



# Gardella Open Space Management Plan

September 13, 2006

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The City completed the acquisition of the approximately 66 acre Gardella Open Space parcel on February 16, 2006. Acquisition of the property will ensure the preservation of a large portion of the Purple Cliffs and a significant section of the Southern Animas River Greenway.

Working in coordination with the City's Open Space Advisory Board this plan has been prepared to provide a framework for the sound stewardship of the property.

## **II. DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA**

The property is located directly west of Escalante Middle School. The eastern portion of the property is bisected by the Animas River, with thick riparian and vegetative cover on the eastern shore and some riparian vegetation and a steep bank on the western shore. La Posta Road parallels the western shore of the river, also bisecting the property. The balance of the property is located west and southwest of La Posta Road where the land slowly rises to eventually becomes very steep as part of the Purple Cliffs. See attached maps and photos.

## **III. MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES**

It is the intent of the City of Durango to manage the property in order to:

- Maintain the site in a largely undeveloped and natural state as wildlife habitat and as part of the Purple Cliffs viewshed;
- Identify and protect unique natural features of the site including the riparian zone located on both side of the Animas River;
- Improve the condition of the property by eliminating non-native plant species and invasive weeds; and thinning of the thick vegetative under-story without unduly impacting the wildlife habitat;
- Construct a section of the Animas River Trail on the northeast boundary of the property;
- Provide opportunities for local outdoor education
- Provide unimproved fishing access along both sides of the Animas River;

## **IV. SPECIFIC MANAGEMENT POLICIES**

1. Management authority for the property shall be the City of Durango Parks and Recreation Department. Specific management activities shall be consistent with this adopted Plan. Proposed activities deemed inconsistent with the management plan shall be reviewed and considered by the City of Durango's Open Space Advisory Board.
2. Proposed changes to the Management Plan shall be circulated to the appropriate City Departments and Advisory Boards for review and comment prior to formal action by the Open Space Advisory Board.
3. The site shall be maintained in its natural state with public recreational use limited to non-motorized trail-oriented activities consistent with the requirements of this plan (walking, hiking, jogging, bicycling on the Animas River Trail, fishing and environmental education).
4. All uses/activities on the property shall be subject to City Park and Open Space rules and regulations. The City shall be responsible for enforcement of all regulations. The following uses/activities shall be specifically prohibited on the property:
  - Overnight camping
  - Fires of any kind
  - hunting or discharge of firearms/weapons
  - dogs not on a leash
  - injury to or molestation of birds, game or wildlife
  - unauthorized motorized vehicles
  - Destruction of natural vegetation (except for purposes of property maintenance consistent with the management plan)
5. Improvements on the property are envisioned to be limited to:
  - A. **Trails:** A short section of the Animas River Trail will be constructed along the northeastern boundary of the property (See attached). Several natural surface trails exist along and approach the river's edge on both sides of the Animas River, providing river access, primarily for fishing opportunities. These trails shall be evaluated to determine functionality, appropriateness and sustainability. The maintenance, closing and/or rerouting of existing trails shall be based upon this evaluation and the participation and input of the Open Space Advisory Board, the Parks and Forestry Advisory Board and the Animas River Task Force.
  - B. **Signage** on the property may include:
    - Rules/regulations
    - Interpretive/educational signage
    - temporary, seasonal, or other signage as deemed appropriate

7. The City, at its discretion, may elect from time to time to temporarily close the property, or selected areas of the property, when it is deemed necessary for the protection and/or rejuvenation of specific resources, including wildlife and vegetation.
8. Property assessments may be taken from time to time to determine the specific location, type, and quantities of unique plant and animal habitat/species, and unique natural or archeological features in advance of any stewardship activities consistent with this Management Plan.

## **V. AMENDMENT/UPDATE**

This Management Plan may be amended from time to time as necessary due to significant changes in use patterns and/or changes in land use policies on adjacent public lands, provided the Plan continues to protect the intent of the original acquisition. The City will consult with the Open Space Advisory Board in the amendment and/or update process.

## **VI. NEAR-TERM STEWARDSHIP GOALS: 2006/2007**

**Construction of the Animas River Trail:** A section of the Animas River trail will be constructed through the northeastern edge of the property and connect with adjoining sections of the trail.

**Noxious Weed Abatement:** The property will be added to the existing weed mitigation program currently administered by the City of Durango Parks and Recreation Department. Weed abatement efforts will occur annually, as needed.

## **VII. ONGOING STEWARDSHIP GOALS**

**Annual Maintenance:** Annual and ongoing maintenance will be based on routine inspection and need. Typical ongoing maintenance shall include weed mitigation, fire mitigation, trash removal, erosion control, vandalism repair, and trail repair and improvements.

**Habitat Protection and Enhancements:** Based on the finding of any future property assessments or other research efforts undertaken, habitat protection and enhancement efforts consistent with this Management Plan may be undertaken to improve the ecological and biological diversity and health of the property.

**Property Annexation:** The property shall be annexed into the City limits of Durango in order to designate the City of Durango Police Department as the entity responsible for providing law enforcement responsibilities on the property.

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## **Animas River Greenway South -- Gardella**

