

# Outside 285 Executive Summary

August 2021





# Background

The purpose of the Outside 285 Master Plan is to provide a blueprint for conserving wildlife habitat while improving trail-based outdoor recreation experiences within the US 285 Corridor southwest of Denver. The Outside 285 planning area encompasses about 550,000 acres of land across four counties and multiple public land managers, including:

- Pike National Forest, South Platte Ranger District
- Arapaho National Forest, Clear Creek Ranger District
- Colorado Parks and Wildlife
- Jefferson County Open Space
- Douglas County Open Space
- Clear Creek County Open Space
- Denver Mountain Parks
- Denver Water

## Goals of the Plan

The goals of the Outside 285 Master Plan are to:

- Produce a regional planning document to guide project decisions
- Build consensus among agency, wildlife and recreation advocates
- Locate desirable and critical habitat areas for protection
- Determine opportunities for improved recreation amenities and capacity
- Identify suitable locations for trail linkages, improvements, or expanded trail systems
- Develop a system and identify resources for trail maintenance
- Strengthen relationships and mechanisms for future project determinations
- Provide a model for future regional trail planning



## Steering Committee














The Outside 285 Steering Committee consists of representatives from multiple land management agencies, trail-based recreation groups, wildlife and conservation organizations, and community interests:

- Colorado Parks and Wildlife
- U.S. Forest Service – Pike National Forest, South Platte Ranger District
- U.S. Forest Service – Arapaho National Forest, Clear Creek Ranger District
- Colorado Mountain Bike Association
- Backcountry Hunters and Anglers
- Bailey Hundo
- Clear Creek County
- Colorado Department of Transportation
- Colorado Mountain Club
- Colorado Wildlife Federation
- Denver Mountain Parks
- Denver Water
- Douglas County
- Front Range Back Country Horsemen
- Jefferson County Open Space
- National Wild Turkey Federation
- Park County
- Rocky Mountain Bighorn Society
- Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
- Team Evergreen Cycling
- Trout Unlimited
- Wild Connections





## Outside 285 Study Area

-  Highway 285
-  Outside 285 Boundary
-  Hiking Only Trail
-  Hiking and Equestrian Trail
-  Multiuse Trail
-  Road/Motorized Trail
-  Colorado Trail
-  U.S. Forest Service
-  U.S. Forest Service Wilderness
-  State of Colorado
-  Local Open Space
-  Denver Water/Special District/NGO
-  Bureau of Land Management



### Key Trail Destinations

- Foothills Parks
- Waterton Canyon
- Roxborough State Park
- Staunton State Park
- Maxwell Falls
- Buffalo Creek Recreation Area
- Mount Evans Wilderness Area
- Lost Creek Wilderness Area
- Kenosha Pass
- Geneva Basin
- Guanella Pass

