SOUTH PARK

SANTA MARIA 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

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HERITAGE RESOURCE AREA

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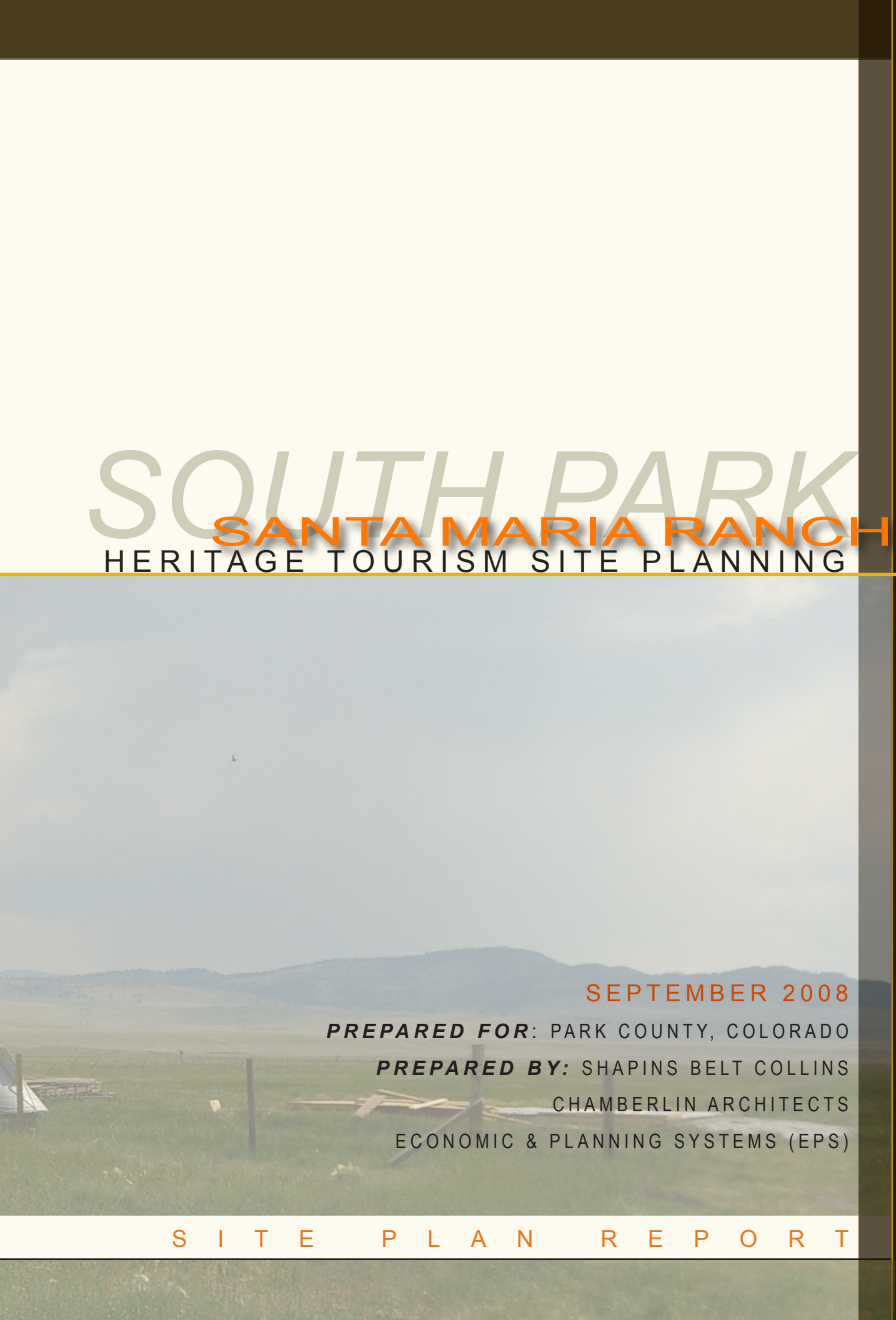
COLORADO HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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COVER PHOTO BY GARY NICHOLS



SOUTH PARK
SANTA MARIA RANCH
HERITAGE TOURISM SITE PLANNING



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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 prepared for the Santa Maria Ranch.

