



Public Amenities Committee Summary

Wed., Feb. 25, 2009

10:30 a.m.

Conference Room 391

Committee Members Present: Lehmann, Chair; Madison, Vice-Chair; Johnson

Agenda: Parks & Recreation – Coyote Management
Parks & Recreation – Denver Mountain Parks

1. Parks & Recreation: Coyote Management Program overview

Scott Robson, Deputy Manager for Parks & Planning; Jude O'Connor, Director of Natural Resources; Ashley Delaup, Wildlife Ecologist; Jill McGranahan, Communications Director; and stuffed coyote and red fox updated the Committee.

Mr. Robson emphasized that the City and State take this issue very seriously. The approach is to work to control first and resort to lethal efforts only when necessary. Denver Parks & Recreation (DPR) and Denver Environmental Health – Animal Control are working closely with the Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW) on finalizing a Coyote Management Plan. This will ensure that agencies across the metro area are working in collaboration toward a common goal. The plan will incorporate best management practices from around the country and utilize the most current scientific research.

The plan will include a full spectrum of management tools. With the assistance of CDOW, DPR staff will continue to inform and educate the public. Special focus will be on reducing human behaviors which have habituated coyotes, including feeding them (either intentionally or unintentionally), enticing them, or ignoring them. Educational efforts will also continue on how citizens can protect their pets and the importance of consistent hazing practices to recondition coyotes to fear and avoid humans. The plan will also detail the protocol to remove an animal exhibiting behavior that threatens human safety.

Ms. Delaup provided the following information:

- Coyotes are native to this area of the US.
- They are not new in Denver; they have always lived in the gulches and drainage areas.
- Cities are ideal habitat; every major City in all habitats host coyotes.
- Cook County, IL, (Chicago) performed a 12-year research project on its coyote population, providing an excellent source of information on the animal and how it interacts with humans.
- Urban coyote behavior is changing; they are more adapted to humans and cars.
- Coexistence doesn't mean doing nothing; we are attempting to change their behavior.

- Attempts to thin the coyote population; they just produce larger litters, as long as the food source is good.
- Relocation fails; a coyote will travel over 20 miles overnight to return to its territory.
- Consistent hazing or harassing with loud noises and aggressive behavior from humans will make them uncomfortable around humans again.
- Use cans or jars filled with pennies or small rocks as noise-makers; yell loudly; make yourself look large; do not run away – stand your ground.
- We must not feed them, intentionally or inadvertently. Keep pet food indoors; keep garbage indoors or securely covered. DPR staff have talked to many businesses near parks and drainages about keeping dumpsters clean and covered.
- The coyote diet is 40% rodents, and they also eat goose eggs, helping control the rat and goose populations.
- Denver has only 1 report of a coyote biting a human; in 2008, people reported 618 dog bites and 54 cat bites.
- People are asked to report any coyote incident or sighting by calling 303-455-0785 or 3-1-1- or online at www.denvergov.org/parksandrec.

Mr. Robson said DPR is meeting with neighborhood organizations and other interested groups and is leading hazing groups. Staff is hazing in Bible and Hutchinson parks every morning between 6:30 and 7:30.

Councilwoman Johnson asked if there is a way to see where sightings are reported. Ms. O'Connor said they would look at creating a database.

2. Denver Mountain Parks Update

Scott Robson, Parks & Recreation; AJ Tripp-Addison, Mountain Park Superintendent; Dick Gannon, Parks Planner; Steve Friesen, Buffalo Bill Museum Director; and Bart Berger, Denver Mountain Parks Foundation, updated the Committee on what's happening in Denver Mountain Parks. Susan Baird, Natural Resources Planner and Project Manager on the Master Plan, was unable to attend.

- The Denver Mountain Parks Master Plan is complete. A limited number is being printed, but it will be available on disk and at <http://mountainparkshistory.org/master>. A copy will be at the Central Library.
- One recommendation of the Plan is to identify more sources of revenue for Denver Mountain Parks (DMP). Two actions already are in line to enhance that revenue:
 - Jack Finlaw, Director of Theatres & Arenas, initiated a parking fee increase at Red Rocks Amphitheatre of 50 cents per ticket to be dedicated to DMP for capital improvements. Annual revenue projection is \$250,000.
 - Council approved establishment of a special revenue fund for DMP. Any funds brought in by DMP, including the 50-cent Red Rocks parking revenue, will be reserved for re-investment in DMP. This is a huge step forward.
- Norman and Earline Ricker recently donated a ¼-acre parcel near Chief Hosa Lodge to become part of Genesee Park. The only privately-held land north of Genesee Road, its donation ensures this entrance to the park will remain undeveloped.
- The Plan recommends more public information about DMP be made available, and two steps are already underway, largely funded by the DMP Foundation:
 - Barnhart Communications is creating, at its own cost, a DMP map and brochure.

- Artist Michael Schwab created the new DPM logo featuring a bison in silhouette against vivid blue sky and snow-covered mountains. The logo will be trademarked and used on all publications, DMP signs, and for merchandising (t-shirts, coffee mugs, etc.).
- The Plan recommends design guidelines be developed for the historic structures and landscapes, and work has begun with Mundus Bishop on these.
- Pine beetle is a problem in some of the parks, but the devastation is not as bad as in other areas in the mountains. AmeriCorp teams have been working with DMP to clear brush and take out diseased trees.
- Heritage tourism is growing, and the DMP are a perfect destination, especially Buffalo Bill Museum and Gravesite, which attracts local and national visitors but also a large number of international visitors.
- The Museum is beginning work on a master plan, starting with a management consultant.
- Found in a Belgian Basement: Lakota Artifacts from the 1935 World's Fair in Belgium opens March 1 with a free day to celebrate Buffalo Bill's 163rd birthday.
- DMP is considering the future of the elk herd enclosure, now that elk are no longer endangered. Regulations governing enclosures and the care of the elk herd are rigorous, and enclosure prevents the natural migration. The current population is 11 adults and 7 calves. It might be time to sell the elk herd, providing more resources to expand the bison herd.
- The few capital improvement projects over the past several years have focused on keeping the buildings vertical.
 - Current projects involve health and safety improvements and ADA compliance, such as current project on accessible restrooms at Chief Hosa and next fall at Echo Lake Lodge. Restrooms will be constructed at Summit Lake this summer.
 - Douglas County and Denver are sharing costs of improvements at Daniels Park based on the jointly-developed Master Plan; Douglas County is undertaking a \$2.3 million road project.
 - A new parking lot will be constructed at the Bison Overlook off I-70 in cooperation with the Lariat Loop Alliance and hopefully a Scenic Byways Grant.
- Bart Berger founded the Denver Mountain Parks Foundation to help raise funds for the Master Plan initially, and he hopes Denver will continue to demonstrate its dedication to its valuable asset. He said he was very pleased with the efforts to date and the work of the staff.
- Doors Open Denver, April 18 and 19 will this year include Red Rocks Amphitheatre and Buffalo Bill Museum.
- Kevin Patterson, DPR Manager, said he had recently participated in the inoculation of the elk and bison herds, and he noted that the scale used to weigh the animals was run with a car battery. He wants to pursue solar power for the barn at the enclosure. There are funds for other sustainability initiatives as well.
- Councilwoman Lehmann said that the task force, noting that all the surrounding communities have dedicated open space funding, recommends that Denver identify dedicated funding sources for Mountain Parks.