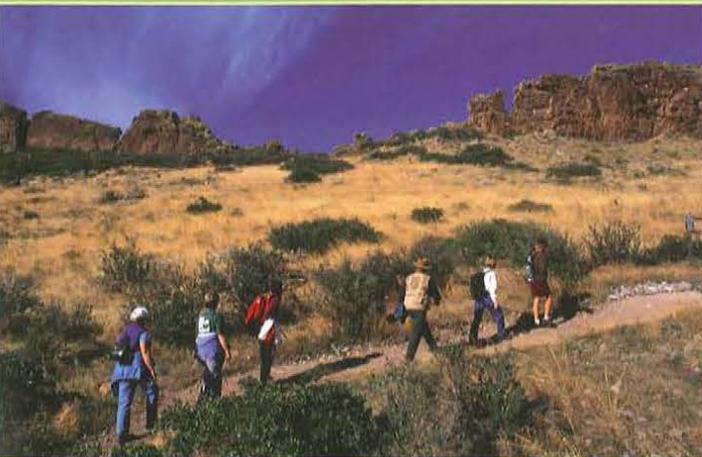


*Larimer County Open Lands Program  
Annual Report 2004  
Larimer County Parks & Open Lands*

*“Preserve and protect  
significant open space,  
natural areas,  
wildlife habitat,  
and develop parks and  
trails for present and  
future generations”*



# 2004 — A banner year for the Open Lands Program

What a year this has been! The progress made and lands protected in 2004 set a new record for the Open Lands Program. As you review the following pages you will see dreams becoming reality!

The massive **Laramie Foothills: Mountain to Plains** project was anchored by Larimer County's purchase of the Red Mountain Ranch. The effort of the county, City of Fort Collins, The Nature Conservancy and Legacy Land Trust was matched by a tremendous commitment from Great Outdoors Colorado, \$11.6 million to be exact, which will result in the preservation of over 55,000 acres of spectacular country in northern Larimer County.

The acquisition of Chimney Hollow west of Loveland was another long discussed goal which was achieved. This effort involved a partnership with the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District.

This land is just west of Carter Lake and will feature a new reservoir and 1800 acres of open space surrounding the lake.

The final connection from Devil's Backbone to Horsetooth Mountain Park was achieved and provides the last link in an open space and trail corridor from Lory State Park northwest of Fort Collins to U.S. Highway 34 west of Loveland totaling about 16 miles as the crow flies.

The dedication of Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space this past fall is an example of a strong and flexible working partnership with the City of Fort Collins and North Poudre Irrigation Company. This open space with its premier bird habitat, interpretive trails and outdoor education center is already a popular destination providing even more excitement in the Open Lands Program.

This year is a clear example of what the Open Lands Program has become, and will continue to be in the future. Our very capable staff continues to work in partnership with other private and public agencies as well as willing land owners to accomplish our goals. Highlighting the major projects is not meant to neglect new trails opened and other lands protected through purchase or conservation easements all around the county. We have done and will continue to do great things!

Peter C. Kast  
Chair, Open Lands Advisory Board



Peter Kast discussing open space issues with Commissioner Gibson and Parks and Open Lands staff, Gary Buffington and K-Lynn Cameron.  
Photo: Charlie Johnson

## A message from the Director

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate our Board of County Commissioners, Open Lands Advisory Board and Open Lands staff for an exceptional year. During this past year, the Open Lands Program has more than doubled the total protected land acreage. This is an outstanding accomplishment for a program that is barely a decade old. This program has certainly attained greatness at a level higher than anyone thought or even dreamed of achieving ten years ago.

As we finish celebrating these accomplishments of this past year, we look forward with anticipation to a New Year that I believe will bring some great challenges to our Open Lands Program. This coming year we will need to evaluate the future financial picture of this program, shift our attention more towards visitor

management while continuing to accept and review acquisition opportunities, and address other internal needs of the entire department.

Our public access open space areas, such as the Devils Backbone and Fossil Creek Reservoir, continue to attract many visitors each year that need the attention of professional park rangers with the training to meet the public's diverse needs. Our internal trail crew and park improvement construction teams continue to build new trails and replace worn out park structures that make our public access areas popular all year round. We are also excited about the opening of our newest open space at Eagle's Nest for public use, which will happen this year.

I am excited about our future and believe that we will continue to strive valiantly to accomplish our goals and meet the changing needs of the citizens of Larimer County.

Gary Buffington  
Director, Larimer County Parks and Open Lands

1	2	Cover: 1. Sue Burke 2. Charlie Johnson 3. Charlie Johnson 4. R. Snell 5. Rick Price 6. Scott Fraser
3		
	4	
5	6	

# One of the last best places that's all "for the birds"

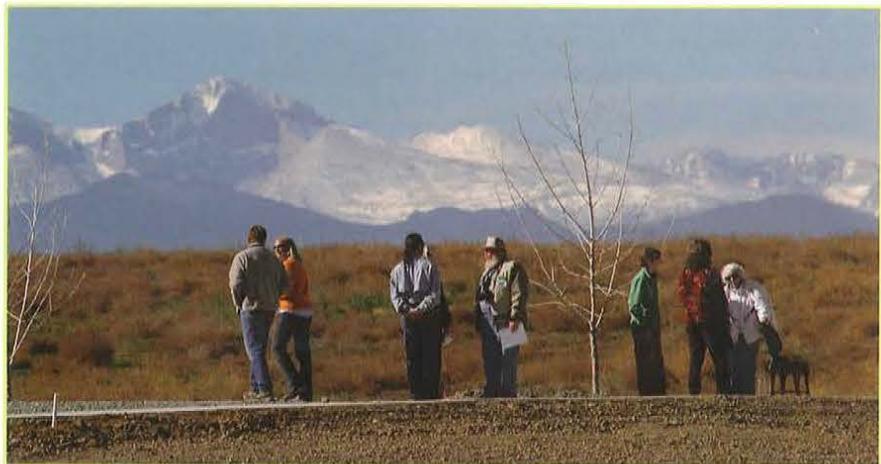
Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space celebrated its grand opening on October 23rd, 2004, during the fall bird migration season. On this warm autumn day, hundreds of eager visitors gathered at the newly completed plaza to send off these winged travelers (and in particular release a rehabilitated American kestrel) and dedicate an open space that was acquired, designed, and will be stewarded for their perpetual use.

This open space area was protected and the new facilities developed in partnership with Larimer County, the City of Fort Collins, North Poudre Irrigation Company and Great Outdoors Colorado. A curving entry road leads visitors back through shortgrass prairie into this 800-acre plus open space tucked in from the sights and sounds of nearby urban development. After parking at the trailhead, visitors can stop in the restrooms inside a striking building with a roof line to mimic a birds' wing, rest on a bench at the plaza or enjoy a stunning overlook or volunteer naturalist program at the outdoor classroom. Wheelchair accessible trails lead to an observation deck over the reservoir that is open year-round with long views both to the east and west. Trails also lead to secluded bird viewing blinds that are seasonally open to minimize impacts to nesting wetland birds on the west side and winter night roosting bald eagles on the east. Depending on the time of year you visit, you are likely to witness birds roosting, mating, feeding or even fighting over territory.

Educational opportunities abound here year-round. Education signs that stimulate the imagination and invite visitors to explore deeper into the mysteries of this open space are interspersed along the trails and at the observation deck and blinds. Volunteer naturalists promote good stewardship and provide information to visitors on a variety of topics through interesting educational programs at the outdoor classroom.



