



# Monument Open Space



## Implementation Plan



**December 1997**

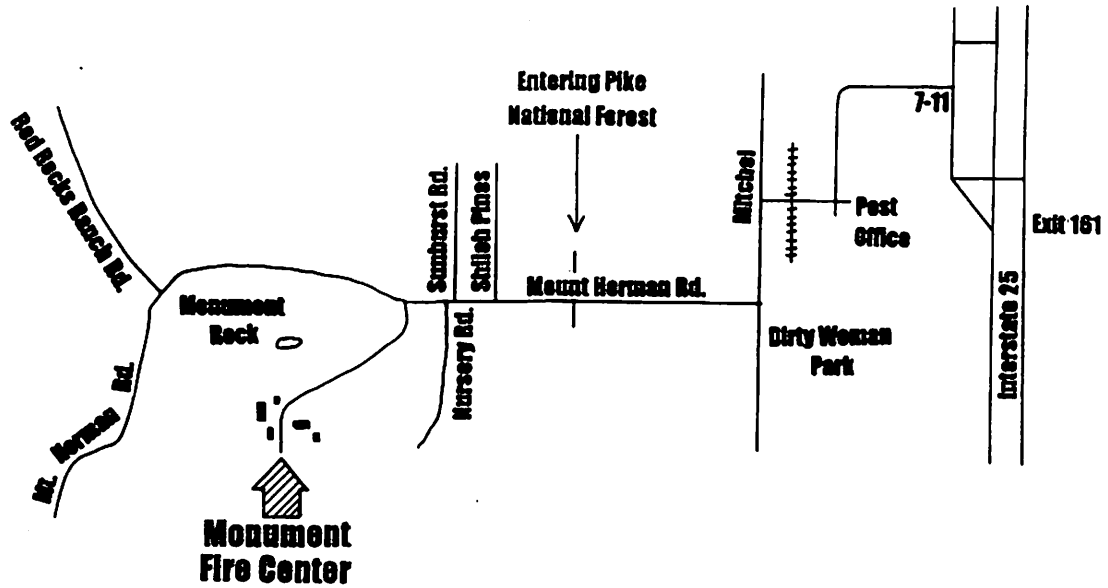


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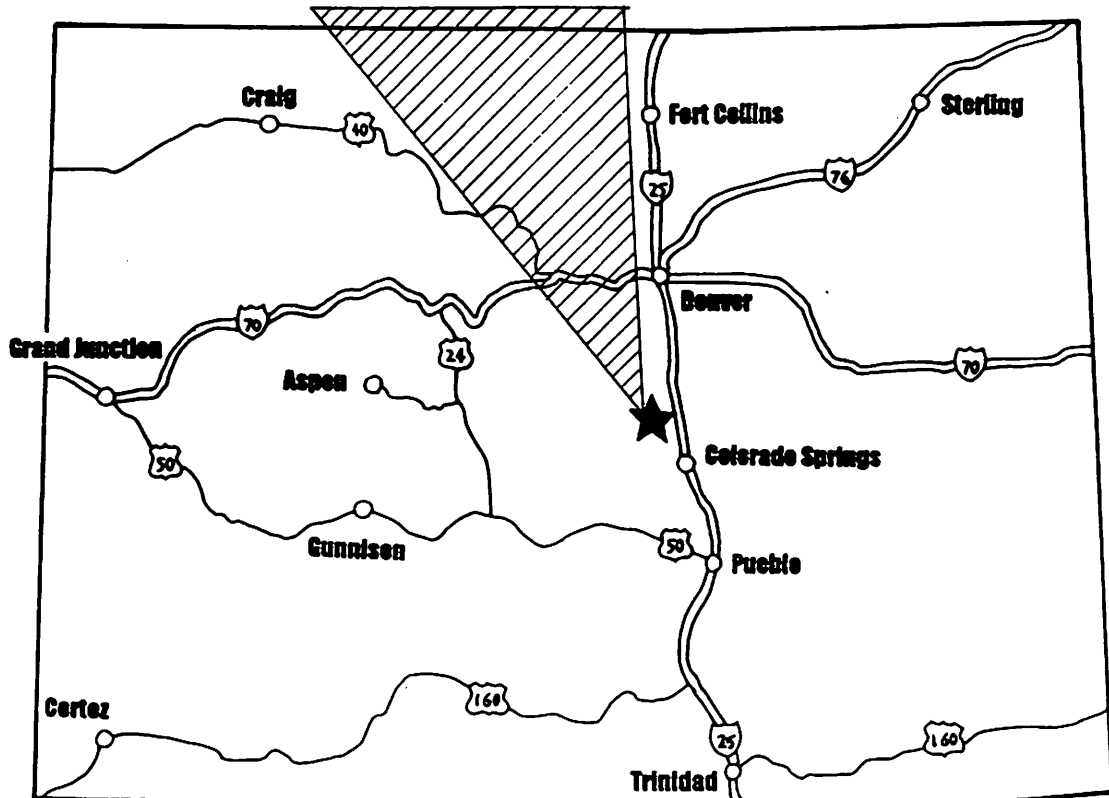
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# Location Map

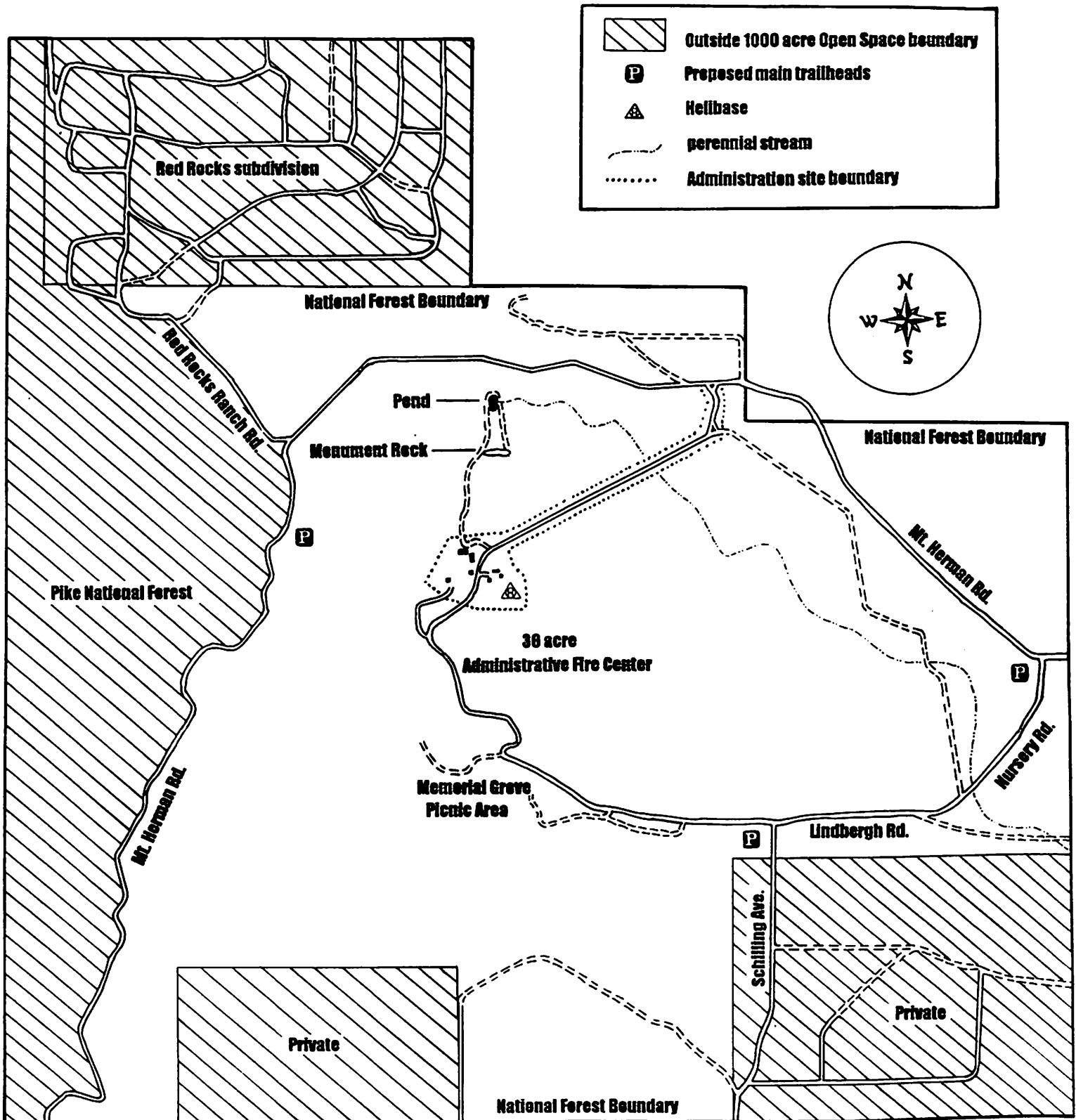


## Monument Open Space





# Monument Open Space Boundary



## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND PRIORITIES**

The Monument Open Space area consists of approximately 1000 acres and is located 1 1/2 miles west of Monument, Colorado, just off Mount Herman Road. The grounds were used as a tree nursery from 1907 to 1965 and are currently used as a wildland firefighting base. The area is rich in history and is listed on the register of State Historic Places. The land is flanked by houses and development on three sides. In 1966, the public began to use the area for hiking and horseback riding. Due to the proximity along the Front-Range and large population base, use has skyrocketed in the past 5 years. Over 22 miles of social trails have evolved and degradation of the resource is rapidly occurring. Recreational use has never been managed in the area.

In April of 1997, a discussion draft and two public meetings were initiated to solicit public involvement. Response was overwhelming and the sense of community ownership was very high. This was done to ensure that key issues were identified and that comments would be used to assist in setting management goals, priorities, and decisions. A final Implementation Plan has been completed that outlines management direction. The following is a summary:

### **Goals:**

- Manage the land to be preserved as an open space and in as natural a state as possible, while still allowing public use without any further degradation to the resource. Limit promotion of the area.
- Develop and use a Cadre of Volunteers to assist in trail management and maintenance, enhancing wildlife resources, eliminating noxious weeds, and preserving the cultural and natural history of the area.
- Because of severely limited federal funding which is not expected to improve, leverage funds to enhance partnerships, grants, as well as encourage private individuals to assist with funding solicitations.

### **Priorities:**

- Define a manageable trail network that will allow for multiple use, and define vehicle parking areas.
- Enhance the wildlife resources by managing the vegetation, by eradicating noxious weeds, and building bird nesting boxes.
- Continue plans for the firefighting base and renovation and preservation of the historical structures.
- Interpret cultural and natural history where appropriate.

### **Decisions:**

- Allow camping at two to three designated sites north of Mt. Herman Road. Install fire-grates and permit fires only at those sites. Do not charge any user fees.
- Define three trailheads: Mt. Herman and Nursery Rd., inside the gate off Lindbergh Rd. and Schilling Ave., and south of Red Rocks Ranch Rd. on Mt. Herman.
- Hunting use is minimal. Allow hunting to continue unless Colorado Division of Wildlife and El Paso Co. request closure. Target shooting is prohibited and no new shooting areas will be allowed.

## **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:**

Monument Open Space (MOS) land surrounds the Monument Fire Center (MFC) and is located on Mount Herman Road 1 ½ miles west of Monument, Colorado, and 17 miles North of Colorado Springs off U.S. Interstate 25. The "open space" area will be referred to as approximately 1,000 acres, which surrounds the MFC. The MFC consists of 30 acres where existing buildings are located. Refer to the map for exact boundary locations. The area is administered by the Pike National Forest, Pikes Peak Ranger District, located at 601 S. Weber Street in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

The facility was originally built as a Forest Service tree nursery in 1907 and was used in that capacity until 1965. During that period of time, the entire area was used as an Administrative site in conjunction with activities relating to the tree nursery operations. Public access and all recreation activities were prohibited on the grounds. Old building foundations, irrigation ditches, and planted rows of various conifers can still be seen throughout the open space area.

After 1965 when the nursery closed, recreation use began to develop in the area. The Forest Service did not prohibit public access, nor was any recreation management of the area implemented. Cattle grazing was allowed just to keep the vegetation down. During this time, much of the housing developments surrounding the area began. Trails in the area were also developed due to users now allowed in the MOS.

In 1979, The Pike Interagency Hotshot Firefighting crew moved into the existing structures. Very little maintenance was done and several buildings were in poor condition. Recreation demands and use continued to increase; however, still no management of the area was initiated. The Forest Service was now aware that a growing population used the MOS.

