

McMillan Mesa Natural Area Management Recommendations

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Discussion Topics

- Background
- Management Goals
- Management Chapter Organization

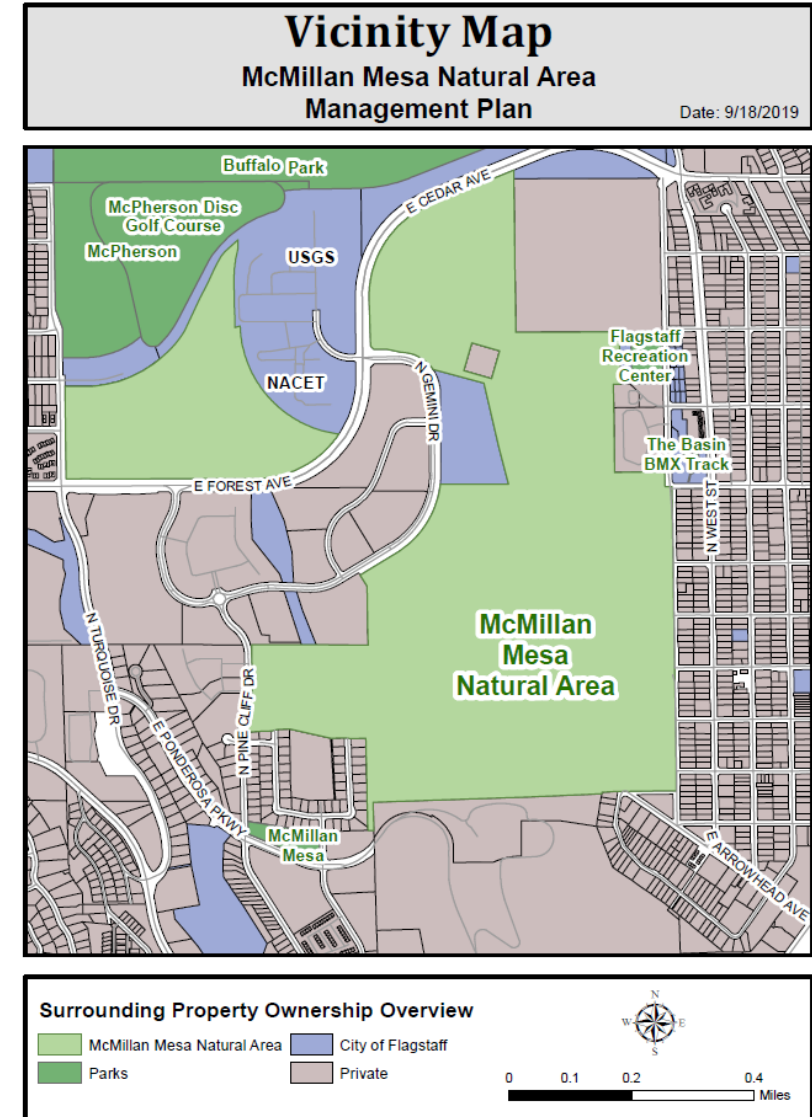




Property Background



- **1959:** The City traded land in the Inner Basin the parcels of McMillan Mesa and Buffalo Park
- **2016:** Proposition 413 protected McMillan Mesa as open space
- **2018:** The City Council approved the McMillan Mesa Natural Area major plan amendment (Resolution Number 2018-50)
- **2018:** Resolution went into effective
- **2019:** Rezone application started however the rezone requires a cultural study, which is not funded
- **2020:** Request Funding for cultural survey





Management Goals

1. Ecosystem health
2. Cultural resources
3. Wildlife populations
4. Sustainable public use
5. Partnerships





Management Organization

1. Property Overview
2. Natural Resources
 - Water Resources
 - Vegetative Resources
 - Forest and Grassland Health
 - Wildlife Resources
3. Cultural and Historic Resources
4. Public Use
 - Access Management
 - Recreational Use
 - Roads
 - Easements and Leases
 - Education and Research
 - Facility Development
5. Priority Action List





Natural Resources - Water Resources

- **Current Conditions:**

- Very little designated floodplain/floodway
- Steep eastern slope has drainage and erosion issues as a result of runoff

