

Technical Report: Parks and Recreation/Section 6(f) Resources

PARKS AND RECREATION RESOURCES EXISTING CONDITIONS

Two parks and three trails are located within the SH 16 study area. Riparian corridors, floodplains, and relatively flat terrain provide ample recreational activities in the area. The primary sources of data for parks and recreation resources include the *El Paso County Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan (1997)*, *Parks and Trails of El Paso County (2003)*, the *City of Fountain Parks, and Recreation and Trails Master Plan (2003)*. The parks and trails discussed in this section are shown by location in **Figure 1**.

Parks

There are two parks in the SH 16 study area: Fountain Creek Regional Park and John Ceresa Memorial Park. Each is described below.

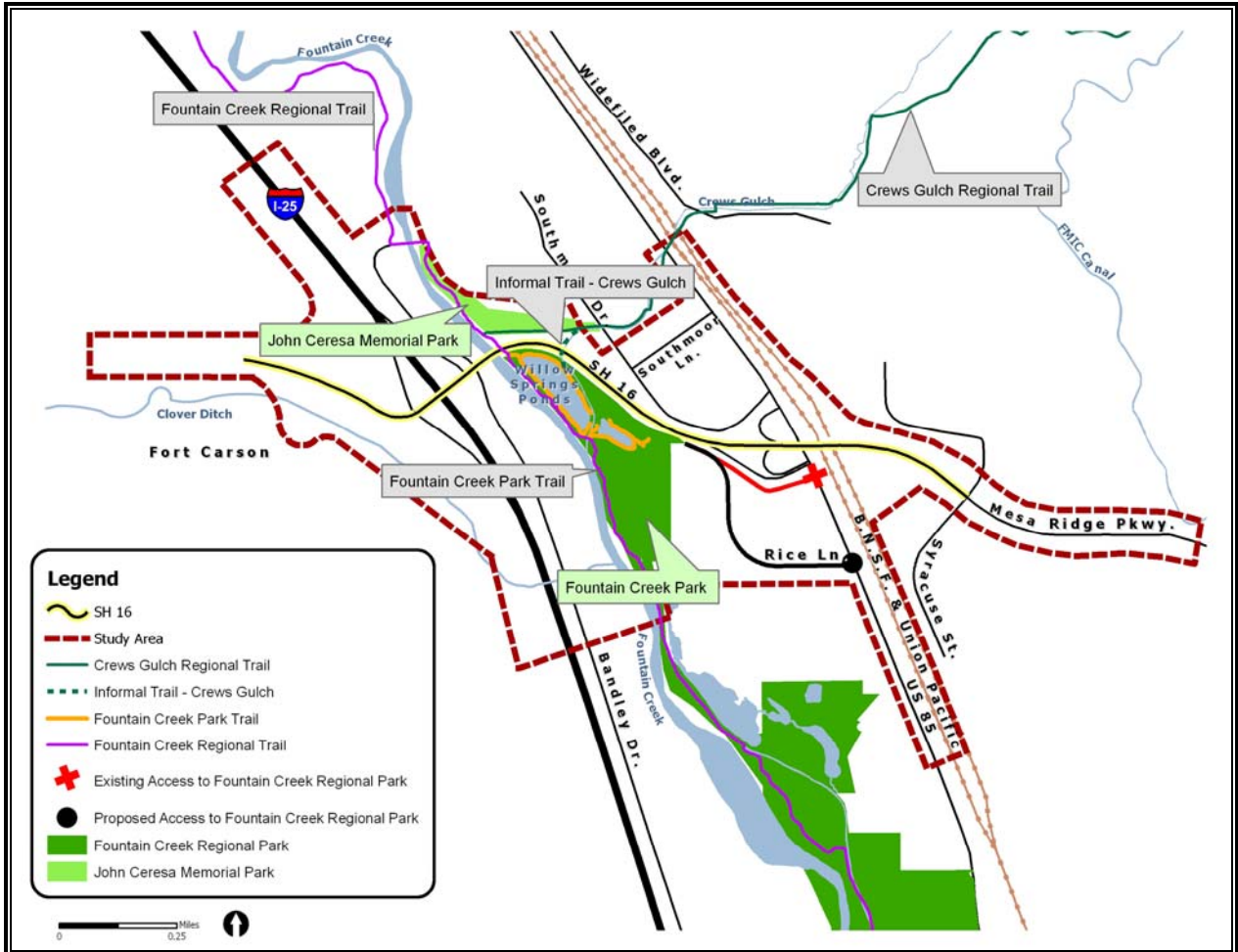
- ▶ **Fountain Creek Regional Park:** Fountain Creek Regional Park is a 2.5 mile linear park south of SH 16 that is owned and maintained by El Paso County. Water features in the Park include the Willow Springs Ponds (Pond 1 and Pond 2), Crews Gulch, and Fountain Creek. Willow Springs Pond 1 is closest to SH 16 and is approximately five acres in size. Pond 2, located southeast of Pond 1, is approximately one acre in size. Both ponds were closed to fishing in 1997 due to elevated levels of PCE contamination (see the Phase I MESA contained on the CD attached to the back of the EA). The contamination comes from a plume of groundwater that resulted from an industrial spill several miles to the north.