A rehabilitated bald eagle takes flight over Fossil Creek Reservoir—over 50 bald eagles are regularly seen roosting here in winter. Photo: Walt Hubis



A naturalist educates visitors on the many wonders to be found at Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space. Photo: Rick Price

So come see for yourself one of Larimer County's newest open spaces open to the public, and enjoy one of the last best places that's "for the birds".

**“ I really enjoy seeing people out having fun when I'm hiking on our open spaces. To me, that's what it's all about.”**

*Glenn Gibson,  
County Commissioner District 3*

## **Come spend an afternoon at Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space and...**

- Hike 2.2 miles of trail.
- In the summer watch pelicans land and take off from the water at the observation deck.
- Attend one of many volunteer naturalist talks.
- See the cottonwoods change from summer green to their brilliant fall gold.
- Enjoy a picnic lunch with your family.
- Spend a quiet hour at a bird viewing blind.
- Read the education signs along the trails with your kids.
- In the winter watch flocks of ducks on the water and count bald eagles in the cottonwood trees.

# Laramie Foothills: Mountains to Plains

*A Legacy preserving the connection between the Rocky Mountains and the High Plains*

Larimer County, the City of Fort Collins, The Nature Conservancy and the Legacy Land Trust joined in a bold partnership with willing landowners to preserve over 55,000 acres in the Laramie Foothills. This is an extraordinary opportunity to create a mountains-to-plains conservation zone of 140,000 acres in an essentially contiguous band of protected area extending 22 miles across, from native grasslands along Interstate 25 to the Laramie Foothills and lower reaches of Roosevelt National Forest. The vision is to achieve a landscape-scale conservation project that will be unmatched in Colorado by maintaining agricultural uses and keeping historic ranches intact, conserving critical wildlife and plant habitat, and providing extensive opportunities for recreational access.

The Laramie Foothills are a land of exceptional beauty. Here the grasslands of the high plains begin their final ascent to the Rocky Mountains. The resulting landscape combines elements of each creating a tapestry of sweeping grasslands merging with red buttes and an occasional stand of dark timber. This is the landscape that greeted the early settlers, and through the efforts of their descendants, it remains the landscape that greets those arriving in northern Colorado today.

To succeed in protecting this vast expanse of northern Colorado landscape, full support from Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) was a must or the project would not move forward. The partners worked diligently throughout 2004 to communicate the compelling need, urgency and significance of this project. And, gleefully, on December 1, 2004, GOCO awarded full funding to the Laramie Foothills: Mountains to Plains project—\$11.6 million!—the largest conservation grant ever received in Larimer County's history! With local matching funds of \$13.7 million, the total project budget is just over \$25 million to protect over 55,000 acres.



*This is the "Old West" exactly as you might have imagined it. Photo: Charlie Johnson*

## Red Mountain Ranch

To make good on our commitment to move quickly, Larimer County and The Nature Conservancy closed on the 15,300-acre Red Mountain Ranch—the centerpiece of the Mountains to Plains project—on December 30, 2004. Combined with the acquisition of the Soapstone Ranch and Roman Ranch by the City of Fort Collins earlier in 2004, over 28,000 acres or just over half of the proposed



*Riding the range—a preview of trails to come. Photo: Mark Sears*

**“ Too many times we look back and say we had an opportunity to do something great, and we didn't do it. Today we can look back and say we had an incredible opportunity, and we didn't hesitate.”**

*Kathay Rennels,  
County Commissioner District 1*

Mountains to Plains project were preserved before the year was out!

The Red Mountain Ranch is a large landscape consisting of grasslands, rolling foothills and rocky outcrops interspersed with ponderosa and juniper woodlands. The prominent feature of the ranch is the "Big Hole" aptly named because the rolling grasslands to the north drop off precipitously into a 2,000-foot valley that includes Haygood Canyon and Table Mountain. Abundant wildlife including mountain lion, pronghorn, elk, bear and coyote roam freely.

## *Partnering to protect Chimney Hollow Open Space is successful*

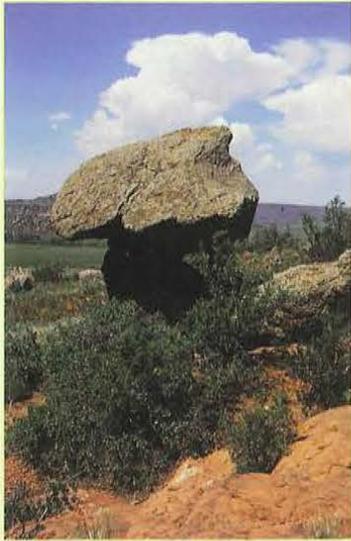


Photo: Charlie Johnson

After developing a management plan, Larimer County and the City of Fort Collins plan to open to the public about 30 miles of hiking, mountain biking and horseback riding trails on Red Mountain Ranch and the adjacent Soapstone Ranch by 2009.

Starting this summer, Larimer County and the City of Fort Collins will be offering public guided tours to the Red Mountain Ranch and adjacent Soapstone Ranch. These tours will be advertised and on the Events Calendar on the Parks and Open Lands website at [http://www.larimer.org/parks/parks\\_calendar.cfm](http://www.larimer.org/parks/parks_calendar.cfm)

In November, 2004, Larimer County Open Lands finally acquired 1847 acres of the Chimney Hollow property just west of Carter Lake. The County also acquired recreation rights on the adjoining 1600 acres, which was purchased by the Subdistrict of Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District (NCWCD). This purchase is the culmination of over seven years of negotiation and represents the final piece in the "Blue Mountain Conservation Area," a high priority of the Open Lands Program for many years.

Larimer County began discussions with Hewlett Packard (HP) in 1997 regarding purchase of this 3,447 acre ranch. At the same time, NCWCD identified the eastern portion of this property as a potential reservoir site. NCWCD and the County concluded that a cooperative partnership would yield the best chance for success, and asked The Conservation Fund, a nonprofit conservation organization, to lead the negotiation.

Great Outdoors Colorado recognized the value of this open space and awarded a grant of \$950,000 to help purchase the open space. The purchase price was \$3,842,000, or \$2,080 per acre which was below the appraised value.

The Open Lands Program has protected other properties in the "Blue Mountain Conservation Area," including the

4100-acre Blue Mountain Bison Ranch Conservation Easement, the Harper Conservation Easement, and the 177-acre Ramsay-Shockey Open Space adjacent to Pinewood Reservoir. Chimney Hollow Open Space is an important piece in this conservation framework because of its public access element.

Recreational facilities will include a trailhead and picnic area with ten miles of trail for mountain bikers, hikers and horseback riders to explore the surrounding ponderosa pine savannah and catch a long view to the east from one of many rock outcrops. When the District constructs its reservoir on the eastern portion, Larimer County will be able to offer fishing and non-motorized boating opportunities. It is anticipated that this open space will open to the public in 2010, with guided public tours available beginning in 2005.

With the opening of this open space and water-based recreation area in 2010, Larimer County will offer visitors a wide spectrum of recreational opportunities at its Parks and Open Lands just west of Loveland. Choose the thrill of waterskiing on the waters of Carter Lake; or relaxing around a campfire at Flatiron Reservoir; or kayaking the quiet waters of Chimney Hollow Reservoir or hiking the forested slopes of Blue Mountain on Chimney Hollow Open Space.



Hundreds of elk graze on the newly acquired Chimney Hollow Open Space west of Loveland and Berthoud.  
Photo: John Otto

# 2004 Acquisitions and Partnerships

\*lead agency on project



CE = Conservation Easement

## Laramie Foothills

**A. Red Mountain Ranch Open Space.** This 13,500-acre ranch is the centerpiece of the Mountains to Plains project. This "Old West" landscape is a tapestry of sweeping grasslands merging with red buttes and an occasional stand of dark timber. Guided public tours of this ranch will begin in June of 2005. Hiking, horseback and mountain biking trails are anticipated to be open to the public in 2009.

