SOUTH PARK

BUFFALO PEAKS RANCH

HERITAGE TOURISM SITE PLANNING


BUFFALO PEAKS RANCH


COMO ROUNDHOUSE


PARIS MILL


SALT WORKS RANCH


SANTA MARIA RANCH



SITE PLAN REPORT

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SOUTH PARK

BUFFALO PEAKS RANCH

HERITAGE TOURISM SITE PLANNING



SEPTEMBER 2008

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CHAMBERLIN ARCHITECTS

ECONOMIC & PLANNING SYSTEMS (EPS)

S I T E P L A N R E P O R T

HERITAGE RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT IN PARK COUNTY, COLORADO

Since 1994, Park County, Colorado and its partners have been laying the groundwork for a new, sustainable economy by protecting, restoring, interpreting and promoting its most valuable heritage sites and properties. The South Park Heritage Site Planning Project builds on these efforts by analyzing and proposing community and business development programs for five key heritage sites in South Park. These five sites include the Buffalo Peaks Ranch, Como Roundhouse, Paris Mill, Santa Maria Ranch and Salt Works Ranch. All five sites are rich in history and resources and lend themselves to adaptive reuse to accommodate heritage tourism and new business opportunities. This report summarizes the site plan and heritage development proposal for the Buffalo Peaks Ranch.

Following an extensive search of western properties, the Rocky Mountain Land Library identified the Buffalo Peaks Ranch as their preferred location for the establishment of a residential library where they could house their growing collection. Park County conducted a thorough evaluation and analysis of different adaptive uses and ultimately concluded that the Rocky Mountain Land Library [RMLL] and its associated "campus" development represents an excellent opportunity to capture heritage tourists and researchers. The site planning effort for the Buffalo Peaks Ranch focused on developing an economically feasible venture, adaptively re-using the historic buildings within the ranch headquarters area, and establishing new structures to create a comfortable and inspiring campus setting. The Buffalo Peaks Ranch site plan is intended to guide the future development and design of the property. Over time, the Buffalo Peaks Ranch and the other four sites featured in this project will serve Park County as tourism generators and create new business opportunities in South Park.

PLANNING CONTEXT

Park County has been designated as a Preserve America Community by the White House for 1) protecting and celebrating their local heritage, 2) using their historic assets for economic development, and 3) encouraging people to experience local historic resources through education and heritage tourism.

On July 25, 2007 Colorado's U.S. Senators Ken Salazar and Wayne Allard announced that the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources passed S. 444 to create the South Park National Heritage Area. Once the bill is signed into law, Park County will be eligible for $10 million in federal funding to help preserve, promote and utilize its unique heritage resources for community development purposes. The Park County Board of County Commissioners unequivocally supports legislation to create the South Park National Heritage Area. Established in 1994, the Park County Heritage Program has become one of the most successful heritage programs in the Rocky Mountain region, with more than one hundred active partners and $17 million in project accomplishments. According to the late Commissioner, Louis "Doc" McKay, "We are extremely pleased that our bipartisan National Heritage Area bill is moving forward in the Senate."

