

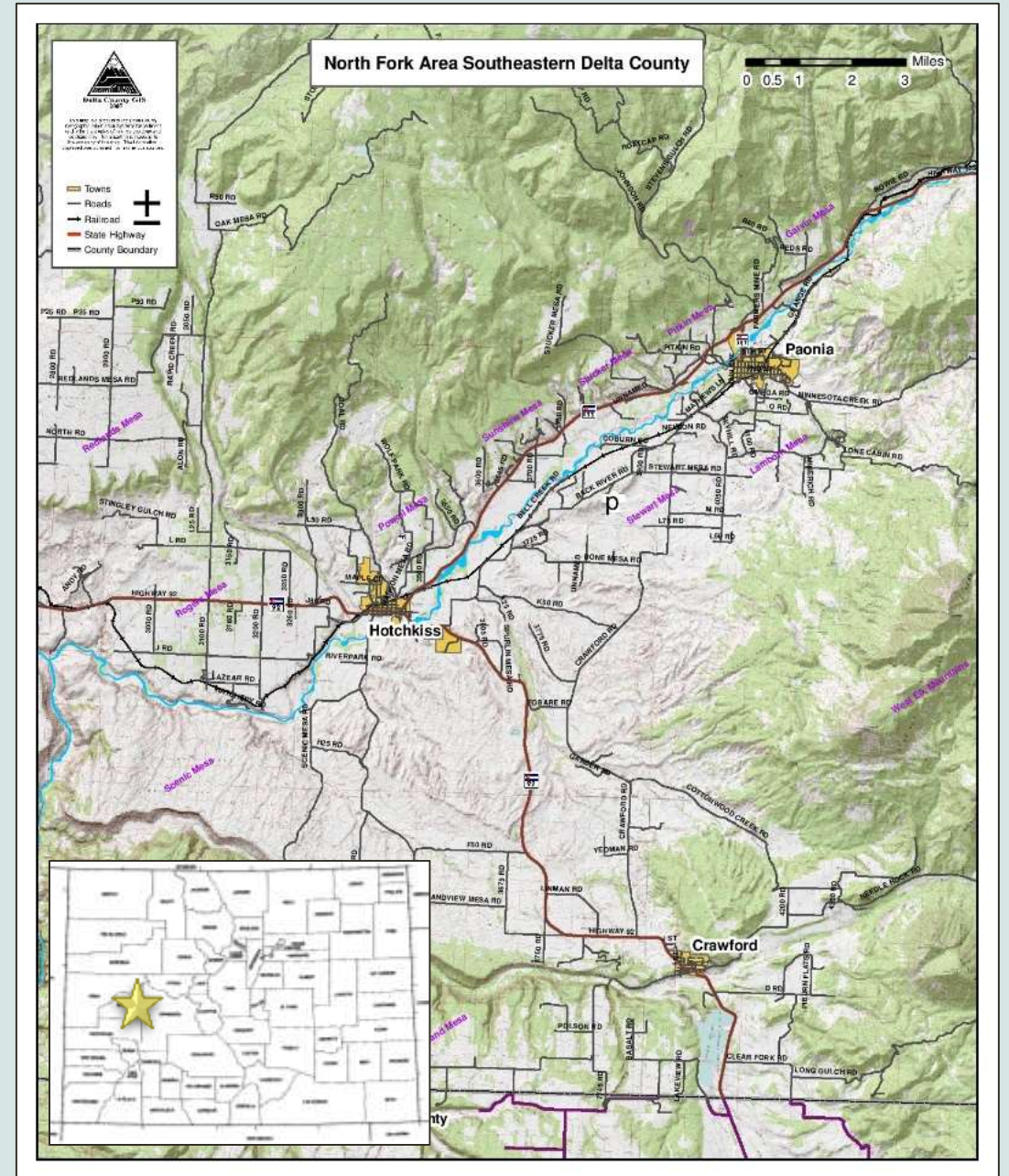
Addressing Cultural and Environmental Needs Together: Paonia River Park

Alyssa Clarida | Paonia River Park Coordinator VISTA | Western Slope Conservation Center | November 2, 2016



NORTH FORK VALLEY

- Diverse Population
- Dominated by Extractive Industry & Organic Agriculture
- Innovation / Productivity / Abundance
- Connected by the North Fork of the Gunnison River



NORTH FORK OF THE GUNNISON RIVER

- All industry tied to the River
- 95% Private = Restricted Public Access
- Limited personal relationships
- Water quality / river health issues due to separation
- North Fork River Improvement Association (NFRIA)
- Restore river health | Restore vitality



PAONIA RIVER PARK INCEPTION

- 1997 Jeff Crane Geomorphological Assessment
- In-stream gravel mining operation
- Head-cutting and Down-cutting bridge (photo)
- In-Stream mining ceased
- United Companies reclamation requirements minimal
- NFRIA saw opportunity | UC wanted community support



PAONIA RIVER PARK INCEPTION

- 2002 Ownership negotiations
- UC , Town of Paonia , Friends Church
- Planning and funding identification began
- Gauge community interest
- Phone & paper surveys
- Community Meetings

PAONIA RIVER PARK INCEPTION

- 2005 – NFRIA broke ground on construction
 - Parking
 - Primitive Boat Ramp
 - Basic river access
- 2012 – BOR funds secured for intensive river restoration



RIVER RESTORATION

- Minnesota Ditch Company wetland mitigation
- Decided to transfer habitat mitigation credits to River Park
- Reconnected braided stream to single meandering thread
- Replanted willows and fill to bankfull elevation
- Flood design to encourage sediment and seed-load deposit
- Grade control structures implemented
- Pooling – fish, swimming, bank eddies



INFRASTRUCTURE TODAY

- Sidewalks
- Entry Arch
- River Overlook
- Boat Ramp Improvements
- ADA Ramp
- Bridge over Minnesota Creek
- Signage
- Trail System



KEY LESSONS

- Public Perception
- Diversity of Funding
- Infrastructure
- Partnerships

PUBLIC PERCEPTION

- Issues in the past
- Increased infrastructure, increased use, public takes ownership
- Problems arise with high use
- Public more perceptive as popularity grows



INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

- Most necessary facet of public access
- Collaborations with public and professionals necessary here
- Communications, education, outreach



DIVERSITY OF FUNDING

- Includes a wider variety of people and interests to the project
- Keeps a diverse stream of money flowing into the community
- Allows for more successful grant leveraging

PARTNERSHIPS

- Key to success
- Diversity of ideas, social capital, strategies
- WSCC Goals
 - Watersheds
 - Education
 - Public Lands
- Not all organizations will have such a wide range of goals
- Diverse partnerships = goals expand and meet a greater amount of needs



CLOSING THOUGHTS

- Reclamation vs. Community-based Restoration
- Turn environmental liabilities into community assets
- Restoration professionals have power to bring incredible assets to their communities
- Through partnerships, higher goals can be set, and community assets can be built



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WORKSHOP OPPORTUNITY:

Gravel Mine to Green Space: A Workshop on Community-Directed Approaches to Mining Reclamation and River Restoration
June 1-2 2017
Westernslopeconservation.org
Contact WSCC for more information

