



# Black Forest Trails Association

Summer 2017



## President's Corner

Larry Fariss

### Private Property Trails Key Link!

We are lucky within Black Forest! Like many American communities, we have a series of parks that allow us to move about in the woods, but we also have civic minded property owners that have allowed Black Forest Trails Association to establish a series of trails across private properties to link the neighborhoods and roadways throughout Black Forest. The paths run along fence lines and right of ways, through pastures and forests, and through rural and urban settings. This open access concept is embraced by generous land owners that keep paths clear and maintained, allowing the public to walk, ride or bike whenever they wish without objection by the land owner. In addition to encouraging members of the community to exercise in the outdoors, the paths serve to strengthen our community bonds as neighbors get to know each other better and we encounter folks "from the next street over"! How did this happen?

A trail can come about in a myriad of ways. I'll give you three examples of new trails that were established this past year...as you'll see the Fariss Trail, Didleau Trail and the Bissell Trail all came about in different ways.

**Fariss Trail:** Property owner approached BFTA with a plan to link Juniper and Danford Roads

**Didleau Trail:** BFTA contacted the property owner about re-linking Meadow Glen and Forest Heights

**Bissell Trail:** BFTA member linked up the property owner to BFTA to link Wildflower and Huntsman

Bottom line is these wonderful trails came about due to someone's initiative! Don't wait for someone else to initiate. You could be the next person who helps our community with another networking trail! To date, with your help, approximately ten non-motorized trails have been established. This is a wonderful concept the BFTA is embracing seeking to expand in several ways:

- We are installing gates and signs on new trails which will be named in honor of the owner.
- We are offering free BFTA membership to those who open their property to trail users.
- We have obtained permission from the county for land owners with trails to receive a tax break.
- We are approaching land owners who have strategic properties that would link unpaved roads.
- We are openly soliciting all property owners to evaluate their holdings for possible linking trails.

To jump start this expansion though, we need it to begin with Black Forest property owners. I am asking each of you to join BFTA in examining your property and if you see an opportunity for a linking path across your (or a friendly neighbor's) property to contact us directly. At your invitation, a BFTA Board member will swing by to meet with you to review your concept. With your help we seek to expand the community trails tenfold in ten years! With our larger land holdings and rectangular shaped acreage, Black Forest is in position to have the best trail linking network in the Pikes Peak region!

Please feel free to contact any board member if you have ideas that help us meet our mission: To create a safe, legitimate, non-motorized, multi-use recreational trail system that connects Black Forest neighborhoods to each other and the El Paso County Regional Trail System.

Sincerely, Larry Fariss

President BFTA

## Section 16 Upgrades

By Nancy Reinhardt

In May of this year, El Paso County Community Services Department performed significant and much needed upgrades to the Black Forest Section 16 trail. The Section 16 trail was partially resurfaced with packed road base starting at the trailhead parking lot on Burgess Rd., and heading west paralleling Burgess Rd to the southwest corner of the park at Burgess and Herring roads. The resurfacing then continued north paralleling Herring Rd to a location north of Juniper Drive and close to the Slash Mulch site. Funding for the resurfacing was done with money that the county received from FEMA after the 2015 flooding events which heavily damaged the sections of the trail that were repaired. This upgrade completed resurfacing of approximately 1.5 of the 4 miles of trails in Section 16. According to Nathan Robinson, North District Parks Supervisor for El Paso County, "As far as future resurfacing of the existing trail - this would be up to our parks operations department." The upgrade was well received by users of the park who would love to see more of the trail resurfaced.



## Dogs In Our Black Forest Parks

By Andy Meng

We have some great rural trails in Black Forest and they are designed to be enjoyed by hikers, equestrians and horses, bicyclists, and yes, dogs. But dogs, being pack animals, require a bit more consideration when bringing them into to Black Forest Parks. First of all, it's important to know that all Black Forest Parks and trails require that dogs be on a leash at all times (with the exception of the Fox Run dog park - see <http://bit.ly/2tDdHbh> for details). This is done for the safety of both the dog and the other users of the trails. In 2016, El Paso County began issuing \$50 fines for off-leash dogs in county parks, except for designated of-leash dog parks. Keeping your dog on a leash is not just a way to avoid a \$50 fine but it also lends to the

enjoyment of the park by all users.