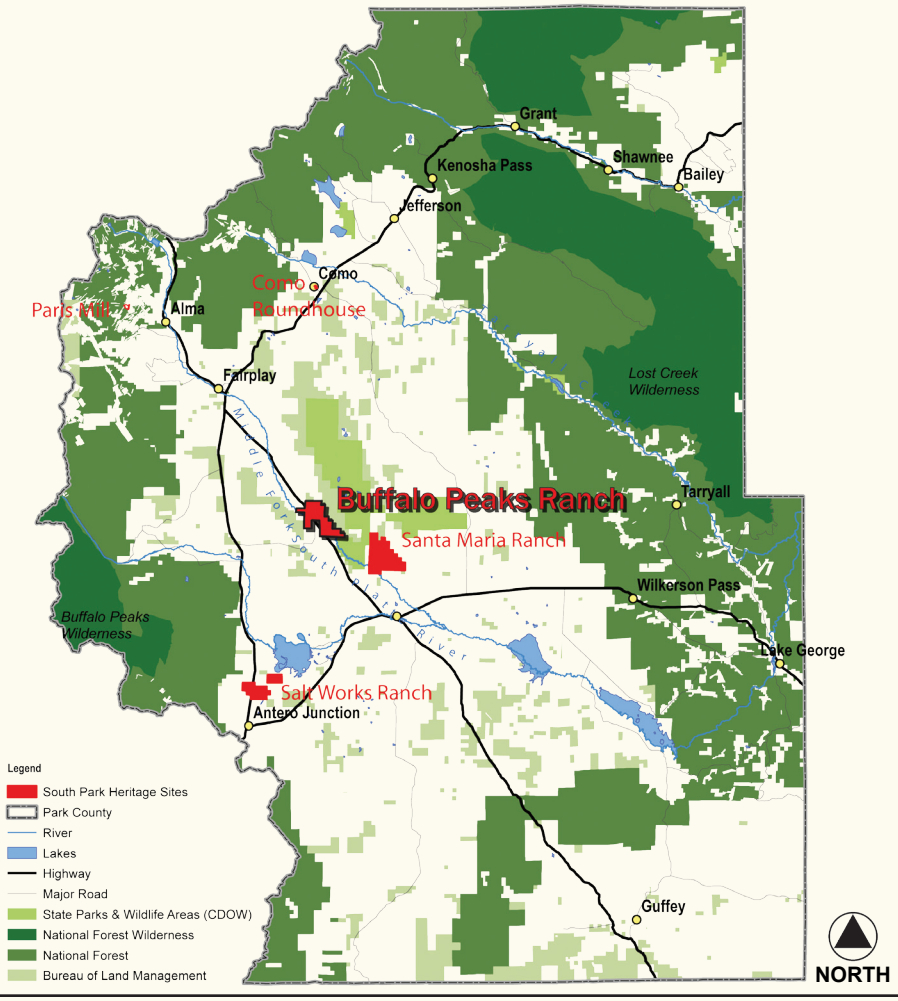
South Park is a compelling heritage tourism destination. The area is close to Colorado's Front Range, which represents a large potential visitor base. By offering new infrastructure such as lodging and dining facilities and serving as destinations for fishing, group retreats, workshops, regional artists, and public entertainment, the five sites featured in this report can bolster business development in Park County and provide a foundation for the proposed South Park National Heritage Area.

FRAMING AND PROMOTING THE STORY OF SOUTH PARK

Research conducted during the analysis phase of this project indicates that heritage areas are most successful when they creatively interpret resources and share compelling stories of the land, culture and history. This report addresses the interpretive potential of the Buffalo Peaks Ranch and outlines how the sites' history, inhabitants and development tie into the broader stories of South Park and the western United States.

The overarching interpretive themes identified in the South Park National Heritage Area feasibility study conducted in March 2006 were used to organize the interpretive planning for the Buffalo Peaks Ranch and the other featured sites. The themes are 1) Natural Resources: We've Got Altitude; 2) Prehistory: An Ancient Hunting Ground; 3) Settlement History: Panning for Prosperity; and 4) Cultural Traditions: Pioneering Characters. Under this interpretive framework, the resources and stories of the five heritage sites proved to be complementary. Each of the sites reveals a distinct aspect of South Park's heritage, and collectively they can be interpreted to build a greater understanding and appreciation of the Park's resources.

Promotion of the South Park story is a key step in enticing heritage travelers to the region. The Buffalo Peaks Ranch may be physically linked to other heritage attractions in South Park through auto-tour brochures, websites, wayside exhibits, and other interpretive media. Cross-marketing the sites and interpreting the Buffalo Peaks Ranch story within the larger South Park context will help move visitors to different sites and spur repeat visits to the region.