Owners of the Santa Maria Ranch are interested in opening their property to heritage tourism on a limited and strategic basis. In particular, the owners would like to take advantage of the site's beautiful setting and Gold Medal trout water along the Middle Fork of the South Platte River. They intend to promote the Santa Maria Ranch as a fly-fishing retreat and occasional special events venue. Over time, the Santa Maria Ranch and the other four sites featured in this project will serve Park County as tourism generators that will appeal to a variety of heritage tourism markets.

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."

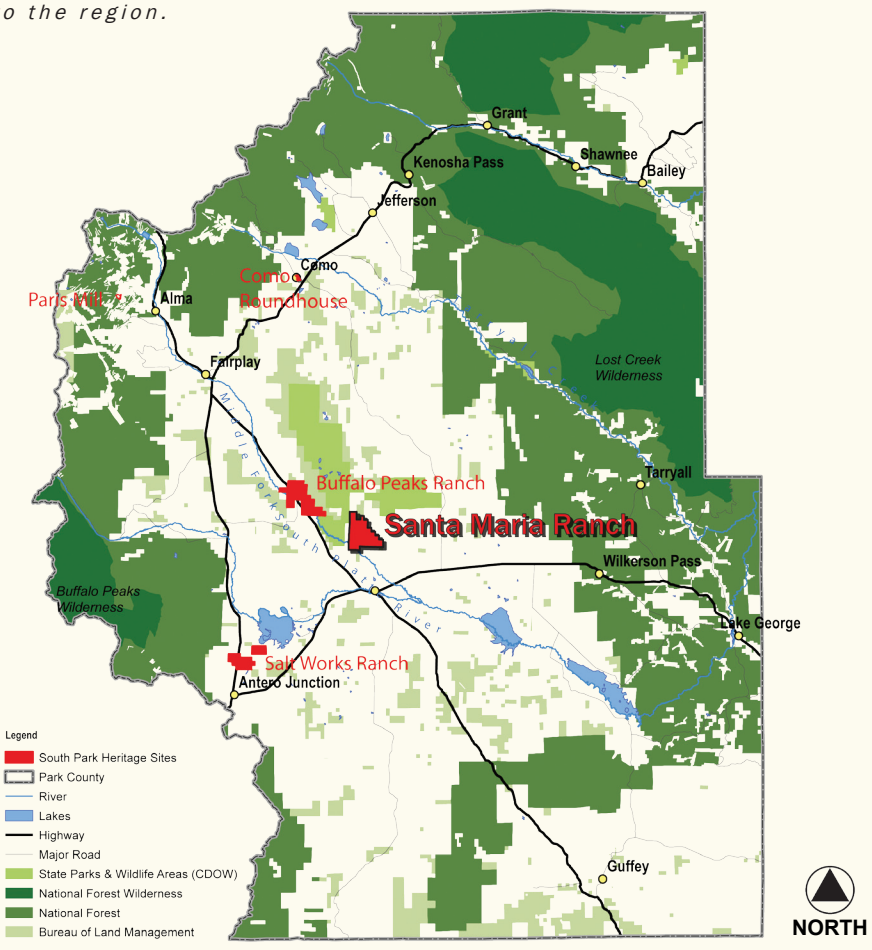
South Park is a compelling heritage tourism destination. The area is close to Colorado's Front Range, which represents a large potential visitor base. By offering new infrastructure such as lodging and dining facilities, and serving as destinations for fishing, group retreats, workshops, regional artists, 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 Santa Maria Ranch and outlines how the site's history, inhabitants and development link to the broader stories of South Park and the western United States.

The overarching interpretive themes identified in the 2006 South Park National Heritage Area feasibility study were used to organize interpretive planning for the Santa Maria 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 Santa Maria 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.



