

## Conservation Greenprint V2A Engagement Summary

### Introduction

Members of the Jefferson County public and Partners and Stakeholders of JCOS were engaged as part of the update to the Jefferson County Open Space (JCOS) 5-year strategic plan, called the Conservation Greenprint. Engagement sought to both educate the audiences about the update and gather informed input related to the refinement of Goals and Strategies of the Conservation Greenprint. This document summarizes the results of the engagement activities and outcomes.

### Resulting Actions

Identifying potential revisions to the Conservation Greenprint that would align better with partners and the public was the immediate and primary purpose of this engagement series. **Overall, the engagement clearly demonstrated very high levels of support for the draft Goals and Strategies of the Conservation Greenprint.** With results that were highly affirming, modest adjustment - if any- is advised. Possible actions might include:

- Retain all Conservation Greenprint Goals in their existing form.
- Retain or reinforce JCOS' strategies related to visitor stewardship education, regional trail connectivity, underserved access, real-time information on parking and trail conditions and climate change response.
- Consider articulating an implementation strategy for Protect goals of providing coordinated leadership on policies and programs among Jefferson County Parks and Recreation Departments.
- Consider engagement results in the selection of Indicator Metrics to maximize relevance to these important external audiences.

Many comments collected in the stakeholder/partners engagement process show enthusiasm for coordination during implementation of the Conservation Greenprint.

### Public Engagement Results

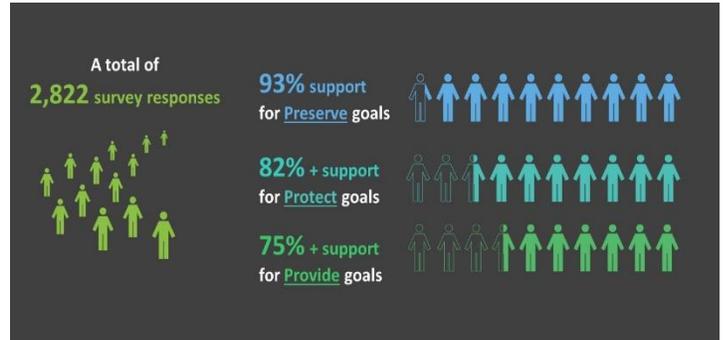
JCOS conducted a series of three surveys online and in JCOS open space parks. The three surveys correspond to the three-part JCOS Mission. Objectives of the surveys were to ask questions about support for components of the JCOS mission, goals and strategies. The in -park surveys were administered by JCOS volunteers using tablet computers; the format and questions were identical online and in-person. Results were analyzed for differences across age groups, ethnicities, engagement method (online or in person at a park), and Jefferson County residency status.



## Vision to Action Framework

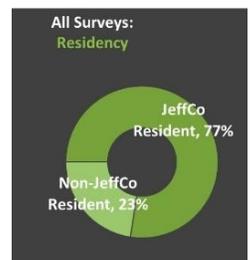
### Public Engagement Results Highlights

- A total of **2,822 survey responses** were received.
- Responses show **90% or greater support for Preserve and Protect goals, and 75% or greater support for Provide goals**, indicating more consensus around the fundamental value of preserving open space lands for their natural resource value and less consensus about how to manage lands to accommodate diverse visitor activities and preferences.
- Availability of both **in-field and online survey distribution was additive** and improved overall participation. The split between in-field and online results was influenced by the weather during the three survey windows.
- Results showed **little variation across demographic groups**.
  - Compared to Jefferson County as a whole, respondent demographics somewhat overrepresented Caucasians and underrepresented Hispanics, as well as younger (25-34) and older (65+) adult age groups. Minors under 18 were underrepresented.
  - The 18-24 age group was more likely to select “Neutral” than other age groups across questions. Modest differences in emphasis between recreation, wildlife and other top values were reported between online and in-park respondents.



### Summary of Respondent Characteristics by Survey

DEMOGRAPHICS	PRESERVE	PROTECT	PROVIDE
Total Responses	1202	645	975
In-field/Online	50%/50%	44%/56%	20%/80%
Jeffco Resident/ Non-Resident	60%/33%	74%/22%	76%/22%
Race: Caucasian/ Non-Caucasian	85%/12%	86%/12%	88%/8%
Age: 0-34/35-49/ 50+	32%/32%/35%	27%/34%/39%	23%/36%/40%

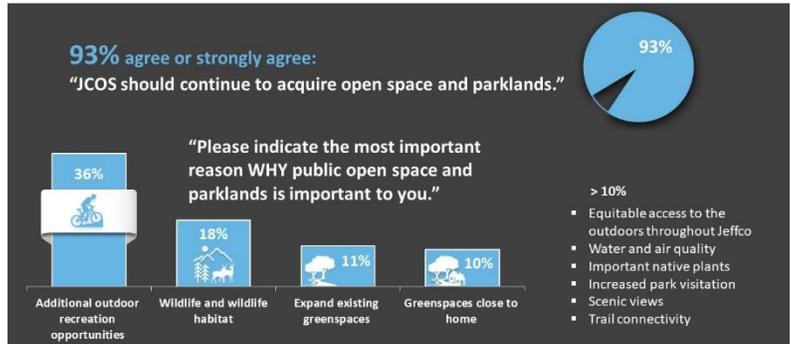


Note that percentages may not sum to 100% when multiple responses are allowed, when some respondents select no response, or due to rounding.



