

# FISHERS PEAK STATE PARK MASTER PLAN

## PUBLIC MEETING #2 OVERVIEW

**JUNE 24, 2021**

This overview describes the presentation and discussion from the Fishers Peak State Park Master Plan public meeting which took place virtually on June 24, 2021.

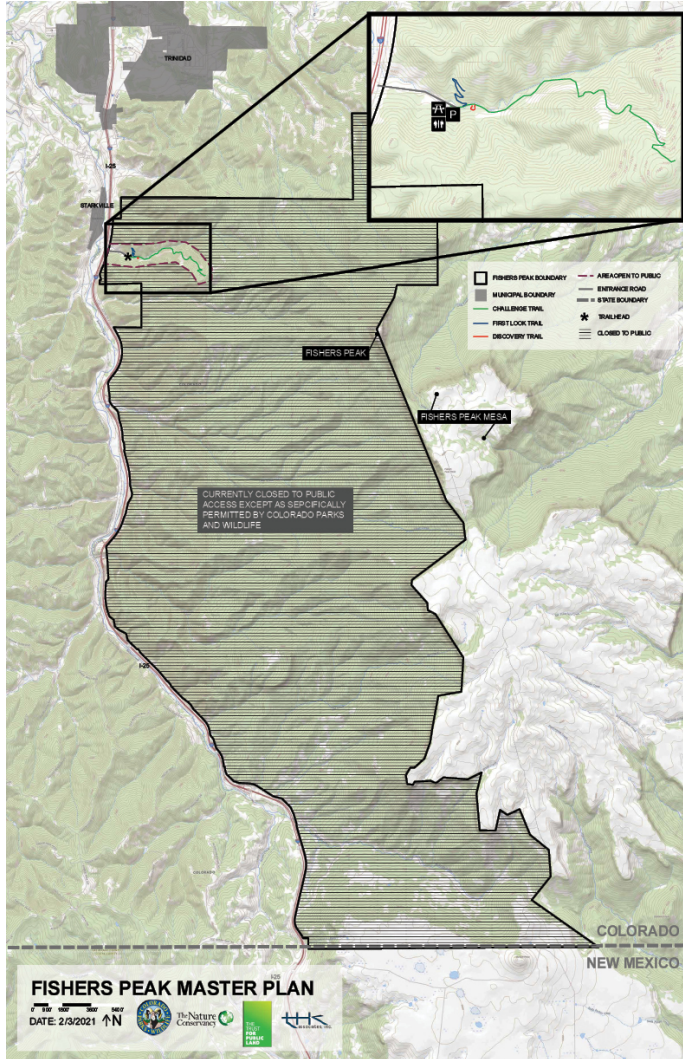
### MEETING GOALS:

1. Provide information and updates regarding the Fishers Peak Master Plan
2. Gather feedback and input about specific aspects (landscape, natural resources, etc.) of the Park and Master Plan
3. Answer questions and concerns related to Fishers Peak Park and the Master Plan process
4. Connect with community members, statewide stakeholders, and regional stakeholders
5. Encourage members of the public to complete the survey

AGENDA
Welcome & Brief project review
Presentation: Visual Understanding of Fishers Peak State Park
Discussion and Q&A
Presentation: Public Input To-Date & Interest Groups
Discussion and Q&A
Wrap Up

## PROPERTY MAP

This map depicts the full Fishers Peak State Park property. The expanded portion shows the sneak peek trails currently open to the public.



