



# CHAPTER 3. OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND CHALLENGES

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS BY JURISDICTION

Local governments, land trusts, and other conservation organizations have conserved 125,406 acres, or 7% of the county, as shown in Figure 3.1. As early as the 1970s, Larimer County and Fort Collins were attempting to protect key regional and ecological assets close to community centers and of local importance such as the Poudre River and foothills. However, it was not until two decades later with the passage of the City of Fort Collins (1992), Great Outdoors Colorado (1992), and Larimer County (1995) open space and parks initiatives that substantial local conservation successes began to occur. Of the 125,406 acres, over 90% (115,000) of these acres have been conserved since the passage of the Help Preserve Open Spaces sales tax in 1996 as shown in Figure 3.2.

In context with state and federal land ownership across Larimer County, nearly a million acres (approximately 62%) are conserved either in fee ownership or conservation easement by federal and state agencies; owned, protected and managed by local governments; or as conservation easements held by land trusts or non-profit organizations (see Table 3.1). Of this amount, four out of five acres (819,287) are federally-owned, including lands with the Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest, Rocky Mountain National Park and several other federal agencies. The majority of these Federal lands – the Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest – were established over a hundred years ago in 1908 in more remote, western mountainous areas, and with some exceptions land ownership has remained relatively static and, while certainly affected by, somewhat distanced from the dramatic changes in land use and population growth along the Front Range. The last century has demonstrated that for conservation to occur, it must be citizen led through county, municipal, and non-profit programs.

**Table 3.1: Conserved<sup>1</sup> Lands in Larimer County (2013)<sup>2</sup>. As discussed in Chapter 1, many local government and land trust conservation projects are completed as partnerships with more than one entity contributing funding. The acre totals are approximate and may duplicate a small number of properties.**

Conservation Status	Acreage
Federal	819,287
Conserved State Lands	48,036
Conserved Local Government Lands	75,268
Land Trusts / NGOs	50,138
Total Conserved Acres	992,730

### How are lands voluntarily conserved?

**Fee-Simple Lands** are purchased by a local jurisdiction from a willing seller, are generally open to the public, and provide a variety of non-motorized recreational activities.

**Conservation Easements** are restrictions that private landowners willingly place on their property to preserve certain values, such as agriculture, wildlife habitat, and scenery. The property still remains privately owned and managed and is not generally open to the public. In most instances a conservation easement is tax deductible and tax credits are often available as an added incentive.

**Rural Land Use Plan, Covenants, or Conservation Development** is a voluntary, flexible way to encourage development that protects the county's rural character, critical areas, distinct features, and continues agricultural production while recognizing current zoning.

**Trail Easements** are permanent agreements between a private landowner and an organization or agency through which the landowner preserves a linear corridor from development and allows public trail use.

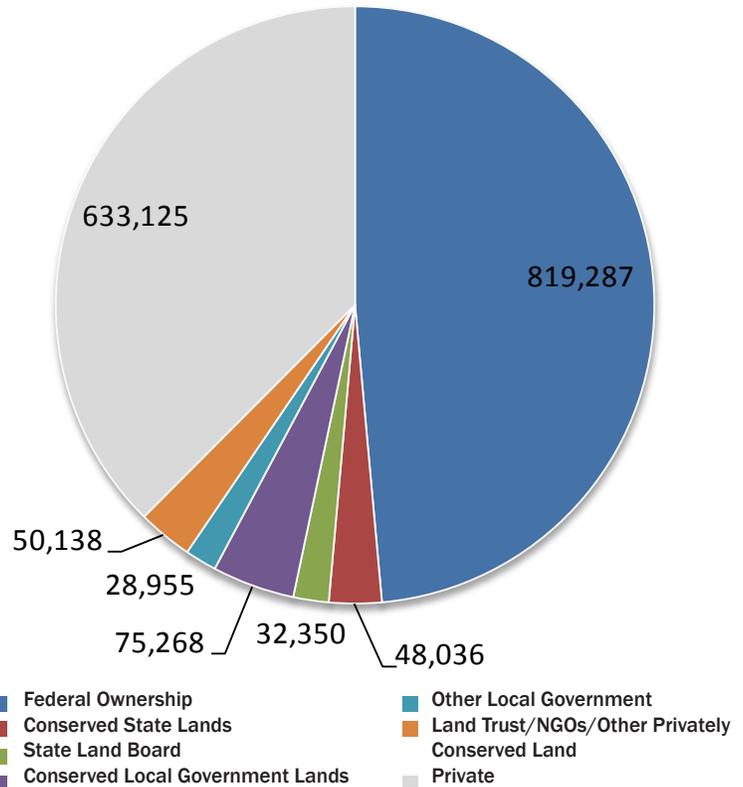


Figure 3.1. Land Ownership in Larimer County (2013)<sup>3</sup>

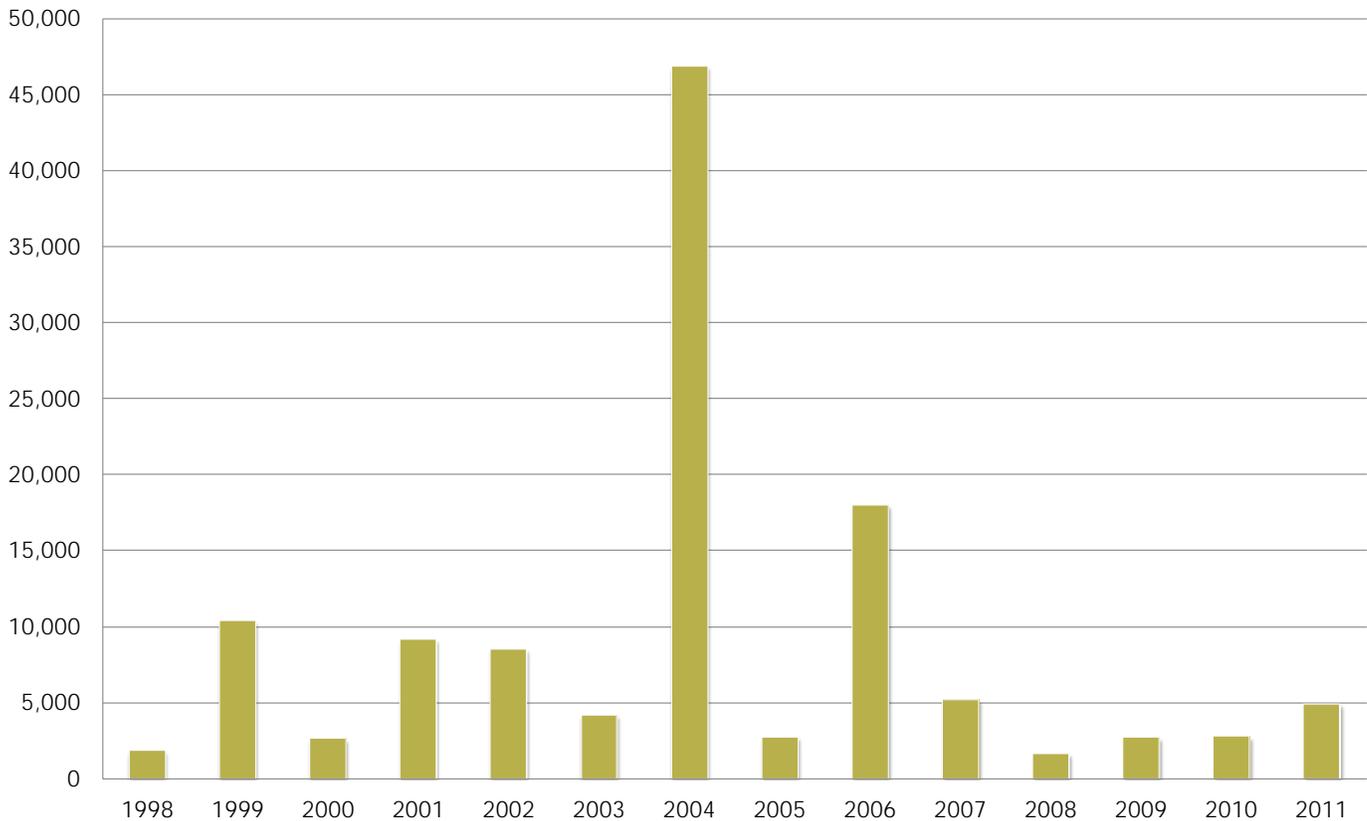


Figure 3.2 Acres Conserved in Larimer County by Year from all Federal, State, and Local Funding Sources<sup>4</sup>

