



# Boulder Area Trails Coalition

## “Trails for Today and Tomorrow”

Newsletter, Winter 2010-11

### Board of Directors

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### BATCO Meetings

BATCO usually meets on the fourth Monday of each month, at the upstairs meeting room of REI in Boulder. The meetings begin at 7PM and last 2 hours or less. Meeting times and agendas will be posted on the BATCO website (<http://www.batco.org>), and will be posted to the bouldertrails@yahoogroups.com e-group. ***We will not meet in December due to the Christmas holiday. The next meeting is January 24, 2011.***

***BATCO members and the public are welcome to attend Board meetings. Please join us!***

Are you reading this electronically? If not, please consider joining our egroup, bouldertrails@yahoogroups.com. Sending paper uses valuable resources and costs BATCO additional time and money. Also, the electronic version of the *Newsletter* is in full color, and zoom-able. Go paperless!

### From the President

I am very sad to announce the passing of Mike O'Brien, who was on the BATCO Board of Directors for a number of years. Mike died from cancer on November 13 at age 75. His obituary, reprinted from the *Camera*, is below and speaks to his lifelong love of the outdoors. Mike's gentle warmth and good humor will be sorely missed.

I want to apologize to all BATCO members and friends for the lack of *Newsletters* over the last several months. As you know, BATCO relies on the energies of a few dedicated volunteers, and how much we can get done depends on how much time everyone is able to put in. I serve as President and also the *Newsletter* editor. Over the last 15 months I have also been a member of the Community Collaborative Group (CCG), a citizen panel convened by the City Open Space and Mountain Parks (OSMP) department to come up with a plan for OSMP's West Trail Study Area (WTSA).

This includes all OSMP land west of Broadway between Eldorado Springs Drive and Linden Ave. The CCG has been holding 3-4 hour meetings twice a month since Sept. 2009. We have also had a lot of homework reading documents, preparing proposals, and negotiating outside of the regular meetings. Suffice to say that this process has eaten up far more time and energy than any of us expected. Well, during this time the *Newsletter* kind of got away from me.

The CCG is a panel of 15 people who represent various interest groups, including recreation interests (trail running, dogs, horses, mountain biking, hiking, climbing), natural and cultural resource concerns and neighborhood issues. I am the representative for trail runners, multisport and equestrians, and Suzanne Webel is my alternate. Our task over the last 15 months has been to hash out agreements that balance the various interests. The good news is that the CCG has nearly completed its work, and successfully negotiated a package of preliminary agreements. We are now in a phase of collecting feedback from the public and the Open Space Board of Trustees. The complete package is available from OSMP's website: <http://www.westtsa.org>

I have to admit that for many months I didn't think a substantive agreement was possible. At times the negotiations were extremely contentious, with representatives for the various interests holding starkly different visions. The original facilitator left after 6 months, and his replacement had to come up to speed on the issues and personalities more or less immediately. Then, two of three neighborhood representatives quit under pressure from some constituents regarding the issue of mountain biking (the representatives were replaced by their alternates). Finally, the OSMP manager in charge of the project retired before the CCG was able to complete its work. Whew!

My own view is that the CCG recommendations, while far from perfect, represent a good compromise that balances visitor access and habitat preservation. Currently, according to OSMP, there are 78 miles of official designated trails and 58 miles of undesignated (“social”) trails in the WTSA. A major task for the CCG was to decide which undesignated trails to designate and which to close. A great deal of effort went into determining which undesignated trails are the most used and useful, and which are redundant. To now, the CCG has agreed to designate 10 miles of undesignated trails, many of which will be rerouted to improve sustainability and visitor experience, and to decrease impact on the environment. With the closure of the remaining 48 miles of undesignated trails, the CCG agreement effectively reduces the total trail mileage in the WTSA by 35%, which should provide a substantial benefit to wildlife habitat. While there are significant new restrictions on dogs, pedestrians can still go

off-trail nearly everywhere (exceptions are various seasonal wildlife closures).