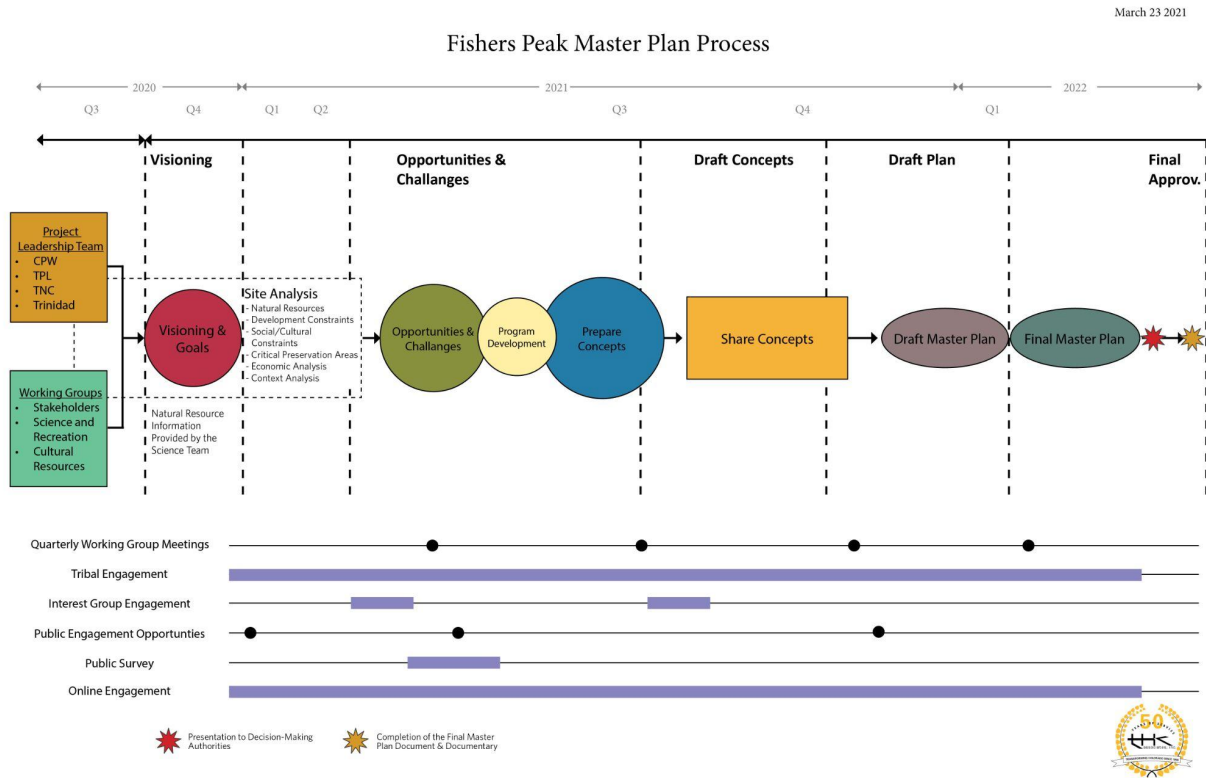
## VISION AND BLUEPRINT

**Vision:** “As it has for eons, Fishers Peak continues to provide for the life that thrives there and serves as a destination for those inspired by all that nature offers for generations to come”

**Blueprint to Achieve Vision:** “Fishers Peak State Park offers a unique and synergistic blend of resource conservation, recreation, education, economic benefit, and cultural significance to the City of Trinidad, Las Animas County, and the State of Colorado.”

## MASTER PLANNING TIMELINE

The graphic below depicts the general timeline for the Fishers Peak State Park Master Planning process. Currently, the project is moving from the Opportunities & Challenges phase into the Program Development phase (small yellow circle).



## ON-SITE DATA COLLECTION

The Project Team shared drone video footage and photographs of the Fishers Peak landscape, wildlife, and cultural history, while providing an overview of how these resources are being studied and inventoried in the Park. You can watch the video here:

<https://www.fisherspeakstatepark.com/public-meeting-62421-english-copy>.

