

Land swap in park wins House OK

Measure mitigates conflict for ranch, RMNP visitors

By **BILL THEOBALD**

Gannett News Service

WASHINGTON — A longtime conflict between hikers and climbers in Rocky Mountain National Park and a historic ranch on park property could finally be over.

The Rocky Mountain National Park Boundary Adjustment Act, passed Tuesday by the House of Representatives, approves the swap of 5.9 acres of the MacGregor Ranch for 70 acres of park land on the east side.

That will allow for construction of a new, larger parking lot for the Twin Owls and Gem Lake trailheads.

The current lot for the Twin Owls trail holds at most 30 cars, said Larry Gamble, chief of planning and compliance at the park.

Through the years, overflow vehicles would have parked along the private road to the lot, which cuts through MacGregor Ranch, said Eric Adams, executive director of the trust that operates the ranch. The traffic and parked cars created safety problems. When fences were put up along the road, Adams said people moved them or parked along a nearby county road.

The new lot, east of the existing Twin Owls lot, will

have 80 spaces, Gamble said.

Gamble said the Twin Owls trail is popular for hikers headed to Black Canyon and rock climbers headed to Lumpy Ridge.

MacGregor Ranch is a 132-year-old cattle ranch operated as an educational institution to demonstrate turn-of-the-century ranch life. Adams said the ranch has 3,000 to 5,000 visitors a year, mostly schoolchildren.

Rep. Marilyn Musgrave, R-Fort Morgan, sponsored the bill passed by a voice vote Tuesday. An identical Senate version introduced by Sen. Wayne Allard, R-Colo., passed earlier. The legislation now goes to President Bush for his signature.

Gamble said following the land swap, work on the new parking lot and trailhead could begin in the fall of 2006. Funding for the work, expected to cost about \$600,000, already has been approved, he said.

On the Internet

- **Rocky Mountain National Park:**
www.nps.gov/romo
- **MacGregor Ranch:**
www.macgregorranch.org

Fl. Collins Coloradoan

Oct. 19, 2005

B1