Source: TPL Conservation Almanac, 2013



# CONSERVED LANDS IN LARIMER COUNTY

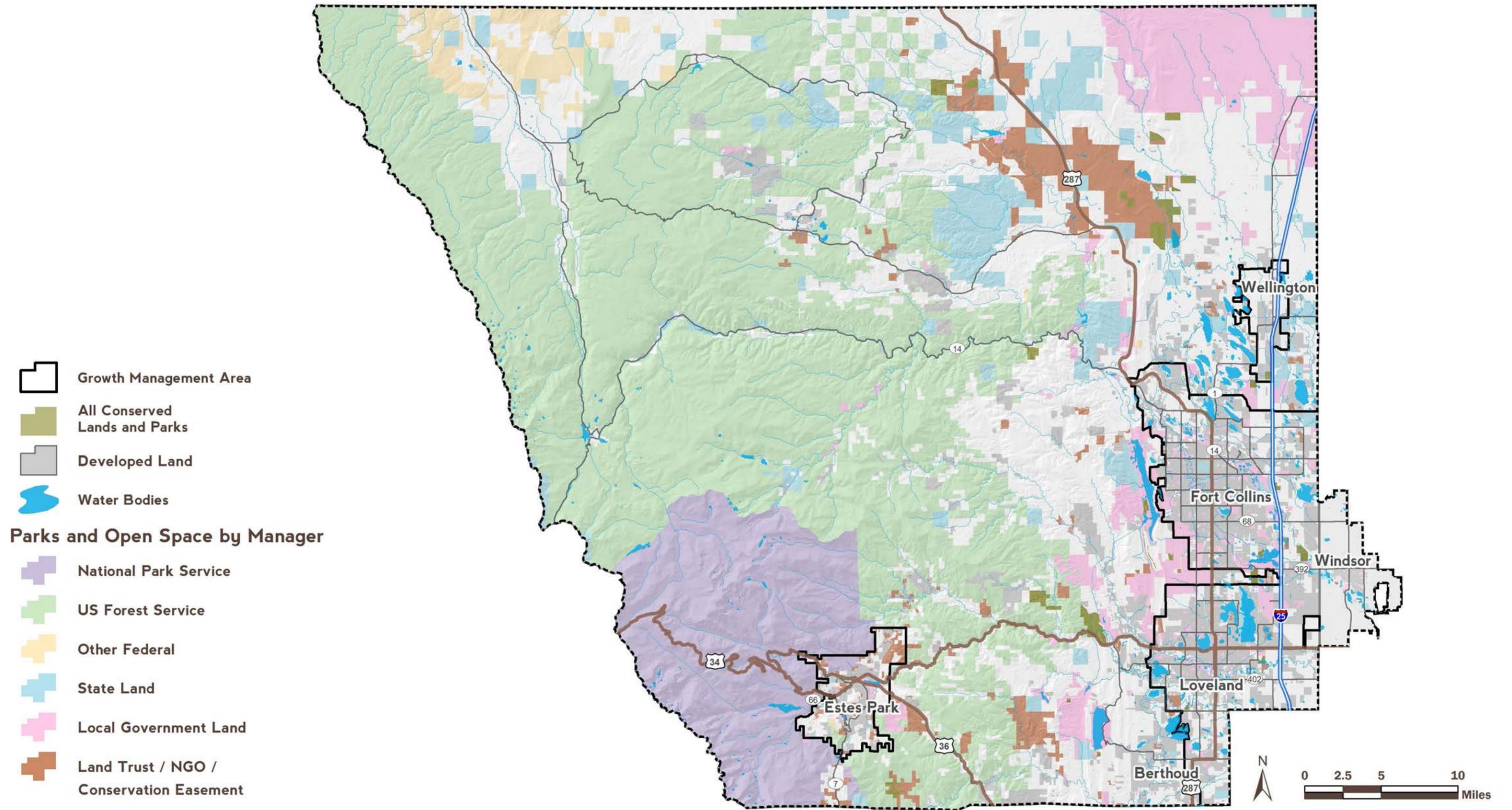


Figure 3.3a Conserved Lands In Larimer County



# CONSERVED LANDS IN LARIMER COUNTY

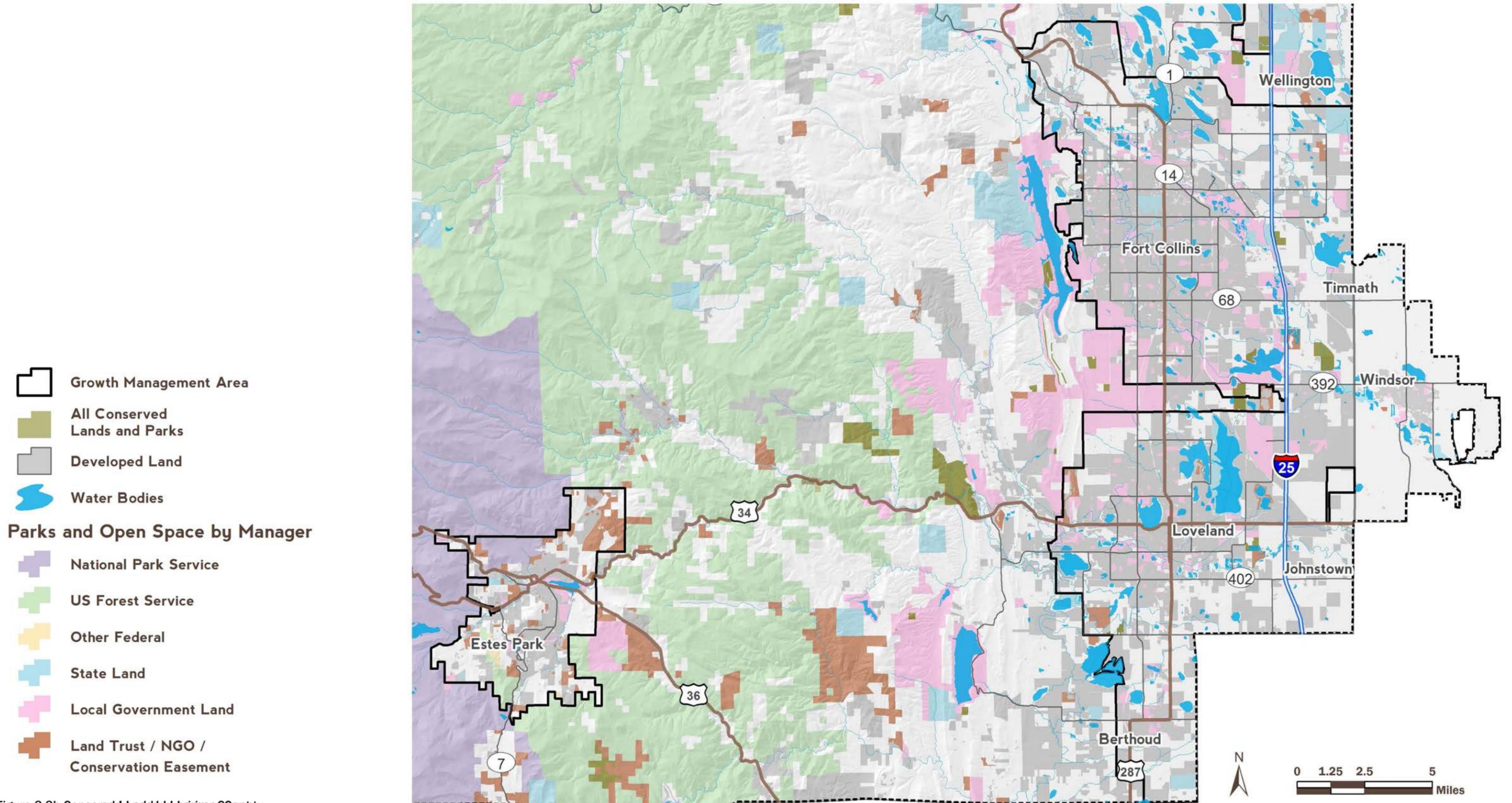


Figure 3.3b Conserved Lands in Larimer County



# Larimer County

## Current Policy Direction

County and municipal priorities are found in their respective adopted general plans and parks, recreation, open space, and trails master plans which often highlight priority areas for conservation, future trail network needs, natural resource management and stewardship, and agricultural land conservation and stewardship. Current policy direction for Larimer County’s Open Lands Program, housed within the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources, follows the principles contained in the *Larimer County Open Lands Master Plan*, adopted in 2001, and the guidance of a citizen Open Lands Advisory Board. This document updated and expanded the 1993 *Larimer County Parks Comprehensive Master Plan* which recommended the establishment of an Open Lands Program.

## Larimer County Properties Currently Conserved

The County has participated with other entities in conserving about 44,400 acres of land. The County itself has conserved 25,000 acres comprised of approximately 40 parcels of land. Public recreation access is currently provided in 17 areas.

The County initiated its land conservation efforts in partnership with the City of Fort Collins with the purchase of the Cathy Fromme Prairie Natural Area in 1994. Since then, the County has secured about 88 parcels of land and has assembled these into 10 conservation areas. Parcels conserved range in size from the Homer Rouse Memorial Trail (1.5 acres) to Red Mountain Open Space (14,928). As illustrated in the Figures 3.4 and 3.5 below, the cumulative number of parcels and acres conserved increased significantly between 2000 and 2005.

Type and Acres of Land Conserved in Part or in Whole by Larimer County			
Type of Holding	# of Parcels	Acres	% of Total
Conservation Easement	44	16,639	37%
Leased	1	20	-
Owned (Fee-Simple Title)	43	27,752	63%
Total	88	44,411	100%

Source: Larimer County, Natural Resources Department

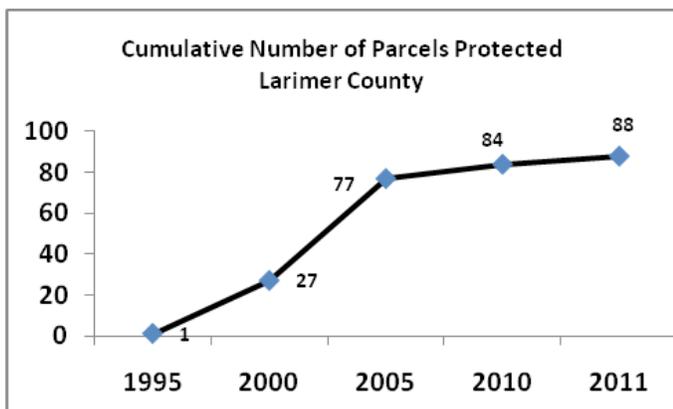


Figure 3.4. Cumulative Number of Parcels Conserved by Larimer County

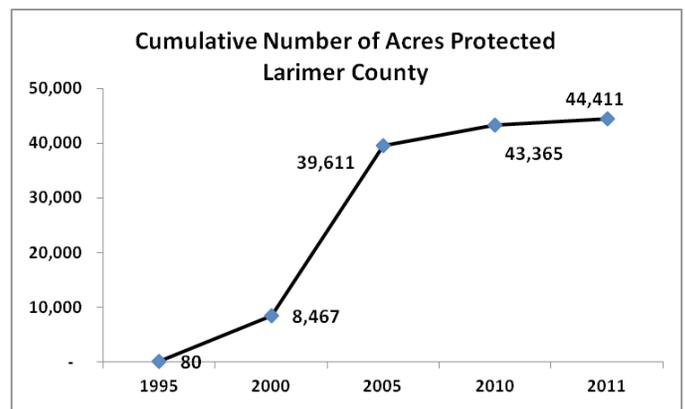


Figure 3.5. Cumulative Number of Acres Conserved by Larimer County



# City of Fort Collins

## Current Policy Direction

Land conservation and the stewardship of natural areas are managed by the City of Fort Collins Natural Areas Department. The Department's efforts are guided by the *Land Conservation and Stewardship Master Plan*, adopted in July 2004, and guided by the citizen Land Conservation and Stewardship Board. This Plan replaced the *Natural Areas Policy Plan* of 1994, and focuses on conserving regional (larger, rural properties), urban (within City limits), and community separator lands (lands between neighboring communities).

