

CROSSING THE DIVIDE

What Mountain Communities Can Learn from
Open Space Programs on the Urban Interface

Pryce Hadley

Pitkin County Open Space & Trails

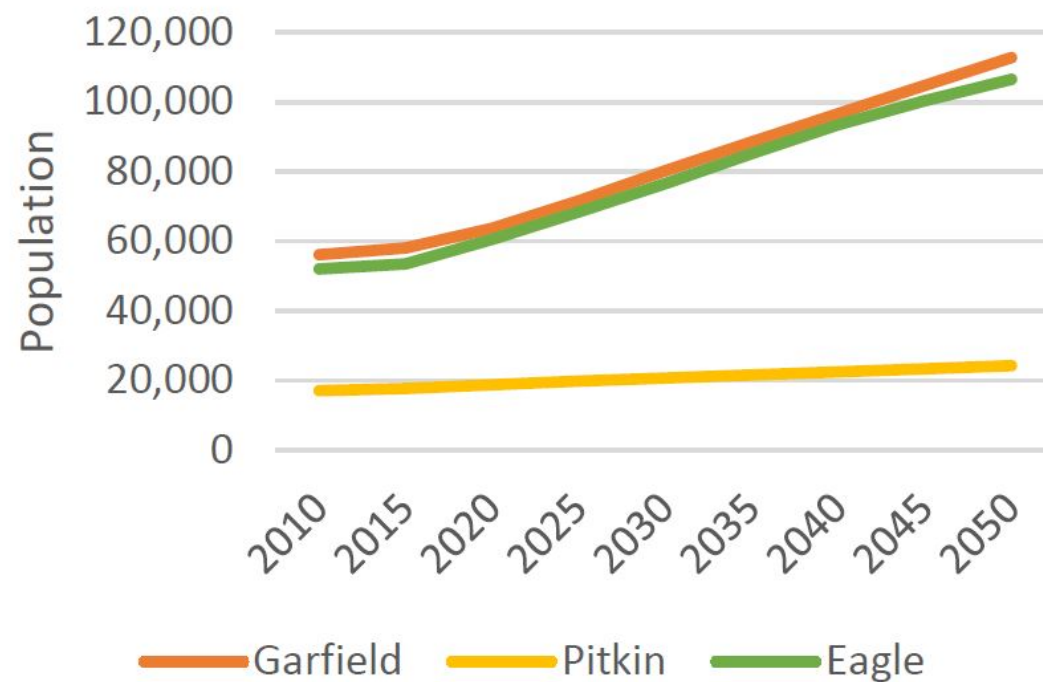
Western State Colorado University

September 10th, 2018

THE CHALLENGE

- The intermountain West is changing dramatically
- Idaho, Nevada, Utah are top fastest growing states
- Colorado's population will double by 2050
- Western Slope will grow by 75%
- This foreshadows major challenges for COSA members, like Pitkin County Open Space & Trails

Projected Population Growth in Western Colorado by County










PITKIN COUNTY OPEN SPACE & TRAILS

- Pitkin County Open Space & Trails
 - Property-tax funded, manages 20,000 acres
 - Spread out over 50+ miles, four counties, fragmented properties
- 2 full-time, 3 seasonal rangers;
 - Outreach, compliance, emergency response
 - Responsible for much of the on-the-ground concerns
 - Code enforcement officers




**Glenwood
Springs**


Aspen

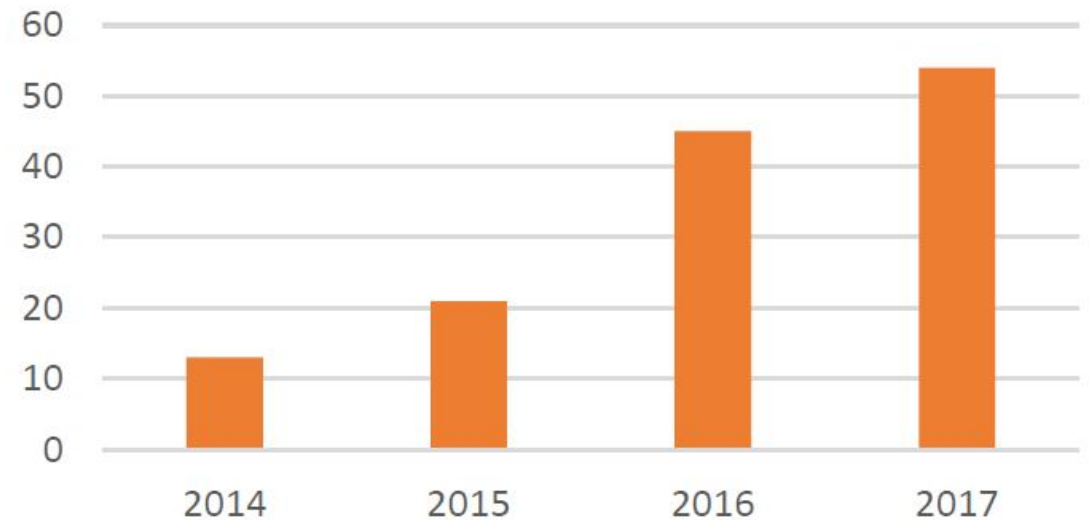
- Legend**
-  Open Space (fee simple)
 -  Conservation Easements
 -  Wilderness Area
- Federal**
-  BLM
 -  USFS
 -  State
 -  Rivers/Streams
 -  Roads