- **Management Goal:**

- Maintain or improve surface and ground water quality, surface water flow, ground water levels, and overall watershed health

- **Management Policies:**

- Manage forest resources, stabilize soils, minimize erosion

- **Potential Improvements/Projects:**

- Drainage facility at the bottom of the eastern hill near Coconino High School/Izabel Street
- Work with Flagstaff Urban Trails System staff to ensure continuous maintenance of the FUTS drainage control structures



Natural Resources - Vegetative Resources



- **Current Conditions:**

- Grassland habitat with significant biodiversity in grasses, forbs, cacti, and shrubs
- Significant populations of invasive weeds (Scotch thistle, diffuse knapweed, toadflax)
- Sensitive plant species within/surrounding the property – need to survey

- **Management Goal:**

- Restore and enhance the native plant communities present on the site while also reducing invasive species populations.

- **Management Policies:**

- Prohibit livestock grazing, consider sensitive plant species in planning projects, reduce invasive weed populations

- **Potential Improvements/Projects:**

- Invasive species survey, mapping, and mitigation
- Native plant walk and brochure
- Monitor recreation to prevent and mitigate the formation of unauthorized trails



Natural Resources - Forest & Grassland Health

- **Current Conditions:**

- Grassland habitat with significant understory biodiversity
- Small treed areas – eastern slope and northwest portion of the parcel

- **Management Goal:**

- Actively managed to achieve forest and grassland structures resilient to wildfire and resistant to other disturbances

- **Management Policies:**

- Establish heterogeneous forest structure, reduce the risk of wildfire
- Protect the grassland from tree encroachment
- Implement thinning and broadcast burning operations based on input and in partnership with the Flagstaff Fire Department

- **Potential Improvements/Projects:**

- Survey treed areas to guide stewardship needs
- Maintain existing grassland



Natural Resources - Wildlife Resources

- **Current Conditions:**

- Lots of diversity in habitats – grassland, rocky outcrops, treed areas
- Human/Wildlife conflicts need to be mitigated
- Game Management Unit 11M - all hunting (including archery) is not permitted within McMillan Mesa Natural Area. Due to its status as Municipal Park
- Special status species identified within and surrounding the Natural Area

- **Management Goal:**

- Maintain and enhance a diversity of habitats that support native wildlife species. Emphasis will be placed on the protection of rare habitat types and special-status species

- **Management Policies:**

- Protect rocky outcrops, protect prairie dog colonies, maintain diversity in wildlife habitats

- **Potential Improvements/Projects:**

- Identify ways to reduce conflicts between humans and wildlife e.g. additional signs along Cedar, motion triggered signs
- Work with partners to maintain sensitive wildlife species



Cultural and Historical Resources

- **Current Conditions:**

- Cultural resources: petroglyphs, grinding slicks, lithic scatter
- Historic resources: Beale Wagon Road

- **Management Goal:**

- Preserve, protect, and interpret the cultural and historic resources

- **Management Policies:**

- Avoid conflicts with historic and cultural resources, monitor resource conditions

- **Potential Improvements/Projects:**

- Complete a cultural survey of the Natural Area to identify cultural resource locations.
- Consider developing interpretive materials e.g. Beale Wagon Road, Knob Hill Ranger Station, Forest Service land exchange



Public Use



Permitted and Prohibited Recreational Uses of McMillan Mesa Natural Area

Permitted Uses	Prohibited Uses
Cross Country Skiing	Campfires
Geocaching	Camping
Hiking/Running	Fuelwood Collection (except with permit)
Stargazing	Off Highway Vehicles/Driving
Snow Shoeing	Hunting/Firearm Use
Mountain Biking	Flying model aircraft, such as drones, airplanes, or rockets. (except with permit)
Nature Study/Environmental Education	Horseback riding
Wildlife Watching	Large-Scale Activities/Events (except with express written approval from the Open Space Program)



Public Use - Access Management

- **Current Conditions:**

- Parking and non-motorized access opportunities (FUTS trails, major roads, public transit)
- Parking available at Buffalo Park – 45 spaces; maintained by Parks

- **Management Goal:**

- Ensure reasonable public access for parking and non-motorized recreational activities