### Aspects shown or discussed included:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aerial footage of Fishers Peak and summit</li> <li>• Mid-elevation forest meadows and rock outcrops</li> <li>• Lower elevation pinyon-juniper woodlands</li> <li>• Rocky desert canyons</li> <li>• Border with New Mexico</li> <li>• Reptiles and amphibians</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Streams and springs</li> <li>• Bears, photos of tracks</li> <li>• Gray fox</li> <li>• Ponderosa pine forest</li> <li>• Mixed forest</li> <li>• Montane grassland</li> <li>• Cliffs</li> <li>• Existing infrastructure</li> </ul>
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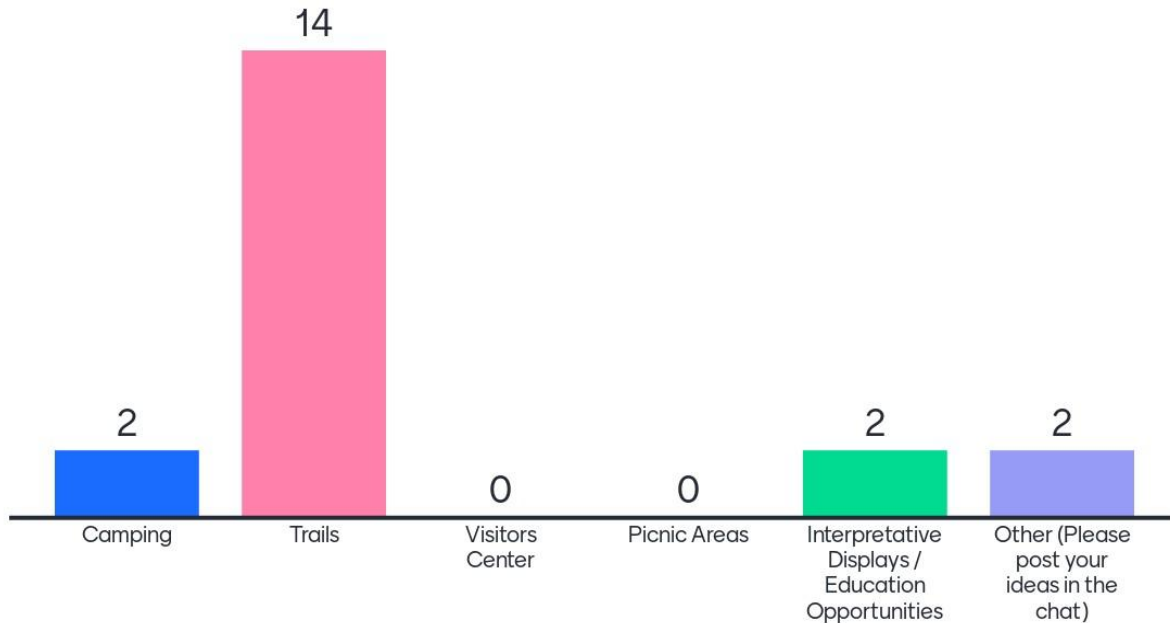
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Breeding birds and raptors</li> <li>● New Mexico Jumping Mouse (endangered species)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Peregrine falcons and golden eagles</li> <li>● Elk and their calving areas</li> <li>● Mapping of habitat, park features, and a trail to the Peak</li> </ul>
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### Q&A 1: DATA COLLECTION

Participants were asked to respond to several questions through online polls. Discussion and Q&A followed. Questions and results are listed here:

<b>Q1: What does backcountry recreation experience mean to you? Do you have an example?</b>	
A remote experience, lightly travelled trail that is a small part of the area assuring the biodiversity thrives and gives a better chance of seeing it.	Backcountry means areas of recreation that are not on paved roads, or there may not be vehicular access at all. Areas for remote camping. Landscapes that have limited access for people.
Backcountry to me means little to no human influence, Wilderness characteristics.	few if any motor vehicles, landscapes that are less impacted by human development.
Overnight backpacking!	Having an opportunity to get out on my horse and ride on some beautiful trails
Having the opportunity to do overnight camping.	natural vistas without manmade structures, chance to see wildlife
Primitive, solitude, challenging, limited infrastructure	limited human interaction, only natural sounds (no road noise), no developed recreation facilities
Fewer people and dogs, an opportunity to view wildlife and plants. A chance for solitude.	Low impact camping, Example: camping along the colorado trail.
For me a backcountry experience is similar to a wilderness experience: no motors, silence, no human influence.	

**Q2: What type of front country infrastructure is most important to you in order to enjoy this Park?**



**PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

Public and stakeholder engagement is a critical component of the Master Planning process. To date, the Project Team has heard from hundreds of Stakeholders through a variety of engagement opportunities, including the Fishers Peak [website comment form](#), two rounds of public meetings, Interest Group discussions, Work Group meetings, an Equity Review Panel, and a public survey.

