



Larimer County
Department of Natural Resources
Parks & Visitor Services / Open Lands /
Weed Management & Forestry

Annual Report 2007

Our Vision

- *Building partnerships*
- *Being customer driven*
- *Empowering people to take responsibility*
- *Being a fulfilling and enjoyable place to work*
- *Being a good steward of public resources*



A message from the Director

Leading Change

Dear Larimer County Citizens,

The 2007 Annual Report supports our promise to every day do our best to improve the lives of our citizens and visitors to Larimer County.

After a rigorous year developing the new Parks Master Plan, the Parks Task Force graduated into an active Parks Advisory Board. A major emphasis in the coming years will be the implementation of the plan, delivering needed improvements to our popular public access sites.

The purchases of additional open space at Hermit Park and Red Mountain have highlighted our acquisition efforts this year. Management plans are underway

Larimer County government officials

Board of County Commissioners:
Glenn Gibson, Kathay Rennels, Randy Eubanks
County Manager: Frank Lancaster
Public Works Director: Marc Engemoen

and these areas are scheduled to open to the public in 2008 and 2009. The Open Lands Advisory Board continues to assist staff and the County Commissioners in land acquisitions and development of open space properties. Excitement is building for future work on the Poudre River Trail near Windsor which will eventually connect to Fort Collins.

The Land Stewardship Program continues to meet the needs of citizens at a customer service *store front* location in central Larimer County. Staff and the citizen-represented Weed Advisory Board are currently updating the Weed Management Plan. The Forestry Program faces a new challenge with the mountain pine beetle epidemic which is moving into the County. An aggressive education program is underway to respond to citizen landowner questions and concerns.



Management team with Larimer County Commissioners. Top from left: Deb Wykoff, Tim D'Amato, Gary Buffington, Marc Engemoen, Dan Rieves, Mark Caughlan, K-Lynn Cameron. Bottom from left: Randy Eubanks, Kathay Rennels, Glenn Gibson. Photo: Charlie Johnson

Together, with citizen boards, volunteers, staff, and the Board of County Commissioners we will work diligently through effective leadership and positive change to meet the future needs of Larimer County.

Gary K. Buffington
Director, Dept. of Natural Resources

Volunteering: A Priceless Experience

We all reside in Larimer County because we know it is, quite simply, one of the best, if not THE BEST place on Earth to live, work, play, and raise a family. We are surrounded by majestic views and unparalleled natural resources accompanied by 300+ days of sunshine. How could life be any better? Let us offer an option.

The Department of Natural Resources offers two dozen different volunteer opportunities for Larimer County citizens. The benefits to our parks and open lands (27,000 hours contributed in 2007 alone!) are the tip of the proverbial iceberg. When you volunteer with Larimer County, the personal benefits you receive may improve and extend your life!

People who involve themselves in the community and are socially active are



Larimer County volunteers helped tell the story of the Sylvan Dale Ranch conservation easement. Photo: Jim Disney

two to five times less likely to suffer heart disease. Additionally, walking a mile will, on average, add 21 minutes to a person's life. Families that recreate together report greater stability and satisfaction. Need yet another reason to volunteer? Regular volunteer work increases life expectancy more than any other activity!

It's easy to see, for these reasons and more, why residents give back again and again. Do well for yourself and your community – Volunteer for your parks and open lands!

To learn more visit
<http://www.larimer.org/naturalresources/volunteers/index.htm>

“I find volunteer work very rewarding. It keeps me and my mind active; I don't feel my age. Volunteering is a definite part of my life and I enjoy every minute.” Bob Kreycik, Volunteer Naturalist, (Real Age 80 – Feels 60)

1	2
3	
4	5

- Cover:
1. Red Mountain Open Space, Charlie Johnson
2. Red Mountain Open Space, Charlie Johnson
3. Sylvan Dale, Gregory Mayse
4. Devil's Backbone Open Space, Sharon Veit
5. Carter Lake Reservoir, John Salas

15 Months at Hermit Park Open Space – From Protection to Public Opening

Larimer County Natural Resources purchased Hermit Park Open Space in February 2007, and it will open to the public even before the printing of this report, in May 2008! It goes to show a lot can happen in 15 months and we have been extraordinarily busy to ensure this unique property opens to visitors as soon as possible. Ever wonder what it takes to open a property to the public?

Here's a glimpse at what we've been doing:

In February 2007, the County acquired Hermit Park Open Space, an existing private recreation area, thus preserving the site forever and paving the way for public recreation opportunities. The acquisition of an open space is just the beginning! In a whirlwind of activity, similar to assembling all the funding partners to buy the land, the Department put together a technical advisory team to assist in developing the management plan.

A series of public site visits and meetings were held to share the site's incredible natural and cultural resource values and hear desires for the stewardship of these resources and recreational amenities. The emerging management vision for Hermit Park Open Space is to provide a *backcountry* experience in a *front country* location where visitors can enjoy unparalleled recreation opportunities in a sustainable manner within the natural environment.

The adopted management plan includes a long-term recreation master plan for such future amenities as five additional camper cabins, trailheads, trails, improved facilities at the group use area, a visitor center, equestrian camping, and 19 additional campsites. Since the plan's adoption, we have been working tirelessly to construct the phase I facilities – many of which are required when converting a property from private to public ownership, and ready the site for a May 2008, opening.



A Crocker Ranch cowboy's line-shack at Hermit Park Open Space. Photo: Walt Hubis

Maybe you were one of the visitors who rented a cabin in fall 2007 during our *soft opening*, providing us an opportunity to learn what to expect and offering cabin visitors a chance to get a sneak peek of the site. If not, come visit Hermit Park Open Space now and help celebrate your newest Larimer County open space!

For more information visit <http://www.larimer.org/naturalresources/hermitpark.htm>



*Hiking among the golden "quakies"
Photo: Charlie Johnson*

“Hewlett Packard and Agilent Technologies protected Hermit Park for many years. The gracious donation of time and money from many individuals and groups as well as the swiftness of this purchase indicates the value of Hermit Park Open Space to everyone involved. It is a great testament of what dedication and energy around a common purpose can accomplish. Well done!”

