



EL PASO COUNTY

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DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

January 18, 2024

Justin Kilgore
Project Manager
El Paso County Development Services Department
2880 International Circle
Colorado Springs, CO 80910

Subject: Town of Palmer Lake / Ben Lomand Mountain Annexation (ANX-24-001)

Hello Justin,

The Parks Planning Division of the Parks and Community Services Department has reviewed the Town of Palmer Lake / Ben Lomand Mountain Annexation application and has the following comments on behalf of El Paso County Parks. The Palmer Lake / Ben Lomand Mountain Annexation is located northeast of the Town of Palmer Lake, between County Line Road and Ben Lomand Mountain itself. The applicant proposes an annexation of approximately 181 acres of a proposed 344.5-acre residential development known as Ben Lomand Mountain Village. A large portion of this proposed residential development already lies within the Town of Palmer Lake.

The 2022 El Paso County Parks Master Plan shows impacts to the proposed Ben Lomand Mountain Secondary Regional Trail (see attached map), which winds its way around Ben Lomand Mountain from El Paso County Parks' Santa Fe Open Space in the south to the northernmost extension of the New Santa Fe Regional Trail. Santa Fe Open Space is located approximately 470 feet south of the proposed development, while the New Santa Fe Regional Trail is located both south and west of the project site. The annexation portion of this application has very minimal impact on the Ben Lomand Mountain Regional Trail, although a small section may enter the southwestern-most corner of the site, dependent on final trail alignment.

The 2022 El Paso County Parks Master Plan includes an update to the Candidate Open Space Areas, utilizing a weighted overlay of numerous natural and man-made attributes (see attached maps) which contribute to strong candidate open space areas. Ben Lomand Mountain Village, as well as the annexation area to a lesser extent, falls completely within the bounds of the updated Ben Lomand Mountain Candidate Open Space Area. As demonstrated on the attached Candidate Open Space maps, the Ben Lomand Mountain Candidate Open Space area possesses high open space values. The Master Plan offers the following explanation in regard to the open space values found here:

- *“These regionally significant landmarks are located near Palmer Lake along State Highway 105. Elephant Rock is an isolated cluster of cap rock that extends off Ben Lomand Mountain, standing above the surrounding pines like a castle ruin. The overall landscape is very scenic. The higher portions of Ben Lomand Mountain are a series of cliff faces that have shed huge blocks of rock lying along the lower slopes. Ponderosa pine and scrub oak blend into an extensive and gently sloping meadow that meets the base of the mountain and emphasizes its abrupt rise. Protection of this area would preserve two notable landmarks and a critical backdrop to the popular Palmer Lake Recreation Area. The area is also traversed by the New Santa Fe Trail and it represents one of the more scenic settings along the trail. However, the meadows and flanks of the mountain face imminent development that may preclude the exploration of protection options unless discussions begin immediately. As a natural area, development of facilities would be minimal and access controlled to protect sensitive areas and steep slopes. Future trail connections could also be made that would link the area to existing Forest Service trails up nearby canyons to the west. The result could be a trail through land managed by the Forest Service, El Paso County and other jurisdictions.”*

The applicant's Letter of Intent states the following in regard to dedicated open space in Ben Lomand Mountain Village:

- *"The southwestern portion of the Property is undeveloped land which includes Ben Lomand Mountain consisting of steep topography, heavy forest, and rock ledges and outcroppings. From the southern property line, the mountain slopes upward from south to north to a sharp ridgeline. The ridgeline runs in the east-west direction and has a dirt, fire access road graded along the top of ridge. From this ridge line, Ben Lomand Mountain falls sharply to the north to a grass valley floor located in the northern half of the property. A large portion of Ben Lomand Mountain is envisioned to remain in its natural state with the future development."*
- *"Open Space: A large portion of Ben Lomand Mountain is envisioned to remain in its natural state. The future development on the property will maintain a large portion of significant open space consisting of the southwestern portion of the Property which includes Ben Lomand Mountain consisting of steep topography, heavy forest, and rock ledges and outcroppings."*

