

Operations &

Chapter 6:

Maintenance

Operations and Maintenance



Fort Garland Park

OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE

The proposed recommendations for operation and maintenance of trails and recreational support facilities and recreational areas within Costilla County were developed in conversations with county officials and the County Road and Bridge Department. Depending on the project priority, one or several approaches may be part of the solution. Maintaining existing or developed trails will require a different approach than maintaining existing recreational facilities such as landscapes, playgrounds, park bathrooms, and campgrounds. Because the nature of maintenance is dependent on the site condition, available county resources and funding sources, the recommendations will need to be revisited each year.

The purpose of these recommendations is to ensure that recreational areas are safe and accessible for residents and visitors to enjoy.

DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES: *COSTILLA COUNTY ROAD AND BRIDGE DEPARTMENT*

The Road and Bridge Department is an essential partner in any discussions on maintenance and operations of existing facilities and development of new trails and recreational resources or any structures that increase accessibility to recreational facilities. They have knowledge and resources to help the county increase accessibility for residents and visitors to participate in recreational activities, to provide safe, clean facilities, make repairs to existing infrastructure, or anticipate maintenance needs for proposed recreational areas. They have creatively developed partnerships to share in the responsibility of beautifying communities and enhancing roadways and signs which in return benefit local residents. They are the branch of the county that is responsible for the following duties:

- Coordinate road and bridge maintenance and construction projects and activities with appropriate personnel.
- Develop work plans, schedules, priorities and materials/procurement requests.
- Make emergency plans and initiate employee call backs as required.
- Develop weekly, monthly and annual schedules of prioritized maintenance work.

- Direct traffic control operations, equipment mobilization, fueling of equipment, training and safety program management.
- Calculate quantities of material required; monitor and account for materials usage

Specific to recreational facilities and trails, the Costilla County Road and Bridge Department responds to repairs, inspections, and general maintenance of county roads, bridges, and signs. Through a group effort, road supervisors and road graders regularly inspect roads and signs within the county. All road signs are on an annual maintenance schedule. The labor for installing road signs is a shared responsibility with partners such as the Southwest Conservation Corp Community crew. The county's budget for maintaining county signs ranges from \$15,000-20,000. County sign standards are 18' x 18' directional signs and estimated at \$45/sign. The Department is currently in the process of replacing street name signs, stop signs, directional and speed limit signs. Without adequate road signs, inspections of roads and bridges, county residents and visitors will not gain safe access to county-owned recreational areas to enjoy a picnic, hike, or time fishing at the reservoir.

Ensuring clean and safe support facilities at recreational areas is another responsibility of the Department. Without proper sanitation and maintenance of these facilities, the public is left to find other unsanitary ways to dispose of waste or damage resources. The Road and Bridge Department inspect, repair, and maintain restrooms, trash bins, and recreational structures (picnic tables, playground equipment) and/or maintain landscapes at the Fort Garland Park, Rito Seco Park, Stabilization Park, Sanchez Reservoir, and Mountain Home Reservoir. Partnerships make some of the routine maintenance possible on non-county owned lands such as the Stabilization Park and other reservoirs managed by the Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife. The county hires at least two seasonal part-time employees to help with routine maintenance of facilities during the busy summer season and hunting seasons – mid-May to mid-October.

Trails maintenance is currently not on a routine scheduled inspection and general maintenance for the Department. Because of the lack of a formal trail system within the county, the Road and Bridge Department has not dedicated resources to maintaining the few existing trails such as the Sangre de Cristo Greenbelt Trail.

Overall, the county feels they have the capacity and resources to purchase supplies to beautify parks and help maintain trails, roads, signs, and other infrastructure

(parking lots, trash cans, restrooms, bridges, etc.) They will continue to seek out partnerships and employ seasonal employees to assist with the priority maintenance work. A list of priority maintenance needs and recommendations (including funding sources when appropriate) has been identified for each trails, recreation, and open space project. The hope is that the county can work together to agree on the priorities and how to financially support the maintenance and operation of each project.

RECOMMENDATIONS: RECREATIONAL FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT

Recreational facilities support a variety of recreational activities that are communal or solitary in nature, active or passive, outdoors or indoors. Swimming pools, indoor sports facilities, sports fields, boating facilities, piers, park signage, and restrooms are just a few examples. Recreational equipment on the other hand relate more specifically to playground equipment (slides, swings, merry-go-round), park benches, picnic tables and grills, pavilions, and sports equipment for indoor or outdoor. During the development of the Master plan, an initial condition assessment was conducted on county recreational resources to identify potential improvements to recreational facilities and equipment. In addition, county residents were able to voice their concerns with the current condition of recreational facilities, providing opinions on how to improve and increase accessibility to parks, fishing areas, trails, and identify their concerns with litter and unclean restroom facilities and picnic areas.