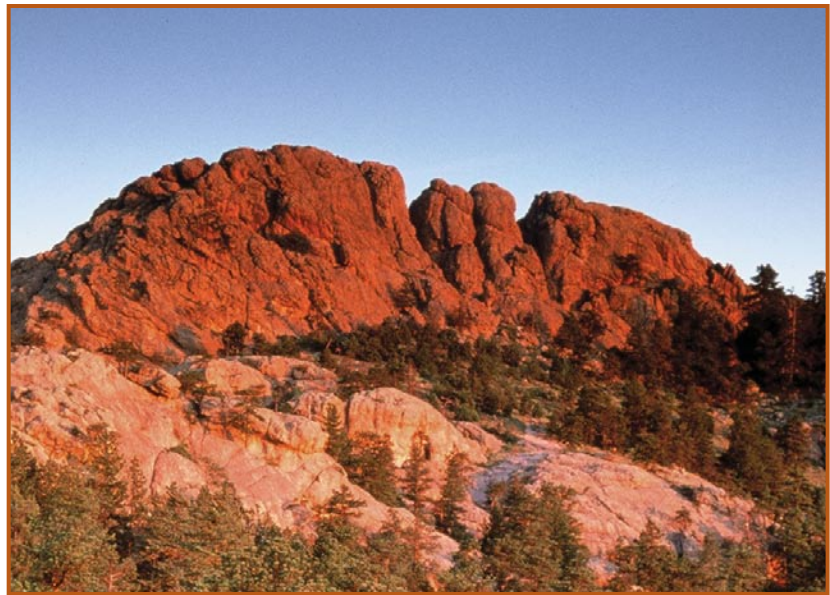
*Kathay Rennels,
County Commissioner District 1*

Preserving an Icon

All you need to do is look west towards the foothills from almost any location in eastern Larimer County and you will likely see one of northern Colorado's most popular icons. Horsetooth Rock is a familiar landmark and those 95,000 people a year who hike to its peak are rewarded with impressive views across the eastern plains and over much of the northern Front Range.

On a clear day you can see Pikes Peak to the south, Longs Peak and Rocky Mountain National Park to the west, Wyoming to the north, and the Great Plains to the east. Views of Horsetooth Rock dominate the viewshed of the greater Fort Collins area; for this reason, Horsetooth Rock is commonly used as an icon or logo for area agencies and private groups.

To help improve access and visitor experience to Horsetooth Mountain Park, home to Horsetooth Rock, the trailhead was redesigned and enhanced in 2007. The redesign provides an aesthetically pleasing entrance and better



Sunlight enhancing Horsetooth Rock overlooking Fort Collins. Photo: Unknown

traffic alternative to the previous trailhead. Improvements to the trailhead include a trail entry plaza, kiosk, picnic shelters, walkways, entrance sign, and entrance station. These improvements will help ensure the protection and enjoyment of Horsetooth Rock for future generations.



A visitor seizing one of many recreation opportunities available on the County's multi-use trails. Photo: Kelley Savage

Ruby of a Gem at Red Mountain Open Space!

Red Mountain Open Space just got better and even redder. In 2007, Larimer County Open Lands Program purchased 1,480 acres representing one of the final

inholdings in the open space. This critical parcel will be the location for the future trailhead and a southern trail connection between Red Mountain

Open Space and the City of Fort Collins' Soapstone Prairie Natural Area.

Part of the highly successful Foothills Mountains to Plains Project that to date has protected over 55,000 acres of lands boasting high quality ecological and cultural resources, this inholding has

significant resources in its own right. In addition, this parcel is a key piece in the recreational plan for the open space. Tucked in from the elements and out of sight of the long views, the trailhead will provide parking for 30 vehicles and 10 horse trailers and include an outdoor classroom, educational displays, and picnic shelters.

Characterized by a large sweeping valley rising to low hills on its western flank and forming a steep hogback to the east, this area represents a true gateway to one of Larimer County's open space jewels. Future visitors arriving at the open space, planned to open in June 2009, will certainly get the royal treatment!



Pristine landscapes at Red Mountain Open Space will enchant future visitors. Photo: Gregory Mayse

The Great Outdoors Delivered!

The Great Outdoors Colorado Trust Fund awarded the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources grants for both Hermit Park Open Space and Horsetooth Reservoir County Park. The Hermit Park Open Space grant for \$100,000 will combine with other funds to upgrade a second campground. The campground will accommodate additional sites for visitor enjoyment. Hermit Park is the first public use park and open space managed by the Department in the Estes Valley. Citizens and visitors will be provided with a truly fabulous outdoor experience offering numerous recreational experiences from camping in a rustic cabin to hiking to Kruger Rock.

Another GOCO grant for \$695,000 will be used to implement the new 2007 Parks Master Plan at Horsetooth Reservoir County Park. Over the next three years, five high-priority projects

will be constructed providing visitors with two new shower buildings, additional campsites with full hookups, an outdoor classroom, a new group picnic area, improvements to the swim beach at South Bay, a new swim beach on the east side of the reservoir, and trail work at the Rotary climbing area. The GOCO grant provides a needed boost to priority projects identified in the new Parks Master Plan.



The new Carter Lake Marina Store nears completion. Photo: Sue Burke

A New Front Door at Carter Lake!

Plans are underway to build a new marina at Carter Lake County Park. The new marina will serve as the *front door* to the lake, creating an atmosphere that visitors will carry over into their recreational experience. The new marina will include a convenience store with boating and camping supplies, and food in a nautical setting. An elevated deck overlooking the lake will offer fantastic views. Please join us in 2008 to celebrate this new beginning.

From the Chair of the Parks Advisory Board

Parks Program: New, Improved, and in Progress

The newly constituted Larimer County Parks Advisory Board met for the first time in June 2007. Nine of the 11-member board served on the Parks Master Plan Task Force, which had just completed more than a year of work with staff to update the Parks Master Plan and Resource Management Plan for the next decade.

Since its inception, the Board has monitored plans to implement high priority improvements identified in the Master Plan, including the new Carter Lake marina, set to open summer 2008, and new camping facilities at Horsetooth Reservoir. Other important topics under consideration have included coordination with the Open Lands Program in the opening of Hermit Park Open Space to the public, public access to the Big Thompson River, and the transfer

of Horsetooth Mountain Park to the Open Lands Program. The Board also continues to learn about the revenue and budgetary issues facing the Natural Resources Department.

I know I speak for all members when I say we look forward to the coming year and continuing to help address important issues involving Larimer County parks.

Linda Knowlton

Linda Knowlton,
Chair, Parks Advisory Board

“The Larimer County Parks Board is very pleased with the ten-year master plan, adopted in 2007, and the immediate progress that has taken place. We are truly excited for the facilities and services that will be coming to Larimer County residents.”

