



Parks & Open Space

Education and Outreach

Boulder County

2020 Annual Report

Cultural History

1 event, 41 guests
32 AHC visitors
740 views of
pre-recorded videos

Natural History

44 programs
1,029 participants

Paid Staff

8 full-time
11 seasonal

Volunteer Staff

133 cultural history
85 naturalists
129 park patrollers
8 writers & illustrators

Call 303-678-6201
for a copy of the
full report

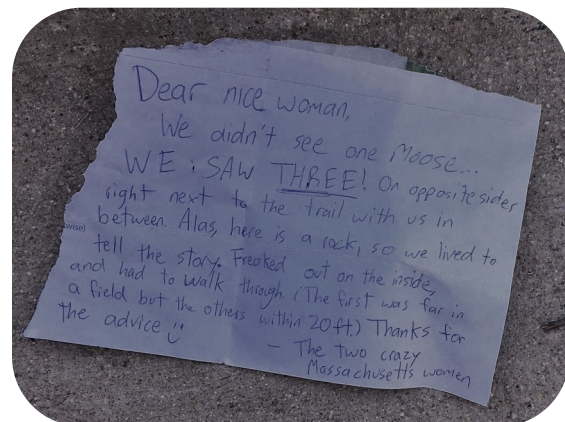
Strategic Plan Desired Future Condition: The community connects with natural, cultural, and agricultural resources and values the importance of county open space.

GOAL ONE: Inform the public about the county's open space resources, management practices, and visitor opportunities.

GOAL TWO: Offer opportunities throughout Boulder County that meet the interests of our diverse population.

GOAL THREE: Recruit, train, and offer volunteer programs that meet the interests of our diverse community.

GOAL FOUR: Evaluate the department's services and programs to better meet the public's needs.



Cultural History Education

The Cultural History Program's operations changed considerably in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Most in-person activities ceased mid-March including museums, special events, and educational programs. The only program sponsored was a special event at the Walker Ranch Homestead in January.

New Public Opportunities

Volunteers were recruited to help film and edit videos to post on the department's webpage and YouTube. By the end of the year, 26 living history demonstrations, historical site tours, and field trips were produced: Walker Ranch Homestead, carding wool, making rope, school session, corn shelling, canning, sody saleratus, manure spreader, calling cards, hard rock mining, chipmunk crusher, Cornish stamp mill, silos, player pianos, kids chores, laundry and ironing, butter churning, and old-fashioned cookstoves, telephones, gardens and outhouses. The virtual field trips were intended for third and fourth graders who study Colorado history, but they can be modified for any group. Lesson plans titled "Think, Write, Draw & Think" were also created for these field trips.

Live, virtual programs were offered to the public. Volunteers, with the assistance of staff, led live discussions and/or demonstrations. These programs were approximately an hour, giving plenty of time for participants to ask questions.

Volunteer Engagement

Garden gurus and critter caretakers oversaw the garden and animals at AHC. Seamstresses worked from home on projects and assisted the county's efforts to sew face coverings. A collections volunteer continued work cataloguing artifacts.

Staff sponsored virtual volunteer learning opportunities on a variety of themes: open forge for volunteer blacksmiths, Native American buffalo, Altona School and Schoolhouse Loop, Boulder County History Jeopardy, historical property field trips, as well as informal virtual get-togethers.

Pandemic Provided Time for Special Projects

The reduction in programming due to the pandemic presented an opportunity to focus on the backlog of collection management projects. Staff completed the Standards and Excellence Program with AASLH (American Association for State and Local History) to earn a Silver certificate in collection management. This achievement, along with a completed application filed with the History Colorado, led to the renewal of BCPOS as a state approved repository of archaeological objects.

A two-year capital project launched to replace a third of the exhibits in the Stroh/Dickens Barn. The new bilingual exhibits focus is how local lands have provided for many throughout time, including Native people, new settlements, and diverse communities and families who live in Boulder County.



