

FRIENDS

of the *Outdoors*

Trails and Open Space Coalition

What do outdoors enthusiasts need to have in order to keep the Pikes Peak region a place really worth living?

They need the Trails and Open Space Coalition (TOSC)—an organization that has been preserving open space and rural land, and creating a network of trails, bikeways, greenways, and wildlife corridors throughout the Pikes Peak region for the past twenty years.

With the dedicated help of our membership (over 1,100 individuals, families, partner organizations, and city and county agencies), we have brought in millions of dollars for trails and open space to the region—resulting in thousands of acres of preserved land and hundreds of miles of trails and bikeways in the area.

We do this through advocacy, education, project funding and volunteer programs. At TOSC, this means working to protect precious land parcels, like the popular Manitou Section 16 or the top of gorgeous Cheyenne Mountain—before they're developed—by mobilizing the public with a preservation strategy.

It means connecting trails so you don't have to cross busy roads on your family bike ride, or making sure that view of the Peak you enjoy every day on your way to work stays that way.

If you're not already familiar with the Trails and Open Space Coalition, chances are good that you've enjoyed some of its accomplishments over the past few years. Beautiful areas like Red Rock Canyon, Stratton Open Space, Blodgett Peak and Austin Bluffs Open Space were all preserved by TOSC-led efforts.

Maybe you and your family have joined our wildly popular summer event—the Starlight Spectacular midnight bike ride in and around the Garden of the Gods. (This year's event is on June 17th—mark your calendars now!)

Or, perhaps, you've noticed improvements on bike trails in the area, such as the Cottonwood, Rock Island and Sand Creek Trails, or you've been able to ride longer as trails continue to be extended.

Within the past two years, TOSC has successfully advocated for \$5 million of the Rural Transportation

Authority (RTA) monies to be allocated to the Pikes Peak Greenway, the popular north/south corridor that many residents have enjoyed since they were children.

Many of us here in El Paso County and the surrounding region have been affected by the area's explosive growth in recent years—whether it is by seeing our favorite open spaces disappear, searching for parking in jam-packed trailhead lots, or cycling on heavily-congested roads—and have wondered what we could do.

Members of TOSC have gotten involved by tracking the local trails and open space issues facing our community, or by discovering new trails on our seasonal hike series.

Our members form the backbone of the Trails and Open Space Coalition, from providing help with mailings, to financial support, to dropping by the office and giving us updates on what they are seeing out on the trails. But, most importantly, our hope for our members, and for those of you we haven't yet met, is that you are out there appreciating what comes naturally to this area—its beauty.