Rich Harter, Parks Advisory Board Member



A special thanks to our **Parks Advisory Board Members**. Top from left: Barry Lewis, Tom Miller, *Mark Caughlan, Dave Coulson, Frank Cada, *Dan Rieves, Russell Fruits, *Gary Buffington. Front from left: *Debra Wykoff, Linda Knowlton, Rob Harris, Rich Harter, Ivan Andrade, Chad LaChance. * = Staff
Photo: Sue Burke

Getting Out and About in Your Parks and Open Spaces!

Carter Lake

Carter Lake, in a foothills valley just southwest of Loveland, has it all with motor boating, water skiing, sailing, fishing, rock climbing, scuba diving, swimming, and hiking. There is tent camping, as well as electric and non-electric campsites, where you can relax by the campfire after enjoying all those activities and soak up the beautiful scenery.



Devil's Backbone and Rimrock Open Space

This very popular area, just two miles west of Loveland, has seven miles of hiking trails through foothills valleys and along the spectacular Devil's Backbone rock formation. A link to the Blue Sky Trail allows backcountry visitors to travel on to Rimrock Open Space, Horsetooth Mountain Park, and Coyote Ridge Natural Area. Restoring native grasses and other habitat improvements are annual projects. The Devil's Backbone is often transformed into an outdoor classroom for area schools and individuals who join naturalist-led hikes.



Eagle's Nest Open Space

Eagle's Nest gives visitors incredible views across Livermore Valley to the high country and north to red sandstone mesas. Five miles of trails run through rolling grasslands down to the North Fork of the Poudre River. Eagle's Nest is managed for recreation, wildlife, and ranching, with cattle grazing alongside the trails. The Eagle Watch Program offers viewing of golden eagles nesting on the cliffs of Eagle's Nest Rock. The winter CSI (Critter Scene Investigation) Program lets visitors identify wildlife tracks in the snow and ponder their activities. Come check it out!



Flatiron Reservoir

This 47-acre reservoir below the dramatic Flatiron cliffs offers a tree shaded setting for electric campsites, tent camping, camper cabins, individual or group picnic areas, or fishing.



Fossil Creek Reservoir

The focus at Fossil Creek is the more than 210 species of birds that visit this open space. Located in southeast Fort Collins, it offers two miles of trails to observation decks and viewing blinds where visitors can see bald eagles and migrating waterfowl.



Hermit Park Open Space

A Rocky Mountain gem, this newly acquired 1,362-acre property adds to the Department of Natural Resources portfolio. HPOS will open to the public in 2008 for day use, and overnight tent and camper cabin camping. The group-use area is a great venue for family reunions, weddings, and other celebrations. Reservations for camper cabins and the group-use area will be incorporated into the Department's existing reservation system. Come explore what HPOS has to offer you!



Horsetooth Mountain Park

This rugged park topped with the signature Horsetooth Rock rises above the plains, foothills ridge, and Horsetooth Reservoir with 2,711 acres of ponderosa pine and meadows. Twenty-nine miles of hiking, mountain biking, and horseback riding trails lead to expansive vistas far out onto the plains. A newly expanded and completely redesigned trailhead will better serve this very popular area.



Horsetooth Reservoir

Waterskiing, boating, fishing, a swim beach, picnic areas, hiking, electric and non-electric campsites, and camper cabins make this reservoir one



Recreation at a glance	Acres	Vehicle Permit Required	Camping with Permit	Camper Cabins	Camping/Cabin Reservations	Electrical Hookups	Sanitary Dump Station	Back Country Camping	Miles of Trail
Carter Lake County Park	2,100	●	● A		●	●	●		4 A
Devil's Backbone Open Space	2,198								12.5
Eagle's Nest Open Space	755								5
Flatiron Reservoir County Park	247	●	● A	●	●	●			
Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space	843								2 A
Glade Park County Park	3								
Hermit Park Open Space	1,362	●	●	● A	●		●		3.5
Horsetooth Mountain Park	2,711	●						●	29
Horsetooth Reservoir County Park	3,900	●	● A	●	●	●	●	●	1
Pinewood Reservoir County Park	427	●	● A		●				
Pleasant Valley Trail at Lions Open Space	20								2 A
Ramsay-Shockey Open Space	177	●							4 A
Rimrock Open Space	742								7

A — Meets Americans with Disabilities Act guidelines.

of the most popular recreation areas in the state. Beautifully set below Horsetooth Mountain, just west of Fort Collins, 2,000 acres of water provide plenty of room for a scenic cruise below the lofty ridges.

Pinewood Reservoir

Little known, but oh, so sweet, this 327-acre reservoir is nestled below the pine covered slopes of Ramsay-Shockey Open Space southwest of Loveland. You can fish from your boat within waving distance of the campsites and picnic areas along the east shore.



Pleasant Valley Trail and Lions Open Space

You can picnic or fish the Poudre River at Lions Open Space in Laporte, and hike or bike east on the Poudre River Trail and west on the Pleasant Valley Trail through this historic early settlement. Two paved sections complete the Pleasant Valley Trail to Watson Lake in Bellvue, and volunteer projects to improve landscaping and wildlife habitat along the way are underway.



Ramsay-Shockey

This pretty piece of ponderosa pine forest above Pinewood Reservoir has four miles of trails that assure



Volunteer ranger assistants help boaters at Carter Lake. Photo: Patricia Brennan

magnificent views and the chance of seeing bear, deer, elk, or wild turkeys.

Guided Public Tours

Guided public tours will be offered in 2008 to three protected areas not otherwise open to the public. Blue Mountain Conservation Area tours provide a spectacular view from the top of Bald Mountain in the beautiful pine-covered hills and grassy meadows near Pinewood Reservoir. Tours to the newly acquired Hermit Park Open Space, near Estes Park, will give a preview of the 1,362 acres prior to being opened to the public. The tours through the 14,980-acre Red Mountain Open Space will give a glimpse of this incredible wilderness landscape of canyons, valleys,



mountains, streams, and the remote Big Hole country, scheduled to be open to the public in mid-2009.

To learn what events and volunteering opportunities are being offered at your parks and open spaces, subscribe to the Department of Natural Resources' monthly flyer at <http://www.larimer.org/subscriptions.cfm> (select Natural Resources Monthly Flyer).

Photo Thumbnails Page 6:

- 1. Walt Hubis
- 2. Rick Price
- 3. Staff
- 4. Sue Burke
- 5. Terry Walsh
- 6. Walt Hubis
- 7. Walt Hubis
- 8. Staff

Page 7:

- 9. Patricia Brennan
- 10. Charlie Johnson
- 11. Virginia Soderberg
- 12. Sue Burke

Hiking	Horseback Riding	Mountain Biking	Leashed Dogs Allowed	Boating	Boat Ramp	Marina	Fishing	Swimming Beach	Bird Watching	Picnic Tables	Drinking Fountains	Restrooms
●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	● A	●	● A
●	●	●	●						●		●	● A
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“I admire what has been accomplished in Larimer County. Where I live in Denver, it seems like you have to go miles before you find any open space.”

