



December 31, 2015

Dear Boulder Open Space Board of Directors:

We are writing this letter to support Scenario A of the North Trail Study Project, with the routing of the trail connection to the EAST of Highway 36.

The Colorado Native Plant Society (CoNPS) is concerned that critical plant and animal communities be safeguarded during the finalization of plans for new trails and trail connectors and construction of new recreational opportunities in the North Trail Study Project. CoNPS is a non-profit organization dedicated to furthering the knowledge, appreciation and conservation of native plants and habitats of Colorado through education, stewardship and advocacy. CoNPS appreciates that you recognize the Area has some of the last untouched mixed grass prairie along the Front Range. As such, it is home to many rare and imperiled native species.

As an example, Bell's Twinpod (*Physaria bellii*) is a rare and imperiled native plant endemic to Colorado which blooms in spring in the Foothills. This population is one of a few along the Front Range. The Foothills habitat is critical to the preservation of this plant as it only grows in the limestone and shale formations in Boulder and Larimer counties. Special attention must be given to protecting native plant populations during construction. The entire population and the species Wolf Creek Evening Primrose was extirpated during road construction in the early 1980's.

Scenario A with the routing of trail connectors EAST of Hwy 36 to preserve the Foothills habitat should be accepted. In addition, consideration should be given to designating the Joder property as a Habitat Conservation Area. More detail is needed on trail loops to know if they are appropriate; this cannot be seen on the present map. Regional connectivity is an issue, and the peripheral alignment which already exists in scenario A could be used. The route NE along the drainage from Longhorn Rd. should only be used if it can be constructed sustainably.

The relative rarity of a species may be related to many factors in an ecosystem. What is under our control is the preservation of undisturbed habitat where these species and communities thrive. You have many surveys of plant and animal species that exist within the planning area as a resource to identify these species. You have considerable power to preserve these ecosystems and individual plants and animals for the present and future generations, through thoughtful planning and control over the execution of the Project.

CoNPS urges you to use this input in the finalization of the Plan. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any additional questions.

Sincerely yours,

Mo Ewing,
Conservation Chair,
Colorado Native Plant Society