

**MINUTES
OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS BOARD
REGULAR SESSION
December 16, 2025
530 East Main Street
Aspen, CO 81611**

OSTB Present:

Graeme Means Dist. 1	Howie Mallory Dist. 2	Amy Barrow Dist. 3, Chair	Michael Kinsley Dist. 4	Wayne Ives Dist. 5
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Staff Present: Gary Tennenbaum, Kim Arensdorf, Ted O'Brien, Jessie Young, Jami McMannes, Carly O'Connell, Liza Mitchell, Drew Walters,

Others Present: Tom Cardamone, Cecily DeAngelo, Tucker Burton, Will Roush

Amy Barrow called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Howie Mallory motioned for the OSTB to approve the amended 11/13/2025 OSTB Regular and Executive Draft Minutes. Michael Kinsley seconded. Motion passed (5-0).

Roaring Fork Safe Passages (RFSP)

Gary Tennenbaum stated that a \$200,000 funding request was proposed as a challenge match for the RFSP's project, requiring the organization to raise an equal amount. The Open Space and Trails Board (OSTB) will review the request and make a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) for final approval.

Tennenbaum explained that the Open Space fund is restricted for specific uses, and careful consideration is needed to ensure compliance with its charter. He emphasized the importance of balancing funding requests with the fund's intended purpose of supporting open space and wildlife habitat.

Cecily DeAngelo noted that, in addition to reducing wildlife-vehicle conflict, RFSP would like to improve and preserve long-term wildlife permeability across Highway 82.

Tucker Burton reported that a public input survey showed strong community support for wildlife crossings, with 95.9% in favor and 77.1% having experienced wildlife-vehicle incidents. The project aims to improve wildlife connectivity and reduce vehicle collisions, with potential funding from federal sources being explored.

Howie Mallory discussed the estimated number of animals that would benefit from the proposed wildlife crossings. Mallory stated that a feasibility study is crucial for understanding how wildlife benefits can be realized by 2035. The county should consider involving insurance companies as partners in efforts to reduce wildlife-related accidents, he said. DeAngelo stated that local ungulate populations are dwindling and losing habitat, necessitating efforts to maintain these populations in the upper valley.

Graeme Means emphasized that the project should involve community collaboration and potential funding sources.

Wayne Ives supported a \$200,000 funding request for the feasibility study; however, future funding from OST would be better spent on purchasing land for conservation.

Amy Barrow raised concerns about the feasibility of the proposed Brush Creek location for wildlife crossings, particularly regarding future population growth and transportation needs. She emphasized the importance of avoiding investing in unfeasible projects. Ryan Mahoney stated that the county is working on a master planning process that will influence decisions regarding the proposed wildlife crossings.

Board action below.

Coke Ovens Open Space Agriculture Lease

Drew Walters stated that the lease for the Coke Ovens Open Space, a 19-acre agricultural property, is now up for renewal. Staff recommend extending the lease for three years based on improvements observed, including effective irrigation and no reported animal neglect.

Michael Kinsley advocated a five-year lease over a three-year lease to encourage lessee investment.

Board action below.

Wheatley Open Space Agriculture Lease

Walters explained that the Wheatley Open Space property, approximately 20 acres, underwent a competitive RFP process due to previous management issues. The selection committee unanimously recommended leasing to Roaring Fork Mill, which produces flour and supports local agriculture.

Board action below.

BOARD STAFF AND COMMENTS

Graeme Means proposed a potential honeybee program on county properties to enhance environmental benefits. Tennenbaum raised concerns about staff time and management, but the program would appear to have low impact and potential ecological advantages. The board expressed interest in exploring this initiative further while ensuring it aligns with existing management plans.

BOARD ACTION

Roaring Fork Safe Passages Funding Request

Howie Mallory motioned to recommend that the BOCC approve a supplemental grant to Roaring Fork Safe Passages for the feasibility study of wildlife crossings at Brush Creek and Sky Mountain, contingent on a matching challenge plan. Wayne Ives seconded the motion. Amy Barrow voted no. Motion passed (4-1).

Coke Ovens Open Space Agriculture Lease

Graeme Means motioned to approve a five-year Coke Ovens Agriculture Lease to Avalanche Outfitters. Wayne Ives seconded the motion. Motion passed (5-0).