In April 2003, El Paso County closed vehicular access to the park and park trails via Willow Springs Road to discourage fishing in the contaminated ponds. The playground, picnic tables, and grills were removed with the closure. Two picnic pavilions and a sanitation facility remain on site. The Fountain Creek Regional Trail and parking facility within the park has been reopened to accommodate trail users.

Entrances to Fountain Creek Regional Park are available off of US 85, outside the study area. The Fountain Creek Nature Center offers interpretive exhibits, nature trails and wildlife observation pavilions for viewing of birds and wetland environments. Picnic pavilions, playing fields, playgrounds, basketball courts,

volleyball courts and horseshoe pits provide recreational opportunities at the south end of the park.

**Figure 1
Parks and Trails in the Study Area**



- ▶ **John Ceresa Memorial Park:** John Ceresa Memorial Park covers ten acres of land north of SH 16. The park is owned and maintained by El Paso County. The park is accessed from Leigh Lane within a residential area east of Fountain Creek. Recreational amenities include a playground, ball field and open space area. Scattered cottonwood trees lie within and around the park, shielding the view to the SH 16 roadway to the south. The SH 16 roadway is elevated along a gently sloping hillside.

Trails

There are three trails in the SH 16 study area: Fountain Creek Regional Trail, Fountain Creek Regional Park Trail, and the Crews Gulch Trail. Each is described below.

- ▶ Fountain Creek Regional Trail: The Fountain Creek Regional Trail spans ten miles from South Circle Drive south to the city of Fountain. The trail in the vicinity of SH 16 is unpaved and 8 to 10 feet wide. The trail runs along the east side of Fountain Creek through the Fountain Creek Regional Park and adjacent to the John Ceresa Memorial Park on an easement where it traverses private land north of SH 16. The trail easement is owned and maintained by El Paso County. The trail crosses beneath SH 16 under the Fountain Creek Bridge.
- ▶ Fountain Creek Park Trail: The Fountain Creek Park Trail is located within Fountain Creek Regional Park and is owned and maintained by El Paso County. The trail winds around the Willow Springs Ponds and connects with the Fountain Creek Regional Trail. The 8-foot wide, dirt surface recreational trail is also used for maintenance access by park staff.
- ▶ Crews Gulch Regional Trail: The Crews Gulch Regional Trail is a 6-foot wide, unpaved urban trail that provides a link from the Fountain Creek Regional Park and Regional Trails, through John Ceresa Memorial Park. The trail is owned and maintained by El Paso County, and eventually ties into the city of Colorado Springs' trail system at Bluestem Prairie Open Space. The Crews Gulch Regional Trail runs underneath US 85 and both the Burlington, Northern and Santa Fe (BNSF) and Union Pacific (UP) railroad tracks through a paved 6-foot underpass.
- ▶ Over time, pedestrians have created an informal pathway parallel to Crews Gulch that crosses beneath SH 16 (on CDOT right-of-way). The 2-foot-wide, dirt path connects Crews Gulch Regional Trail to the Willow Springs Pond area. Vertical clearance under the SH 16 bridge is approximately 8 feet.