*Appraised Value: \$9,700,800*

*Partners: Great Outdoors Colorado \$7,854,400*

*Larimer County Open Lands\*: \$1,846,400*

**B. Ackerman CE.** Protecting these 247 acres preserves irrigated cropland, hay fields and pasture lands. Irrigation water, provided by the Boxelder Creek, is required as part of this easement. This parcel is also important for wildlife, and provides a hunting area for raptors nesting in the adjacent ridges.

*Appraised Value: \$370,000*

*Partners: NRCS Farm & Ranchland Protection Prog. \$106,544*

*Landowner \$100,000*

*Larimer County Open Lands\*: \$163,45*

**C. Ackerman Land & Livestock CE.** This 318-acre easement is primarily pivot irrigated crop and hay fields located north of the Buckeye area. Prime irrigated soils found in this parcel were a major factor for protection. A short section of the Boxelder Creek flowing through this parcel provides habitat for wildlife.

*Appraised Value: \$430,000*

*Partners: NRCS Farm & Ranchland Protection Prog. \$169,682*

*Larimer County Open Lands\*: \$260,318*

**D. Roberts Ranch CE.** This easement protects 4,960 acres of the Roberts Ranch, located near Livermore. The Roberts Ranch is a working cow-calf operation with beautiful rolling prairie, scenic riparian areas and culturally significant landmarks.

*Appraised Value: \$3,000,000*

*Partners: City of Fort Collins \$1,800,000*

*Great Outdoors Colorado \$889,500*

*The Nature Conservancy\* \$1,500*

*Landowner donation \$109,000*

*Larimer County Open Lands: \$200,000*

## Poudre River

**E. Fonken III CE.** This 105-acre conservation easement, located in the forested hillside of the Poudre Canyon, is the third donation by the Fonken family. The landowner intends to take advantage of state tax credits to offset the donation.

*Appraised Value: \$193,000*

*Partners: Landowner donation \$193,000*

## Wellington Agricultural Lands

**F. Kraft CE.** Located south of Wellington and protected for its prime irrigated soils, this 130-acre working farm is flood irrigated by four adjudicated wells and produces sorghum and alfalfa.

*Appraised Value: \$4,600,000*

*Larimer County Open Lands\*: \$460,000*

## Devil's Backbone to Horsetooth

**G. Indian Creek CE.** This 9.7-acre easement is a key link in providing public access to the adjacent 1,545-acre Indian Creek Open Space acquired by Larimer County and the City of Fort Collins in 2003.

*Appraised Value: \$50,000*

*Larimer County Open Lands\*: \$50,000*

## Berthoud/Loveland Separator

**H. Hopkins CE.** Adjacent to existing conservation easements in the Ryan's Gulch region, this 60-acre easement boasts spectacular views and important wetlands.

*Appraised Value: \$340,000*

*Partners: City of City of Loveland\* \$188,100*

*Landowner \$131,000*

*Larimer County Open Lands: \$20,900*

## Blue Mountain Conservation Area

**I. Chimney Hollow Open Space.** Protection of this 1,847-acre property completes an important conservation vision. Guided public tours of the open space will begin in June of 2005. Hiking, horseback and mountain biking trails are anticipated to open to the public in 2010, as well as non-motorized boating and fishing on the adjacent Chimney Hollow Reservoir, a future project of NCWCD.

*Appraised Value: \$3,842,000*

*Partners: Great Outdoors Colorado \$950,000*

*Larimer County Open Lands\*: \$2,892,000*

## Big Thompson River

**J. Sylvan Dale IV, Sulzer Gulch CE.** This 220-acre easement donation at the mouth of the Big Thompson Canyon provides habitat for bighorn sheep, coyote, mountain lion, and mule deer. The landowner intends to take advantage of state tax credits to offset the donation.

*Appraised Value: \$225,000*

*Partners: Landowner donation \$225,000*

## Estes Valley

**K. American Legion Gateway Open Space.** Located above the Big Thompson River, this 1.6-acre property provides a visual backdrop to the Town of Estes Park. A future trail across this property would connect it to the Town's Open Space.

*Appraised Value: \$200,000*

*Partners: Estes Valley Land Trust\*/Town of Estes \$50,000*

*Landowner donation \$125,000*

*Larimer County Open Lands: \$25,000*

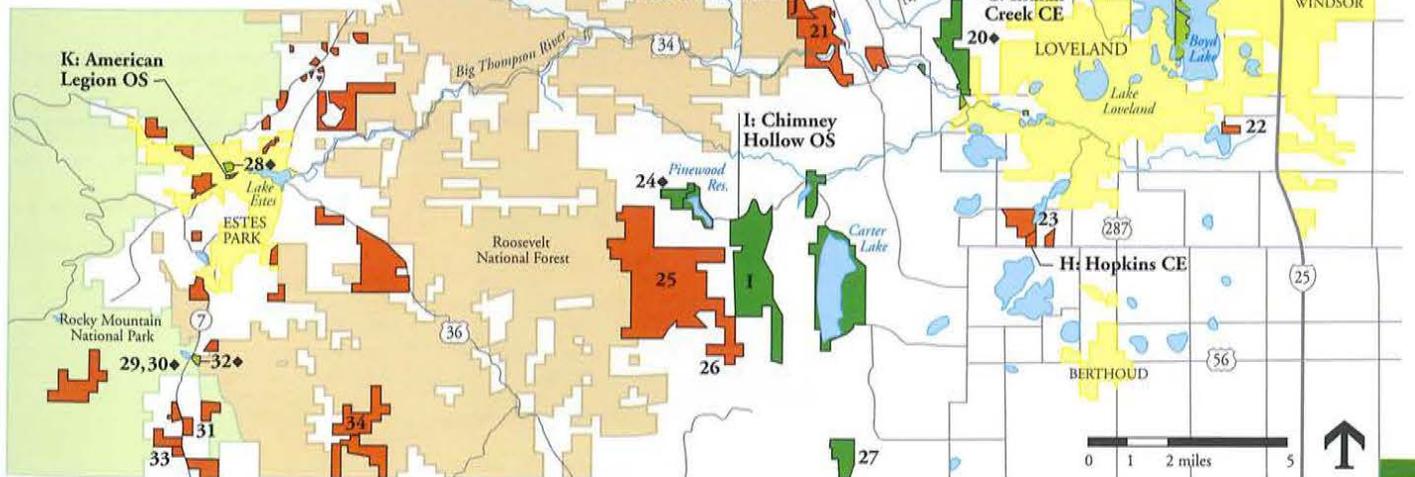
## 2004 Acquisitions & Partnerships

- |                                 |                                    |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| A. Red Mountain Ranch OS        | F. Kraft CE                        |
| B. Ackerman CE                  | G. Indian Creek CE                 |
| C. Ackerman Land & Livestock CE | H. Hopkins CE                      |
| D. Roberts Ranch CE             | I. Chimney Hollow OS               |
| E. Fonken III CE                | J. Sylvan Dale IV, Sulzer Gulch CE |
|                                 | K. American Legion OS              |

## 1996-2003 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 Park, Pleasant Valley Trail
11. Horsetooth Mountain Open Spaces
12. Cathy Fromme Prairie Natural Area
13. Rimrock Open Space
14. Coyote Ridge Natural Area
15. Dryland Wheat Farm
16. Long View Farm Open Space
17. Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional OS
18. River Bluffs Open Space
19. Boyd Lake State Park addition
20. Devil's Backbone Open Space
21. Sylvan Dale Ranch CE
22. Kauffman CE
23. Ryan Gulch CE
24. Ramsay-Shockey Open Space
25. Blue Mountain Bison Ranch CE
26. Harper CE
27. Red-tail Ridge OS & Southdown Trailhead
28. Knoll-Willows OS
29. Lily Lake (Roessler)
30. Lily Lake Water & Recreation Rights
31. Mills/Kiley CE
32. Homer Rouse Trail
33. Childers/Henning CE
34. Smitherman Ranch CE

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



0 1 2 miles 5



“ The hike was amazing. The soft dirt felt like my kitten’s hair. The flowers I saw remind me of my mom’s garden.”

