It's all about the journey

Hiking brings families closer to the area's natural beauty

V. Richard Haro

With butterfly net at the ready, Daniel Gammon, 7, leads his brother, Andrew, 4, and mom, Betsy up a hiking trail at Lory State Park Friday June 19, 2009.

By Coloradoan staff

Hiking is a family-friendly activity that can introduce kids to the outdoors as well as provide health benefits.

The Fort Collins area is blessed with a myriad of family-friendly hikes to introduce all members of the family to the outdoors.

Here are five family-friendly hikes just a short drive from Fort Collins:

Horsetooth Falls Trail

Where: Horsetooth Mountain Open Space. Take Larimer County Road 38E west of Fort Collins for 8.7 miles to Horsetooth Mountain Park.

Open: Year-round

Trail: Easy 1.1-mile trail one way with little elevation gain that is open only to hiking

Entrance fee: $7 daily or $65 annual pass to Larimer County Parks

Facilities: Restrooms, water and information available at the trailhead

Pets: Yes, on leash

Why go: This the closest waterfall hike to Fort Collins with the falls tumbling 20 feet down to create a refreshing shallow pool where kids can easily wade. The earlier you go the better, as the falls in dry years don't run all summer. Along the way you can enjoy an abundance of wildflowers, wildlife and connect o 28 miles of trails spread through the 2,400-acre county open space. Watch for rattlesnakes. For a longer option, try Horsetooth Rock, the park's signature trail

Information: Larimer County Parks, 679-4570 or visit www.larimer.org/parks

Devil's Backbone Nature Trail

Where: Devil's Backbone Open Space. Take Taft Hill Road south to U.S. Highway 34 in Loveland. Turn right and head west for 4 miles to just past mile marker No. 88. Turn right onto Hidden Valley Drive just east of the old water tank. The trailhead is on your left.

Open: Year-round dawn to dusk

Trail: Easy to moderate one-way 3.5-mile hike with little elevation gain

Entrance fee: Free

next to the campground. Just make sure to keep an eye on the kids around the river.

Where: 13 miles up the Poudre Canyon on Colorado Highway 14 from U.S. Highway 287

Sites: 19, tent-only up to 30-foot RVs

Things to do: Fishing the Poudre River, rafting/kayaking, hiking (Greyrock Trail is 4 miles away), mountain biking, wildlife watching

Elevation: 5,800 feet

Amenities: Vault toilets, fire grates, picnic tables and drinking water

Fee: $17 per night

Reservations: Yes, call (877) 444-6777 or visit www.recreation.gov. There is a $9 additional fee to reserve a site.

Information: 295-6700 or visit www.fs.fed.us/r2/arnf

Dowdy Lake

This is a very family-friendly campground. It offers beautiful views of the lake dotted with granite boulders. A new trail allows campers to access the popular Mount Margaret Trail where you can hike and mountain bike as well as equally beautiful West Lake Campground.

Where: Drive 21 miles north on U.S. Highway 287 to the Red Feather Lakes Road (Larimer County Road 74E). Take this road west for 22 miles. Turn right and the campground entrance is a mile up the road.

>**Sites:** 62, tent-only sites to RVs up to 130 feet

Things to do: Fishing, hiking, mountain biking, canoeing, wildlife watching, four-wheeling

Elevation: 8,100 feet

Amenities: Vault toilets, fire grates, picnic tables and drinking water

Fee: $18 per night for non-electric sites and $23 for electric sites

Reservations: Yes, call (877) 444-6777 or visit www.recreation.gov. There is a $9 additional fee to reserve a site.

Information: 295-6700 or visit www.fs.fed.us/r2/arnf

Jack's Gulch

You won't have to worry about your kids falling into the river here. Despite being well off the Poudre River, this quiet campground offers plenty of recreational options. It has trails leading right out of it to the south and west that are beautiful, loaded with wildflowers and provide access to two designated wilderness areas. Many other trails can be found in just about any direction you go.

If you're one of those families sticking closer to home, it doesn't mean you still can't get away.

Where: Go north on U.S. Highway 287 for 10 miles to Colorado Highway 287. Turn left and go west on Colorado 14 for 26 miles to the Pingree Park Road (Larimer County Road 63E). Go south just more than 6 miles to the campground on your right.

Sites: 70, including five horse camping sites in one loop with small corrals, tent-only sites and some that can accommodate up to 50-foot RVs.

Things to do: Horseback riding, hiking, mountain biking, wildlife watching, stream fishing, four-wheeling

Elevation: 8,100 feet

Amenities: Vault toilets, fire grates, picnic tables and drinking water

Fee: $18 per night for non-electric sites, $23 for electric sites and $29 for equestrian sites

Reservations: No

Information: 295-6700 or visit www.fs.fed.us/r2/arnf

Mountain Park

This may be the most family-friendly campground in all of the Poudre Canyon. It offers a coin-operated shower house for those that don't wish to rough it too much.

Where: Go north on U.S. Highway 287 for 10 miles to Colorado Highway 287. Turn left and go west on Colorado 14 for 23 miles to the campground on your left.

Sites: 55, tent-only sites to RVs up to 45 feet

Things to do: Hiking, fishing, mountain biking, wildlife watching, rafting, four-wheeling

Elevation: 6,500 feet

Amenities: Coin-operated shower house, vault toilets, fire grates, picnic tables and drinking water

Fee: $18 per night for non-electric sites, $23 for electric sites and $110 for group site

Reservations: Yes for sites 1-32, all of which have electrical hookups. Call (877) 444-6777 or visit www.recreation.gov. There is a $9 additional fee to reserve a site. Sites 33-55 are first come, first served and do not have electricity

Information: 295-6700 or visit www.fs.fed.us/r2/arnf

Hermit Park

This Larimer County open space just south of Estes Park opened to camping last year but still remains largely undiscovered. However, it caters to families whether they wish to just set up a tent for themselves or have a big gathering at the group campground site. Not only is there plenty of hiking, horseback riding and mountain biking trails in the open space but you also have easy access to Rocky Mountain National Park.

Where: From U.S. Highway 34 in Estes Park, turn left on Mall Road (Larimer County Road 63) and go south for .6 miles. Turn left onto U.S. Highway 36 and go south for 2.1 miles to entrance on your right.

Sites: 36 non-electric tent and RV sites, group camping area for up to 30 people and 15 camper cabins.

Things to do: Hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding and wildlife watching

Elevation: 7,880 feet

Amenities: Campsites have fire grates

Fee: $20 per night for individual campsites, $150 for group campsite and $80 to $100 for cabins plus $7 daily entrance fee

Reservations: Yes, call (800) 397-7795 or visit www.larimercamping.com. There is an $8.25 additional fee to reserve a site.

