



Trail Signs

2005 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SAND CREEK REGIONAL GREENWAY PARTNERSHIP



*Year 2005
Witnessed a
Remarkable
Transformation
Along the
Greenway...*

Two Thousand Five was a year of tremendous change along the Greenway. In this report, we are updating our users on our progress and giving a preview of our 2006 major projects.



Each time I go on the Greenway, I am amazed that, even with all the construction, our natural inhabitants continue to thrive. Deer, foxes, beavers, muskrats, coyotes, plus many different bird species make this unique Greenway their home. As a ribbon of natural habitat passing through industrial zones, new neighborhoods, and the backyards of the Sand Creek Regional Greenway brings nature to the backyards of many. The surrounding changes impact the Greenway, but we try to keep the trail open with temporary detours and new trails and parks.

Our organization is a true partnership with staff and elected officials from Aurora, Commerce City, and Denver cooperating to make everything happen along Sand Creek. The other heroes are the businesses, governments, non-profits, and individuals that donate time and money to making progress along the Greenway. We thank everyone for making the Greenway better every year!

Please come enjoy our little bit of nature in the northeast metro region. We have a quarterly newsletter that gives updates on the Greenway and a recorded message at 303-468-3260 that gives trail construction reports. Of course, you can always call the staff, Kate or Laurie, for the most up-to-date information.

Happy Trails!

Mary
Mary Gearhart
Board President
Sand Creek Regional Greenway Partnership

Users and supporters of the Sand Creek Regional Greenway can look back to 2005 as a year of momentous change along virtually every stretch of our trail system. It was a period that saw significant strides in protecting habitat and in making new portions usable, in all three of the great cities that the trail joins together.

Join us in celebrating just how much was accomplished.

PHOTO BY JOHN FIELDER



SAND CREEK REGIONAL GREENWAY
Wilderness In the City

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Western Section/Commerce City

Over a mile of new trail was built in Commerce City during 2005. Starting at the Dahlia Trailhead and going east to the new Commerce City Wetland Park, the trail takes users off the dangerous Sand Creek Drive. Rabbits, squirrels, and birds jump in



New trail section through Commerce City.

New Wetland Park!

The new Commerce City Wetland Park received its first planting in April 2005. The 19-acre park is on the south side of Sand Creek and is connected to 52nd Street near Dahlia Street. The land was recovered from an old landfill and dumping area and was formerly a sand and gravel operation.



The land was graded in the fall of

On a beautiful spring day, 120 volunteers came out to do the first native plantings at the Wetland Park.

2004 and then subjected to extensive testing to see if the water table was high enough to saturate the low areas that had been excavated.

Satisfied that the wetlands would function properly, the final grading was completed and the first planting done in April 2005. On a beautiful spring day, over 120 people came out to help put in native plants at the Wetland Park.

Heavy spring rains turned the wetlands into ponds by May, and waterfowl made the lakes their home. As the rains continued, a portion of the road slumped into the ponds. To prevent future damage from flooding, pipes were installed to drain the lakes when they reached high levels and road repairs were made in the early fall.

By October, ducks, Canada Geese, and Avocets made the Wetland Park a nightly stop.

Projects for 2006 Commerce City

► Finish the Off-road Trail

An additional three-quarters of a mile of trail needs to be constructed from the Commerce City Wetland Park to 47th Avenue at the Denver border. In 2005, the trail was designed, land and easements were purchased, and the money was secured. Construction will begin in April of 2006 and should be completed by fall 2006.

► Work on the Wetland Park

In the fall of 2006, the Army Corps of Engineers will perform its final tests to certify that the Wetland Park is functioning.

Interpretive signs that describe the wetlands will be installed.

In fall, if funds and volunteers are both available, more native plants will be added in and around the wetlands.

One of the goals is to restore habitat. As a first step, Russian olives, tamarisk, and other non-native plant species will be removed...



Ducks, Canada Geese, and Avocets already make nightly stops at the Wetland Park.