El Paso County Parks staff recommends that the applicant work closely with the Town of Palmer Lake to establish a long-standing publicly accessible open space on the southern, western, and northwestern slopes of Ben Lomand Mountain. A quasi-governmental agency or non-profit conservation organization could help to establish ownership and oversight guidelines to allow this property to remain accessible to the public in perpetuity and provide public access from the New Santa Fe Regional Trail and Santa Fe Open Space on the mountain's southern slopes. Ben Lomand Mountain remains as one of the last remaining undisturbed and most recognizable landmarks in northern El Paso County.

Staff also recommends that the applicant provide a 25'-50' wide public trail easement on the southern, western, and northwestern slopes of Ben Lomand Mountain for the construction and continued maintenance of the Ben Lomand Mountain Secondary Regional Trail, and to designate and provide the easement on forthcoming preliminary plans and final plats. The final alignment of this trail will be determined at a future date pending the final approval of this annexation request, as well as the submittal of preliminary plan and final plat applications.

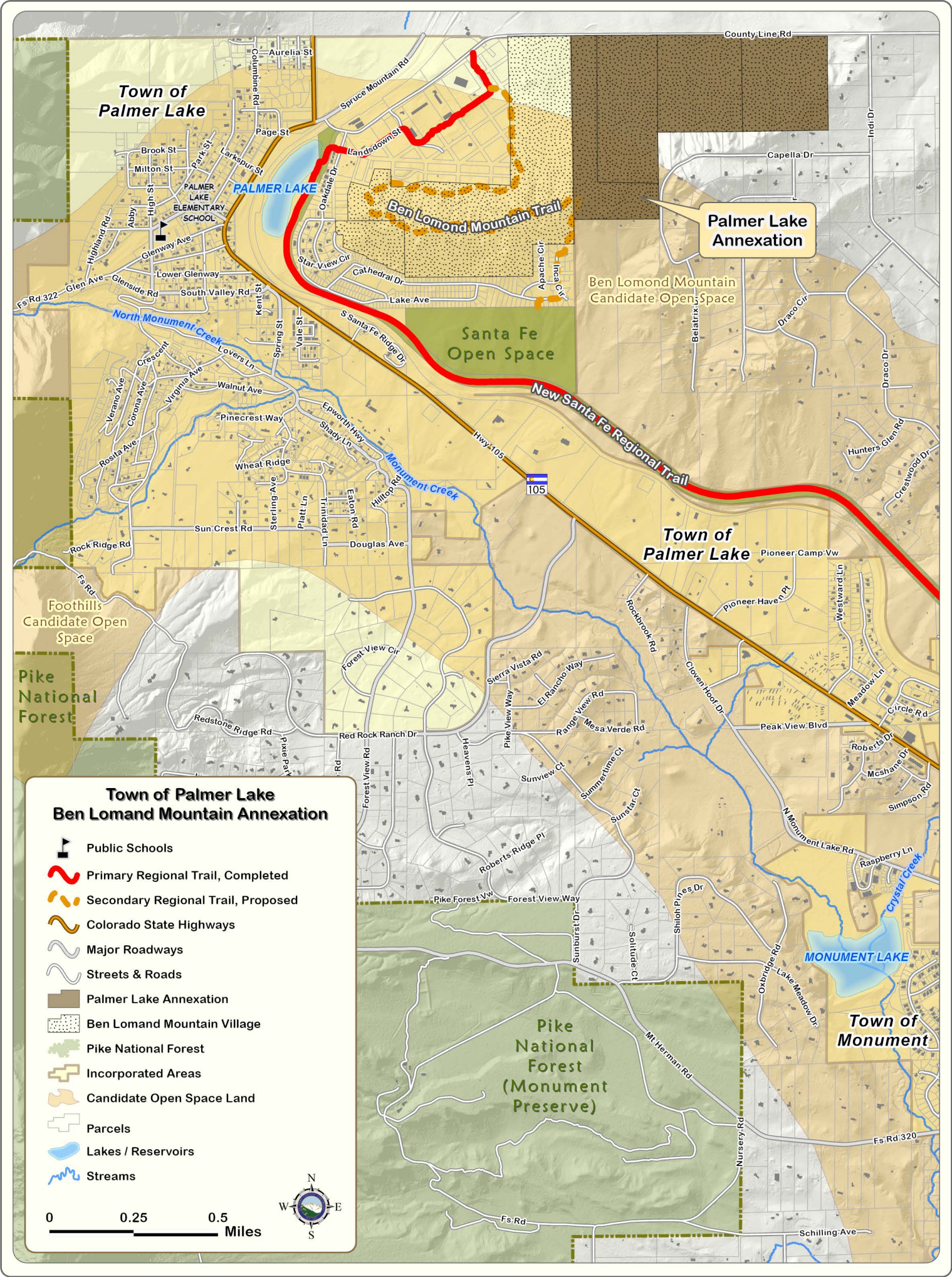
These comments are being provided administratively, as the Park Advisory Board is not required to endorse annexation requests.

