SOUTH PARK

SALT WORKS RANCH

HERITAGE TOURISM SITE PLANNING


BUFFALO PEAKS RANCH


COMO ROUNDHOUSE


PARIS MILL


SALT WORKS RANCH


SANTA MARIA RANCH



SITE PLAN REPORT

PRESERVE AMERICA
Explore and Enjoy Our Heritage

PARK COUNTY
HERITAGE RESOURCE AREA

Colorado
Tourism Office
www.colorado.com 1-800-Colorado

COLORADO HISTORICAL SOCIETY
STATE HISTORICAL FUND
GRANTS FOR
HISTORIC PRESERVATION

This project was made possible with funding from the Preserve America Grant Program, Colorado Historical Society' State Historical Fund, Colorado Tourism Office, and the Colorado Department of Local Affairs. This material is based upon work assisted by a grant from the Department of the Interior, National Park Service. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of the Interior.

COVER PHOTO BY GARY NICHOLS



SOUTH PARK

SALT WORKS RANCH

HERITAGE TOURISM SITE PLANNING



SEPTEMBER 2008

PREPARED FOR: PARK COUNTY, COLORADO

PREPARED BY: SHAPINS BELT COLLINS

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 Salt Works Ranch and Colorado Salt Works.

Owners of the Salt Works Ranch are in the process of establishing the Colorado Salt Works Western Heritage Center, a not-for-profit organization focused on the preservation and celebration of Western heritage. The owners intend to rehabilitate the Colorado Salt Works complex to serve as a venue for seminars, workshops, retreats, art exhibits, residencies and other programs that focus on Western heritage. The Salt Works Ranch site plan is intended to guide future development and design of the Colorado Salt Works complex. Over time, the Salt Works Ranch and the other four sites featured in this project will serve Park County as tourism generators that will attract heritage travelers to 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."

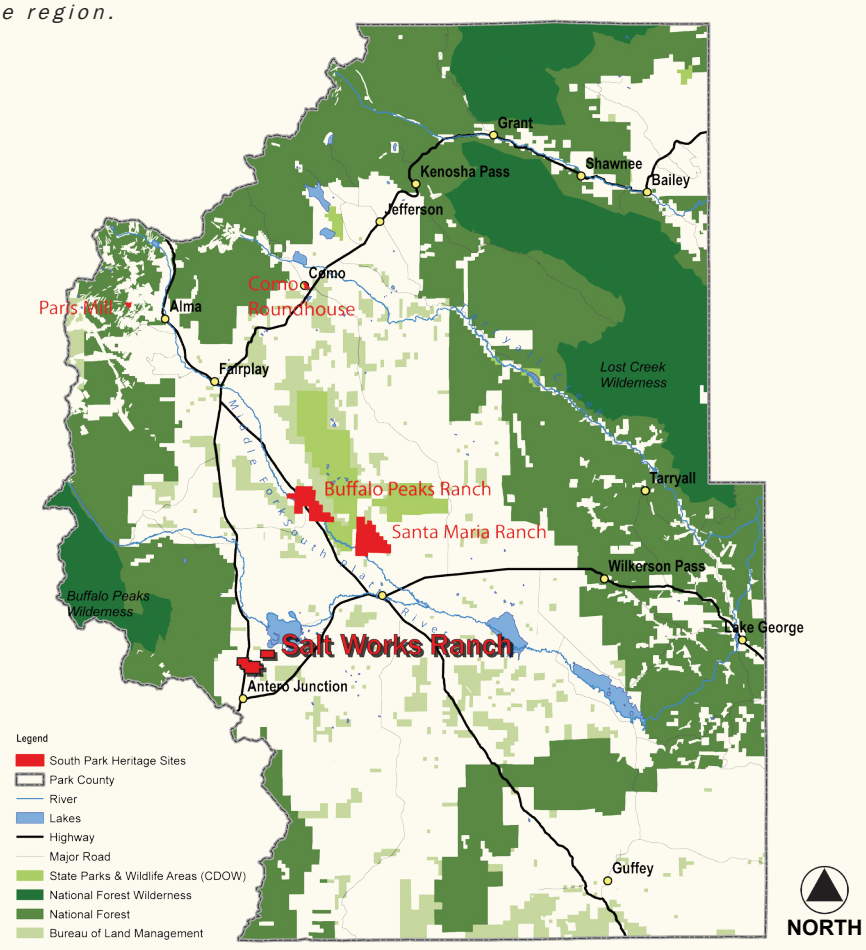
South Park is a compelling heritage tourism destination. The area is close to Colorado's Front Range, which represents a large potential visitor base. By offering new infrastructure such as lodging and dining facilities and serving as destinations for fishing, group retreats, workshops, regional artists, 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 Salt Works Ranch and outlines how the site's 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 Salt Works 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, resources and stories at 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 visit the region. The Salt Works 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 ranch's story within the larger South Park context will help move visitors to different sites and spur repeat visits to the region.



