Trail talk: Heritage Series will eye future of trails in Colorado Springs, Pikes Peak region

By: Susan Davies Special to The Gazette
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You are invited on a journey through the past, present and future of local trails and open space - and you won't even have to break a sweat.

El Pomar Foundation begins its Heritage Series on May 13, and the main headline will be "Pikes Peak Region Trails and Open Space."

Gov. John Hickenlooper and Lise Aangeenbrug, executive director of Great Outdoors Colorado, will set the stage by laying out exciting initiatives that could confirm Colorado as the top trail destination in the country.

The state's trail reputation has roots that stretch back more than 100 years. Trails and parks were a central component of Gen. William Jackson Palmer's vision for a healthy community when he founded Colorado Springs.

During the Heritage Series, visitors will learn how Fremont County is creating trails to attract "adventure tourists" and add dollars to its economy. Spectacular images of the proposed Ring the Peak Trail should get everyone's hiking boots twitching. And local and state "trail visionaries" will provide updates on the projects underway, paint a picture of what's possible in the near future and detail the bigger challenges that await.
Representatives from the U.S. Forest Service, Colorado Springs Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services, and Colorado Parks and Wildlife will present their unique perspectives. This is possibly the first trails program of its kind in Colorado, and it's free to attend. The only requirement is that you make a reservation online at elpomar.org/programs/pikes-peak-recreation-tourism-heritage-series/may-13-rsvp.

The program runs from 3 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. at the Penrose House, with a reception immediately following.

Trail update

The latest news on the New Santa Fe Regional Trail is not hopeful.

After initial assurances that the 7-mile stretch through the Air Force Academy would reopen by late spring or early summer, recent information from Lt. Gen. Michelle Johnson, the academy's superintendent, indicates it could be the end of summer before it reopens to the general public.

And there's no explanation why.

Perhaps it's time to seriously consider a new route that would remove the region's major spine trail (also part of Front Range Trail) from academy property. Since public dollars paid for that stretch of trail, and now it is essentially a private trail at the academy, perhaps AFA would help finance an alternative trail that commuters and recreation users can rely on.

- Davies is the executive director of the Trails and Open Space Coalition. Read her columns on the fourth Thursday of each month in Out There.