In 1989, public concern surfaced relating to recreational shooting and discharging firearms in El Paso County. Individuals were target shooting throughout heavily populated areas. The Forest Service initiated a special closure, which prohibited target shooting. Only individuals with a valid hunting license pursuing legal game were allowed to discharge a weapon. This applies to the Monument Open Space area and was the first recreation management tool used.

Also in 1989 the Berry fire burned approximately 1000 acres surrounding the MFC. All structures were saved. The charred trees remain; however, much of the area is regenerating. Today, the MFC has 10 buildings that serve as a home base for wildfire Hotshot and Helitack crews. The site is listed on the State Register of Historic Places. Plans have been initiated to renovate and develop the 30 acres where the current structures are located.

In 1994, the Forest Supervisor of the Pike and San Isabel National Forests, Comanche and Cimarron National Grasslands rejected a proposal to exchange several hundred acres that

would have allowed additional private development surrounding the MFC. The decision was based on the value of the land to remain as open space. Today the area is used heavily by the local residents on a year-around basis.

### **PURPOSE AND NEED:**

There is very limited public land along the entire Interstate 25 corridor from Denver to Colorado Springs. The location of the MFC allows a population of 600,000 to be within a 25 minute driving distance of this open space. Within a one-hour drive, an additional 2.5 million people can have access to this area. Douglas County is just 3 miles north and is the fastest growing county in the United States. The United States Air Force Academy is located 3 miles south, and is one of the most visited tourist attractions in El Paso County. The 14,110 foot mountain of Pikes Peak serves as the backdrop for this entire area.

The area is heavily used primarily by local individuals from the communities of Monument, Palmer Lake, and to a lesser degree from Black Forest, Colorado Springs, and Castle Rock. Currently the Forest Service does not manage the area for recreational use, nor does it promote the MOS as a recreational opportunity. Because of the unique location, wildlife habitat, trail network, historical significance, and potential development of the MFC, visitation can be expected to continue to increase sharply.

Why do we have to manage at all? The importance of the decision to preserve and enhance the land surrounding the MFC as open space can not be understated. Unprecedented development and population growth, combined with the desire to use the area has resulted in degradation to the natural setting. A strategy must be developed that addresses increased use and balances the need to preserve the land while allowing for a spectrum of recreational uses.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS, FUNDING, AND VOLUNTEERS:**

In April 1997, a discussion draft was issued that solicited public comments to assist in developing the management strategies defined in this plan. Two public meetings were held along with a bulk mailing that included a comment form that could be returned. The response was overwhelming. Homeowners in the area took the additional step in creating their own more detailed form.

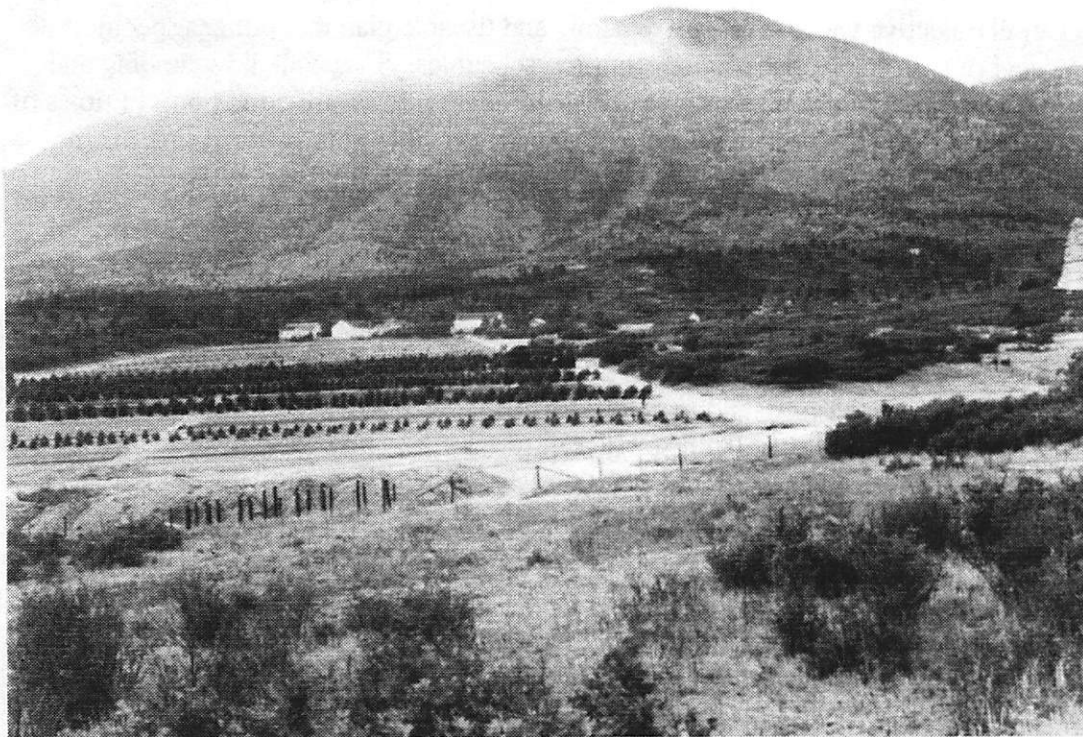
Incorporating public involvement and comments was one of the major objectives of this plan. As one can imagine, there was a wide spectrum of views and responses. Each management issue summarizes the various public comments received for that specific issue. This public scoping process was used to ensure that no major viewpoint or issue went unnoticed. This was not a voting process, but rather a management tool used in helping define overall objectives and priorities. This also reinforced to the Forest Service the value of the open space as a natural and sensitive area that added to the users quality of life.

The overall objective was to create a dynamic and useable plan that defines specific actions and outlines costs with implementation schedules. This will allow funding and resources to be matched together to accomplish the desired future condition. In times of declining budgets, this is very important. There is very limited federal funding for the various projects needed at Monument. Applying for potential grants and the utilization of partnerships and volunteers are the key to success.

In order to help solicit volunteer interest and involvement, we have included a form located on the following page. Those wishing to be a part of the Cadre of Volunteers, and to participate in accomplishing the goals for Monument Fire Center and Monument Open Space should fill out the form and mail to this office. This will help us plan for the spring meeting and determine overall interest. If you have further questions, please call the Pikes Peak Ranger District Office at 719-636-1602 and ask for Mari Ziegler or Frank Landis.



Sorting Ponderosa pine seeds in the early days when Monument Fire Center was a tree nursery. Circa 1925



Photo, looking toward Mount Herman, of the Monument Tree Nursery in 1937 and approximately the same view 40 years later of the Monument Fire Center in 1997.



## VOLUNTEER FORM

Would you attend the Cadre of Volunteers coordination meeting this spring?

Please circle: ----- Yes---No----Uncertain

### Areas of Interest for Volunteering:

Grant Writing-----Yes---No  
Fund Raising-----Yes---No  
Partnership Development -----Yes---No  
Volunteer Coordination -----Yes---No  
Participate in the Cadre of Volunteers-----Yes---No

### Trails

Mapping of Trails -----Yes---No  
Determination of Trail Usage-----Yes---No  
Maintenance of Trails-----Yes---No  
Trailhead Development-----Yes---No

### Interpretation and Education

Sign Themes and Brochures -----Yes---No  
Cultural Historical Trail -----Yes---No  
Interpretation Programs -----Yes---No

### Wildlife

Animal or Bird Watches and Counts-----Yes---No  
Building Bird Boxes -----Yes---No  
Planting Wildlife Habitat Vegetation -----Yes---No

### Noxious Weeds and Vegetation Management

Planting Trees -----Yes---No  
Adopt a Weed Program -----Yes---No  
Monitoring of Weeds and Natives -----Yes---No

Are you interested in donating funds for projects? -----Yes---No

### Other Volunteer Interests

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*Please fold along dotted line, attach postage and seal. Thank you for your interest.*

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**Name and Address:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Please place  
Postage here.**

**US Forest Service  
Monument Open Space Volunteer Form  
601 South Weber  
Colorado Springs, CO 80903**

**Attention: Mari Ziegler**

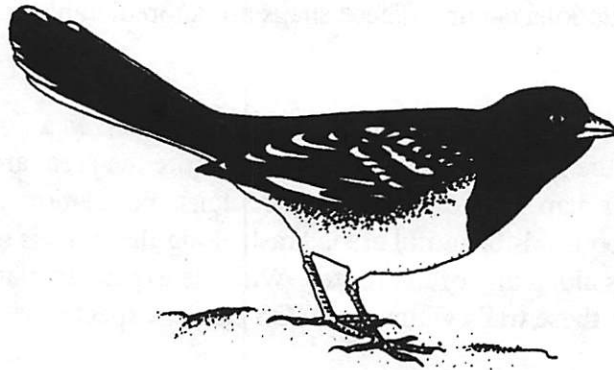


## **FOREST PLAN DIRECTION:**

What is the "Forest Plan?" A Forest Plan document gives managers the direction and emphasis for what to consider when making decisions regarding Forest Service lands. This direction has set the parameters for each desired future condition and any recommended action that may be taken.

What does the Forest Plan say is the management emphasis for the MOS? Recreation opportunities exist and should remain in a rural and roaded-natural setting. Activities such as viewing scenery, using trails, picnicking, and cross-country skiing are possible. Motorized travel may be prohibited or restricted to designated routes to protect physical and biological resources. Visual resources are managed so that activities maintain or improve the quality of recreation, but still harmonize and blend with the natural landscape. Landscape rehabilitation should restore the positive elements aimed at enhancing the natural beauty of the resources.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires a comprehensive review, along with public scoping, of an action that may have adverse impact on the land. Some specific actions that are being recommended may require additional NEPA scoping. However, given the direction in the Forest Plan and the current situation, many of the recommended actions should result in minimizing or mitigating existing adverse conditions. If this is the case, a NEPA evaluation may not be necessary.



In early spring, male Rufous-sided Towhees begin territorial singing amongst the Gamble oak in Monument Open Space.

## MANAGEMENT ISSUES AND DIRECTION

### TRAILS

#### CURRENT SITUATION:

The existing trail network is the major attraction and the area of highest recreational use. There is an estimated 22 miles of trails within the 1000 acres. Activities on these trails are very diverse and include hiking, bicycling, (both for pleasure and commercial races), running or fitness, exercising dogs, and horseback riding. The majority of these trails have evolved over the years simply due to users' demands with no thought given to location, maintenance, resource damage, user conflicts, or wildlife. Slope and grade of the majority of these trails can be summarized as easy to moderate. This accessibility contributes to the popularity of the network.

Trailusers enjoy the diversity of vegetation that provides the habitat for many animal species. Viewing deer, birds, and other wildlife is growing in popularity as much of the vegetation from the Berry fire is growing back. There are several unique geological rock formations along some of the trails, and users are dispersing throughout the area.

Due to loss of trees from the fire and to the highly erosive decomposed granite soils of the area, many trails are severely rutted and cause damage to the surrounding resources. High use causes soil compaction, and heavy rains cause runoff in low-lying areas. Currently no drainage structures are in place, and the situation continues to grow worse. Current Forest Service budgets have not allowed any maintenance to be done on any of these trails. Some trails are located in the burn area with many standing dead trees called snags. This creates a hazard when windy situations occur. These snags are unpredictable and can fall at anytime.

Only the Mount Herman Trail #715 is recognized and maintained as a Forest Service system trail. Generally, the Forest Service does not promote the area, and only trail #715 is identified on the visitor map. However, due to the intense population growth, more people are finding out about this beautiful area. Trash along the trails is minimal, but does exist. There are no signs along any of the routes. With the expanded plans for the MFC, sharp increases in use on these trails within the MOS can be expected.

The Forest Service does review proposals that fall into commercial special use authorities. They are analyzed on an individual basis and if approved, a fee is paid to the government. Previous ventures within MOS include a series of bicycle races using some of the trails.

There are seven trailheads and pull-offs where vehicles park to use the network. There are no toilet facilities, trash receptacles, or drinking water. Some of these locations are receiving additional resource damage, growing larger in size, and trash can be found. Specific trailheads need to be defined.

Except for the main road system, all trails are closed to motorized vehicles. Some illegal motorized use does occur, and the Forest Service does make efforts to stop this activity.

#### **DESIRED FUTURE CONDITION:**

The Forest Service has a long tradition of multiple-use management. To limit access to or specific activities from this area may lessen the number of users on the trails but most likely would not address the compounded concerns surrounding the resources. The Forest Plan recognizes that the area should provide for a wide range of dispersed recreation, short of motorized use. Expectations of the trailusers need to be identified and addressed.

A systematic trail network should be developed that connects logical loops with recommended user groups. Vehicle parking and trailheads should be developed and limited to reflect this. Trails can be identified by the specific user activity and maintained to address that prominent use. This would reduce the potential for user conflicts and help establish limits for maintaining the trail.