SALT WORKS RANCH





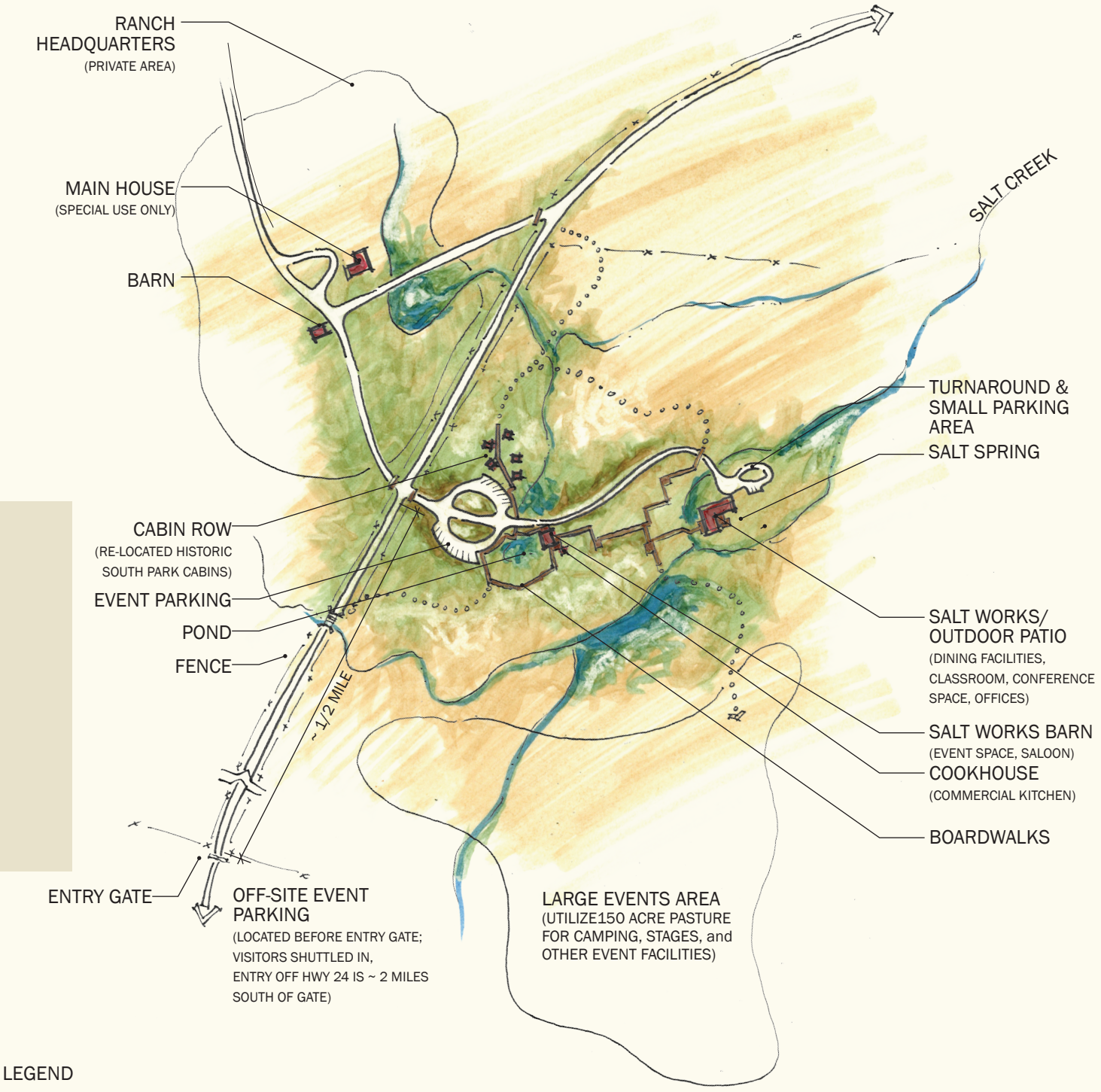
SALT WORKS RANCH

HERITAGE TOURISM SITE PLANNING

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

CONCEPTUAL SITE DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

SOUTH PARK



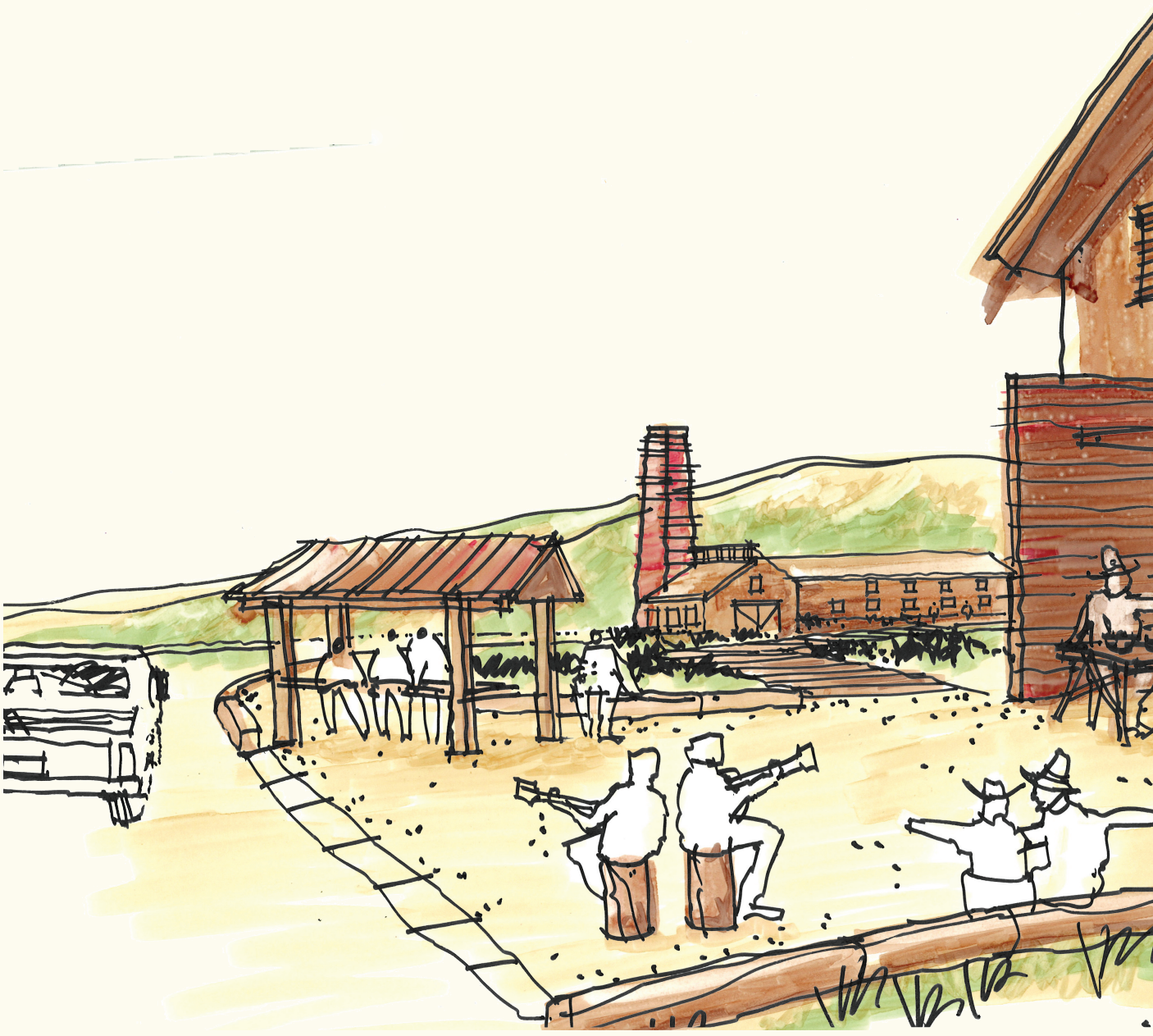


VISION

The Western Heritage Center at the Colorado Salt Works Ranch will provide a charming venue for the celebration of the heritage of the Rocky Mountain West. The Western Heritage Center endeavors to foster a greater appreciation for the history and culture of the West by hosting provocative, engaging and lively activities at the Salt Works Ranch.