## Properties Currently Conserved

In addition to the county sales tax, the City of Fort Collins "Open Space Yes!" 0.0025% (1/4 cent) sales tax was passed in 2005 (to take effect in 2006) for a 25-year period (to end in 2030). These two sources provide approximately 95% of the funding for the Fort Collins Natural Areas Program. The remaining 5% comes from Park Development fees, grants, and the City's general fund. Prior to the 2002 "Open Space Yes!" sales tax, Fort Collins voters passed tax initiatives in 1973, 1984, 1992, and 2002.

The City's Natural Areas Department has conserved 193 parcels that collectively comprise about 41,658 acres of land, both within Fort Collins and beyond city limits. As described in the table below, 84% of the lands are owned in fee simple, 13% are conserved through conservation easements on private lands, and 3% is are leased lands and surface water rights.

Since the 1970s, those City conserved land parcels have been collectively assembled into 63 conserved properties. As illustrated in the graphs below, the cumulative number of parcels conserved increased steadily from 1970 through 2004, as funds were generated from the County and City open space sales tax initiatives. Conserved properties range in size from less than 1 acre to 22,257 (Soapstone Prairie Natural Area, an assemblage of 14 unique parcels).

Consistent with language in its voter-approved ballot initiatives, the City focuses its land acquisition efforts in local and regional natural areas and community separator focus areas.

**Table 3.3: Lands Conserved by the City of Fort Collins**

Type and Acres of Land Conserved in Part or in Whole by the City of Fort Collins in the Natural Areas Program

Type of Holding	# of Parcels	Acres	% of Total
Conservation Easement	19	5,548	13%
Leased	4	1,128	3%
Owned	170	34,982	84%
Total	193	41,658	100%

Source: City of Fort Collins, Natural Resources Department 2012

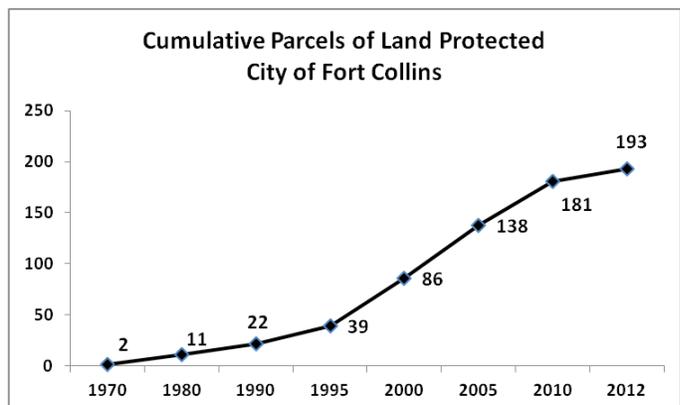


Figure 3.6. Cumulative Number of Parcels Conserved by the City of Fort Collins.

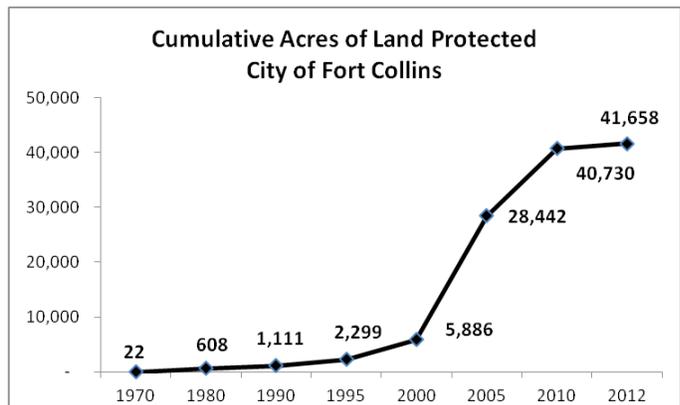


Figure 3.7. Cumulative Number of Acres Conserved by the City of Fort Collins



## City of Loveland

### Current Policy Direction

Open lands are managed by the Open Lands Division within the Parks and Recreation Department. The City is guided by a citizen Open Lands Advisory Commission and the City of Loveland *Open Lands Plan*, adopted in March 2003. This Plan updated the City's first Open Lands Plan, adopted in 1996. The 1996 plan was built from an inventory and analysis of open lands and compiled in a document, *In The Nature of Things*, which was updated in 2008. The City focuses its open lands and land conservation attention on property within its Growth Management Area (GMA) and its larger Community Influence Area (CIA), as well as creating opportunities through regional partnerships.

The City of Loveland maintains a Capital Expansion Fee and the Millennium Environmental Fee dedicated to the conservation of open space, which supplement the city's portion of the county open space sales tax. Loveland's Open Lands Division manages 5,109 acres of conserved land on nine sites. Five of Loveland's sites currently allow public access, with future access planned for River's Edge Natural Area, Dakota Ridge, and the Fort Collins/Loveland Separator.

### Properties Currently Conserved

The City of Loveland participated with partners in conservation projects consisting of five conservation easements and 11 fee-simple holdings. As shown in Table 3.4, 55% is owned in fee simple and 45% is under private ownership in a conservation easement.

**Table 3.4: Lands Conserved by the City of Loveland**

Type and Acres of Land Conserved in Part or in Whole by City of Loveland			
Type of Holding	# of Parcels	Acres	% of Total
Conservation Easement	15	3,130	45%
Owned	29	3,806	55%
Total	44	6,936	100%

Source: City of Loveland, Natural Areas Program, December 2012

## Town of Estes Park & Estes Valley Recreation and Park District

### Current Policy Direction

Both the Town of Estes Park and the Estes Valley Recreation and Park District are jointly evaluating the best way to collaborate on how they might pursue land conservation not only with each other but also with the Estes Valley Land Trust.

At this time, the Town of Estes Park's Park Division of the Public Works Department is responsible for the beautification, maintenance, renovation and management of Town-owned parks except for Stanley Park, the 18-hole golf course and a few trails. The *Estes Valley Comprehensive Plan*, adopted in 1996, provides some broad policy guidance regarding land conservation and open space.

The Estes Valley Recreation and Park District was formed in 1955 and originally was known as the Rocky Mountain Metropolitan Recreation District. It provides recreation facilities and services within its 320 square mile service area in Southwestern Larimer County and northern Boulder County, including the Town of Estes Park as well as the towns of Allenspark, Meeker Park, Glen Haven and Drake. The District views its primary responsibilities to be trail maintenance and development, active and passive recreation, community events, local programming for youth and adults and campground management. The District manages parks, natural areas, campgrounds and trails in the Estes Park area, including Lake Estes, Stanley Park and an outdoor shooting range. Its decisions are guided in part by a 2008 Resource Management Plan that provides guidelines for the management of four US Bureau of Reclamation holdings in the District: Lake Estes, Mary's Lake, East Portal and Common Point.

### Properties Currently Conserved

The District helps maintain several open space areas that are owned by the US Bureau of Reclamation, including portions of Wapati Meadow Day Use Area, the Cherokee Draw Day Use Area, and Mary's Lake. The District maintains the Town-owned Stanley Park, the golf course and portions of Fish Creek and Lakes Estes trails. A number of acquisitions and easements were secured with the active partnership of Larimer County, the Estes Valley Land Trust and GOCO.



## Town of Berthoud

### Current Policy Direction

The Town’s open space program is managed within the Parks and Recreation Department and is guided by the Parks and Open Space Committee. Formed in 1995, this committee includes citizens, a member of the Board of Trustees and the Parks Director serving as the staff liaison. The Town has also prepared a *Draft Parks, Open Lands, Recreation and Trails (PORT) Plan*, but it is not adopted at this time. The Town focuses its land conservation activities on protecting agricultural lands. The Berthoud Land Conservation Fund and its Steering Committee was created as an outgrowth of Berthoud’s Parks and Open Space Committee to find cooperative, positive, voluntary ways to keep identified land in farming. So far, the program has helped pass a local “right to farm” resolution, partnered with Colorado Open Lands, a statewide land trust to preserve its first agricultural property, the Waggener Farm Park, and secured multiple grants to fund farm preservation. Though currently inactive, the program was also a clearinghouse of information about land conservation and provided a support structure for farming families that have felt isolated in the face of increasing pressure to sell. The Town continues to place a strong and consistent priority on conserving working agricultural properties to create a scenic and rural communities.

The Town of Berthoud has a density transfer fee that, together with the county sales tax, is dedicated towards the purchase of open space.

### Properties Currently Conserved

In addition to two parcels in Weld County, the Town is involved in the protection of six conservation easements that are in Larimer County and five properties in Larimer County that are held in fee simple. Collectively, these total 750.5 acres of land. Three of the five properties held in fee simple also have conservation easements on all or a portion of the property. A number of acquisitions and easements were secured with the active partnership of Larimer County, the City of Loveland, the Legacy Land Trust and GOCO.

## Town of Johnstown

### Current Policy Direction

The Johnstown Planning and Zoning Department implements the *Johnstown / Milliken Parks, Trails, and Open Space Plan*, which was adopted in June 2003. The *Parks, Trails and Open Space Plan* identified specific types of properties that the Town would like to conserve.

### Properties Currently Conserved

At this time, the Town of Johnstown offers neighborhood parks throughout the town but does not have any properties designated as open space. From the Town’s perspective, the economic downturn, slower development rates and the preponderance of working agricultural properties affords some time to pursue open space acquisitions in the future. Only a small portion of the Town of Johnstown lies within Larimer County and accordingly the Town receives a small share of the Help Preserve Open Spaces revenue.

## Town of Timnath

### Current Policy Direction

Guidance on park and open space matters is contained in the *Town of Timnath Comprehensive Plan (2007)* and *Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Trails Master Plan (2011)*. While Timnath does not have an open space or natural areas program, in a recent survey for Timnath’s Comprehensive Plan over half of the respondents rated open space protection as extremely important for the town<sup>7</sup>.