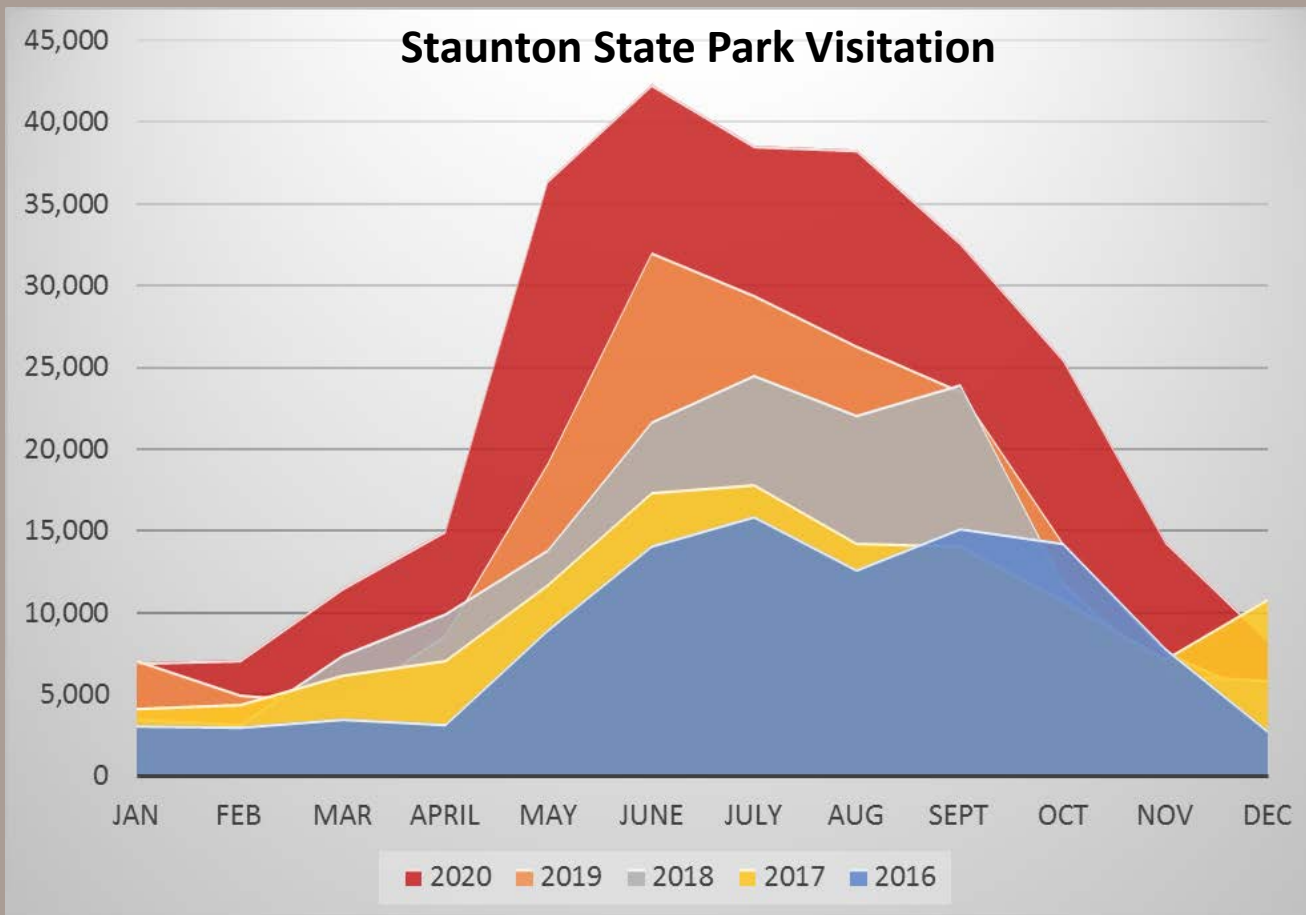




# Planning Context

## Increasing Pressure on Public Lands

- Since 2000, the Denver metropolitan region has grown by about 37% (790,000)
- By 2040, the population is projected to increase by another 23% (693,000)
- Trail use has increased accordingly, resulting in crowding of popular areas, degradation of trails and infrastructure, increased conflict, increased pressure on wildlife, and an overall loss of solitude
- These trends and issues were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in significant increase in trail access and use



# Planning Process

The Outside 285 planning process was designed to engage land managers and recreation and wildlife advocates in analyzing the region and working together to develop shared solutions.

## Outside 285 Stakeholder Engagement, *by the numbers...*

- 22 Organizations represented on the Steering Committee
- 15 Months of the planning process
- 10 Steering Committee Update Meetings
- 24 Steering Committee work sessions
- 1 In-person Steering Committee gathering
  
- 865 Responses to the public survey
- 130 Proposed trail and recreation projects
- 17 Proposed conservation and enhancement projects
  