THE CHALLENGE

- Visitation has **increased 18%** or 96,000 people since 2013
- EMS incidents have **doubled** since 2014
- Calls related to homeless camps have **quadrupled** since 2014
- Commercial permit applications have more than **doubled** since 2014
- **Greater risk, greater demand for rangers**

Number of Illegal Camping-Related Calls
2014-2017



“THE CRYSTAL BALL”

- Open Space programs on the urban-interface can model solutions
 - “Crystal Ball”
- I set out to study how other programs tackle the big challenges facing OST:
 - **Homelessness and illegal camping**
 - **Emergency medical care**
 - **Ranger safety**
 - **Public outreach**
 - **Meeting future demand**





IT WAS A STRANGE JOURNEY



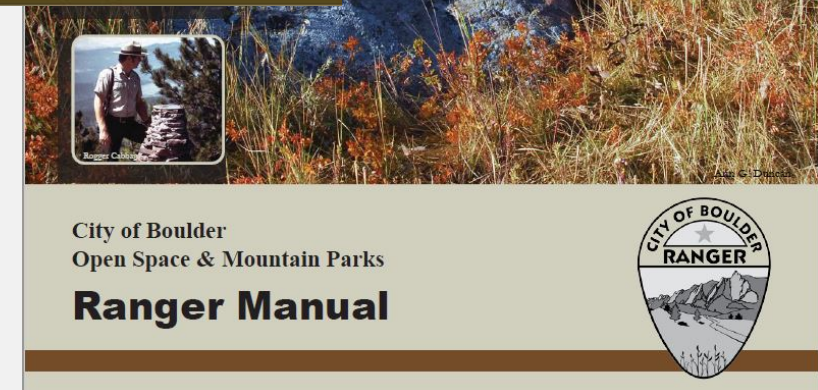
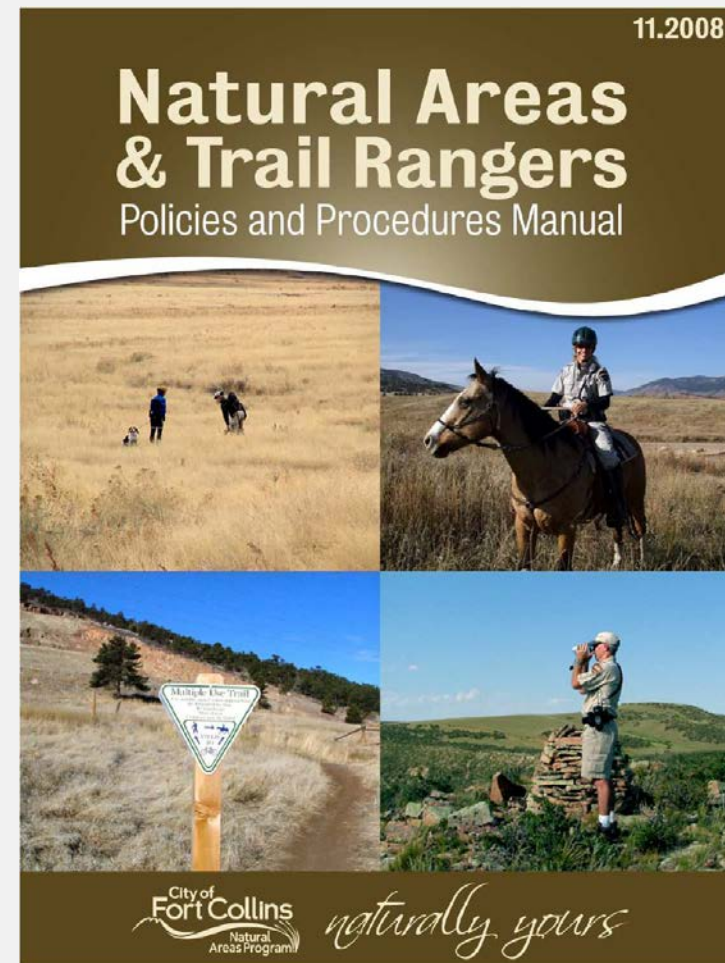
Yes, that is a “leg” in a suitcase.