General Community Requests:

- Improve existing county parks specifically Rito Seco Park, Sanchez Reservoir, and the Town of San Luis Park
- Create regulations and enforce them in the park
- Increase trash patrol to protect natural areas
- Repair and clean-up picnic areas
- Repair and clean bathrooms in all county parks
- Provide landscaping in county parks
- Provide trash bins and trash pick-up

MAINTENANCE RECOMMENDATIONS: CURRENT LIST OF MAINTENANCE NEEDS FOR RECREATIONAL EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES WITHIN THE COUNTY

Rito Seco Park:

- Develop informational signage at park (etiquette, park hours)
- Develop, install, and maintain signage along major roadways along Hwy 159 and Balleroy Road
- Increase trash pick-up
- Provide trash bins
- Maintain campgrounds (clean-up, designate campgrounds on durable surfaces)
- Stabilize areas along creek to avoid erosion, litter in creek, and increase safety
- Develop a parking lot and continue road grading
- Maintain picnic areas
- Implement restroom maintenance

Veterans Park:

- Maintain partnerships with community organizations to assist with landscaping
- Provide more trash bins
- Post park signage for park hours, etiquette, and uses

Maintenance needs for the following sites should be completed in cooperation with current partners:

Fort Garland Park:

- Repair/replace picnic tables
- Repair basketball court
- Continue with park maintenance

Stabilization Reservoir:

- Provide trash bins
- Clean BBQ pits in picnic area
- Repair/replace picnic tables and benches

- Establish campground areas on durable surfaces
- Provide informational signage on hours, uses, etiquette

Mountain Home, Sanchez, and Smith Reservoir:

- Provide informational signage on hours, seasonal restrictions
- Establish campgrounds on durable surfaces and maintain sites (clean out fire pits, etc.)
- Maintain roads and restrooms
- Trail maintenance (brush clearing)

Town of San Luis Park:

- Improve landscaping (mow, plant native plants, trim trees, etc.)
- Increase trash pick-up
- Provide trash bins
- Repair and/or replace picnic tables, benches
- Repair basketball court
- Upgrade or improve playground equipment
- Inspect the safety of structures within park boundaries – bell tower, old school gym

Town of Blanca Park:

- Repair playground equipment with more durable equipment
- Install shade structure to ensure equipment longevity
- Maintain landscaping
- Increase trash pick-up

Community surveys suggested that the operation and maintenance of the above requests could be completed by:

- Shared responsibilities
- Volunteerism
- Creating an “adopt a park” program
- Parks and Recreation District

In discussions with the County Road and Bridge Department, they remain committed to routine scheduled inspections, repairs and general maintenance of recreational facilities they currently oversee for:

- Roads, bridges, and signage
- Landscapes
- Recreational facilities – Rito Seco Park, Stabilization Reservoir, Sanchez Reservoir, Fort Garland Park, and Veterans Park

Opportunities:

- Utilize the Southwest Conservation Corps community crews to help the county clean campgrounds and picnic areas at the Rito Seco Park.
- The county will continue to maintain the road to the park.
- The county is also considering trash cans at Rito Seco Park and posting signs such as “Keep Park Clean” and “No Dumping Allowed” to educate visitors.
- During high visitation, the county will increase routine maintenance at Rito Seco park.
- The county will continue to grade the road to Sanchez Reservoir to maintain safe access to the recreational area.
- The county has developed a partnership with the local American Legion to assist with the landscaping and overall maintenance of the Veterans Park. This partnership will be used as an example for developing partnerships with Sembrando Semillas and Adams State University to organize road and park clean-ups.

Maintaining any new facilities not currently on their schedule will require a joint effort with partnership groups. They remain flexible to maintaining additional recreational facilities if any are further developed and working with partners such as CO Parks and Wildlife Department and local special interest groups such as the VFW, American Legion, and the Fort Garland/Blanca Community Center to add recreational facilities to their schedule.

RECOMMENDATIONS: TRAIL MAINTENANCE

All trails benefit from routine maintenance. The level of trails maintenance can vary depending on the type of trail, accessibility of trail, trail maintenance needs and priorities, and trail infrastructure (signage, trash cans, etc.).