Darrel Larson, Open Space Visitor

“I learned a lot from this field trip. I want to go to the Devil’s Backbone with my mom sometime since you showed me all of this wildlife.”

*Jadey, 4th grade, Student
Thompson School District*



Sylvan Dale Ranch Conservation Easement. Photo: Gregory Mayse



Devil’s Backbone Open Space. Photo: Sharon Veit



Red Mountain Open Space. Photo: James Steele



Photo: Jack Hicks

“Volunteering on the Open Lands Advisory Board has been fun, challenging, and an education. It has been a great opportunity for personal growth while making a lasting contribution to the future quality of life in Larimer County. It has been a privilege to serve in this way.”

*Peter Kast, Open Lands Advisory Board
2002 - 2008*



Chimney Hollow Open Space. Photo: Gregory Mayse



Horsetooth Reservoir. Photo: Staff

“At NRCS (Natural Resource Conservation Services), working with others to help the land is what we are about. Larimer County has been a great local partner in accomplishing this.”

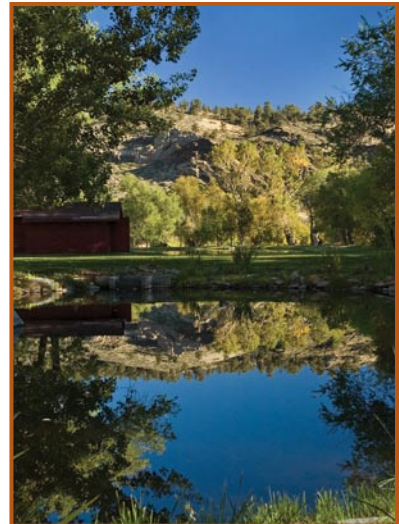
John Fursaro, NRCS (Natural Resource Conservation Services)

“I felt the Devil’s Backbone trail utilized our Colorado history curriculum plus geology units we have touched on all year. It was a great conclusion.”

Renee Hein, 4th grade Teacher, Big Thompson Elementary



Hermit Park Open Space. Photo: Walt Hubis



Sylvan Dale Ranch Conservation Easement. Photo: Gregory Mayse

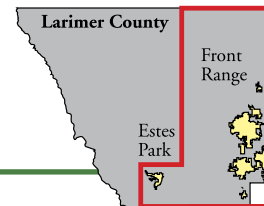


Photo: Charlie Johnson

“Larimer County residents are fortunate to have a dedicated group of people as our Natural Resources Department working tirelessly to protect the very things that make this a special place to live. The staff deserves our recognition for the tremendous work they do to protect and sustain our open spaces places.”

State Representative Randy Fischer, Fort Collins House District 53

2007 Acquisitions & Improvements



Acquisitions

Laramie Foothills

A. Red Canyon. This 1,480-acre breathtaking foothills parcel is a piece of the greater Laramie Foothills-Mountains to Plains project and a key acquisition as part of Red Mountain Open Space. A section of Red Canyon will house the future trailhead for the open space (see page 4). See map on adjacent page.

Appraised Value: Undetermined

Purchase Price: \$335,000

Partners: The Nature Conservancy: \$335,000

City of Fort Collins: \$976,000

Larimer County Open Lands: \$2,689,000

Estes Valley

B. Hermit Park Open Space. This 1,362-acre Rocky Mountain gem was acquired in early 2007 (see page 3). See map on adjacent page.

Appraised Value: \$8,700,000

Partners: Landowner discount: \$2,200,000

Estes Valley Land Trust: \$700,000

Great Outdoors Colorado: \$700,000

City of Loveland: \$420,000

Town of Estes Park: \$400,000

City of Fort Collins: \$91,000

Town of Berthoud: \$25,000

Estes Valley Rec & Park District: \$10,000

Friends of Larimer County Parks & Open

Lands/Private Donors: \$198,500

Larimer County Open Lands: \$4,000,000

Capital Improvements

C. Devil's Backbone Open Space. The trailhead was redesigned to offer additional vehicle capacity, including more parking for horse trailers/school buses. The parking lot was reconfigured to increase the ease of entering and exiting the trailhead.

2007 Project Cost: \$11,000

D. Horsetooth Mountain Park. The main trailhead was redesigned to offer additional vehicle parking and enhanced visitor services. The parking lot layout provides better visitor access, visitor information, a new entry plaza, and group use facilities.

2007 Project Cost: \$588,518

Partners: Great Outdoors Colorado: \$200,000

Larimer County Open Lands: \$388,518

E. Hermit Park Open Space. The caretaker's house and maintenance shop were given minor adjustments to meet regulatory codes. Additionally, maintenance needs for the fall soft opening (see page 3) were completed. Wildfire mitigation was conducted around all of the cabins.