Wheatley Open Space Agriculture Lease

Wayne Ives motioned to approve a five-year Wheatley Open Space Agriculture Lease to the Roaring Fork Mill. Graeme Means seconded the motion. Motion passed (5-0).

JOINT OSTB – BOCC WORK SESSION **Commissioners Meeting Room; 530 E. Main St., Aspen**

OSTB Trustees Present: Amy Barrow (Chair), Graeme Means, Michael Kinsley, Wayne Ives

BOCC Present: Jeffrey Woodruff (Chair), Kelly McNicolas Kury, Francie Jacober, Greg Poschman, Patti Clapper

Staff Present: Gary Tennenbaum, Dale Will, Kim Arensdorf, Liza Mitchell, Jessie Young, Ted O'Brien, Jami McMannes, Carly O'Connell, Rick Norman, Ryan Mahoney, Richard Neiley, Kara Silbernagle

Others Present: John Spiess, Shelly Grail, Tom Cardamone, Chris Monz, Steve Larson, Morgan Boyles. Elizabeth Boyles, Jane Poss, Sally

Media Present: Grassroots TV

The BOCC Work Session can be viewed at:

<https://pitkincounty.ompnetwork.org/embed/sessions/331872/12-16-2025-ostb-bocc-joint-meeting-12-16-2025>

Jeffrey Woodruff called the joint work session to order at 12:00 p.m.

North Star Nature Preserve (NSNP) Draft Management Plan

Jessie Young provided the management plan process, which includes

- Facilitated Working Group Meetings
 - Determined desired conditions and future management
- Public Survey and Open House
- Draft Management Plan
- OSTB & BOCC review

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- Public Survey and Input on Draft Plan

Young stated that the management plan included laws and policies, previous management plan actions and regulations, ecological monitoring, the 2024 Visitor Use Study, and input from the working groups, the public, and partners.

Liza Mitchell noted that conservation values are the core of the plan and inform desired conditions, indicators, thresholds, and goals. Conservation values include:

- River System
- Riparian Zone, Wetlands, and Beavers
- Wildlife and Habitats
- Biodiversity and Ecosystem Integrity
- Community

Young stated that NSNP provides long-term protection for biodiversity, natural ecosystem processes, landscape connectivity, and opportunities to connect with nature. Management efforts restore natural processes and promote ecological resilience in the face of challenges, including climate change, upstream water diversions, and agricultural land-use legacies. Habitat complexity across the property benefits diverse wildlife species and supports the continued provision of ecosystem services for the Roaring Fork Watershed, including flood protection, hydrological function, a wildfire fuel break, and air and water quality. North Star is managed first and foremost for ecological integrity and resilience, while allowing human presence in limited areas for environmental education, research, respectful recreation, and access to nature.

Young explained that the area west of the main river channel, otherwise known as the “Wildlife Zone,” is closed to the public and managed to benefit native flora and fauna, as well as meadow, wetland, riparian, forest, open water, and shrubland habitats.

Young noted that the river corridor supports floodplain connectivity and the development of robust riparian communities that accommodate flow variability. Beavers continue to inhabit the area, serving as ecosystem engineers that support ecological resilience. The river accommodates recreational use and river access, offering a peaceful, nature-based experience compatible with ecological values. River users arrive informed about the area’s values and regulations through accessible pre-visit and on-site information. While on the river, users exhibit behaviors that reflect environmental awareness, community connection, and responsible recreation.

Young explained that the Limited Access Zone focuses on wildlife habitat and low-impact recreation, including activities that have minimal environmental impact. Human presence is limited to designated areas to reduce disturbance and protect ecology. Access points, parking, and trails are managed for safety, education, and to promote respect and stewardship.

Carly O’Connell explained that this plan allows the river to remain dynamic through a passive management approach that supports natural geomorphological processes to maximize ecological function. To monitor the ecosystem at NSNP, comprehensive ecological indicators are used.

O'Connell explained that the plan recognizes that accessible nature experiences offer meaningful connections to the landscape. Recreational use is concentrated spatially and temporally to benefit wildlife. The biggest visitor-use challenge occurs during peak river-use days. The plan establishes safeguards and adaptive management through an indicator-and-threshold approach.