Sincerely,



Ross A. Williams
Park Planner
Parks Planning Division
Parks and Community Services Department
rosswilliams@elpasoco.com





Town of Palmer Lake

Palmer Lake Annexation

Ben Lomond Mountain Trail

Santa Fe Open Space

Ben Lomond Mountain Candidate Open Space

Town of Palmer Lake

Town of Monument

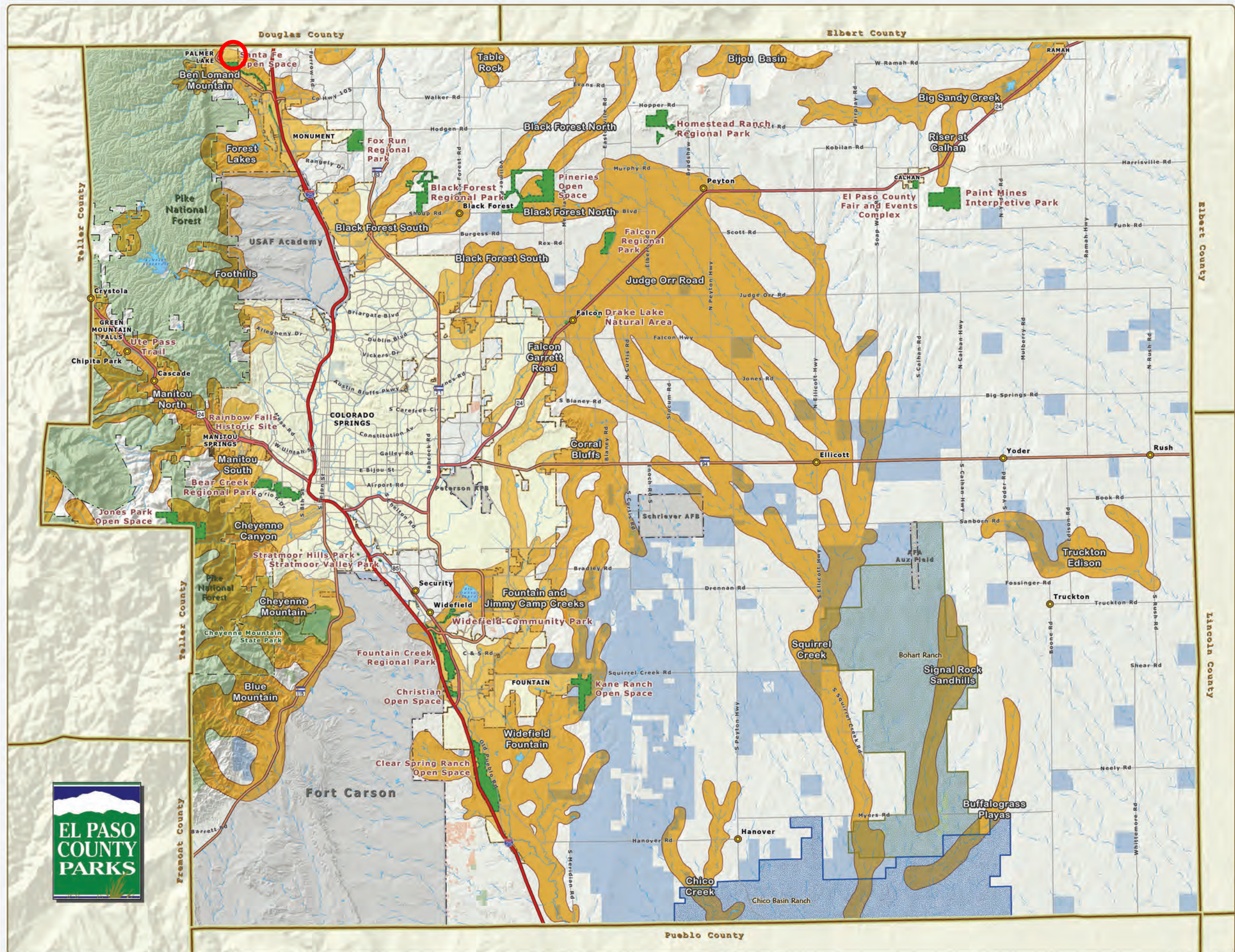
Pike National Forest (Monument Preserve)

