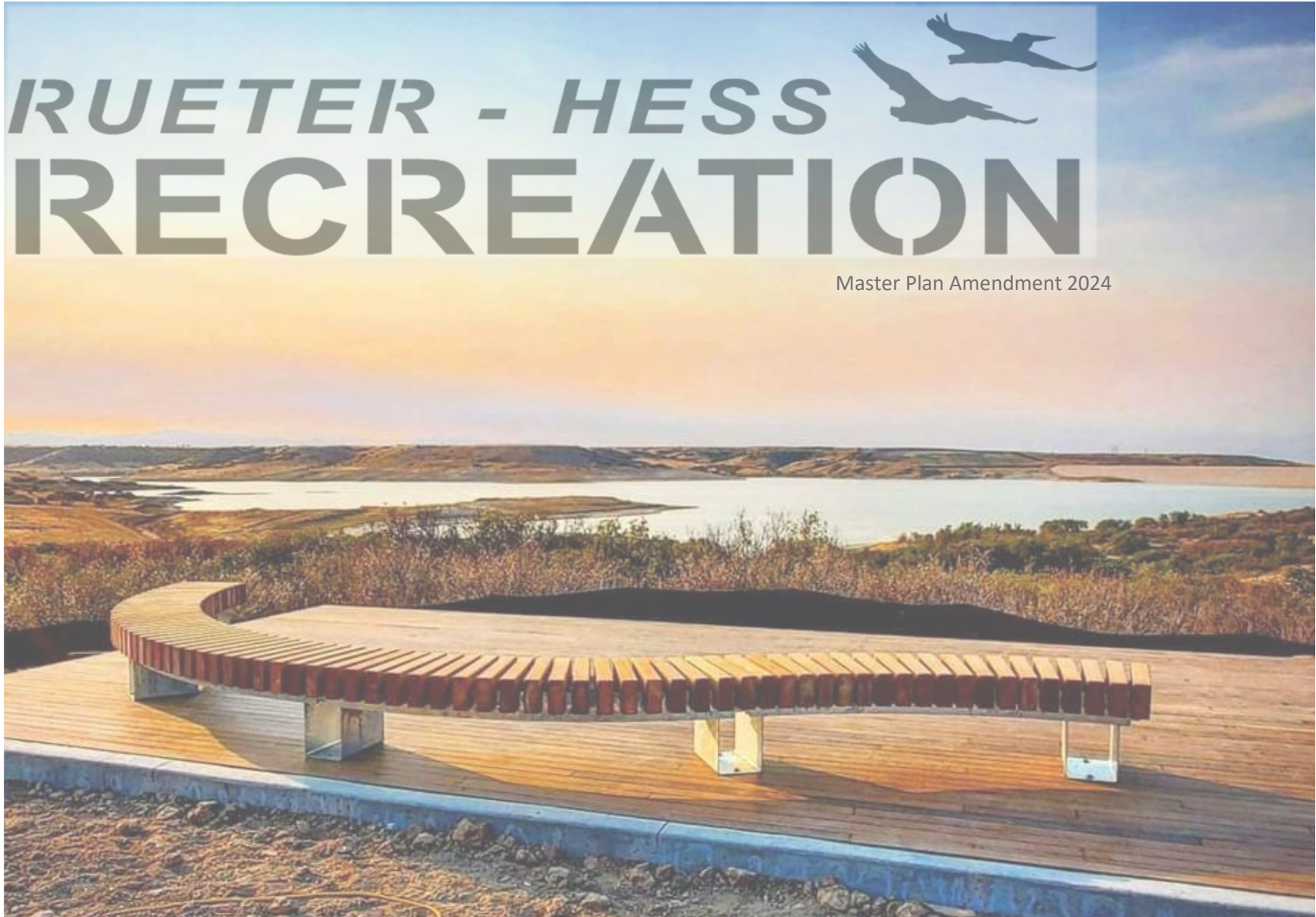


RUETER - HESS RECREATION



Master Plan Amendment 2024





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Vision

Rueter-Hess is a tranquil and serene recreation destination.