Natural History Education

Due to the suspension of in-person programming mid-March, Natural History staff looked for ways to reach the community through virtual means. These included:

Collaboration with the Louisville Public Library

Three short nature-themed videos (5-7 minutes) created by E&O staff were used by librarians who created additional activities to go along with videos and suggested books that children could check-out to learn more about topics. Scheduled Zoom gatherings were held to give children and families the opportunity to share what they learned and to ask BCPOS staff questions.

Virtual Hike of the Lichen Loop Trail (Heil Valley Ranch)

The 30-minute video included 13 different interpretive topics and stops along the trail. Each short video clip was followed by a slide with thought-provoking questions and activities. The video was designed for use by teachers who normally schedule field trips to Heil Valley Ranch. The video was also made available to the public on the department's webpage. Following the October Cal-Wood Fire, an addendum was added to the video to document the fire and expand information about fire ecology.

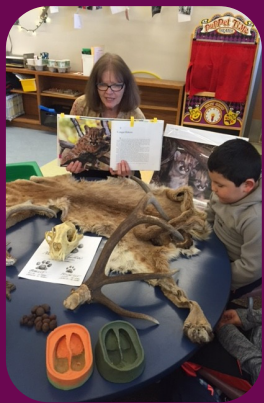
Altona Schoolhouse Loop Trail Guide Project

In partnership with the department's cultural history staff and the St. Vrain Valley School District Innovation Center, a cartoon-style trail guide for the Schoolhouse Loop was created. Four high school students researched, drew, and wrote the guide for groups visiting the historic schoolhouse so they can also learn about natural history features at Heil Valley Ranch.

Volunteer Engagement

Virtual resources, training, and get-togethers were well-received by volunteers as a way to "see" and interact with each other and staff. Virtual volunteer trainings were offered through Zoom. Most of these were led by volunteer naturalists (VN) and assisted by staff. Topics included dark skies, Boulder County wildflowers, bird migration, Colorado weather, Boulder County herps, and Native American history in Boulder County. We also launched "Nature Reads" book group that met monthly on Zoom, focusing on nature-related books.

Building a robust virtual resource center for volunteers began immediately after county offices closed in mid-March. The VN webpage can be accessed 24/7 by volunteers and includes program resources for general nature programs, foothills ecology, geology, reptiles and amphibians, insects and spiders, ecosystems, wildlife, plants, preschool programs, wetlands, interpretive tips, property resources, and links to virtual trainings, field trips, and VN policies and procedures.



Informal Education

Artist-in-Residence Program: This program provides an opportunity for artists to pursue their work in the inspiring landscape and history of Caribou Ranch. By sharing their art with Boulder County, we hope to add to residents' enjoyment of their open space lands and create a legacy of art preserved for future generations. In 2020, three artists participated (while two deferred their stay to 2020 due to pandemic scheduling issues) and included a photographer, illustrator, and painter.

Images Magazine: 710 subscribers received hard copies and 496 people got electronic copies of the quarterly magazine that highlights the department's management activities, natural resources, recreational opportunities, and local history.

iNaturalist Website: In the fifth year of hosting the Boulder County Wildlife project with the City of Boulder and the Wild Foundation, there was an increase of just over 7,500 new observations. iNaturalist continued to flourish in spite of the pandemic since residents could go out and take photos on their own. There are over 300 contributors and 2,300 species recorded!

Park Patrol (Roving Interpretation): E&O staff and volunteer patrollers contacted open space visitors at trailheads and on trails, answering questions about the property's natural resources, park amenities, recreational opportunities and land management activities. They also provided a uniformed presence, encouraged responsible use of open space, and addressed infractions of park regulations and public health orders to wear face coverings and social distance when appropriate. There was a 205 percent increase in hours on patrol by E&O staff from the previous year since all other programming was cancelled and parks were very busy. Some of those hours were the result of additional staff helping with trailhead duty. Volunteer patrol increased six percent.

Volunteer Work Projects: 663 volunteers participated in one-day projects where they were given a brief introduction to the cultural and natural resources of the open space, as well how their work played into the overall management of the property.