SANTA MARIA RANCH





SITE PLAN REPORT

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CONCEPTUAL SITE DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

SOUTH PARK

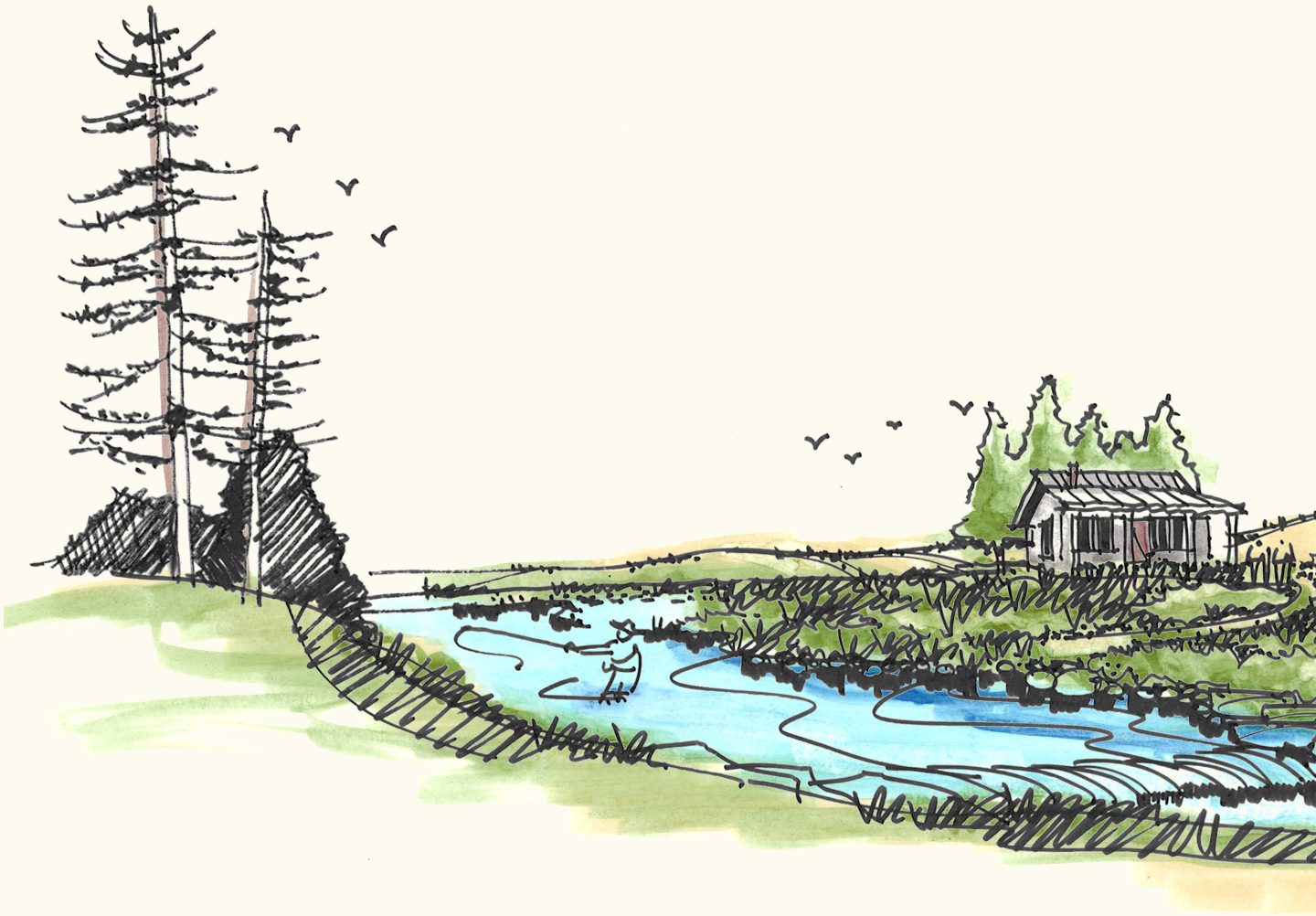




VISION

On the Santa Maria Ranch, anglers enjoy solitude and an idyllic stretch of the Middle Fork of the South Platte's Gold Medal waters. The ranch offers overnight accommodations for anglers and other groups in search of a riverside retreat within this scenic and historic ranch setting.