OPPORTUNITIES:

The county already manages the road system and would be inclined to work with partners more versed in trail construction, and trail maintenance. In partnership, the county will work on establishing rules/policies for use of trails and recreational areas (trail etiquette, park rules, and safety), and identify funding sources and partnerships to address improvements, repairs, or future development. Since all potential or existing trails examined “go somewhere,” there are a variety of transportation funding sources that can be leveraged to cover costs for labor and supplies. Incorporating trails and side-paths into plans for the upkeep and improvement of County roads can make projects more attractive for funding. For the purpose of this document, the recommendations will address maintenance of trail signage, trash receptacles at trailheads, parking areas, and restrooms for the following projects. However, this guidance can also apply to any new trails that are not yet identified in this document:

- Sangre de Cristo Ranges Subdivision Greenbelt Trail Loop – using the existing linear trail, create a loop trail circumnavigating the entire greenbelt area with multiple access points to scenic views.
- Sangre de Cristo Ranges Subdivision Greenbelt Trail extension to Rito Seco Park – extend the trail from its southern terminus to the Rito Seco Park.
- Establish a Rito Seco Park Trail System – extend a trail from the park to the Battenburg Meadows within the Sangre de Cristo Ranges Subdivision Greenbelt
- Rio Grande Greenbelt Recreational Area – 3-mile hiking, biking, horseback riding trail along river and canyon rim linking to multiple access points for fishing, boating and camping

To better manage trails, the county, should consider the following options:

- Partnering with trails supervisors at public land management agencies to complete an assessment of trails and propose maintenance
- Create a trails authority in cooperation with state, and federal agencies to assure strong public involvement and support.
- Apply for assistance from Southwest Conservation Corps
- Create “adopt a trail” programs with local businesses and schools.

- Organize volunteer days to help clean trails or complete trail assessments.
- Create a trail users organization to provide feedback and report on issues concerning trail maintenance and safety issues.

For trail development and/or maintenance consider the following:

- Inventory the Trail and its related facilities.
- Set maintenance goals and standards for the quality of maintenance, hours of operation, etc.
- Develop tasks necessary to achieve maintenance quality levels.
- Assign the maintenance tasks to designated groups or individuals.
- Monitor the quality and frequency of the work.
- Implement a control system for tracking accomplishments and relevant costs.
- Evaluate the maintenance of the trail.

MAINTENANCE GUIDELINES:

The following maintenance guidelines are generalized, and should be reviewed carefully when considering improvements and incorporating trails into routine maintenance. Trail maintenance should be taken seriously as it relates to trail safety, attractiveness, and image.

Important maintenance tasks that management agencies must consider:

- Mowing - (3-4 times annually) 4-foot min. wide each side of trail where applicable.
- Pruning - (Annually) Prune woody vegetation 4-feet back from sides of trail – 14-foot vertical clearance.
- Removal of Trees/Limbs - (Annually) Evaluation/removal of unhealthy or dead trees and limbs. Fallen trees may remain as access control and to minimize disturbance.
- Signage - (periodically as required) Maintain directional and informational signs and permanent signs.
- Trail Surface on local roads - (periodically as required) Resurface based on county schedule.
- Trail Surface on gravel road - (periodically as required) Repair surface damage from vehicles, erosion, etc. Based on county schedule.

- Drainage Structures - (Minimum - Annually)
Clean inlets, keep swales clear of debris. Complete rehabilitation during construction would dramatically reduce necessity for this type of maintenance after storms.
- Litter Pick Up - (Weekly or as required during high visitor use) Trailside-litter pickup. Access area litter pickup. Encourage continued user “carry-in, carry-out” policy.
- Trash Collection - (Weekly or daily during high visitor use) Removal of trash from receptacles at access areas.
- Bridges Inspection - (Every 2 years) Maintenance of bridge to ensure structural integrity. Bridges associated with public roads are already on a regular inspection schedule.

MAINTENANCE COSTS:

Maintenance costs generally range from \$5,000 to \$7,000/ per mile/per year for similar trails. It's recommended that the responsible agencies use a figure of \$7,000 per mile to estimate maintenance costs during the first year after development. This figure can be evaluated at the end of the first year. This cost can be used for fundraising purposes as well as to solicit volunteer help for maintenance. It's suggested that the county supplement their trails maintenance by creating partnership agreements with local businesses, clubs and organizations. Formal cooperative agreements can be made with these partners that clearly define the roles and responsibilities of each party. Developing an effective trails maintenance program is an on-going process.

Based on the community's priorities and recommendations for open space, trails and recreation within the county, the following operation and maintenance costs have been identified

- Sangre de Cristo Ranches Subdivision Greenbelt Trail Loop – using the existing linear trail, create a loop trail circumnavigating the entire greenbelt area with multiple access points to scenic views.