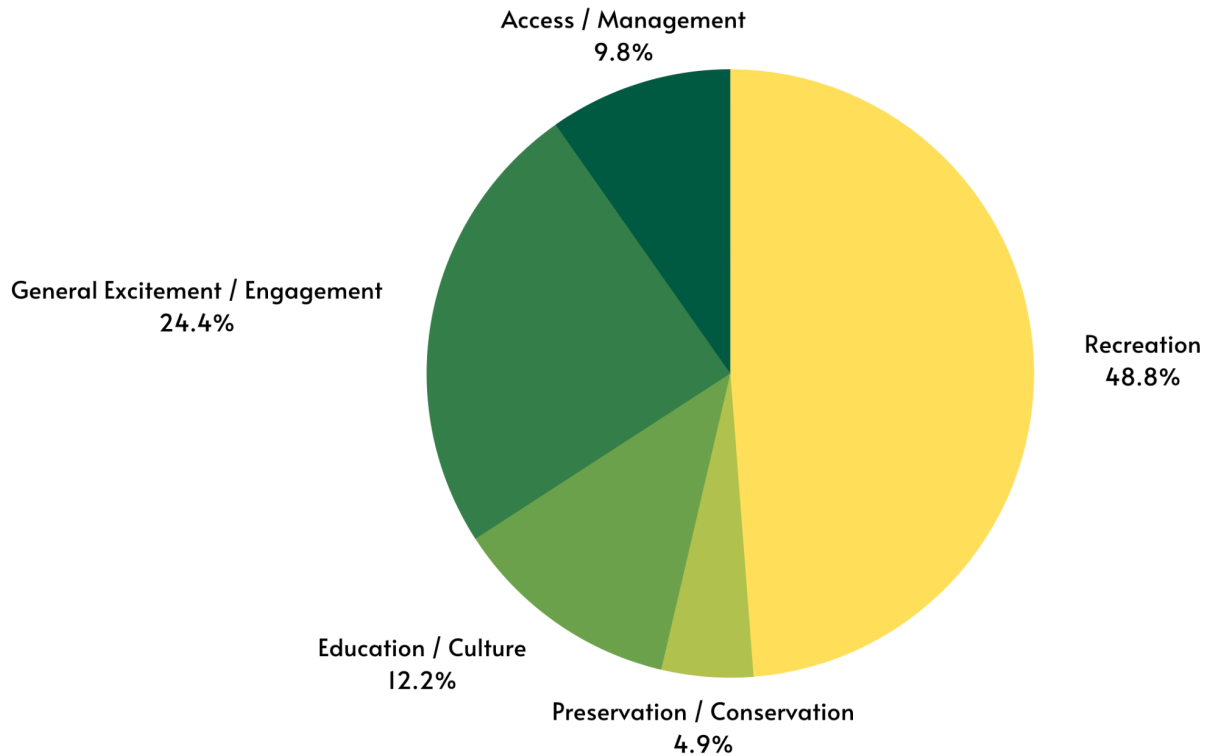
These are engagement statistics at this stage of the process:

- 200+ public comments
- 350+ survey responses (to-date)
- 2 public meetings
- 2 rounds of Work Groups
- 1 round of Interest Groups
- 1 round of Equity Review

The primary ways the Project Team is using the input received include developing and refining the Master Plan Focus Areas and Objectives; developing criteria and concept considerations; and informing tradeoffs and opportunities/challenges.

A wide range of topics have been mentioned by stakeholders throughout the engagement process, with some of the most prevalent themes being a high level of overall excitement for the Park; an emphasis on preserving the natural, cultural, and historical resources in the Park; developing recreation opportunities;

and including educational and interpretive initiatives. The following graphic is a snapshot of the topics received through online comments:



**INTEREST GROUP DISCUSSIONS**

In the spring of 2021, the Project Team engaged governmental, non-governmental, and business stakeholder organizations for interest group conversations based on focus area.

**Interest Groups included:**

Conservation / Environmental / Stewardship	Emergency Services
Wildlife / Hunting	Education and Interpretation
Outdoor Recreation	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
Mountain Biking	Local Businesses
Equestrian	Local and Regional: Colorado
Climbing	Local and Regional: New Mexico
Motorized Recreation	State and Federal Agencies
Grazing and Agriculture	

Goals of the discussions included 1) *soliciting ideas related to opportunities/challenges and evaluation criteria* and 2) *building relationships with key stakeholders*.