### Properties Currently Conserved

The Town of Timnath manages one natural area, Timnath Reservoir, and the recently constructed Gateway Park, which serves as a trailhead for the regional Poudre River Trail.

**Table 3.5: Lands Conserved by the Town of Berthoud in Larimer County**

**Type and Acres of Land Conserved in Part or in Whole by the Town of Berthoud in Larimer County**

Type of Holding	# of Parcels	Acres	% of Total Acres
Conservation Easement <sup>5</sup>	6	537.0	71.5%
Leased	0	0	0.0%
Owned (some also include an easement.) <sup>6</sup>	5	213.5	28.5%
Total	11	750.5	100.0%

Source: Town of Berthoud Planning Director, December, 2012



## Town of Wellington

### Current Policy Direction

Wellington manages its open space matters with staff from the Department of Facilities and Parks. Open space initiatives are guided by the *Town of Wellington Parks and Trails Master Plan* (September 2008), which supplements the visions and policies of the Town's Comprehensive Master Plan, 2008 Update.

### Properties Currently Conserved

The Town owns one agricultural property, Forever Farm MLD. To date, it has not acquired property for parks or open space; it has only accepted dedication of parkland from developers.

## Town of Windsor

### Current Policy Direction

The Parks, Recreation and Culture Department oversees the Town's open space activities. Their efforts are guided by the Parks, Recreation, & Culture Advisory Board and *Town of Windsor Parks, Recreation, Trails and Open Lands Master Plan – 2007 Update*, which replaced a plan completed in 2003. To date, the Town has managed its open space program by partnering with other agencies rather than purchasing and maintaining land itself.

The Town of Windsor has a Park Improvement Fund (park land dedication, fees-in-lieu and park impact fees), Conservation Trust Fund, and Capital Improvement Fund, which support parks, recreation, trails and open lands in Windsor.

### Properties Currently Conserved

In addition to limited trail easements, the Town manages portions of the Poudre River Trail and four open space sites: The Riverbend Open Space, the Poudre Natural Area, the Oxbow Natural Area and the Folkstone Natural Area. All existing natural areas are in Weld County.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife holds conservation easements on one property: Frank State Wildlife Area (partially in Larimer County). Larimer County owns and manages River Bluffs Open Space, which is adjacent to the Town. Many private developments have significant private open space managed by metropolitan districts or homeowners' associations.



Photo by Harry Strharsky



Colorado and Larimer County's demographics are changing: the population is growing, becoming older and more ethnically diverse, and these trends are expected to continue well into the future. Larimer County and other Front Range counties will serve the largest populations in the state.



Blue Sky Marathon; photo by Harry Strharsky

## LARIMER COUNTY'S POPULATION IS GROWING

Colorado has experienced rapid growth over the past century, and that trend is expected to continue well into the future. The Colorado State Demography Office predicts that an additional three million new residents will live in the state by 2040, and Colorado is expected to grow faster than both the U.S. and world populations in that time period. The counties on Colorado's Front Range, including in Larimer County, will have the highest populations in the state<sup>8</sup>.

Larimer County's population has grown steadily over the last century, with the largest booms occurring in the 1970s and 1980s (see Figure 3.8). The rate of population growth in 2010 was approximately 19%. The development of new housing units has matched the county's population growth (see Figure 3.9). The number of housing units in Larimer County increased by 26% in 2010.



### Larimer County Historic and Projected Population Growth (1940-2040)

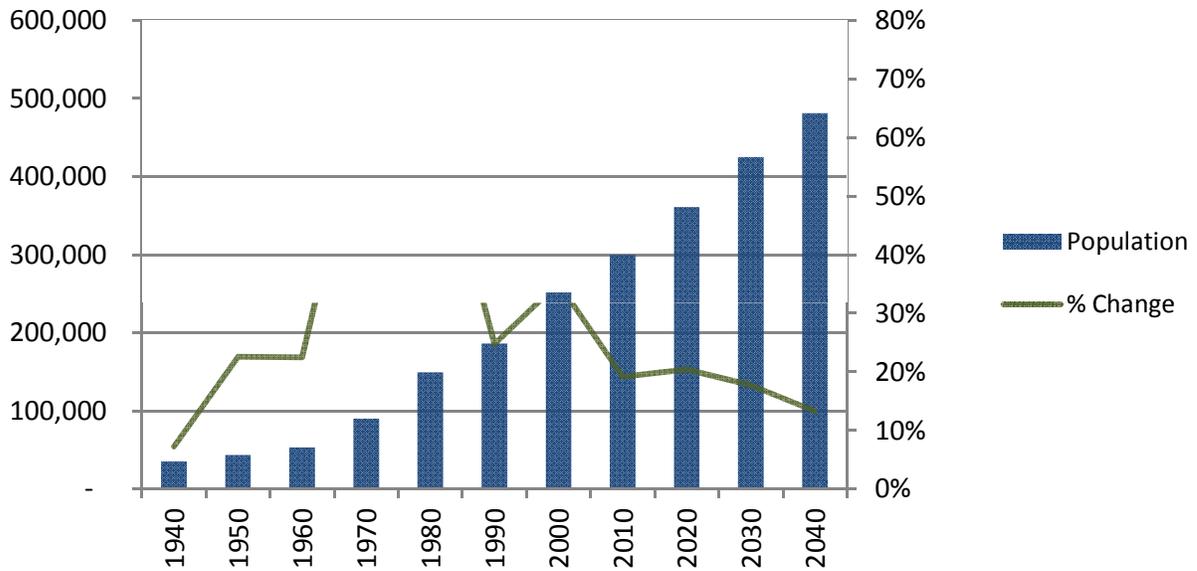


Figure 3.8 Larimer County Historic And Projected Population and Growth Rate, in 10-year increments (1940-2040). Source: U.S. Census Bureau 1940-2010; Colorado State Demography Office 2010-2040.

### Number and Growth Rate of Housing Units Larimer County Change in Housing Units (1940-2010)

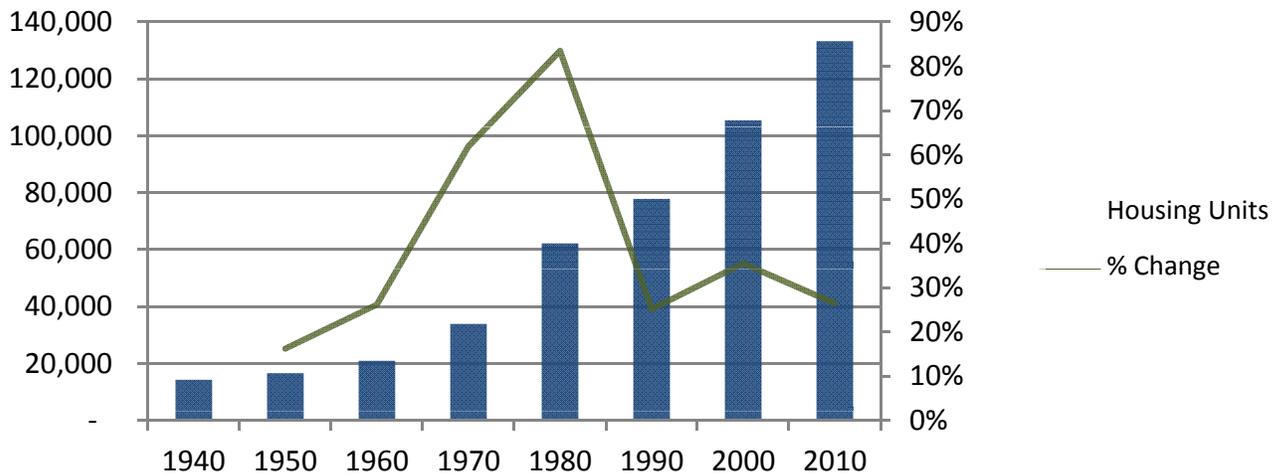


Figure 3.9. Number and Growth Rate of Housing Units in Larimer County, in 10-year increments (1940-2010). Source: U.S. Census Bureau 1940-2010



The median age in Larimer County has climbed since 2000, as has the percentage of the population over the age of 65 (see Table 3.6). This matches the nationwide aging trend, which correlates with the baby-boomer generation reaching retirement age.

The racial and ethnicity composition of the County is also changing. Since 2000, the percentage of Hispanic or Latino residents has risen from 8.3% to more than 10% of the population (see Table 3.7). This trend is expected to continue nationally, statewide and locally.

Household, family and per capita income have all declined in Larimer County in the past decade (see Table 3.8). This may likely be associated in part with the economic recession that affected the U.S. through 2010.

There is great diversity in population density, age, race, education, commuting, income and other demographic characteristics among Larimer County and its municipalities. See the data presented in Table 3.9. Consequently, local demand for land conservation, recreation and leisure activities varies throughout the County.

**Table 3.6: Larimer County Age Comparisons: 2000-2010**

	2000	2010
Under 5 years old	6.1%	5.6%
18 years and over	76.2%	79.1%
65 years and over	9.6%	12.3%
Median age	33.2	35.5

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2010

**Table 3.7: Larimer County Race Comparisons: 2000-2010**

	2000	2010
White only	91.4%	90.5%
Black/African American only	0.8%	1.0%
American Indian/Alaska Native only	0.7%	1.0%
Asian only	1.6%	2.1%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander only	0.1%	0.1%
Some other race alone	3.4%	3.25%
Two or more races	2.2%	2.2%
Hispanic or Latino*	10.6%	10.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2010. Persons of Hispanic or Latino origin are counted separately, so this line is in addition to 100%.

