

Managing Trails for Safety at Apex Park



JEFFERSON
COUNTY COLORADO
Open Space

Overview

A new management plan will be implemented at Apex Park beginning September 10, with the goals of improving safety and visitor experience. This plan applies an even/odd designated use schedule to trails in the southern portion of the park and implements directional use on BIKE ONLY days. Importantly, it provides neighborhood and regional access for all modes of trail use on all days. Additionally, the new plan will consider removing special use designations during prolonged winter conditions, allowing Apex trails to be “SNOWpen” for all use, all days.

The new management will be on a one-year trial basis. During that time, Jeffco Open Space (JCOS) will track multiple factors that will help us measure the impact of the designated use trial. These factors include intuitive compliance, comment tracking, and safety monitoring.

Starting September 10, you must know the calendar date to safely use the park. Affected trails include: Enchanted Forest, Magic Mountain, Poco Calle, Rocker, Paydirt, and Smelter (see map below for more details).

- Even calendar dates (2nd, 4th, etc.) = Bikes only, no hikers or equestrians
- Odd calendar dates (1st, 3rd, etc.) = Hikers and equestrians only, no bikes

Please note that several trail names have been updated to improve communication and understanding around this new management plan.

APEX PARK DESIGNATED USE



LEGEND

EVEN
CALENDAR DATES
BIKES

BIKES ONLY
on Even Calendar Dates
Hikers and equestrians prohibited beyond this point on even calendar dates.



ODD
CALENDAR DATES
NO BIKES

NO BIKES
on Odd Calendar Dates
Bikes prohibited beyond this point on odd calendar dates.



--- **EVERY DAY**
MULTI-USE;
MULTI-DIRECTIONAL

STOP GATE

Background

Safety Challenges at Apex Park

Apex Park experiences high visitation, often concentrated on weekends and weekday evenings. The park landscape contains challenging technical geography including blind corners, tight corridors, and steep terrain. High speed differentials exist between visitor groups. These factors combine to create dangerous conditions for park visitors.

Following more than two years of public and visitor engagement, intense in-park education efforts, and field observations, JCOS worked with the Apex visitor community to develop this plan to improve safety and improve the visitor experience at Apex Park.

Management Strategy to Reduce Conflict

Reported incidents of conflict and safety concerns are concentrated on the trails that will be converted to **designated use on alternating calendar dates**, with **directional use** on bike only days. Designated use on these trails helps mitigate the conditions that lead to trail conflict. The rest of the trail system will remain available to every visitor, every day. With about half the trail miles multi-use, visitors can enjoy a portion of the park, even if they arrive on the “wrong” day.



Community Engagement Process

This plan was the result of a public process which included releasing a draft plan, hosting a community meeting, and collecting public and stakeholder feedback. The following themes were identified as being the most important to Apex Park stakeholders in the new management plan:

- Even/odd vs day of week
- Directional use
- Regional connectivity
- Neighborhood access

The final plan addresses these themes as well as the goals of improving safety and visitor experience in the park.

FAQ

What informed this management plan?

Several efforts were made to understand Apex Park visitor conflict and to evaluate potential solutions. In addition to education and outreach efforts, data was collected through several means, including two visitor surveys, a sign inventory and analysis, stakeholder listening sessions, the 2018 Jeffco Resident Survey, Park Ranger contacts with visitors, and visitor/volunteer reports and observations.

Between visitor surveys in 2017 and 2019, respondents who believe the current management strategy is ineffective increased from 50% to 75%, and respondents who believe JCOS needs to implement a new management strategy increased from 27% to 43%. The 2018 Resident Survey showed 74% of residents support designating trails for a single type of use. Overall, this data indicates that the current management strategy is ineffective in reducing conflict and that visitors support a new management strategy that includes designated use trails.

Following the release of a draft plan and public input period, JCOS worked with stakeholders to create a final plan that addressed community feedback.

How has JCOS tried to address visitor safety concerns in the past?

After numerous direct incidents and complaints from park visitors, JCOS responded with increased education, ranger patrols, and signage in 2019. Patrol hours increased by 70%, written warnings and penalty assessments increased by 305%, educational contacts increased by 93%. These efforts notwithstanding, incidents at the park increased by 108%.

Why are there new trail names?

With the new plan, several trails spanned the multi-use and designated use sections of the park. Segments of these trails in the designated use section of the park were renamed for clarity in communication. Parts of Apex Trail are now Rocker and Magic Mountain Trail, part of Sluicebox is now Paydirt, and part of Pick-n-Sledge is now Smelter.

Contact Us

Submit questions and comments to:
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