The CCG was unable to agree on mountain bike and equestrian access in the WTSA, so these uses have gone into a non-consensus process whereby OSMP will make recommendations to the Board. It is anticipated that the Board will make decisions on the CCG and OSMP recommendations in February 2011.

*Peter Bakwin, President*

## **Mike O'Brien 1935-2010 (reprinted from the Boulder Camera)**

Mike O'Brien died at Hospice Care of Boulder and Broomfield Counties on Nov. 13, 2010, after a short, but brave, fight with cancer. Mike was born in Berkeley CA in 1935.

He came to Boulder to attend the University of Colorado, and was graduated with a degree in mechanical engineering. He worked at Rocky Flats for over 30 years, initially in the Joining Group. He became a program manager near the end of his career, and retired in 1992.

For most of his adult life, he loved the outdoors and was an avid mountain biker, skier, climber, kayaker, sailor, and hiker. He had a number of first ascents, including routes in Eldorado and Boulder Canyons, and an early ascent of Shiprock. He was on the ski patrol at Vail shortly after it opened. He loved cross country skiing, and did many multi-day ski trips in the Sierra and elsewhere. In addition to outdoor activities, he particularly enjoyed the superb cuisine prepared by his late wife Sue. They were married nearly 50 years.

He is survived by his sister Sheila O'Brien of Healdsburg, CA. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made in his name to Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado, at VOC.org.

## **BATCO Recognized as "Alpine Partner"**

At a ceremony on Sept. 24 at the farmhouse at Rock Creek Farm, Boulder County Parks and Open Space recognized BATCO as an "Alpine Partner". BCPOS staffer Karen Imbierowicz said "We, who value our beautiful parks and open space, feel very appreciative of the contributions made by our Boulder County Parks and Open Space Partners." Alpine Partners commit to participating in at least two trail projects per year with 10 or more participants. In 2010, BATCO worked on the Picture Rock Trail at Heil Valley Ranch (6/24), and the new extension of the Mayhofer-Singletree Trail near Superior (10/23). Volunteers from Boulder Trail Runners, Boulder Mountain Bike Alliance and Boulder County Horse Association participated with BATCO in these projects.

## **GOCO Awards \$500,000 for Erie Trail**

The following is a press release from the Town of Erie, dated April 1, 2010.

Governor Bill Ritter today announced the award of a \$500,000 Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) grant for the Eastern Link of the Coal Creek / Rock Creek Trail Project.

The project is a multi-jurisdictional collaborative effort to connect the communities of Erie and Lafayette with public open space properties in unincorporated Boulder County, Broomfield, Louisville, Superior and the city of Boulder. The project will construct a new 4-mile long trail that will extend from the existing Rock Creek Trail, near 120th Street in the City of Lafayette, to the existing trail at Vista Pointe Parkway and Coal Creek on Erie's eastern edge. The 4-mile section will complete one of the last remaining links of a 24-mile loop trail that connects these communities.

In December 2009, Town of Erie Board of Trustees approved a GOCO Special Opportunity grant application in partnership with Boulder County and the City of Lafayette for construction of various segments of the Coal Creek/Rock Creek Regional Trail. Erie has appropriated \$350,000 in matching funds and is responsible for the segment from Vista Parkway to State Highway 7 which will include approximately 2.5 miles of 8 foot crusher fines trail, two bridges and an underpass at State Highway 7. It was determined that submitting one application on behalf of all three agencies provided the best opportunity for success in this highly competitive Special Opportunity grant cycle. Boulder County submitted the grant application to GOCO and each agency agreed to provide financial assistance to enable the entire project to be completed as follows:

- Erie - \$350,000 (from the Erie Trails and Natural Areas Fund)
- Boulder County - \$300,000
- City of Lafayette - \$250,000



## **"Dirty Bismarck" Nearly Complete**

Road bicyclists are familiar with the Morgul Bismarck loop south of Boulder. The ride heads east on Marshall Road from the intersection with Highway 93, turns south on McCaslin, then west on Highway 128 to 93, and back to Marshall Road. In the 1970s and 1980s it was the course for a stage in the Red Zinger and Coors Bicycle Classic races, and it is still ridden frequently.