2007 Project Cost: \$49,362

Partners: Larimer County Engineering Department

Private Donations: \$44,495

Larimer County Open Lands: \$79,850

Larimer County Parks: \$79,850

* lead agency on project

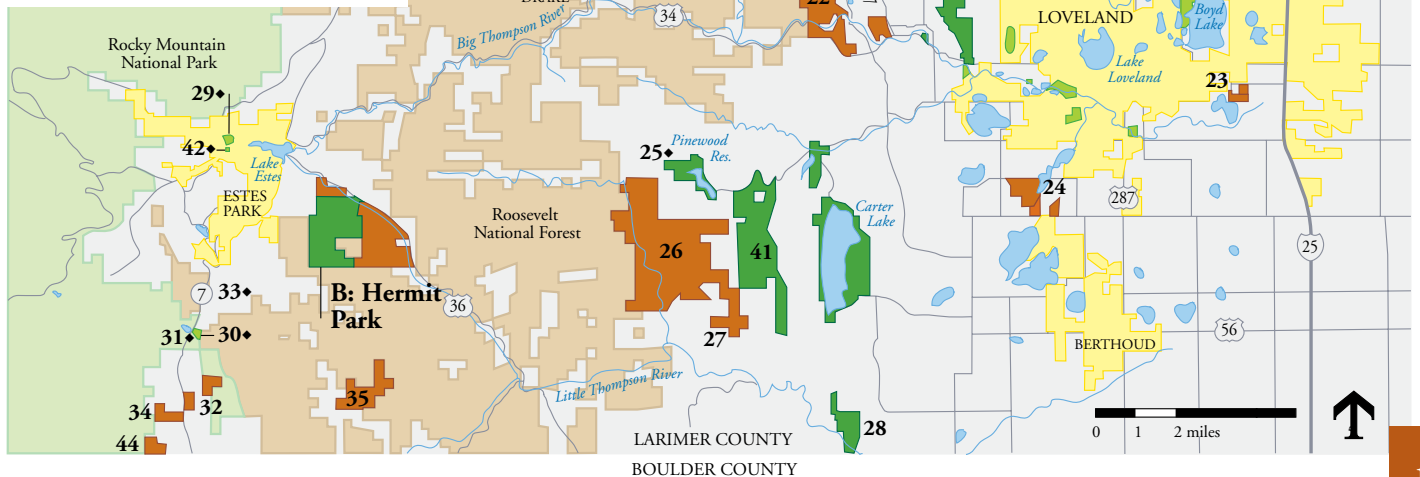


Red rocks, blue skies, and a lush green landscape await future visitors to Red Mountain Open Space. Photo: Charlie Johnson

1996-2007 Acquisitions & Partnerships

1. Tepee Rings CE
2. Buckeye CE
3. Buckeye Agricultural Partnership CE
4. Eagle's Nest Open Space
5. Eagle's Nest CE
6. Fonken CE
7. Kerbel Farm CE
8. Bee Farm CE
9. Weber Farm CE
10. Lions Open Space
11. Pleasant Valley Trail
12. Horsetooth Mountain Open Space
13. Cathy Fromme Prairie Natural Area
14. Rimrock Open Space
15. Coyote Ridge Natural Area
16. Dryland Wheat Farm
17. Long View Farm Open Space
18. Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space
19. River Bluffs Open Space
20. Boyd Lake State Park Addition
21. Devil's Backbone Open Space
22. Sylvan Dale Ranch CE
23. Kauffman CE
24. Ryan's Gulch CE
25. Ramsay-Shockey Open Space
26. Blue Mountain Bison Ranch
27. Harper CE
28. Red-tail Ridge Open Space
29. Knoll-Willows
30. Lily Lake (Roessler)
31. Lily Lake Water & Recreation Rights
32. Mills/Kiley CE
33. Homer Rouse Trail
34. Childers/Henning CE
35. Smitherman Ranch CE
36. Red Mountain Open Space
37. Ackerman CE
38. Ackerman Land & Livestock CE
39. Roberts Ranch CE
40. Kraft CE
41. Chimney Hollow Open Space
42. American Legion Open Space
43. Siefke CE
44. Cohen CE
45. Ackerman II CE
46. White CE
47. Parcel 19 CE
48. Bradley CE
49. Miller CE

- Open Space (OS) Managed by Larimer Co.
- Other Open Space
- Conservation Easements (CE)
- Project Currently Open to the Public



WYOMING
COLORADO

A: Red Canyon

2007 Acquisitions

- A. Red Canyon
- B. Hermit Park Open Space

LARIMER COUNTY
WELD COUNTY

LARIMER COUNTY
BOULDER COUNTY

Annual Excursions for the Whole Family

Hoot, hoot – honk, honk! These sounds were frequently heard in September at the annual Northern Colorado Birding Fair, though not from the birds themselves, but from the hundreds of kids who attended. Kids created their own bird nests and hats, and learned about native birds through fun activities such as the Great Migration Challenge and Bird



A rehabilitated golden eagle at the Northern Colorado Birding Fair. Photo: Charlie Johnson



A budding angler gets some coaching at the Larimer County Boating and Fishing Expo. Photo: Gregory Mays

Bingo. Slapshot, the Colorado Eagle’s mascot, was on hand to participate and encourage kids through the courses.

The 9th annual CAST (Catch a Special Thrill) for Kids event took place during the first weekend of June at Horsetooth Reservoir. Nearly 30 kids who had never fished before attended. Their reasons for never fishing, or riding in a boat for that matter, are not the same as the average American kid. In some way, each of them is disabled. The real success and most exciting part of the day was seeing the kids ecstatic and overwhelmed by their adventures.

The 3rd annual Larimer County Boating and Fishing Expo provided a great setting

for anglers and boaters to gather the latest information on recreation in the County. Local vendors shared information and products with thousands of citizens. Seminar speakers talked to hundreds of anglers and provided the latest information on fishing local waters. The great kids’ events made the Expo fun for the whole family. Keep a look out for next year’s event scheduled for the first weekend of April.

“Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space was protected for the birds, but on Bird Fair Day it is also protected for kids. It’s nice to see hundreds of people come out each year to learn about our feathered friends, and get more familiar with this magnificent open space.”

Travis Rollins, Park Manager

Open Space Tax Revenues Benefit All of Larimer County

The 1/4-cent *Help Preserve Open Spaces* (HPOS) sales and use tax revenue is shared with the County’s eight municipalities. The tax continues through 2018, and is not imposed on food or prescription drugs. The total revenue collected to date is over \$96 million.

Distributions to municipalities are based upon the highest yield of either population or sales tax generation. This revenue sharing agreement ensures that residents throughout the county receive benefits from the Open Space sales tax.

Annual Revenue Receipt of Open Space Tax Dollars*

	Larimer CO	Berthoud	Estes Park	Fort Collins	Johnstown	Loveland	Timnath	Wellington	Windsor
1996	2,259,975	71,154	161,905	2,107,473	–	847,210	4,221	29,848	–
1997	2,485,421	80,969	178,198	2,319,562	–	932,139	4,646	32,520	–
1998	2,707,553	87,574	193,453	2,487,606	–	1,003,872	5,025	40,557	–
1999	3,067,810	101,539	224,779	2,850,066	–	1,146,823	5,732	47,494	–
2000	3,294,869	110,862	222,608	3,109,001	–	1,234,060	5,742	53,444	–
2001	3,565,146	122,889	229,886	3,323,372	–	1,321,205	5,887	64,589	–
2002	3,527,084	124,139	229,886	3,235,748	–	1,304,378	5,599	67,642	–
2003	3,532,580	123,913	218,802	3,205,119	–	1,314,655	7,083	66,730	–
2004	3,750,211	126,810	234,908	3,374,671	9,457	1,405,098	11,480	75,185	17,416
2005	3,811,306	127,480	239,502	3,417,517	8,932	1,432,898	11,684	79,698	20,115
2006	4,033,795	136,930	250,110	3,599,786	11,965	1,506,477	13,196	77,782	13,379
2007	4,152,187	129,513	252,524	3,529,570	34,285	1,554,153	10,563	122,196	54,760
Total	40,187,937	1,206,843	2,502,109	36,559,491	64,639	15,002,968	90,858	757,684	105,670

* These figures are unaudited. Audit to be completed in mid 2008. Figures in this chart have been rounded when appropriate.