Information: 679-4570 or visit www.larimer.org/naturalresources

Guided hikes hosted by county this month

Loveland Connection staff

Larimer County is hosting a series of guided hikes and educational programs this month.

Following are details about the events:

• 10:30 a.m. today: "Hiking with Your Toddler" — Learn how to take toddlers along on hikes and strategies for helping them fall in love with the outdoors. This is a stationary program with optional hike afterward.

• 10 a.m. Sunday and June 21: "Home on the Range" — Learn about life on the range with a former rancher and county naturalist. This is a stationary program.

• 9 a.m. Tuesday and June 30: "Laramie Foothills Archeology" — Join Dr. **Jason LaBelle** for a look at archeology of Red Mountain Open Space, including some field work in action.

• 5 p.m. Wednesday: "Evening Wildflower Walk" — Join a naturalist for a leisurely wildflower walk at Devil's Backbone Open Space, west of Loveland off U.S. Highway 34. The hike will highlight color and texture of the early summer wildflowers. Participants should dress appropriately for the weather and bring water for the trail. For more information, call 679-4561.

• 9 a.m. June 20: "Horsetooth's Bloomin" — Join a naturalist at Horsetooth Mountain Open Space, west of Fort Collins on County Road 38E, for a colorful program about wildflowers. The program is free. However, there is a $6 vehicle entrance fee. For more information, call 679-4561.

• 5 p.m. June 23: "Intermediate SLR Photography Clinic" — Join professional photographer **Charlie Johnson** for an in-depth clinic detailing film and digital SLR cameras. Some easy to moderate hiking is involved.

• 8 a.m. June 27: "Red Mountain's Little Ponies" — Take a trail ride at Red Mountain Open Space on your horse. This is a nearly four-hour ride about 8 miles.

For more information about Larimer County's parks and open spaces, visit www.larimer.org/naturalresources.

Open lands manager to have happy trails

BY KEVIN DUGGAN
For Loveland Connection

Rich Abrahamson For Loveland Connection
K-Lynn Cameron stands in Red Mountain Open Space.

> 'My heart is still in protecting the special places in Larimer County, and there are still many places to protect.'
> **K-Lynn Cameron**, Open Lands manager

K-Lynn Cameron is hiking away from a job she loves.

Cameron is leaving her post as manager of the open lands program in the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources after 13 years.

Her resignation was announced in April with the intention of tying her departure to the recent grand opening of the county-owned Red Mountain Open Space and Fort Collins' Soapstone Prairie Natural Area.

But she postponed her last day of work to Tuesday so she could meet one more time with Larimer County commissioners to discuss the importance of building partnerships in order to make the county's open spaces accessible to more people.

Cameron intends on taking the summer off before deciding what to do next.

She will continue living in Larimer County and stay active in the conservation community.

"My heart is still in protecting the special places in Larimer County, and there are still many places to protect," she said.

Cameron started with Larimer County in 1981 as a contract employee charged with finding ways to fund a natural areas program. In 1983, she was hired as a full-time planner for the parks department.

She helped develop a master plan for the parks system in 1993 that led to a grass roots effort to create an open lands program.

The first ballot proposal to fund a county program failed.

But in 1995, voters overwhelmingly supported a .25 percent sales tax dedicated to open space with part of the money going back to municipalities.

Voters renewed the tax in 1999 and gave the program bonding authority, allowing it to buy mountain property and agricultural land before prices soared beyond reach.

Cameron became the open lands manager in 1996.

She created a program that would become the envy of other counties.

Fueled by the sales tax, in 13 years the program has protected more than 43,000 acres.

Its crown jewels include Red Mountain, the Devil's Backbone Open Space and Hermit Park Open Space near Estes Park.

Red Mountain and Soapstone are part of a larger plan — the Laramie Foothills: Mountains to Plains Project — aimed at protecting 55,000 acres in the northern part of the county.

Funding big-ticket items required building partnerships with property owners, municipalities, land trusts and sundry federal and state agencies.

Strong partnerships will keep the county's program going, Cameron said, as it faces a time when bonds that helped lower funds for acquiring land must be paid off. "That doesn't mean we can't protect more land," she said. "We just have to find creative ways to pay for it."

Cameron brought "energy and vision" to the county's program, said **Peter Kast**, who served six years on the Open Lands Advisory Board. She surrounded herself with people who shared her enthusiasm for the work, he said.

"She took an idea that was on paper and made it the spectacular program it is," Kast said.

Cameron said she'll miss the job she created but added, "it's time to move on and hand the reins over to others."

She'll miss working with county staff members, elected officials, volunteers and members of the advisory board, Cameron said.

But she'll most miss working with private property owners who are willing to save their land for future generations by letting it go.

Guided hikes slated across Front Range in July

Loveland Connection staff

Larimer County will host a series of guided hikes and events in July.

The following is information about the events:

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• 8 a.m. July 5 — POGO Hike: Join a naturalist at Fossil Creek Reservoir, north of Colorado Highway 392, west of the Windsor/Interstate 25 interchange, for an adventurous search for pelicans, osprey, grebes and others. This is a two-hour, easy hike. For more information, call 679-4561.