Another courtesy we ask of dog owners is to pick up and remove dog waste. We've seen a rash of instances where dog owners put their dog's waste into a plastic bag (a great first effort!) but then leave the poop filled bag on the side of the trail, presumably because they assume that someone will come and pick up the bag of waste. But there are no paid or unpaid workers who remove waste and trash from the Black Forest Parks, so this practice is actually worse than leaving the dog poop to degrade on its own. But either way, dog poop on trails used by hikers, bikers and horses is not only a nuisance, but a health hazard as well. Please clean up after your dogs.

## **Pineries Open Space Project is Underway**

**By Cheryl Pixley**

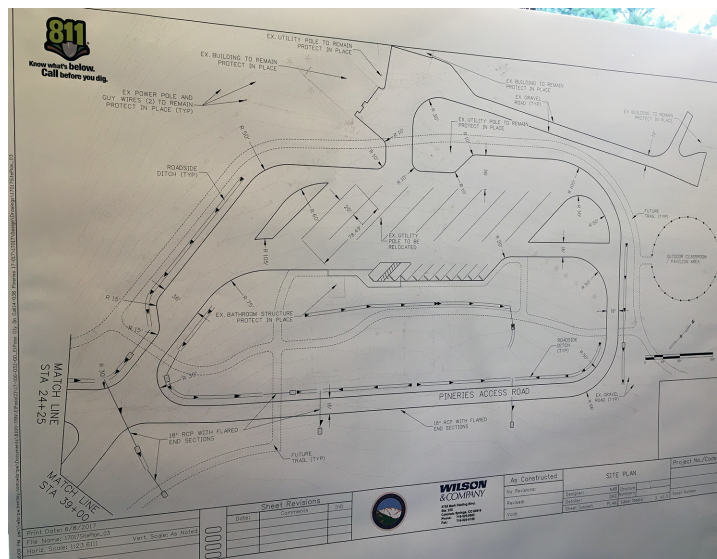
El Paso County Parks is beginning implementation of the first phase of improvements identified in the Pineries Open Space Master Plan adopted in 2010. On June 8, a public open house was held to share information about the progress of this long-awaited project. Approximately 50 people attended the presentation. Preliminary construction plans were on display and a representative from Wilson & Company Engineers was present to answer questions and hear comments from the community.

The Phase 1 trailhead (one of 3 trailheads in the Master Plan) is accessed from Vollmer Rd between Shoup Rd and Swan Rd. The concept drawings of the drive-through horse trailer lot show diagonal, side-by-side parking spaces for 10 truck & trailer rigs. Traffic into this lot is designed to flow in a circular pattern with one-way traffic in and out. A few handicapped spots for car parking are proposed in front of the restroom, but the main vehicle parking for hikers and bicyclists is in a separate lot which is designed to accommodate 64 vehicles. Other Phase 1 amenities include picnic tables, benches, a round pen, hitching rail and mounting blocks.

Maps of proposed alignments for approximately 8 miles of perimeter trail, partly Regional Trail and partly single-track trail, were also on display. On the east side of the property are two parallel north-south trails that will allow foot & bicycle traffic to be on a separate path from horses.

Trail building is scheduled to begin in July, with tentative completion in September 2018. Volunteer opportunities and the 2010 Pineries Master Plan can be viewed at <http://bit.ly/2r5WRAP>. On the next page are some of the Pineries maps and plans.





# Palmer Lake Reservoir Trails Reopened

By Larry Fariss

After a debate spanning several months, the Palmer Lake Town Council voted in April to re-open access to the Palmer Lake Reservoir Trail. Previously, in March, the Council had closed the trail due to the risk of fire and the damage it would cause to the town's watershed.