There are no other parks or recreation areas within the study area.

PARKS AND RECREATION RESOURCES IMPACTS**No-Action Alternative**

The No-Action Alternative would have no direct effects on parks and recreation resources in the study area. However, there would be indirect effects associated with increased traffic on SH 16 and other nearby roads, such as traffic noise and an increase

in certain exhaust emissions. For trails closest to the highway, noise levels are expected to increase by an average of about 2 decibels from today to the year 2030. The resulting future noise levels would be less than 66 decibels. A projected change of 2 decibels would be barely perceptible, occurs over a 25 year time-frame, and does not result in a noise level that approaches or exceeds CDOT's noise abatement criteria. This is explained in more detail in the Technical Memorandum *Noise Analysis Results, 2007* contained on the CD attached to the back of the EA.

Like traffic noise, some exhaust emissions are also likely to increase. As discussed in further detail in the Air Quality Technical Memorandum contained on the CD attached to the back of the EA, the No-Action Alternative would meet the air quality conformity requirements, but as travel speed declines, some emissions per mile traveled would increase. However, localized carbon monoxide concentrations would remain at least 60% below the 9.0 parts per million federal standard for an 8-hour average concentration under worst-case traffic and meteorological conditions. Mobile source air toxics, certain compounds that are known to be hazardous to human health, are expected to decrease from current levels because of federally mandated improvements in vehicle engines and fuels.

Proposed Action

The Proposed Action would have no direct effects on existing parks and trails in the study area, but will result in a temporary trail detour during construction, as well as a park access change, increased noise levels, and some minor visual changes. In March of 2006, the project team of consultants met with representatives from the City of Fountain and El Paso County. No major issues or concerns were identified at this meeting and both the city and county are in support of the project.

For trails closest to the highway, noise levels are expected to increase by about 2 to 4 decibels from today to the year 2030 under the Proposed Action, due to the higher traffic volumes accommodated at higher average speeds. Noise levels along the trails and in the parks would not exceed 66 decibels. For more information, see the Technical Memorandum *Noise Analysis Results, 2007* contained on the CD attached to the back of the EA.

As discussed in the Air Quality Technical Memorandum contained on the CD attached to the back of the EA, the Proposed Action would accommodate more traffic with less congestion. This would result in carbon monoxide emission under worst-case conditions that are about 47% below the 9.0 parts per million standard. Although

mobile source air toxic emissions could be slightly higher for the Proposed Action than the No-Action Alternative, they are expected to be substantially below current levels due to federally mandated improvements in vehicle engines and fuels.

A retaining wall varying in height from 4 feet to 10 feet and 370 feet long would be required between SH 16 and John Ceresa Memorial Park. This wall would be constructed within CDOT right-of-way but would be visible from the park and Crews Gulch Trail. Another retaining wall varying in height from about 2 feet to 12 feet and about 220 feet long would be constructed along the west bank of Fountain Creek just north of SH 16. This wall would be about 300 feet from the Fountain Creek Regional Trail and would be visible from the trail, but would be only a minor visual intrusion into the natural landscape from most vantage points. Both walls would introduce an urban visual element into the natural setting of the park and Fountain Creek. These walls would avoid encroachment of the roadway slopes into John Ceresa Memorial Park or into Fountain Creek. Visual impacts associated with these retaining walls are discussed in the *Visual Quality Technical Report, 2006* contained on the CD attached to the back of this EA.

