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DENVER
PARKS & RECREATION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Denver International Airport Expands Land Overseen by Denver Parks and Recreation *Prairie Grasslands to Benefit from Juncture*

DENVER – Feb. 6, 2023 – At 53 square miles, Denver International Airport (DEN) is the largest airport in the U.S. by land size, and the second largest airport in the world. Within that space are hundreds of acres of native prairie grasslands, including some of the most intact remnant parcels of historic prairie land that exist in Denver today.

Denver Parks and Recreation (DPR) previously oversaw, managed and maintained 198 acres of DEN’s prairie grasslands. An expanded Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which began Jan. 14, increased the area managed by DPR to approximately 580 acres located in the Peña Scenic Buffer, along Second Creek, north of Peña Boulevard at Tower Road, and at the property line between DEN and the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge. This acreage is the largest open space in the City and County of Denver – approximately twice the size of City Park, the largest park in Denver. This area includes First Creek and Second Creek, two waterways home to diverse habitats that support a wide range of wildlife species including nesting bald eagles.

DPR’s management of additional acreage will benefit the airport and surrounding communities in a variety of ways, including carbon sequestration, soil health, erosion control, noxious weed control and treatment, prairie grassland restoration, and maintenance of DEN’s multi-use trail system. Grassland restoration could eventually include the use of DEN compost to assist reseeding.

“One of the guiding principles of [Vision 100](#), our strategic plan, is to become the greenest airport in the world,” said DEN CEO Phil Washington. “By utilizing Denver Parks and Recreation’s knowledge and understanding of prairie grasslands, our airport is better equipped to sustainably enhance the nature and wildlife that exists on DEN property.”

“The vision for managing this natural resource would not be possible without the support of our partners at Denver International Airport,” said Happy Haynes, executive director of Denver Parks & Recreation. “Combining the natural resource management of Denver Parks & Recreation with airport land allows for the management of the currently largest open space in our city and protects its natural resources, including vegetation and wildlife.”

Through this partnership, DEN will pursue grant funding to connect a regional multimodal trail system to the airport. The partnership will enhance equity initiatives that increase access to the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge through Montbello and the Far Northeast – neighborhoods that are primarily made up of communities of color. Bison, nesting eagles, burrowing owls and black footed ferrets are among the wildlife within the Refuge. DEN and DPR are also exploring ways the partnership can create an opportunity to restart conversations with the Refuge to expand the bison habitat east onto DEN land.

“Open space is so important for our wellbeing to recharge, exercise and experience the environmental benefits,” said Stacie Gilmore, City Councilwoman District 11. “The significant expansion of the DEN at First Creek Open Space by approximately 380 acres, creates connections to our trail system and the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge for communities that have been historically forgotten or excluded from the natural world.”

Denver International Airport is the third-busiest airport in the world. DEN is the primary economic engine for the state of Colorado, generating more than \$33 billion for the region annually. For more information visit www.FlyDenver.com, check us out on [YouTube](#) and [Instagram](#), like us on [Facebook](#) and follow us on [Twitter](#). Sign up for DEN’s [monthly newsletter Nonstop News](#).

Denver Parks & Recreation: As stewards of a legacy park system, Denver Parks and Recreation (DPR) is dedicated to customer service and enhancing the health of residents and the environment through innovative programs and safe, beautiful and sustainable places. The DPR system includes 30 recreation centers and nearly 20,000 acres of urban and mountain parkland including off-street trails, parkways and natural areas. For more information, visit www.denvergov.org/parksandrecreation, check us out on [YouTube](#), like us on [Facebook](#) and follow us on [Twitter](#)

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