- 85 Estimated hours in online meeting platforms

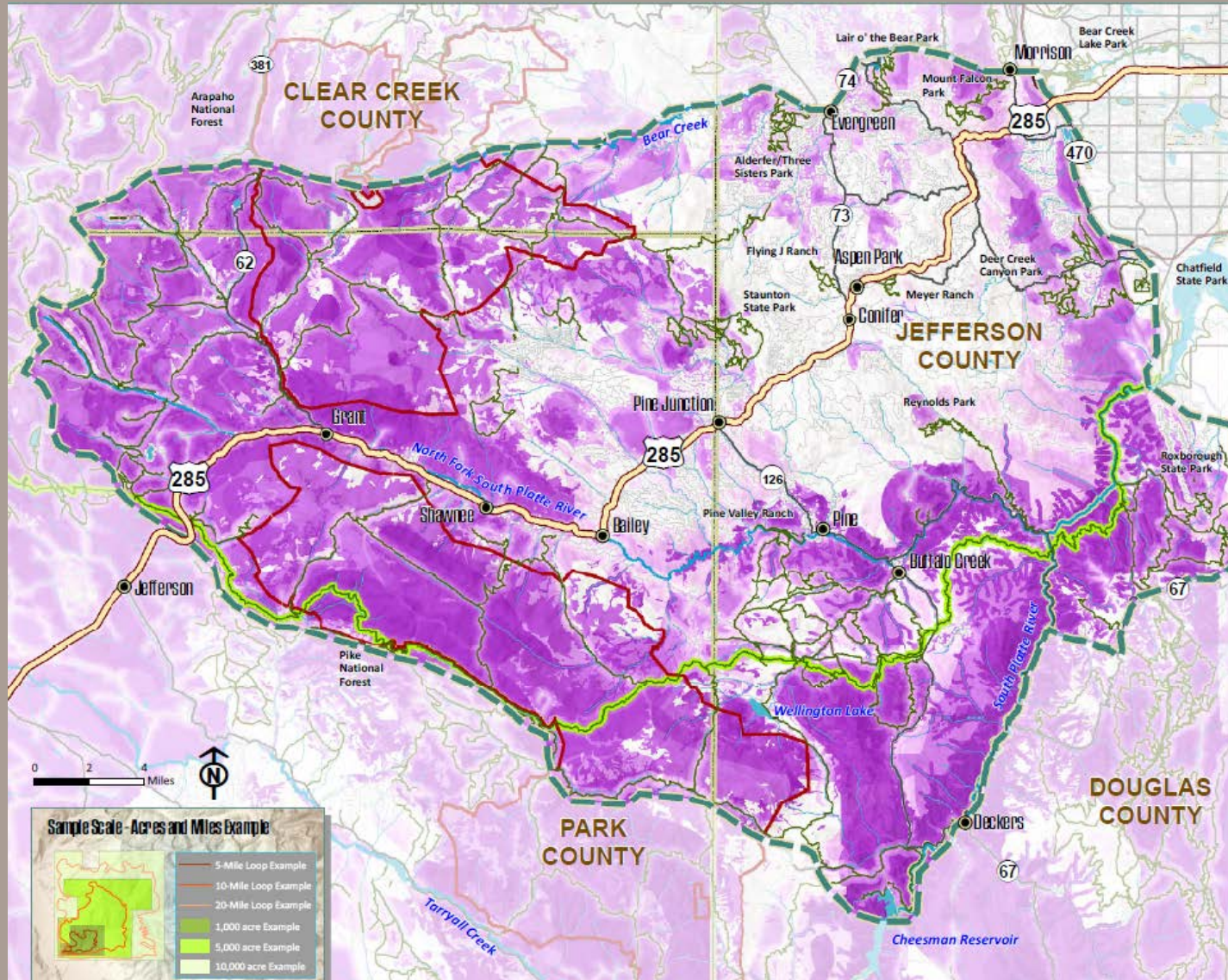




# Wildlife Habitat Analysis

A key element of the Outside 285 master plan is the analysis and documentation of existing wildlife habitat in the study area.

The **Habitat Sensitivity** map is shown below – Areas with darker shades are more sensitive to new disturbance, while lighter shades are less sensitive and more suitable for new trails.





# Master Plan Recommendations

The planning team received proposals for over 130 trail and trailhead improvement projects, and 17 habitat conservation and enhancement efforts. Each project was carefully evaluated considering environmental impact, land manager compatibility, recreation benefit, and overall feasibility. The following recommendations represent a consensus of the Outside 285 Steering Committee.

## Outside 285 Master Plan Recommendations, *by the numbers...*

- 58 Trail projects (new trails, maintenance, and reroutes)
- 26 New trails, routes, or experiences
- 120 Miles of new trail (approx.)
- 12 Parking improvement projects
- 3 New trailheads or parking areas
- 10 Target areas for private land conservation
- 5 Target areas for habitat restoration

### Recommendation Tier Definitions

- **Tier 1** – Feasible project with high value, high support, and immediate need or benefits
- **Tier 2** – Feasible project with high value and support, but is more challenging to implement, requires more time and collaboration, or is contingent on other projects
- **Tier 3** – Compelling idea that is not feasible now and requires more information or changed circumstances to move forward





## Key Elements of the Plan

Highlights of the Outside 285 Master Plan include the following recommendations:

- **North Elk Trail System** – Completion of a third phase of this trail system north of Staunton State Park, providing a backcountry loop and access to the summit of Black Mountain.
- **Indian Creek Trail System** – Improvements to this trail system with extensive maintenance and reroutes of existing trails, designation of some social trail loops, and expansion of the existing trailhead.
- **Buffalo Creek Trail System** – Extensive additions to the Buffalo Creek system, including new loops to the east, north, and west and improved trail connectivity within the system.
- **Kenosha Pass Improvements** – A new alternate trail on the west side of the pass to reduce congestion, and a commitment to collaborate on parking and safety.
- **Ben Tyler Trailhead** – Relocating the trailhead to improve capacity and safety, with connectivity to other trails.
- **South Park/Burning Bear Trails** – Maintenance of existing trails with new linkages to improve connectivity and backcountry loop opportunities.
- **Geneva Basin** – New trails and parking at the old Geneva Basin ski area, with regional trail connectivity.