BUFFALO PEAKS RANCH





SITE PLAN REPORT

CONCEPTUAL SITE DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

SOUTH PARK





PHOTO BY GARY NICHOLS

VISION

The Rocky Mountain Land Library and associated field research station will attract many visitors to the Buffalo Peaks Ranch. The renovated ranch headquarters will provide a serene setting and an intimate South Park retreat. A unique collection of books, diverse programming and recreational opportunities will inspire guests to explore their connection to the land.

At the Rocky Mountain Land Library, guests have ample opportunities to experience the land and enjoy the beautiful ranch setting.

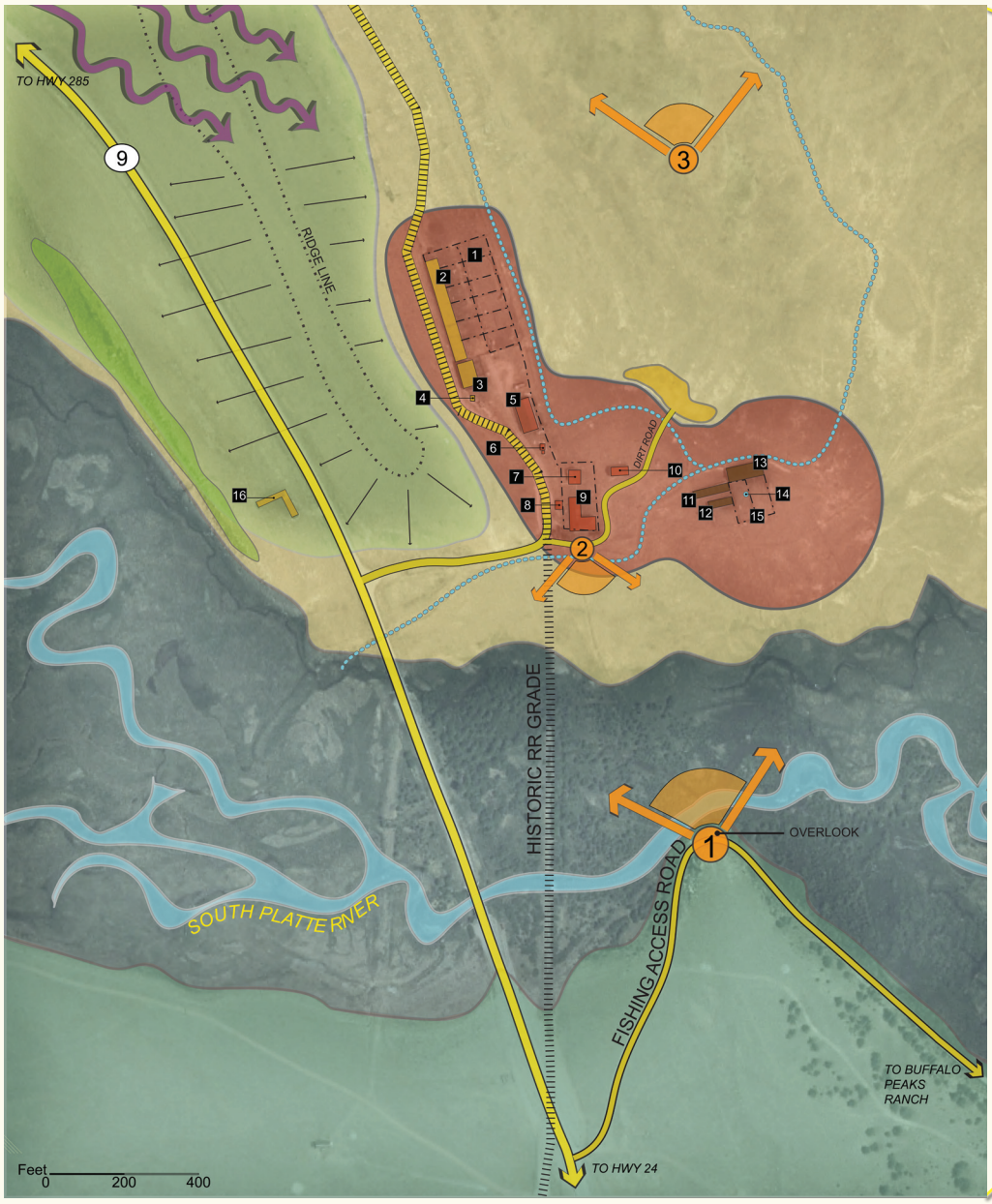




SITE PLAN REPORT

SITE CONTEXT AND ANALYSIS

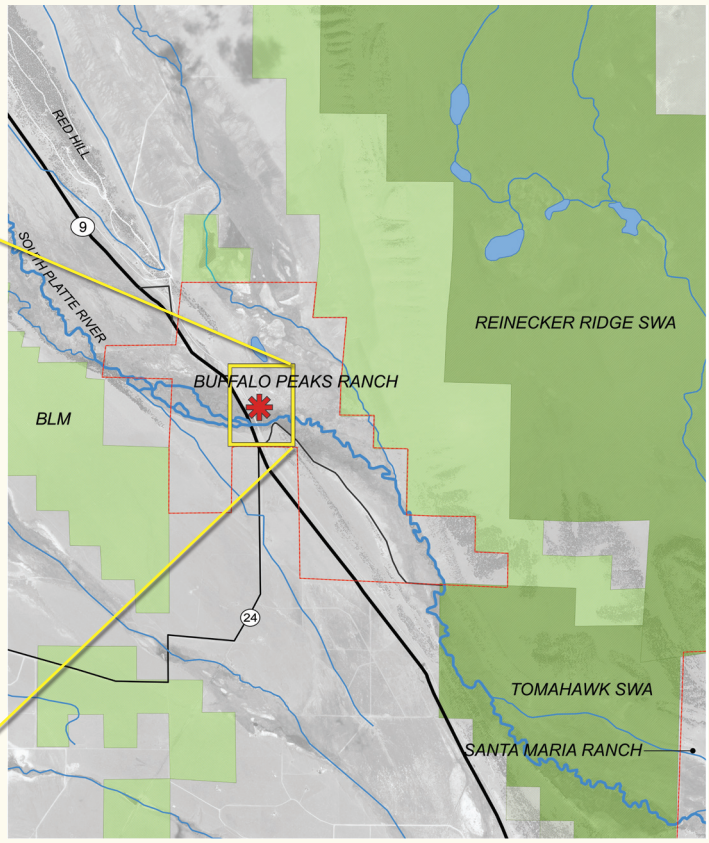
SOUTH PARK



- Foothills/Mountain Grassland
- Ranch Headquarters
- Cattle-Feeding Area
- Existing Evergreen Escarpment
- Wetland/Riparian Corridor
- Rocky Mountain Bristlecone Pine
- Irrigated Agriculture
- Main Area Structures
- Sheep Area Structures
- Cattle/Horse Area Structures

- 1 South Platte River/Mountain Views
- 2 South Platte River Views
- 3 Valley Views to Mountains
- Irrigation Ditch
- Historic Railroad Grade
- Roadways
- Prevailing Winds
- Slopes
- Fencing

NORTH



- Area Enlarged
- State Wildlife Area (SWA)
- BLM
- River
- Primary Highway
- State Route County Road
- Buffalo Peaks Ranch Boundary
- Site Headquarters

1. Cattle/Horse Area
2. Concrete Sheds
3. Horse Barn (concrete-and-wood 2-story structure)
4. Storage
5. Garage/Workshop
6. Metal Shed/Workshop
7. Cook House
8. Newer Garage
9. Main House (several additions; south-facing porch)
10. Bunk House
11. Corrigated Metal Shed (higher roof; skylights; south facing)
12. Metal/Corrigated Shed (low roof; south facing)
13. Wood Barn (high ceilings; large, south-facing windows)
14. Well Pump
15. Cattle Sheds
16. Corrals (board fencing)