Legislation Improves the Tax Credit Program

The joint efforts of numerous *odd bedfellows* recently resulted in new legislation which is intended to prevent abuses of Colorado's conservation easement tax credits. On June 5, Governor Ritter signed into law HB08-1353, with the support of wide ranging interests, including the land trust community, local government open space programs, the Colorado Division of Real Estate, the Colorado Department of Revenue, the Colorado Department of Agriculture, and many others. Larimer County Commissioner Kathay Rennels testified in support of the bill before the Colorado legislature, and K-Lynn Cameron, Larimer County Open Lands Program Manager, served on the task force which helped draft the legislation.

The revisions to the tax credit program will provide assurances that landowners and land trusts or other holders of conservation easements are appropriately protecting property and accurately assessing the value of conservation

easements. This will be accomplished by the following provisions:

1. Increase accountability for conservation easement appraisals.

The Colorado Division of Real Estate will review conservation easement appraisals. If it finds that the appraisal has exaggerated values, the Division can impose suspensions or other penalties on the appraiser. Education and experience requirements will be established to assure competence by conservation easement appraisers.

2. Certify conservation easement holders (e.g., state, local governments and land trusts).

Qualifications will be established for certification of easement holders. Tax credits will only be allowed when the easement is held by a certified entity.

3. Strengthen oversight and enforcement of the state tax credit.

The Department of Revenue will coordinate with other state agencies

and a new Conservation Easement Oversight Commission to ensure compliance with the goals of the program.

4. Create a Conservation Easement Oversight Commission.

This new commission will advise other State agencies, and will administer the certification program.

5. Create a one-year holding requirement.

This mirrors the IRS limitation on the value of a qualified conservation contribution for property held for less than one year.

In 2007 and 2008, the Colorado Dept. of Revenue and the Federal Internal Revenue Service scrutinized programs throughout the state, looking for potential misuse of the conservation easement tax credit. The Larimer County Open Lands Program is proud to report that no easements held or owned by the Program were determined fraudulent.

Beetlemania! Mountain Pine Beetle in Larimer County

While certainly a different kind of beetlemania from the 1960s, mountain pine beetle (MPB) epidemics are definitely a more frequent occurrence in Colorado. Native to our pine forests, MPB outbreaks naturally cycle through pines and periodically kill large numbers of trees.

The mountain pine beetle epidemic of the western slope of the past ten years crossed the continental divide into the northern Front Range in a big way in 2007. While endemic to the pine forests of Larimer County, recent evidence indicates MPB populations are now on the rise here. Likely you have heard of the outbreak through the media or have seen the large number of dead trees in the mountains of counties to the west.

The County Forestry Program is collaborating with other agencies to provide education and assistance to private landowners. The Forestry Program received an increase in MPB-related calls by 160% in 2007, indicating heightened awareness of the issue and interest by citizens of what they can do. In early 2007, Larimer, Boulder, Gilpin, and Clear Creek counties, the U.S. and Colorado State forest services, and Rocky Mountain National Park formed the Northern Front Range Mountain Pine Beetle Working Group with the mission to educate the public concerning MPB. To learn more visit <http://www.larimer.org/forestry/>



A forest affected by the natural occurrence of mountain pine beetle. Photo: Unknown

Your Parks and Open Spaces

Since 1998, forest stewardship plans have been in place and are actively implemented on parks and open space lands in partnership with the Colorado State Forest Service and Larimer County Emergency Services. The primary goal of our forest management activities includes thinning forested areas to create diversity in forest age and structure and thereby result in healthy forests that are more resilient to insect and disease outbreaks.

“The partnership we have with the Natural Resources Department to do proactive forest management simultaneously meets their goals to maintain healthy forests and one of our Department goals of reducing wildfire danger while providing an on-call wildland fire initial attack resource.”

Tony Simons, Larimer County Emergency Services

“The Open Lands Program continues to leverage from the Help Preserve Open Space tax with state, federal, and private dollars, providing citizens a bigger bang for their tax dollars.”

Glenn Gibson,
County Commissioner District 3



Big spaces as far as the eye can see at Red Mountain Open Space. Photo: Harry Strharsky

Leveraging Dollars: A Priority for Larimer County Citizens.

When word got out that Larimer County was poised to purchase Hermit Park, the donations flooded in! With a \$1.2 million shortfall in funding, the Open Lands Program and the Friends of Larimer County Parks and Open Spaces launched their first-ever fundraising campaign in January, 2007. The campaign achieved early success in the form of grants and PayPal donations. Final donations from an anonymous challenge grant, and *techno* companies like Hewlett-Packard, Verigy, AMD, and Avago, put us over the top as new public-private partnerships were born.

Partnerships are a critical component of the Open Lands Program, allowing important leverage of our valuable sales tax dollars. Since 1996, the Program has received over \$9.3 million in land and cash donations through the generosity of citizens and landowners.

Citizens also gave through volunteering. The Open Lands Program received 5,755 volunteer hours in 2007, equivalent to \$112,208.* Thanks to these volunteers, not only is the life of our tax dollars extended, but open space visitors interact with knowledgeable and helpful people who are passionate about the land.

If you are interested in preserving your land, making a donation, and/or volunteering, please contact us at (970) 679-4575.