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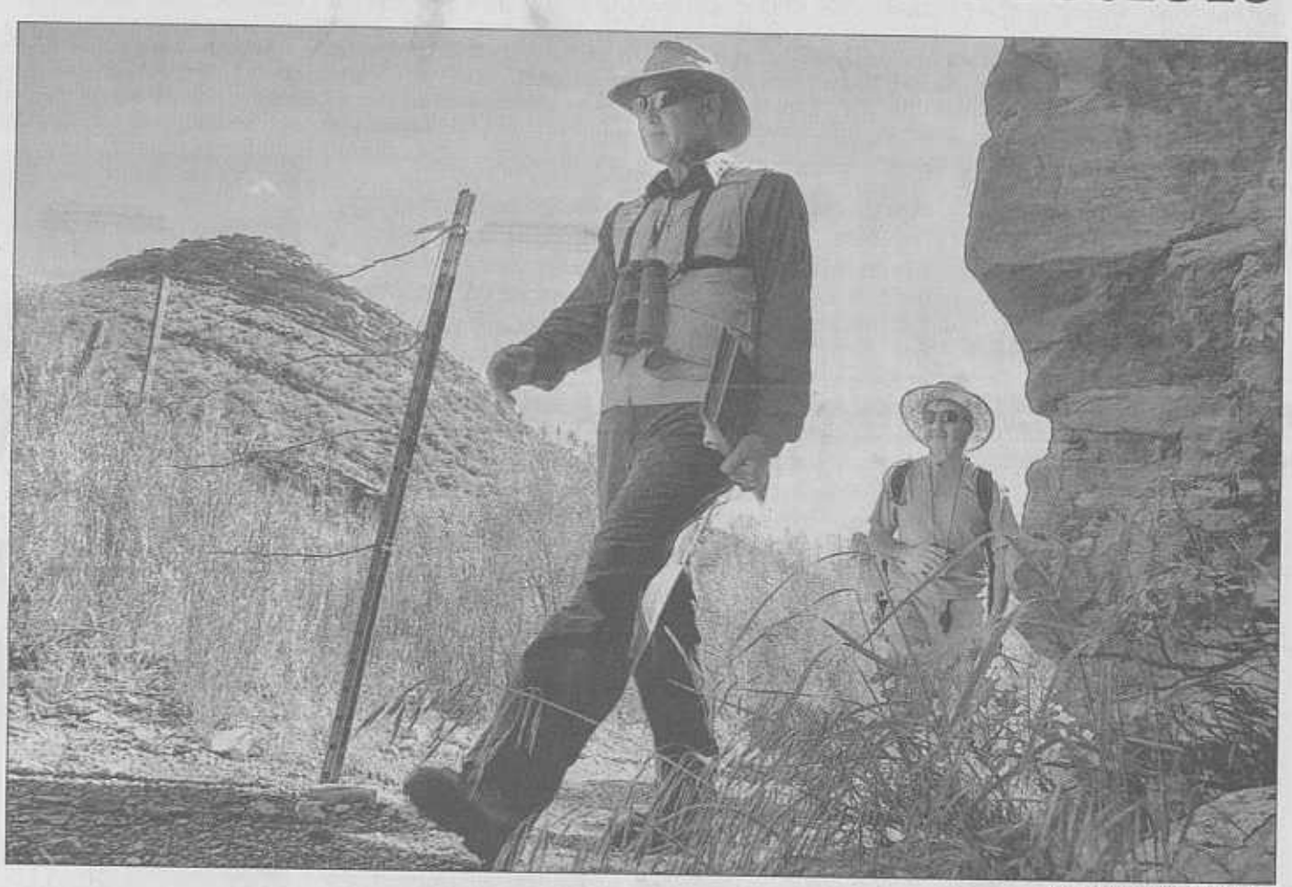
• 8 a.m. July 12 — POGO Hike: Join a naturalist at Fossil Creek Reservoir, north of Colorado Highway 392, west of the Windsor/Interstate 25 interchange, for an adventurous search for pelicans, osprey, grebes and others. This is a two-hour, easy hike. For more information, call 679-4561.

• 7 p.m. July 25 — Wiley Coyotes: Learn about coyotes during this presentation at the outdoor classroom of Fossil Creek Reservoir Open Space, north of Colorado Highway 392, west of the Windsor/Interstate 25 interchange. This is an hour-long stationary program. For more information, call 679-4561.

Coloradoan 6-28-2009

NATURE HIKE HELPS HIGHLIGHT GRAND OPENING

Red Mountain now accessible



Miranda Grubbs/The Coloradoan

Rudy Lucero, back, of Fort Collins follows volunteer naturalist Dave Marvin as he leads a guided hike at Red Mountain Open Space on Saturday.

Isolated 'ecotone' provides unique experience for visitors

BY MOLLY ARMBRISTER
MollyArmbrister@coloradoan.com

After several postponements because of inclement weather, Red Mountain Open Space celebrated its grand opening Saturday morning with events designed to showcase the amenities, including a nature hike along one of the trails.

Those in attendance were surrounded by rolling green hills and rock-covered plateaus as they approached the trailhead, isolating them from busy roads and anything that might distract them from enjoying the natural area.

There was plenty for the 10 hikers who set out on Bent Fork trail to experience on the 2½-mile trek, including several varieties of wildflowers, a pronghorn antelope and even a rattlesnake stretched out in the sun.

Dave Marvin, a nature volunteer trained to teach visitors about the area's indigenous flora and fauna, led the hike. Marvin began his training program in July 2008 and completed it in March.

See OPENING/Page A2

Page A2
Upcoming events at Red Mountain Open Space

PHOTOS ON COLORADOAN.COM
View the online photo gallery from Red Mountain.

Coloradoan 6-28-2009 continued

Opening

Continued from Page A1

Stopping every now and then to show the hikers a particular flower or land formation, Marvin had plenty of knowledge to share with the hikers.

"I've always wanted to give back," Marvin said, referring to his volunteer work.

The hike was interactive, with visitors getting an opportunity to ask Marvin questions about what they saw or share their own knowledge.

The Red Mountain space is what is called an "ecotone," Marvin said, meaning "ecology in stress." Ecotones are created when an area is in transition, such as Red Mountain, which is the meeting of mountains and the prairie. This meeting creates a unique experience because of the varying plant and animal life.

The trail led the hikers along Sand Creek and past a cliff face made of dizzying red rocks that are home to cliff swallows whose nests are clearly visible from the ground. The hikers then trekked through a shrub-filled meadow and across a gypsum deposit before returning to the trailhead for refreshments.

Ellen Miller of Fort Collins made it her New Year's resolution to hike more often and is sticking to it. The Colorado State University graduate has hiked in Rocky Mountain National Park as well as Horsetooth Open Space. Miller brings friends along on her hikes and is considering venturing into the newly opened Soapstone Prairie Natural Area next.

Meg Parmer said Red Mountain is more remote and has fewer tourists than parks like Rocky Mountain National Park.

"I like to go where it's not the busiest," she said. Parmer has been hiking for almost 30 years and is a volunteer with Poudre Wilderness Volunteers.

"I would bring somebody else out here," she said of the space.

Red Mountain offers hiking, biking and horseback riding trails, and focuses on the Earth's history, as well as the plants and animals that were native to the land in the past and the present.

Red Mountain Open Space is owned and managed by Larimer County. It is part of the Laramie Foothills Mountains to Plains Project, a collaborative land protection effort among willing landowners, Larimer County Open Lands Program, the city of Fort Collins Natural Areas Program, The Nature Conservancy, Legacy Land Trust and Great Outdoors Colorado. To date, the project has protected more than 55,000 acres of land.

Upcoming events at Red Mountain

> "Moon Over my Open Space," a moonlit hike at 8:15 p.m. July 7
> "Life on the Edge," an ecotone hike at 11 a.m. July 11

Registration required at www.larimer.org/natural resources/registration

Want to go?