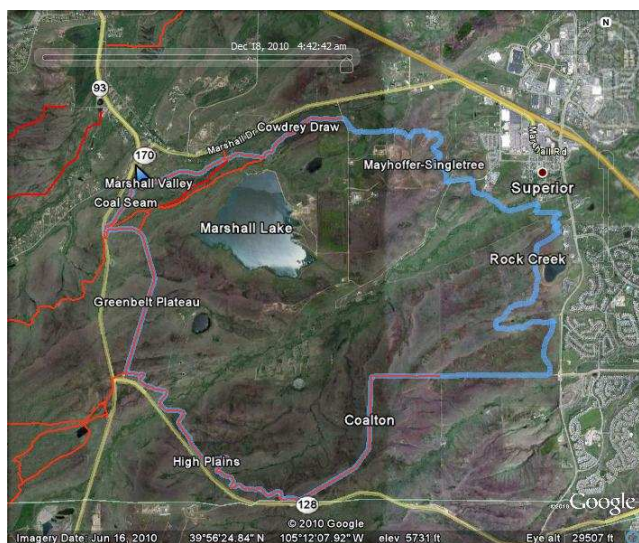
With trail development in the City and County Open Space land encircled by the Morgul Bismarck, trail enthusiasts have long anticipated a dirt version of the Morgul. Well, the "Dirty Bismarck" is very nearly a reality. In Octo-

ber, with financial and trail-building assistance from BATCO, Boulder County Parks and Open Space completed a 1.5-mile singletrack extension of the Mayhoffer-Singletree trail. Now, with funds from a federal grant, the County is working on the final section which will link Mayhoffer-Singletree with the Coalton Trail. This new 3-mile segment, called the Rock Creek Trail, will be an 8-foot wide, smooth crusher fines trail, in compliance with federal ADA standards. It is expected to be completed within several weeks. Besides completing the Dirty Bismarck loop, the new trail forms the key western connection between the County's Coal Creek and Rock Creek regional trails.

Boulder County is also currently working on improvements to the Coalton Trailhead, at the intersection of McCaslin Blvd and Coalton Rd. The trailhead is closed until Jan. 14, 2011, while this work is underway.

With the opening of the new trail connection, the Dirty Bismarck will finally be a reality! This is a fantastic 14.8-mile all-dirt, multi-use (pedestrian, equestrian, bike) loop that does not cross a paved road. The route is as follows (see map below). Heading clockwise from the Marshall Mesa Trailhead, go east on the Marshall Valley Trail and then the Cowdrey Draw Trail. Cross 66<sup>th</sup> Street and continue east on the Mayhoffer-Singletree Trail. At the end of Mayhoffer-Singletree you will pick up the new trail heading south, roughly parallel to McCaslin Blvd. The new trail ends at the Coalton Trailhead, turn west on the double-track Coalton Trail, which ends at a small trailhead off Highway 128. Continue northwest on the singletrack High Plains Trail. At the Greenbelt Plateau Trailhead, head north on the Greenbelt Plateau Trail. The trail eventually turns west, and links up with the Coal Seam Trail along side of Highway 93. Follow Coal Seam 0.5 miles back to Marshall Mesa Trailhead. Smaller loops are also possible in the area, and longer routes can be done by crossing Hwy 93 at the Greenbelt Plateau Trailhead, or at the Community Ditch Trail. See <http://www.osmp.org> for a trail map of these areas.

Enjoy your City, County, State and Federal tax dollars at work!



The "Dirty Bismarck" loop (light blue) with existing OSMP trails shown by thin red lines. The Marshall Mesa trailhead is indicated by a blue arrow. (Zoom in for more detail.)