- **Management Policies:**

- Consider impacts to adjacent neighborhoods when planning additional access

- **Potential Improvements/Projects:**

- Investigate additional parking opportunities; design orientation kiosk for access points
- Assess trail system and identify areas for improvement
- Investigate opportunities to work with FUTS to achieve accessible and/or ADA compliant access and trails
- Work with BASIS to resolve issues related parking at N Manzanita Way and N Hemlock Way



Public Use - Recreational Use

- **Current Conditions:**

- Significant existing trail system throughout the property (FUTS and AZ Trail)

- **Management Goal:**

- Provide a wide variety of developed and dispersed day-use recreational opportunities

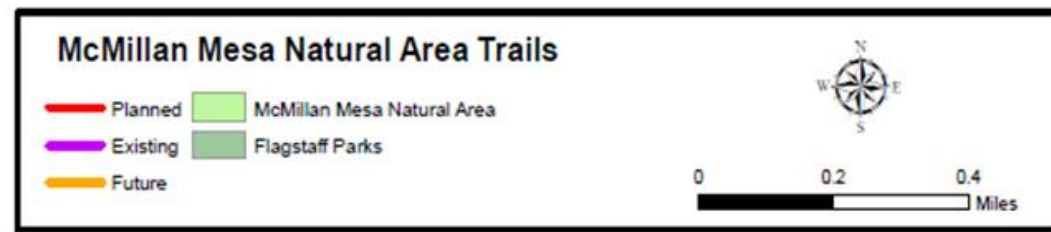
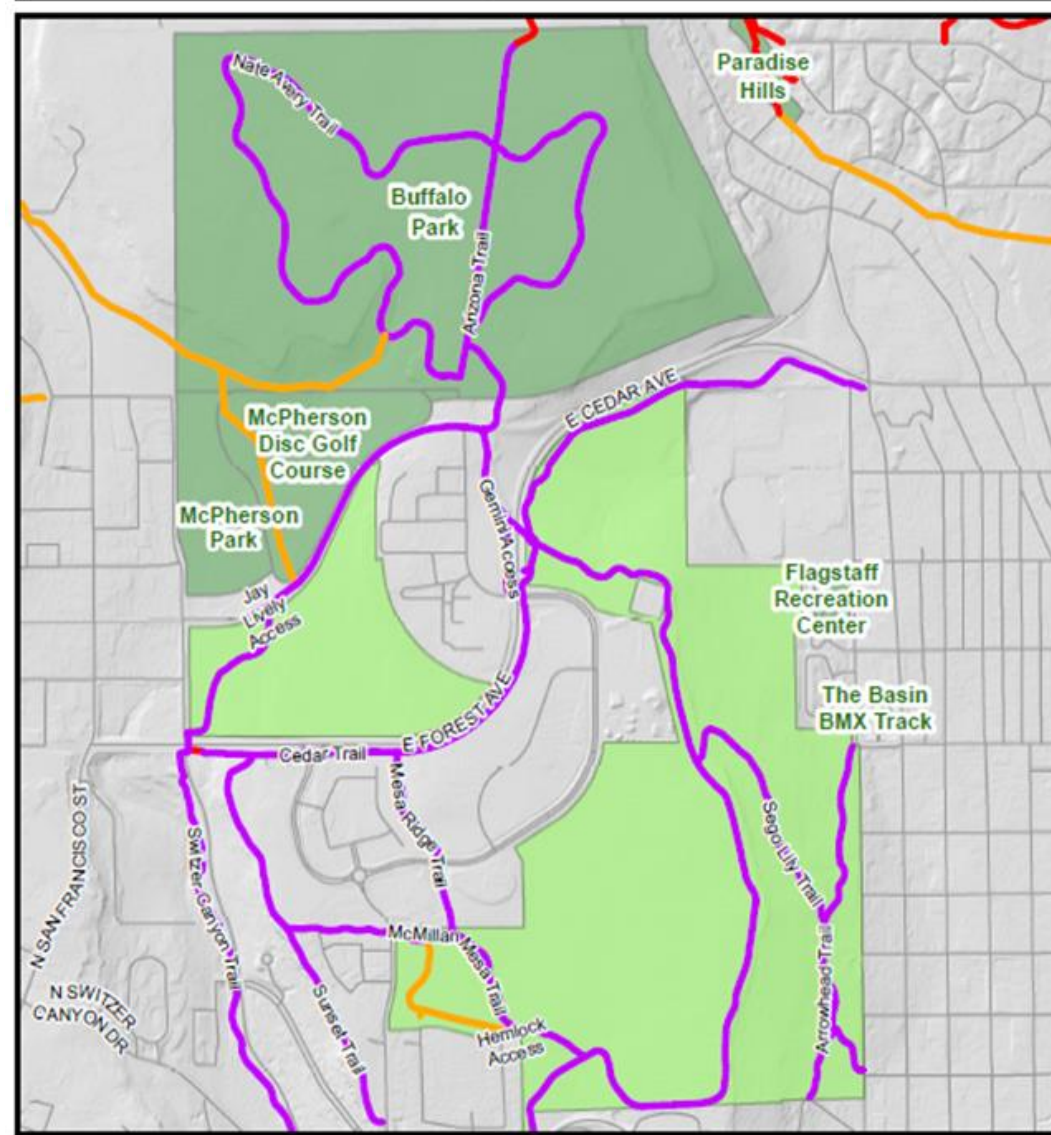
- **Management Policies:**