* Based on estimates made by Independent Sector

Major Donors of the Open Lands Program

Donation over	Agilent Technologies (2007)	Hermit Park Open Space
\$1,000,000	David & Susan Jessup (1999-2005) Rob Cohen (2005)	Sylvan Dale Ranch CEs Cohen CE
\$500,000 to \$999,000	H.A. & Elaine Fonken (2002-2006) Jake Kauffman & Son, Inc. (2001) Paul Jonjak & Family (1999)	Fonken CE I-V Kauffman CE Blue Mountain Bison Ranch CE
\$300,000 to \$499,000	Curt & Jennifer Heckrodt (2000) Jack & Beth White (2000) Bob Ramsay (1999)	Red-tail Ridge Open Space Rimrock Open Space Ramsay-Shockey Open Space
\$100,000 to \$299,000	Eldon & Trulie Ackerman (2004-2005) Catherine Roberts (2004) Royce Hopkins (2004) The American Legion (2004) Dan Miller & Mary Beth Simon (2002-2003) Larry & Anne Peterson (2002) Patricia Block (2002) Dave Sitzman (2001) Grace Dunkin (2001) Joe & Pat Harper (2000) Jon & Susanne Stephens (2000)	Ackerman CE I, II Roberts CE Hopkins CE American Legion Open Space Miller-Simon CE I, II Peterson CE Block CE Kerbel Farm CE Ryan Gulch CE II Harper CE Ryan Gulch CE
\$5,000 to \$99,000	Advanced Micro Devices (2007) Anonymous Donor* (2007) Community Foundation of No. Colo.* (2007) Erion Foundation* (2007) Hewlett-Packard (2007) Mark D. Tabb & Julie Vida* (2007) McWhinney Foundation (2007) Microsoft Corporation* (2006, 2007) Haines & Colton Charitable Trust* (2007) Verigy (2007) Whole Foods Markets* (2007) Bryant & Patricia Miller (2006) Jim & Christy Bradley (2006) Charles & Judith Siefke (2005) Southdown, Inc (2001) Miller, Left Hand & Park Creek Ranches (2001) Robert & Ann Avis (2000) Byron & Beverly Williams (1999) Audra & Don Hughey (1998) Stephanie Steppel-White (1997)	Hermit Park Open Space Hermit Park Open Space Hermit Park Open Space Hermit Park Open Space Hermit Park Open Space Hermit Park Open Space Hermit Park Open Space Hermit Park Open Space Hermit Park Open Space Hermit Park Open Space Hermit Park Open Space Miller CE Bradley CE Siefke CE Red-tail Ridge Open Space Buckeye Agricultural Partnership CE Eagle's Nest CE Fossil Creek Reservoir Open Space Horsetooth Mountain Open Space Coyote Ridge Natural Area

Bold = 2007 Donations

* = Donation to Friends of Larimer County Parks and Open Lands towards a specific project

CE = Conservation Easement

Inventory of Open Lands Acquisitions

Name	Acreage	Acquisition Cost	Larimer Co. Open Lands	Donation/ Bargain Sale	Partnerships	Public Access	Comments
Laramie Foothills							
Red Mountain Open Space	13,448	9,700,800	1,846,400		GOCO 7,854,400	Yes 2010	FC hold GOCO CE
Red Mountain Open Space	1480	4,000,000	2,689,000		TNC/FC 1,311,000	Yes	Red Mountain Trailhead
Eagle's Nest Open Space	755/*72	2,054,500	1,360,000	54,500	3 Partners 640,000	Yes	LLT holds covenants
Teepee Rings CE	*504	170,000	69,000	100,000	LLT 1,000	No	Monitored by LLT
Roberts Ranch CE Phase I	*4,960	3,000,000	200,000	109,000	3 Partners 2,691,000	No	Monitored by TNC
Ackerman I & II CE	*567	504,000	230,456	167,000	NRCS/FRPP 106,544	No	Monitored by Larimer Co.
Ackerman Land & Livestock Co. I CE	*318	430,000	260,318		NRCS/FRPP 169,682	No	Monitored by Larimer Co.
Buckeye/Waverly Ag Lands							
Buckeye CE	*494	197,853	28,000		TNC/LLT 169,853	No	Monitored by LLT
Buckeye CE 3 & 4	*70	60,000	60,000	130,000		No	Monitored by Larimer Co.
Bradley CE	*184	95,000		95,000		No	Monitored by Larimer Co.
Miller CE	*90	50,000		50,000		No	Monitored by Larimer Co.
Wellington Ag Lands							
Kerbel Farm CE	*83	197,498	98,749	179,280	Fort Collins 98,749	No	Monitored by Larimer Co.
Bee Farm CE	*139	365,302	182,651		Fort Collins 182,651	No	Monitored by Larimer Co.
Weber Farm CE	*69.1	198,138	99,069		Fort Collins 99,069	No	Monitored by Larimer Co.
Kraft Farm CE	*130	460,000	460,000			No	Monitored by Larimer Co.
Poudre River							
Fonken CE Phases 1-5	*245	650,000	0	650,000		No	Five donations completed
Lions Open Space	20		0			Yes	20 acre-25 year lease
River Bluffs Open Space	161	1,920,000	720,000		GOCO 1,200,000	Future Trail	Greeley holds GOCO CE
Fort Collins/Loveland Separator							
Long View Farm Open Space	599.4	3,027,000	1,594,500		3 Partners 1,432,499	Future Trail	Leased for dryland farming
Cathy Fromme Prairie Natural Area	240	1,000,000	180,000		2 Partners 820,000	Yes	Managed by Fort Collins
Prairie Ridge Natural Area	792	3,139,000	437,881		3 Partners 2,701,119	Future Trail	Managed by Loveland
Fossil Creek Reservoir Open Space	843.5	7,988,750	3,744,550	19,650	Fort Collins 4,224,550	Yes	Transfer to FC in 2010
Coyote Ridge Natural Area	839.3	1,885,499	523,583	21,500	Fort Collins 1,340,416	Yes	Managed by Fort Collins
Boyd Lake State Park Addition	30	405,000	90,000		5 Partners 315,000	Yes	Managed by State Parks
Devil's Backbone to Horsetooth							
Rimrock Open Space	472/*274	2,362,240	2,262,240		Fort Collins 100,000	Yes	Monitored by Larimer Co
Siefke CE	*35	93,000	0	93,000		No	Monitored by Larimer Co
Soderberg Open Space (HTMOS)	114	460,000	460,000			Yes	Managed as part of HTMOS
Devil's Backbone Open Space	2,197/*11.3	9,365,020	2,283,920		4 Partners 6,783,100	Yes	Monitored by Larimer Co
Hughey Open Space (HTMOS)	282	310,000	129,000	31,000	GOCO 150,000	Yes	Managed as part of HTMOS
Culver Open Space (HTMOS)	287.9	1,500,000	975,000		FC/GOCO 525,000	No	FC holds GOCO CE
Big Thompson River							
Sylvan Dale CE	*1160.7	1,297,676	922,436	1,325,240	2 Partners 375,000	Potential	Monitored by Larimer Co
Block CE	*35	200,000	100,000	100,000		No	Monitored by Larimer Co
Kauffman CE	*73.55	800,000	0	800,000		Future Trail	Monitored by Larimer Co
Berthoud/Loveland Separator							
Ryan Gulch CE	*438	2,027,844	290,900	381,000	4 Partners 1,355,944	Future Trail	Monitored by Loveland
Blue Mountain							
Ramsay-Shockey Open Space	177	325,000	0	325,000		Yes	Adj. to Pinewood Reservoir
Blue Mountain Bison Ranch CE	*4,100	2,666,000	1,350,000	666,000	GOCO 650,000	Guided Tours	Monitored by LLT & LC
Chimney Hollow Open Space	1,847	3,842,000	2,892,000		GOCO 950,000	2015	Loveland holds GOCO CE
Harper CE	*240	295,000	0	295,000		No	Monitored by LLT
Little Thompson River							
Red-tail Ridge Open Space	320	951,559	286,500		4 Partners 665,000	Future Trail	Monitored by LLT
Red-tail Ridge Trailhead/Trail	**	43,699	0	43,699		Future Trail	15.1 ac. trail & trailhead
Estes Valley							
Childers/Henning CE	*160	800,000	0	752,000	Private 48,000	No	Monitored by EVLT
Hermit Park Open Space	1362	8,700,000	4,000,000	2,200,000	7+ Partners 2,500,000	Yes	Monitored by EVLT
Cohen CE	*131	500,000	75,000	850,000	4 Partners 425,000	No	Monitored by EVLT
Smitherman CE	*520	520,000	130,000		2 Partners 390,000	No	Monitored by EVLT
Homer Rouse Memorial Trail	**	40,000	10,000		Estes Park 30,000	Yes	Managed by EVRPD 1.5 mi.
Lake Estes Trail	**	232,500	100,000		4 Partners 132,500	Yes	Managed by EVRPD 4 mi.
Lion Gulch Trailhead		21,521	10,000		USFS 11,521	Yes	Managed by USFS
Lily Lake/Roessler	18.2	400,000	40,000		3 Partners 360,000	No	Managed by RMNP
Lily Lake Water & Rec. Rights		551,000	45,000	236,000	6 Partners 270,000	Yes	Managed by RMNP
Enos-Kiley CE	*192	335,000	45,000		EVLT/EPk 290,000	Limited	Monitored by EVLT
Knoll-Willows Open Space	20	210,000	50,000		EVLT/EPk 160,000	Yes	Monitored by EVLT
American Legion Open Space	1.6	200,000	25,000	125,000	2 Partners 50,000	Limited	Monitored by EVLT
Fee Simple Acreage Total	26,286						
CE Acreage Total	15,295						
Fee Simple & CE Acreage Total	41,951	80,547,400	31,356,153	9,619,589	41,578,597		