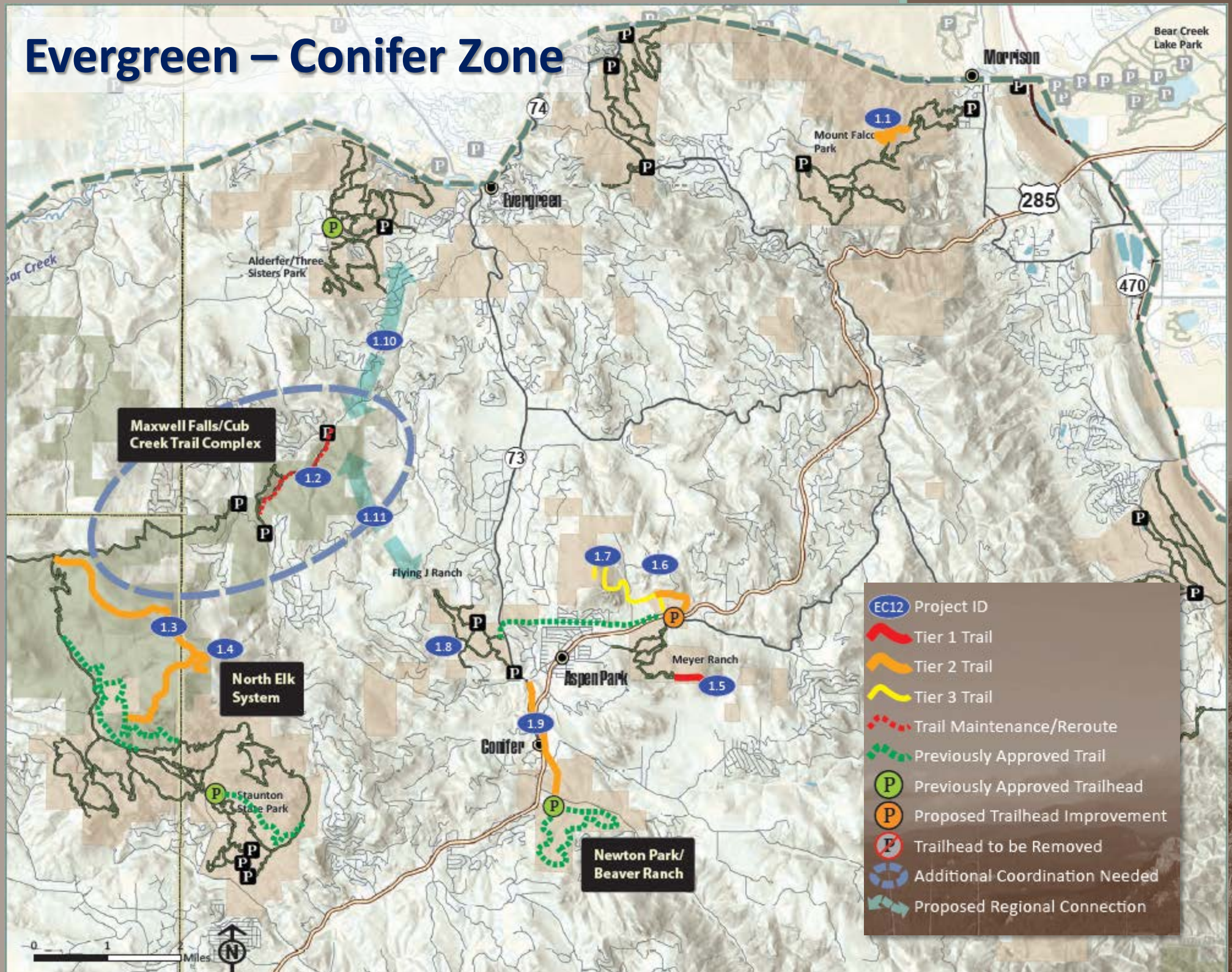


# Outside 285 Trail Recommendations





# Evergreen – Conifer Zone





# Evergreen – Conifer Zone

## Key Trail Project Proposals

- **North Elk Phase 3** – Create a loop that completes a backcountry trail system in the area north of Staunton State Park
- **Conifer Area Trails** – Multiple small connections within and adjacent to Meyer Ranch, Flying J, and Beaver Ranch parks

## Conservation and Enhancement Recommendations

- Six areas are identified for voluntary, private land conservation to protect wildlife habitat

