landowners.

7.7 Public Education

Interpretive programming and volunteer opportunities will be integral to connecting visitors with the site’s unique ecological, cultural, and historical resources. Educational programs may include guided nature walks, wildlife monitoring workshops, archeological site tours, and conservation-focused volunteer projects. Partnerships with local schools, conservation groups, and historical societies will further enhance public education efforts, fostering a greater sense of stewardship and appreciation for Lost Canyon Ranch’s natural and cultural assets.

7.8 Special Events

Special events contained within the building envelopes do not require DLC approval but should align with the conservation values of the property. Special events outside of the building envelopes must be submitted to DLC for prior approval. Pursuant to the Conservation Easement, in making a determination regarding a special event, DLC will consider whether the event traverses the property without encouraging congregation in sensitive areas and is conducted in a manner that minimizes impacts to conservation values.

Educational and interpretive activities conducted outside of any building envelope must be consistent with the purpose of the Conservation Easement and be conducted in accordance with the management plan or with the approval of DLC. Additional detail regarding proposed programs will be provided to DLC as programming develops.

Special events currently envisioned on the property include day camps, guided hikes, nature-based programming, twilight events, and volunteer and donor appreciation events.

The Conservation Easement also requires the restoration of any portions of the property impacted by a permitted special event in accordance with the Restoration Standards set forth in Section 5(D)(xi).

7.9 Regulations

Lost Canyon Ranch Open Space will be open to the general public from sunrise to sunset, with automated gates installed to restrict access during nighttime hours to protect sensitive resources and reduce the risk of unauthorized use after dark. However, the Town may operate staffed evening or nighttime programs on a limited basis. Examples include:

- Stargazing and astronomy nights
- Full moon or dusk hikes led by naturalists
- Educational night programs focused on nocturnal wildlife
- Cultural or seasonal events such as solstice observances or bat walks
- Evening events within the ranch house building envelope

All after-hours activities will be scheduled, supervised, and aligned with resource protection goals. Access outside of posted hours is otherwise prohibited.

Visitors will be required to comply with the Town's General Rules and Regulations, as established in Municipal Code 12.12.030, which will be enforced by the Castle Rock Police Department. The following activities will apply to all recreation areas:

- Closed Areas. It shall be unlawful to enter, use or occupy a recreation area during the time such recreation area is closed to entry, use or occupancy.
- Vandalism. It shall be unlawful for any person or persons to remove, damage, deface or destroy any real or personal property, wildlife habitat or vegetation.
- Litter. It shall be unlawful to deposit or leave any refuse, trash or litter in or upon any recreation area except by depositing such refuse, trash or litter in designated refuse receptacles.
- Fires. It shall be unlawful to build, start or light any fire of any nature in any recreation area except in outdoor fireplace grills or camp stoves within designated areas.
- Hunting. It shall be unlawful in any recreation area to hunt, trap, catch, molest, harm, kill or chase any wild animal or bird, or to molest their habitat.
- Firearms and Deadly Weapons. Except for law enforcement officers in the performance of their duties, it shall be unlawful for any person to openly carry a firearm upon any recreation area upon which the Town Manager has directed to be posted a notification that the carrying of firearms is prohibited. It shall be unlawful to discharge or use explosives, firearms, BB guns, pellet guns, air guns, crossbows, long bows or slingshots while upon any recreation area, except in designated areas or by law enforcement officers on official duty.
- Motorized Vehicles. Parking or driving of unauthorized motor vehicles on a recreation area is not permitted, except on designated roadways and parking areas.
- Camping. It shall be unlawful to camp overnight in any recreation area, except in areas which are designated for camping.

- Dogs. Dogs are not permitted to run at large in any recreation area. All dogs must be on a leash, cord or chain and held by a person physically able to control the dog.
- Dumping. It shall be unlawful to dump commercial or household refuse or any hazardous substances within any recreation area or in any trash containers placed on such land.
- Hazardous Activities. It shall be unlawful for any person to engage in any activity on any recreation area which constitutes a hazard to the safety of other persons, except in areas where such activity is specifically authorized.
- Signs. Posting of signs of any kind is prohibited, with the exceptions of signs erected and maintained pursuant to and in the discharge of any governmental function, or as required by any law, ordinance or governmental regulation, except as authorized in writing by the director of parks and recreation.
- Fireworks. It shall be unlawful to discharge fireworks on any park or open space lands except when authorized in writing by the director of parks and recreation.
- Commercial Activity. It shall be unlawful to conduct any commercial activity, or provide any service, product or activity for which a fee is charged, on any park or open space lands, except when such activity is authorized in writing by the director of parks and recreation.
- Alcoholic Beverages. As provided in Chapter 9.12 of this Code, it shall be unlawful for any person to consume, serve, sell or possess or have under his or her control, in any recreation area, any alcoholic beverage, except when a special events permit is issued pursuant thereto.
- Hours of Use. All park and open space areas shall be closed to public use between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m. unless excepted in writing by the Director of Parks and Recreation.
- Encroachment on Public Property. It shall be unlawful to construct or place any unauthorized permanent or temporary structure or obstruction on any public property or to block access of said public property to the general public.