Costs: \$7,000/mile for a 3-mile trail

Additional costs: Road grading, Hazards Removal, Trail signage, Road signage,

- Sangre de Cristo Ranches Subdivision Greenbelt Trail extension to Rito Seco Park – extend the trail from its southern terminus to the Rito Seco Park.

Costs: \$7,000/mile for a 3-mile trail

- Establish a Rito Seco Park Trail System – extend a trail from the park to the Battenburg Meadows within the Sangre de Cristo Ranches Subdivision Greenbelt

Costs: \$7,000/mile for a 3-mile trail

- Rio Grande Greenbelt Recreational Area – 3-mile hiking, biking, horseback riding trail along river and canyon rim linking to multiple access points for fishing, boating and camping

Costs: \$7,000/mile for a 3 mile trail

Other costs to consider include the following:

- Parking lot, Road grading, Trash cans, Restroom cleaning, and Campground clean-up.

Plan Phasing &

Chapter 7:

Financing

Plan Phasing and Financing: Investment



Culebra Peak

PLAN PHASING AND FINANCING

The Costilla County Trails Recreation and Open Space Master Plan represents a solution to develop recreational opportunities for a large variety of users, and outdoor recreation enthusiasts. This proposed list of projects does not imply that funding exists nor does it imply that such a trail system or recreational facilities will be automatically funded in the future. Rather, this plan provides a strategy useful for seeking funding and in-kind support from public and/or private sources. By engaging the community in

the planning process, this Plan demonstrates the strong support of trails, recreation, and open space projects and the importance of these amenities.

The following table outlines priority projects that have been identified in the Master Plan thus far. These projects are organized in planning phases and include cost estimates to implement the projects, funding sources and partnerships. There are two phases for implementing priority projects considering construction and availability of financial support for labor, supplies, equipment, and sustainability.

PHASE 1 PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION		Implemented within 1-3 years	
PROJECT	COST	POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCE(S)	PARTNERSHIPS
Improve Rito Seco Park Establish directional and informational signage Establish campgrounds Purchase and install new trash receptacles Organize park clean-up days Re-establish stream bank for safer access points to creek	\$2,000/sign (frame and fabrication) <\$600/trash receptacle	GOCO National Park Service Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area, American Trails Association; private donations	Costilla County, CO Parks and Wildlife, NPS, Town of San Luis, Sembrando Semillas, Costilla County Public Health Agency, Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area
Improve Veterans Park Purchase trash receptacles Continue landscape projects, build shade pavilion	<\$600/trash receptacle	GOCO Costilla County Veterans Organizations	Fort Garland Revitalization Committee, Costilla County Road and Bridge, American Legion, Sierra Grande School District, VFW
Restore, Maintain, & Expand Sangre De Cristo Greenbelt Trail System Research of trail connectivity from Rito Seco Park to existing Greenbelt Trail Identify trail extensions to other areas within Rito Seco Park Complete trail maintenance on a 1.5 mile stretch of the original Greenbelt Trail Construct ~ 2-mile of Greenbelt trail extension Develop an Adopt a Park Program for restoring and maintaining Rito Seco Park and Greenbelt Trails Develop a trails map for county website	NPS can provide in-kind services to do site visits & provide recommendations \$12,000 – labor costs for SCC camping crew for 2 weeks NPS can provide in-kind services for map	GOCO National Park Service Southwest Conservation Corps (SCC) CO State Recreational Trails Program U.S. Forest Service Community Grant	Colorado Open Lands; Great Sand Dunes NP & Preserve; Costilla County; SCC; Costilla County Public Health Agency; CO Parks and Wildlife
Improve Stabilization Reservoir Purchase and install trash receptacles	<\$600/trash receptacle	GOCO Costilla County	NPS, Costilla County Road and Bridge, SCC, Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area, CO Division of Parks and Wildlife
Improve Fort Garland Park Renovate pavilion and picnic area Resurface basketball court Replace basketball hoops and basket	Refinish ~\$150/table Concrete to re-surface = \$75/cu. yd. + \$0.10/sq./ft. (reinforcements) ~\$50-\$100 (hoops & basket)	County provides supplies and/or donations from non-profit organizations or partners SCC can provide labor to renovate Pavilion and picnic area	Costilla County, SCC, Sierra Grande School District, Fort Garland Revitalization Committee, Fort Garland/Blanca Community Center, Costilla County Road and Bridge, Fort Garland Water and Sanitation District
Improve Mountain Home Reservoir Develop informational signage	\$2,000/sign (frame, fabrication + design)	CO Parks and Wildlife Department GOCO	RTCA Program, Great Sand Dunes,
Improve Smith Reservoir Develop signage detailing restrictions and recreational Opportunities	\$2,000/sign (frame and fabrication + design) – SCC day crews can install	CO Division of Parks and Wildlife Costilla County	SCC, CO Division of Parks and Wildlife, Costilla County