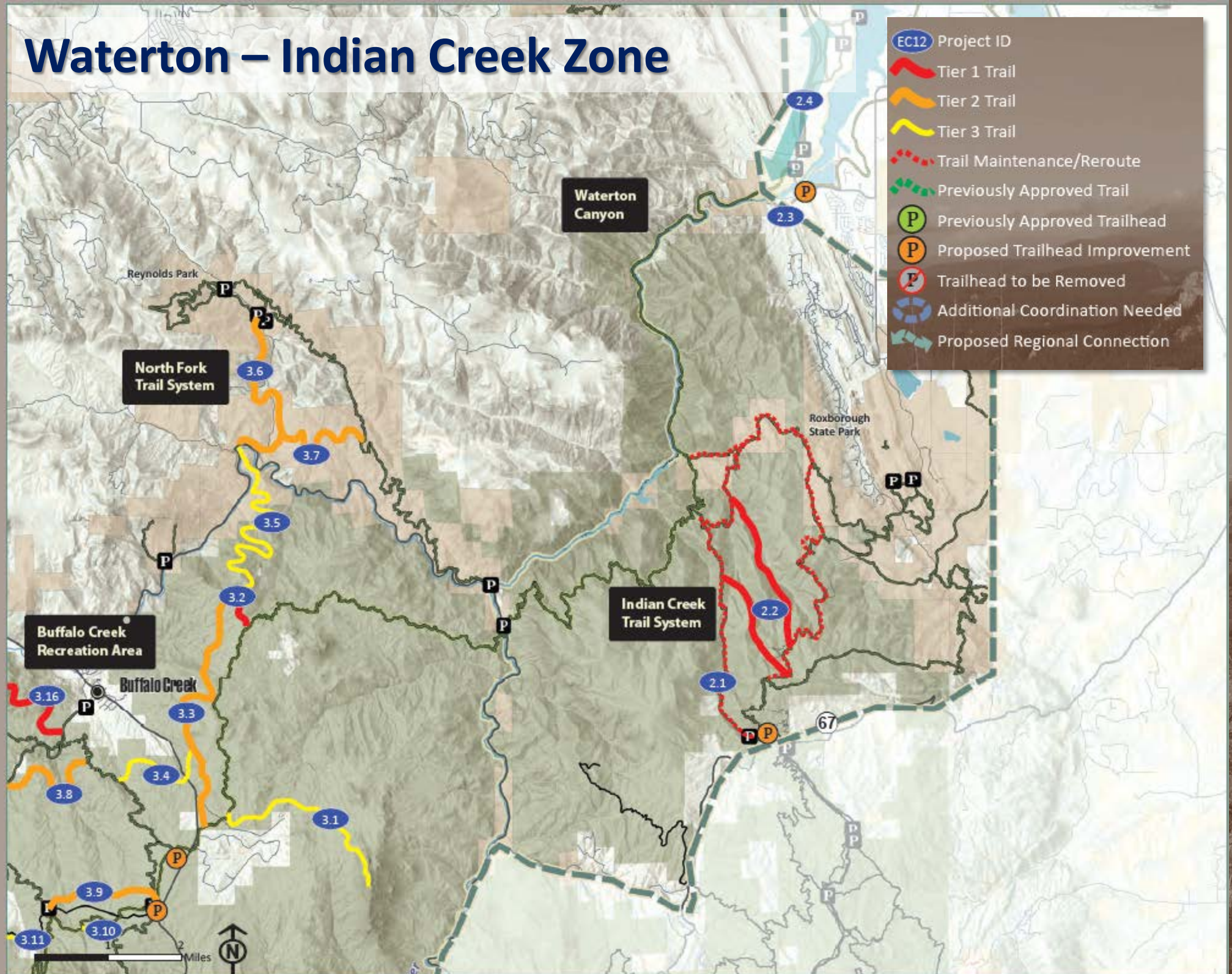
## Additional Coordination Required

- Improve trail conditions, circulation, and connectivity within the Maxwell Falls and Cub Creek trail areas
- Continue conversations between key partners to address existing issues and implement future improvements





# Waterton – Indian Creek Zone





# Waterton – Indian Creek Zone

## Key Trail Project Proposals

- **Indian Creek Trail Improvements** – Conduct extensive maintenance and reroutes of existing trails, and designate suitable social trails to improve the system
- **Indian Creek Trailhead** – Expand capacity at the existing Indian Creek Trailhead