### Preserve Survey Results

- **93%** of all respondents Agree or Strongly Agree with the statement, “JCOS should continue to acquire open space and parklands.”
- The top selections in response to, “Please indicate the most important reason WHY public open space and parklands is important to you” are:



Additional outdoor recreation opportunities (36%); Wildlife and wildlife habitat (18%); Expand existing greenspaces (11%); and Greenspaces close to home (10%). While the overall pattern was similar across all groups:

- Non-Caucasians were even more likely to select Additional outdoor recreation opportunities over Wildlife and wildlife habitat.
- In-field respondents more strongly favored Additional outdoor recreation opportunities (47%) while while online users ranked Wildlife and wildlife habitat (27%) and Additional outdoor recreation opportunities (26%) about equally. Online respondents ranked Water and Air quality (10%) over Greenspaces close to home.
- JeffCo Residents ranked Additional outdoor recreation opportunities (30%) versus Wildlife and wildlife habitat (22%) while Non-residents emphasized Additional outdoor recreation opportunities (47%) versus Wildlife and wildlife habitat (11%)

### Protect Survey Results

- **92% of all respondents** Agree or Strongly Agree with the statement, “Protection/stewardship of park and natural resources on existing open space lands should be our top priority.” The overall pattern was similar across all groups.
- **90% or more of respondents** Agree or Strongly Agree with each of the policies and regulations included in the survey that JCOS uses to protect park and natural resources.
- **86% or more of respondents** Agree or Strongly Agree that JCOS should be a leader in each of the resource management areas included in the survey.
- When asked for their three most important management priorities, respondents were most likely to select Wildland restoration (57%) and least likely to select Heritage Resource protection (31%).





### Provide Survey Results

- **75-87% of all respondents** Agree or Strongly Agree with the five Provide goals tested. The highest support (87%) was for “Increase trail development while being sensitive to plants and wildlife” while 75% support “Create additional designated-use trails.”



- Overall pattern was similar across most groups. Somewhat lower levels of support for “Create additional designated-use trails” among “Asian” and “Other” races, however sample sizes of these races are too small to reliably draw conclusions.
- Older age groups more likely to Strongly Agree than Agree with the goal, “Emphasize visitor stewardship education such as trail courtesy, park regulation compliance, etc.”

- **Two-thirds of respondents** indicate that Picnic tables/shelters and Universally Accessible compliant trails are Neutral in contributing to their park experience. About half of respondents indicate that Potable Water is Neutral to their experience. All other park offerings included in the survey were rated as contributing Positively or Very Positively by at least **76% percent of respondents**.



- The top four responses that respondents rated as among the most important to their park experience are: Designated use trails (47%); Available parking (42%); Clearly signed trails and wayfinding signage (41%); and Access close to home (40%).
- Regarding Group Permits, responses were more likely to fall in the middle of the spectrum and lack consensus. Small majorities Disagree or Strongly Disagree with “No groups should be permitted” and Agree or Strongly Agree with “Groups of 14-50 permitted with trails open”.



## Stakeholder/Partner Engagement Results

JCOS engaged with three main grouping of partners and stakeholders: professionals in peer land management agencies, parks and recreation directors in Jefferson County, and JCOS volunteers, some of whom also represent stakeholder/partner community organizations.



## Engagement Objectives

1. Identify alignment of draft Conservation Greenprint Goals with partners/stakeholders
2. Identify lessons learned from partners/stakeholders on similar efforts that could inform/refine strategies
3. Identify potential metrics used by partners/stakeholders for consideration

Engagement activities included one-on-one interviews, in-person workshops, and a supplemental online engagement survey for those that were not able to participate in the in-person activities. Stakeholder/partners were asked to review Draft Conservation Greenprint Goals and strategies and provide comments on alignment, lessons learned, and potential metrics. Top take-aways from each group are summarized below. Additional detail with individual responses are attached.

## Results Highlights

- Overall, stakeholder/partner comments affirmed JCOS' Goals and while offering many confirming and some additional ideas for strategies (how it will be accomplished).
- Tension between the Preserve/Protect aspect of JCOS mission and the Provide component is recognized by all stakeholder groups. It is the norm in JCOS' industry and rightly represented in JCOS' Goals.
- JCOS is valued as a leader, convener, and standard-setter by Jefferson County Parks and Recreation Directors, and as a collaborating partner by peer land managers, who face similar challenges.
- Stakeholders did not identify any new metrics beyond what JCOS has identified already through the V2A process to date.



