

Land Stewardship Plan for Stratton Open Space

Colorado Springs, Colorado



Like many municipalities along Colorado’s Front Range, Colorado Springs is struggling to maintain high quality open space areas amidst increased visitor use. Located on the City’s central-western edge, Stratton Open Space is described by a local biologist as, “. . . one of the most biologically diverse, ecologically significant, and beautiful pieces of land along the entire Front Range.” With a foundation of unusual geologic features, it supports high plant and animal species diversity, and is easily and frequently enjoyed by the people of Colorado Springs.

The land stewardship plan is critical to conserving the only open space in Colorado Springs to encompass three major ecosystem types — foothills grassland, foothills shrubland, and ponderosa pine forest.

The City manages the property with a commitment to maintain it in accordance with the terms and conditions of a conservation easement. The easement covers 300+ acres of foothills grassland, foothills shrubland, and ponderosa pine forest. Challenges include invasive species, erosion, wildfire, and stressed native vegetation and habitat.

Biohabitats helped develop a Landscape Stewardship Plan to guide the management and protection of this unique site. With increasingly overburdened budgets and human resources, the City needed open space management objectives and actions that would be practical, specific, and achievable.

After working with the City to craft a vision for the site, Biohabitats developed a management approach based on six specific goals to enhance and preserve native ecosystems and wildlife diversity, as well as visitor enjoyment. The goals, each with specific objectives and action items, include: maintenance of wetland, grassland, and riparian areas; reduction of wildfire risk; control of noxious weed species; control of erosion along trails; science-based management of bird and wildlife species; and maintainance of positive visitor experiences.

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