► **Repair of the Trail Next to 60th Avenue and Under Brighton Boulevard and the Rail Tracks**

During a serious flood, the foundation of the trail at 60th Avenue under the railroad tracks was washed out. Because of the number of parties who must approve the repairs and new designs (to prevent future washouts), the work was delayed. Pending final approval from the railroad company and various government agencies, work on the trail will begin in late spring and be completed by late summer.

► **Other Trail Improvements in 2006**

A trailhead will be added at the Commerce City Wetland Park entering from 52nd Avenue, with a parking lot, restroom, shelters, and trash cans. The parking lot at the Dahlia Trailhead will be paved, and an arch and signage will be installed.

One of the goals of the Sand Creek Greenway Master Plan is to restore habitat. As a first step, Russian olive trees, tamarisk, and other non-native plant species will be removed from the western part of the Greenway.

► **Interpretive Signage and Way-finding Signage**

In 2006, maps and directional signs will be added. The signage will begin at the confluence with the South Platte River and continue eastward, with the final signs added after the new trail has been completed east of the Commerce City Wetland Park.

Interpretive signage will be installed at the confluence overlook, just east of the South Platte River, in cooperation with Xcel Energy and the Metro Wastewater Reclamation District. More signage will be installed at the Commerce City Wetland Park, which will describe the purpose and functions of wetlands and the birds and mammals that make the area their home.

Commerce City Events for 2006

By summer, signage will be installed describing the Xcel power plant, the Metro Wastewater waste treatment facility, and wildlife at the confluence of Sand Creek and the South Platte River.



Work Day volunteers.

In late June, the new Commerce City Wetland Park will officially open. A public celebration will mark the opening of the completed off-road trail from the Dahlia Trailhead and construction of the new trail to 47th Avenue.

Watch our web site for several volunteer work days along the Greenway in Commerce City.



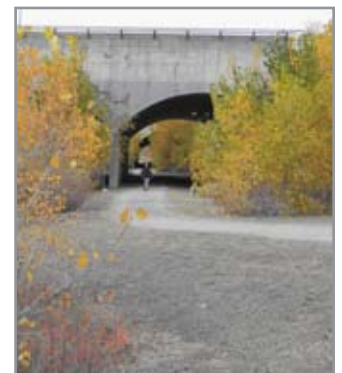
REI and volunteers did a facelift for the North Side detour trail.

Middle Section/City & County of Denver

North Side Detour

In the winter of 2004 and in 2005, several major construction projects started on the south side of Sand Creek between the former runway tunnels and Havana Street. Each of the projects was scheduled to close the trail for a period of weeks or months. Knowing that trail use would be greatly interrupted, a team designed a new detour on the north side of the creek, from the runway tunnels to Havana. The alternate trail opened in the spring of 2005.

In August 2005, REI, Sand Creek Regional Greenway Partnership, the Denver Parks and Recreation—Hands On Denver, and strong volunteers spread the crusher fine for almost one-third of the new trail. Recycled Materials Company donated hundreds of tons of crusher fine rocks for the new trail surface. Additional volunteers removed trash and pulled invasive weeds, including tamarisk.



Runway tunnels will disappear.

Volunteers from the M. A. Mortenson Company moved into the area the next week and spread the crusher fine along the rest of the trail. Due to the incredible team effort of all the wonderful individuals, the North Side trail was vastly improved.

The detour trail will be in service until the trail along the south of the creek can be opened, which will be after the new park is completed at the confluence with Westerly Creek in 2008.



Newly completed overpass and pedestrian bridge on Quebec Street.

trail detour while replacing pipes west of the runway tunnels. A new drop-structure was built under Quebec Street after a major rainstorm broke through the old structure.

A bit further upstream, a new dam was built after a storm undermined the structure that held a major sewer pipe. Finally, in late fall 2005, the last runway tunnels at old Stapleton Airport were removed. DIA built an excellent detour along the railroad tracks to the north of the tunnels to be used until the trail can be rebuilt along the creek. The old trail along the creek will be reopened through the former runway tunnels by the summer of 2006.

