

THE RED ROCK RAG

Volume 5, Number 1

News and Views on Red Rock Canyon

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www.saveredrockcanyon.com

**GOCO awards \$1 million grant for Red Rock Canyon Open Space:
Largest GOCO grant ever awarded to Colorado Springs!**

LAST MONTHLY ISSUE!

This will be the last regular monthly issue of the Red Rock Rag.

The Red Rock Canyon Committee has published the Red Rock Rag monthly since May of 2000, and believes that the Red Rock Rag has been one of many effective elements in the successful campaign to preserve Red Rock Canyon Open Space.

Now, with the dedicated efforts of the Trust for Public Land, the City of Colorado Springs and many citizen supporters, we have reached a goal that many thought was impossible three years ago.

The Red Rock Canyon Committee has recognized that the need for a separate ad hoc advocacy group supporting Red Rock Canyon Open Space has now passed, and has voted to dissolve, effective January, 2004, and merge its remaining assets with the Red Rock Canyon Foundation.

The Red Rock Canyon Foundation believes that the progression of events from the City's purchase of Red Rock Canyon to the formal opening of Red Rock Canyon Open Space may be slow at some times and rapid at other times. So, the Red Rock Canyon Foundation has decided its communications with Red Rock Canyon supporters can be handled better through occasional timely bulletins, the "saveredrockcanyon.com" website, and possibly a quarterly newsletter.

While the Red Rock Rag has had a wider circulation, the occasional bulletins of the Red Rock Canyon Foundation may be directed to a more targeted audience of community leaders, open space advocates and Foundation members. To be sure that you "stay in the loop", this could be a good time to join the Red Rock Canyon Foundation.

Our Thanks

The Red Rock Canyon Committee wishes to express its appreciation to Jo Cervone for her contribution supporting the Red Rock Rag and to the Red Rock Canyon Foundation for its support for the Red Rock Rag.

We would also like to express our appreciation to the Village at Skyline for providing our meeting room.

And, our special thanks to everyone who has contributed over the years to help make Red Rock Canyon Open Space a reality!

Red Rock Canyon Foundation Looking For New Board Members

At our Annual Meeting on March 4th we will be electing new board members. You are invited to submit your name or others you know to be nominated to be on the board of directors. Please call Shanti (634-1810) or Brad (633-9977) if you have suggestions.

Then, come to the Annual Meeting for our review of our goals for the coming year. After refreshments and an open discussion we will elect new board members. It is an important meeting, please come.

Red Rock Canyon hikes planned

Hiking tours of Red Rock Canyon Open Space are planned monthly through the Winter. The hikes are currently planned for the third Saturday of each month, January 17, February 21, and March 20. After that we may start hiking more often.

To confirm hike dates and make reservations for the hikes, contact Linda Hodges at the Trails and Opens Space Coalition 633-6884 or e-mail linda@trailandopenspaces.org.

A gift of history

On the November 8th Red Rock Canyon hike Kalee Thompson and Kaitlin Burrell, both age 9, and both students at Steele Elementary, found a steel rod in the Snider Quarry, a remnant of the quarrying enterprise. After the hike, Kalee and Kaitlin gave this artifact to Tom Faudree as a contribution to the Red Rock Canyon Foundation. Tom suggested that this artifact might eventually find a place in an interpretive, educational center on the open space site - and that they could have some satisfaction in preserving a bit of history for others to experience.

Trust For Community Parks to hold citizens forum

A newly formed organization The Trust For Community Parks is sponsoring a special citizens forum about the future of parks in Colorado Springs and El Paso County at Centennial Hall on Saturday, January 24 from 9:00 to 11:00 AM. The forum is open to everyone. Kyle Blakeley and the Pikes Peak Community Foundation are involved in The Trust For Community Parks.

What Next?

"Now that we own it, when do we get to start enjoying it?" Today this is the most frequently heard question about Red Rock Canyon. Like everything else concerning this spectacular open space acquisition, the answer is not all that easy.

Parks and Recreation Department Director Paul Butcher has expressed the hope that the property could be open to the public as soon as this summer, but he also concedes that many things have to happen before then. Here is where we are in the process and a look of some of the things that must be done.

The City has just contracted with Design Concepts of Lafayette, Colorado, to complete a Red Rock Canyon Open Space master plan. Design Concepts has a 23-year history of outstanding work in designing parks and open space areas throughout the state. They will be assisted by local landscape architect Priscilla Marbaker who did the plans for the City's Blodgett Peak and High Chaparral open spaces as well as the Palmer Park trail plan and trails in the Garden of the Gods.

In the meantime, the Parks Department has been conducting - and in several cases has already completed - surveys of the geology, archeology and flora and fauna on the property.