Town of Palmer Lake Ben Lomond Mountain Annexation

- Public Schools
- Primary Regional Trail, Completed
- Secondary Regional Trail, Proposed
- Colorado State Highways
- Major Roadways
- Streets & Roads
- Palmer Lake Annexation
- Ben Lomond Mountain Village
- Pike National Forest
- Incorporated Areas
- Candidate Open Space Land
- Parcels
- Lakes / Reservoirs
- Streams

0 0.25 0.5 Miles





Candidate Open Space Areas

Legend

- Candidate Open Space Areas
- El Paso County Parks
- Military Areas
- County Lands
- Federal Lands
- State Lands
- Pike National Forest
- Incorporated Cities

Nature Conservancy Lands:

- Bohart Ranch
- Chico Basin Ranch
- Unincorporated Towns

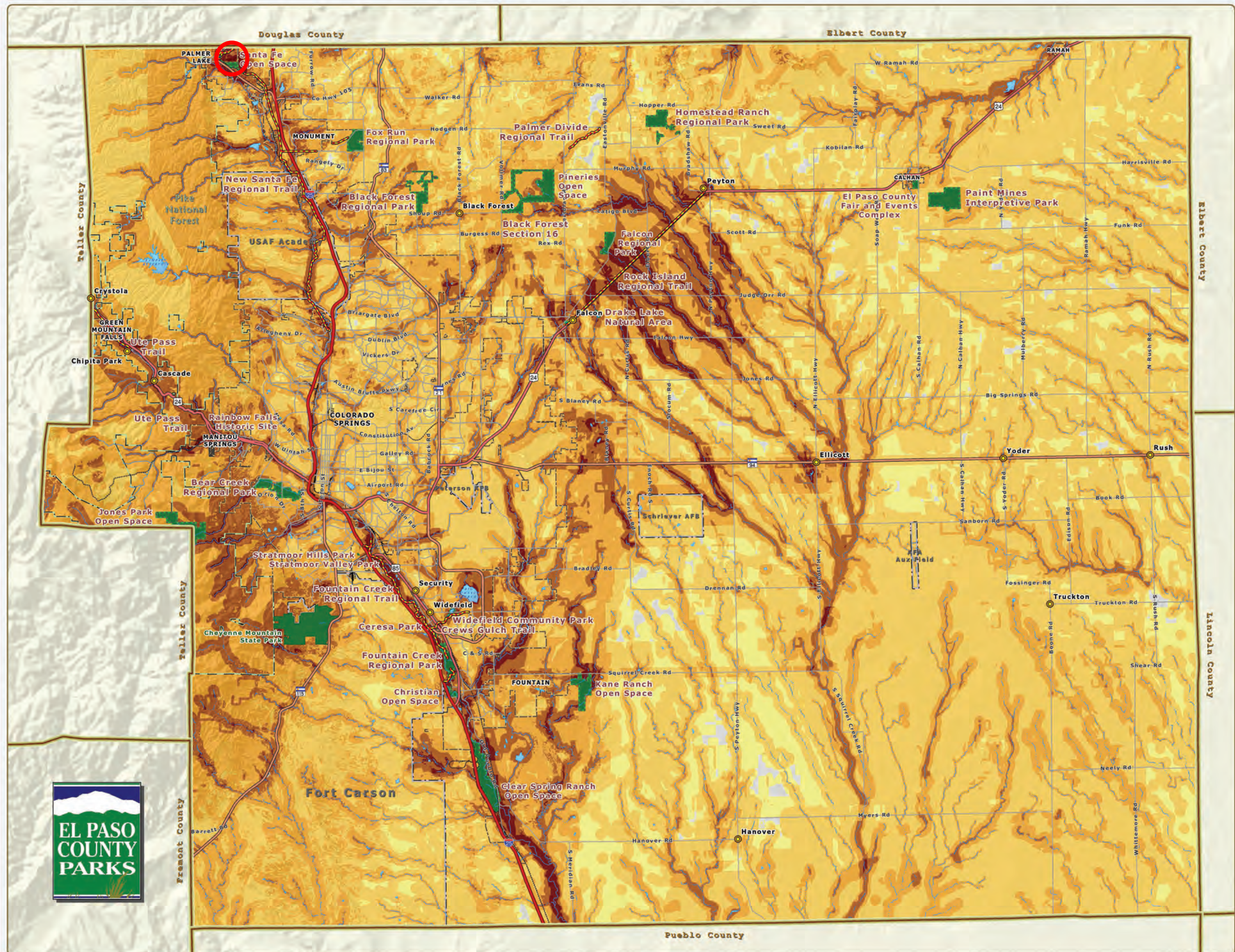
- US Interstate Highways
- US Highways
- State Highways
- Major Roadways
- Railroads
- Lakes & Reservoirs
- Creeks - Perennial