Projects for 2006 — Denver

▶ Finish Pedestrian/Bike Bridge to NorthField

In spring 2006, the new pedestrian/bike bridge to the trails north of I-70 should be open to trail users. The bridge will be the first off-road connection between southern and northern Stapleton.

▶ Restore Trail Along Sand Creek in Former Runway Tunnels

The trail will be restored and reopened along Sand Creek, but the detour trail will be left in place to allow access to the Greenway after the security gates are locked (between dawn and dusk).

▶ New Access From West of Havana to the Sand Creek Trail

Currently, users cannot get to the Greenway from the newly developing portion of Stapleton without using Quebec or Havana streets. Depending upon the pace of construction north of Martin Luther King Boulevard and west of Westerly Creek, a new detour



Student activity at Bluff Lake Nature Center.

New Trail Connection From Denver to Aurora

While a new tunnel was being built under Peoria Street in Aurora, Denver construction workers built a new permanent trail to link to the underpass.

The new trail goes east from Bluff Lake and turns north to run along the bluff over the creek to the Aurora city line, just before the new underpass. Trail users no longer have to dodge cars and wait for lights to cross into Sand Creek Park on the north side of Fitzsimons. Special thanks go to URS and Denver International Airport for their assistance on the new section of trail.

New Off-road Overpass at Quebec

Work started on the new pedestrian/bike bridge over Sand Creek, which parallels Quebec Street on the east side. In the spring of 2006, trail users will be able to hook up with trails on the north side of I-70 without getting on Quebec or Havana streets. The new bridge will take users from the Sand Creek Greenway trail to a stop light at the exit ramp off I-270 and onto sidewalk trails that will take users into the new NorthField Shopping Center, north of I-70 and I-270.

A new detour will be opened to let users access Sand Creek Trail by way of Fulton Street.

Detours and Construction

Several major construction projects took place on the Denver section during the warm weather of 2005. Metro Wastewater built a

will be opened to let users access the Sand Creek Trail by way of Fulton Street.

► Interpretive Signage and Way-Finding Signage

In 2006, way-finding signage will be added to the Denver section. The signage will begin at Quebec and 47th streets and will continue eastward, with the final signs being added after the new trail has been completed in the former runway tunnels.

Denver Events for 2006

Trail users will be able to stay off-road from Stapleton on the south of I-70 to the new NorthField Shopping Center along the new Quebec Street pedestrian bridge.

REI, Denver Parks and Recreation, and the Sand Creek Regional Greenway Partnership will hold their third annual Work Day on Saturday, August 5, 2006 — get it on your summer calendars now!



Some 125 participants discovered City of Aurora sections of the trail during a 5-K/10-K walk during October, sponsored by Rocky Mountain Wanderers.

Eastern Section/City of Aurora

Sand Creek Park

Phase 1 of the Sand Creek Park development was completed in 2005. The theme chosen for the park is the “celebration of water.” The park on Sand Creek began its transformation into a 100-acre large urban park and natural area with water features, parking, and trails. The City of Aurora spent over \$1 million on the park in 2005, including a grant from the Sand Creek Regional Greenway Partnership for \$125,000.

New ponds were dug, sections of the stream stabilized, trails installed, and a new parking area was constructed. The new Fitzsimons Parkway will be open in 2006, allowing access along the north and east borders of the Fitzsimons Campus to the new park area. New bridges and trail connections to Toll Gate Creek are also being constructed.

The best new feature for users of Sand Creek Greenway is the underpass at Peoria Street. Trail users will no longer have to cross Peoria at the light at 25th Avenue and use a narrow sidewalk to return to the off-road trail. With the new trail connection in Denver on the west of Peoria, trail users can stay off-street from Airport Boulevard in Aurora to Quebec Street just east of Commerce City.