The closure came about after the Palmer Lake Fire Department had met with the Coalition for the Upper South Platte (CUSP) and some members of the community to discuss the town's efforts at fire mitigation. A consensus emerged from that discussion that the town should close the parking lot and the trail to the town's reservoirs due to the extremely dry conditions and the risk of fire. A fire adjacent to the reservoirs that supply the town's drinking water would be catastrophic and could potentially lead to erosion that would cause the reservoirs to fill with silt and gravel. In that case, the town might need to truck in water for years. The Fire Department reported extinguishing campfires left smoldering by hikers. The board considered raising the fines for open fires, smoking, and dogs off their leashes at the town's reservoirs and communicating the trail closure and fines to the public using signs, the town's website, and social media. Several board members also agreed the town Police Department would need to increase the frequency of its patrols of the trail and the reservoirs. As a result of the discussions, a motion was made that the trails to both the upper and lower reservoir be closed whenever El Paso County announced stage 1 fire restrictions, or at the discretion of the Palmer Lake mayor. The motion was approved unanimously.

In April, the Palmer Lake Town Council, met 60 or more residents, most of whom were there to try to persuade the council to reverse its decision to close the hiking trail. Many of those present took advantage of the public comment period to express their disagreement with the council's decision and made the following arguments:

- Most hikers are responsible and would assist the town by reporting open fires and other violations.
- Many of the town's residents chose to live in Palmer Lake because of the proximity to trails.
- People who chose to live in Palmer Lake accept the risk of fire.
- Eliminating access to the forest makes people not care about it as much.
- There are too many ways to access the trail to be able to effectively close it.
- The trails bring people to the town and support the local restaurants and businesses.
- Police do not respond when violations are reported.

Most of the public comments supported the council's decision to increase the fines for behavior on the trail that endangered the town's water supply, and the council debated ordinances that codified the process for closing the trail and raised fines for fires and pet-related violations. Several of the residents volunteered to donate their time to work on these issues.

After the comments from the public, and to the vocal approval of the attendees, the council voted to reopen the trail immediately and to proceed with the rewriting of ordinances that clarified how the trail would be managed. The council approved the following ordinances related to the discussions about fire safety and protecting the town's water:

Ordinance 5 of 2017: The ordinance uses El Paso County fire restrictions to determine fire restrictions in Palmer Lake; it also gives the town the ability to keep those restrictions in place after the county restrictions are removed. When Palmer Lake fire restrictions are active, the fine for an open fire is \$1,000 and for a lit cigarette is \$500.

Ordinance 6 of 2017: The ordinance protects the water system, prohibits fishing in the reservoirs, and establishes these fines:

- 400 for washing, swimming, wading, or bathing in the reservoirs
- \$1,000 for a campfire within the water system
- Up to \$150 for any dog off leash
- \$400 for allowing any animal to swim in the reservoirs



- Up to \$150 for failing to remove dog feces
- \$200 for being in the water shed area in violation of a posted sign

People who see activity that is not allowed (listed in the ordinances above) can call the town at 481-2953 on weekdays, and a phone number for after-hours reporting is planned. (Our Community News Vol. 17 No.4/5)

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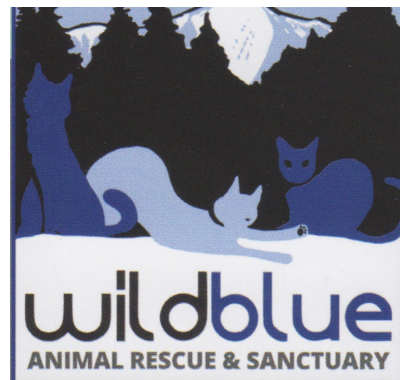
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By supporting BFTA with your annual membership, you help provide the funding and support for a whole range of issues that affect Black Forest trails and the lifestyle we all want to protect. The Black Forest Trails Association is a non-profit organization under IRS Code Section 501(c)(3). Donations are fully deductible to the extent permitted by tax law. There are 4 tiers of BFTA membership (Dues are tax deductible):

- 1) Individual / family (\$15 per year),
- 2) Business / club (\$30 per year),
- 3) Donor (\$50 per year)
- 4) Lifetime (\$150 one time).

Membership runs from April 1 to March 31, and if you become a member now, your membership will be good through March 31, 2017. We use PayPal, which is easy and secure, to accept online payments, or you can print out an application and mail your payment in via US Postal service – either option can be completed via our website at <http://www.blackforesttrails.org/joinrenew>