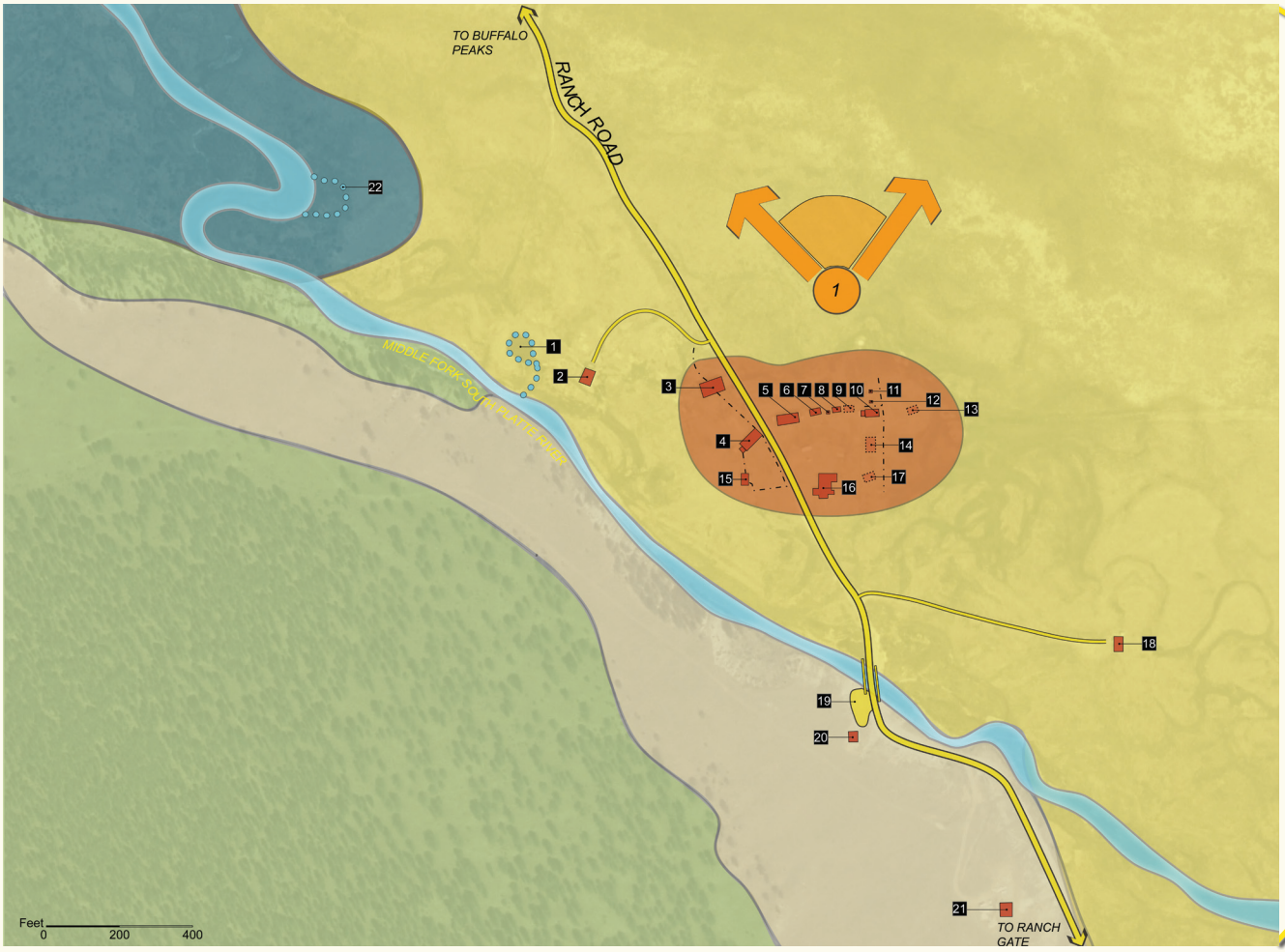
ANGLERS ON THE MIDDLE FORK OF THE SOUTH PLATTE WITH THE RENTAL CABINS IN THE BACKGROUND





