

South Platte Park Management Plan Update 2017

Comments/*Responses* from Public Meetings

Comment: Address Pollinators, native plants like Thistle and Milkweed; *Pollinator management policy is pg. 41 under Wildlife Management – the native thistle, wavy leaf thistle has not been seen in South Platte Park since the park's inception. This plant is more prairie and less riparian, and much of the park consists of restoration areas. Staff is familiar with the identification of this plant regarding to avoid it during weed management. The appropriateness and success to include this plant in future seed mixes may be investigated. Showy milkweed exists in multiple healthy populations and several volunteer projects have been focused to seed it into several other locations; swamp milkweed thrives in the Park's wetland areas and is the greater focus for restoration efforts.* wildlife migration routes and consideration of over/under pass at Mineral *A section on Wildlife corridors has been added; future over/underpasses are high budget items in the purview of city and state road engineering design);* address Tuck Property development and its influence on the park *Addressed on page 20 under future anticipated developments.*

Comment:: Cooley Lake info still needed?; *Cooley Lake, appendix 5, retain unchanged* Bird Counts at Nevada Ditch *Nevada Ditch, #3 under Wildlife Areas with one comment added about bird study results.*

Comment: Address Chatfield Reallocation *Existing under Water Resources section, p 36*

Comments submitted by Email:

Comment: the entire staff's commitment to appropriate ways to preserve and conserve while still managing access is a gift not many communities have. *Noted*

Comment: Updates to the park management plan includes a statement at the beginning of the plan says "... allow for visitor opportunity while providing an undisturbed area for wildlife retreat...". I support maintaining Cooley Lake for wildlife alone. When I hike around the other Park lakes, I frequently find trash remnants and fishing line, which as we know, is dangerous for wildlife. Opening Cooley to the public for recreation will disturb the animal population and inevitably bring more trash. *Noted*

Comment: I support a balance between areas where people can recreate and enjoy nature and wildlife close up, and areas designated as undisturbed places for wildlife retreat. Hopefully, that balance and direction established in the past will continue to be a major mission of South Platte Park. I would like to encourage you and the management team at SPP, South Suburban, and the City of Littleton to continue to keep Cooley Lake as a restricted access area as it is now. And that the Park will continue to manage the

Critical Wildlife Areas for the enjoyment of hikers only (with leashed dogs where appropriate). *Noted*

Comment: I do support keeping Cooley with the limited human access. Surely, a large multi-use park in a major metropolitan area can continue to meet the needs of visitors, wildlife, water appropriation and water quality. Growing population pressure makes respites like Cooley more necessary to encourage the health of the park so we all can continue to enjoy it's varied amenities. *Noted*

Comment: Please include my support for an undisturbed area, i. e. Cooley Lake, for wildlife in the management plan for South Platte Park. *Noted*

Comment: Just a note to let you know that I agree with your statement about Cooley Lake to "allow for visitor opportunity while providing an undisturbed area for wildlife retreat." *Noted*

Comment: If the idea of opening up the Cooley area comes up during the discussion of the SPP Management Plan I want you to know that I totally support keeping Cooley a restricted area. *Noted*

Comment: In the past there has been some talk about opening Cooley Lake up for fishing, which of course would make that area no longer a haven for wildlife. I served on the Blue Ribbon Committee that worked on management plans with Jim Priddy, and one of the things we did was distribute questionnaires to park users, interested citizens, and people attending Western Welcome Week. We received a very good return on the questionnaires, and many more via the internet. One of the questions asked what changes would you like to see at South Platte Park? The overwhelming majority of the responders said to keep the park the way it was and do not change a thing. No one - repeat - no one said why can't I fish in Cooley Lake? Cooley Lake was never mentioned by any of the responders. I regularly lead hikes to Cooley Lake, and I have never had a visitor ask about fishing there or even ask about boating there. To me, this means that the fishermen have plenty of opportunities to practice their fishing skills in the lakes south of Mineral and/or in the river. I can't think of another suburban park that offers so many choices of lakes plus a river for fishing. The wildlife at South Platte Park is constantly threatened by people, loose dogs, traffic, noise, loss of habitat, weather, disease, etc., etc. Some sort of protection is needed if we are going to have wildlife at all. The Cooley Lake area provides a safe place for these animals and it should not be open to the general public. *Noted*