Directions: Take Colorado Highway 1 (Terry Lake Road) to Larimer County Road 15 (Waverly turnoff). Go left on County Road 15 to County Road 78. Go left on County Road 78 to County Road 17. Go right on County Road 17 to County Road 80. Go left on County Road 80 to County Road 19. Go right on County Road 19 to County Road 21. Go left on County Road 21 for about seven miles to the trailhead parking area.

Natural Resources opens land to community vision

BY KEVIN DUGGAN
For Loveland Connection

One of Larimer County's most popular agencies is exploring a new way of looking at itself and the work it does.

The Larimer County Natural Resources Department, which includes the county's parks and open space programs, will be evaluating its work against practices described in the Whole Measures program of the Center for Whole Communities, this summer.

Whole Measures is a strategic planning tool that will allow county staff members, citizen advisory boards and the county commissioners to think in terms of the "big picture" and how residents benefit from the department's programs, officials said.

K-Lynn Cameron, who worked her final day as manager of the county's open lands program June 16, told the county commissioners recently that the Whole Measures approach uses value-based practices to create a community vision.

The vision for the Natural Resources Department would be based on how the community is connected to the land, she said, and how well the department is doing and where it can do better.

Practices are parceled into groups under a variety of titles, including justice and fairness, relationships between land and people, community building, health ecosystems, healthy habitat for people, stewardship and economic vitality.

"It's a way to engage these boards, yourselves and staff in some really exciting discussion about where we are and where we want to go," she said.

The county commissioners June 16 unanimously approved the pilot program, as well as spending $1,000 on a workshop scheduled Sept. 23 with **Peter Forbes**, one of the founders of the Center for Whole Communities.

Before the workshop, staff members, advisory boards and the commissioners will meet with facilitators to discuss issues surrounding the department's work and whether it's meeting the needs of citizens.

Commissioner **Kathay Rennels** said she supports the program because "at some point, somebody is going to have to make a decision on what happens" to the open lands and parks programs in the future.

The process will allow local residents to get a better sense of what the county has to offer and possibly set the groundwork for a campaign addressing the sales tax that supports the open-lands program, she said.

Whole Measures approach goes beyond conserving open lands, Cameron said. It shows how the conservation community may find a role working on social issues such as affordable housing.

Rennels said the approach is a good tool for opening a wide-ranging discussion about how people are connected to land and whether the land is being used appropriately.

"My bottom line is always the land itself," she said.

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COMMUNITY

Red Mountain Open Space Ready for Business

Larimer County is set to open Red Mountain Open Space next Saturday, June 27. The Friends of Larimer County Parks & Open Lands will have a time capsule art project booth where participants can design their own celebration flag to be included in a time capsule that will be opened on the 10th anniversary of Soapstone Prairie and Red Mountain Open Space's opening (June 2019). Will these amazing places be the same in 1 years? The answer is up to all of us.

Everyone is invited to be part of history by contributing their first impressions, hopes and dreams for Soapstone Prairie and Red Mountain Open Space in art or writing. Requirements for submissions are posted at www.Larimer.org/RedMountain, or join the Friends' group at the trailhead next weekend and they will assist you.

Things to keep in mind before heading to Red Mountain Open Space:

- Dress in layers — weather is unpredictable. Wear sturdy shoes. Red Mountain's beauty includes rattle snakes and cacti.
- Bring plenty of water; there is no drinking water available on-site.
- No dogs are allowed, even if left in your car.
- Hike with a buddy when possible. Red Mountain Open Space offers a remote, backcountry experience. If you do hike alone, let someone know your expected route ahead of time, and when you plan to return.

To learn more about Larimer County's parks and open spaces, visit their Web site at www.Larimer.org/NaturalResources.

The Coloradoan, Wednesday, June 17, 2009

WHAT'S GOING ON

Weekend starts with Horsetooth wildflower hike

Here is a look at three events this weekend:

> **Horsetooth wildflower hike:** 9 a.m., Saturday, Horsetooth Mountain Open Space. Easy naturalist-guided wildflower hike. Program is free but a $6/vehicle entrance fee is required. No registration required. Information: Rob, (970) 679-4561 or visit www.larimer.org/naturalresources

> **Equestrian ride:** 8 a.m. Saturday and 8:30 a.m. Sunday, Soapstone Prairie Natural Area. Bring your own horse. Free. Registration required. Information: Fort Collins Natural Areas Program, 416-2815 or send e-mail to naturalareas@fcgov.com

Berthoud Weekly Surveyor June 24, 2009

Bobcat Campground opens at Hermit Park Open Space — On Monday, June 22, at 10 a.m., Bobcat Campground at Hermit Park Open Space, just two miles from Estes Park, opens 39 campsites for reservations. To make camping reservations go to www.larimercamping.com or call 1-800-397-7795.

The opening of this campground, formerly Campground 2, is long awaited and a favorite of HP and Agilent employees. The campground was redesigned with grants from the Gates Family Foundation and Go Colorado!. Each campsite was planned to take advantage of its unique natural features or assets — from the perfect place for a tent to where the picnic table and fire grate should be situated. It could be cool rock outcroppings, wildflower-filled meadows, or wildlife rich ponds. The campground offers many options, with clustered sites for friends and families, secluded sites in more isolated areas, and sites for larger RVs.

The breathtaking Kruger Rock Trail, with its panoramic view of Longs Peak and the Continental Divide, is within walking distance of the campground. The nearby Homestead Meadows Connector Trail accesses over 12 miles of trails for hiking, biking, and horseback riding.

Go to www.larimer.org/naturalresources/hermitpark.htm for information about Hermit Park Open Space, campground maps, etc.

To learn more about Larimer County's parks and open spaces, visit our Web site at www.larimer.org/naturalresources.

Parks and Open Space Board regular meetings every fourth Wednesday, Library meeting room, 236 Welch Ave., Norma Banzhaf, chairperson, 7 p.m.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

coloradoan 6/18/09

Open tax should be eliminated

The column in the Monday Coloradoan by John Knezovich revived my opinion about the Open Space tax. I have thought ever since an earlier budget crisis a couple of years ago that the Open Space tax should be terminated or suspended and diverted to more needy city programs, such as police staff, street maintenance, etc.

My objections are fueled whenever I pass a city open space area and see all the rail fences and other evidence of money being spent to modify that space; that program obviously has too much money. Then I read about all the resources being put into the distant open space (which I will never be able to use) near the Wyoming border.

I think this issue should be put on the city ballot this upcoming fall.