The public process for the Red Rock Canyon open space is expected to begin in late January of 2004 and continue through the spring. Public input will be taken on a number of outstanding issues concerning the property including trail layout, entrance and trailhead locations, the ultimate use of the Bock residence, and the use of parts of the property now occupied by several small mobile home parks and the parcel fronting Highway 24. Other questions such as rock climbing, access to the quarry areas and overall security for the large property also will have to be addressed. The Parks Department hopes to have a final plan by May or June.

The Red Rock Canyon property comes with a number of features not found on any other open space acquisition. Many of these are incompatible with immediate public access. Over two-dozen families live in mobile homes scattered along the edges of the property. The City has agreed to assist in their relocation and this process is now underway with the hope that it can be completed in the next three months. Nearly sixty acres of landfill must be fenced off and a number of structures on the property - some of them potentially hazardous (like the empty swimming pool at the Bock residence) - must be removed. Portions of the property - and particularly the old gravel pit area - will require revegetation. Some of these things are already happening.

As with any project this large and complex, money is an issue. The recently awarded \$1 million GOCO grant will be an enormous help and the Parks and Recreation Department staff is actively pursuing other possible grants to assist in the infrastructure development. A dark cloud in the financial picture continues to be the Douglas Bruce lawsuit against the TOPS extension which prevents the City from tapping any of the new maintenance funds offered by the revised TOPS ordinance.

During November the public was able to enjoy limited access to the property through Saturday hikes organized by the Trails and Open Space Coalition. These hikes are expected to resume after the Christmas holidays on the third Saturday of each month. For more information, call TOSC at 633-6884.

In the meantime, please be patient. What we have acquired in Red Rock Canyon is more than worth a few additional months of waiting.

Kent Obee, Chair,
TOPS Working Committee

CALENDAR:

Events of Possible Interest:

- January 17 Red Rock Canyon Open Space Hike
10:00 AM, High Street entrance
Contact: Linda Hodges at 633-6884
or e-mail linda@trailsandopenspaces.org
- January 24 The Trust For Community Parks
Citizens Forum
9:00 to 11:00 AM Centennial Hall
- February 5 Red Rock Canyon Foundation
7:00 P.M. Village at Skyline (off Lower Gold
Camp Road), Activities Room, Building No. 4
(The Easternmost Building - enter from the
parking lot north of the building)
- February 21 Red Rock Canyon Open Space Hike
10:00 AM, High Street entrance
Contact: Linda Hodges at 633-6884
or e-mail linda@trailsandopenspaces.org
- March 4 Red Rock Canyon Foundation
ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING
7:00 P.M. Village at Skyline (off Lower Gold
Camp Road), Activities Room, Building No. 4
- March 20 Red Rock Canyon Open Space Hike
10:00 AM, High Street entrance
Contact: Linda Hodges at 633-6884
or e-mail linda@trailsandopenspaces.org
- April 1 Red Rock Canyon Foundation
7:00 P.M. Village at Skyline (off Lower Gold
Camp Road), Activities Room, Building No. 4
- The TOPS Working Committee meets at 4:00 PM
the second Wednesday of each month
and 7:30 AM the fourth Wednesday
at the Parks and Recreation Building
1401 Recreation Way

No January meeting

Since the regularly scheduled January meeting of the Red Rock Canyon Foundation would be New Year's Day, there will be no Red Rock Canyon Foundation meeting in January. Regular open meetings will resume February 5. The annual business meeting of the Red Rock Canyon Foundation will be held March 4. At the March 4 meeting, new Board members and officers will be selected.

Secret Garden of the Gods, a Secret No More: How We Saved Red Rock Canyon

From the beginning no open space prize loomed larger or appeared more impossible to achieve than the saving of the 789-acre Red Rock Canyon.

Every major developer in Colorado Springs, including the Broadmoor Hotel, had at one time or another looked at development plans for the property. In the '70s, the late John Bock and his brother Richard - whose father assembled the Red Rock Canyon property - built a large and detailed scale-model of their own futuristic plans for the property. It included 24 space-age high-rise buildings and temple-like towers, some with their own helicopter landing pads. Bock's scheme dwarfed even the most grandiose plans of subsequent developers.

Red Rock Canyon, a natural geological continuation of Garden of the Gods, was not only the most breathtakingly beautiful and unique of the remaining, legacy-quality, undeveloped properties on the city's periphery, its purchase was the most complex to negotiate. A major complicating factor was a 60-acre landfill on the property - a potential liability of unknown proportions. Added to such environmental question marks and points of abuse (including a motel buried on the site) was a landowner who was widely perceived to be difficult - with his "take-the-property-as-it-is" at a non-negotiable \$15 million price attitude.