## *Vision to Action Framework*

### Results – Jefferson County Parks and Recreation Directors

On October 24, 2019 JCOS staff and members of the consultant team met with Jefferson County Parks and Recreation Directors at the West Woods Golf Course community building in Arvada. Themes heard from this group include:

#### Preserve

- Land acquisition funding, swaps, and identifying gaps in access are ripe areas for collaborative efforts.
- Access metrics are important metrics for consideration in future acquisitions and access development
- There is potential for alignment through coordinated master plan updates.
- Systemwide acres and 10-minute access are key metrics, while mapping provides access detail.

#### Protect

- Users do not understand the difference between municipal/district properties that are posted as having received JCOS funding, and JCOS owned properties.
- Most agencies are not talking about climate change and no one wants to be first. Directors would appreciate JCOS convening/leading development of consistent, coordinated messaging.
- A consistent trail classification system throughout parks managers of Jefferson County would be beneficial.
- Wildfire and weed mitigations are common metrics. Water usage and property cleaning hours are also used.

#### Provide

- It would be easier for users if rules and regulations were consistent across agencies
- JCOS funding support helps provide a rationale for open access to district parks
- Coordinated programming efforts have been well-received
- Need more education on how trail alignment interfaces with natural resource protection
- “Standards of Excellence for Urban National Wildlife Refuges” is a useful tool
- Visitation numbers, parking utilization, and program participation/quality are common metrics. Trail and facilities utilization can provide useful detail.



## *Vision to Action Framework*

### Results – Peer Land Management Agencies

From October 21-31, members of the consultant team conducted individual phone interview with six peer land managers. They reviewed the draft goals and strategies and offered their perspectives. Interviewees were able to comment broadly rather than necessarily responding to each of the individual question prompts. The resulting inputs readily fall into the categories of “themes confirmed” and “fresh suggestions.”

#### Themes Confirmed

- Population growth and development pressure throughout the Front Range is such that ‘provide’ must increasingly be balanced with ‘provide’ and ‘protect.’
- Park / Open Space Management agencies throughout the Denver metro region need to collaborate on best practices in pursuit of achieving the preserve/protect-provide balance.
- Park and open space agencies need to understand and embrace that some parks will continue to be heavily utilized (and those offer one type of user experience) whereas others are lesser impacted and can provide a different experience and values (i.e. solitude, wildlife habitat, etc).
- Surveys of users continue to be a tremendously valuable tool to understand park and open space ‘customers’ and should continue to be administered on a standing basis. Survey should be shared across agencies.

#### Fresh Suggestions

- Partner agencies should convene to conduct a region-wide ‘resource/asset gap analysis’ to identify where closures (through land acquisition) would provide a more contiguous system.
- Develop contingency planning; how would the agency respond and function in the event of massive wildfires or floods, for example? How would implementation of the Strategic Plan (pursuit of its goals) be affected if the agency had to focus heavily on repair and rebuild?
- Climate Change (arguably a Climate Crisis) is upon us. JCOS and its peer agencies have a duty to ensure that its Strategic Plan lays out strategies for mitigating the causes and effects of warming.
- Youth Advisory Councils/Committees are an excellent vehicle for understanding the interests, motivations, and desires of the next generation of stewards.



## *Vision to Action Framework*

### Results – JCOS Volunteers

On November 4, 2019 JCOS staff and members of the consultant team met with JCOS volunteers at JCOS offices. Themes heard from this group include:

#### Preserve

- Educate the public about opportunities to donate through bequest
- Acquire lands that connect existing parks and open space and increase access
- Acquire lands with high quality resources for recreation, wildlife, and
- Educate neighbors, set expectations prior to acquisition or development of visitor/recreation facilities
- Celebrate rare assets – such as fossils – to build appreciation for value beyond recreation
- Balance resource use for new acquisitions with stewardship of existing JCOS lands

#### Protect

- Many volunteers value their activities – such as informing visitors of park regulations and reporting back on the conditions and behaviors they see in the park - for their alignment with “protect” goals.
- Volunteers who patrol have insights on areas for visitor education about why JCOS rules exist
- There is a need for more education about visitor impacts, the rationale behind rules, and how visitors can be better stewards
- Continue and enforce trail closures and other erosion and conservation measures

#### Provide

- Offer more educational interpretation of park features and resources
- Educate the public about trail usage, closures, and etiquette, and about visitor impacts on wildlife.
- Develop more modern, technology-based real time information, such codes to scan or text at the trailhead with park-specific information.
- Volunteers have varied, specific ideas for potential new access points, wayfinding, and interpretation.