Ernie Cummins,
Fort Collins

Reporter-Herald June 25, 2009

Residents are invited to participate in time capsule at open space event

LARIMER COUNTY — Residents can participate in a time capsule project when Red Mountain Open Space opens to the public Saturday.

The opening of Larimer County's newest open space, located 25 miles north of Fort Collins, was delayed three weeks after steady rains postponed road work.

Residents can join the Friends of Larimer County Parks and Open Lands in designing a celebration flag to be included in a time capsule that will be opened on the 10th anniversary of Red Mountain in 2019.

Directions to and information about the open space is available online at www.larimer.org/redmountain.

The Coloradoan, Thursday, June 25, 2009

Red Mountain opens Saturday

Larimer County is set Saturday to open Red Mountain Open Space.

Visitors can visit www.larimer.org/redmountain for directions and up-to-date information regarding guided hikes and educational opportunities.

The Friends of Larimer County Parks & Open Lands will have a time capsule art project booth where participants can design their own celebration flag to be included in a time capsule that will be opened on the 10th anniversary of Soapstone Prairie and Red Mountain Open Space's opening (June, 2019).

Everyone is invited to be part of history by contributing their first impressions, hopes and dreams for Soapstone Prairie and Red Mountain Open Space in art or writing.

A2 **Friday** Reporter-Herald June 19, 2009

New campground to open

LARIMER COUNTY — A new campground opens at Hermit Park on Monday.

Bobcat Campground, a favorite when the area was privately owned by Hewlett-Packard — opens with 39 campsites.

With grants from the Gates Family Foundation and Great Outdoors Colorado, each site was redesigned to take advantage of its natural features, including rock outcroppings, wildflower-filled meadows and wildlife-rich ponds.

Residents can make reservations for Hermit Park, located two miles outside Estes Park, online at www.larimercamping.com or by phone at 800-397-7795.

IN BRIEF

Guided hikes slated throughout county

Larimer County will host a series of guided hikes and events in July.

The following is information about the events:

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July 4, 2009
FRONT RANGE

Aerial firefighters ready for season
Region, A7

FRIDAY'S DRAWING
Cash 5:
10-11-17-22-30

City pursues easement on river

Big Thompson corridor would link Morey Reserve with Wild property

By Pamela Dickman
Reporter-Herald Staff Writer

The city of Loveland has applied for $800,000 in grants in hopes of preserving a piece of habitat along the Big Thompson River.

Brian Hayes, the city's natural areas director, is talking with landowners John and Jeri Whiteside about buying a conservation easement on their 110-acre property.

If the deal goes through, the Whitesides would still own the ranch in west Loveland, but it would be protected from future development.

The property, which connects the Morey Wildlife Reserve and nearby Wild property, also owned by the city, would not be open to the public. But Hayes hopes to negotiate an agreement that would allow guided fishing and wildlife viewing tours.

The property stretches along six-tenths of a mile of the Big Thompson River.

Hayes did not detail the discussions under way between the city and the landowner or the potential price of the easement because, he said, negotiations are in the early stage.

The city has enough in the bank from its share of the county open space tax to cover the difference between the grants and the final price, according to Hayes.

John Whiteside confirmed that he has been talking with Hayes, who has been interested in the property for many years because it is rich in habitat and wildlife species.

"It's got a huge family history for me, so if it could be protected forever, I'd be interested in that," said Whiteside.

Reporter-Herald graphic/KATE WYMAN

"But on the other hand, developers might be interested, and I have to consider that, too."

Hayes plans to continue talking with Whiteside and trying to make the easement happen.

This week, he applied for two grants — one from Great Outdoors Colorado and one from the Colorado Division of Wildlife Habitat Protection Program. He should hear back about those by fall.

While it is too early to say what will happen, some members of the Loveland Fishing Club said they would support the project.

"It would give more access to the river and make fishing more available to people," said George Kral.

"We've only got so much fishing left."

YOUR TAKE: Post your comment to this story at www.reporter-herald.com.

Red Mountain now accessible

BY MOLLY ARMBRISTER
For Loveland Connection

After several postponements due to inclement weather, Red Mountain Open Space celebrated its grand opening June 27 with events designed to showcase the amenities, including a nature hike along one of the trails.

Those in attendance were surrounded by rolling green hills and rock-covered plateaus as they approached the trailhead, isolating them from busy roads and anything that might distract from the natural area.

There was plenty to experience for the 10 hikers who set out on Bent Fork trail 2½-mile trek, including several varieties of wildflowers, a pronghorn antelope and even a rattlesnake stretched out in the sun.

Dave Marvin, a nature volunteer trained to teach visitors about the area's indigenous flora and fauna, led the hike.

Marvin began his training program in July 2008 and completed it in March.

Stopping every now and then to show the hikers a particular flower or land formation, Marvin had plenty of knowledge to share with the hikers.

"I've always wanted to give back," Marvin said, referring to his volunteer work.

The hike was interactive, with visitors getting an opportunity to ask Marvin questions about what they saw or share their own knowledge.

The Red Mountain space is called an "ecotone," Marvin said, meaning "ecology in stress." Ecotones are created when an area is in transition, such as Red Mountain where mountains meet the prairie.

This meeting creates a unique experience because of the varying plant and animal life.

The trail led hikers along Sand Creek and past a cliff face made of dizzying red rocks, which are home to cliff swallows whose nests are clearly visible from the ground.

The hikers then trekked through a shrub-filled meadow and across a gypsum deposit before returning to the trailhead for refreshments.

Ellen Miller made it her New Year's resolution to hike more often and is sticking to it.

The Colorado State University graduate has hiked in Rocky Mountain National Park as well as Horsetooth Open Space. Miller brings friends along on her hikes and is considering venturing into the newly opened Soapstone Prairie Natural Area next.

Meg Parmer said that Red Mountain is more remote and has fewer tourists than Rocky Mountain National Park.

"I like to go where it's not the busiest," she said.

Parmer has been hiking for almost 30 years and is a volunteer with Poudre Wilderness Volunteers.

"I would bring somebody else out here," she said of the space.

Red Mountain offers hiking, biking and horseback riding trails, and focuses on the Earth's history, including the plants and animals that were native to the land in the past and present.

Red Mountain Open Space is owned and managed by Larimer County. It is part of the Laramie Foothills Mountains to Plains Project, a collaborative land protection effort among willing landowners, Larimer County Open Lands Program, the city of Fort Collins Natural Areas Program, The Nature Conservancy, Legacy Land Trust and Great Outdoors Colorado. To date, the project has protected more than 55,000 acres of land.