- Creeks - Intermittent
- County Boundary

* Candidate Open Space Areas represent areas of medium to high open space values as calculated in the Open Space Composite Analysis.

Miles
2 1 0 2 4 6 8 10
Scale = 1:145,500

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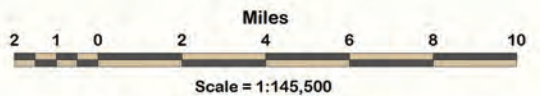


Open Space Composite Analysis

Legend

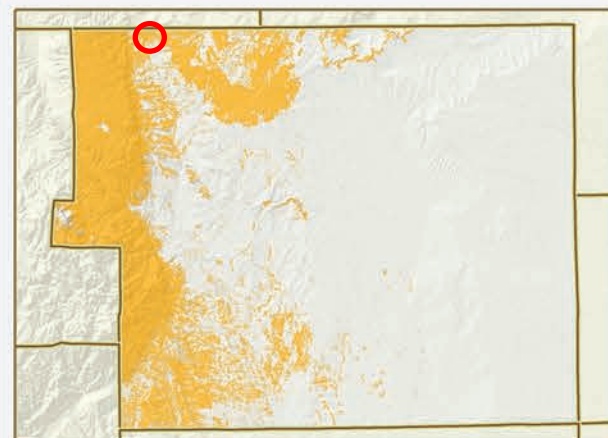
- Potential Open Space Values**
- Lower Attribute Value
 - Lower Attribute Value
 - Lower Attribute Value
 - Lower Attribute Value
 - Higher Attribute Value
 - Higher Attribute Value
- EPC Parks
 - EPC Regional Trails
 - US Interstate Highways
 - Major Highways
 - Major Roadways
 - Railroads
 - Lakes & Reservoirs
 - Creeks - Perennial
 - Creeks - Intermittent
 - Unincorporated Towns
 - Incorporated Cities
 - Military Areas
 - Pike National Forest
 - County Boundary