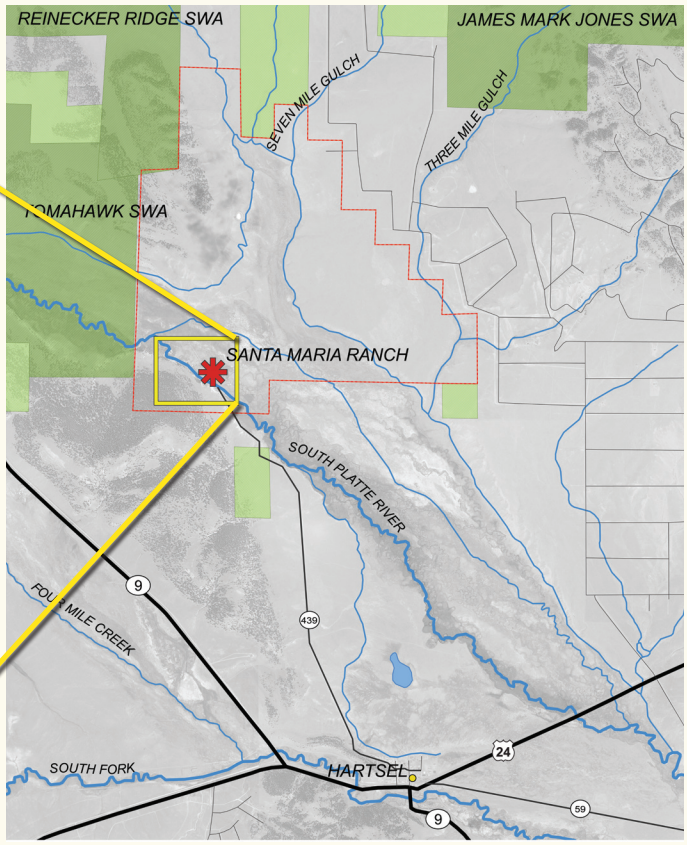
SITE CONTEXT AND ANALYSIS

SOUTH PARK



- Ranch Headquarters
- Riparian Willow Community
- Mixed Montane Forest
- Montane Grassland
- Montane Meadow
- Existing Structures
- 1 — Expansive Views (to distant peaks and grasslands framed by ridges)
- Roadway
- Restored River Corridor/Enhanced Trout Habitat (1.3 miles of private water; 3-rod limit)
- Fencing

NORTH



- Area Enlarged
- BLM
- SWA
- River
- Primary Highway
- State Route/County Roads
- Ranch Boundary
- Site Headquarters

1. Warm Spring
2. Rental Cabin
3. Barn
4. Loaf Shed (rehabilitated)
5. Equipment Shed and Foundation
6. Blacksmith Shop
7. Outhouse
8. Chicken Coop
9. Carpenter Shop Foundation
10. Bunkhouse
11. Wellhouse
12. Bunkhouse Outhouse
13. Sheep Barn Foundation (planned reconstruction)
14. Cookhouse
15. Scale House
16. Main House (planned restoration)
17. Bunkhouse
18. Cabin
19. Angler Parking
20. Angler Outhouse
21. Caretaker Residence
22. Overflow Channel

SITE OVERVIEW

The Santa Maria Ranch is located approximately three miles north of Harstel along County Road 439 in Park County, Colorado. The county road ends at the ranch entrance. The entire 2,880-acre ranch is held in a conservation easement that limits land use and new construction on the property.

The historic ranch headquarters is well preserved and includes the main ranch house, a bunkhouse, a loafing shed, a large barn, a blacksmith shop, a shed, a chicken coop, a well house, and several outhouses. An old cabin with no utilities, a modern caretaker cabin and a modern fishing cabin all lie outside the headquarters area. The fishing cabin is situated near the Middle Fork of the South Platte River. The 1.3-mile stretch of river that bisects the southwestern portion of the property supports a Gold Medal fishery and is leased to the South Park Fly Fishers Program (SPFFP) during the open water months. This prime fly-fishing water is a coveted asset in South Park, and the Santa Maria Ranch has become a popular fishing destination.