Sabrina, Carrie Martin Elementary



Photo: Scott Fraser



Photo: James Steele



Photo: Charlie Johnson



Photo: Charlie Johnson



Photo: R. Snell



Photo: Sharon Viet

“ The first time that I saw Devil’s Backbone I was 14 years old on my way to summer camp. The Backbone was my first experience being welcomed to the Rocky Mountains. I am so glad that concerned citizens and Larimer County Open Lands have created a permanent legacy for our community by preserving not only this treasure, but many other open space projects in Northern Colorado.”

Pat Stryker, President, Bohemian Foundation, Fort Collins, CO



Photo: Mike Strunk

“ The view took my breath away and brought tears to my eyes.”

Chris Cleveland, Greeley

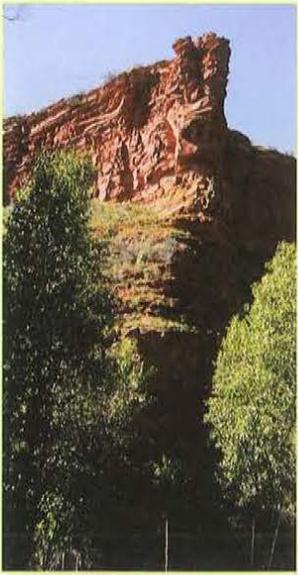


Photo: Charlie Johnson

“Commitment to partnerships and stewardship is a way of life, and makes the Larimer County Open Lands Program the best in Colorado.”

Tom Bender,  
Former County Commissioner

“I liked the fantastic view.”

Katie, Big Thompson Elementary

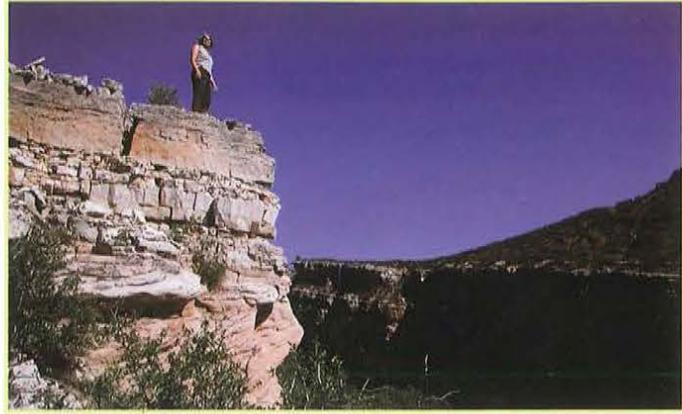


Photo: Charlie Johnson

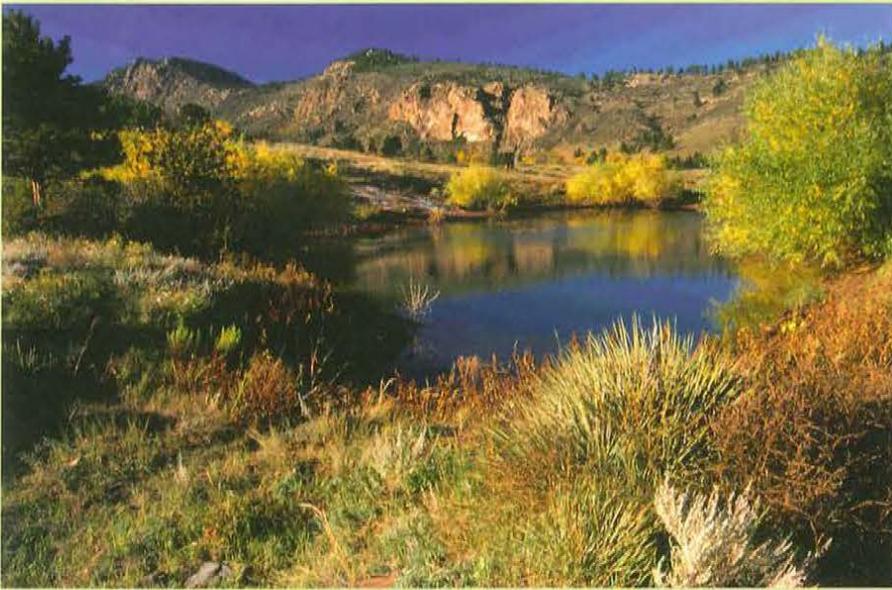


Photo: R. Snell



Photo: Rick Price



Photo: Colorado DOW

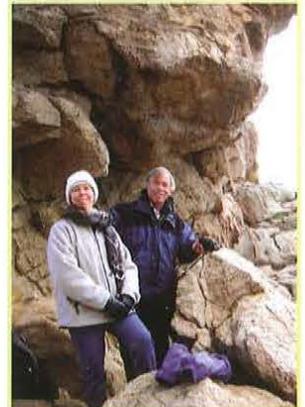


Photo: John Otto



Photo: Walt Hubis



Photo: R. Snell

“I learned that the yucca plant can't live without the yucca moth.”

Zach, Carrie Martin Elementary

“The highlight of the Mountains to Plains project for The Nature Conservancy has been the strength of the conservation partnership. In particular, the leadership of Larimer County and Great Outdoors Colorado in this visionary project, and the City of Fort Collins through their long-sighted investment in this landscape.”

Greg Gamble, The Nature Conservancy

# A mission to have fun

An important mission of Larimer County's Parks and Open Lands is to provide recreation opportunities. Recreation implies fun; or as Webster's Dictionary defines recreation, "refreshment of body and mind by some form of play, amusement or relaxation." With the hectic pace of life so many of us now lead, so removed from the natural world, who doesn't need a little refreshment, a little fun. Larimer County Parks and Open Lands probably has the cure.

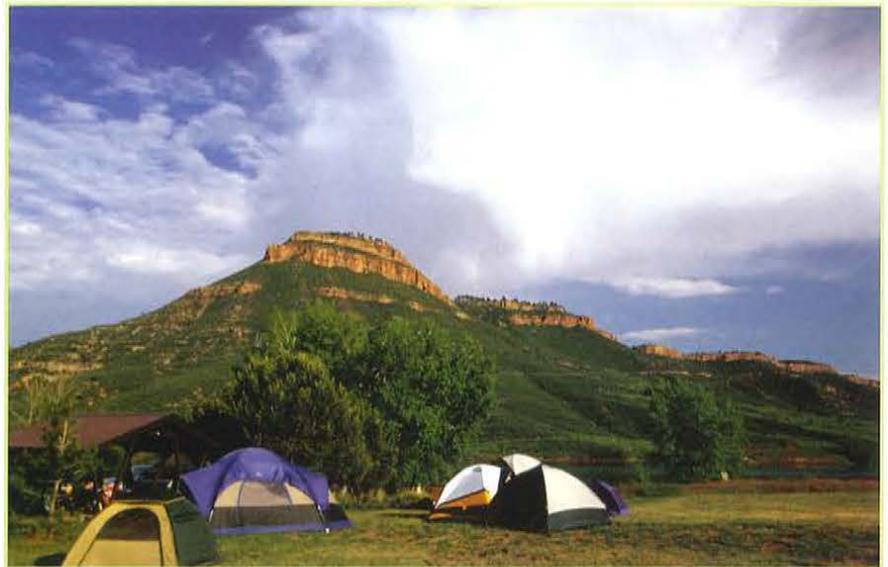
## What's your brand of outdoor fun?