Miranda Grubbs For Loveland Connection

Rudy Lucero, back, follows volunteer naturalist **Dave Marvin** as he leads a guided hike at Red Mountain Open Space.

UPCOMING EVENTS AT RED MOUNTAIN

- "Moon Over my Open Space," a moonlit hike at 8:15 p.m. Tuesday
- "Life on the Edge," an ecotone hike at 11 a.m. July 11

Registration required at www.larimer.org/naturalresources/registration

WANT TO GO?

Directions: Take Colorado Highway 1 (Terry Lake Road) to Larimer County Road 15 (Waverly turnoff). Go left on County Road 15 to County Road 78. Go left on County Road 78 to County Road 17. Go right on County Road 17 to County Road 80. Go left on County Road 80 to County Road 19. Go right on County Road 19 to County Road 21. Go left on County Road 21 for about seven miles to the trailhead parking area.

Coloradoan 7-11-09

Muddy Mayhem forges trail

Handcycling event teams with veterans

BY HAP FRY
HapFry@coloradoan.com

Once again, boats ruled Horsetooth Reservoir on Friday. But if you stumbled into Horsetooth Mountain Park, you would have encountered speed of a different kind.

Horsetooth Mountain Park was the site of the first Muddy Mayhem — a two-day handcycling event for people with disabilities who still like to go fast and take calculated risks.

Anthony Smith is one of those guys. The Blytheville, Ark., resident was one of about eight veterans who participated in Friday's festivities.

"I love this kind of stuff," Smith said. "It's just a lot of fun coming out here and doing something physical with people who are in the same boat."

Smith lost his right arm, right hip and the sight in his right eye April 24, 2004, in Iraq, when he took a direct hit from a rocket-propelled grenade. Four people died from the attack and seven others were injured.

"I've always been real religious, so I never was depressed," Smith said. "I always felt there was purpose. It was just a matter of finding that purpose. Stuff like this is a big help. It really helps with my post- traumatic stress. I used to be on a lot of pain medication. Now all I take is Motrin."

Photos by Miranda Grubbs/The Coloradoan

Jake O'Connor, front, and Mark Deschamp ride One-Off handcycles at Horsetooth Mountain Park during a Muddy Mayhem cycling event Friday.

Steve Ackerman orchestrated the Muddy Mayhem with the help of U.S. Handcycling, the Paralyzed Veterans Association, Rochester Medical and Craig Rehabilitation Hospital.

The purpose of the event?

"The vision is to introduce people to the sport," Ackerman said, "and for those who already have equipment to be able to meet others with the same interests."

Geoff Hopkins, associate director of Paralyzed Veterans of America rides in the Muddy Mayhem.

Ackerman, who suffered a spinal cord injury 22 year ago during a car accident in Poudre Canyon, got bit by the handcycling bug in 1991.

He has since competed in numerous off-road handcyling races and even spent eight months handcycling across 16 countries in 1995 and began off-road handcyling in 2003.

"The reception from everyone was awesome," Ackerman said. "I'll always remember when we were in Russia and we had two cops in front of us and a cop behind clearing traffic on the highway. People in their cars were clapping for us and

See MUDDY/Page A2

Muddy

Continued from Page A1

basically treating us like we were heroes or something."

Andy Orr said veterans such as Smith are exactly that: heroes. Orr and his wife, Jamie, hosted a dinner cruise on Horsetooth Reservoir on Friday.

"I'm a veteran, and I'm an avid cyclist," Orr said. "I ran into Steve at a (Colorado) Eagles (hockey) game this past winter, and that kind of set the wheels in motion for this. I mean, what could be wrong with this? These are guys who have sacrificed everything."

For a first-year event, the Muddy Mayhem spared no expense for the 20-or-so participants. Festivities got under way Thursday night at the Rio Grande restaurant, and today the participants have two more rides together before gathering for barbecue and beers later this evening at Horsetooth Mountain Park.

Jake O'Connor is Ackerman's self-described protégé. He and Ackerman forged the Poudre River together in 2004.

"Steve definitely got me into it," said O'Connor, who lives in Utah. "I got into a construction accident in 2001 and before that, I was really into rock climbing. I thought pretty much everything was over after the accident. I heard about this and it just took. I probably go out about three or four times a week now."

"I really like coming to these things to help inspire these other guys," O'Connor said. "This sport is going to take off."

SITES: Staff at Hermit

From Page A1

involved in this if we weren't at Hermit Park already," said Buffington. "We already have staff up there."

Specific revenue figures and the terms of the contract are not solidified and could change, he said.

"We're still on draft," he said. "All this is up in the air. It's not going to be final until the county commissioners sign off on it."

He expects to have a contract before the commissioners late this year.

But first, Buffington will take the draft to the Larimer County Parks Advisory Board for input Tuesday night.

Sunday Reporter-Herald July 12, 2009

County may take over campgrounds

Dilapidated sites eventually could turn a profit

By Pamela Dickman
Reporter-Herald Staff Writer

Larimer County is considering sharing its campground expertise and earning a little extra money at the same time.

The Department of Natural Resources is negotiating with the Estes Valley Recreation and Park District to manage two campgrounds in Estes Park starting next summer.

"We do a lot of camping management in Larimer County in different places, and we think we're pretty good at that," said Gary Buffington, director of the Natural Resources Department.

Currently, the parks district contracts with a private manager that receives all but 5 percent of the profits for Mary's Lake and Estes Park campgrounds.

But the private managers haven't kept up the facilities and campsites, and the 5 percent to the district has not been enough to handle the needs, officials said.

Both campgrounds need extensive work, officials said.

Enter Larimer County.

The two recreation departments are working on an agreement in which the county would step in and manage those two campgrounds.

They are looking at splitting the profits 65-35, said Stan Gengler, director of the Estes Valley district.

Sixty-five percent would go to improve the campgrounds, and the remaining 35 percent would go to Larimer County, he said.

The proceeds would cover an additional staffers Larimer County would need to hire and add a little to the pot for other parks, Buffington said.

"We wouldn't be so heavi

See Sites, Page A

If You Go

What: The Larimer County Parks Advisory Board will discuss a draft contract for the county to take over management of two campgrounds in Estes Park. The profits would be shared to increase county revenue and improve the campgrounds.

When: The advisory board meets at 5:30 p.m. Tuesday at the Bison Visitor Center, 1800 S. County Road 31, west of Loveland on the way to Carter Lake.

COLORADOAN 7-13

'WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT SOAPSTONE?'

Lecture covers natural area's histor

BY MOLLY ARMBRISTER
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A lecture series at the city f Fort Collins' newest natu-al area offers a glimpse of What's So Special About oapstone?"