SITE OVERVIEW

The 1,840-acre Buffalo Peaks Ranch is currently owned by the City of Aurora, which purchased the ranch in 1985 to provide high-quality public fishing opportunities along the Middle Fork of the South Platte River. The stretch of the Middle Fork that bisects the ranch is a tremendous resource that has been designated Gold Medal water by the Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW). To qualify as Gold Medal, a stream must possess the highest-quality aquatic habitat and provide outstanding angling opportunities for catching large trout.

Park County identified the ranch as a key heritage asset: built in 1863, it is one of the oldest ranches in the area. Extant facilities include the original ranch house, two large bunkhouses, a corral and barn and several additional outbuildings. Most of the buildings are considered sound, having been used until the mid-1990s.

The natural resources within the Buffalo Peaks are significant. The riparian corridors created by the South Platte and Trout Creek drainages are used as wildlife movement corridors and hunting areas for birds of prey. Herds of elk, deer and antelope are frequently found on the Buffalo Peaks Ranch. Outside the wide swaths of riparian vegetation that trace the Middle Fork and Trout Creek, the majority of the ranch consists of mountain grassland and irrigated agricultural lands. Additionally, a bristlecone pine community can be found in the northwestern portion of the ranch.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Following an evaluation and analysis of suggested adaptive uses for the Buffalo Peaks Ranch, Park County has identified the Rocky Mountain Land Library (RMLL) and associated “campus” development as the preferred option (see appendix A of the analysis report for an analysis of all proposed uses). Park County believes that the RMLL can capture a broad spectrum of both institutional and heritage tourism markets. Furthermore, the RMLL concept is consistent with Park County’s economic development goals and objectives, and would fill a demonstrable tourism niche. The county has concluded that development of the RMLL center at Buffalo Peaks Ranch is a high priority for Park County if it is judged to be an economically feasible use of this site.

Likewise, the RMLL systematically identified Buffalo Peaks Ranch as the preferred location to establish a residential library. To support the RMLL programming and a scientific field research station, the RMLL campus would require adequate room to store and exhibit 15,000 to 25,000 volumes, accommodations for researchers and workshop participants, exhibit areas and dining facilities as well as classroom, studio, workshop and meeting spaces. At the Buffalo Peaks Ranch guests and researchers will have access to the land library and to a ranch landscape that provides educational opportunities and invites exploration.

The RMLL campus will serve researchers, resident artists and writers and field scientists, as well as heritage travelers who may take advantage of the RMLL programming or simply elect to stay in the ranch’s cabins or bunkhouse. Programming at RMLL will focus on the relationships between people and the land, and will touch on a wide variety of topics ranging from scientific study to traditional art and crafts.

FINANCIAL FEASIBILITY ANALYSIS SUMMARY

Visitation Forecast

Visitation to the RMLL will be closely linked to research and the variety of programs and courses offered. By coupling the library with a larger field research station and education center, use of the facility is projected to increase significantly. In addition to academic institutions, the RMLL should target Front Range heritage tourism markets (estimated at 650,000 individuals in 2005) and appeal to the general public as well as the more discriminating traveler.

The South Park Archaeology Project participants, scientists from Colorado State University and other researchers have been identified as potential tenants of the RMLL campus's field station facilities.

Economic Considerations

Capital improvements associated with establishing the RMLL and field research station will be extensive. The library will require construction of a new facility designed to hold sensitive collections and other materials. The RMLL campus development will also require housing and dining facilities, a laboratory, conference facilities, reading and studio spaces, and collections and equipment storage. Furthermore, the site will require improvements to the grounds including paths and trails, gardens, and parking and utility upgrades. Depending on the scope of improvements, the total projected capital development cost will range between $2 and $3 million. This large investment will require some combination of grants, donations and private capital to reduce or eliminate the annual debt service.