REHABILITATED STRUCTURES AT THE SALT WORKS HOST A VARIETY OF EVENTS AND GROUPS. ACTIVITIES ARE DESIGNED TO PROMOTE AN UNDERSTANDING AND APPRECIATION OF WESTERN HERITAGE.

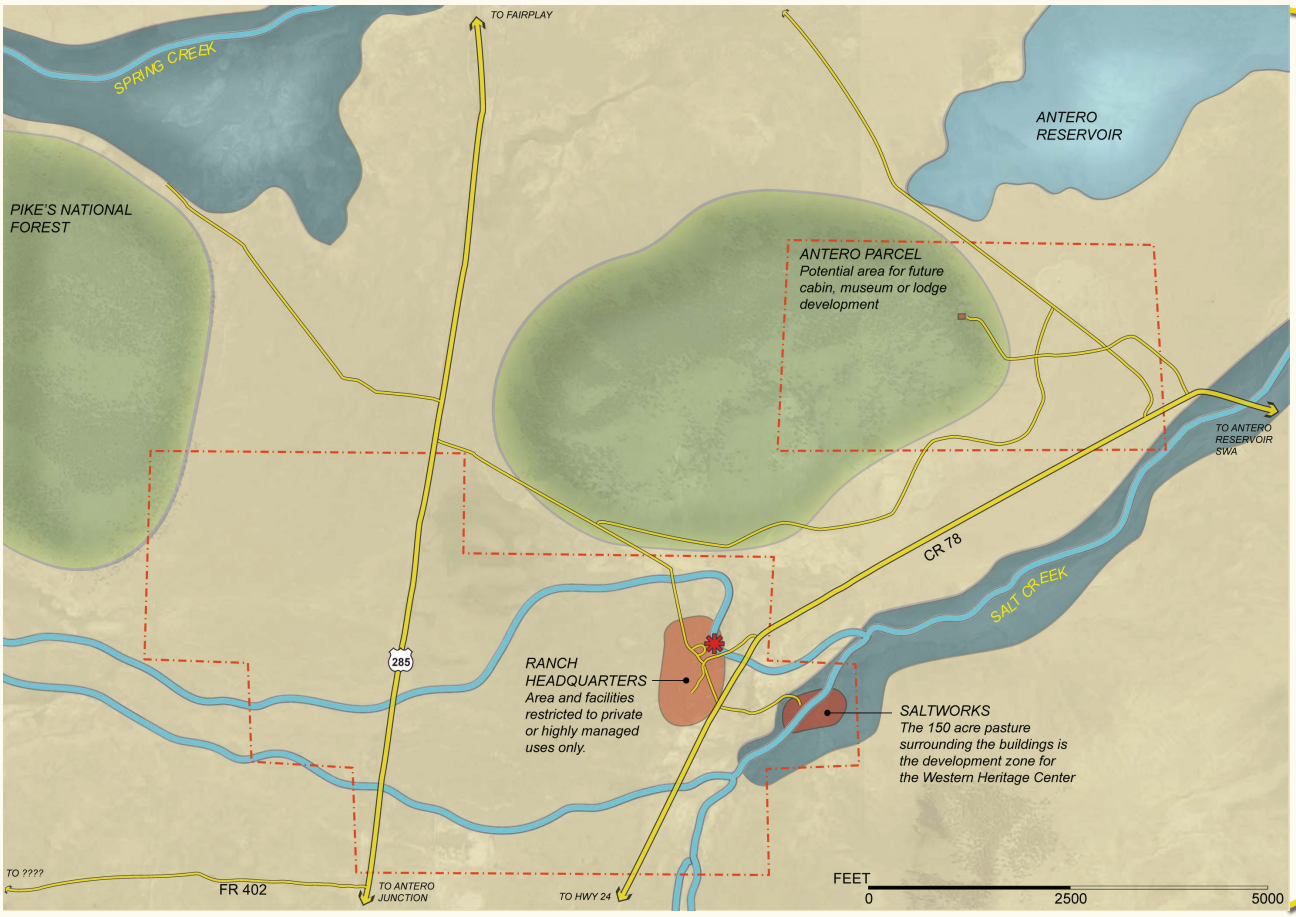
SOUTH PARK




SALT WORKS

SITE CONTEXT AND ANALYSIS

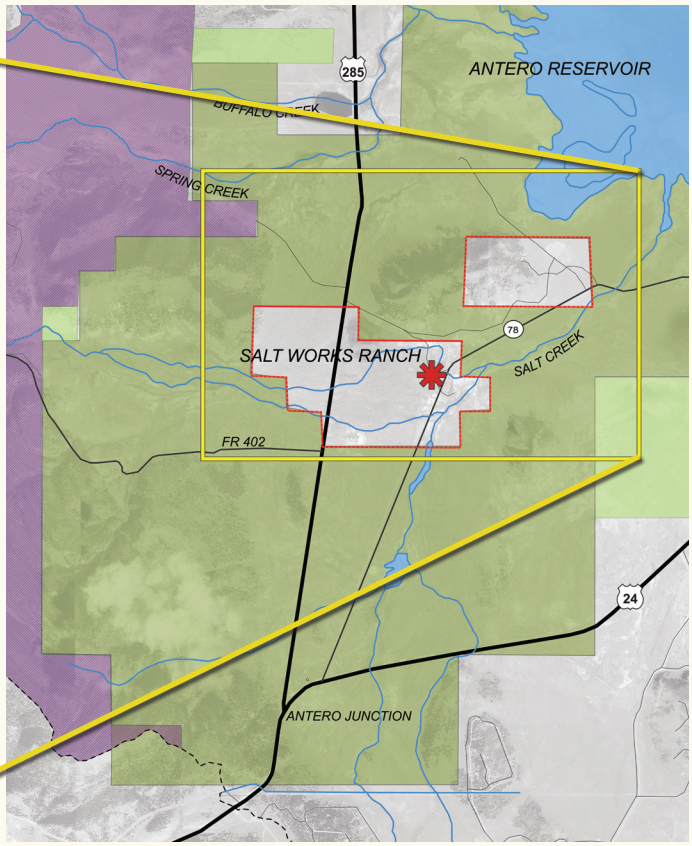
SOUTH PARK



- Grassland
- Ponderosa Pine
- Wetland
- Salt Works Ranch Boundary
- Roadway
- Main House at Ranch Headquarters







- Area Enlarged
- National Forest
- BLM
- SWA
- River
- Primary Highway
- State Route/County Road
- Salt Works Ranch Boundary
- Site Headquarters



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



HERITAGE TOURISM SITE PLANNING

SALT WORKS RANCH

SITE OVERVIEW

Homesteaded by Charles and Mary Hall in 1862, the Salt Works Ranch has been in the same family for seven generations. Salt Works Ranch has been designated as a Colorado Centennial Ranch by the Colorado Historical Society and has been operated continuously by one family for almost 150 years. Both the Colorado Salt Works and Salt Works Ranch are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

This site planning effort focuses primarily on the Colorado Salt Works structures that are situated in a 150-acre pasture adjacent to the Salt Works Ranch headquarters area. The intact wood frame barn, drying house and the partially collapsed kettle house of the historic Salt Works operation (1862-1870) serve as visual reminders of one of Colorado's earliest industrial enterprises. This operation was strategically situated on a salt spring that gave rise to South Park's original name: Bayou Salado (salt marsh). While the setting of the Salt Works facility retains high historic integrity, the buildings are in disrepair and in need of restoration before they are visitor-ready.