**Table 3.8: Larimer County Income Comparisons: 2000-2010 (In 2010 Dollars)**

	2000	2010
Median household income	\$63,683	\$56,447
Per capita income	\$31,006	\$30,046

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2010



**Table 3.9: Selected Demographic Characteristics (2010 Census)**

	Larimer County	Fort Collins	Loveland	Windsor	John-stown	Welling-ton	Estes Park	Berthoud	Timnath
<b>General Characteristics</b>									
Population	305,525	146,762	68,203	19,066	10,119	6,416	5,976	5,206	638(a)
Households	117,415	55,889	26,488	6,096	2,916	2,040	2,830	1,987	214
Land area (square miles)	2,596	54.3	33.6	24.4	13.5	3.4	6.7	11.4	0.2
Persons per square mile (density)	115	2,653	1,990	763	731	1,868	873	447	960(b)
<b>Age</b>									
Persons under 5 years old	5.6%	5.7%	6.8%	7.3%	9.4%	10.6%	4.8%	5.2%	11.4%
Persons over 65 years old	12.3%	8.8%	14.9%	10.0%	8.7%	4.8%	25.2%	12.4%	7.4%
<b>Race</b>									
Non-Hispanic White Persons	84.1%	83.1%	84.8%	87.7%	80.1%	83.2%	83.1%	88.4%	90.7%
Persons of Hispanic or Latino Origin	10.8%	10.1%	11.7%	9.0%	16.8%	13.3%	14.0%	8.6%	6.1%
<b>Education</b>									
High school graduates	93.7%	94.6%	92.7%	95.1%	88.6%	91.5%	95.4%	96.4%	NA(c)
Bachelor's degree or higher	42.5%	50.1%	32.0%	42.6%	25.9%	29.8%	47.4%	27.9%	NA
<b>Travel Patterns</b>									
Mean travel time to work (minutes)	22	19.3	24.2	22.6	27.4	26.6	14.4	24.6	NA
<b>Income</b>									
Median household income	\$56,447	\$49,589	\$54,775	\$75,970	\$70,379	\$66,524	\$52,778	\$70,292	NA
Persons below poverty level	13.30%	18.00%	8.60%	3.40%	6.40%	12.80%	5.60%	4.40%	NA

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2010. (a) U.S. Census Bureau 2011 data; (b) U.S. Census Bureau 2000 data; (c) NA = Data Not Available)



## **GROWTH IS INCREASINGLY CHANGING DEMANDS FOR RECREATION AND LAND CONSERVATION**

As Larimer County's population grows and its demographics change, so will the needs and preferences of the county's residents. For example, with a 2010 population of 305,525 and approximately 75,000 acres of land conserved by local governments these conservation efforts have resulted in the provision of approximately .25 acre of open space for each resident. In order to maintain this same ratio in response to continuing growth, local government efforts would need to conserve more than 45,000 additional acres by the year 2040 when an additional 175,000 people are forecasted to reside within Larimer County and its communities.

Other demographic changes are also occurring. As the median age in Larimer County continues to increase, an older but active population will have a greater need for diverse recreation options. The 2010 census shows that over 26% of the county's population falls within the Baby Boomer age range (45-65 years). Known to work hard, play hard, and spend hard, Boomers seek customized experiences that cater to the need for self-fulfillment, healthy pleasure, nostalgic youthfulness, and individual escapes that are quite different than "senior" games (i.e., bingo, bridge, shuffleboard). As baby boomers enter retirement, they will be looking for opportunities in fitness, sports, outdoors, arts and cultural events, and other activities that suit their lifestyles. With their varied life experiences, values, and expectations, baby boomers are expected to redefine the meaning of recreation and leisure programming for mature adults<sup>9</sup>. Also, with a growing population of Hispanic, Latino, and Asian individuals living in Larimer County, there will be more demand for family-based activities and bilingual programming. The demographic trends for each municipality and for the County as a whole must be considered when determining land conservation, stewardship and recreation priorities.

### **Increasing Demands for Land, especially Agricultural Land and Water**

A growing population will require more jobs and housing, resulting in greater demand for developable land, water, and energy. The resulting loss in agricultural land and water has potentially major economic and ecological consequences for Larimer County and the state as a whole. New development will especially target agricultural lands, where high demand drives land values higher and gives incentive to farmers and ranchers to sell their land for development. As discussed in Chapter 4, Larimer County's farmland is being lost at a rate of 4,500 acres each year at a cost of \$1.2 million in agricultural output (sales) each year.

Water rights will also be in high demand for developers: the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) estimates that Colorado will need between 600,000 and one million acre-feet/year of additional water for municipal and industrial uses to serve the state's population by 2050, adjusted to reflect modest amounts of conservation<sup>10</sup>. According to CWCB, the majority of this demand is anticipated to come from agricultural water rights: 500,000 to 700,000 acre feet could be transferred to municipal use by 2050. Meeting this demand will require more intense conservation and agriculture/urban sharing of water resources. It also has implications for how water rights must be addressed in future conservation easements and fee-simple acquisitions.



## Increasing Demands Facing Land Managers

Our Lands – Our Future surveyed jurisdictions and organizations that conserve land and offer outdoor recreation opportunities on public lands in Larimer County. Six jurisdictions provided valuable information on the capacity and needs of these organizations to continue serving county residents: Larimer County Department of Natural Resources; Fort Collins Natural Areas Program; Loveland Parks and Recreation; Estes Valley Recreation and Parks District; Windsor Parks, Recreation and Culture; and Colorado Parks and Wildlife.

Each of the provider agencies offers a different suite of recreation opportunities. Some activities are offered by all or nearly all of the agencies, while other more specialized activities (e.g. hunting or rock climbing) are only offered by some of the providers. As shown in Figure 3.10, fishing, trail activities on natural surface trails or roads and wildlife watching/birding are offered by all of the organizations.

Does your organization offer the following recreational activities?

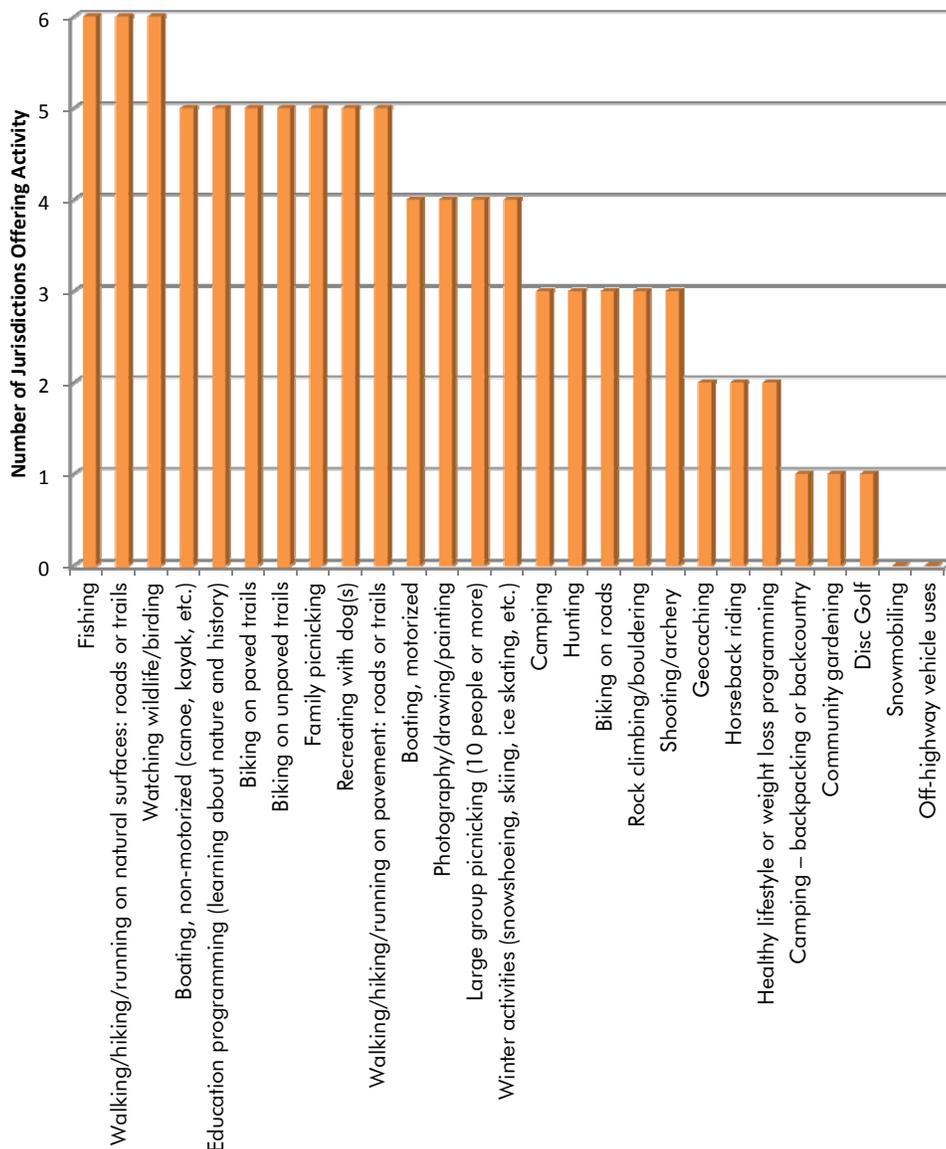


Figure 3.10 Recreation Activities Offered By Land Managers in Larimer County (out of 6 respondents)





Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space; photo by Rick Price

The provider agencies were asked about their perception of increases and decreases in participation in recreation activities. Participation appears to be either stable or increasing (See Figure 3.11).