Rather than allow trails to evolve by use, establish the backbone for the trail network. Close and rehabilitate trails that are unsafe and define a system that can be manageable, adequately maintained, and signed. Use volunteers to assist with defining the network and maintaining the trails. Give strong considerations to existing wildlife patterns and minimize the impacts from the trails to allow the wildlife to live in harmony with the natural setting.

Create a trail system that can be used to educate and interpret the key attractions and appropriate themes.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVED:**

Almost all the respondents mentioned the trails within MOS. There was a strong sense of ownership and personal responsibility indicated. Many of the trailusers even stated that they would be willing to volunteer in order to preserve and protect the area, forming a "friends" group of the MOS trails. Some addressed the potential for conflict within the divergent user groups, but indicated that with respect of each other's preferences, there should be room for all. One comment summed it up this way: "instead of creating more rules, let this area remain for people who appreciate the privilege of choosing what they enjoy most, having others respect that choice. This area is a good lesson in cooperation." Most expressed concern over unmanaged creation of new trails, resulting in an interconnecting maze. Several respondents mentioned erosion on existing trails as an area needing immediate attention by the Forest Service. One user stated: "it is clear that trails





will have to be rehabilitated and constructed to withstand the use. I would prefer that the end result was 'rustic' instead of 'easy'." Others indicated the need for mapping as well as signage of existing trails, with perhaps the result of closing certain trails that either were heavily eroded, or that crossed through wet areas. As far as having more trails in the area one user commented: "the amount of trails that currently exist are more than enough for the delicate ecosystem to handle. I have been utilizing the area for more than 17 years and have seen a continual degradation of the trails."

#### **PRIORITIES, DECISIONS, AND ACTION ITEMS:**

Perhaps no management issue requires more attention, and its ramifications justify sensitivity to the land and trails. There is no question that the time has come to manage a definable trailwork. The following are some basic decisions and directions:

- Do not charge user fees if at all possible.
- Continue to allow for a wide spectrum of users that include: hikers, cyclists, and equestrians.
- Prohibit motorized use on all trails.
- Identify trails by predominate or recommended use. However, do not create one user only trail; all trails open to all users.
- Educate users on multiple-use trail guidelines and proper trail ethics and courtesy.
- Develop a cadre of trail volunteers to help in defining routes and maintaining them.
- Generally, keep trails natural and rustic and no greater than 24 inches in width with a native soil surface.
- Explore the opportunity for a loop trail that would be handicap-accessible and 4 to 6 feet wide.
- Define and allow continued trail access to popular key designations and attractions such as: historical structures, equestrian jumping areas, Monument rock and pond, and others that might be identified with volunteer groups and public input.
- Develop a historical trail that would incorporate various Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and nursery attractions throughout the area.
- Develop interpretation themes and signs where appropriate along the historical trail.
- Once trails are identified, incorporate them as Forest System trails, which justifies expenditure of federal funding to maintain them.
- The general philosophy will be to limit promotion and marketing of the trail network.
- Utilize firefighting crews as much as possible to assist in maintaining trails, and develop a list of priorities for them to accomplish.
- Do not establish a dog leash restriction.

The availability of volunteers and funding will truly determine the timeframes for accomplishing these goals. The Forest Service has programmed personnel and some limited funds in 1998, to begin addressing priorities and defining trailheads.

There will be a lot of thought and effort given to develop the "ultimate" trail network. Field validation is required to ensure locations of key attractions and all existing roads and

trails. Satellite and Global Positioning Systems (GPS) will be used in early spring of 1998 in order to map exact locations of these. Wetlands and sensitive wildlife habitat areas will also be identified. Also during GPS, locations of hazards, erosion, and unsuitable terrain will be noted. Priorities for whether the trail should remain or requires maintenance will be documented.

The Recreation and Parking Section describes in detail the location of three main trailheads. From these trailheads, as well as using existing trails, we will begin to lay out the network, then determine the logical location of the historical trail, and key the network to include the identified attractions and popular designations.

Public involvement and participation must be made a priority. Hikers, bicyclists and equestrians need to work together and with the Forest Service to assist in defining the trails and volunteering to maintain them. A volunteer public involvement meeting will be scheduled in the spring to organize a Cadre of Volunteers. These volunteers will work with Forest Service crews to accomplish the goals set in this plan. This includes not only trails, but ideally, wildlife, interpretation/education, noxious weeds, and other areas. Those who are interested in participating can fill out the volunteer form located in the front of this document. The use of the existing mailing list will also notify and inform users on how to get involved.

The degree to which signs will be used along the trails also needs to be established. Recommended routes by the predominate user group may help lessen conflicts and hazards. Mileage or degree of difficulty may also be needed on certain trails. User ethics and trail courtesy will be incorporated at trailheads. Final decisions on signage will be developed from the Cadre of Volunteers and will be site specific pending final locations of the trail network.

#### **IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE AND COST ESTIMATES**

- Spring 1998:
  1. Complete GPS that will identify existing trails, roads, wildlife habitat, key attractions and erosion problems.  
Cost: .....\$750
  2. April—hold the first in a series of organizational meetings to develop a Cadre of Volunteers and interest.
  3. May—Forest Service crew to field validate GPS data. Begin to identify main trail network. Prioritize erosion work.
- Summer 1998:
  1. Begin to outline Cadre of Volunteers to identify user-type trails and address erosion. Continue this process throughout the summer.
  2. Identify location for cultural historical trail.
  3. Evaluate potential funding sources for the three main trailheads and determine trail access points from each. Explore location for handicap-accessible trail.

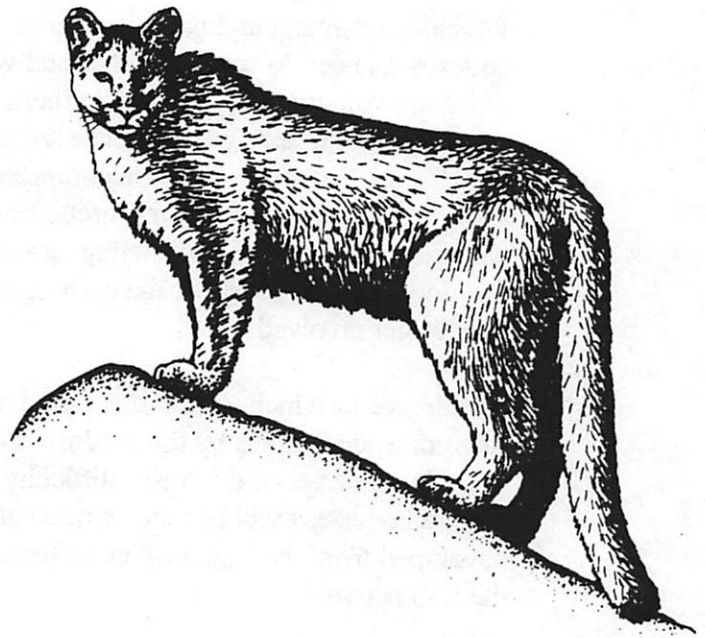
● Fall 1998 and Beyond:

1. Pending volunteers and potential funds, continue to progress on developing the trail network.
2. Develop a logical signage program.

## EDUCATION AND INTERPRETATION

### CURRENT SITUATION:

Both the MFC and the MOS area surrounding the facilities have superb potential for educational use. Old Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) structural ruins and abandoned relics from the years when the facility was a nursery, push up through the gamble oak and wild flowers. Straight-lined groves of lodgepole, blue spruce, and Douglas-fir still stand, left as a reminder of the days when this land supplied trees for all the western forests. The montane Ponderosa pine-gamble oak ecosystem gives way to prairie and wetland providing diverse wildlife habitat. Succulent giant puffball mushrooms, the size of soccer balls, are scattered about the understory. The cleared work areas and trails show a myriad of wildflowers, from the earliest pasque flowers and sand lilies to the late frost-hardy asters. The great-great granddaughter of a prairie falcon, shown in an old CCC photo from the 1930's, still rears her yearly hatchlings high up on Monument rock. All these wonders beg to be shared.



The current use of the facility for educational purposes has been relegated to the classroom, which is the historic tree-sorting building. The Hotshot and Helitack crews use the building for their yearly spring training. Project Learning Tree, Wild and Wet workshops are also held in this building once or twice a year. The Pikes Peak Wildfire Prevention Partners hold meetings and educate public gatherings about fire mitigation in the wildland urban-interface. Two Interpretive Naturalist's walks were held last summer in order to ascertain public interest in this type of event. The first was a Cultural History program and the second featured Natural History. On both walks, attendees indicated a high level of interest in regularly scheduled weekend walks. Other than these events and uses, the MOS trails and the classroom facilities are not used for publicly offered official Forest Service educational programs.



### **DESIRED FUTURE CONDITION:**

Areas of historical significance, such as old CCC building foundations and abandoned tree planting equipment are overgrown and unsafe. Other structures are hidden by tall grass and gamble oak thickets and are in danger of being forgotten. If trails were created that lead to these fascinating remnants of the MFC's colorful past, safety rails that provide protection for the visitor, but don't inhibit viewing, would need to be designed. Certain areas such as open basements would need to be partitioned off. The Memorial Grove picnic area and encircling trail would need summer maintenance. By late summer this area is completely overgrown with tall forbs and grasses that enclose the picnic tables and grow up through the trail.

Educational opportunities using the MOS areas and classroom building are unlimited, but in order to be realized, would need to be sponsored by a Friends group and supported by volunteers. Patrons, or champions, of cultural history or any of the natural sciences could be involved in promoting and sustaining projects of their choice that are compatible to the desired future condition for education at the MFC and in the MOS surrounding it.

Interpretive Naturalist-lead walks could be offered every weekend of the summer, and Interpretive signs should be installed next to historic structures for self-guided tours. Schools could be invited for a living history program depicting the old Tree Nursery and CCC days, during the fall Outreach Program. Schools could also be given tours of a real fire facility during National Fire Prevention week, followed by a session in the classroom on wildfire prevention. This week falls during the great Chicago fire, which was October 7, therefore, the normal operation of the Hotshot and Helitack crews wouldn't be compromised, as the official fire season would be over. Volunteers from the National Audubon Society could involve students in bird inventories and give educational walks, and other private organizations could follow suit within their area of expertise. Eagle Scouts could be guided through fire safety or trail-restoration projects. Seasonal guided walks could be scheduled, such as: spring flowers, bird watching, mushrooming, winter field-ecology (on cross-country skis), orienteering, and Native American edible and medicinal plants. Horseback riders, mountain bikers and other outdoor clubs could be invited to educational demonstrations for leave-no-trace camping, weed-free hay, and tread-lightly programs.

A Nature Center and a Wildland Fire Museum would be possible future educational facilities. Headsets and push button recordings could provide visitors with information without distractions. These recordings might be of the roar of a crown fire as a visitor watches a video from the perspective of ground personnel, such as a member of a Hotshot crew, or from the birds-eye-view of the lead plane or helicopter pilot. Over the roar of the fire, the voice of the incident commander could be heard. Interactive displays allowing visitors to try firefighting equipment could be created. A historical record showing firefighting uniforms and equipment through the years should be available. The stories of the great fires and the people who fought them as well as the losses incurred, would be an

essential component. A section showing old photos from the Tree Nursery and CCC days with descriptions should also be available. Illustrations and specimens of flora and fauna which visitors are likely to encounter on the trails, as well as a description of their needs and their inter-related place in the ecosystem should be included in the Nature Center section.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVED:**

Many were interested in the historical significance of the area and wished for some form of interpretation involving relics from the CCC days. Following the general theme of minimizing development and motorized access, some responders questioned the use of the education building for training other than for fire crews. Another stated that although a Wildland Fire-fighting Museum would be interesting, she was afraid that it would attract more visitors and ruin the private nature of the area. The need for an Interpretive Naturalist program was mentioned, headed by a "Public Affairs Officer/Volunteer Coordinator," who would "promote the site's past and future." The respondent indicated that the needed funding would come as a result of this promotion. One person stated: "opportunities for educational uses of this site by schools, universities, individuals and organizations should be addressed. The location, geology, natural and cultural history of the MFC make it a rich learning environment."

#### **PRIORITIES, DECISIONS, AND ACTION ITEMS:**

Although a Wildfire Museum and Nature Center would be a long-term goal and not possible without economic sponsorship from partnerships, trail and historic interpretive signage and guided Interpretive Naturalist walks are feasible under the current situation. Use of the classroom and the MOS by the community for fire training and science education has already begun. This is a remarkable area, with distinct possibilities for use of the facilities and trails for Interpretation and Education; therefore, the Forest Service will continue to support community needs in this area. It will also be necessary to accept patrons' encouragement as well as partners' designs and funding in order to reach long-term educational goals. Primary focus would be to make available the highest quality and safest recreational and educational experience for current users. Future development will be modified to accommodate the needs of future recreationists, as well as the primary and compelling need of the near vicinity and outlying area for fire protection and education.



## IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE AND COST ESTIMATES

The current MFC is not accessible to educational or recreational use without a Forest Service presence. Areas within the MOS have been degraded by unmanaged use, but will recover after erosion from crossovers and cutbacks are mitigated. For trail restoration costs, please see the Trails section. After the MOS trails have been recovered, seasonal Interpretive Naturalist-led walks will be conducted. Low maintenance, metal, "tin-type" engraved historical signage will be installed for self-guided tours of the valuable historical areas. These areas will also need to be managed for safety.

The following costs are approximations only:

• Design, Text and Graphics for Interpretive Signage: .....	\$7,000
• Production of Signs for Self-guided Cultural History Trail: .....	\$18,000
• Sign Frames and Installation: .....	\$5,000
• Seasonal Interpretive Naturalist Salary (summer months): .....	\$6,000
<u>Total .....</u>	<u>\$37,000</u>

Please note that the costs of the Educational Facilities such as the Museum and Nature Center, that are not described in the 30-Acre MFC development section, are long-term goals and are not considered within current cost estimates. With the much-needed assistance of Grants and Partnerships, Educational facilities may also become a reality.

## RECREATION AND PARKING

### CURRENT SITUATION:

"General Recreation" can be defined as all activities where the public utilizes the MOS area surrounding the MFC for pleasure. Memorial Grove Picnic area is recognized as the only developed site. Refer to the section on Memorial Grove for specific discussion topics related to this area. Refer to trail related topics in the section on Trails as well as the Hunting and Shooting section.

Along the entire Interstate 25 corridor, there are limited opportunities for the public to access National Forest lands. The Mount Herman Road provides one of these access points, and this area is actually only 1 ½ miles from the Interstate.

Currently the Forest Service does not promote the area as a recreational opportunity. Growth in the Tri-Lakes area has resulted in the MOS becoming a very popular local recreation site. Most of the use is related to trails; however, for the most part the area remains unknown to those who don't live in the general vicinity. This use pattern will inevitably change, and adequate planning for increased recreational demands must be accomplished.

The Forest Plan states that the recreation management emphasis in the Monument area should remain in a setting that is "rural and roaded-natural." This means that the area is to

be managed to provide a moderate to high incidence of people contact. This prescription allows for recreational facility development such as: trailheads, interpretational signing, picnic grounds, campgrounds, and other dispersed camping opportunities. The level of development should have a degree of pristine or natural appearance. Roads usually are not paved.

Dog owners will be encouraged and recommended to keep pets on a leash, but not required. However, dogs chasing wildlife is strictly prohibited, and the owner may be fined. Dog owners must take responsibility for their pets and at a minimum have a leash with them. This way, when encountering others and wildlife, the dog can be restrained. If the Forest Service, Colorado Division of Wildlife, or El Paso County later determines that a safety concern exists, a leash law may be imposed. Dog owners should be courteous and sensitive to others who may feel threatened by their pet.

Currently the only type of camping available is dispersed. That is, camping with no amenities and no definable area such as a campground. This type of camping is commonly referred to as "car camping." Within the last few years there has been an increase in camping, mainly north and along the corridor of Mt. Herman Road. This is also a popular area for high school students to engage in various weekend parties. Camping on National Forest lands is allowed for a period of 14 days, unless prevented by a special order. Campfires are also allowed, unless the Forest, State or County imposes a fire-ban.

Motorized recreational use is restricted to roads and trails that are identified with a white arrow. Currently, only the main-access roads to the MFC and to Mount Herman Road allow for this. All trails are closed to motorized use. No trailhead parking areas are developed. Vehicles park along Nursery, Lindbergh (north), Schilling, and Mount Herman Roads to access the various MOS lands.

#### **DESIRED FUTURE CONDITION:**

There is no question that as the plans to develop the MFC progress, and as the Front Range continues to grow, the recreational impacts on the MOS will increase. How do we manage that? The focus on this area should be to preserve the natural setting. Recreational use should center on quality day-use activities such as trail use and picnicking. Any facility development should be on a scale that has reasonable funds available to patrol and maintain the area. The trend is a decreasing federal budget allotment for the Forest Service. As this tendency continues, it does not allow for Forest Service sponsored maintenance of facilities.

Due to the small scale of the area and high use, no motorized activities will be allowed off the "white-arrow" roads. Multiple-use trails should continue to allow for bicycles, hikers, and horse users in a safe manner. Routes may be identified for recommended uses, but not prohibit any specific activity. Trailheads need to be developed and are considered to be one of the highest overall priorities.

The area has a series of old structural foundations and is of historical value. Stories of the old nursery and CCC can still be told by a handful of folks. Opportunities to preserve and interpret the numerous sites throughout the grounds should be accomplished.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVED:**

Issues of establishing campgrounds, providing parking lots and toilets, as well as prohibiting dispersed camping, met the full range of comment, from opposition to approval. There was a general consensus amongst homeowner groups in the area that camping should be prohibited due to potential fire danger as well as trash accumulation. The general sentiment reflected a desire for the MOS to remain as primitive as possible, while maintaining control over possible degradation of the area from uses. High volumes of vehicles parking along Lindbergh Road and Schilling Avenue were identified as a resource and safety concern.

#### **PRIORITIES, DECISIONS, AND ACTION ITEMS:**

The biggest decision is to recognize that recreation must now be managed. A developed campground in the vicinity is not the answer and will not be considered. Limited camping will only be allowed at specifically designated areas. Campfires will be allowed only at areas that provide a Forest Service fire grate.

There are no current plans for changing user fees in the area.

- **Camping and Fires:**  
Designate and sign two or three campsites north of Mount Herman Road. Install fire grates to define each site. Camping outside these areas will be prohibited and all users will be required to remove their trash. Fires will be allowed only at these sites, and Memorial Grove picnic area, and must be contained within the confines of the Forest Service fire grate. Campers will see routine law enforcement patrols to ensure regulations are being met.
- **Parking and Trailheads:**  
Three main trailheads will be developed. Parking outside these areas will be discouraged. See the map in the front of the document for exact locations.
- 1. **Trailhead 1:** This will be located on the east just south of Mount Herman Road on Nursery Road. The area is currently being used to access trails. This will also be used as an orientation site for the MOS area and gateway to the trail network. An outhouse and sign kiosk will be considered. No trash receptacle will be provided.



Tall showy purple penstemons bloom throughout the whole area all summer long.



2. Trailhead 2: This will be located inside the exiting gate at the corner of Lindbergh Road and Schilling Avenue. A definable parking area with a signboard will be developed. This will serve trail access to Memorial Grove, Trail 715, and the trail network to the north. A service road closed to the public with a gate, will allow emergency vehicle access to Memorial Grove.
3. Trailhead 3: This will be located on the Mount Herman Road just south of Red Rocks Ranch Road. In addition to serving the trail network from the west, this will provide the main access to Monument Rock and pond. A sign kiosk and a gravel parking lot are the only degree of development planned at this time.

#### **IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE AND COST ESTIMATES**

- Spring 1998:
  1. Designate and sign two to three dispersed camping sites. Install corresponding fire grates.  
 Cost: .....\$900
- Summer 1998:
  1. Developed site plans for the three main trailheads including sign kiosks and 1 CXT accessible toilet.  
 Cost: .....\$2,500
  2. Complete NEPA documentation.

Estimated trailhead construction costs: (Project pending available funding.)

- Trailhead 1:
 

1. Earthwork .....	\$4,000
2. Gravel .....	\$3,000
3. CXT Toilet .....	\$12,500
4. <u>Sign Kiosk .....</u>	<u>\$1,500</u>
<u>Total .....</u>	<u>\$21,000</u>
- Trailhead 2:
 

1. Earthwork .....	\$2,000
2. Gravel .....	\$3,500
3. CXT Toilet .....	\$12,500
4. Buck Pole Fence .....	\$2,000
5. Grate .....	\$500
6. <u>Sign Kiosk .....</u>	<u>\$500</u>
<u>Total .....</u>	<u>\$21,000</u>
- Trailhead 3:
 

1. Earthwork .....	\$5,000
2. Gravel .....	\$3,000
3. Rock .....	\$1,000

4. Sign Kiosk .....	\$500
Total .....	\$9,500

## **SPECIAL RECREATION EVENTS**

### **CURRENT SITUATION:**

Recreation events are recognized as a legitimate use of federal land. This consists of a permit that allows for commercial use where land managers have determined the activity has minimum impact on the resource and on other users.

Currently there are two outfitter guides permitted to use the MOS. One provides orienteering courses, and the other hiking. There is one recreation event permitted for the area, which includes the three mountain bike races that take place mid May through June, yearly.

In 1995 a Forest Prospectus was issued that allowed for additional outfitter guide permittees. The MOS was identified as an area where no new outfitter guide permits would be issued. This decision was made due to the heavy recreational use the area already receives and the impacts to the unmanaged trail network.

#### **Issues Identified:**

- Conflicts between user groups.
- Lack of adequate parking for large events.
- Trail erosion and impacts.
- Impact on wildlife resources.

### **DESIRED FUTURE CONDITION:**

A balance between permitted recreational events and the general public must be addressed on a case by case basis. There is a potential for use of the area for recreational events. Timing, group size, parking availability, and the nature of the activity will all have to be considered prior to authorizing any new recreation events. The trail network must be defined and managed to reduce resource damage.

The Forest Service will discourage any outfitter guide use within the MOS, due to the high volume of use from the general public.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVED:**

Almost all who commented about this subject indicated a strong desire that the Forest Service discontinue its agreement with the current Mountain Bike Race permittee. Severe trail erosion, as well as the dangerous mix of bike racers and horses were reasons given for this sentiment. These respondents also stated that they would prefer that the Forest Service limit other special recreation events within the MOS area.

## **PRIORITIES, DECISIONS, AND ACTION ITEMS:**

Until the trail network can be managed and actions taken to control erosion and parking problems, recreation events that impact the trails will no longer be allowed. Each application received will be considered and the impacts analyzed. Activities that enhance the historic, wildlife, and vegetation experience of visitors will be considered.

## **MEMORIAL GROVE PICNIC AREA**

### **CURRENT SITUATION:**

Memorial Grove Picnic area is recognized as a developed site and is accessed by parking at the gate at Schilling and Lindbergh Roads. Visitors must walk in approximately 1/2 mile, as this road is closed to public vehicles. Because of this lack of access, use by the public is not significant.

The area is defined by a buck and pole fence and has three picnic tables. There are no fire grates, water, trash receptacles, or toilet facilities. There is a gravel-surfaced trail that links the parking area to the tables. The area does not meet standards for the Americans With Disabilities Act.

The area has a rich and valuable history for the Forest Service. In 1920 a tradition was started in which a tree was planted in memory of each employee that had been killed in World War I. This was done for Region 2 employees which includes the state of Colorado, and parts of Wyoming, South Dakota, and Kansas. Later a sign and plaque were installed, and the names of the employees that had passed-away during that given year were added to it. One tree was planted in memory of all the employees who passed-on each year. Miraculously most of the trees survived the Berry fire in 1989. However, during December of 1996, strong winds blew down some of the trees. Efforts are being made to replant those trees as well.

This tradition continues today, and each spring the Forest Service has a workday comprised of employees from across Region 2, including retired individuals. A tree is planted, and a new engraved plaque is added to the memorial sign. The area is cleaned up and maintenance is done to the existing facilities from this volunteer effort.

The area is used from time to time by employees and family members who wish to reflect back on the memory of a past time or person. The general public is allowed to use the area too. However, the Forest Service currently does not promote this as a recreational opportunity. The main concern with opening the gate and allowing vehicle access to the public is vandalism and trash, as well as providing the funds to adequately maintain the site. The area is remote enough from the main buildings that use would occur without supervision.



#### **DESIRED FUTURE CONDITION:**

No doubt, as use increases and the trail network is managed, the demand for a quality picnic area will need to be met. The degree of development should remain limited and public access controlled. The historical and interpretive value of the area is high and should be promoted. If fires are allowed, approved grates should be installed.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVED:**

Many respondents were surprised and interested to learn about the Memorial Grove. Trail users indicated that although they had passed the area frequently, they didn't know its history. One respondent stated that the area would need to be mowed and maintained in order to be useful to the public, but also indicated that she didn't want it to become accessible by vehicle.