The landscape within the Santa Maria Ranch is predominantly foothills, mountain grassland and irrigated agricultural lands. Irrigation ditches, Three Mile Gulch, the Middle Fork and the Santa Maria Spring (a warm spring) create wetland and riparian habitats. The two defining ridges and slopes to the south and northwest of the ranch headquarters have fairly large stands of ponderosa pine. Collectively these habitats support populations of deer, elk, antelope and black bear as well as a variety of migratory waterfowl.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The Santa Maria Ranch will serve the dual purpose of a private weekend getaway to be shared by friends and family, and a small commercial venture. The landowners wish to preserve their privacy and private use of the ranch. Proposed tourism development on the ranch is therefore relatively small in scale. The ranch will continue to serve as a fly-fishing retreat and special-events venue.

This proposed venture will entail the construction of an additional fishing cabin so the property can offer two rental cabins to accommodate anglers and their families. SPFFP will continue to lease the ranch and manage fly-fishing on the property at a rate of three rods per day. Groups of anglers that book the ranch for two days and stay overnight will be entitled to six rods per day. This group deal will likely be promoted during the “shoulder seasons” to boost occupancy during these slower times of the year (e.g., May and October). Fly-fishing will be monitored closely to ensure that expanding the angler capacity does not compromise resource quality or the existing fishing program.

Development will also include upgrades to the loafing shed’s kitchen and gathering area so that the structure can better accommodate food service and groups. These improvements will bolster the ranch’s marketability as an intimate events venue for organizations, private parties and corporate use.

FINANCIAL FEASIBILITY ANALYSIS SUMMARY

Visitation Forecast

Promotion of the Santa Maria Ranch will target specialty markets including anglers, conservation organizations and other interested groups looking for a small-scale private retreat or event venue. Such targeted marketing will drive visitation at the ranch, and it is predicted that the Santa Maria cabins will meet or exceed average occupancy rates for rental properties in South Park. An analysis of rental cabins in the Park County area indicates that most privately rented properties average 40 percent occupancy during the summer season. For the Santa Maria Ranch, it is assumed that during the five-month angling season, the occupancy rate will be 50 percent (approximately 75 nights per cabin). In keeping with the landowners' wishes, the number of special events per season will be limited to four small events targeted to groups of no more than 50.

Economic Considerations

After evaluating several proposed commercial ventures for the Santa Maria Ranch, it was determined that promoting the property as a fly-fishing retreat and special-events venue is the most suitable, economically promising and cost-effective development option. The projected capital development cost is approximately $160,000, including a new cabin ($125,000), site amenities/utilities ($15,000 for vault toilets, paths, parking areas, fire pit), and upgrades to the loafing shed to better accommodate groups ($20,000). Ideally, a combination of grants and private capital will be secured to reduce or eliminate the annual debt service.

The annual operations and maintenance costs related to development of the special-events venue and retreat are projected to be $40,000. Projected revenue generated from cabin rentals ($32,000), use fees ($2,000), cattle ($6,500) and fly-fishing ($7,000 from the SPFFP lease and $600 from additional rods for groups of anglers) will cover these operational costs and allow for a modest annual net cash flow and an approximate 5 percent return on capital investment.

Analysis Conclusions

Assuming that limited facility improvements will not significantly increase annual property taxes, the property owners are advised to strategically build on existing baseline conditions by constructing one additional guest cabin and marketing the ranch as an overnight destination for anglers, while maintaining the day-use fishing program. Additionally, the scenic rural setting and charming historic infrastructure should be promoted as a special events venue to targeted market segments such as conservation organizations and small corporate groups.

The owners are also advised to undertake improvements in a phased manner, starting with the construction of the fishing cabin. By doing so, they can get a sense of whether additional improvements such as upgrading the loafing shed and increasing public use of the ranch (e.g., events) are desirable or warranted. The owners may also want to consider establishing a nonprofit organization to run the fly-fishing and events operation. This will allow for the reinvestment of net annual income toward historic preservation, interpretation and other operational improvements, with minimal tax implications.

SITE STORIES

Historic Significance

The Santa Maria Ranch, known until the 1950s as the EM Ranch, is significant for its association with the history of ranching in South Park. Established in 1874 by Hardy Epperson, the ranch was initially used for hay production, with vast quantities of hay sold on the Denver markets. Over time, ranching operations were expanded to include raising sheep and cattle.