**Is public participation in this activity increasing or decreasing?**  
 (1-major decrease, 3-same, 5-major increase)

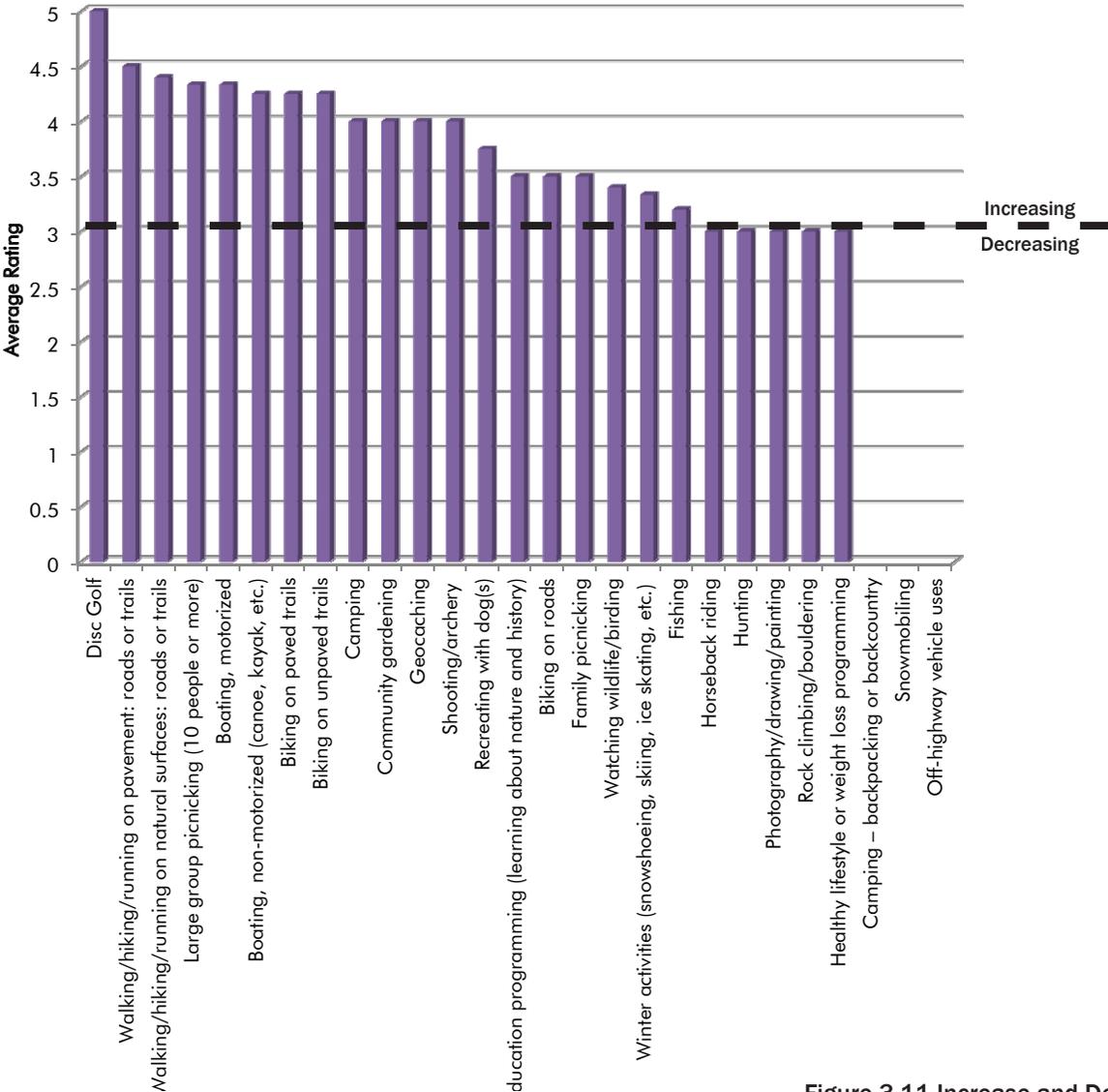


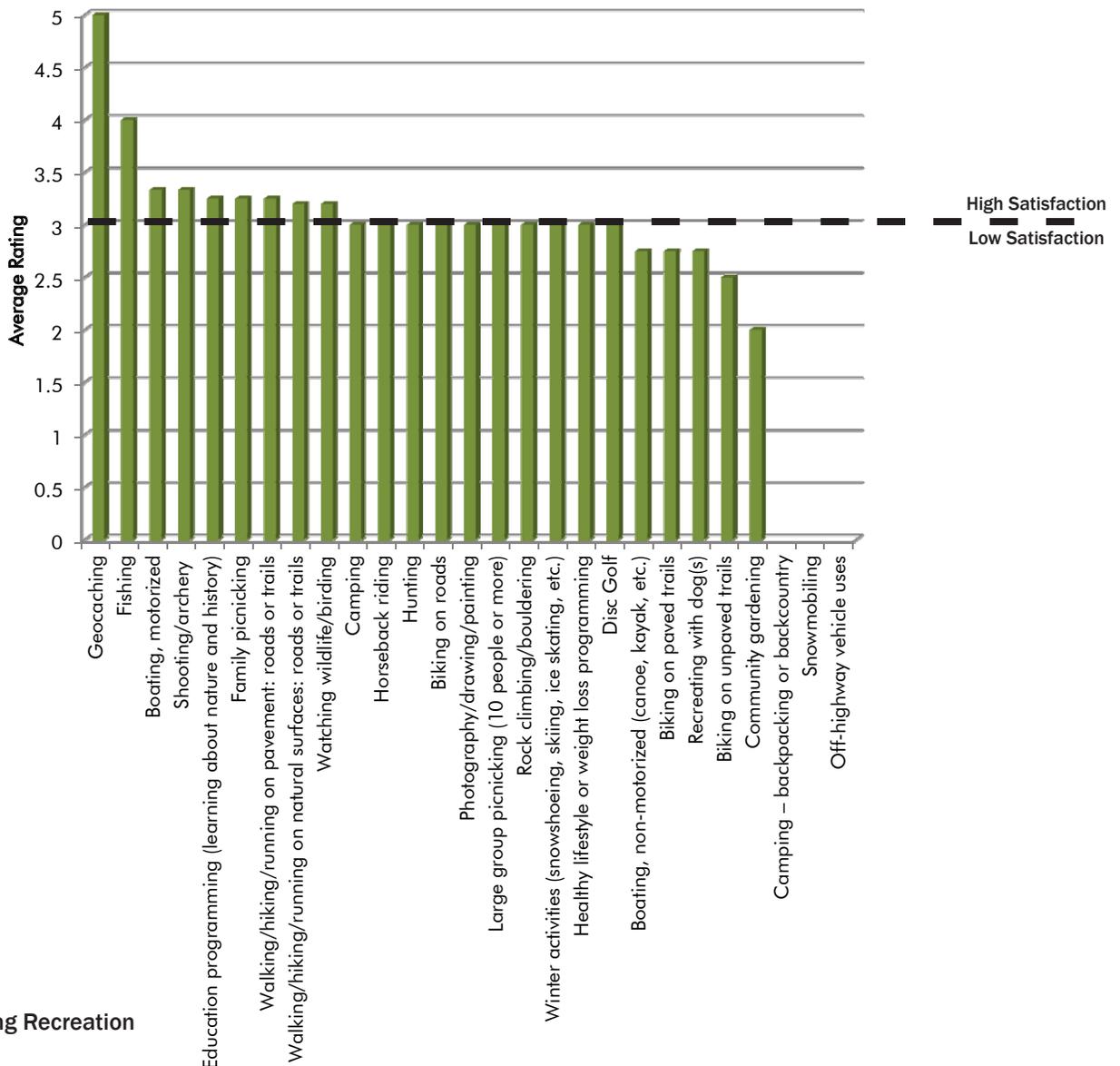
Figure 3.11 Increase and Decrease In Activity Participation

However, when asked whether they are satisfactorily meeting public demand, the results suggest that agencies are just meeting current demands, or feel there is room for improvement for a number of activities (see Figure 3.12). Snowmobiling and OHV uses are offered on Federal and some state lands, suggesting a gap in proximity to population centers along the Front Range.



Red Mountain Open Space; photo by David Coulson

**How satisfactorily do you believe your organization meets public demand for this activity?  
(1-low satisfaction, 5-high satisfaction)**



**Figure 3.12 Meeting Recreation Demands**





Carter Lake; photo by Charlie Johnson

Partners were asked which administrative and management issues are the most challenging to address. Common responses included maintaining existing recreation infrastructure and resources, crowding and overuse of parks and/or trails, engaging and managing volunteers, adequately training staff, serving a growing and changing population and managing off-leash dogs.

How challenging are the following administration and management issues for your organization?