#### **PRIORITIES, DECISIONS, AND ACTION ITEMS:**

The area will remain closed to vehicle access. As plans develop for Trailhead 2 with utilization of the existing road as a defined trail route, the area will provide an excellent picnic and resting site. Future use will dictate the degree of development. Fire grates need to be installed, as fires will be allowed only within the confines of these structures.

The area needs to be monitored for impacts from the public. No toilet, trash receptacles or water is planned. However, future use may require the need for installation of these. With decreasing federal budgets the cost for construction and for maintaining the area makes development unlikely. There are no plans for any user fees.

#### **IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE AND COST ESTIMATES**

- Summer 1998  
Install fire grates at each picnic site.  
Cost: .....\$800



## **HUNTING AND RECREATIONAL SHOOTING**

### **CURRENT SITUATION:**

The 30 acres immediately surrounding the MFC and existing buildings has a Forest Order that prohibits the discharging of any weapon. This is year-round and includes all the hunting seasons.

The MOS is also closed to recreational and target shooting. However, a hunter possessing a valid Colorado State hunting license may during the legal game season hunt in the area outside the 30 acres of MFC. That hunter must abide by the following regulation described in 16 United States Code 551, 36, Code Federal Regulations 261.10(d):

"Discharging a fire arm or any other implement capable of taking a human life, causing injury, or damaging property: (1) In or within 150 yards of a residence, building, campsite, developed recreation site or occupied area, or (2) across or on a Forest Development road or body of water adjacent thereto, or in any manner or place whereby any person or property is exposed to injury or damage as a result in such discharge."

The maximum fine for this offense is \$5,000 and could result in 6 months in prison.

It should be noted that this regulation refers only to discharging the weapon. While possessing or carrying a firearm may be threatening to other users, it is legal during a valid hunting season with a valid license. It must be taken into consideration that the density of trails, type of vegetation, and terrain of the landscape could make the interpretation of an "occupied" area and the distance of 150 yards difficult to judge, when encountered with the game they are justified in shooting.

Current use by hunters is considered incidental and minimal. The area is not a good or popular location to hunt. Some use does occur during the deer rifle season. The number of hunters during small game seasons is not known. However, the Colorado Division of Wildlife has many varying hunting seasons. Big game seasons begin in late August and run into November. There are several small game seasons that traditionally last from late October to the end of February.

Hunting has long been recognized as a legitimate use on public lands. It is not the position of the Forest Service to close any public land to hunting. There must be well documented cases and compelling safety concerns before any closure would even be considered. The Colorado Division of Wildlife and local county law enforcement would have to support the decision of any closure.

The El Paso County Sheriff's office has no documented complaints related to hunting in this area. The Forest Service received one complaint; however, no violation occurred nor were any charges filed.



#### **DESIRED FUTURE CONDITION:**

Is there a compelling safety concern with the conflict of hunting and the other recreational use in this area? Is the MOS land any different than the thousands of other acres bordering subdivisions and private land in other areas? Will the continued increase in recreational use result in more or less hunting in the area? Will a managed trail network reduce or increase any safety concerns with hunting?

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVED:**

This became a hotly regarded topic, losing sight of the local nature of the decision making process. Local residents, who owned houses surrounding the MOS area, expressed concern about stray bullets; others who were frequent riders or walkers on the trails expressed the same concern. The major consensus from residents surrounding the area was to provide hunting and shooting opportunities in areas other than one so heavily populated. The consensus from mass mailings and respondents on the Internet, was an opposition to any closures of any kind fearing that this would set a national precedent. Most respondents recognized hunting and shooting to be a legitimate recreational use of National Forest lands, in keeping with the multiple-use management that the Forest Service strives to achieve.

#### **PRIORITIES, DECISIONS, AND ACTION ITEMS:**

After a meeting with the Colorado Division of Wildlife (DOW) a joint decision was made to continue the use of hunting in the area. DOW stressed that this area is not unique in the sense of use, location, or population; and they therefore could not support a decision to close. In fact, if the area was closed, hunters might end up along the west side of Mount Herman Road, waiting for big game to cross there. This could pose a greater safety concern.

The area was monitored for hunting activity this past fall. The findings confirmed the fact that hunting use is very minimal. This, along with a philosophy to now manage the area, define trailheads and trails, install signs, and increase Forest Service presence, will only continue to make this area unpopular with hunters.

Sheer recreational use alone is not justification for closure. There just has not been formal complaints of safety related issues. This decision does not rest solely with the Forest Service. El Paso County Sheriff's office and Colorado Division of Wildlife must also agree that compelling safety concerns exist. All three agencies must concur before any such action of closure would transpire.

Remember, target shooting and other non-hunting shooting is prohibited. This will continue to be strictly enforced. There may be a need or demand for shooting ranges along the Front Range. However, is that the best use of Forest Service land? A visit to Rampart Shooting Range shows that unstaffed areas pose environmental and safety issues,

not to mention high costs of maintaining. The Pikes Peak Ranger District will not construct or allow any new shooting ranges, this applies Districtwide, not just in the MOS.

## **WILDLIFE RESOURCES**

### **CURRENT SITUATION:**



The MFC, and its surrounding MOS, is situated in the transition zone between the prairie and the montane forest and thus has plant and animal communities from both ecosystems, as well as species unique to the transition zone. Commonly seen wildlife species include mule deer, black bear, turkey, and a wide variety of songbirds and raptors.

There are no threatened or endangered animal or plant species known to occur within the MOS. There is a golden eagle nest on Mt. Herman which likely uses the area as feeding habitat, and a pair of prairie falcons have historically nested on a rock ledge on Monument Rock. Potential habitat may exist for Preble's meadow jumping mouse (currently petitioned to list as federally threatened or endangered) and Ute lady's tresses orchid (federally listed as threatened). These species are associated with wet meadow/riparian habitat; however, this habitat occurs at the fringe of the elevational limit for these species.

Human disturbance of wildlife is a concern. The 30 acres of MFC is restricted to administrative use so human disturbance is related to operations of the Pike Hotshot crew, occasional interagency training exercises, and more recently helicopter operations. Local hikers, horseback riders, mountain bikers, and hunters use the National Forest area surrounding the actual MFC. Disturbance associated with urban encroachment such as trailusers, loose dogs, horses, and shooting, is also a growing concern.

The primary threats to wildlife habitat in the MOS are noxious weed infestations (leafy spurge, knapweed, thistle, toadflax) and unmanaged recreational impacts (i.e., social trails causing loss of vegetation and erosion, spread of noxious weeds, and disturbance to wildlife). Habitat conditions are currently degraded as a result of these factors, and the potential for increased habitat deterioration is high. The Berry fire changed the way wildlife use the area by creating more hiding cover and acorn production. This encouraged spring, summer, and fall use, but reduced tree (therma) cover and thus discouraged over-wintering use.

### **DESIRED FUTURE CONDITION:**

Because the main threat to wildlife habitat is noxious weeds, and secondly, habitat degradation by unmanaged recreational activities, a collaborative effort to reduce and control weeds, as well as a concerted effort to manage recreational activities, are two opportunities to pursue which would improve wildlife resources. Other alternatives to enhance habitat could include planting selective native vegetation and the installation of

bird nesting structures. The noxious weeds, trails, and recreation sections of this analysis describe these issues in further detail. The desired future condition by which to improve wildlife resources would be to conduct baseline habitat inventory, move from dispersed recreation activities (current situation) to managed recreation activities, and initiate an aggressive noxious weed control program. This would entail recognizing sensitive habitat areas, identifying desired trail routes for recreational use, and rehabilitating degraded habitats.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVED:**

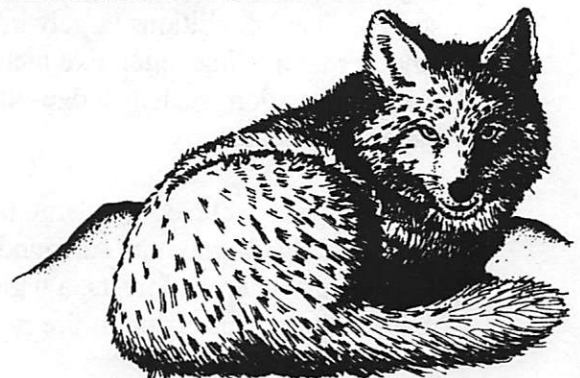
The subject of wildlife within the MOS area was one met with mutual affection by all Discussion Draft respondents. All agreed that the natural beauty and wildlife was the area's most attractive feature. As one frequent user of the area stated: "I cannot tell you how important this area is to my life. It is one of the last places where cars and motorcycles aren't roaring around, litter is not much of a problem, people are scarce, it is quiet and safe; and I can see all kinds of birds, wildlife and plants. Please don't make any changes to this already perfect place. Thank you." One National Audubon Society member suggested that the area might be a flyway and society volunteers should adopt spring and fall bird counts. Others mentioned enjoying reading about wildlife viewing experiences on the 715 trail registry, and adding their own experiences. That the area should be managed within the best interest of wildlife was unanimous amongst all the respondents.

#### **PRIORITIES, DECISIONS, AND ACTION ITEMS:**

Organize Cadre of Volunteers to construct bird boxes. The nest structures will help mitigate snags lost in the Berry fire and subsequent tree salvage.

Conduct a complete inventory of all trails in the area. Based on the existing trail network, establish the desired travel routes (includes trail maintenance, parking area development, signing, etc) and eliminate those social trails causing environmental damage and/or those excess to the desired travel management system. See trail section for more information.

Manipulate the habitat to create vegetative diversity, i.e., reduce the domination of oakbrush, increase height diversity by establishing tree cover, maintain grassland openings where oakbrush is invading, and restore native plant communities that have been invaded by non-native plant species such as smooth brome, slender wheatgrass and noxious weed species. This would entail implementing a variety of treatment methods, such as: 1) tree planting, 2) control of noxious weeds (discussed in the Noxious Weed section), 3) protection of riparian habitats, and 4) prescribed burning to restore native plant communities. See the Vegetation Management section for more information.





Complete a habitat assessment for Preble's meadow jumping mouse (proposed listed species) and Ute ladies' tresses orchid (listed species) to determine if potential habitat occurs within the MOS. Based on this assessment, conduct inventories for these species if deemed necessary. The Colorado Natural Heritage Program is lined up to complete this work summer of 1998.

Develop signs for placement on designated trails which interpret the native wildlife of the area.

#### **IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE AND COST ESTIMATES**

• Summer 1998 Pending Volunteers and Funding	
Construct 50 Bird Boxes at \$20 each .....	\$1,000
Install boxes in designated locations	
Complete Prebles mouse habitat assessment .....	\$2,500
Funding committed and allocated by Forest Service	
Identify Wildlife Interpretive Sign Locations and Themes	
• Summer 1999 Pending Volunteers and Funding	
Construct 50 Bird Boxes at \$20 each .....	\$1,000
Install boxes in designated locations	
Design 3 Wildlife Interpretive Signs at \$750 each.....	\$2,250
• Fall 1999 Pending Funding	
Manufacture 3 Wildlife Interpretive Signs at \$800 each.....	\$2,400
Mounting Frame and Installation.....	\$2,175
<u>Total.....</u>	<u>\$11,325</u>

#### **VEGETATION MANAGEMENT**

##### **CURRENT SITUATION:**

The MOS vegetation area described covers approximately 1000 acres with elevations varying from 7000 to 7600 feet and slopes, mostly 3 to 15 percent with some areas 20 to 45 percent. Present vegetation consists mostly of Gamble oak shrub with some mixed Ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir stands and Englemann spruce in wet areas. Over-all vegetation conditions are deteriorating rapidly due to high-stocked density of Gamble oak shrubs. These conditions largely inhibit vegetative diversity and reduce wildlife habitat. Another interesting vegetative factor is the remnant, strait-lined stands of unusual species for this elevation, such as lodge-pole pine, which remain from the days when this area was used as a tree nursery.

Mortality has occurred to a large portion of the Ponderosa pine stand because of the 1989 Berry fire that burned the surrounding area. Although recurring low-intensity fires are natural in Ponderosa forests, a high intensity wildfire like the Berry causes stand-replacement. This is due to fire racing through the crowns of the trees, rather than moving

through the under story, burning needle-buildup and dead branches, and returning nutrients to the soil. After the fire, densely packed Gambel oak replaced the Ponderosa pine. This oak comes back as scrub after a burn, because it is a vigorous root-sprouter. The density of the root sprouting, as well as tannins in the leaves, bark and wood, shuts out other species from effectively regenerating in an area Gambel oak has colonized. High intensity wildfires also sterilize the soil of delicate, native wildflower-seeds and other native plants, allowing hardy seeds of opportunistic, invasive-weeds, transported into the area, to take-over. Because of this, there are also a variety of noxious weeds that have established within the area. Prescribed fire, on the other hand, has the potential to manage these problems.