The property contains more than ten historic buildings representing over a hundred years of ranching heritage in South Park (1859-1959). This collection of buildings showcase the evolution of construction materials used on ranches in the 19th and early-20th centuries, from logs to milled lumber.

INTERPRETIVE OPPORTUNITIES

The beautiful setting of the Santa Maria Ranch and its collection of historic structures provides for authentic experiences on a South Park ranch. Here visitors feel as if they've been transported to an earlier era. Ideas for building on South Park's four interpretive themes are outlined below.





PHOTO PROVIDED BY SANTA MARIA RANCH

Natural Resources: We've Got Altitude

The ranch is situated at nearly 9,000 feet, with its headquarters abutting the river and sub irrigated meadows. Identifying how the Santa Maria Ranch's natural resources benefited the ranching operation and enhanced life on the ranch offers a new perspective for natural resource interpretation. For example, the Middle Fork and the Santa Maria warm spring provided a year-round water supply for the ranch. Even during winter the spring could be tapped for bathing and watering livestock. Medicinal properties of the thermal springs as attested to earlier inhabitants may also be interpreted. Other landscape features contributed to the wellbeing of ranch residents. A large ridge provided protection from winter storms; nearby forests supplied timber for construction; and the expansive valley provided ample grass for livestock and hay production as well as habitat for large game.

Prehistory: An Ancient Hunting Ground

Geologic events that shaped South Park may be interpreted at the Santa Maria Ranch. Abundant fossils and extensive geologic stratification at the ranch are evidence of the inland sea that covered South Park over 70 million years ago. Views from the Santa Maria Ranch inspire interpretation of the volcanic and glacial activity that sculpted the South Park landscape. The Santa Maria Ranch presents opportunities to interpret more recent

PHOTO BY GARY NICHOLS





prehistory as well. Archeological investigations on the ranch have been fruitful and attest to the fact that the area served as seasonal prehistoric camps where hunting and fishing opportunities were plentiful. A fairly large prehistoric campsite was located on the terrace overlooking the valley on the current ranch headquarters site. This archeological evidence invites interpretation of the layers of inhabitation and use that occurred in South Park. Additionally, the transition from South Park's role as a seasonal hunting ground for the Ute and others, to ranch country during the 19th and 20th Centuries, can be interpreted at the Santa Maria Ranch. The Ute began to lose control of their South Park hunting grounds in the mid-1800s as pioneer settlements and homesteads, such as the Santa Maria Ranch, were established.

Settlement History: Panning for Prosperity

The Santa Maria Ranch is a significant agricultural complex that clearly illustrates the history of ranching in South Park. The site has all the characteristics of a well-preserved South Park ranch, with expansive vistas of the mountains to the west, Pikes Peak to the east, extensive grazing lands, and numerous ranch structures. Located near the railroad towns of Garo and Hartsel, the Santa Maria Ranch was able to ship large quantities of hay to market. The stories of homesteading, high-altitude haying, cattle and sheep operations, British-owned ranching operations, and the lifestyles of early ranchers may all be interpreted at Santa Maria.







Cultural Traditions: Pioneering Characters

As the Santa Maria Ranch story unfolds, an unusual mix of gentility and ruggedness surfaces among the early ranchers. For example, Hardy Epperson was quite industrious, having cut 175 tons of hay in 1879 and run up to 500 head of cattle, yet he also built an elegantly furnished home with a ballroom to host dances. The lineage of ranch owners at Santa Maria provides a unique perspective into the personalities behind Colorado's ranching industry. The ranch changed hands several times throughout its early history. In 1900, English immigrants David and Harold Chalmers and Frederick Galloway acquired the property and added it to their extensive network of South Park ranches. The Chalmers-Galloway Livestock Company ran the ranch for nearly 40 years. During the 1920s, the company focused on sheep raising, but shifted to cattle raising when they began to feel the effects of the Great Depression. In the 1930s, the Chalmers-Galloway Livestock Company sold the property to the Ownbey Family, who operated the ranch until 1948.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY SANTA MARIA RANCH





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