El Paso County wishes to acknowledge the assistance of Greenplay with the initial analysis that led to the development of this map.



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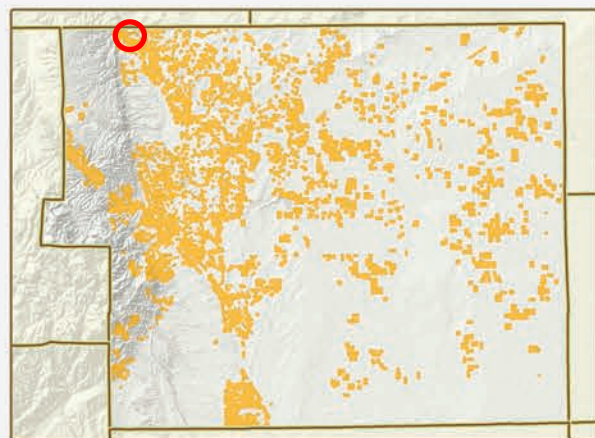




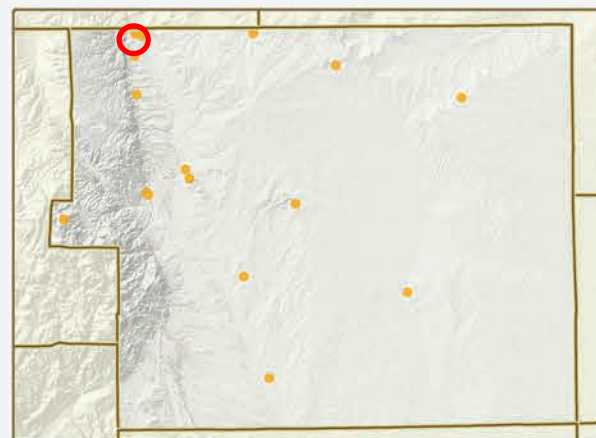
A. Wildfire Hazard Areas



B. Existing/Proposed Parks/Trails - Varying Buffers



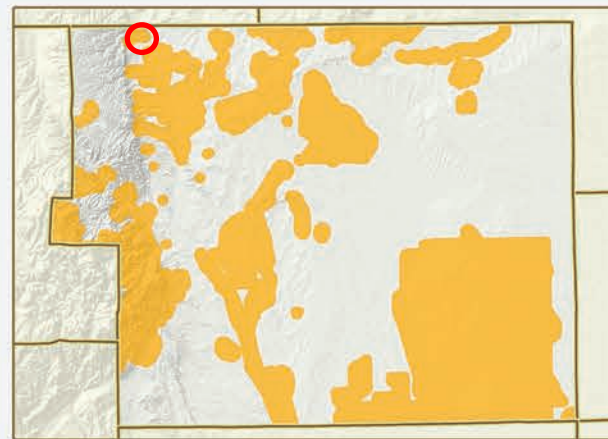
C. Vacant Lands - 1/8 Mile Buffer



D. Landmarks & Landforms - 1/2 Mile Buffer



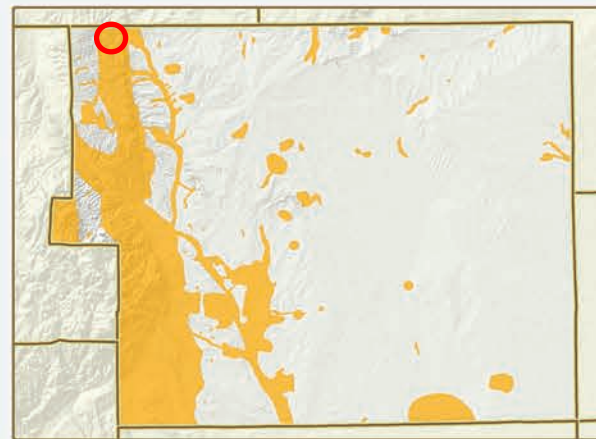
E. Slope > 30%



F. Colorado Natural Heritage Program



G. Federally Protected Wildlife - Prebles



H. Wildlife Impact - High & Very High



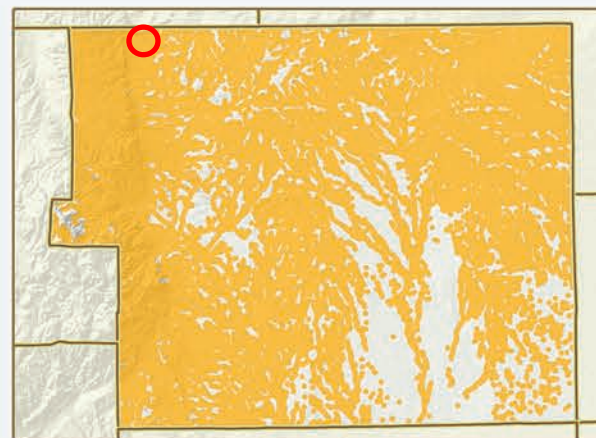
I. Upper Black Squirrel Creek Alluvial Aquifer