#### **DESIRED FUTURE CONDITION:**

- Promote vegetation diversity within the compartment by increasing Ponderosa pine regeneration, maintaining meadow vegetation, increasing "natural" edges where vegetative manipulation occurs, and encourage serial stands of Ponderosa pine.
- Provide habitat for wildlife species.
- Retain 30 snags per 10 acres of Ponderosa pine at least 10 inches in diameter and establish a balance of forest serial stages to improve habitat diversity for non-game wildlife species.
- Provide for continued increase of recreational activities.
- Design and implement management activities to provide a visually appealing landscape. Enhance or provide viewing opportunities and increase vegetation diversity in selected areas.

In order to accomplish these objectives, two possible alternatives are described:

- No Action. This alternative would allow the natural processes in the assessment area to determine the chain of events. No personnel, money, or time would be invested in this area with exception of vegetation monitoring. The monitoring would consist of routine checks for insects/disease, noxious weeds, and fire patrolling during high periods of extreme fire danger.
- Silvicultural Treatment. Vegetation management would be with emphasis on aesthetics and managing vegetation in visually sensitive areas. Another emphasis would be to increase vegetation diversity. Applying mechanical treatment methods and prescribed fire can meet the vegetation objectives for the area. These management methods will create several issues: 1) Air shed cleanliness; 2) Public concerns of smoke; 3) Conflict with recreation use during treatments; 4) Concerns of escape wildfire from prescribed fire; 5) Visual appearance of slash. Because of these

concerns, there needs to be public participation in the development of management plans.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVED:**

Although there were few comments about vegetation management, some did question why the Forest Service hadn't done more to regenerate Ponderosa pine and discourage the growth of Gambel oak, after the Berry fire. Some respondents recommended management that would promote wildlife by providing food and habitat. Most people didn't want any more fires in the area. They share the public lack of knowledge on how prescribed fires can be used as a valuable management tool in enhancing the natural environment.

#### **PRIORITIES, DECISIONS, AND ACTION ITEMS:**

There are several actions that can be taken to meet the vegetative management objectives for Monument. They include the following:

1. **PLANTING:** Areas that lost stands of Ponderosa pine during the Berry fire could be replanted. There is an existing stock of low elevation Ponderosa pine seed at the Bessy nursery. Another source of seedlings is the Colorado State Forest Service, who provides containerized seedlings at a cost of approximately \$0.50 per seedling. Another use for planting would be to plant trees in areas with noxious weeds in a dense planting pattern (6'x6') in an attempt to have the trees out compete the weeds as they mature. We know of no research in this area, and it may be a long-term method to control these weeds in specific areas. Larger trees could be moved from well-stocked areas of the MOS to poorly stocked areas with the use of a tree spade.
2. **THINNING:** Many of the existing stands of trees are too dense, resulting in excess competition for space within which the trees could survive and thrive. These stands are naturally thinned by fire, and fire suppression has resulted in this overstocked condition. Mechanical (chainsaw) thinning is currently being conducted on a small scale to increase tree vigor and reduce wildfire hazard.
3. **TREE REMOVAL:** In areas where trees are encroaching into meadows, these trees could be removed to help preserve the meadows for wildlife and aesthetics.
4. **PRESCRIBED FIRE:** Small (2-5 acres) sample plots could be burned under prescribed conditions to reduce wildfire hazard and stimulate growth of the residual plants. This would not only eliminate or moderate run-away wildfire conditions, but also would return vital nutrients to the soil to enrich the health and vigor of surviving trees.
5. **FIRE BREAK:** One of the hazards faced in the wildland/urban interface is the threat of wildfire spreading from National Forest to private lands, or private lands to National





Forest (as was the case during the Berry fire). One method to reduce this hazard is to create an area of reduced flammability along the property boundaries. Thinning the trees, pruning the remaining trees, and removal of the oak-brush can accomplish this. Residue from this effort can be chipped, with the chips placed on the oak-brush stumps to reduce sprouting.

## IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE AND COST ESTIMATES

Vegetation management objectives are an ongoing process. The sooner the Forest Service and partners can accomplish these management goals, the sooner the ecosystem will stabilize in the aftermath of a fire that burned hotter than it would have without the previous legacy of suppression. Therefore, our implementation schedule should begin as soon as is feasible.

- Costs:

Tree Planting: 10,000 trees .....	\$25,000
Thinning: 200 acres .....	\$10,000
Tree Removal, Chainsaw, 100 acres .....	\$2,500
Tree Removal, Tree Spade, 50 trees .....	\$8,000
Chipper .....	\$30,000
Firebreak, 4 miles .....	\$50,000
<u>Total.....</u>	<u>\$125,500</u>

## NOXIOUS WEEDS

### CURRENT SITUATION:

Noxious weeds are introduced plants that aggressively out-compete native plants for space, water, and nutrients. They typically have no forage value to big game or domestic livestock, they have very little value for songbirds and other wildlife, and they have immense potential for spread.

In 1988 the Forest Service completed a noxious weed control plan and implemented herbicide treatments on leafy spurge, spotted knapweed, and musk thistle within the MOS. Herbicide treatments continued through 1990; however, monitoring indicated the treatments were only marginally successful. At that point, emphasis shifted to biological and mechanical control of weeds. To date predatory insects have been released targeting leafy spurge and knapweed, and mowing accessible sites has occurred annually. Recent monitoring indicates these efforts have also been marginally successful.

Currently an estimated 25 percent of the MOS is infested with noxious weeds (leafy spurge, spotted and diffuse knapweed, musk thistle, and Dalmation toadflax). The percentage of land occupied by noxious weeds is increasing exponentially because of their propensity for spread.

Weed seeds are spread through natural causes such as wind. They are also spread by adhering to clothing on hikers, bicycle and vehicle tires, adhering to hair and fur of horses and dogs, and weed seeds are spread through the manure of horses and wild animals. Because of their propensity for spread, noxious weeds are of concern for public land managers and private landowners alike.

Recently the Forest Service has consulted with the El Paso Weed Advisory Commission in an effort to quantify the severity of the problem, identify immediate steps needed to prevent further spread of noxious weeds, and work collaboratively to identify a long-term weed management strategy.

#### **DESIRED FUTURE CONDITION:**

The desired future condition for noxious weeds is to stop further spread of noxious weeds from Forest Service land and private land sources, and to reduce the percentage of infestation from 25 percent (current) to 10 percent. A unified effort between the US Forest Service, El Paso Weed Advisory Commission, local landowners, Highway Department, etc, is needed to effectively slow the progression of noxious weeds in all jurisdictions (i.e., federal lands, private lands, etc). This problem presents an opportunity to implement integrated weed management using a variety of methods (predatory insects, mowing, herbicides, etc), and to fund weed control projects through the Pulling Together Initiative: A Public/Private Partnership for Invasive and Noxious Plant Management. In addition public education about the trend toward no-impact trail use and weed-free hay must be increased.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVED:**

This was an area of grave concern to local residents who responded to the discussion draft. This was especially true of landowners immediately adjacent to the MOS. One rancher stated that he pursued a very aggressive noxious weed elimination plan on his property, but was continually set back by wind-blown reseeding of weeds from Forest Service land. He proceeded to offer his services via advice and expertise. One woman offered a solution through volunteer efforts: "I think there are a number of users of this area who would be willing to help in the forest. Example- have an "Adopt A Weed" program (similar to the adopt a highway) where each person would become familiar with a certain weed and cut it whenever they see it growing." Another commented that it was unfair to only blame horse-use for the weed problem. They said that they had been a long-time landowner in the area and had noticed the invasion occur after the area had been permitted to grazing.



The napweed clan can take over wild lands and grazing lands leaving them worthless, while displacing native wildflowers and grasses.



## **PRIORITIES, DECISIONS, AND ACTION ITEMS:**

Develop and implement an integrated pest management plan for the MOS during the winter of 1997-98 and initiate intensive weed control treatments during the spring of 1998. The plan must include all potential treatment methods, such as predatory insect releases, mechanical treatment (mowing, handpulling), herbicide application, use of prescribed fire, and seeding of native species.

Prepare a grant proposal for the MOS (Pulling Together Initiative: A Public/Private Partnership for Invasive and Noxious Plant Management.) for the next grant cycle. Develop the proposal collaboratively with El Paso County Weed Advisory Commission, private landowners, and other potential partners. The Forest Service could match and leverage funding up to \$3,000.

Develop a public education program, and conduct weed identification seminars in collaboration with El Paso County. Through the Spring meeting, identify a Cadre of Volunteers that can initiate an "Adopt A Weed" program.

## **IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE AND COST ESTIMATES**

- Spring 1998 Initiate Weed Control Treatments

Pending Funding/Partners

Predatory Insect Release (2 species) .....	\$5,000
For knapweed and leafy spurge \$1,000 per acre at 5 acres	
Native Seed Mix (240 Lbs. at \$10/Lb.) .....	\$2,400
8 Lbs. Per acre at 30 acres	
Herbicide Application at 25 acres .....	\$6,250
10 acres-Forest Service at \$2,000 and 15 acres-Partners at \$4,250	
<u>Total.....</u>	<u>\$13,650</u>

- Spring 1999 Continue Treatment

Pending Funding/Partners

Predatory Insect Release (2 species) .....	\$10,000
For knapweed and leafy spurge \$1,000 per acre at 10 acres	
Native Seed Mix (352 Lbs. at \$10/Lb.) .....	\$3,520
8 Lbs. Per acre at 44 acres	
Herbicide Application at 35 acres .....	\$8,750
<u>Total.....</u>	<u>\$22,270</u>

## **PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT AND LAND OWNERSHIP**

### **CURRENT SITUATION:**

The management of National Forest System lands includes analyzing various applications and proposals from specific groups wishing to acquire public land. This is a very complex process and changes in ownership could occur through donation, purchase, or exchange. This can involve other public lands many miles away. Generally the purpose is to exchange private land that is of equal or greater value than the public land that is of interest to be acquired. The reasons to do this can be for: acquiring private land inholdings, as well as lands of high interest to the public; consolidating ownership; and boundary line management.

Over the past 10 years, two applications have been filed related to the MOS land. One was to build a camp area for a local organization. In 1992, the Forest Service reviewed another proposal that would have exchanged approximately 150 acres north of the Mount Herman Road adjacent to the state land in Section 16 and the Red Rocks housing development. This was a very complex proposal including high-value land in Northwest Colorado almost 250 miles away.

During this review several concerns surfaced. Once it was learned that the motive from the applicant was to sub-divide the land for private housing, several agencies, groups and individuals raised opposition.

The Forest Service decided that the proposal was not in the best interest of the public and denied the land exchange. Some reasons were the value of the land as open space, lack of available water rights, and loss of wildlife habitat. There is no question that future proposals will be made and each must be analyzed. The Forest Service is currently working on a Land Ownership Adjustment Analysis that will identify areas that may be of interest for acquisition or disposal.

### **DESIRED FUTURE CONDITION:**

Private land development and growth will continue. Should any of the 1000 acres in the MOS area be available for a land exchange? What is the value of these lands as undeveloped open space? What would happen if an exchange proposal included land that far exceeded this value, should it be denied? Why should it be denied?

The following items seem to indicate that this land is not suitable for disposal: the importance of this 1,000 acres of National Forest System lands as potential natural open space; the site for the MFC; the many recreational opportunities the land provides; and its relatively undisturbed wildlife habitat. Development of a management plan is desirable for these to remain as public lands.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVED:**

In response to the possibility of a land exchange, public comment was unanimously and very hotly opposed. One comment summarized the general sentiment: "I think the public mandate is clear on this issue. The Front Range is being developed at such a rapid rate that diminution of open space is out of the question. Contiguous blocks of open space must be maintained despite possible land swaps that may favor Forest Service goals in other areas. The MOS is truly unique to the area and should be preserved intact."