Comment: Having reviewed the draft management plan, it seems to me that the major priority is resource protection. I am especially interested in protecting the east trail from too much impact. It is the longest piece of real estate that is uninterrupted by buildings and other structures, and even though Wolhurst has its two points, those folks are careful about using and exposing them. We have to get permission, I believe, to park on the west side of the mobile homes to walk in and do bird censuses. East Trail provides habitat for nesting owls, coyote denning, and whitetail deer, among other

things, that I would not like to see impacted. We can't stop development, I suppose, although I would if I could on that east side, but if and when it goes in, access to the east side of the river should be strictly limited. The plan says that the developer wants two access points to the east trail from Santa Fe Park, and is no doubt planning to sell property based partly on access to that open space, but I would like to see access made as restricted as possible, with only one access point. Part of the development on the north end looks to be platted above that bluff above the feeder stream, which will make it difficult to get in at that point anyway. We do have the buffer we purchased, but that buffer should remain fenced with four-strand wire and only one gate, locked after hours, provided so that people have to travel some distance to even get to it. This will discourage the impulsive secret drinkers, teen parties and other such groups. Fishermen will have to find their way in the dark. Given that the park is open through access via the Mary Carter Greenway Trail, there isn't much the park can do except patrol 24/7, but it may come to that when the park is finally surrounded on all sides by housing and shopping. Distance and a physical barrier seem to me to be the only options, with perhaps a patrol from either Littleton, Arapahoe County, or the park itself after hours to educate visitors about hours, leash laws, etc. at least in the early stages. We should endeavor to keep Northern Critical Area, the area around Bufflehead, the Heron Pond and the bank east of the Overlook to remain as protected areas. Most of all, we **MUST** keep Cooley closed to the public except on an arranged basis. Perhaps our walks should not be the only venues for education. A display about Cooley in the Carson Center, in other S. Suburban facilities, and other public spaces should address this question for those who just don't get it. Articles for the Littleton Independent and other local media outlets should outline why Cooley is protected, and all of these should include something to the effect of, "There are seven billion people in the world. Do you think the human species has the right to occupy every foot of ground for its own needs?". *Noted*

Comment: Keep Cooley Lake closed to the public except for the walks if the subject comes up. The wildlife need a place to retreat especially on those busy weekends when the park has people everywhere-not just on the paths. *Noted*

Comment: SPP should offer places for people to enjoy many outdoor pursuits, but that also retains & maintains some areas as refuges for wildlife, where they can go about their business without fear of human interference (namely Cooley Lake area). It seems that human encroachment into wildlife habitat is constantly on the march and once encroached, is impossible to turn back. *Noted*

Comment: I would like Cooley to remain an area preserved for wildlife and only guided tours. *Noted*

Comment: Page 59 "...on over Dad Clark.." probably should be "...one over Dad Clark...". *Corrected* Page 28, Cut bank management: Nesting locations of kingfishers, bank swallows and rough-winged swallows have already decreased. No nest records for any of them were reported this season. Several times we saw kingfishers at the

south end, fishing and carrying their catch under C470, presumably to feed young just outside the park. I saw RWSWs exploring one hole in the bank near the east trail, but they didn't return to use it. *Noted, language corrected.*

Comment: 1) The mission is clear and the action steps are all consistent with the mission. There is also solid certainty and conviction about how things should be run. All in all a well thought out plan. 2) I don't know how much pressure you get to turn the park into a traditional park. I can see people wanting swing sets and soccer fields and just turn SPP into just another park. If you get such pressure it may be wise to consider changing the name to one more consistent with the mission. Would a name such as South Platte Natural Area or South Platte Wildlife Area or some other variation help preclude such requests. *The moniker "South Platte Park . . . A Natural Area" is used on some publication headers and brochures. It was used on previous park signs. Staff will continuing to seek opportunities to promote this brand for the Park within new graphic and branding guidelines* 3) The section on Cooley Lake was wonderful. Cooley Lake is a gem within a gem and should be protected as described in the plan. I have been on a number of the once a month trips to Cooley Lake. These trips are terrific. Would it be possible to stay with the same number of trips per year but periodically insert a more advanced birding trip? I bet more experienced birders would love it, the lake would still be protected, and even more support for the park realized. *Staff will look at including some advanced birding or slower photography-focused trips among the general interest options for guided programs in future catalog cycles.*