The ranch lies in a remarkably scenic setting and is entirely surrounded by public lands. Elk, deer and pronghorn migrate through the ranch along the Salt Creek riparian corridor and also reside on the ranch property. A vast majority of the ranch consists of short grass prairie. Salt Creek bisects the ranch, and this riparian corridor includes a salt spring that was the source of salt for the historic Colorado Salt Works.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The industrial salt manufacturing facility (Colorado Salt Works) on the Salt Works Ranch will be restored to house the Western Heritage Center. The Center will provide a venue for seminars, workshops, retreats, art exhibitions, residencies and other programs that focus on western heritage. The Salt Works complex and its surrounding open pasture are well suited for large-scale western cultural events including western music, art events and film festivals. Large events proposed by the owners include the Rocky Mountain High Altitude Chuck Wagon Cook-off; the Bayou Salado Western Arts and Collectibles Show, Sale and Auction; and a festival of the Rocky Mountain Indian/Trapper Rendezvous. For these large events, high-peak frame tents could be set up to provide additional accommodations. Smaller special events held at the Salt Works could include a western speaker series, musical performances and/or an Antoinette Perry (Tony) Awards barbeque luncheon.

The historic barn and the kettle and drying houses within the Salt Works complex will be restored to accommodate conference and meeting rooms, classrooms/studios, performance spaces, offices and a kitchen/dining area. Historic cabins relocated to the Salt Works complex will be rehabilitated to serve as lodging and cookhouse facilities. The proposed venture will be operated by the Western Heritage Center nonprofit, which will manage fundraising, operations, scheduling, and maintenance of the complex.

The development proposed herein would take place in and around the Salt Works complex and would not impact the ranch headquarters area. The owners would like to maintain ranch headquarters for family use, including

the ranch house, barn, corrals and cabins. Limited use of the ranch house and associated structures by guests of the nonprofit entity may be accommodated on special occasions. Over time, the Western Heritage Center development may expand to the 400-acre parcel adjacent to Antero Reservoir. Because this parcel is not restricted to the existing conservation easement, it lends itself to future development which may include a caretaker's residence, additional cabins and possibly a museum where the Hall family's collectibles and other western collections could be exhibited.

FINANCIAL FEASIBILITY ANALYSIS SUMMARY

Visitation Forecast

Visitation at Salt Works Ranch will depend on the array of different programs, events, retreats and workshops offered by the Western Heritage Center, as well as the type and level of marketing efforts.

The Western Heritage Center and its associated programs and events will have broad appeal among Front Range markets and beyond. It is estimated that by 2010, heritage tourism markets along the Colorado's Front Range will represent 2.8 million potential trips annually to natural, cultural and agricultural sites.

Economic Considerations

Restoration of the Salt Works complex to house the Western Heritage Center will require substantial investment. It is estimated that restoration of the kettle house and the drying house, development of outdoor facilities (e.g., boardwalks and patio), and relocation to and rehabilitation of historic cabins on the property will entail a capital investment of $2,500,000. This investment will likely require a combination of donations, grants and private capital.

Assuming that the Western Heritage Center employs three full-time employees to oversee the operation and coordinate events, annual operations and maintenance costs are projected to total $200,000. Program, lodging and meal fees will generate revenue to offset some of these costs. In its first few years of operation, it is estimated that the Western Heritage Center could host ten 3-day (2-night stay) workshops, retreats, and/or meetings for groups ranging from 15 to 150 participants. Other sources of revenue would include ticket and food sales from two large-scale events per season. Additionally, the managing entity could rent cabins to the public at times when they are not otherwise occupied by program or event participants. Based on comparable facilities around Colorado, these three revenue sources are projected to cover approximately half of total annual operating expenses. To sustain the Western Heritage Center, an endowment, ongoing fundraising and/or private capital will therefore be necessary.

Analysis Conclusions

A successful Western Heritage Center at the Colorado Salt Works will greatly boost visitation to South Park and other heritage sites in Park County. If successfully developed and marketed, the Western Heritage Center will become Park County's showcase heritage attraction, and a major asset in the proposed South Park National Heritage Area. Given the owner's interest in hosting large-scale, world-class theme events such as music, art and culinary festivals, the draw of the Western Heritage Center will likely extend far beyond Colorado's heritage tourism markets.

Recruiting staff who are experienced in fundraising and event planning, raising capital funds needed to restore the facility and develop a successful marketing program are the imminent challenges facing the owners of Salt Works Ranch. The owners are therefore advised to immediately structure a formal not-for-profit organization and begin engaging suitable benefactors to help fund and guide the organization.