This vision guides the management practices to:

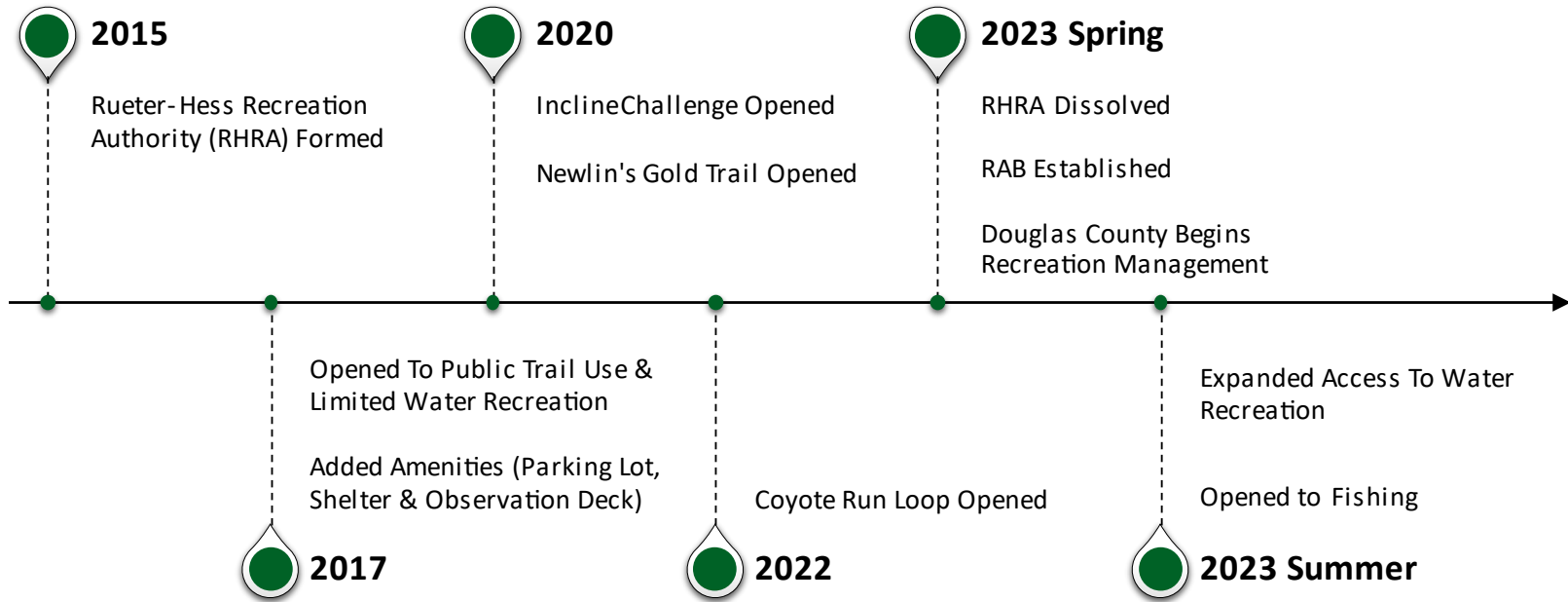
- Pursue the greatest community benefit while preserving the tranquil and serene nature of the property.
- Provide safe and sustainable access to recreation opportunities that align with preserving water quality and historic, cultural, and natural resources of the property.
- Invest in operations, maintenance, and programming while simultaneously being fiscally responsible with the funding partner's contributions.
- Strengthen partnerships with local, state, and federal land managers.

Overview

The Master Plan update is a collaborative project led by the Rueter-Hess Recreation Advisory Board (RAB), Elected Officials and their appointed staff from Parker Water and Sanitation District (PWSD), the Cities of Castle Pines and Lone Tree, the Towns of Castle Rock and Parker, and Douglas County appointed industry leaders from their staff to serve on the RAB. The purpose of the 2024 Master Plan is to establish goals and objectives that will guide decision-making in operating, maintaining, enhancing, and expanding recreation at Rueter-Hess Reservoir. The RAB expects the recreation provider to offer fishing, water-based opportunities, and non-motorized trail use in a conservative and managed manner. They also expect improvements in the future. This will allow visitors to take advantage of the property's resources while still meeting the goals for water quality.

Outstanding local participation in the reservoir's original recreation master plan provided valuable information to inform the 2024 Master Plan amendment (2024 Master Plan) and future iterations. The original 2016 Master Plan for Rueter-Hess Reservoir (RHR) is attached as Appendix A. The 2024 Master Plan is structured to capture prior accomplishments by the Rueter-Hess Recreation Authority (RHRA) and current prioritized projects of the RAB and identify considerations for future expansion of use.

Rueter-Hess Recreation Milestones



Prior Accomplishments of the RHRA

The RHRA was established in 2015 to manage recreation and create infrastructure at Rueter-Hess. The RHRA contributions and projects are listed below.