## **PRIORITIES, DECISIONS, AND ACTION ITEMS:**

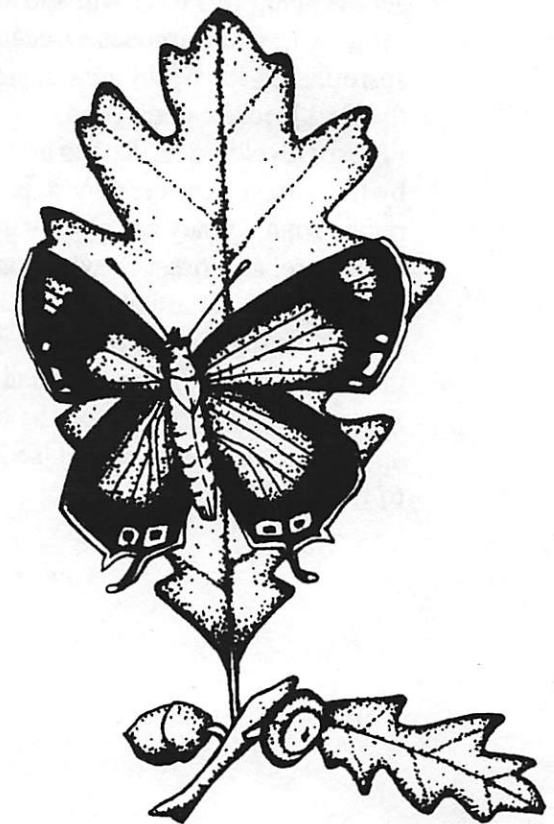
Public comment truly solidifies the decision to deny selling or exchanging any of this land. No doubt, proposals from various groups will continue, especially on the lands north of Mount Herman Road.

The public scoping and decision in this implementation plan will serve as valuable documentation that will be used to discourage and deny future land exchanges in the MOS area.

## **ROADS**

### **CURRENT SITUATION:**

The primary access route into the area is the Mt. Herman Road also called Forest Development Road (FDR) 320. Legal access has been acquired along this alignment all the way to the Forest boundary. Several right-of-ways have been acquired over the years, which will continue to provide access to National Forest System lands into the future. On January 1, 1940, a right-of-way 60 feet in width and .75 miles long was acquired from Wilbur Carrothers. This access begins at Mitchell Avenue in Monument and continues to the Forest boundary. The second right-of-way of interest was acquired from the State of Colorado. The right-of-way is for the short section of the Mount Herman Road, which crosses the corner of State Land Board property in Section 16, and is 60 feet wide. On June 30, 1915, the USDA acquired a right-of-way that provided the original access into the Monument Nursery. This was 33 feet wide and 1.06 miles long. Although this route provided early access into the Nursery for many years, it was no longer used after right-of-ways were obtained along the Mt. Herman Road.



Vivid-blue Colorado hairstreaks flit amongst the Gamble oak shrubs on warm summer days. Their larva eat the leaves.

In addition to rights-of-ways that have been acquired by the Forest Service, several Special-Use permits have been issued to allow for the use of roads on National Forest System lands.

The most heavily-used road within the area is the Mt. Herman Road. The City of Monument maintains the road from the intersection of Mitchell Avenue to just west of the bridge. This is a relatively short section of road. From the point west of the bridge, maintenance is performed by El Paso County all the way through the MOS area, and on into Red Rocks Subdivision. The maintenance responsibility is not officially the City's or County's responsibilities because no easements have been granted nor have any road maintenance agreements been entered into.

The Forest Service does not routinely perform maintenance on any other roads in the area. When maintenance is needed on any of the other roads, it is either contracted out, done by Forest Service road crews, or handled with an informal agreement with the County. Some of these roads have probably been added to County or Local Road System Maps, and many people may think that official easements exist on them.

#### **DESIRED FUTURE CONDITION:**

The Mount Herman Road is the primary access route into the Northeast area of the Pikes Peak Ranger District and provides the only access into the MOS area. Maintaining public access along this road will allow for unrestricted access to National Forest System lands for a variety of purposes. Because the area has seen rapid development on private lands surrounding the MOS area, many people use the road to access residential areas such as the Red Rocks Subdivision. The Forest Service is not a public road agency. Historically, Forest Development Roads are subject to closures and do not receive regular maintenance by the Forest Service. There is no guarantee that roads that are not under easement to a public road agency are always going to remain open and maintained to a high standard. Therefore, all Forest Service roads that are currently being used as access routes into subdivisions and are already maintained by either the City of Monument or El Paso County should be under easements to them. The access road into the MFC should not be under easement to a public road agency, and management of the road by the Forest Service is considered to be the best option. All other roads in the area that are under authorization by a Special-Use Permit need to be inspected and a determination made as to their validity.



## **PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVED:**

Although the subject of granting easements for roads into subdivisions is one of primary importance, very little was mentioned in the return comments. Perhaps this was considered to be an area of public rather than private concern with the confidence that local civic authorities would pursue the necessary changes. One respondent did mention that he paid a yearly fee to access his property from the Nursery Road. Many respondents addressed the need for some type of managed parking lot system in order to access the MOS. The views were divergent as to whether the lot (lots) should be paved, as well as where they should be located.

## **PRIORITIES, DECISIONS, AND ACTION ITEMS:**

The obvious conclusion is that those roads that are used by the public to access year around full-time residences should be under easement to a public road agency. This would be either El Paso County or the City of Monument. The process to grant easements can be accomplished relatively easily if those municipalities are willing to accept the maintenance responsibilities.

- The decision was also made not to place the main road that enters into the MFC under easement to anyone. By having this road remain under the jurisdiction of the Forest Service, it allows for several management options that would be lost if an easement for this road were granted. For example, the ability of the Forest Service to close the road for management reasons would no longer be an option if the road were under easement to a public road agency.
- Because of the traffic on the Mount Herman Road, an asphalt surface on the road would reduce maintenance needs, provide for a smoother travel surface and reduce the amount of dust entering the air from traffic on the road. Since the desired future condition is to grant an easement to El Paso County for the Mount Herman Road, it would be their responsibility to fund this type of project for the section of road under easement to the County. This would likely be from the bridge just west of Mitchell Avenue to the intersection of the road into Red Rocks Subdivision and then on into the private land at the edge of Red Rocks Subdivision. An asphalt surface on the road into the MFC would also improve access into the center. Since this road would not be under easement to anyone, the funding would have to come from elsewhere.
- Several roads that are on Forest Service land are used by individuals to access property for which they must first cross public lands to get to private lots. These are more in the nature of a private driveway and not necessarily a public road. These situations need to be reviewed and previously issued permits that are either expired or were issued under old authorities and outdated permits, need to have new and updated permits prepared.

- Even though these roads would be under permit or easements to others authorizing certain things, the federal government would continue to be the landowner. Therefore any requests to encumber any of these roads with such things as buried gas lines or phone lines, etc., would still have to be approved by the Forest Service.

#### **IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE AND COST ESTIMATES**

1. The easement process should begin as soon as 1998. There would be no costs to El Paso County or the City of Monument to acquire easements. The county or city would request the easements in writing, and the Forest Service would then process the requests. The major costs for preparing easements is in the staff time necessary to prepare them and coordinate with the receiving party.  
Estimated cost of easements processing ----- \$500
2. There are no costs associated with not placing the access road to the MFC under easement. The costs are incurred in maintaining the road and snow removal during the winter months. Contributed funds could be used to offset these costs.  
Estimated costs ----- \$3,000
3. Paving the access road from Mount Herman Road to the MFC should be delayed until the Mount Herman Road is under Easement to the County, and it is paved. The access road would have to be improved prior to paving and then a 4-6 inch asphaltic lift be laid on the running surface.  
Estimated cost ----- \$75,000
4. Permit administration and issuance costs are again mostly associated with staff time required to process the requests and issue permits. With relatively few permits existing at this time and not that many more anticipated, it is estimated that \$5,000 would clean up all of the permitting issues. This would also cover new requests for minor permit applications. Any major permit applications which would result in significant surface disturbance and would require environmental compliance, would have to be funded by the applicants.  
Estimated cost ----- \$5,000

#### **30 ACRE MONUMENT FIRE CENTER**

##### **CURRENT SITUATION:**

There are 10 buildings that serve the Pike Interagency Hotshot crew and the Monument Helitack crew; resources used in wildland fire suppression locally and throughout the country. The Forest Service and many interagency cooperators use the facilities for training sessions and as a meeting place. This area consists of approximately 30 acres and is closed to use by the general public.

The Pike Interagency Hotshot crew consists of 20 highly trained wildland firefighters. They start their physical training at the MFC in late April and are available to fight fires across the country until October. The Monument Helitack crew, an initial attack wildland firefighting crew, also begins training in April. These crews are based at the MFC, and there is a bunkhouse, kitchen, classroom, supply cache, and administrative office shared by both. For detailed information on these crews, see the following section.

The conversion of the MFC into a fire management facility will reflect modern trends in public and private land management in localities where concerns about wildland and urban interface fires have become increasingly more prominent. As well, the MFC is listed on the Colorado State Register of Historic Places and is eligible to the National Register.

Repair work is needed on the water system, wiring, gas lines, and crew housing. Accessibility issues are a concern as well. There is a need to address the deteriorating infrastructure in order to meet health and safety codes and to create a safe and healthy environment for personnel stationed at the MFC and the residents that use it.

Year-round dry weather and frequent lightning, combined with Chinook winds, classifies the Colorado Front Range as one of the highest fire-risk areas in the country. The MFC should be transformed into a demonstration site in order to showcase what homeowners, developers, insurance companies, and related industries can do to create a safe environment that protects lives, property, and natural resources from fire. This would not only help mitigate the risk of wildfire damage to this property, but also demonstrate how local homeowners can do the same. Buildings and landscaping will serve as demonstration areas for defensible-space design and low-water consumption.

Firefighters, students, educators, and cooperators such as: city and county fire departments, insurance representatives, State Forest Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management and Department of Defense need a place to study fire behavior, suppression, prevention, preparedness, and fire ecology. This facility would provide a state-of-the-art indoor and outdoor training facility.

#### **DESIRED FUTURE CONDITIONS**

The buildings at the MFC were originally constructed for use as a tree nursery and have been listed on the State Register of Historic Places. In order to protect the cultural and historical integrity of the site, a combination of historic restoration and use of modern fire resistant materials on existing buildings, as well as adoption of historic styles for new construction will be used.

There is not enough housing space for both the Helitack and Hotshot crews, nor Engine crews if and when assigned. To remedy this, the Forest Service will need to provide sufficient space by constructing new bunkhouses. A better location is needed for the Emergency Fire Center Dispatch. Consolidating this at the MFC is something that will be considered.



The Forest Service is in need of a training and meeting facility that can accommodate up to 100 people. The classroom would be a perfect location and could be used regularly during the off season.

In addition to housing the Hotshot and Helitack crews, plans are to add an Engine crew and to convert the MFC into a fire education and management center. Then the facility would reflect modern techniques and trends in land conservation, while responding to increased danger of fire vulnerability along the urban Front Range. The historical, natural, and recreation values will be preserved and interpreted. Special tours could be arranged by appointment.

There is a desire for a museum of wildland firefighter memorabilia. No facility unique to this special historic subject and its preservation is known to exist. One concept would be to convert the tree-storage building into a museum. Given the vast need to improve other facilities and repair the infrastructure, this would be a lower priority.

Additional associations with private sector partners will be sought in order to accomplish the extensive renovation and rehabilitation of the facility. There is very limited federal funds available to assist in these various projects. Any federal funding will be used to leverage and match partnership funds.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVED:**

Response to the subject of development of the MFC met with the most contradictions. On the one hand, survivors of the Berry fire stated that they were glad and relieved that the Forest Service was emphasizing interagency fire cooperation in the area, but on the other hand local residents indicated that development would spoil the naturalness of the area. It is possible that the planned renovation of the buildings at MFC was misunderstood as to also mean development of the MOS lands surrounding it. Several comments were similar to this: "The Discussion Draft seems contradictory, concerns for wildlife and even the environment, while wanting to draw other people to our area." This related to a Fire Museum and a major draw from the MFC development. Many stated "please don't change anything." Keep it quiet, private, and ours, was a general sentiment of local residents. One responded summarized the general viewpoint: "We recognize that some changes to the area are necessary. The plans for MFC seem excellent and very well thought out. We lived here during the terror and devastation of the 1989 fire. We could not be happier than to have improved facilities and training for the fire crews. The fire protection is definitely worth the occasional helicopter noise." Another comment was, "I would like to see the facility developed to whatever level is deemed useful for the training of a professional and skilled firefighting corps." Some individuals were excited about having a demonstration site that would teach techniques in protecting homes built next to wooded areas.



## **PRIORITIES, DECISIONS, AND ACTION ITEMS:**

Several projects have already begun to take place. This consists of replacing roofs, siding, and windows in existing buildings. The highest priorities relate to bringing the MFC up to code and repairing the dilapidated infrastructure. This includes replacing the water system, gas lines, and electrical wiring.

The Colorado Historical Society has contributed a \$100,000 grant which was matched by Forest Service funds to finance these initial construction phases. Additional grants are being planned as well as solicitation for various other partnerships through the Wildfire Prevention Partners.

Marketing of the MFC should remain mostly as a demonstration site for fireproof materials and as a wildland firefighting center. Considerable thought must be given to the concept of a national or major key attraction here. Public concern over increased traffic and additional impacts to the MOS must be further evaluated.