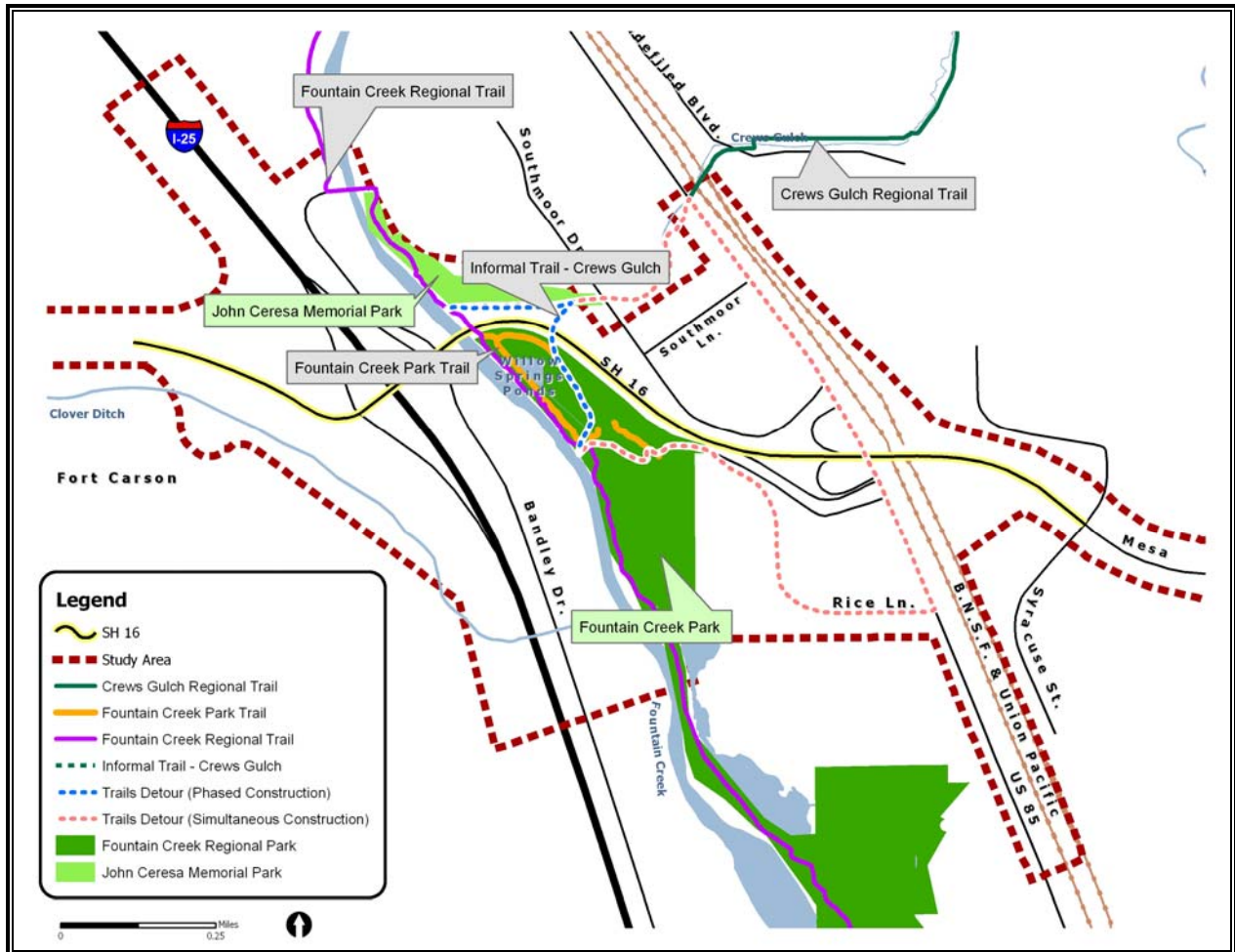
Willow Springs Road is the route currently used to access Fountain Creek Regional Park from US 85. As part of the Proposed Action, Willow Springs Road would be closed to accommodate the south loop ramp of the SH 16/US 85 interchange. As shown in **Figure 1**, access from US 85 into the park will be rerouted onto a proposed extension of Rice Lane.