"It's a really important lace," master naturalist ileen Sake said Sunday while xplaining the history of the ea. "It's important to pre-erve it for future generations."

Sake began the lecture by lking about the land and e wildlife 25 miles north of ort Collins. The land is just natural now as it was when ncient people lived on it, she id.

Sake also spoke about the portance of preserving the te by staying on trails and ot bringing dogs to the area.

Additionally, any artifacts und while hiking, biking or rseback riding at Soapstone ould be left where they are. sitors to the area are asked report the location of such tifacts so the items can be adied.

Lecture participants fol-wed Sake up a trail to ndenmeier Overlook to con-ue the talk that provided formation about the people o once inhabited the area. ke said more than 6,000 tifacts have been recovered m the site, which is part of e National Historic Registry. "It's impressive how much story is here," lecture ndee and Fort Collins res-nt Sandy Charles said.

She said she would like to urn to Soapstone to take rt in one of the nature hikes ered there.

Bernardo Sanchez, also of rt Collins, said he "learned lot about the past" during e lecture.

Soapstone is managed by e city of Fort Collins and is rt of the Laramie Foothills untains to Plains Project, a laborative land protection ort between willing downers, Larimer County en Lands Program, the city Fort Collins Natural Areas ogram, The Nature nservancy, Legacy Land ust and Great Outdoors Colorado.

Photos by Jenna Schoenefeld/The

Master naturalist Eileen Sake, center, leads Ludi Lutton, left, and Mark Lutton during a 'What's So Special About Soapstone?' lecture Sunday at Soapstone Prairie Natural Area north of Fort Collins.

Paul Vanderheiden, left, and Bernardo Sanchez look at wildlife photos before a tour at Soapstone Prairie Natural Area on Sunday.

To date, the project has protected more than 55,000 acres of land.

Soapstone includes more than 28 square miles of landscape, 35 miles of trails and information about the cultural history of the area.

The "What's So Special About Soapstone?" lecture series is just one of many programs at Soapstone.

Other programs include night hikes, such as one titled "Full Moon at Soapstone Prairie," and events for artists, such as "Artist's Day at Soapstone." These even place on several differer

There will be 13 "What's So Special Soapstone?" lectures or ent dates through Octo

Want to go?

"What's So Special About Soapstone?" lecture dates (all lec begin at 11 a.m, no registration required):

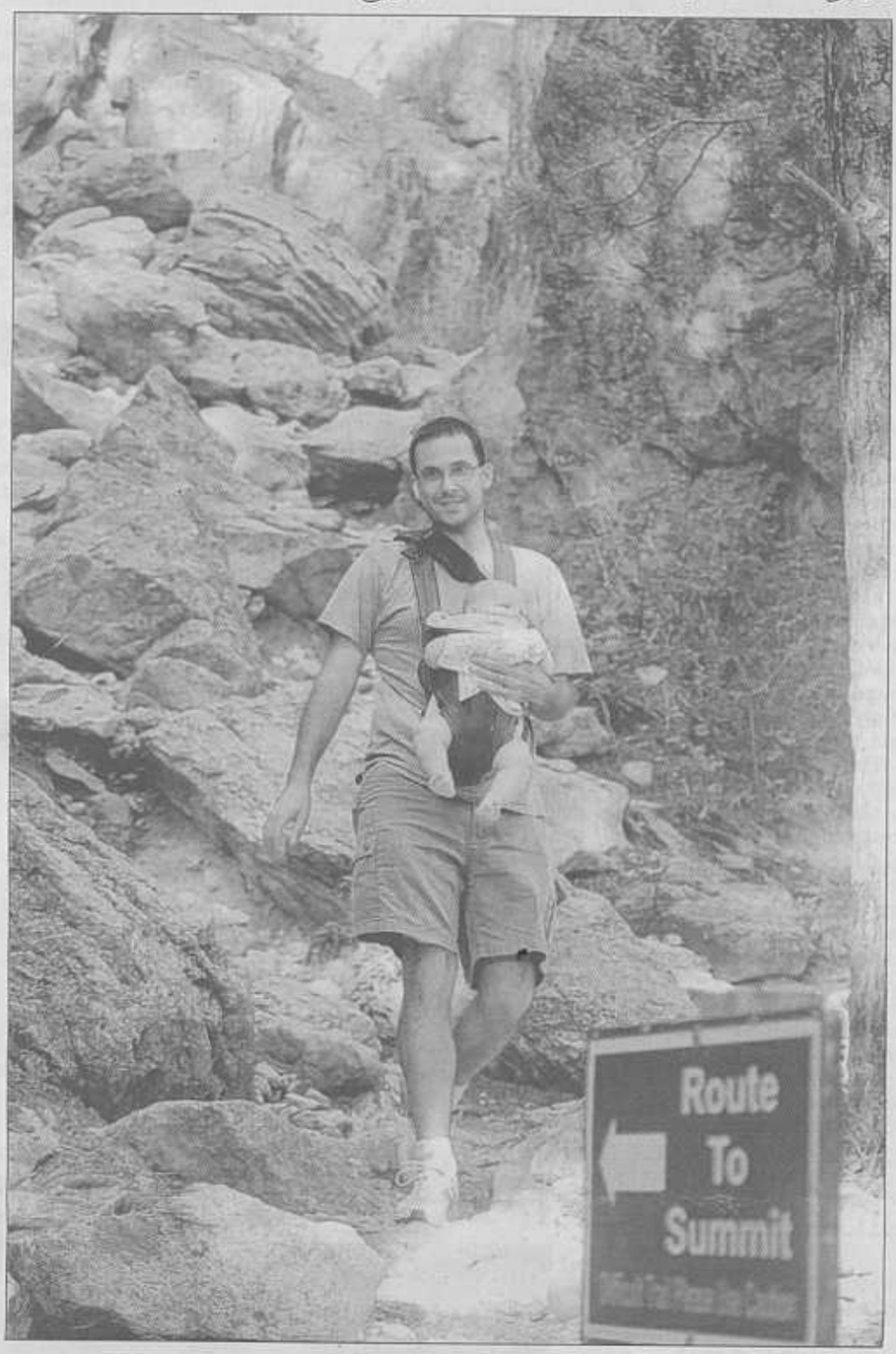
- > Saturday
- > Aug. 1
- > Aug. 8
- > Aug. 16
- > Aug. 23
- > Aug. 29
- > Sept. 5
- > Sept. 12
- > Sept. 20
- > Sept. 26
- > Oct. 4
- > Oct. 10
- > Oct. 18

Directions to Soapston
Take College Avenue no turn right on Terry Lake Road/Highway 1. Turn le County Road 15, then rig Rawhide Flats Road and tinue north to the entran station.