**Water skiing** a long run down Horsetooth Reservoir, wind in your hair, arms and legs gone rubbery and your ski slapping the little wind waves that sparkle sunlight...

**Jet skis** racing along the gleaming surface of Carter Lake like supersonic water skippers enjoying the thrill of it all...

**Fishing** in the cool of the morning at Pinewood Reservoir enjoying the view of Blue Mountain when suddenly your rod arcs over the side of your boat...

**Sailing** on a brisk day at Carter Lake listening to the crisp snap of your sail...



Camping and fishing are popular activities at all of Larimer County's parks. Reserve your campsite now at 800 397-7795. Photo: Efrain Padro

**Camping** at Flatiron or Horsetooth Reservoirs where the family has circled their chairs around the fire and the smoke drifts up to brilliant stars...

**Picnicking** on your favorite old quilt spread by the Thompson River at Glade Park on a warm evening, or a sunrise breakfast at Rotary Park at the rim's edge high above Horsetooth Reservoir...

**Leisurely hiking** along the winding trails at Carter Lake or Pinewood Reservoir for some fresh air, quiet and a mild stretch for the muscles...



Photo: Scott Fraser

**Mountain biking** with a challenge on the trails Horsetooth Mountain Park, where the terrain will bring on a good sweat...

**Bouldering** with the best at Horsetooth Reservoir thinking of nothing but the rock in your face as you dangle by your fingertips from a cliff ledge...

**Horseback riding** out on the spur ridges of Horsetooth Mountain Park with the plains stretching out to the East and the wall of high country peaks to the West...

Whatever your preference, there's something for everyone here at Larimer County's Parks and Open Lands. Visit <http://www.larimer.org/parks> to begin planning your next adventure



Experience the rhythmic dipping of the boats' bow as you head out for a spin around Carter Lake, or to explore the coves at Horsetooth Reservoir. Photo: Walt Hubis

# Getting out and about on your open spaces!

## Devil's Backbone Open Space

Hike along a dramatic geologic formation and enjoy long mountain views. This unique open space, located approximately two miles west of Loveland on U.S. Highway 34, is popular with outdoor enthusiasts of all types and levels.



## Ramsay-Shockey Open Space

Located adjacent to Pinewood Reservoir west of Loveland, this mountain open space features a four mile trail system in a ponderosa pine forest that is perfect for a family outing. If you keep a sharp eye out, you will most likely see signs of deer and elk.



## Rimrock Open Space

Nestled in the hogbacks south of Horsetooth Reservoir, this scenic open space is accessed through Coyote Ridge Natural Area south of the Larimer County Landfill on County Road 19. A moderate hike or bike to the crest of the hogback rewards you with expansive views of the plains to the east and high mountain peaks to the west.



## Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space

is recognized as an Important Bird Area (IBA) by the National Audubon Society because of 180 species of birds that frequent the reservoir. This new open space facility features over two miles of trail with bird viewing blinds and an observation deck that allow avid birders as well as families the opportunity to



Watching birds at Fossil Creek Reservoir or getting out on the trails at the Devil's Backbone, the Open Lands Program has much to offer for passive recreation activities. Photo: Rick Price

watch bald eagles in the winter and migrating waterfowl in the spring and fall. Located just west of the I-25/Windsor interchange, this open space is easily accessible to all!

## Horsetooth Mountain Open Spaces

These open space additions to Horsetooth Mountain Park total almost 700 acres. A challenging yet rewarding hike on the Audra Culver Trail brings you to the base of Horsetooth Rock. The new Soderberg Open Space Trailhead is located off of Shoreline Drive northwest of Inlet Bay at Horsetooth Reservoir. The trailhead is located on the homestead of two Larimer County pioneer



families—the Herringtons and Soderbergs. From this trailhead, enjoy a leisurely hike on the Swan Johnson Trail into Horsetooth Mountain or Lory State Park.

## Pleasant Valley Trail and Lions Park

Bike, jog, walk or stroll on the Pleasant Valley trail as it winds its way along the Poudre River and through the community of Laporte towards Bellvue. The trailhead at Lions Park, located on the Poudre River in Laporte, is a perfect spot to enjoy a picnic or cast a fly in hopes of catching that elusive trout.



Photo thumbnails:  
1. Sharon Viet  
2. James Steele  
3. Walt Hubis  
4. Charlie Johnson  
5. Virginia Soderberg  
6. Rick Price

## Your public open spaces at a glance

	Permit Required	Miles of Trail	Hiking	Biking	Horseback Riding	Leashed Dogs Allowed	Picnic Tables	Restrooms & Drinking Fountains
Devil's Backbone OS		7	●	●	●	●	●	●
Ramsay-Shockey OS	●	4	●	●		●		●
Rimrock OS ▲/Coyote Ridge NA		7	●	●	●			●
Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional OS		2 H	●				●	●
Horsetooth Mountain OS *	●	1.5	●	●	●	●	●	●
Pleasant Valley Trail at Lions Park		2 H	●	●	●	●	●	●

▲ Accessed through the City of Fort Collins' Coyote Ridge Natural Area

\* Accessed through Horsetooth Mountain Park

H Handicapped accessible

## Donations from local families make a difference in land preservation

Preserving land for the future was very important to at least three Larimer County families in 2004 and these families were also able to donate or sell conservation easements at discounted prices. Including the \$519,000 in land value received in 2004, the Open Lands Program has received over \$6 million since 1996 in outright land donations, bargain sales and cash donations. These donations are very important in allowing the Open Lands Program to stretch its dollars to protect more land. If you are interested in preserving your land through donation or bargain sale or making a donation to the County's Open Lands Program and want to understand the tax advantages to these types of donations, please contact us.

Donation over \$1,000,000	David & Susan Jessup (1999-2004)	Sylvan Dale Ranch CEs
\$500,000 to \$999,000	Jake Kauffman & Son, Inc. (2001) Paul Jonjak & Family (1999)	Kauffman CE Blue Mountain Bison Ranch CE
\$300,000 to \$499,000	H.A. & Elaine Fonken (2002-2004) Curt & Jennifer Heckrodt (2000) Jack & Beth White (2000) Bob Ramsay (1999)	Fonken CE I, II, III Red-tail Ridge Open Space Rimrock Open Space Ramsay-Shockey Open Space
\$100,000 to \$299,000	Eldon & Trulie Ackerman (2004) Dan Miller & Mary Beth Simon (2002-2003) H.A. & Elaine Fonken (2002-2003) Patricia Block (2002) Dave Sitzman (2001) Joe & Pat Harper (2000)	Ackerman CE Miller-Simon CE I, II Fonken CE I, II Block CE Kerbel Agricultural CE Harper CE
\$1,000 to \$99,000	Conservation Resource Center (2004) New Belgium Brewing (2002) Walmart of Loveland (2002) Southdown, Inc (2001) Robert & Ann Avis (2000) Anonymous Donation (2000) Byron & Beverly Williams (1999) First Choice Bank (1999) First National Bank (1999) Audra & Don Hughey (1998) Stephanie Steppel-White (1997) Loveland Wildlife Assoc. (1996)	Easement Project Fossil Creek Reservoir Open Space Fossil Creek Reservoir Open Space Red-tail Ridge Open Space Eagle's Nest CE Future Project Fossil Creek Reservoir Open Space Devil's Backbone Trail Devil's Backbone Trail Horsetooth Mountain Open Space Coyote Ridge Natural Area Boyd Lake Property
<b>2004 Donations</b>		CE = Conservation Easement

## A shared vision for conservation

With a shared vision and committed partners, over 1800 acres at the entrance to the Big Thompson Canyon has been protected forever. This "win-win" outcome is the result of visionary planning by the owners of the Sylvan Dale Guest Ranch coupled with the conservation and land use planning goals of Larimer County's Open Lands Program and Rural Land Use Center and the Legacy Land Trust.