RHRA Completed Projects
Lower Parking Lot at the Reservoir & Fencing at the Dam
Overflow Parking lot
Upper Parking Lot
Trail along Entry Road
Trails – SE stretch of Newlin’s Gulch Trail
Trails – South of Hess Road; Coyote Run & Fisherman’s Gulch
Rosie Rueter Trailhead Parking Lot
Trails – Rosie Rueter Trail
Trails – Panorama Rock Trail
Incline Challenge
Port-o-let at the Lower Parking Lot
Port-o-let at Rosie Rueter Trailhead
West Fork Trail Connection to E-W Trail
Entry Fence & Drive
Entry Station Building



Master Plan Amendment Process



Strategic Goals

The RAB prioritizes protecting assets, expanding access and programming, and enhancing organizational capacity. The goals will be developed and prioritized after careful consideration of visitation milestones, industry standards, and recommendations from the RAB and staff.

Based on current data, it is predicted that annual visitation will increase. Fishing access will increase to the extent the fishery can sustain. The special use permit is a method to increase access. The reservation system is an effective tool for managing capacity and maintaining a tranquil and serene vision for the property. A periodic needs assessment and analysis will occur to aid in management, operations, and programming decisions.

Goal 1: Implement sound financial planning and collaboration with the RAB

- Objective 1A: Periodically conduct a financial needs assessment to determine what, if any, fee adjustments are needed to retain the necessary finances to provide recreation on the property
- Objective 1B: Pair funding of capital improvements with ongoing maintenance needs
- Objective 1C: Develop sustainable funding that keeps pace with the cost of doing business

Goal 2: Provide, maintain, and enhance amenities and facilities to meet the current and future recreational needs of a wide variety of users

- Objective 2A: Allocate resources to develop new and improve current parking, trails, water-based recreation, amenities, and facilities
- Objective 2B: Preserve and protect the water quality and natural resources
- Objective 2C: Maintain the fishery by periodically conducting assessments, stocking, and habitat improvement
- Objective 2D: Phase the development and construction of recreation resources to keep pace with population growth and user demands

- Objective 2E: Develop, install, and maintain wayfinding, informational, and regulatory signs and maps
 - Objective 2F: Maintain a reservation system to access the reservoir portion of the property
 - Objective 2G: Schedule the use of the rental facilities and areas to balance use with the vision for the property
 - Objective 2H: Maintain a current inventory of all recreation improvements
- Goal 3:** Ensure recreation opportunities and amenities on the property align with PWSD's vision and allowed use
- Objective 3A: Establish trailheads, trails, and amenities in locations suitable for proposed use
 - Objective 3B: Develop recreation resources that are compatible with the natural environment and protected resources
 - Objective 3C: Preserve and protect the water quality and natural resources
 - Objective 3D: Provide diverse, quality, safe recreational opportunities for a wide variety of users
 - Objective 3E: Maintain the fishery by periodically conducting assessments, stocking fish, and improving habitat
 - Objective 3F: Manage amenities, facilities, and improvements to prevent overuse and irreparable damage
- Goal 4:** Develop public and private partnerships where feasible for the operation and development of recreational opportunities, facilities, and amenities
- Objective 4A: Work to build stronger partnerships with other entities to help support recreation

Recreation Considerations

Water

The reservoir makes the Rueter-Hess property unique in Douglas County. The goals for water-based recreation are to enhance the user's experience by developing infrastructure to ease transition from the shore to the water, explore flexible parking solutions, and facilitate educational opportunities and programming through special use.

Fishery

The fishery serves two purposes, the first and foremost is for water quality and the second is game fishing. Game fishing will be provided within the parameters set by PWSD and their fishery consultant. Management practices surrounding habitat improvements and the rules and regulations will be informed by the annual fishery assessment. Game fishing will be provided to the extent the fishery can support.

Trails

The goal is to provide a meandering continuous trail around the Rueter-Hess property highlighting the unique topography and attributes where possible as the water level fluctuates. Trails may focus on areas of interest regarding view, wildlife observing, or other interests with signage for wayfinding and education. The goal is to construct the missing links and

connect the trails throughout the property on both the north and south sides of Hess Road with the support of PWSD and the RAB. PWSD, as the property owner, determines trail access points and connections to other trail systems. It is a closed trail system and public entrance is determined by PWSD at controlled access points.

Facilities

The RAB believes that facilities such as docks, the entrance station, rentable event space, a demonstration garden, and more picnic areas will add value to the property and user experience. Further research will be conducted on the feasibility and impact each may have on the property's natural resources, budget, predicted future visitation, and ways to enhance user experiences at the Rueter-Hess property.