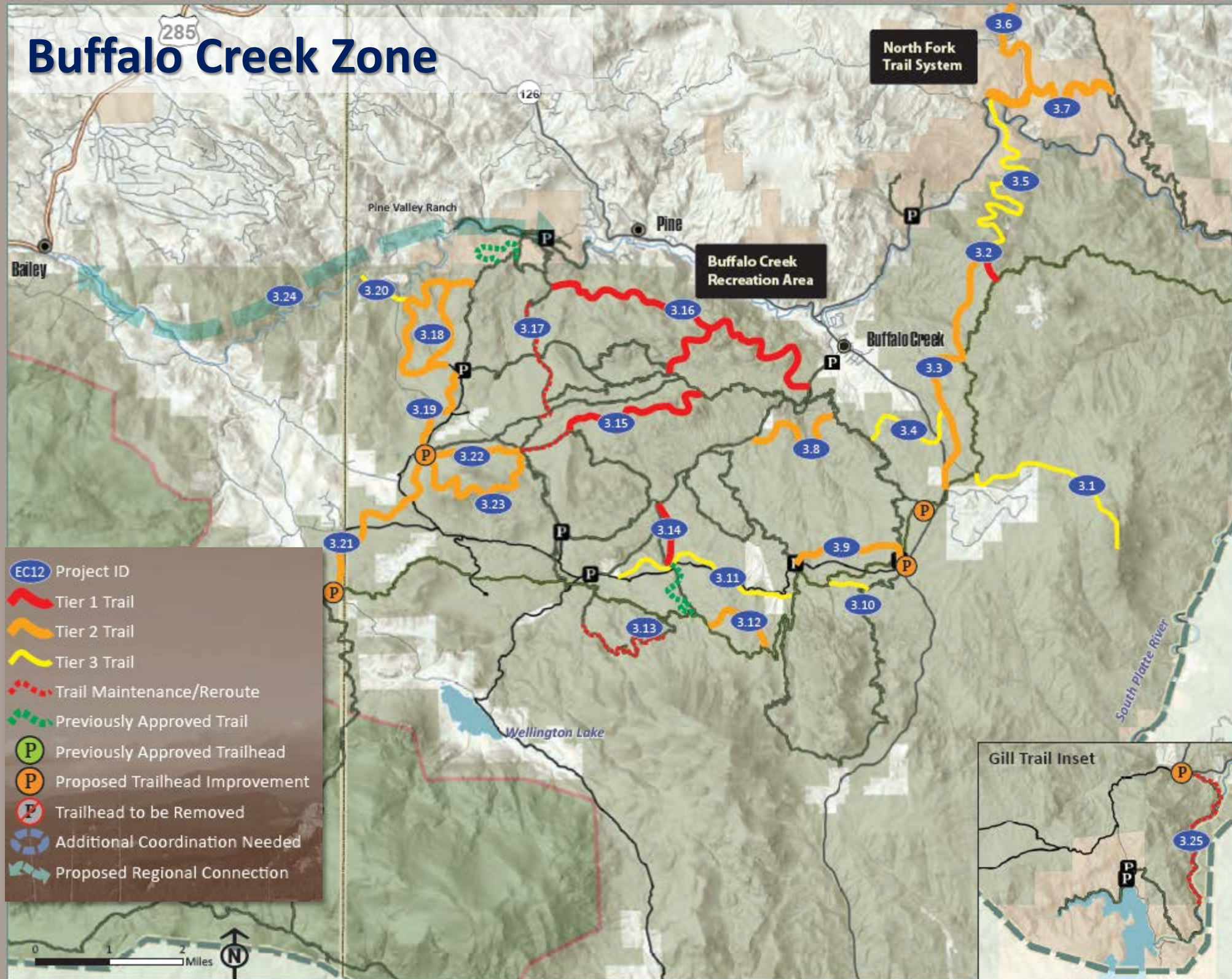
## Conservation and Enhancement Recommendations

- Two areas are identified for voluntary, private land conservation to protect wildlife habitat
- Streambank protection and enhancement is proposed for the South Platte River corridor





# Buffalo Creek Zone





# Buffalo Creek Zone

## Key Trail Project Proposals

- **Baldy – Sandy Wash Connector** – Establish new route connecting the top of Baldy Trail to upper Sandy Wash, eliminating recreation access along the Miller Gulch road
- **Miller Rocks Connector**– New trail connections along the rocky ridgeline between the Buffalo Creek and Pine Valley Ranch trailheads
- **Chair Rocks/Top of the World Loop** – New trail along the high ridgeline between Chair Rocks and Highway 126, creating a loop with the Colorado Trail.
- **Foxton/North Fork/Reynolds Connectors** – New trails creating loop connectivity between Reynolds Park, Foxton Road, and the North Fork Trail
- **West Loops** – New trail loops on the west side of the Buffalo Creek system disperse visitors and expand access