Comment: I was reading through the South Platte Park Management Plan, and I would like to confirm that ice fishing will be allowed on Eaglewatch Lake (Lake #2) as long as there is 6" of ice or greater. *Confirmed*

Comment: Page 15 first paragraph: Line 1 "from the Littleton, and" It seems a word is missing. *Corrected* Line 3 "and are typically require to plant" A final d is needed on require (or required on require?) *Corrected*

Page 17 in Item 1: Reference is made to Santa Fe Park with no preceding mention of this. I had no idea of what was meant until a later page gave more information.

Corrected

Page 19: Line 3 What is meant by "late seral stage"? *Corrected*

Page 22: Lines 4-5 "to close heavily used areas help reduce the cost..." It seems an additional word or some punctuation is needed. *Corrected*

Page 27: Consider listing specific weeds in an appendix or reference another document. I saw the comment in the document so maybe this is how it was before and someone thought the specifics should be included. *Noted*

Comment: As one who frequently hikes and birds along the trail west of Eaglewatch Lake, I know that the dog leash policy is often ignored in that area; once owners enter the seclusion of that woodland, they often let their dog run free.. Would recommend

limiting access to walkers/fishermen only (i.e. no dogs) on that section of trail.

Considered, and current policy to remain in place at this time, with notation for more enforcement presence in this location.

Input from Justin Olson, District Wildlife Manager for CO Parks and Wildlife: I do not see any issues, and it looks like SSPRD has a great handle on the management of the Park. Two things I found that might warrant consideration are the following:

- On Page 39 of the report, there is mention of a fishing regulation pertaining to bass size, and it is incorrectly stated as 16 inches. The length as per our regulations is 15 inches or larger to be legal to keep. I would recommend changing this. *Corrected*

- Reference in the report is made to the possibility of beekeeping occurring on the park. Due to the possibility of bears passing through the area, if a beekeeping operation is undertaken, I would recommend looking into protective apiary fencing should this move forward. *Noted*

Input from Paul Winkle, Aquatic Biologist for CO Parks and Wildlife: took a look at your mgt. plan, and everything aquatics related looks good. I'm glad to see that repairs were done on the river restoration area after the historic high flows. *Noted*

Input from Littleton Staff: mowing: Pg. 27 “manage as a natural area” The following language was added in the upland grassland management section: *South Platte Park is designated a natural area by the city, exempting it from mowing ordinances for plants over 8” tall. The Mineral Avenue median will be managed as natural native grass with some restriction on plant height. A mid-summer mow is recommended of the median and a strip on either side, to a height of 6 – 8” before the warm season grasses complete their growth cycle so it can maintain a natural look through the winter without impeding visibility. Guardrails and reflector poles should be trimmed to make the job look complete, or treated with a chemical and crusher fines to eliminate future vegetation in this radius. Due to safety concerns of staff on the roadway or damage to vehicles from thrown stones, Staff should use extreme caution and PPE’s when working near the roadway. Trash and litter should be managed regularly by orange-vested paid staff or CSW’s to keep the area looking neat.*

Comments from Don Bruns:

Several extensive documents were provided to South Platte Park and city staff, from Mr. Brun’s experience as a professional recreation planner and teacher. *Staff has implemented some of Mr. Brun’s recommendations within the update of the current plan. This has included developing more specific processes and objectives under the Park goals in Appendix 2, adding detail to the intended use zone experiences in the Core Habitat and Use Zones section on page 15, and establishing objectives to better identify and track key indicators. This process will help establish baseline measurements towards future capacity recommendations.*

With regards to Mr. Burns desire to see a more robust plan that surveys visitor experience expectations and ties them to specific management prescriptions, we feel this is beyond the current scope of updating this management plan, and would require resources beyond the current allocations. We are willing to look at a process to begin to capture more park user input into park user experience, desired activities and overall protection of the habitat within South Platte Park.