**Key opportunities stemming from the groups included:**

General appreciation to be engaged with the Master Plan	Opportunity for unique education, interpretation, and creative experiences
Emphasis on protecting natural resources and unique landscape of the Park	Desire for inclusive and equitable opportunities
Desire for varied types of recreation opportunities that do not significantly impact existing nature	Preservation and recognition of history and culture of the park (Tribes, grazing and ag)
Interest in unique experiences that aren't found elsewhere in the region (lookouts, wildlife viewing, challenging recreational trails, etc.)	Quality trails for easier maintenance
Importance of tying management and operations of the Park to the community (community economic benefit, and community opportunities to learn and give back)	Opportunities to Partner with Local, Regional and State Organizations and Agencies

**Key challenges stemming from the groups included:**

Recognition of the challenge of Park management and operations - opportunities to collaborate regionally (emergency services, businesses, volunteer groups, etc.)	Differing recreational interests and needs
Need for appropriate infrastructure and staffing to manage visitation and respond to community/visitor needs and interests (education/volunteer coordinator)	Community's desire for economic benefit may drive over-development of the Park
Landscape challenges and opportunities that may drive recreation and land use	Visitor Management Across State Park Lines

**A sampling of evaluation criteria developed in the Interest Groups includes:**

- Are human impacts to the natural systems appropriate for/minimal enough to meet conservation goals?

- Does the Park offer diverse recreation opportunities that can be used by many recreation interests and skill levels?
- Are the recreation opportunities planned and developed in ways that preserve the cultural and historical heritage of the property?
- Are there a variety of engagement opportunities for all users?
- Does the messaging in the Park highlight the unique character of the surrounding communities?
- Is the Park providing educational and stewardship (i.e. volunteer) opportunities?

*\*See the full Interest Group Report, including all opportunities/challenges and criteria developed [here](#).\**

**Q&A 2: INPUT GATHERING AND DISCUSSION**

Participants were asked to respond to several more questions, this time related to the public input presentation. Questions and results are listed here:

<b>Q1: Of the issues we’ve heard thus-far from the public, what stands out to you as most important?</b>	
Land conservation management and education trail development	Balancing recreation and natural resource preservation.
Meeting local community needs while balancing statewide interests	Trails serving the spectrum of users.
conservation & preservation of wildlife and landscape and balancing with recreation	Preserving cultural heritage and telling all of the stories of the land
Keep the park as pristine as possible while developing it so visitors can enjoy the culture and recreation opportunities.	Recreation accessibility and usage
Balance	Conservation and preserving the natural flavor of this property. Responsible recreation. Education.

<b>Q2: What are we missing, if anything?</b>	
boots on the ground with stakeholders	Make sure trail system minimizes conflict between user groups. This can be very challenging.



You are doing a great job of listening to the stake holders	When will you be able to share potential opening dates for sections and when will the master plan be completed?
Opportunities for early open houses, access.	Are bike trails in consideration?
A specific and targeted climate resiliency plan	There are two places in climbing to the top of the peak that require climbing short 10-15 foot vertical faces. Safe access points need to be added at these locations. in order to safely reach the peak.
Programming for local and state-wide visitors	

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

A variety of questions were asked by participants via the meeting chat function and a form that was distributed ahead of the meeting. Some of the questions had been previously answered at the first public meeting. For ease of reference, here is the full list of questions and answers from both meetings, with new questions from the June 2021 public meeting highlighted in pink:

- Process
  - **What types of community engagement activities are planned? How can I be a part of the process?**
    - Ensuring meaningful involvement for the local, regional, and state-wide communities in the Master Planning process is important to the Project Team. Several activities are planned for 2021 in accordance with the Master Plan schedule. These include:
      - Public Meetings - Similar to those held in December 2020 and June 2021, one more public meeting (virtual or in-person depending on COVID) is slated for later in 2021 during the Concept Development phase of the Master Planning process. More information will be distributed closer to the meeting date.
      - Interest Group Discussions - Early in 2021 Interest Group Discussions were conducted on a range of topics relevant to the development of the State Park. A second round is planned for later in the year. Read the first round report [here](#).
      - Survey - The Fishers Peak Master Plan public survey wrapped up in July 2021 with over 500 participants. A report and analysis is forthcoming.
      - Website Comment Form - Members of the public are encouraged to provide feedback and ideas using [this comment form](#).
    - Stakeholder Engagement Newsletter List