Committed partners protect the Sylvan Dale Ranch and the sky smiles... Photo: R. Snell

The Sylvan Dale Guest Ranch, owned by David Jessup,

Susan Jessup and her family includes 3200 acres of pastures, hogback ridges, valleys and canyons at the entrance to the Big Thompson Canyon. Sylvan Dale is a very successful ranch and guest ranch business. The Jessups designed a long term strategy for their properties that would best support the primary business: produce capital and tax credits, and preserve the landscape of their heritage so vital to a guest ranch setting. With this in mind, the Jessups approached the Open Lands Program to develop a plan to donate and sell a series of conservation easements over time. They also approached the County's Rural Land Use Center to discuss limited development options.

Since 1999, Sylvan Dale Ranch has worked with Larimer County on six separate conservation easements for a total of 1161 acres. The total value of these conservation easements is \$2.65 million

*“Without the county's open space sales tax dollars, and the incentives provided by innovative state laws and county regulations, we might not have been able to preserve so much land.”* David Jessup, Sylvan Dale Guest Ranch

and the Jessups have donated \$1.35 million of that value. They have also participated in the Colorado income tax credit program to recoup some of their donated value. The land protected is spectacular and the wildlife habitat is priceless.

Since 1999, Sylvan Dale has also worked with Larimer County's Rural Land Use Center on three Rural Land Use projects. Those plans for 825 acres preserved 400 acres through a conservation easement, and 304 acres protected by restrictive covenants. Only 34 home sites were created with those plans on properties with a potential for 194 lots. Legacy Land Trust holds conservation easements on those properties as well as on 96 acres sold with restrictive building envelopes.

This success story at Sylvan Dale Ranch was only possible through partnership, generous donations and a shared vision.

## So many adventures, so little time...we can help!

Imagine the smell of the clean crisp air as you hear the sounds of your feet crunching the leaves that have fallen on the trail. Nearby there is the plaintive call of a raven seeking its mate. Ahead of you is a wonderful adventure, close to town, but not too close. A guide awaits your arrival, only to whisk you off to a place far away from the day to day pressures found in the urban jungle.

Volunteer Naturalists have received many hours of training in natural resources,

history, geology, and more. They too have experienced what you have, and understand your daily struggle with the 'rat race' and your need to get away from it all.

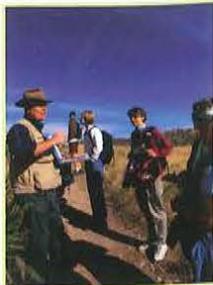
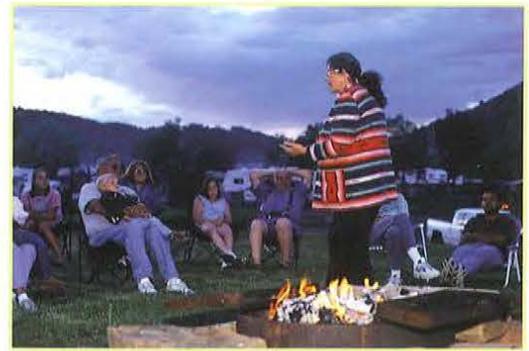


Photo: Rick Price

Many of our volunteers, always on the lookout for ways to simplify their own lives, have developed interpretive talks based in the natural world around them. They enjoy sharing their talks with other hikers who, like them, are looking to find some peace, quiet and fresh air. It doesn't matter if you are fond of birds, history, or creepy crawlies, our naturalists have developed guided hikes in all of these areas, and more.

For a slightly different experience, think back to when the "West" was young. As groups of people moved from place to place, it was customary to entertain each other at night around a campfire in much the same way as our Campground Program volunteers do today. If hiking is not your cup of tea, then you might be interested in packing up a lawn chair or an old blanket and coming to a fun, old fashioned, evening of storytelling, music,



Trained volunteer storytellers and naturalists lead activities at our parks and open lands. Photo: Scott Fraser

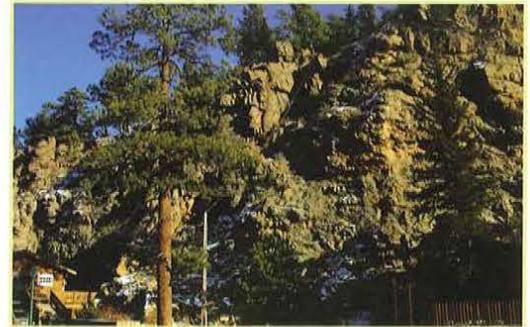
or stargazing at our nearby reservoir campgrounds.

So whether you unwind by hiking or by poking around a campfire, we can offer you something that you will enjoy. We encourage you to come out to our parks and open lands, to get away from the 'rat race' and have some good old-fashioned family fun. If you would like to go a step farther and become part of our volunteer team, please call Ann Montoya, Education Coordinator at (970) 679-4561.

## 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. The total revenue collected to date is over \$68 million.

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



In 2004 HPOS tax dollars contributed to the protection of the American Legion Open Space in Estes Park. Photo: R. Snell

### Annual Revenue Distribution of Open Space Tax Dollars\*

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	Total
Larimer County	2,259,975	2,485,421	2,707,553	3,067,810	3,294,869	3,565,146	3,527,084	3,532,580	3,750,211	28,190,649
Berthoud	71,154	80,969	87,574	101,539	110,862	122,889	124,139	123,913	126,810	949,850
Estes Park	161,905	178,198	193,453	224,779	222,608	229,886	218,802	218,445	234,908	1,882,984
Fort Collins	2,107,473	2,319,562	2,487,606	2,850,066	3,109,001	3,323,372	3,235,748	3,205,119	3,374,671	26,012,617
Johnstown									9,457	9,457
Loveland	847,210	932,139	1,003,872	1,146,823	1,234,060	1,321,205	1,304,378	1,314,655	1,405,098	10,509,440
Timnath	4,221	4,646	5,025	5,732	5,742	5,887	5,599	7,083	11,480	55,416
Wellington	29,848	32,520	40,557	47,494	53,444	64,589	67,642	66,730	75,185	478,008
Windsor									17,416	17,416
<b>Totals</b>	<b>5,481,786</b>	<b>6,033,455</b>	<b>6,525,640</b>	<b>7,444,243</b>	<b>8,030,585</b>	<b>8,632,974</b>	<b>8,483,392</b>	<b>8,468,525</b>	<b>9,005,237</b>	<b>68,105,837</b>