The idea of a Firefighting Museum has merit. The MFC is a good location and the historical value of the site could easily be interpreted. The Museum is a conceptual dream at this time; there is no funding for the project, nor any identified time-frames.

## **IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE AND COST ESTIMATES**

- November 1996 to December 1997  
Roofing, Siding, and Window Replacement of two buildings:  
    Cost: .....\$60,000
- 1998 Funding Secured  
Complete Water System replacement:  
    Cost: .....\$110,000
- 1999 Funding Pending Various Grants  
Replace 5 additional roofs:  
    Cost: .....\$75,500  
Historical structures interpretation signage:  
    Cost: .....\$37,300  
Three story building repair:  
    Cost: .....\$40,000  
Replace gas lines:  
    Cost: .....\$62,000  
Classroom interior:  
    Cost: .....\$65,850
- 2000 – 2003 No Identified Funding Services  
Low water fire resistant landscape plan:

Cost: .....	\$30,000
Main road and parking area improvements:	
Cost: .....	\$75,000
Helitack Operations building:	
Cost: .....	\$???,000
Crew Quarters building:	
Cost: .....	\$???,000
Dispatch Center building:	
Cost: .....	\$???,000
Complete Classroom interior:	
Cost: .....	\$20,000
Total Cost: .....	\$???,???,000

## **HOTSHOT CREW AND BASE AND HELITACK CREW AND HELIBASE**

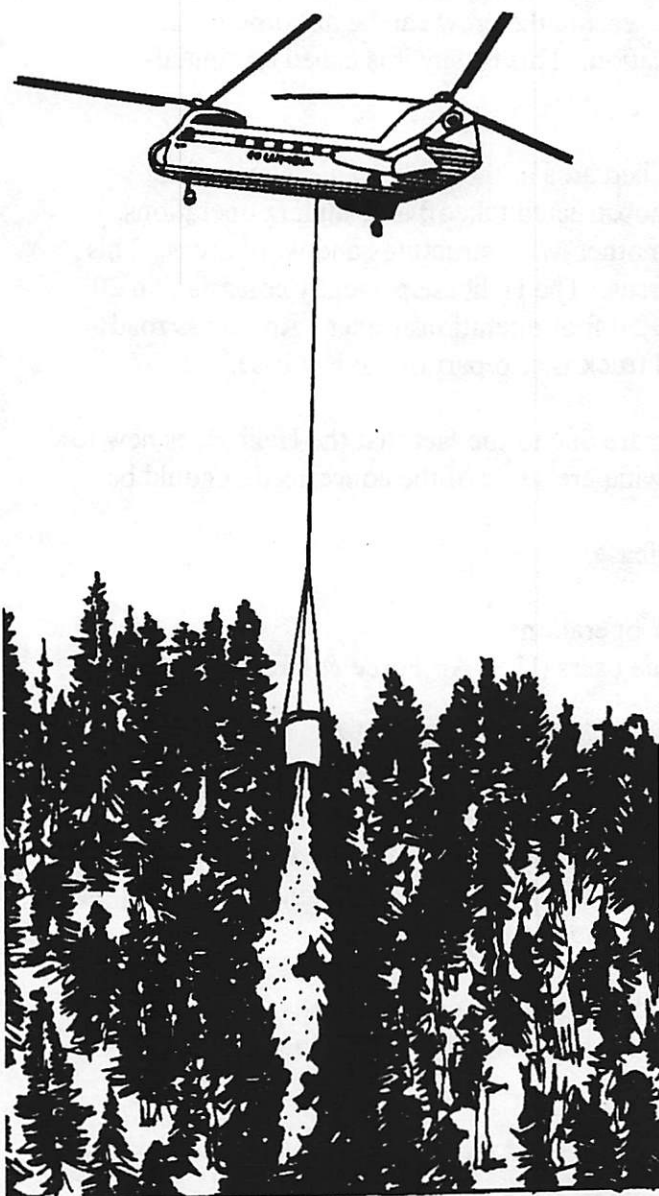
### **CURRENT SITUATION:**

The Pike Interagency Hotshot Crew (Pike IHC) is a 20-person fire resource that is available for reinforcement with no geographical restrictions. It has been utilized in all of the western states, Arkansas, and Ontario, Canada. The crew is available for dispatch from May until the end of September.

The crew facilities include the bunkhouse, kitchen, fire cache, physical training/classroom, and office.

- **BUNKHOUSE:** The current building is a reconverted 5-bay garage that was converted into quarters in the early 1980. The building is not up to current code due to the existing water system.
- **KITCHEN:** The kitchen was converted from a welding shop at the same time the bunkhouse was converted. It also does not meet code due to the water system.
- **FIRE CACHE:** The Fire Cache is the old carpenter shop that is still in its original configuration. The building has suffered major roof damage in recent years, due to high winds.
- **PHYSICAL TRAINING/CLASSROOM:** This facility was a seedling packing building. It has had some remodeling, with the addition of a restroom, laundry room, and the replacement of the roof. It has no insulation in the ceiling or windows.
- **OFFICE:** The office is located in the original office portion of the seed extractory building. The remodeling is almost 60 percent complete.

The Helitack crew and Helibase are new to the MFC. A "Helibase," by definition, is a permanent or temporary facility that allows for the safe operation of helicopters supporting an incident. It is not really a Heliport, which is like a public airport for helicopters. Monument Helibase is more like a fire station for a helicopter. Just as a fire station has a group of fire fighters to staff their apparatus, so does the Helibase. This crew



has a special name; it's called a "Helitack" crew. This name is a conjunction meaning Helicopter-Attack.

This is not the army, so just what does a Helitack crew attack? Well, in this case the crew attacks or responds to wildland fire and other emergencies. Though the crew's primary duty is to respond to wildland fires, they can also be called to respond to other emergencies where a helicopter is needed. Floods, earthquakes, and searches and rescues are examples of other incidents to which the Helitack crew might respond. The crew has specialized training in all of these areas.

What type of resources and people make up a Helitack crew? Certainly the first thing that comes to mind is a helicopter. The helicopter at the MFC is a very capable high-altitude aircraft. It's an American Euro-copter model 315B-AS nicknamed the "Llama" because of its capability in the mountains. The aircraft, a fuel truck, as well as pilot and mechanic are all contracted to the U.S. Forest Service.

The Helitack crew consists of seven fire fighters and a support truck called a Helitender. Three to four of these fire

fighters respond to the incident in the helicopter; the rest follow in the Helitender as well as in a chase truck. The fuel truck with the helicopter mechanic also follows. The incident may last a few hours or a few weeks.

When the crew is not responding to an incident, they are maintaining their readiness. This may involve maintaining tools and equipment or physical training. The crew also spends considerable time receiving and providing fire and aviation safety training. Base maintenance and improvement are also part of the daily routine.

The Helitack crew and helicopter are on duty from June to September, which is usually the fire season in our area. During this time the crew and helicopter is available 7 days a week during daylight hours. Though the crew might continue to fight fires on the ground

at night, they do not fly after sunset because of the hazards that exist in the wildland environment. On any given day, during fire season, the crew can be airborne to an incident in only 5 to 10 minutes after notification. This is why it is called an "initial-attack" crew and vehicle.

The Helibase itself is located above the seedbed area at the MFC. This is one of the highest points at the MFC and allows for unobstructed takeoff and landing operations. Additionally, the Helibase is 200 yards from other MFC structures and work areas. This arrangement prevents the flight over such areas. The Helibase presently consists of a 20 by 20 foot concrete landing pad and a 10 by 50 foot operations trailer. An access road and parking area for the Helitender and fuel truck is also part of the Helibase.

Certain concerns about the current situation are due to the fact that the Helibase is new to the MFC and surrounding areas. The following are some of the concerns that could be identified:

1. Public safety on and adjacent to the Helibase.
2. Aircraft security on the Helibase.
3. Aircraft noise associated with helicopter operations.
4. Airspace management with other airspace users (U.S. Air Force & General Aviation).

#### **DESIRED FUTURE CONDITION:**

Future plans for the Helibase include a permanent operations building and additional landing pads. An operations building fitting the architectural charter of the MFC, and meeting fire-safe standards, is in the planning and design phase. An additional landing pad is planned to provide for the occasional use of another helicopter.

Another important future development is a visitor viewing and interpretive area. This area would provide for public viewing of helicopter operations from a safe location; an interpretive sign is also planned.

Recognition and identification of concerns are the first steps in mitigation. The following are steps which are planned, or that are already in place, which address each concern:

- The Helibase is fenced for the protection of the public and the aircraft.
- The planned operations building includes crew quarters and Helipad security lighting.
- Varied arrival paths are taken to avoid noise impact on local residential areas.  
Whenever possible, residential areas are avoided all together.
- A memorandum of understanding is being developed between the U.S. Air Force and the U.S. Forest Service concerning airspace management.



## **PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVED:**

Most public comment reflected recognition of the need for a Hotshot crew, Helitack crew and firefighting helicopter located in this area of the Front Range. One rancher stated that helicopter noise scared his horses, but also believed that it had been military, rather than Forest Service helicopters, that had created the disturbance. Some responded that they didn't want the MFC to "turn into an airport," not realizing that only one helicopter would be stationed there, except in the event of a wildfire. The community has embraced both crews, as well as the helicopter, by requesting school and scout troop tours. The Helitack crew has already become a part of the community by serving it. They have conducted various interagency training exercises and safety classes, including El Paso county chapter of Search and Rescue. The Helitack crew and helicopter was also recognized by community news for having initially attacked 35 fires in the 1997 summer fire season, all of which could have become another Buffalo Creek fire, but were stopped within the initial phase. Overall, public response to the new location of the helicopter and Helitack crew has been inclusive and accepting. The Hotshot crew has been solidified within the community since 1979, and several TV documentaries have been produced about the crew.

## **PRIORITIES, DECISIONS, AND ACTION ITEMS:**

Steps have already been taken to mitigate facilities concerns for the Hotshot base and barracks for both crews. See the section on the 30 Acre MFC for more information. Among the steps already taken around Monument Helibase are:

- Maintaining Helibase fencing and signing including using more educational signing to better inform the public.
- The operations building is not scheduled for construction for several years. The present operations trailer has been rented for the last 2 years. Presently an excess mobile office trailer has been procured from another federal agency. This will serve as an interim operations building, until one can be constructed. It will be a cost savings in yearly rental fees as well as in set up, transportation, and moving costs that occur yearly. The trailer will be located and sided to blend with the landscape and blend as best as a trailer can with the MFC.
- An additional training facility issue is the Helirappel tower planned for summer of 1998. This will be a 40-foot wooden tower constructed from power poles. This tower will facilitate Monument Helitack becoming the first Helirappel crew in the region and more capable in performing Helitack missions.
- Aircraft noise and flight path issues will continue to be addressed. These issues are also addressed in the Monument Helibase Annual Operating Plan (an internal document). Sections of the plan will include a hazard map and instructions for departure and arrival for local and visiting Helitack crews.
- In the area of airspace management, no airspace conflicts have occurred in two seasons of operations. Continued communication between the U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Air Force Academy Flight-Training-Squadron Airfield Manager, and Academy Fire Department, has been an important part of this safety record. Our

interaction with general aviation has been our effort to maintain a high profile in the public sector of aviation. This includes visits to local air shows, speaking to aviation groups, and offering tours of the Helibase.

- An additional area not previously discussed is the opportunity for public involvement in the MFC and Helibase. Such an opportunity has come in a form of a new fire weather station located at the Helibase. This weather station will serve as fire danger prediction model for Front Range communities. Throughout fire season, daily weather readings are made from such stations and fire danger predictions are made. There will be a need for several volunteer fire-weather observers, to make such daily weather readings. These volunteers will receive the appropriate training to participate in this important fire-prevention project.

#### **IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE AND COST ESTIMATES**

- **Spring of 1999**

Helibase informational and educational signing and a visitor picnic area

Estimated cost of sign planning and construction ----- \$2,000 - \$3,000

- **May 1998**

Fire weather station (60 percent complete)

Additional cost will be ----- \$500

Training of volunteer fire-weather observers

Cost of instructional materials and instructor travel ----- \$200

- **June 1998**

The interim Helibase operations trailer (arrival: January 1998).

Cost of delivery and setup, ----- \$1,000

Cost of siding and improvements. ----- \$2,500

- **Summer of 1998**

Helirappel tower

Construction costs anticipated to be ----- \$2,000-\$3,000

(It is expected that funding will come from a combination of the Forest Service and our MFC partners.)

Address air space safety concerns and high profile fly-in activities will be conducted at air shows and other public events throughout fire season.

Anticipated flight time cost ----- \$1000

(Well worth it in the interest of aviation safety.)