Mitchell stated that the plan addresses natural ecosystems through the following:

- Goals
 - Protect and support the overall biodiversity
 - River corridor contributes to the overall health and resilience of the ecosystem
 - Preserve wetlands, promote riparian habitat expansion
 - Maintain floodplain connectivity, high water quality, sufficient water quantity
 - Control invasive species and support diverse native habitat types
 - Provide ecosystem services
- Regulations
 - Access in designated corridors only. No leaving the trail.
 - Float-through only; no beaching except at designated access corridors
 - No dogs (except leashed on East of Aspen Trail) and no horses.
- Policies
 - West Side Public Access Closure & Designated recreation locations
 - Flow Level & River Temperature Closures
 - Downed trees
 - Nordic Use (season duration)

Mitchell provided wildlife (beavers, elk, birds, and more) attributes included in the management plan:

- Goals
 - Protect and support the overall biodiversity
 - River corridor contributes to the overall health and resilience of the ecosystem
 - Preserving wetlands, promote riparian habitat expansion
 - Maintain floodplain connectivity, high water quality, and sufficient water quantity
 - Control invasive species and support diverse native habitat types
 - Provide ecosystem services
- Regulations
 - Access in designated corridors only. No leaving the trail.
 - Float-through only; no beaching except at designated access corridors
 - No dogs (except leashed on East of Aspen Trail) and no horses.
- Policies
 - Wildlife Zone Closure, designated access areas
 - Strict enforcement
 - Beaver dams
 - Wildlife closures
 - Quite Zone
 - Nordic Use

Young explained that the goals of education and respectful user behavior are to maintain clear, consistent, and enforceable rules so that behaviors reflect environmental awareness, compliance is high, and ecological values are protected. Regulations and policies are put in place to achieve these goals. Additionally, other actions are provided, including:

- Provide naturalist/steward presence at access points during busy periods
- Facilitate and support educational programming and volunteer opportunities to build a following, maintain relationships, and foster environmental and stewardship education.
- Develop education initiatives on wildlife behavior, respectful river use, and ecological sensitivity
- Use signage to guide respectful behavior and prevent off-corridor use

O'Connell stated that to ensure the volume, type, and distribution of recreational and river use remain within a manageable and predictable range, allowing wildlife to adapt and thrive and to use the river corridor during periods of minimal recreational disturbance, key indicators should be tracked and management strategies adjusted as conditions change.

Young stated that coordinated commercial river use as a management tool will provide controlled public access that supports informed, respectful experiences, reduces parking pressure and congestion at access points, reduces private-use impacts, and enhances safety through structured scheduling, group size limits, and required education.

John Spiess commented that the City of Aspen supports the Nordic operations and has a ranger presence at NSNP.

Michael Kinsley asked how NSNP indicator species are selected and how ecological factors affect human use. Mitchell explained that indicator species are selected to represent specific habitat types and are monitored on a regular basis. O'Connell stated that the management action items address the overlap between community indicators and habitat/wildlife indicators.

Francie Jackober asked what other modes of transportation are available to shuttle at North Star. Young stated that bikes are encouraged and that staff are in talks with We-Cycle about future opportunities.

Kelly McNicolas Kury asked whether staff are collecting imagery of the river's shape to track changes and whether that affects wayfinding signage. Mitchell provided a graphic in the management plan showing how the river channel changes slightly with different flows. If a channel changes significantly, altering river flow, signage, and outreach would be deployed to direct river users.

Morgan Boyles stated that the working group did not fully examine ecological capacity. The social capacity based on the survey was based on crowding (6 people per viewscape). The clearest way to determine social capacity is through parking and the ranger/naturalist experience, he said.

Tom Cardamone thanked the staff and the working group for a thorough planning process.

Jane Poss commented on the increase in recreation and population growth, which are impacting wildlife at NSNP.

Elizabeth Boyles stated that North Star has been turned from a nature preserve to a recreational area. She noted that a study is needed to assess the impact of humans on the habitat.

Chris Monz mentioned that he reviewed all ecological monitoring studies and the recreational component. He praised the plan's approaches and the inclusion of new indicators in the visitor use strategy.

ADJOURN

The OSTB meeting of December 16, 2025, adjourned at 2:05 p.m.

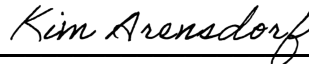
Approved:

Attest:

Signed by:




Amy Barrow, Chair
Pitkin County Open Space & Trails Board




Kim Arensdorf, Administrative Specialist
Pitkin County Open Space & Trails