These regulations shall not be applicable to nor prohibit any act by any officer or employee of the Town who is engaged in the performance of any act within the scope of his or her employment.

(Ord. 2003-41 §2, 2003; Ord. 99-43 §1, 1999; Ord. 93-24 §1, 1993; Ord. 92-12 §1(part), 1992)

In addition to these general rules and regulations, activities on the property that do not promote safe use of the open space and that are inconsistent with the purpose of the Conservation Easement will be prohibited or restricted.

SECTION 8

Implementation



8.1 Operations

Effective implementation of the Lost Canyon Ranch Management Plan will require coordination across multiple Town departments, partner organizations, and stakeholders. Town staff will develop annual work plans and maintenance schedules to align operations with strategic objectives, ensuring consistency in resource management, visitor services, and facility upkeep. Partner organizations, including local conservation groups and volunteer networks, will play a critical role in implementing restoration projects, conducting outreach programs, and assisting with ongoing monitoring efforts.

8.2 Schedule and Budget

Implementation will be strategically phased based on priority, funding availability, and resource considerations. Projects will be categorized as short-term (1-3 years), mid-term (3-5 years), and long-term (5+ years) to effectively allocate resources and manage workload. Funding sources will include the Douglas County Shareback Fund, Great Outdoors Colorado, and the Castle Rock Parks and Trails Foundation. The Town will also seek additional grant opportunities, public-private partnerships, and volunteer support to offset costs and accelerate project timelines.

8.3 Review and Amendments

The Lost Canyon Ranch Master Plan will undergo a comprehensive review every five years to assess progress, incorporate new data, and adjust strategies as necessary. The (DLC) team will be consulted during each review cycle to ensure alignment with broader regional conservation goals and evolving regulatory frameworks. Amendments to the plan will be made as needed, with public input solicited to maintain transparency and community engagement. The Conservation Easement requires that the management plan be reviewed by DLC and the Town annually during the annual monitoring visit. Upon the mutual agreement of the Town and DLC, the management plan may be amended.

8.4 Annual Report

The Town and Douglas County signed an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) regarding the County's financial contributions towards the acquisition of LCROS. According to that IGA, beginning on April 1, 2025, and on or before April 1 of each year thereafter through and including April 1, 2034, the Town shall provide the County with an annual report documenting the work performed by the Town on LCROS and all related

activities during the preceding year. Such report shall describe, in general terms, the Town's use of LCROS, all activities associated with, and expenses incurred in the design, installation and maintenance of trails on LCROS, estimates regarding public attendance on LCROS, efforts undertaken to comply with the Conservation Easement, and any other information requested by the County regarding the site. A copy of such report shall be provided to the County Open Space Advisory Council (COSAC).

8.5 Summary of Action Items

- **ENGAGE TRAFFIC CALMING MEASURES:** Design and install prescribed traffic calming measures to Lost Canyon Ranch Road.
- **FORMALIZE TRAIL ALIGNMENTS:** Establish and mark designated trails with signage and wayfinding to direct visitors and protect sensitive habitats.
- **ROADWAY IMPROVEMENTS:** Assess and upgrade existing roadways to ensure safe operational and public access, including paving or stabilization of erosion-prone sections.
- **PARKING AREA CONSTRUCTION:** Develop strategically located parking areas to accommodate visitors while minimizing environmental impact.
- **PROPERTY LINE STAKING AND FENCING:** Locate property lines and install fencing to delineate property boundaries to ensure protection of the property from trespass or unintended impacts
- **SECURITY ENHANCEMENTS:** Install surveillance cameras at key access points to deter unauthorized entry and monitor for vandalism.
- **VOLUNTEER PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT:** Recruit and train volunteers to support visitor management, trail maintenance, and habitat restoration.
- **BUILDING CONDITION ASSESSMENT:** Evaluate existing structures for safety and structural integrity, and develop a phased plan for rehabilitation, adaptive reuse, or removal.
- **WEED AND RESTORATION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION:** Implement targeted invasive species management and native habitat restoration initiatives, including riparian buffer enhancements and erosion control plantings.
- **DAM ACCESS ROAD RESTORATION:** Restore and maintain dam access road to a safe, serviceable condition to facilitate maintenance and emergency response.
- **PUBLIC EDUCATION INITIATIVES:** Create interpretive signage, brochures, and outreach programs to educate visitors about cultural, historical, and ecological resources
- **WILDLIFE AND VEGETATION MONITORING:** Establish ongoing monitoring protocols for key wildlife species, nesting sites, and sensitive plant communities.
- **ARCHEOLOGIC INVESTIGATION OPPORTUNITIES:** Explore opportunities for future archeological studies in areas with high cultural resource potential, in coordination with regional experts and academic institutions.