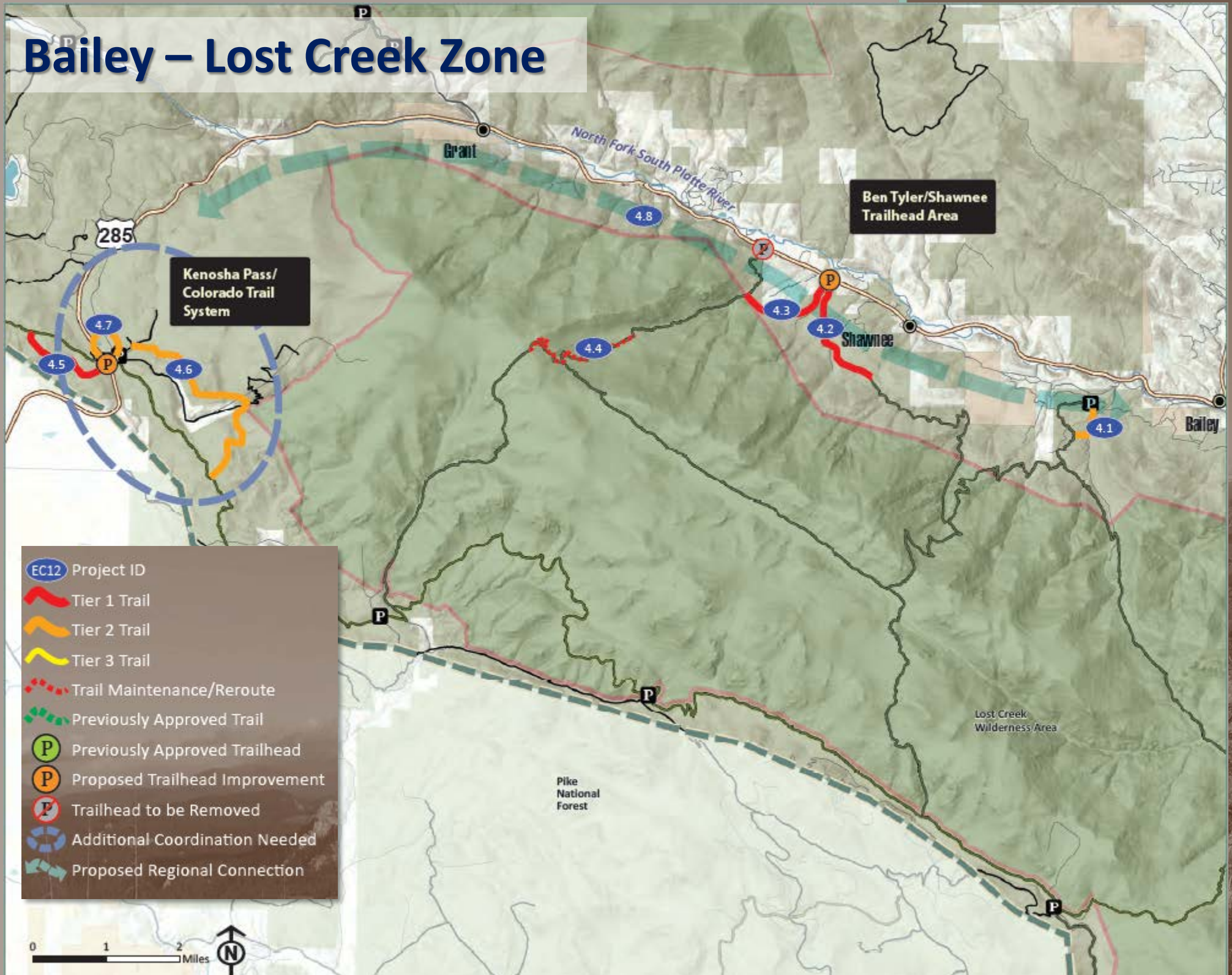
## Conservation and Enhancement Recommendations

- Two areas are identified for voluntary, private land conservation to protect wildlife habitat





# Bailey – Lost Creek Zone





# Bailey – Lost Creek Zone

## Key Trail Project Proposals

- **Kenosha West Alternate Trail** – New trail loop on the west side of the pass to relieve congestion and conflict on the Colorado Trail.
- **Kenosha Pass Trailhead** – Improve and potentially expand parking at the top of the pass to manage capacity and improve safety during busy periods.
- **Ben Tyler Trailhead/Brookside AG Trail** – Relocate the existing Ben Tyler trailhead to a new site near Shawnee to manage capacity and improve safety, connect with Brookside AG trail.