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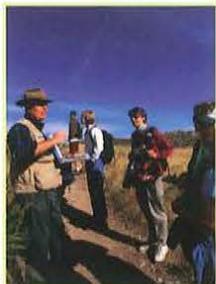
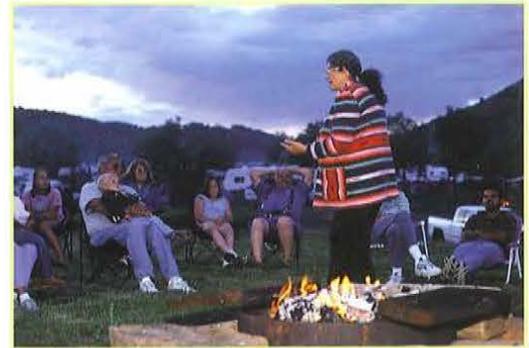


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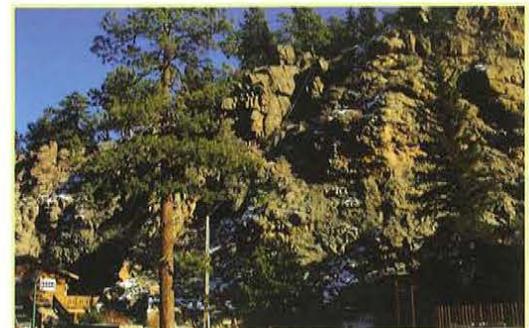
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# Meeting the "Conservation Purposes Test"

Larimer County has worked with landowners interested in preserving their land with conservation easements. Sometimes a landowner is interested in exploring a charitable donation. Before doing so, it is important to understand the "conservation purposes test."

In order for a conservation easement donation to confer state and federal tax benefits to the landowner, it must meet the "conservation purposes test" as described by the IRS. Specifically, a donated conservation easement must meet one or more of the following conservation purposes:

1. The preservation of open space, including farmland and forest land that a) provides for the scenic enjoyment of the general public or b) is established



Photo: James Steele

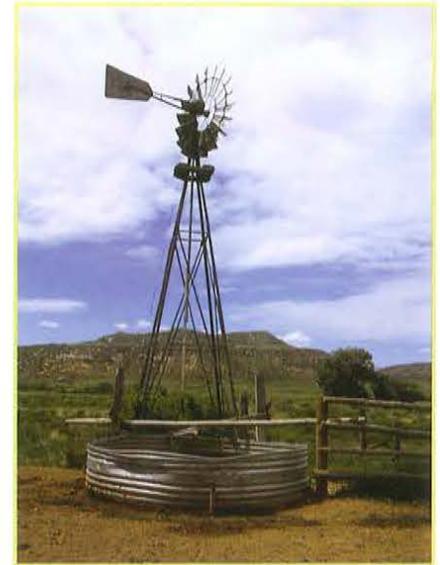
pursuant to a clearly delineated government conservation policy, provided, in each case, that such preservation will yield a significant public benefit;

2. The protection of a relatively natural habitat of fish, wildlife, plants or similar ecosystem;
3. The preservation of an historically important piece of land or a certified historic structure; or
4. The preservation of land for outdoor recreation by, or the education of, the general public.

The Open Lands Program accepts easement only on lands which have a significant public value, meeting one or more of the above criteria. Approval of easement donations with questionable conservation values not only violate the letter and intent of the law, but undermine the credibility and reputation of the Program.

Other criteria also might be considered:

- a) are there other protected lands in the vicinity?
- b) is the property large enough to provide true conservation benefits?
- c) what other protection strategies are available?
- d) what does the future hold for possible development of neighboring lands?



Ackerman Conservation Easement: One rancher's commitment to Larimer County's agricultural heritage. Photo: Charlie Johnson

- e) is there a true conservation motive by the owner in donating the easement?

For all projects claiming tax benefits, an independent qualified appraiser must substantiate the value of the donation. The IRS recently issued a statement that it could penalize individuals and organizations involved in fraudulent transactions (most commonly the inflation of the value of the easement).

The Open Lands Program supports the conservation purposes criteria established by the IRS, and encourages landowners to become familiar with them as they consider conservation easements.

## One, two, three times the money

Imagine that for every dollar you spent in 2004, someone matched that dollar with another \$2.13—more than tripling your money! That would be nice, wouldn't it? Well, that's exactly what happened to your Help Preserve Open Spaces sales tax dollars in 2004. For every dollar spent protecting open space or developing recreational facilities, Larimer County was able to more than triple your tax dollar with donations, grants and partnerships.

From the beginning of the Open Lands Program in 1996, Larimer County has made it a priority to leverage your open space sales tax dollars whenever, and wherever possible. The Open Lands

Program has been successful negotiating with willing landowners for donations or bargain sales that make financial sense to the landowner and the County; developing mutually beneficial financial partnerships with other agencies or municipalities; and finally, developing compelling funding proposals to Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO). In 2004, with the award of a \$7.8 million grant from GOCO for the purchase of the Red Mountain Ranch, Larimer County was able to triple its buying power! Over the life of the Open Lands Program, the County has leveraged an average of \$1.76 for every \$1 in open space sales tax revenue received.

### A multi-million dollar year— \$9,264,400 in grants in 2004!

- \$7,854,400 from GOCO for the purchase Red Mountain Ranch, including \$1,000,000 of DOW's wildlife quadrant funds.
- \$950,000 from GOCO towards the purchase of Chimney Hollow Open Space.
- \$260,000 from the CDOT Transportation Enhancement Program for a trail underpass for the Blue Sky Trail connecting Devil's Backbone to Horsetooth.
- \$200,000 from GOCO for development of trails and facilities at Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space.

Thanks to Great Outdoors Colorado and the Colorado Department of Transportation!