- To sign up for Fishers Peak Master Plan public e-blast newsletters featuring updates and opportunities for engagement please fill out [this form](#).
  - **How is the Master Plan using the early visioning work from the local community that occurred in 2018?**
    - The partners used the initial [Community Visioning Document](#), developed by Trust for Public Land and the City of Trinidad, as a foundational resource on which to base the partner Visioning process. Visioning documents stemming from this process are available on the website.
  - **Where can I find information about what the public has been saying during the Master Planning process?**
    - Project documents and reports can be found here: <https://www.fisherspeakstatepark.com/en/reports>
    - Public meeting recordings and documents can be found here: <https://www.fisherspeakstatepark.com/meeting-materials>
    - The public survey closed on July 5, 2021. Public survey data and analysis is forthcoming—stay tuned!
    - The draft Master Plan is slated to be available during the first quarter of 2022 and will include more information about public input.
- Volunteer and Employment Opportunities
  - **Can I volunteer for trail building or other opportunities at the State Park?**
    - There are no details currently available about volunteer opportunities, although there may be a number of volunteer projects available in the summer of 2021. More information will be made available at [fisherspeakstatepark.com](https://www.fisherspeakstatepark.com).
  - **Will there be paid positions available?**
    - CPW anticipates there will be a small number of temporary and permanent positions open in the future. Open positions will be posted on CPW's [job board](#).
- Recreation, Usage, and Potential Facilities
  - **What types of activities will be available on Fishers Peak State Park?**
    - At these early stages of the Master Planning process, all options for park usage and activities are being considered. The Master Planning process will refine and evaluate design and management approaches for feasible activities, keeping in mind the input from stakeholders, the local community context, and the scientific data being compiled. Currently CPW can say definitively that there will be both hiking and hunting on the State Park in some capacity. To date the Project Team has heard interest in numerous activities, including, but not limited to:

● Dogs	● Equestrian
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Hiking</li> <li>● Camping</li> <li>● Hunting</li> <li>● Mountain Biking</li> <li>● RVs</li> <li>● OHVs</li> <li>● Cattle Grazing</li> <li>● trailers and RV's</li> <li>● Winter activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Education</li> <li>● Disc Golf Course</li> <li>● Performance Amphitheater</li> <li>● Adequate parking for different types of access such as bicycles, horse</li> <li>● Other</li> </ul>
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- **What does hunting currently look like on Fishers Peak State Park?**
  - One of the pillars of the partnership at Fishers Peak State Park is planning recreation around conservation. Sportspersons dollars went into the acquisition of the Fishers Peak State Park. As such, CPW provided an inaugural limited public hunting opportunity on the State Park in the fall of 2020 through a drawing. The first season featured a draw of five hunting licenses: 1 deer, 3 elk, 1 mountain lion. Hunting protocols will be further developed through the Master Plan.
- **Will there be funding for State Park improvements?**
  - The five original partners helped secure funding to purchase the over 19,000 acres that is Fishers Peak State Park and there may be future opportunities for these and other partners to support State Park improvements.
  - The Master Plan will identify and help prioritize projects for funding consideration by CPW.
- **Will dogs be allowed on Fishers Peak State Park? Why aren't they allowed now?**
  - Currently dogs are not allowed in the State Park while data and information is being gathered about species and ecosystems. Dog access will be further evaluated throughout the Master Planning process.
- **Will there be a trail to the peak and if so, how long will it be?**
  - CPW is in the process of developing a trail to the Peak which will soon be under construction. The trail will be between 15 and 20 miles roundtrip.
- **Is there a timeline for more of the State Park to be open beyond the sneak peek opportunities?**
  - Currently, the Master Planning process is estimated to be completed by the first quarter of 2022. Investments and park openings will be budgeted and scheduled through subsequent CPW decision-making.
  - CPW is working on additional trail opportunities in 2021, but they may not be open to the public until subsequent years.
- Management Techniques
  - **Will renewable energy be used on Fishers Peak State Park?**