All these questions were laid to rest on Tuesday, November 25, at 10:31 am, when the City assumed title to Red Rock Canyon, thus bringing to a close a nearly five-year-long, combined citizen and city-led effort. The process underwent as many ups and downs as the surrounding mountain landscape and, in the end, it was a dream come true for all Colorado Springs citizens. How did it happen?

The Mouse that Roared

Four-and-a-half years ago on March 30, 1999, the Red Rock Canyon Committee (RRCC) was formed - with the help of the then-Trails and Open Space Coalition Deputy Director and environmental activist Scott Flora. The voluntary group's mandate was to promote the preservation of Red Rock Canyon. It was initially headed by Denise DeLeo; followed by Joe Fabek. For the past two years Don Ellis and Shanti Toll have served as its co-chairs.

To educate people as to what was really out there - back behind the giant "Keep Out" signs and trailer parks, the RRCC secured permission from owner John Bock to conduct hikes on the property. A slide show was created, articles were written, and Don Ellis started the small, but effective Red Rock Rag, which he initially financed out of his own pocket. As Terry Putman, planning chief for the Parks and Recreation Department, observed, the RRCC was the only open space advocacy group in town to be able to claim its own news publication. With its carefully targeted audience of political leaders and activists, the Red Rock Canyon Committee truly was "the mouse that roared."

Meanwhile, in early 2000, the development specter became imminent. Richard Yates, a Santa Fe developer, heading a company called Zydeco (a division of his family's Yates Drilling Company) decided he could "make the numbers work." Zydeco secured a multi-year renewable option on the property.

For the next two years, the choice before the preservationists was: Did you try to cut a deal with the developer to save part of the land or did you go all out trying to defeat the developer and his plan. Negotiations took place at countless meetings and planning sessions in both Manitou and Colorado Springs, in repeated presentations before both city councils and at numerous sessions of the TOPS Working Committee. Participants matched wits, stratagems, and a don't-blink-first-brand of toughness and optimism that reminded some observers of an old-fashioned poker game.

In the end, aided by some maladroit political choices by the developer and the unwillingness on the part of most of the preservationists - including the TOPS Working Committee - to buy into any of the limited open space scenarios offered by the developer, the development plan appeared to be stymied.

When the initial Zydeco option lapsed preservationists and the city quickly stepped forward, even while Yates was still engaged in talks with Bock for renewing it. Shortly thereafter, John Bock died. The TOPS Committee recommended that the Trust for Public Land (TPL) be brought in as negotiator. (TPL had been involved in the City's first big open space success story, the purchase of the Stratton land in 1998). After several months of negotiations, TPL negotiator Woody Beardsley, an astute, young, 6'4" Coloradan, with a ready smile and a partiality for cowboy boots and tweed coats who grew up on a Colorado ranch, secured the option on the land.

Other complications remained. First was the critical question of TOPS funding (its existing program could pay for Red Rock and little else). To make sure there was money both for Red Rock and other projects of high priority to the community, TOPS supporters decided to put an extension of the tax before the voters. The question now was: "Would voters support such an extension, particularly in these bad economic times?"

The other variable was the almost complete turnover of the City Council in April 2003. Would its new members support the vision of saving Red Rock Canyon as its previous members had done? The answers to both questions were a resounding "Yes." The tax initiative passed with an overwhelming two-to-one margin of support on April 1. And on May 27, the new City Council voted unanimously to approve the Red Rock Canyon acquisition at \$12.5 million.

On December 5, just in time for Christmas, Great Outdoor Colorado (GOCCO) gave Colorado Springs a grant of \$1 million to help pay for the purchase of Red Rock Canyon - GOCCO's largest grant ever to Colorado Springs.

In short, after what has been described as one of the most intensive periods of citizen lobbying in local history, paradise lost has been found. Don Quixote has triumphed. And even the spirits of the historic Ute may be resting a bit easier now.

Ruth Obree

Red Rock Canyon Foundation - MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-mail: _____ Phone: _____

_____ Membership donation: (checks payable to Red Rock Canyon Foundation)

Membership level

Supporter (wanting to be kept informed)

Helper (willing to work on occasional committee or help with work projects)

Leader (willing to volunteer a few hours a month)

Areas of interest for volunteering: _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Send this membership form to:

Red Rock Canyon Foundation

2207 W. Colorado Ave

Colorado Springs, CO 80904

(Phone 634-1810)

For more information, contact **Linda Hodges** at the **Trails and Open Space Coalition**: 633-6884,
or e-mail: help@saveredrockcanyon.com

THE RED ROCK FLAG

Red Rock Canyon Committee

P. O. Box 2352

Colorado Springs, CO 80901-2352