On the Internet

Visit www.fcgov.com/naturalareas/pdf/09program-guide.pdf for the full program schedule for Soapstone Prairie Natural A

Coloradoan 7-22-2009



Miles Blumhardt/Coloradoan library

James Leveille and his daughter Abby of Fort Collins return from the top of the Arthur's Rock Trail in August. It's never too early to start taking the kids hiking.

KIDDIN' AROUND

Get your children outdoors with these kid-glove hikes

BY MILES BLUMHARDT
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If the summer seems to be dragging for your kids or grandkids, get them outdoors, where you can find fun and health benefits.

Hiking is an ideal way to get kids away from the computer and out in the real world.

The Fort Collins area is blessed with a myriad of family-friendly hikes to introduce all members of the family to the outdoors.

Here are five family-friendly hikes just a short drive from Fort Collins:

Horsetooth Falls Trail

> **Where:** Horsetooth Mountain Open Space. Take Larimer County Road 38E west of Fort Collins for 8.7 miles to Horsetooth Mountain Park.

> **Open:** Year-round

> **Trail:** Easy 1.1-mile trail one way with little elevation gain; open only to hiking

> **Entrance fee:** $7 daily or $65 annual pass to Larimer County parks

> **Facilities:** Restrooms, water and information available at the trailhead

> **Pets:** Yes, on leash

> **Why go:** This is the closest waterfall hike to Fort Collins, with the falls tumbling 20 feet down to create a refreshing shallow pool where kids can easily wade. The earlier you go, the better, as the falls in dry years don't run all summer. Along the way, you can enjoy an abundance of wildflowers and wildlife and connect to 28 miles of trails spread through the 2,400-acre county open space. Watch for rattlesnakes. For a longer option, try Horsetooth Rock, the park's signature trail.

> **Information:** Larimer County Parks, (970) 679-4570 or www.larimer.org/parks

Devil's Backbone Nature Trail

> **Where:** Devil's Backbone Open

See KIDDIN'/Page C2

Kiddin'

Continued from Page C1

Space. Take Taft Hill Road south to U.S. Highway 34 in Loveland. Turn right and head west for four miles to just past mile marker No. 88. Turn right onto Hidden Valley Drive just east of the old water tank. The trailhead is on your left.

> **Open:** Year-round, dusk to dawn

> **Trail:** Easy to moderate one-way 3.5-mile hike with little elevation gain

> **Entrance fee:** Free

> **Facilities:** Restrooms, water and information available at the trailhead

> **Pets:** Yes, on leash

> **Why go:** This 2,200-acre county open space features intriguing rock formations, wildflowers and abundant wildlife, including songbirds, raptors, mule deer, fox, coyotes and the occasional bobcat and mountain lion. Another bonus here is the nesting ravens and prairie falcons. See if you can spot them. This also is a good place for novice mountain bikers.

> **Information:** Larimer County Natural Resources, (970) 679-4570 or www.co.larimer.co.us/parks//bbone.cfm

Well Gulch Trail

> **Where:** Take Overland Trail north to Larimer County Road 50E (Bingham Hill Road). Turn left and go west to County Road 23. Turn left and go 1.4 miles south to Larimer County 25G. Take a right and drive 1.6 miles to the Lory State Park entrance. Follow the road south until you see the sign for the trail.

> **Open:** Year-round, dawn to dusk

> **Trail:** Easy 1.5-mile loop

> **Entrance fee:** $6 for a daily pass

> **Facilities:** Restrooms, water and information available at the visitor center

> **Pets:** Yes, on leash

> **Why go:** A year with good moisture, like this year, makes this hike even better. The creek that parallels the trail attracts migrating birds and butterflies, and this is among the best wildflower hikes in the area. Several interpretive signs can be found pointing out the different life zones along the trail, botany, geology and animal life in the park. Make sure to pick up a map to indicate what the numbers mean at the visitor center or trailhead. For a longer hike, try the Arthur's Rock Trail, which is a park favorite.

Information: Lory State Park, (970) 493-1623 or http://parks.state.co.us/Parks/Lory

Rimrock Trail

> **Where:** From Fort Collins, take Taft Hill Road about 1.5 miles south of the Larimer County Landfill. Look for the Coyote Ridge Natural Area parking lot on the west side of the road.

> **Open:** Year-round, dawn to dusk

> **Trail:** Easy three miles one way with little elevation gain

> **Entrance fee:** Free

> **Facilities:** Restrooms at the cabin a mile up the trail

> **Pets:** No

> **Why go:** The scenery for the first mile through the city-owned Coyote Ridge Natural Area certainly won't take your breath away, but once you crest the first set of ridges and hit Larimer County Parks' Rimrock [illegible] Space, the scenery picks [illegible] This hike takes you along [illegible] hogback that runs west [illegible] Fort Collins. It's an easy [illegible] with rock formations, wil[illegible] flowers, mule deer and a [illegible] ety of birds as highlights [illegible] this nice hike.

> **Information:** City [illegible] Fort Collins, (970) 221-66[illegible] or http://fcgov.com/natura[illegible] sources/ or Larimer Coun[illegible] Natural Resources, (970) [illegible] 4570 or www.larimer.org/parks/

Black Powder Trail

> **Where:** From Fort Collins, take U.S. Highwa[illegible] 287 north 10 miles to Colorado Highway 14. Ta[illegible] Colorado 14 west for five [illegible] miles to Gateway Natura[illegible] Area. From the parking l[illegible] follow the trail to about 2[illegible] yards past the bridge ove[illegible] North Fork of the Poudre.

> **Open:** Year-round, d[illegible] to dusk

> **Trail:** Easy three-qu[illegible] mile of a trail one way, wi[illegible] 500 feet of elevation gain

> **Entrance fee:** $5 or [illegible] if you park above the par[illegible] and hike down

> **Facilities:** Restroom[illegible] drinking water, picnic tab[illegible] and kiosks

> **Why go:** This short t[illegible] winds up the south rim of [illegible] park with wonderful view[illegible] the North Fork of the Pou[illegible] River and Seaman Reserv[illegible] to the northeast. The Overlook Trail is a short h[illegible] up the north rim of the pa[illegible] A longer service road and [illegible] trail takes you along the w[illegible] side of Seaman Reservoir. This is a very scenic area, with the North Fork of the Poudre running through it.

> **Information:** City of Fort Collins, (970) 407-110[illegible] or www.fcgov.com/naturals[illegible] eas/finder/gateway