The hazards of research.

METHODS

- Assessed needs of Open Space & Trails
 - Trail counter data, ranger records, incident reports, planning documents, media articles
- Carried out:
 - 4 Focus Groups (n = 26)
 - 4 Observational Ride-alongs
 - **Anonymous*
- Thematically coded 8-hours of transcripts (Dedoose)
- Reviewed 5 Ranger Manuals;



Top (Mentioned) Challenges	Frequency	Top (Mentioned) BMPs	Frequency
Homelessness	232	Interagency Partnerships	64
Increasing Visitation/Urban Development	126	Enforcement/Tickets	57
Ranger Safety	145	New Training	56
Politically Driven Decision-making	55	Changing Patrol Routine	41
Generalist Demands of the Job	35	Eviction	38
Low Staffing	33	Partnerships with Parks Deputies	33
Challenge Educating the Public	29	Limit Parking	31

Focus Group	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5
A	Increasing Visitation and Urban Growth	Homelessness	Generalist Ranger Model	Confusing Regulations	Team Communication
B	Increasing Visitation and Urban Growth	Limitations on Resources	Generalist Ranger Model	Dogs	Multi-Use Management (Recreation and Wildlife)
C	Increasing Visitation and Urban Growth	General Ranger Model	Public Attitude and User Group Conflict	Homelessness	High-Risk Contacts
D	Increasing Visitation and Urban Growth	Managing New Acquisitions	Homelessness	Managing Closures	Staffing

Land Management Challenge	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Rank 4	Rank 5	Total
Increasing visitation/urban growth	10	1	4	4	2	21
Homelessness	7	5	2	6	1	21
User group conflict	0	1	3	0	4	8
Generalist ranger model	1	2	3	1	0	7
Challenge educating the public	0	3	0	3	0	6
Low staffing	0	2	3	0	0	5
Multi-use management demands	0	1	1	0	3	5
Dogs	1	0	1	2	0	4
Weapons	1	1	1	0	1	4
Parking congestion	0	2	0	0	2	4
Politically-driven decision-making by department	0	0	1	0	3	4
Radio communication problems	2	1	0	0	0	3

FINDINGS: REGIONAL STUDY


- All programs reported similar challenges:
 - **Homelessness**
 - **Increasing visitation and urban development**
 - **Threats to ranger safety**
 - **Politically driven decision-making**



HOMELESSNESS

- Homelessness was the most frequently mentioned theme
 - 81% individual ranked as top 5
 - 3 of 4 focus groups
- Ranger safety concerns:
 - Transient contacts, drugs, needles, crime, weapons
 - Wildfire caused by campfires
- BMPs:
 - Eviction/enforcement
 - Specialized training
 - Law enforcement partnerships
 - PPE (ballistic vests, puncture resistant)
 - Health & Human Services