## Conservation and Enhancement Recommendations

- One area is identified for potential wildlife habitat enhancement

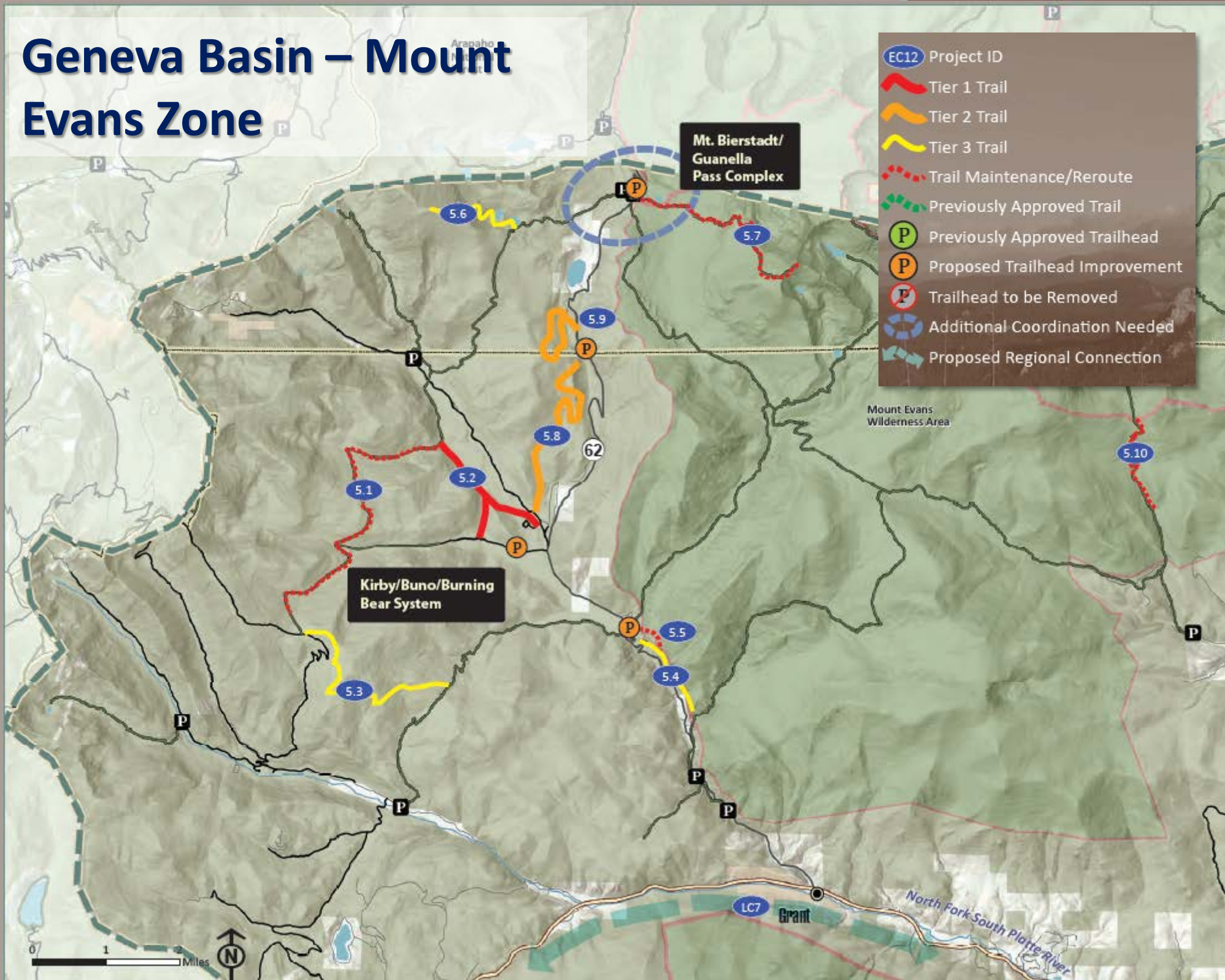
## Additional Coordination Required

- Improve parking management and safety at the top of Kenosha Pass, while also improving recreation experiences.
- Continue conversations between key partners to address existing issues and implement future improvements





# Geneva Basin – Mount Evans Zone





# Geneva Basin – Mount Evans Zone

## Key Trail Project Proposals

- **South Park Trail Improvements** – Maintenance and short reroutes along the existing trail to improve experience and sustainability
- **Mill Gulch/Geneva Basin Trails** – New trail connection between the Duck Creek Picnic Area and the old Geneva Basin Ski Area, and a loop trail within the ski area
- **Burning Bear Connector** – New trail connection between the southern terminus of the South Park Trail and the Burning Bear Trail

## Conservation and Enhancement Recommendations

- One area is identified for voluntary, private land conservation to protect wildlife habitat
- Two areas are identified for potential wildlife habitat enhancement

## Additional Coordination Required

- Improve parking management and safety at the top of Guanella Pass, while also improving recreation experiences
- Continue conversations between key partners to address existing issues and implement future improvements





# Management Recommendations

The plan identifies several key implementation and management strategies that should be considered within the Outside 285 region.

## Management and Implementation

- **CPW Regional Partnership** – Establish Outside 285 as a formal Regional Partnership, under CPW
- **Funding** – Explore regional pass programs, parking fees, and partnerships
- **Parking Management** – Consider reservation and/or fee system at heavily-used destination trailheads
- **Maintenance** – Utilize partnerships and agreements to maintain trails, while also establishing and funding a professional trail crew
- **Visitor Conflict** – Increase use of designated, directional trails on new trails in high-use, frontcountry settings, while also implementing suggested directionality for areas with a lower management presence
- **Visitor Ethics** – Utilize a combination of educational and interpretive tools to instill a sense of stewardship to new groups and generation of trail visitors.
- **Trail Event Space** – Identify appropriate trail venues for community-based events such as running races, and high school mountain bike events
- **Accessible Trail Experiences** – Continue to provide new opportunities for people with mobility impairments and other disabilities to enjoy trails and outdoor recreation
- **Habitat Conservation and Enhancement** – Work with partners to identify and implement opportunities to protect and enhance wildlife natural habitats in the region