- This is currently undecided. CPW does use renewable energy in certain areas, but it is too early in the process to make a determination at this time.
    - **Will visitor conflicts be managed, such as between potential conflicts among bicycling and horseback riding?**
      - The Master Plan process will evaluate types of recreation management strategies and design techniques to mitigate visitor conflicts as well as manage impacts to species and ecosystems
    - **How is wildfire mitigation being considered as part of the master plan?**
      - Wildfire mitigation is a critical management practice that CPW takes very seriously on all of its properties. CPW is engaging the Colorado State Forest Service, local emergency services, and partners in New Mexico to develop best practices for fire mitigation at Fishers Peak.
    - **How are certain vulnerable areas going to be protected from human intervention?**
      - CPW is in the process of identifying areas that could be harmed by human activity. Understanding where these areas are and the resources they hold will inform the Master Plan and future management approaches. CPW is also working to develop education and interpretive programs in order to inform the public about the flora and fauna that requires preservation on the Park.
    - **How does CPW plan to minimize littering, vandalism, and other issues on the Park?**
      - While there is no one-size-fits-all solution that will prevent human-caused problems like littering and vandalism, CPW takes a holistic approach to minimizing these problems at its State Parks. This starts with education about Leave No Trace principles and is supported by management techniques such as adequate trash receptacles and collection.
- Inclusivity and Equity
  - **How do you plan to engage diverse users in the Stakeholder Engagement process? How will you navigate challenges for those who may not have the ability to engage virtually?**
    - It is a priority for the project partners to engage diverse users in the planning process. To support this priority, a group of equity and inclusivity experts, local leaders, and representatives of diverse users are reviewing our engagement plan and providing feedback to ensure that the Project Team is collaborating with the users we hope to engage. We are also engaging Tribes through a consultation process and setting up a number of interest group discussions. If you have ideas for ways to better engage diverse users we would love to hear from you [here](#).
  - **Will there be wheelchair/disability access?**
    - Accessibility is an important consideration for the Project Team. At this time, an accessible restroom has been constructed at the main parking lot. During the Master Planning Process, we will be looking for future opportunities for accessibility in the State Park.

- Regional Connectivity
  - **Will there be access to New Mexico or neighboring Colorado state wildlife areas?**
    - Currently, the Project Team is looking at regional connectivity as part of the Master Plan, but no decisions have been made. The Project Team has met with and will continue to engage partners in Raton, Colfax County, and the state of New Mexico.
  - **Is there a plan for a trail from the City of Trinidad to the peak?**
    - CPW's purview concerns only what is in the identified boundaries of the State Park. CPW is open to working with the City and community to determine potential connectivity from Trinidad to the Park.
  - **Can the public drive the 4 wheel road from Raton to Trinidad and vice versa?**
    - CPW is exploring options for connectivity between Fishers Peak and the surrounding communities. At this time, however, the only opportunities to experience the Park are on one of the two hiking trails open to the public (more info here: <https://www.fisherspeakstatepark.com/park-access>).
  
- Data Collection
  - **What is the process for collecting data about the plant and animal species on Fishers Peak State Park? What has been found so far?**
    - Data collection is an important part of gathering information to inform the Master Plan and recreation opportunities. Data will continue to be collected from the State Park to inform management strategies and understand trends as management strategies are adapted based on information available to CPW.
    - There is a large crew of experts working to create a robust inventory of the State Park. This includes documenting plants, animals, ecosystems, geological features, and historical sites.
    - There have been a number of species identified that only live in this region (not necessarily strictly on Fishers Peak). This means they are “globally significant.” As such, these and other species will need protection to ensure they are safe amid the management concepts developed in the master plan. More information will be made available as data collection continues.
    - To date the Project Team has identified old growth forests, at least 350-400 years old, and almost 900 species, including some insects and butterflies that live nowhere else in the world.
    - You can find a few examples of plant and animal species found on the Park on the website: [www.fisherspeakstatepark.com](http://www.fisherspeakstatepark.com)
  - **How is the human history and culture of Fishers Peak State Park being included in the Planning Process?**
    - Documenting, honoring, and preserving the human history and culture of what is now Fishers Peak State Park is a priority for the Project Team. Currently several activities are taking place to meet this priority, including developing opportunities for education, working with Tribes to integrate their stories, and

identifying specific geographical points that require protecting. These efforts will be further developed and refined through stakeholder engagement and Master Planning efforts in 2021.

- Other
  - **Will the State Park show up on Google Maps?**
    - CPW and the Project Team don't have control over what data is presented on Google Maps. However, there will be maps of the State Park posted to fisherspeakstatepark.com as the Master Planning process progresses.
  - **Will there be water stations on any of the trails since many visitors are not familiar with the Colorado climate and need to hydrate frequently, especially in hot weather?**
    - No decisions have been made about on-trail infrastructure at this time. This is an issue that will be deliberated through the Master Planning process.
  - **What are the plans for the historic adobe building located on the site of the park headquarters?**
    - An adobe building near Headquarters has been designated as historic by the State Historic Preservation Office. Plans for its future use are still being determined through the Master Planning process.