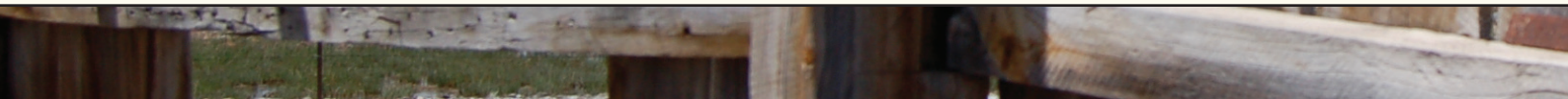
SITE STORIES

Historic Significance

Salt Works Ranch is among Colorado's oldest continuously operating cattle ranches and is particularly notable for its continued ownership by the founding family. The property is significant for its association with ranching in South Park and is a well-preserved example of a successful large-scale cattle, horse and hay operation from the late-19th century that continued to flourish into the 20th century and remains in operation today.

The Salt Works complex contributes to the uniqueness and historical significance of the entire ranch. The complex includes a wood frame barn, a drying house and a partially collapsed kettle house. These structures are representative of one of Colorado's earliest industrial enterprises, and they are closely associated with the history of mineral processing in Colorado. One of the few sources of salt in what would later become the state of Colorado, the Salt Works produced salt that was used in the process of refining ores. Preliminary research indicates that the Salt Works may be the only surviving example of a 1860s kettle-and-pan salt production facility in the United States.





INTERPRETIVE OPPORTUNITIES

The Western Heritage Center will be instrumental in developing and promoting events, programs, and interpretive media that tell the stories of the Hall family, their ranch and South Park. Salt Works Ranch boasts an incredibly scenic location as well as remarkable stories and deep ties to western history that will entice visitors. Additionally, the Salt Works complex provides an excellent venue for revealing multiple interpretive themes of the proposed South Park National Heritage Area.

Natural Resources: We've Got Altitude

The natural salt spring helped establish the Salt Works Ranch and therefore warrants interpretation. The movement of pioneering settlers westward created a market for salt. As a long standing convergence point for both humans and animals, the salt spring also invites interpretation of wildlife, prehistoric people, trappers and enterprising ranchers, all of whom were drawn to the property at different points in its history. Unobstructed views to the Buffalo Peaks also create an opportunity to interpret the recreational opportunities that South Park has provided visitors for over a hundred years.

Prehistory: An Ancient Hunting Ground

As mentioned above, Native Americans used the salt springs long before ranchers developed it for commercial purposes. Later, the Salt Works provided annuities of salt to the Ute Indians under a government contract. No formal archeological investigations have been conducted to date on the Salt Works Ranch, and no archeological sites have been formally registered on the property. Such an investigation will likely will provide evidence of extensive prehistoric use.



SOUTH PARK

Settlement History: Panning for Prosperity

The Western Heritage Center may include a number of relocated historic cabins that present opportunities to interpret homesteading and pioneer living conditions in South Park. The practice of relocating homestead cabins for use as bunkhouses was common among South Park ranchers and therefore may be interpreted at the ranch. Many visitors may be struck by the challenges of ranching at high altitude and the hardships endured during the long, harsh winters. The Western Heritage Center will enrich visitor experiences at the ranch by interpreting the folklore and culture of South Park, including the region's art, music, poetry, and personalities. Buildings within the ranch headquarters area reflect the changing tastes and lifestyles of Colorado ranch families during the 19th century: first a pioneer log house was erected, and later a sophisticated Second Empire style dwelling was built.

The Salt Works structures are a unique example of an industrial agricultural facility, and interpretive facilities on the site will explain the operations of the kettle-and-pan salt production facility. An abundance of other topics related to South Park's ranching history may be interpreted at the Salt Works Ranch, including the accommodation of travelers during the territorial period; production of hay, cattle and horses; the consolidation of holdings and the growth of ranching operations; the impacts of roads and railroads; the significance of water rights; and the popularity of Hereford cattle.