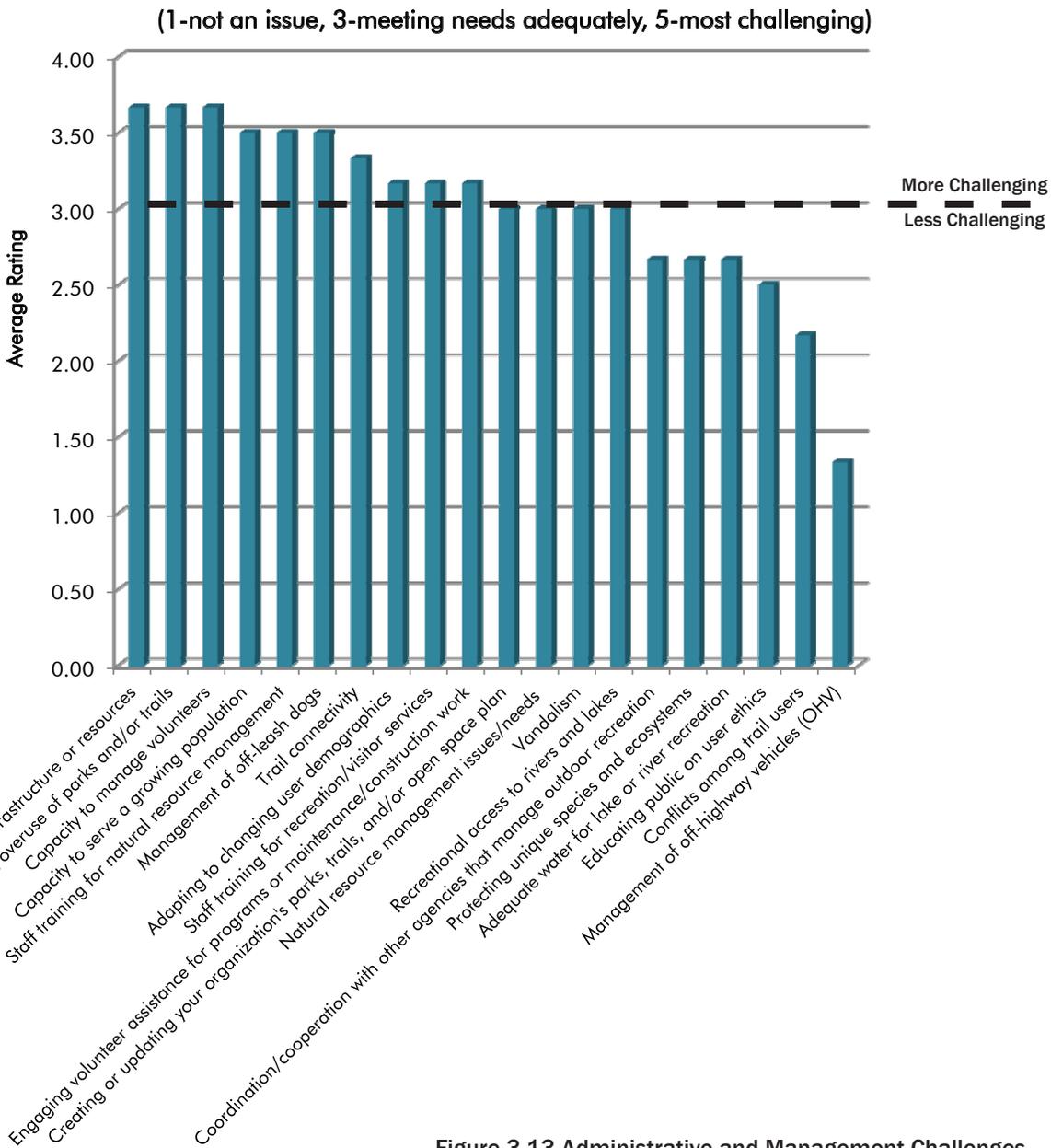


Figure 3.13 Administrative and Management Challenges



Visitor services seem to present fewer challenges for the provider agencies than administration and management. Nevertheless, the top visitor services issues include assessing visitor satisfaction and expectations, offering recreation programs and opportunities for youth and Hispanic populations, and providing adequate trail and interpretive signage (see Figure 3.14).



Flatiron Reservoir; photo by Dave Marvin

### How challenging are the following visitor services issues for your organization?

(1-not an issue, 3-meeting needs adequately, 5-most challenging)

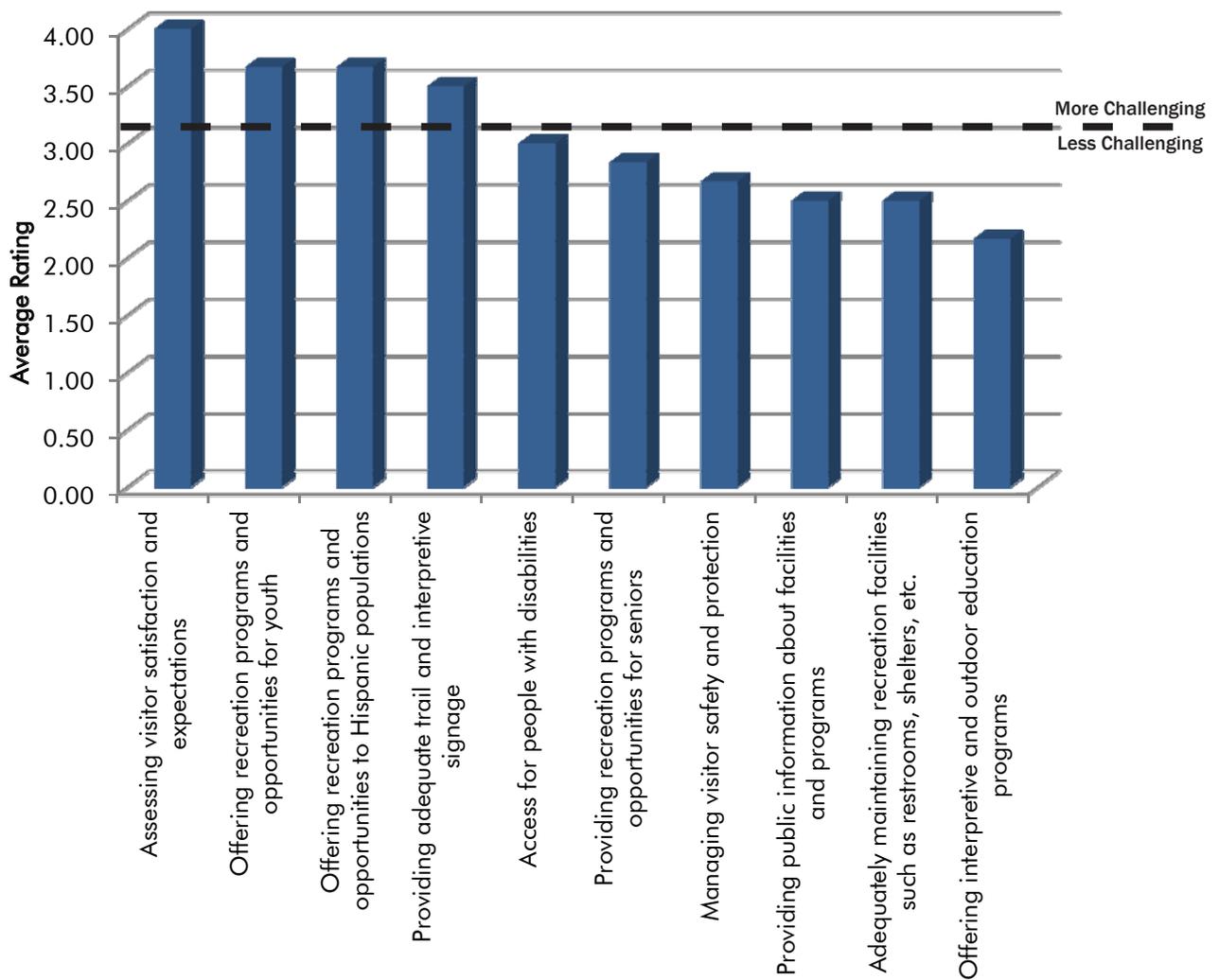


Figure 3.14. Visitor Services Challenges



# OUR LANDS – OUR FUTURE TOOLS FOR LAND MANAGERS

In light of the increasing and changing public demands for a wide variety of environmental protection, recreational, educational, scientific, aesthetic, and/or economic services provided by Larimer County and local governments, Our Lands - Our Future created three tools to assist the project partners. Each of these is described below.

## 1. Property Database

The Colorado Ownership Management and Protection (COMaP) at Colorado State University maintains a state-wide inventory of open space in digital format. The project team reviewed the 2011 version and updated their land ownership in a new database. New fields were created to use in this report's analysis of open space types, levels of service, and the financial analysis.

## 2. Open Space Types

Conserved lands can be broadly categorized into open space types to assist land managers and the general public in understanding their purpose, values, and cost and management implications. By having a common set of open space types in place, all parties know what is expected and commonly permitted, making day-to-day decisions justifiable and rational.

Using the 2011 COMaP database, all of the partners' properties were categorized around the four open space goals described in Chapter 1:

- Conserve working farms and ranches
- Create regional open space and trail areas
- Enhance and/or create urban open space and trail systems
- Protect natural resources and wildlife habitats

The property database and open space types are available on the online mapping website and were used as the basis for the economic benefits analysis in Chapter 4, the financial stewardship analyses in Chapter 5, and the opportunity area models in Chapter 6.