Progress at Morrison Nature Center at Star K Ranch

Aurora now has three naturalists on staff at the Morrison Nature Center. The naturalists in 2005 provided programming for over 4,000 people. Individuals, community, and school groups are accommodated through the center’s regularly scheduled programs, as well as those “custom designed programs” by the center’s staff. In addition, groups such as the Rocky Mountain Wanderers, who selected Star K Ranch for their fall event, bring new users to this beautiful place.

The theme chosen for Aurora’s new Sand Creek Park is the “celebration of water.”



Aurora’s new Sand Creek Park



Colorado Masters Runners and Race Walkers carried out a successful trail run in April, 2005. Sand Creek was recognized as one of the "Top-ten Fitness Trails in the U.S." for 2005 by the American Trails Society.

Sand Creek Regional Greenway Partnership (SCRGP) Revenues and Expenses

Following are SCRGP's revenues and expenditures for 2005.

Interpretive Signage and Way-finding Signage

In 2006, way-finding signage will be added to the Aurora section. The signage will begin at Sand Creek Park, at the city limits and border with Denver, and will continue eastward, with the final signs added east of Star K Ranch.

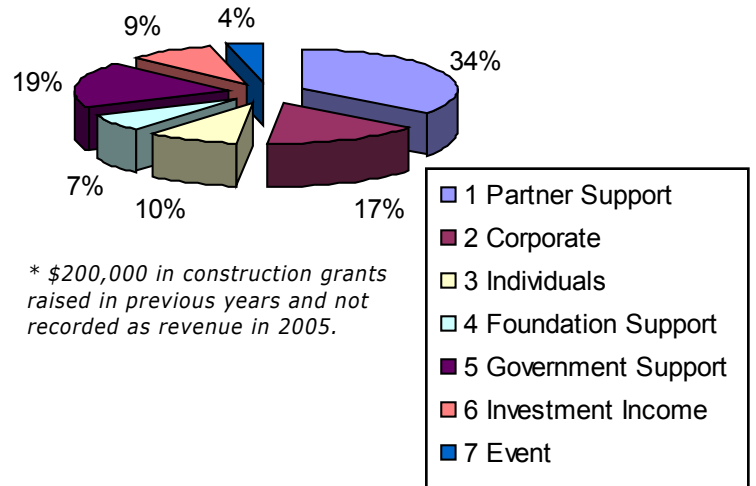
Aurora Events for 2006

Volunteers will convene at Sand Creek Park on Earth Day to plant wetland plants, trees, and shrubs within Sand Creek Park.

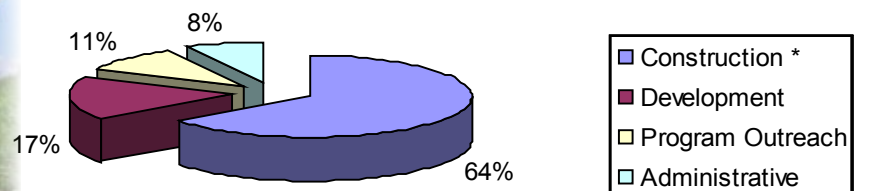
Sand Creek Art and Photo Contest will be held again in 2006. The contest accepts entries from artists and photographers of all skill levels and ages. The entries must, in some way, represent the natural features of the Sand Creek corridor.

Trick or Treat Nature Trail is a new event in 2006. The Trick or Treat Nature Trail will offer programs at both the Morrison Nature Center and the Bluff Lake Nature Center as well as information and "treats" along the greenway trail between the two sites.

2005 Revenues (unaudited) = \$157,050*



Annual Work Day volunteers.



** Includes payout of past grants for 2005 construction. Does not include \$505,000 of Great Outdoors Colorado grant expended in 2005 for trail building in Commerce City.

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Many of the people who love the Sand Creek Regional Greenway become Friends of the Greenway. We want to give special thanks to these who were donors in 2005.

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Kid's pitch in during Work Day on the Greenway

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