## Boulder County Open Space Tax Passes by a Narrow Margin

In the November election Boulder County Issue 1B, which asked voters to increase sales taxes by 0.15% for 20 years to buy more open space land, passed by a small margin of around 1000 votes. A similar tax increase for open space was defeated in 2009, with 52% of voters opposed. BATCO officially supported 1B, as did the Boulder Mountain Bike Alliance and the Boulder County Horse Association, while some other groups representing recreation interests did not. Many Parks and Open Space visitors feel that the County's program is much too heavily weighted towards increasingly expensive acquisitions of lands that remain closed to the public. The *Colorado Daily* quoted Buzz Burrell of the Boulder Outdoor Coalition as saying "The public is tired of paying for taxes to buy land that it's illegal for them to walk on." Indeed, BATCO's research indicates that fully 79% of BCPOS land is closed to all visitor access (2007 data), with most areas closed to off-trail travel. Furthermore, except for a few regional commuter trails, BCPOS trails are all inexplicably closed to nighttime visitation.

Even before the final vote tally was complete, the County Commissioners voted to purchase the remaining 577 acres of Hall Ranch for \$13.3 million. While the property has the potential for new recreational opportunities, including a possible trail corridor linking existing Hall and Heil Ranch properties, the County will first need to complete a management plan for the area, which will take several years.

## And Now For Something Completely Different: A Trail Around Boulder!

*By Suzanne Webel*

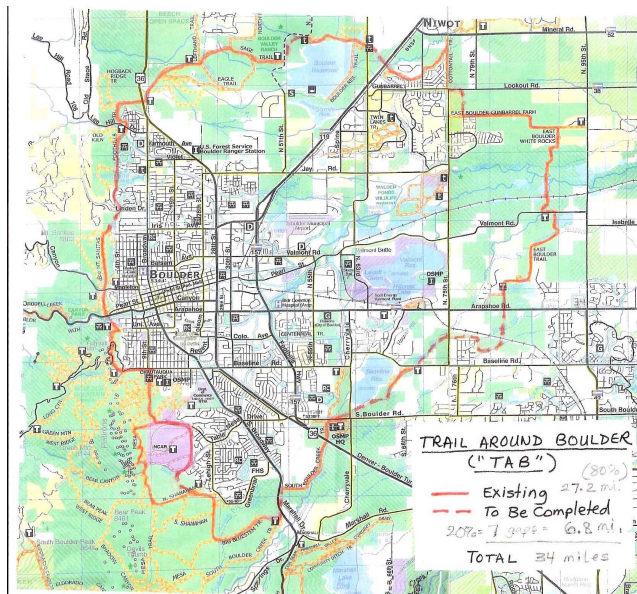
Remember the adage "Think Globally, Act Locally"? Sometimes it does us good to get the heck out of the People's Republic in order to get a fresh new perspective on things. For me, I often get ideas from seeing how other people have solved their problems, and from experiencing successful trail systems elsewhere.

My epiphany for a Trail Around Boulder (TAB) came this past summer when I went back to Vermont to visit my alma mater and my daughter who now goes to college there as well. When I was a student at Middlebury (back in the dark ages), the only trails nearby were the Long Trail in the Green Mountain National Forest, which runs the length of the state, and a few side trails leading up to it. Sometime between then and now, somebody got the bright idea of a creating Trail Around Middlebury (known as the TAM) – and, seemingly, poof! -- they got it done. The TAM, now celebrating its 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, has become a popular attraction for locals and visitors alike. Its 16-plus miles encircle the Town of Middlebury (pop. 10,000 plus 4,000 college students) and encompass hundreds of acres of town and college land, conservation properties, farm easements, schools and other landmarks. The TAM is a major project of the Middlebury Area Land Trust, and is funded by donations of cash and land, fundraising events, and support from dozens of local businesses and the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation.