Cultural Traditions: Pioneering Characters

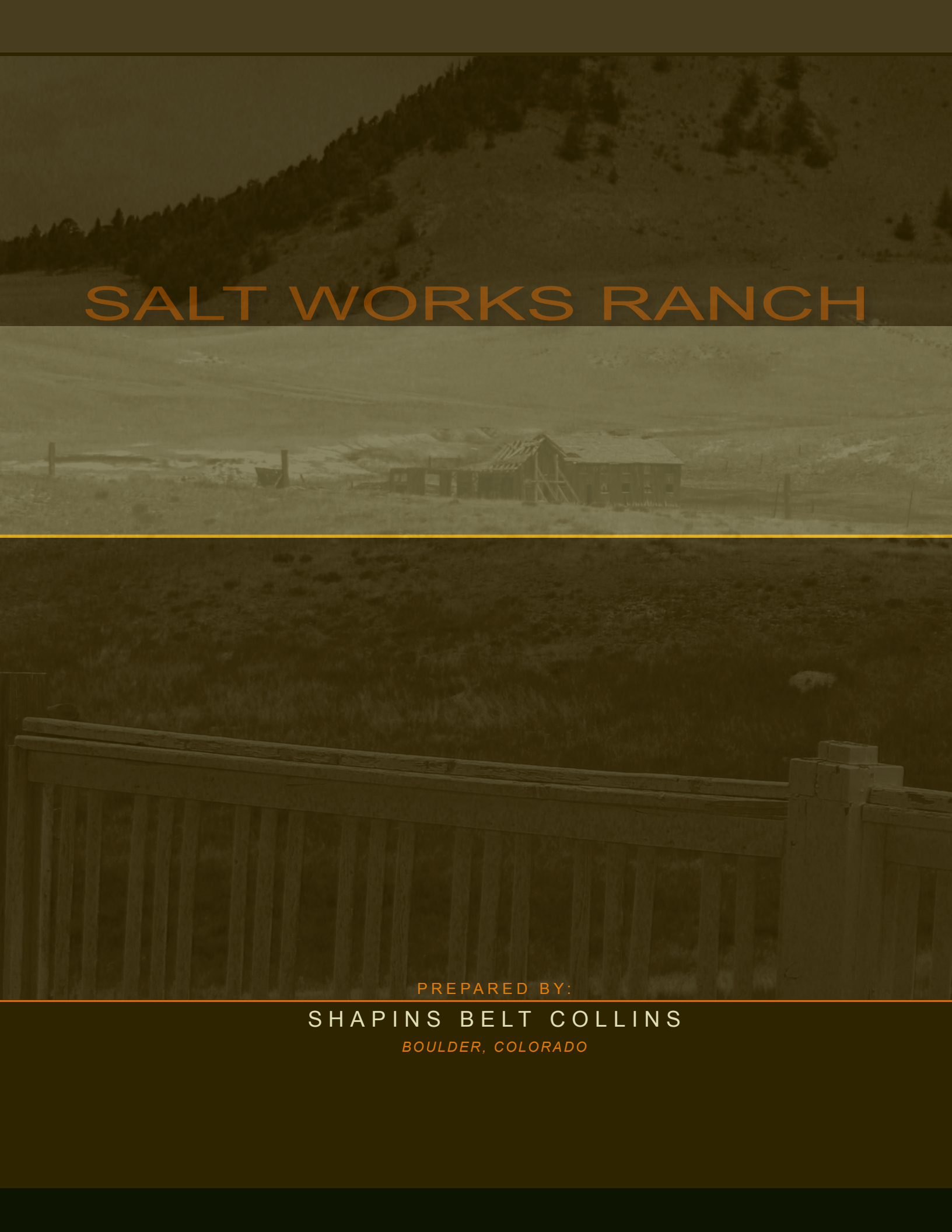
The personalities associated with the Salt Works Ranch are as rich in interpretive fodder as the structures and the setting. Cattle baron Thomas (Tom) McQuaid built an immense cattle operation around the Salt Works Ranch. The ranch served as the headquarters for McQuaid's vast ranching operation (1911-1965), which included more the 80,000 acres of deeded and leased land. While their roots are in South Park, the owners are well connected with the entertainment industry in New York City and Hollywood. For example, Antoinette Perry Fruehauf, after who the Tony Awards were named, was the daughter of Minnie B. Hall Murphy and she frequently visited the ranch. A library within the headquarters area houses a collection of memorabilia celebrating her career.

The owners represent a wealth of information about the family's longstanding tradition of ranching in South Park, as well as the cast of intriguing characters who have been part of Salt Works Ranch. The family's knowledge of the ranch and a vast collection of local records should certainly be used in the development of interpretive media at the Colorado Salt Works Western Heritage Center.









SALT WORKS RANCH

PREPARED BY:

SHAPINS BELT COLLINS

BOULDER, COLORADO