Partner Programming

The RAB partners have designated two free access days for citizens of their jurisdiction each year. During those days the reservoir will be closed to public use. Partners are encouraged to include Rueter-Hess in their local programming for activities and recreation planning.

Action Plan (3-To-5-Years)

Access

With increased use and visitation, the property will expand recreation opportunities in a manner that ensures the peaceful and serene atmosphere, and to protect the natural resources and the water quality.

Operating Schedule

Rueter-Hess Reservoir is open and staffed on a managed schedule that fits within the parameters of the budget and visitation milestones. Water recreation requires staffing on days of open public use. The daily hours of operation change as well as the number of days per week depending upon visitation demands and the budget. The Incline Challenge is open 7 days a week from one hour before sunrise to one hour after sunset.

Fishing

PWSD and the contracted fishery consultant will determine the number of anglers per week. As the fishery matures these numbers will reflect the status of the fishery. When ice is on the reservoir fishing will not be allowed.

Watercraft

As part of the Federal Environmental Assessment for Rueter-Hess Reservoir, one of the conditions was to not allow motorized watercraft. This also helps to ensure the serene and tranquil atmosphere of the reservoir while keeping water quality a top priority.

Special Use

Special use activities are encouraged and approved on a case-by-case basis with the pristine health of the reservoir being the number one priority. Rueter-Hess is available seven days a week for special use for educational/learning, water-based activities, or land-based activities.

Programming

Rueter-Hess is available for programs and community groups through special use permits. The recreation provider will review special use applications and schedule the ones that are approved.

Tools to Manage

The recreation provider will be responsible for daily management of parking reservations, special use, fishing regulations, and the oversight of recreation on the property. Visitation use will be monitored, and the metrics used to drive decisions for infrastructure, financial decisions, and staffing.

Wildlife

As development encroaches around the area, the importance of the wildlife habitat will increase. The reservoir, Newlin Gulch, and the landscape create a sanctuary for wildlife.

Historical, Cultural, and Natural Resources

Management efforts for historical, cultural, and archeological attributes will remain the same as in the 2016 Master Plan. Large areas of the site are considered 'culturally sensitive' where cultural and archeological artifacts were discovered during construction. Protecting these sensitive areas can be done through trail design and education on the significance of the site's heritage. Staff will work closely with PWSD and their stakeholders to ensure historical, cultural, and archeological attributes are protected.

Responsible Growth and Expansion

Growth and expansion of usage will be determined by PWSD, the RAB, and the County when it is found to be financially responsible and in the best interest of the citizens we serve while protecting and preserving the water quality and the natural resources surrounding the Rueter-Hess property. Consideration for expanding use may include the vision, resource protection, and customer experience.

Capital Improvement Projects

The RAB, through the recreation manager, will continue to develop and maintain the infrastructure created during the RHRA era. The following RAB goals improve the recreation experience by enhancing infrastructure or by expanding access.

Future Capital Improvement Projects
Catch and Keep Fishing
Docks
Connect Trail segments
Reservoir Roadway and Entrance Station Improvements
Increase Usage by Hours or Days
Incline Trailhead Expansion
Demonstration Garden At Incline Trailhead
Signs
Pioneer Loop Trail
Hess Road Trailhead and Trails
Reservoir Upper Parking Lot Expansion
Picnic Areas – Upper Lot
Archery Facility



Future Considerations

Future considerations may be completed or allowed as resources, time, and finances become available for projects.

Future Considerations
Picnic Areas – Rosie Rueter Trailhead
Picnic Areas – Hess Trailhead
ADA Parking Lot
Accessible Trail Loop
Vault Toilet at Upper Parking Lot
Port-o-let at Hess Road Trailhead
Trails – Newlin’s Gulch to Boat Launch
Trails – West Access to Water/Boat Launch
Trail – Southwest Stretch of Newlin’s Gulch
Trail – Coyote Run Loop & Miner’s Draw
Overlook – Arrow Point
Overlook – North of Hess Road
South Overlook (no structure)



Partner and Use Fees Supported Funding

Operation and maintenance of the property is funded through the RAB’s annual partner contributions along with user fees from public and special use. Grants and other funding sources may become available and will be researched to determine if they align with the priorities of the master plan. PWSD, the RAB, and the County will create a cost recovery plan based on visitation, budget, and expenditures.

Moving Forward

PWSD and the RAB will be making changes in a conservative manner as to stay true to their priorities for water quality, recreational use, and protection of the historical, cultural, and natural resources. Added hours or days of operation will be considered to accommodate the visitation demand within the budget and conservation needs of the property’s natural resources.

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Appendix

2016 Rueter-Hess Recreation Master Plan