Construction of the Proposed Action would require a temporary detour of the Fountain Creek Regional Trail and the informal Crews Gulch Regional Trail spur. Detours would only occur at proposed bridge locations and are anticipated to not to exceed 6 months in duration.

If replacement bridges over Fountain Creek and Crews Gulch can be constructed in separate phases, all trail traffic can be detoured to the alternate bridge trail during construction. This allows utilizing the Crews Gulch Regional Trail spur with the Fountain Creek Park Trail loop to avoid bridge construction zones associated with the Fountain Creek Regional Trail, and the reverse to avoid the bridge construction zone associated with Crews Gulch (see **Figure 2**). If the bridges are phased to be constructed simultaneously, a 2-mile trail detour would be required carrying Fountain Creek Regional Trail via Crews Gulch Regional Trail, on-street US 85, to Rice Lane as shown in **Figure 2**.

Also, due to the wider cross section of SH 16 and required bridge expansion, less natural light would be present beneath the bridges.

Figure 2
Trail Detours in the Study Area



PARKS AND RECREATION RESOURCES MITIGATION

CDOT will formally develop the existing informal pathway off of Crews Gulch Trail below SH 16. The trail would be improved to a 6-foot width and remain unpaved.

Permanent light fixtures will be installed beneath the bridges at the Crews Gulch and Fountain Creek Regional Trail crossings. The light fixtures will enhance the safety and

security beneath the proposed bridges, and will provide an improvement over the existing condition.

Access to Fountain Creek Regional Park will be provided through the new access via Rice Lane.

Mitigation for the visual impacts of retaining walls is described in the *Visual Quality Technical Report*, 2006 contained on the CD attached to the back of the EA.

CDOT will coordinate with El Paso County, the city of Fountain, and the Trails and Open Space Coalition of the Pikes Peak Region to finalize the details of any temporary trail detours, and will provide advance notice to trail owners and users regarding temporary trail detours and closures.

SECTION 6(f) RESOURCES

For four decades, the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund Program of Assistance to States and Urban Parks (L&WCF) has provided funding for various parks and recreational facilities across the nation. The L&WCF program was established by the L&WCF Act of 1965 (Public Law 88-578) which is now codified at 16 U.S.C. 460. Under this act, the Secretary of Interior provides funds to the states to plan, acquire or develop outdoor recreation facilities. Section 6(f) of the Act provides in part that:

“No property acquired or developed with assistance under this section shall, without the approval of the Secretary, be converted to other than public outdoor recreation uses. The Secretary shall approve such conversion only if he finds it to be in accordance with the then existing comprehensive statewide outdoor recreation plan and only upon such conditions as he deems necessary to assure the substitution of other recreation properties of at least equal fair market value and of reasonably equivalent usefulness and location.”

One property has been identified in the study area that was developed with L&WCF grant assistance. In the state of Colorado, L&WCF is administered by Colorado State Parks. Identification of LW&CF properties was coordinated through Colorado State Parks.

Three grants were utilized in development of recreational facilities within Fountain Creek Regional Park. Colorado State Parks has concurred that no portion of the L&WCF projects will be affected by the Proposed Action. Coordination with Colorado

State Parks and El Paso County Parks Department has been on-going throughout the evaluation process.

SECTION 6(f) IMPACTS**No-Action Alternative**

No impacts to areas developed with Section 6(f) funds would occur under the No-Action Alternative.

Proposed Action

The Proposed Action would not require acquisition, nor conversion to non-recreation use, of any property that was obtained or improved with L&WCF grant assistance. No impacts to areas developed with Section 6(f) funds would occur under the Proposed Action.

SECTION 6(f) MITIGATION

No impacts to areas developed with Section 6(f) funds would occur under the Proposed Action. Therefore, no mitigation is required.

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