As with comparable facilities evaluated in the analysis report, annual operations and maintenance costs related to the RMLL and field research station are projected at $279,000. If the facility is used only for RMLL's programs and research purposes, an annual operating deficit ranging between $54,000 and $158,000 is projected. If the facility is used only for public tourism (lodging and meals), the annual operating deficit is projected to be $75,000. However, by scheduling use of the facility by RMLL, researchers and the general public, occupancy rates and infrastructure use will increase dramatically. Under this "combined" use scenario, a positive cash flow of $2,700 can be expected without relying on contributions, donations or grants to cover annual operating and maintenance costs. This scenario assumes that lodging and dining facilities at the ranch will be available to the general public for 142 days/nights of the 182-day tourism season (May-October).

While the combined use scenario does not project a large net profit, additional financial support from RMLL benefactors could offset a portion of annual operating costs and make this development concept an appealing partnership opportunity.

Analysis Conclusions

Of the eleven suggested adaptive uses evaluated for Buffalo Peaks Ranch in the Analysis Report, three were determined to be feasible and compatible with the property, extant facilities and the collective objectives of project partners. These three uses are the RMLL, public heritage tourism (e.g., overnight ranch stays) and a scientific field station. The success of the

Buffalo Peaks Ranch development project depends on combined use of the property and associated facilities for these three uses. Since the ranch offers an abundance of recreational opportunities (e.g., fishing, hiking, trail rides, birding), recreational use of the ranch will also contribute to the success of proposed development.

The RMLL concept alone will not generate sufficient visitation or revenue to sustain operations. The addition of a field research station presents opportunities to secure grants, endowments and institutional funding that otherwise would not be available. Therefore, adaptive design and reuse should include facilities for both the land library and field research. Designing and developing the site for heritage tourism purposes from the onset will greatly increase the site's long-term potential for success, as demonstrated by comparable facilities throughout the region.

Buffalo Peaks Ranch is well positioned to draw high levels of visitation from a variety of markets, including both Denver and Colorado Springs. Use of the lodging, meeting and dining facilities by heritage travelers will be essential to augmenting revenues whenever the ranch is not otherwise booked for the RMLL's programs and purposes. The significant level of infrastructure required by the RMLL should also be used to attract anglers, naturalists, history buffs, international travelers, school groups, artists, corporate groups, Front Range residents and others looking for an intimate and educational ranch retreat.

SITE STORIES

Historic Significance

The Buffalo Peaks Ranch is eligible for listing on both the local and national registers of historic places. The ranch is a fine example of the contributions of immigrants and women to the growth and prosperity of South Park in the early 1900s. The intact cultural landscape and preserved historic structures on the property also represent the ranching and transportation (railroad and stagecoach) stories that are central to the heritage of South Park.

The Buffalo Peaks Ranch (originally known as the Guiraud Ranch) was established in 1862 by Adolphe and Marie Guiraud and remained in the family for three generations. Having immigrated from France to New Orleans in 1850, the Guirauds eventually followed the gold rush west and settled in Hamilton, one of the fist towns established in Park County. The Guirauds settled their ranch in 1862 and turned to it to make a living for themselves when the gold in Hamilton ran out. Following the death of her husband in 1873, Marie took over management of the ranch and expanded the property to over 5,000 acres. With the help of her ten children, Marie transformed the ranch into one of the most productive in the area, and she became one of the most prosperous residents of Park County (at the time of her death $80,000 was reportedly found in the ranch house basement). In addition to producing an extensive hay crop and growing wheat, rye, oats and vegetables, Marie managed a cattle herd and a slaughterhouse.