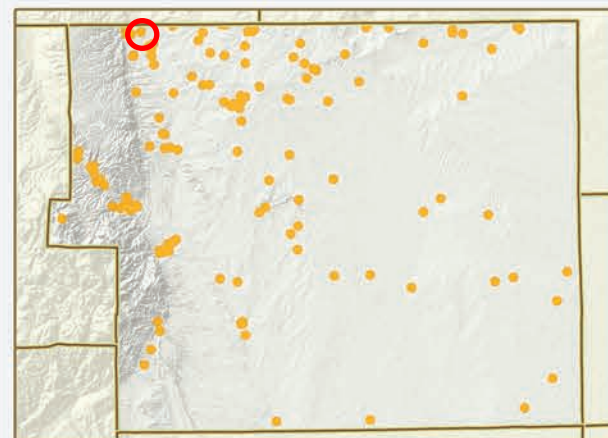
J. 100-Year Floodplain



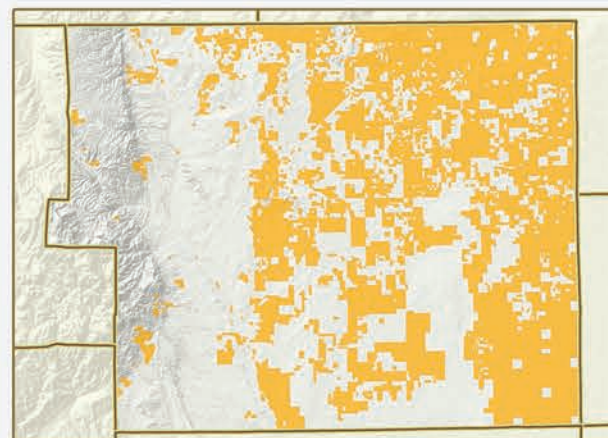
K. Surface Water - 1/4 Mile Buffer



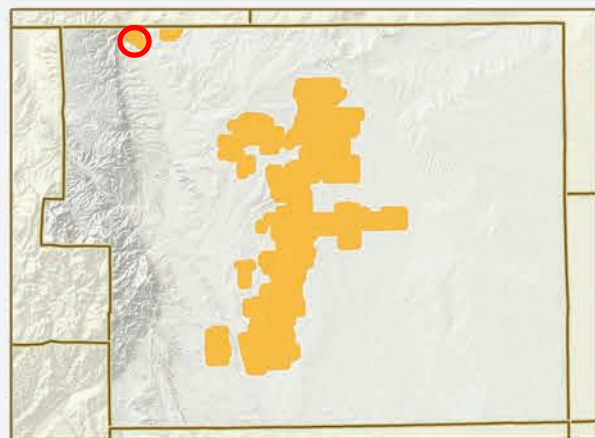
L. Wetlands - 1/4 Mile Buffer



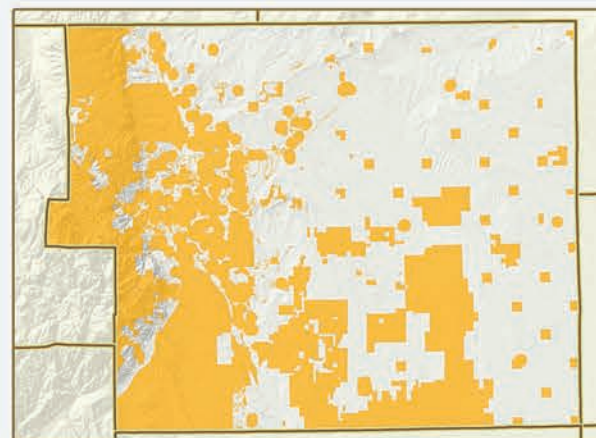
M. Cultural and Historic Sites - 1/2 Mile Buffer



N. Existing Agricultural Lands



O. Projected High Growth Areas



P. Administrative Areas - Varying Buffers

Open Space Values Attributes

GIS Data Layers

- A. Forested and High Wildfire Hazard Areas
 - a. National Land Cover Dataset (NLCD)
- B. Existing Parks and Trails (1/4 & 1/2 Mile Buffer)
 - a. El Paso County Park Areas
 - b. El Paso County Trails
 - c. Colorado Springs Park Areas
 - d. Colorado Springs Trails
 - e. Colorado State Parks
- C. Vacant Lands (1/8 Mile Buffer)
 - a. Current Land Use Data
 - b. El Paso County Assessor Parcels
- D. Significant Landmarks & Landforms (1/2-Mile Buffer)
 - a. 2013 EPC Parks Master Plan
- E. Slope > 30%
 - a. 30% Slope Raster Dataset (2011 LiDAR Data)
- F. Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP)
 - a. CNHP Network Conservation Areas