PHASE 2 PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION		Implemented within 3-5 years	
PROJECT	COST	POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCE(S)	PARTNERSHIPS
Improve Rito Seco Park Install new restroom facilities Install new picnic tables	\$800-\$1,500/table	GOCO CO State Recreational Trails	Costilla County Road and Bridge Department, Costilla County
Restore, Maintain, and Expand Sangre de Cristo Greenbelt Trail System Acquire subdivision lots that can increase greenbelt acreage	Price available upon appraisals	CO Open Lands, GOCO	Costilla County Planning and Zoning Department, CO Open Lands
Restore, Maintain, and Expand Rio Grande Greenbelt Recreation Area Acquire subdivision lots that can increase greenbelt acreage	Price available upon appraisals	CO Open Lands, Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust, GOCO, BLM	Costilla County Planning and Zoning Department, CO Open Lands, Rio Grande Headwaters Land Trust
Stabilization Reservoir Repair picnic tables	\$800-\$1,500/table	GOCO CO State Recreational Trails	Costilla County Road and Bridge Department, Costilla County

Future Stewardship

Chapter 8:

and Planning

Future Stewardship and Planning



Culebra Valley

FUTURE STEWARDSHIP & PLANNING

Costilla County is committed to making the vision of the Master Plan come to fruition. So far, the Master Plan has outlined partnerships, funding sources, priority projects, and a framework for maintaining and operating existing and future recreational and trail facilities. This chapter focuses on establishing a future plan for the recommendations identified in the Master Plan. The idea is to have the plan adopted by the County Commissioners and available to the public on the County's website. Future planning also means that the plan is reviewed every three years and revised according to needs of the community and progress of the projects.

Another component of future planning is defining a process for moving forward with implementation of specific recommendations and priorities. Project implementation can occur on a variety of levels but this chapter will outline how the county can ensure that the plan is reviewed and updated and define a process for approving projects and monitoring the progress of project implementation.

Project Implementation: Costilla County Recreation Advisory Board

To advise County Commissioners, the Planning and Zoning Department, and County Administrators, it is recommended the County appoint members of the community to a County Recreation Advisory Board. The purpose of the Board is to recommend funding sources, and/or partnerships that support priority projects in the Master Plan. The Board will also keep the County abreast of new opportunities for additional trails and recreational projects. This board can ensure the document is put to use and discussed during critical planning and budget meetings and grant assistance is pursued to make some of these projects a reality. The Board at a minimum should comprise of:

- Representative from the County Planning and Zoning Board
- Representative from a Youth Organization
- Representative from the Blanca/Fort Garland Revitalization Committee
- Representative from the Road and Bridge Department
- Representative from a community non-profit organization involved in service projects
- Representative from the Town Council of San Luis

- Representative from the Blanca/Fort Garland Community Center
- Representative from a County School District

The Advisory Board will review the plan at a minimum on an annual basis to ensure the phases of the Master Plan are considered during county budget meetings and to pursue grants, organize events, and propose partnerships. During more frequent meetings, the Board should discuss moving projects forward, updating the Board on other opportunities to collaborate, and report on the progress of other projects related to conservation of open space, and trails and recreation.

STEWARDSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Implementing the recommendations in the Master Plan is also the responsibility of community members motivated to enhance their parks and promote the existing trails. It is encouraged to organize park cleanup days, trail maintenance days, or organize fundraising events to implement any of the priority projects outlined in this document. Some suggestions are outlined below:

- Work with the Blanca/Fort Garland Community Center Director to organize park clean up days during after school programs. Supplies such as gloves, trash pickers, and trash bags can be donated by local vendors. One hour of trash pick-up at the Fort Garland, Veterans, or Blanca parks can go a long way plus it teaches the younger generations the importance of caring for places in their community.
- Collaborate with Sierra Grande or Centennial School Districts to organize Adopt a Park Programs in their classrooms or amongst teachers and administrators.
- Work with the Town Council of San Luis to organize park clean-ups and landscaping days at the Town of San Luis Park.
- Collaborate with the CO Parks and Wildlife Division to provide a guided hike on the Sangre de Cristo Greenbelt Trail.