Managed or monitored by Larimer Co.

* Conservation Easement

** Trail Easement

EPk Estes Park
 EVLT Estes Valley Land Trust
 EVRPD Estes Valley Rec. & Park Dist.
 GOCO Great Outdoors Colorado

HTMOS Horsetooth Mountain Open Space
 NRCS Nat. Res. Conservation Service
 LLT Legacy Land Trust
 RMNP Rocky Mountain Nat. Park

TNC The Nature Conservancy
 USFS U.S. Forest Service

Connecting Communities with a Regional Trail – One Step Closer

The Poudre River Trail has been a vision of the Northern Colorado community for over 30 years and 2007 was an important year in its evolution. Twelve miles of trail already weave through natural areas in Fort Collins and another 22 miles of trail meander along the Poudre River through Weld County. Unfortunately, these beautiful, shady trails don't intersect and a 6-mile gap in the trail exists between the Weld/Larimer County line and I-25.



River Bluffs Photo: Rick Price

In 2007, Larimer County identified this gap in the Poudre River Trail as its highest priority project for the Open Lands Program. Critical partners needed to complete the trail were identified including Windsor, Timnath, Fort Collins, the Poudre River Trail Inc., and Colorado State Parks.

The first phase of this section of the Poudre River Trail is planned at Larimer County's River Bluffs Open Space and will include a trailhead and ½ mile of concrete trail. The Town of Windsor also secured a grant from the Colorado Department of Transportation to design an underpass for State Highway 392, which will connect River Bluffs Open Space to the existing 22 miles of trail through Windsor and Weld County.

The River Bluffs section of the Poudre River Trail will open in 2010-2011. The trail will then continue north from River Bluffs Open Space to Harmony Road and under I-25 into Fort Collins, where it will connect with the existing 12 miles of trail. In time, the Poudre River Trail will be one of the longest multi-use trails in northern Colorado and will link people with shopping, recreation, and employment centers in a fun and environmentally sustainable manner.

Reflecting on the Past, Living in the Present, and Planning for the Future

A few years ago, I wrote this column with the premise we would be focusing less on acquisition and more on management issues. While true, I cannot help but note the acquisition program has been a resounding success, protecting 40,000 acres of open space and agriculture lands, while providing outdoor recreation for all generations. The work has only begun.

The Open Lands Program is accountable to the citizens of Larimer County who initiated the Help Preserve Open Space Tax in 1995. We have successfully administered the Program by carefully monitoring the use of open space tax dollars, for acquisition, management, and development of our open space. Donations, grants and partnerships have strengthened our efforts.

“Thank you to the Open Lands Advisory Board for making the Poudre River Trail a high priority. Let's protect and enjoy this beautiful river corridor.”

*Randy Eubanks,
County Commissioner District 2*



A special thanks to our **Open Lands Board Members and staff**. Top from left: *Jeffrey Boring, *Windy Kelley, *Lori Smith, Sue Sparling, *Kathay Rennels. Middle from left: *Gary Buffington, *Randy Eubanks, Peter Kast, Don Griffith, *K-Lynn Cameron, Nancy Wallace, *Kerri Rollins, Ben Manuel, Jim White, Bill Pinkham. Front from left: *Charlie Johnson, Brian Hayes, Bob Streeter, Bill Neuman, *Meegan Flenniken, *Jerry White. * = Staff Photo: Charlie Johnson

What's next? In 2007, the Board identified priority areas for spending open space tax dollars from 2008–2012. Regional Trails (especially the Poudre River Trail), the Laramie Foothills, Hermit Park Open Space, and the mouth of the Poudre Canyon are the top four. These projects are among the next steps toward fulfilling the purposes and goals of the Help Preserve Open Space tax.

What the future holds. Our tax revenues are committed to the open spaces we have successfully acquired and are managing. To continue to protect and conserve land and provide new recreational opportunities past 2018, we will ask citizens to support a new tax initiative. Additional funding will enable more land to be preserved, maintain excellent outdoor recreation, and enhance quality of life for Larimer County citizens.

As the Board reflects on the accomplishments of the Open Lands Program and plans for a successful future, we appreciate and acknowledge the support of Larimer County citizens. You have made this program a reality for all generations! Thank you.

Nancy J. Wallace

Nancy Wallace
Chair, Open Lands Advisory Board



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