 - b. CNHP Potential Conservation Areas
 - c. Conservation Easements
 - d. Nature Conservancy Lands
- G. Federally Protected Wildlife (200' Buffer)
 - a. Prebles Meadow Jumping Mouse Creek Buffer
 - b. Prebles Meadow Jumping Mouse Floodplain Buffer
- H. Wildlife Impact Areas (High & Very High)
 - a. Colorado Parks and Wildlife Impact Data
- I. Upper Black Squirrel Creek Alluvial Aquifer
- J. 100-Year Floodplain
 - a. FEMA FIRM Floodplain Data
- K. Surface Water (1/4 Mile Buffer)
 - a. Creeks and Streams
 - b. Lakes and Reservoirs
- L. Wetlands (1/4 Mile Buffer)
 - a. National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) Data
- M. Cultural & Historic Sites (1/2 Mile Buffer)
 - a. Elaine Freed: Historic Sites & Structures
- N. Existing Agricultural Lands
 - a. Current Land Use Data
 - b. NLCD 1992 Land Cover Dataset
- O. Projected High Growth Areas (1/2 Mile Buffer)
 - a. 2021 El Paso County Master Plan
- P. Administrative Areas
 - a. Military Installations
 - b. Federal, State, and County Lands
 - c. Political Subdivisions
 - d. Public School Property (1/2 Mile Buffer)

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