# Inventory of Open Lands Acquisitions

Name	Acreage	Acquisition Cost	Larimer Co. Open Lands	Donation/Bargain Sale	Partnerships	Public Access	Comments
<b>Laramie Foothills</b>							
Red Mountain Ranch	13,448	9,700,800	1,846,400	—	GOCO 7,854,400	Yes, 2009	Fort Collins hold GOCO CE
Eagle's Nest Open Space	755/72	2,054,500	1,360,000	54,500	2 Partners 640,000	Yes, 2005	LLT holds restrictive covenants
Tepee Rings CE	*504	170,000	69,000	100,000	LLT 1,000	No	Managed by LLT
Roberts Ranch CE	4960	3,000,000	200,000	109,000	3 Partners 2,691,000	No	Monitored by TNC
Ackerman I CE	246.5	370,000	163,456	100,000	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.
<b>Buckeye/Waverly Ag Lands</b>							
Buckeye CE	*494	203,753	28,000	5,900	TNC & LLT 169,853	No	Monitored by LLT
Buckeye CE 3 & 4	70	190,000	60,000	130,000	TNC & LLT —	No	
<b>Wellington Ag Lands</b>							
Kerbel Farm CE	*83	376,778	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.
<b>Poudre River</b>							
Fonken CE Phase I, II & III	*175	450,000	0	450,000	—	No	3 of 10 CE donations complete
Lions Park	20	0	0	—	—	Yes	
River Bluffs	161	1,920,000	720,000	—	GOCO 1,200,000	Future trail	Greeley holds GOCO CE
<b>Fort Collins/Loveland Separator</b>							
Long View Farm	599.4	3,027,000	1,594,500	—	3 Partners 1,432,499	Future trail	Leased for dryland farming
Cathy Fromme Prairie	240	1,000,000	180,000	—	2 Partners 820,000	Yes	Managed by Fort Collins
Dryland Wheat Farm	792	3,139,000	437,881	—	3 Partners 2,701,119	Future trail	Monitored by LLT & Lar. Co.
Fossil Creek Regional Open Space	843.5	7,988,750	3,744,550	19,650	Fort Collins 4,224,550	Yes	
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 as Boyd Lake SP
<b>Devil's Backbone to Horsetooth</b>							
Rimrock Open Space	472/*274	2,362,240	2,262,240	—	Fort Collins 100,000	Yes	Managed by Larimer Co.
Soderberg Homestead (HTMP)	114	460,000	460,000	—	—	Yes	Managed as part of HTMP
Devil's Backbone Open Space	2197/*11.3	9,365,020	2,581,920	—	4 Partners 6,783,100	Yes	Managed by Larimer Co.
Hughey Open Space (HTMP)	282	310,000	129,000	31,000	GOCO 150,000	Yes	Managed as part of HTMP
Culver Open Space (HTMP)	287.9	1,500,000	975,000	—	2 Partners 525,000	Potential	Fort Collins holds GOCO CE
<b>Big Thompson River</b>							
Sylvan Dale CE	*1160.7	2,622,616	922,436	1,325,240	2 Partners 375,000	Possible trail	
Block CE	*35	200,000	100,000	100,000	—	No	
Kauffman CE	*73.6	800,000	0	800,000	—	Possible trail	
<b>Berthoud/Loveland Separator</b>							
Ryan Gulch CE	*438	2,027,844	290,900	381,000	4 Partners 1,355,944	Future trail	Monitored by Loveland
<b>Blue Mountain</b>							
Ramsay-Shockey Open Space	177	325,000	0	325,000	—	Yes	
Blue Mountain Bison Ranch CE	*4100	2,666,000	1,350,000	666,000	GOCO 650,000	Guided tours	Co-monitored by LC and LLT
Chimney Hollow	1,847	3,842,000	2,892,000	—	GOCO 950,000	2010	Loveland holds GOCO CE
Harper CE	*240	295,000	0	295,000	—	No	Monitored by LLT
<b>Little Thompson River</b>							
Red-tail Ridge Open Space	320	951,559	286,500	—	4 Partners 665,000	Future trail	Monitored by LLT
Red-tail Ridge Trailhead/Trail	**15.1	43,699	0	43,699	—	Future trail	Monitored by LLT
<b>Estes Valley</b>							
Childers/Henning CE	*160.0	800,000	0	752,000	Private 48,000	No	Monitored by EVLT
Smitherman CE	*520.0	520,000	130,000	—	2 Partners 390,000	No	Monitored by EVLT
Homer Rouse Memorial Trail	1.5 miles	40,000	10,000	—	Estes Park 30,000	Yes	Managed by EVRPD
Lakes Estes Trail	4 mi.(ph.III)	232,500	100,000	—	4 Partners 132,500	Yes	Managed by EVRPD
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	14 ac.ft.	551,000	45,000	236,000	6 Partners 270,000	Yes	Managed by RMNP
Mills/Kiley CE	*192	335,000	45,000	—	2 Partners 290,000	Homestead	Monitored by EVLT
Knoll-Willows	20.5	345,000	55,000	—	2 Partners 290,000	Yes	Monitored by EVLT
American Legion	1.6	200,000	25,000	125,000	2 Partners 50,000	Limited	Monitored by EVLT
<b>Fee Simple Acreage Total</b>	<b>23,465</b>						
<b>CE Acreage Total</b>	<b>14,465</b>						
<b>Fee Simple &amp; CE Acreage Total</b>	<b>37,930</b>	<b>\$68,550,519</b>	<b>\$24,828,153</b>	<b>\$6,249,769</b>		<b>\$37,472,597</b>	

Properties managed by Larimer County Parks & Open Lands

EVLT Estes Valley Land Trust  
 EVRPD Estes Valley Recreation & Park Dist.  
 GOCO Great Outdoors Colorado  
 HTMP Horsetooth Mountain Park

LLT Legacy Land Trust  
 RMNP Rocky Mountain National Park  
 TNC The Nature Conservancy  
 USFS U.S. Forest Service

\* Conservation Easement  
 \*\* Trail Easement

## Thank you, Larimer County citizens

Larimer County's Open Lands Program is truly a citizen's program—your program. In 1996, citizens like you worked hard to put the Help Preserve Open Spaces initiative on the ballot. Citizens voted overwhelmingly to support this initiative and then they voted again to extend the open space sales tax in 1999. That says something about the importance of open space in Larimer County—Citizens voting twice to tax themselves to pay other citizens to keep their land as open space.

And that's exactly what's happening. Every time you spend \$20, a nickel goes for open space. Over the years, those nickels have added up and turned into millions—\$28 million, as a matter of fact, for Larimer County's share. With those nickels of yours, Larimer County and its partners have been able to protect over 37,900 acres of open space. In addition, we have used those nickels to open the Devil's Backbone, Fossil Creek Reservoir, Soderberg, and Ramsay/Shockey Open Spaces for you to enjoy. Coming on line for public access in the near future will be Eagle's Nest, Chimney Hollow, River Bluffs and Red Mountain Open Spaces. So thank you, citizens of Larimer County for digging into your pockets to pay for the open space that you value so highly.

*K. Lynn Cameron*

K-Lynn Cameron  
Open Lands Program Manager

“Why not be on a Board that visits beautiful, interesting places? The staff and OLAB members are passionate about their work. Being a member of the Open Lands Advisory Board is a unique opportunity to “touch the future” today and is time well spent.”

Jean Carpenter, OLAB member

**“Larimer County's Open Space Program is good for both body and soul. This visionary program preserves habitat, view sheds, recreational opportunities and that priceless commodity called “sense of place.” It is a legacy for current residents and for generations to come.”**

*Karen Wagner,  
County Commissioner District 2*



“With our hard work, and open space passions and an extraordinary staff comes a legacy that is priceless.”  
Lori Jeffrey-Clark, OLAB member



**2004/2005 Open Lands Advisory Board Members**  
Jean Carpenter, Mark DeGregorio, Eric Hamrick, Brian Hayes, Lori Jeffrey-Clark, Peter Kast, Bill Newman, Duane Pond, Sue Sparling, Bob Streeter, Ted Swanson, Jim White



**Parks & Open Lands Department**  
1800 S. County Road 31  
Loveland, Colorado 80537  
970 679-4577

## Volunteering for Larimer County creates a lasting legacy

Each month, twelve members of the county's Open Lands Advisory Board come together to give advice and guide the future of the citizen initiated Open Lands Program. The Board listens to presentations on natural resource topics; discusses open space priorities; evaluates management issues; and responds to public comments and concerns.

Ultimately, the Board is responsible for making recommendations to the County Commissioners on how to expend the Help Preserve Open Spaces sales tax dollars. And what does “responsible for making recommendations on open space sales tax dollars” really entail? Sounds like it might include detailed interpretation of financial spreadsheets or does it? What does go on behind the scenes making membership on the Open Lands Advisory Board such an interesting and desirable position?

Well, for starters, for every open space proposal or management plan reviewed, Board members get out into the field. With Open Lands staff or the landowner as a guide, Board members explore the intricacies of each project getting an “on-the-ground” feel for the issues at hand. Board members participate in identifying open space priorities and public access opportunities; assess the program's financial integrity; and develop strategies for long term financial viability to name just a few.

But that's not all. These volunteers who make up this active Board represent YOU. Your views, your hopes and your concerns about open lands are all represented by this cross-section of County citizens. Because of that, the Open Lands Program is successful in its mission of protecting the special places of Larimer County.

Ultimately, Board members are rewarded with the knowledge that their voluntary contribution to the Open Lands Program is creating a legacy that will last forever.

Photo: Charlie Johnson

Photo: Charlie Johnson