

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Colorado State Forest Service Success Story

High Priority Forest Restoration and Fuels Mitigation Grant



The concept of a mountain park system was first presented to the Denver Chamber in 1910. In 1912, a special mill levy was passed to fund land acquisition, and the city began negotiations to acquire Genesee Park, now the system's largest park at 2,413 acres. Bison were located in Genesee in 1914, and the herd now grazes on 730 acres in the park. By the end of the 1930s, Denver had 46 mountain parks, 22 of which are now developed. The remaining properties are conservation/wilderness areas without facilities. Denver Mountain Parks manages 14,141 acres of land.

In 1996, Denver began assessing the condition of the mountain park forests. Since that time, forest restoration work has been occurring. Fire mitigation and forest restoration projects on adjacent federal, state and private lands have leveraged the overall success and benefits of work being done on parks land. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act is funding work in Genesee Park, Pence Mountain Park and Lookout Mountain Park.

The 112-acre Genesee Park Project is just north of Interstate 70. In the absence of fire, Douglas-fir trees have encroached on the ponderosa pine and have created a thick understory, particularly on north-facing hillsides. The forest restoration project focuses primarily on thinning the over-abundance of young trees and removing diseased trees.

Lookout Mountain Park is west of Golden. Twenty-five acres on the steep north side of the park have been thinned to increase the space between tree tops and remove trees in poor health. As a side benefit, visitors now have a better view from roadside pullouts.

Pence Mountain Park is an undeveloped park south of Interstate 70 that is available to hikers. At some point in the past 20 years, small patches of trees were cleared adjacent to the park road. Lodgepole pine seedlings sprouted in the cleared areas and are now Christmas-tree sized. Unfortunately, the older, dwarf mistletoe-infected lodgepole pine trees on the periphery of the cut area are infecting the young trees. The 55-acre treatment area will reduce the number of dwarf mistletoe-infected trees and encourage aspen suckering.



A. Perri



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Denver Mountain Parks used American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds to hire Andy Perri, who is responsible for updating portions of previously written forest management plans and developing a plan for Lookout Mountain Park. In the field, Perri's task is to set up and administer the forest health and restoration work in the three parks.

Perri, originally from Georgia, received his bachelor's degree in recreation resource management at the University of Georgia in 2000. Five years later, he earned a master's degree in forest sciences from Colorado State University. As a former assistant district forester with the Golden District of the Colorado State

Forest Service, Perri was familiar with Denver Mountain Parks and had set up and administered forest management projects for the parks. Perri's past experience allowed him to hit the ground running.

"We are very appreciative of the ARRA grant. It has allowed us to hire Andy as our mountain parks forester. With approximately 90 percent of our 14,141 acres forested, it is imperative that we have an active management program and manager in place to deal with the health of our trees," said Dick Gannon, Mountain Parks superintendent. "That Andy already was familiar with Denver Mountain Parks was an added benefit."

Swingle Lawn, Tree and Landscape Care was awarded the tree-cutting contract. Traditionally an urban tree-care company, in 2010, Swingle expanded business operations to include forest care. The company takes pride in employee retention and gives awards to employees who maintain a good safety record throughout the year.

A crew of three cut trees in Genesee Park on a brisk March day. Dan Collins, crew supervisor, recently returned from two years in his home state of New York. Smiling, he said he was happy to be back. Collins has worked for Swingle four years, and as the crew supervisor, he's had the opportunity to bid on jobs.

Brian Bostdorf also has been with Swingle nearly four years. When asked what he saw himself doing in five years, he said "hopefully working here." Steve Pitts has worked for Swingle off and on for seven years. He's attending community college while he works and aspires to be involved in professional sports team management.

In August, the crew of three had expanded four-fold to complete the project at Pence Mountain. At the far end of the project, the trees had been cut and crew members were feeding branches into the chipper. Half a football field away, another group of employees dragged limbs and tree tops to the road and stacked them for chipping. Saws could be heard in the distance where the remaining crewmembers were cutting trees.

Dan Collins was not the crew supervisor at Pence because he recently was accepted into a master's program in business administration. He continues to work at Swingle as a part-time employee while completing his degree.

