



Sector: Watersheds & Natural Resources

Action: Integrate Floodplain Management and Open Space/Recreation Planning and Regulations

Action Overview:

Where is this Action Relevant?

Communities across Colorado with recreational areas and/or open spaces and floodplains or experience flooding may find this action relevant. To determine your community's risk level for flooding, consult the [Hazard Mapping and Risk MAP Portal](#) from the Colorado Water Conservation Board.

This Action is a:

- ☒ Plan
- ☒ Assessment
- ☒ Policy
- ☐ Implementation

Complementary Actions:

- [Integrate Land Use and Water Planning](#)
- [Integrate Floodplain Management and Open Space/Recreation Planning and Regulations](#)
- [Regional Watershed and Flood Planning and Implementation](#)
- [Regional Water Collaboration](#)

Action Description:

Why is this action important?

Outdoor recreation, and thus, parks and open spaces, are major cornerstones of Colorado's culture, economy, and infrastructure. The State boasts 23 million acres of public lands including federal, state, county, and municipal holdings. Colorado communities are increasingly attempting to join these public lands and build interconnected park and open space systems linked by trails, greenways, or other public corridors.

As Colorado experiences increasingly severe flooding incidents, these public lands offer an invaluable opportunity to boost the resilience of communities and ecosystems. Some of the central challenges of sustainable stormwater and flood management include lack of connectivity across distributed management systems and need for significant space for green stormwater infrastructure; parks and open spaces present a creative, collaborative solution to both of these issues.

How to implement this action

Integrating floodplain management and recreation or open space considerations can happen in a number of plans depending on local risks and needs. All of the following policies and plans should integrate social vulnerabilities.

The following is a description of the actions that can be taken:

- **Planning:** Communities may consider integrating floodplain management into their parks and open space plans, if applicable. These types of plans vary widely in terms of format, organization, and level of detail, based on the goals of the jurisdiction and the resources available to support the planning effort. Some critical considerations for a collaborative planning process between floodplain managers and open space and recreation planners include the following:
 - **Inventory of assets** - What is the current total amount of parks, open spaces, trails, and recreation areas and facilities? Where are they located? Where are there gaps in the system? Are assets located in hazard areas?
 - **Policies** - How should the community address issues related to parks and open space? Should additional investments and land acquisitions occur outside of hazard areas? Is increased maintenance a priority? Should the community consider sharing resources?
 - **Priorities and recommendations** - What are the specific steps a community can take to address a stated issue? Are there gaps in the system that should be treated as priorities? Should areas outside known hazard areas be given higher priority than others?
- **Implementation:** Coordinate between floodplain managers and open space and recreation planners to identify multibenefit opportunities for recreation and open space as part of floodplain protection or natural systems design in floodplain rehabilitation projects.
- **Policy:** For policy options, consider the “tools and strategies” in the [Planning for Hazards, Protecting Sensitive Areas](#). An example of this type of regulation is counting floodplain buffers above and beyond minimum requirements towards a developer’s open space dedication requirements. Additionally, a local government may choose to use

Timeframe, project costs, and resource needs

Timeframe, project costs, and resource needs vary by community, project, and subaction. Integrating floodplain considerations into parks and open space policies, practices, and plans will require dedicated trained staff time or funding to hire a consultant. Communities may require some technical mapping and analysis of floodplain areas as well.

What local governments is this action relevant to? Which department(s) within the local government are most likely to have responsibility for this action?

Government departments that may be involved in implementing this action includes: parks and recreation, planning, emergency management, community development, public works, amongst others.

Links to case studies or best practices

- [City of Colorado Springs Parks System Master Plan](#)
- [City of Durango Parks, Open Space, Trails, and Recreation Master Plan](#)
- [Town of Erie Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Trails Master Plan](#)
- [Town of Frederick Parks, Open Space, and Trails Master Plan](#)
- [Johnstown/Milliken Parks, Trails, Recreation, Open Space Master Plan](#)

Programs, resources, and funding to support implementation of this action

Resources

- [Colorado Parks and Wildlife State Wildlife Action Plan](#): This Plan includes information on the value of floodplains in biodiversity and wildlife preservation by habitat type.
- [Colorado Department of Local Affairs, Conservation Trust Fund Website](#)
- Planning for Hazards: [Parks and Open Space Plan](#)
- [Colorado Water Conservation Board: Flood Information and Resources](#)
- Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB), [Colorado Fluvial Hazard Zone Program](#)

Funding

- [Land and Water Conservation Fund Grants](#)
- [Colorado Parks and Wildlife Wetlands for Wildlife Grants](#)

For the most recent list of funding opportunities, see the State of Colorado, Department of Local Affairs [Local Community Funding Guide](#).