Marie also founded the nearby town site of Garo in 1879 to serve the Denver, South Park & Pacific Railway when it reached Park County. The grade from this historic line is visible just west of the main ranch house. The small

town, located across the river from the ranch headquarters evolved into a bustling railroad center with a store (which stands today), a school (which was relocated to South Park City Museum in Fairplay) and a diverse European and Latin American population. Stagecoach lines from Colorado Springs and Canon City dropped travelers in Garo, where they would meet the daily trains that headed to points farther west. The rail served ranchers who needed to transport their stock to market, as well as sportsmen who ventured to South Park from the cities to take advantage of the region's excellent fishing and hunting.

After Marie's death, the ranch passed to her daughter, Mildred, and husband Harry Johns, a Colorado state legislator. In 1943, James T. McDowell & Sons purchased the ranch which then spanned 15,000 acres. The ranch was operated as the McDowell Ranch until 1976 (for a period of time under McDowell's ownership, the nearby Santa Maria and Buffalo Peaks ranches were managed as one). Several European corporate owners managed the ranch after 1976, and in 1985, the City of Aurora purchased the property.

Interpretive Opportunities

The Rocky Mountain Land Library's mission is to encourage a greater awareness of human interactions with land, both past and present. Therefore, interpretation will be a key development component at the Buffalo Peaks Ranch. With RMLL as its primary tenant and the South Park Archeology Project as potential seasonal research residents, the ranch is well suited to introduce and interpret the prehistory of South Park and the Rocky Mountain region. Additionally, the site's historic ranch structures and abundant natural resources invite interpretation.

Ideas for tying the resources at Buffalo Peaks Ranch to the central interpretive themes of South Park are discussed below.

Natural Resources: We've Got Altitude

The natural resources of the Buffalo Peaks Ranch are plentiful and could be interpreted through various media including guided tours, nature trails, workshops and wildlife and plant lists. The RMLL's collection could be drawn upon to create rich interpretive exhibits. Additionally, in keeping with the field station concept, South Park's scientific research record could be mapped and interpreted at Buffalo Peaks Ranch for the benefit of both researchers and visitors. Resource interpretation at the ranch could focus on the property's riparian resources including the fen (west of Highway 9), the confluence of Middle Fork and Trout Creek, stream dynamics and wildlife corridors. Recent efforts to improve Gold Medal steam habitat along the Middle Fork of the South Platte River could also be showcased.

Prehistory: An Ancient Hunting Ground

Skidmore College's ongoing archeological studies in South Park (initiated in 2001) and RMLL's Native American collection represent abundant interpretive resources related to the region's prehistory. Findings from the South Park Archeological Project could be exhibited on site, and the RMLL's collection could be used to develop interpretive materials (e.g. signage, brochures, websites, video) that feature the life ways of the Ute and other tribes (Comanche, Kiowa, Cheyenne and Arapaho) who seasonally visited

the Park. Archeological resources in South Park span Colorado's entire prehistoric sequence and reveal insight into the Paleo-Indian and Early Archaic mountain traditions. Prehistoric interpretation can be tied to the ranch landscape, highlighting the native plants (wild fruits, roots, seeds) and animals (trout, elk, deer) that early peoples relied on for survival.

Settlement History: Panning for Prosperity

Ranching is central to the history of the Buffalo Peaks Ranch, and the property's working landscape and collection of historic structures lend themselves to the interpretation of the South Park ranching experience. The City of Aurora will most likely maintain livestock on the ranch and the presence of cattle will illustrate the ranching stories. The role of railroads in supporting ranching and spawning the development of settlements can be interpreted at the ranch. The property is bisected by the historic Denver, South Park & Pacific grade and lies within sight of Garo, a town founded by the ranch's original owner, Marie Guiraud. The role of the stagecoach lines in transporting travelers from Colorado Springs and Canon City prior to the development of the railroad may also be revealed.







Cultural Traditions: Pioneering Characters

Marie Guiraud's success in operating a ranch and raising cattle and crops at such a high elevation makes for intriguing interpretive content. Buffalo Peaks presents a unique opportunity to highlight the contributions of women to the growth and prosperity of South Park and the American West during the early 1900s.







BUFFALO PEAKS RANCH



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