- Limit developed recreation opportunities to preserve the scenic resources
- Manage dispersed recreation to minimize soil compaction and impacts to wildlife forage
- Dogs on leash

- **Potential Improvements/Projects:**

- Develop interpretive signs; realign portion of Cedar Trail; decommission user-created trails; modify some trails to be ADA compliant

Public Use - Recreational Use





Public Use - Roads

- **Current Conditions:**

- Major roads surrounding the property but no roads within it

- **Management Goal:**

- Reduce motorized travel within these properties

- **Management Policies:**

- FUTS available for City vehicles to complete administrative uses
- Prohibit vehicles within the property/eliminate unauthorized vehicle trespass

- **Potential Improvements/Projects:**

- Natural barriers to block off unauthorized access points
- Work with APS to restore soil and vegetation surrounding their parcel



Public Use - Easement and Leases

- **Current Conditions:**

- City holds utility easements for water infrastructure for surrounding neighborhoods (e.g. water lines, valves)

- **Management Goal:**

- Manage for non-consumptive, sustainable uses

- **Management Policies:**

- City Water Services Department retains access to their easement areas for maintenance, improvements, etc.
- Renew non-perpetual easements that do not impact conservation values
- Use existing easements and reservations to the extent practical
- Prohibit commercial or industrial uses

- **Potential Improvements/Projects:**

- Ensure that ground-disturbing activities associated with easements and leases are coordinated with the Open Space Program



Public Use - Education and Research

- **Current Conditions:**

- Unknown whether the property is used for educational opportunities or research
- Adjacent to BASIS and Coconino High School – potential to use as an outdoor classroom

- **Management Goal:**

- Provide diverse educational and research opportunities

- **Management Policies:**

- Include property in “Education and Research Permit” process

- **Potential Improvements/Projects:**

- Partner with adjacent schools and local organizations to provide educational and research opportunities for their classrooms



Public Use – Facilities Development

- **Current Conditions:**

- Extensive FUTS trail network and associated infrastructure (trail signs, trash cans)

- **Management Goal:**

- Provide facilities that enhance visitor's experience

- **Management Policies:**

- Cluster facilities to areas that are already developed to reduce impacts to the interior portion of the property

- **Potential Improvements/Projects:**

- Investigate the need for an additional parking area and/or bathroom facilities
- Install additional signage (trail signs, directional signs, kiosks, interpretive signs)



Priority Action List – McMillan Mesa

Action	Estimated Cost	Funding Source
Conduct a cultural survey of the property	\$17,500	FY 2021 budget process.
McMillan Mesa Natural Area Enhancements	\$250,000	Funding has not been identified for this project.
Expansion of Experiential Educational Curriculum for FUSD Teachers	\$25,000	Funding has not been identified for this project.
Invasive plant management	\$12,500	Currently not funded.

Moving Forward

Staff will return to City Council to formally adopt the Chapter into the Legally Designated Open Space Management Plan

- Provides a philosophical framework for managing McMillan Mesa
- Prioritizes improvement project
- Identifies needed maintenance



Questions?

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