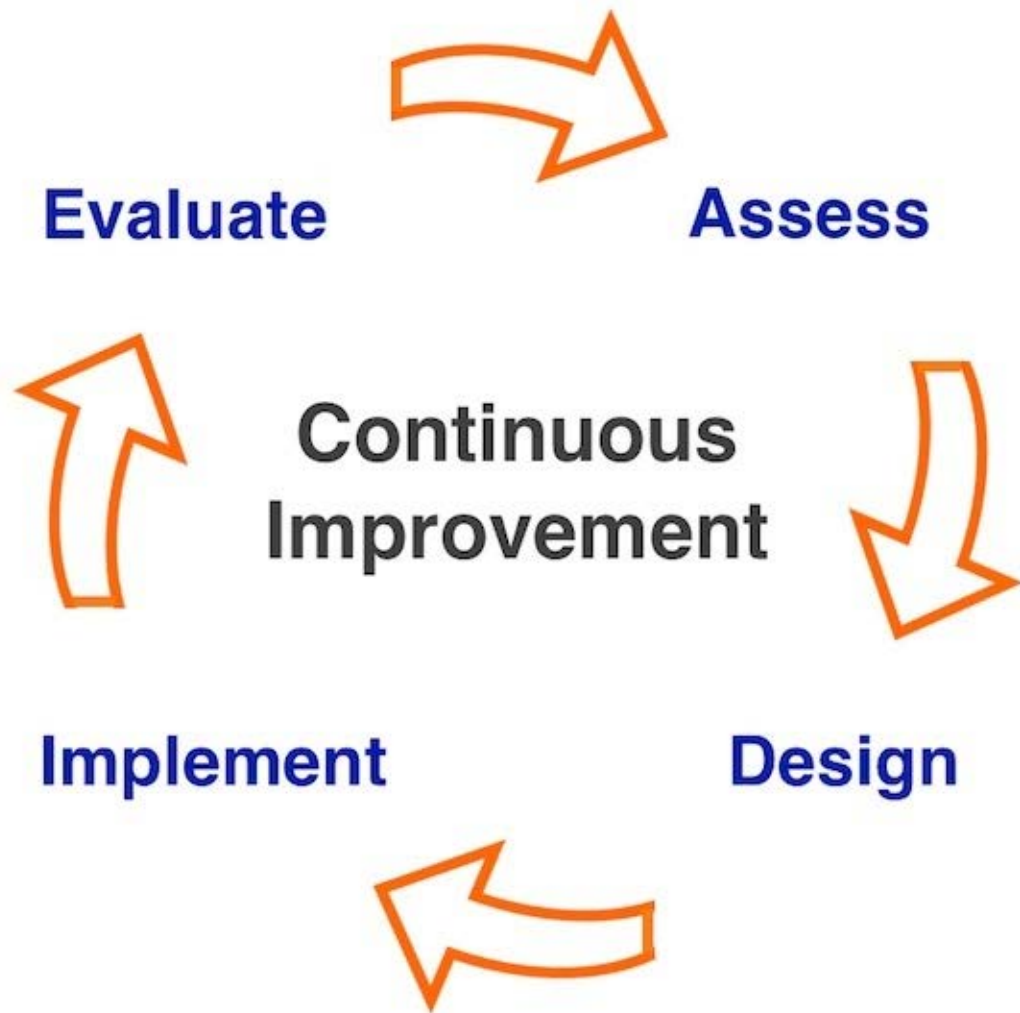


“I think the one big thing about all this is that we can't enforce our way out of homelessness. It's a social and community issue that has to be addressed on a social and community level. And no matter what we do, we can't enforce our way of it... there used to be hardly any camps and now there's even more and we've increased our enforcement, not decreased it, and it's still growing. And so it's just kind of proving that point that it's a community issue and has to be dealt with on a community level.”

INCREASING VISITATION & URBAN DEVELOPMENT

- Second most often mentioned theme
 - 81% individually ranked as top 5 challenge
 - Seen as driver of all challenges
- Discussed as “carrying capacity”
 - Not adequately addressed
- Parking congestion main outcome
- BMPs:
 - Limit parking or increase infrastructure
 - New technology
 - Social media
 - Volunteer programs and partnerships





Continuous Improvement Cycle of Adaptive Project Management

Adapted from The Agile Project Management Academy

Chuck Cobb

HOW COULD PITKIN COUNTY OPEN SPACE & TRAILS ADAPT?

- **Homelessness and illegal camping**

- Partner with Health & Human Services

- Coordinate with Pitkin County Sheriff's Office

- **Emergency medical care**

- Improve training and evaluate risk posed by river accidents – *in progress*

- **Ranger safety**

- Pass self-defense policy and offer new training

- **Public outreach**

- Engage growing Hispanic community
- Start volunteer programs (i.e. Bike Patrol, Nordic Ambassadors, etc.)

- **Meeting future demand**

- Consider Resident Ranger position
- Hire additional winter ranger or (FTE) ranger – **Currently under consideration**
- Update policies and develop a Ranger Manual

TAKEAWAYS FOR C.O.S.A.

- Mountain communities can use the urban interface as a “Crystal Ball”
 - Reveal regional challenges
 - Identify best practices
- This can be applied to other regions
- Tool for adaptive management
- Practices may be fit to local needs – not a 1:1 translation
- The West is changing, land managers across the region should adapt



Acknowledgements:

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- Colorado Open Space Alliance
- Project participants
- Margie & John Haley Foundation
- Friends & Family

QUESTIONS?



HOW CAN WE LEARN FROM EACH OTHER?

- **Brian Long**, Trails System Manager, City of Aspen
- **Bridget Clark**, Natural Areas and Trails Ranger, City of Fort Collins Natural Areas Department
- **Bevin Carithers**, Resource Protection Supervisor, Boulder County Parks & Open Space
- **Phil Kirkman**, Ranger, Eagle County Open Space





RANGER PANEL

- What are the top two challenges you face in your line of work?
- How is your agency working to address these challenges?
- How can open space programs in the mountains and on the Front Range collaborate to find solutions?
- How can COSA support this process?



THANK YOU!

CONTACT ME

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