Figure 3.15 Open Space Types



# MAP OF OPEN SPACE TYPES

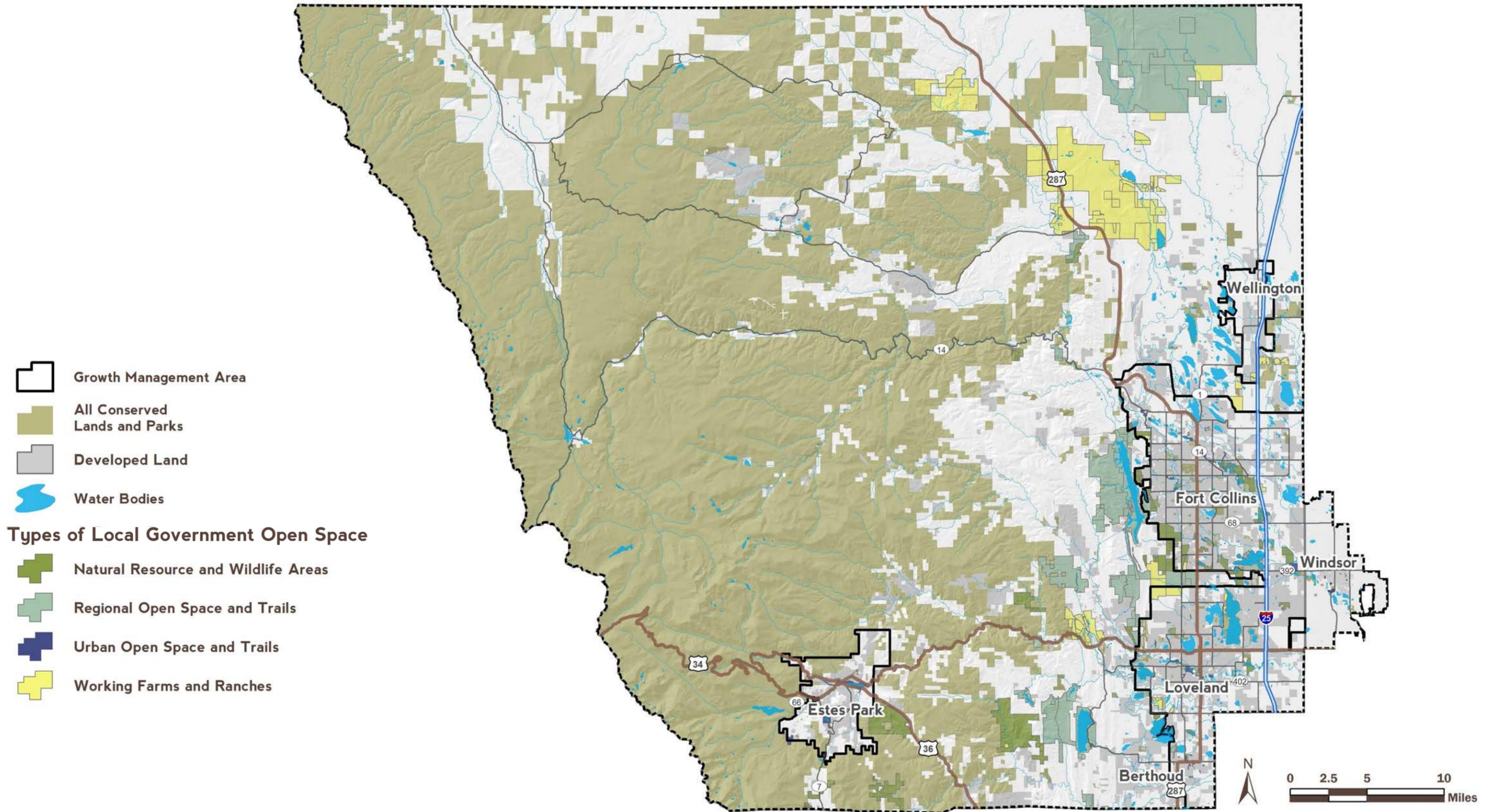


Figure 3.16 Map of Open Space Types

# MAP OF OPEN SPACE TYPES

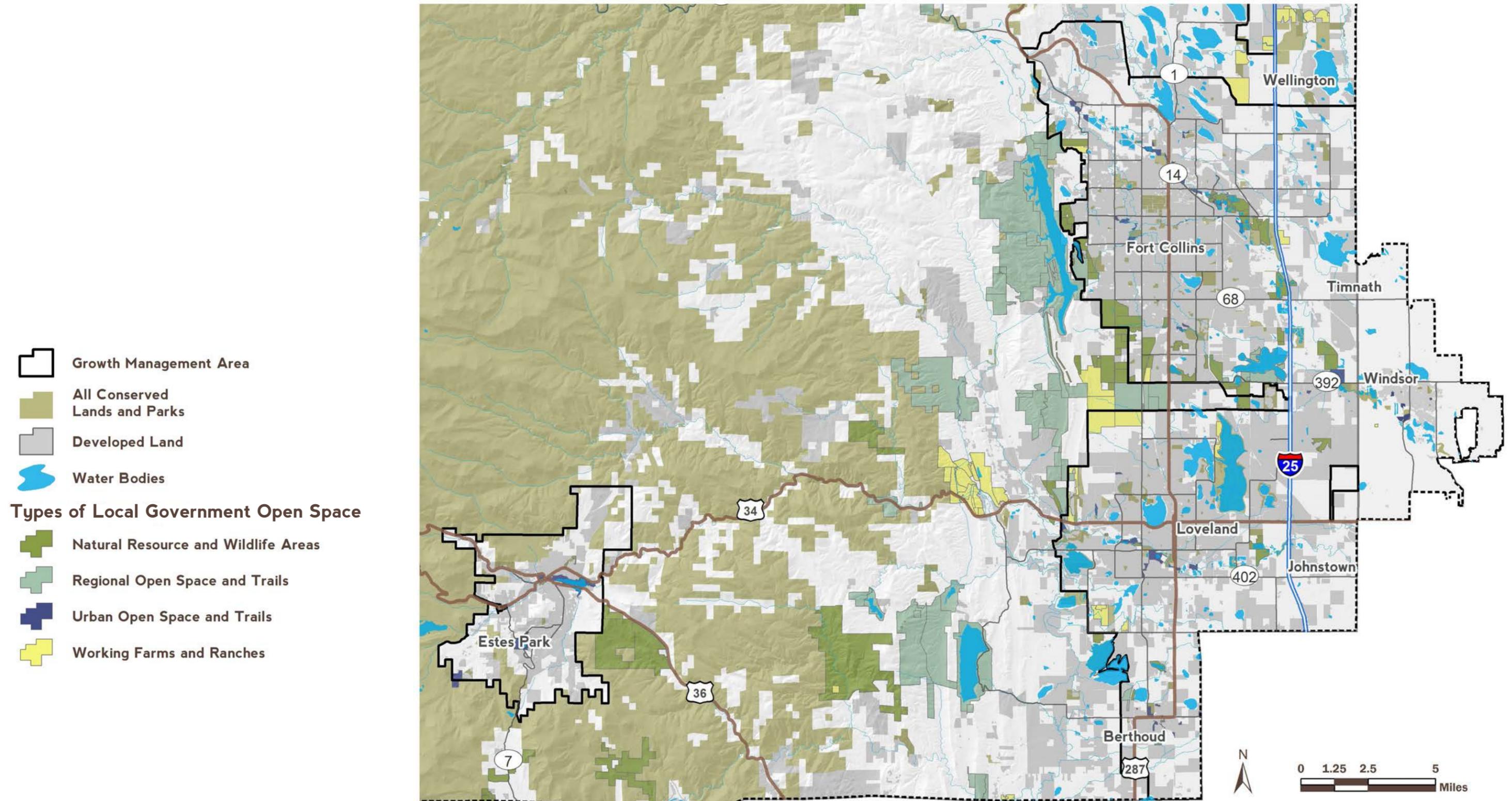


Figure 3.16 Map of Open Space Types



### 3. Levels of Service

As part of the local master plans and operational plans, short- and long-term levels of service required for each property can be mapped in the property database. The intent of determining the level of services regarding facility and infrastructure development on open spaces is to: 1) Effectively communicate, respond to and manage public expectations based on the overall property vision and budget; and 2) Improve projections of both development and long-term management costs. The five categories of service levels are:

- Levels of Facility Development – Initial Capital Outlay, Not Including Trails
- Levels of Trail Development – Initial Capital Outlay
- Levels of Restoration/Vegetation Management – Initial Capital Outlay
- Long-term Visitor Maintenance
- Long-term Ecological Management

Properties with adopted management plans include a vision statement and/or goals that define the property’s overarching management philosophy, and detail specific goals for facility and trail development, restoration, and long-term maintenance. However, it is difficult to anticipate the cumulative costs and operational needs of the entire system. In future master and management planning processes, it is proposed that these open space types and levels of service be utilized to clarify the facility development, infrastructure and services that match the system’s financial resources and public demands.

Criteria used to determine the open space type and level of facility development and maintenance may include:

- Uniqueness and threats to special resources.
- Projected use levels/visitation.
- Location of the property (proximity to populated centers and Growth Management Areas).
- Protection mechanism or management partnerships (i.e., fee simple, conservation easement, Inter Governmental Agreement (IGA), management partnership or other agreement).
- Existing infrastructure and site capability.
- Property function and niche in relation to master plans and other open lands, natural areas, parks and trail facilities.

This is an adaptive approach to be used over time with management plan updates and adjusted as information becomes available. Throughout all the steps of the master and management planning process, the level of facility development and service provided can be tested against visitor/user preferences and fiscal constraints so that the agency program can dedicate the necessary resources and manage each property appropriately.

**Table 3.10: Levels of Service for Five Categories**

INITIAL CAPITAL OUTLAY	LONG-TERM LEVELS OF SERVICE
<p>1. Levels of Facility Development – Not Including Trails</p> <p>Varying levels of capital costs associated with the type, number, and quality of facilities, such as unpaved/paved parking; vault/flush toilets, kiosks; gates; fencing; benches or picnic tables; bike racks/pumps; picnic/sun/wind shelters; outdoor classrooms; or natural playgrounds.</p> <p>2. Levels of Trail Development</p> <p>Varying levels of capital costs for the miles of paved trail and/or natural surface trails.</p> <p>3. Levels of Restoration/Vegetation Management – Initial Capital Outlay</p> <p>A range of long-term costs to restore lands to native conditions and control weeds. At the low disturbance end of the scale, little or no restoration is needed (i.e., relatively very few weeds/acre; and/or primarily in agriculture with lessee or owner doing weed control). At the high end are highly disturbed sites with long-term and wide-scale weed issues (i.e., brownfield or gravel pond reclamation and wetland creation).</p>	<p>4. Long-term Visitor Maintenance</p> <p>This level of service includes ongoing ranger patrol, trail maintenance, cleaning, minor repair as a function of visitation and distance from population centers. At the low end are properties with no public access (conservation easement monitoring and properties not currently open to the public). At the high end are popular properties with high visitation large trail networks; high frequency of ranger patrol, cleaning and trail maintenance; and frequent graffiti and vandalism issues.</p> <p>5. Long-term Ecological Management</p> <p>Once the initial restoration has been completed, all properties require ongoing ecological stewardship including weed control, forest and vegetation management, other vegetation management, and wildlife management efforts (ex. prairie dogs, rare species, created habitats such as nesting raptor poles), etc.</p>



## CHAPTER ENDNOTES

- 1 In this analysis, the term “conserved” is intended to mean parcels secured via land conservation, lease or fee-simple ownership.
- 2 Colorado Ownership Management and Protection (COMaP). 2013. COMaP general ownership acreages per county as revised by project partners.
- 3 Colorado Ownership Management and Protection (COMaP). 2013. COMaP general ownership acreages per county as revised by project partners.
- 4 Trust for Public Land. 2013. Conservation Almanac. Accessed from <http://www.conservationalmanac.org/>
- 5 These easements include the Yeager Farm (65 acres), Alverson (70 acres), Dunkin/Fancher (52 acres), Hopkins (59 acres), and Lazy J Bar S Parcels #1 and #2 (291 acres).
- 6 These include the Hillsdale Nature Park (8.5 acres), Matthews Farm (19 acres), Waggener Farm Park (65 acres) Jaskowski (78 acres) and Heron Lakes (43 acres).
- 7 Town of Timnath, 2012. Timnath Comprehensive Plan Online Survey Results.
- 8 Colorado Conservation Trust. 2012. “Colorado’s Rapidly Increasing Population: Impacts on our Land and Water. Presentation, Spring 2012. Accessed from: <http://coloradoconservationtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/Colorados-Rapidly-Increasing-Population.pdf>
- 9 Cochran, L. et. al. 2009. Leisure Programming for Baby Boomers. Human Kinetics.
- 10 Colorado Water Conservancy Board. 2012. Colorado’s Water Supply Future. Accessed from <http://cwcb.state.co.us/water-management/water-supply-planning/Documents/SWSI2010/SWSI2010FactSheet.pdf>