The TAM is awesome! The trail meanders through mellow deciduous forests and dense piney woods, over gla-

cial hills, over and along rivers small and large, and through numerous cow pastures (there are more cows than people in Vermont). Different sections of the trail are open to different user types, depending on the terrain and other circumstances. Almost all of the TAM is off-road, but parts of it go right through town, so you can always find a place for some native Ben & Jerry's.

Inspired by Middlebury's success, I put the idea to BATCO to formalize a proposal for a Trail Around Boulder (TAB). We have so much in common: we're a college town with a lot of outdoor recreation-oriented businesses, we have a lot of public land, and we have a lot of dedicated trail advocates. We also have some funds generated by the BATCO map, which are earmarked for new trail construction and maintenance. Sure, various groups have their own little versions of events around Boulder, ranging from Plan Boulder's "OSMP Circumnavigation" to the Boulder Trail Runners' informal "B360" – but they're not community-wide, top-of-the-mind-awareness iconic "things" – they're transient events, known only to a few. Wouldn't it be exciting to really get out there and generate some buzz about an instantly-identifiable, lovable community trail, with its own wayfinding markers, kiosks, public relations, and stakeholders?



Map showing a possible alignment of the Trail Around Boulder (TAB). (Digital copies of the Newsletter can be zoomed for more detail.)

The map above shows one possible alignment for the TAB that would be 100% off-road and entirely on public

land. Of its approximately 34 miles, 27 miles (80%) are already in place, with only 7 miles (in 7 gaps, or 25%) to go. Once the basic framework is in place, additional loops, connections, and extensions could develop.

The BATCO Board has gotten the bit in its teeth about the TAB. We will be looking to engage a PR firm to help us get ahead of the grind of the endless Trail Study Areas, Master Plans, and other bureaucratic nightmares that have gotten us bogged down for so long.

We see the TAB as an elegant and exciting means of fulfilling one of BATCO's original goals: changing the paradigm so that successful and popular trails are seen as successes, not threats. We hope Boulder will become "Trail Town Colorado."

Join us and help us develop so much momentum for the TAB so that it develops a life of its own. Just say *Yes!* to the TAB! Contact anyone on the Board to find out how you can help.

For more information on the Trail Around Middlebury, see the website at <http://www.maltvt.org/tam.html>.

## President Obama Announces "America's Great Outdoors Initiative"

The "America's Great Outdoors Initiative" focuses on preserving America's natural landscape, promoting conservation and encouraging people to spend more time outdoors. The President launched the initiative on April 16, 2010, with a brief speech to the America's Great Outdoors Conference in Washington, DC. "Few pursuits are more satisfying to the spirit than discovering the greatness of America's outdoors," he said. Among other things, the President promised to "help families spend more time outdoors" and to "encourage young people to hike and bike and get outside more often. He also said that the program would not be "a big federal agenda driven out of Washington", but rather would "pursue good ideas that local communities embrace". According to the Interior Department, American children spend half as much time outside as their parents did, a trend that the program aims to reverse.

## Gift Idea: BATCO Maps!

Need a last minute gift or stocking stuffer? How about BATCO's Comprehensive Trails and Recreation Map of Boulder County? The maps are available for about \$9.95 at many area retailers – see [www.batco.org](http://www.batco.org) for a list of locations.

## Membership Form

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Clip or print and send to: BATCO, PO Box 19726, Boulder, CO 80308-2726, or contact Peter Bakwin (pbakwin@comcast.net) for more information.

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YES, I want to become a member of BATCO and help preserve and promote environmentally sound trails in Boulder County. Membership is FREE in 2008, but donations are always appreciated. Enclosed is my tax-deductible donation of:

\$100 Sustaining Donor;  \$50 Supporting Member;  \$35 Family;  \$20 Individual;  
 Other \$\_\_\_\_\_

NAME:\_\_\_\_\_ ORGANIZATION:\_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS:\_\_\_\_\_

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Please provide at least your email address! Future contact will be by email!

I wish to receive the Newsletter in hardcopy, rather than email.  
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**Join BATCO today!**