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Publish Date: 1/7/2011

Larimer County parks offered something for all in '10

For More InformationVisit
www.larimer.org/naturalresources.

*By Pamela Dickman
Loveland Reporter-Herald*

Children play and learn in Larimer County's parks and open spaces.

Others seek out birds, hike, paint, take notes, fish, boat, study flowers and more.

"It's important for people to know there's something out there for just about everyone to enjoy," County Commissioner Steve Johnson said Thursday at a work session summarizing 2010 in outdoor Larimer County.

The discussion about the Natural Resources Department's outreach education and volunteer programs produced facts such as:

- Larimer County received \$1.7 million in grants and donations for parks and open spaces in 2010, including \$120,000 in lottery money to pay for a study looking at ways to reconnect children with nature. That money brings the overall tally to \$32.6 million since 1996.
- Volunteers spent 53,000 hours helping the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources by teaching classes, manning campgrounds, helping rangers, working on trails and more. At a \$21.47 per hour rate, that equals \$1.3 million.
- Crews spent 217 of those donated hours repairing and cleaning trails.
- The most ever, 735 people, flocked to the Northern Colorado Birding Fair, which branched out from Fossil Creek Regional Open Space to other natural areas in the region.
- County rangers began tweeting trail conditions, and the Department of Natural Resources has more than 100 Facebook fans.
- Volunteers and staffers led 79 hikes, which drew a total of 375 people. Another 60 activities at campgrounds touched 1,433 people, and 600 people took in 17 programs at community groups.
- Improvements at the Devil's Backbone Open Space allowed the county to reach more students with a brand-new geology loop trail that ties into an open classroom.

In part because of that, the county offered 17 programs to Thompson and Poudre school districts students; 913 children attended.

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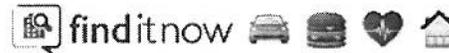
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County honors artist

BY KEVIN DUGGAN • KEVIN.DUGGAN@COLORADOAN.COM • JANUARY 8, 2011

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As its name indicates, Larimer County's Red Mountain Open Space is known for the red-tinged soil of its dramatic landscape.



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Barbara Moore, the 2010 Larimer County Natural Resources visual artist of the year, stands in front of her watercolor 'Red Mountain Autumn,' during a Friday reception in her honor at the Larimer County Courthouse Offices. Moore's watercolor painting depicts fall colors along a Red Mountain trail. The area is about a 45-minute drive north of Fort Collins. (Rich Abrahamson/The Coloradoan)

INTERESTED?

The application deadline for the 2011 visual artist of the year program with the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources is Feb. 18. For more information about the program, visit www.larimer.org/openlands/artist.htm

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But a new painting by internationally known artist Barbara Moore shows the broad range of the area's palette, including the subtle greens and shimmering yellows of fall.

Moore, the Larimer County Natural Resource Department's visual artist of the year for 2010, formally presented the painting - "Red Mountain Autumn" - to county officials Friday.

The painting will hang for a year outside the county commissioners' office on the second floor of the courthouse offices building, 200 W. Oak St., in Fort Collins.

Moore said she was struck by the beauty of Red Mountain Open Space, which is north of Wellington. Its northern boundary is the Colorado/Wyoming state line.

"It's one of the newer open space areas, and I wanted to give it some attention and publicity," she said. "We were there on a great day - the air was really crisp and clear. We hiked around, and I kept coming back to this spot."

The painting shows a creek-side scene with cottonwood trees in their autumn colors, tall native grasses and red cliffs in the background.

Moore works in watercolors using a style that is realistic and exacting. She is well known for her painting of local landmarks, including historic buildings in Old Town.

Her work has graced the covers of Discover Fort Collins magazine since 2001.

The visual artist of the year designation gives the honoree full access to open lands managed by the Natural Resources Department with the understanding a piece of artwork will be created and permanently donated to the county.

Past artists of the year include Jim Disney, a professional landscape painter and former county

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commissioner; fabric artist Patty Hawkins; and Fort Collins painter Diane Findley. Their work is displayed at the Larimer County Justice Center.

Moore said she enjoyed the experience, which included touring areas she had not visited before.

"It was quite an honor," she said. "When you think about all the incredible talent in this county, to be named the artist of the year is pretty humbling and wonderful."

County officials thanked Moore for her donation during a reception in her honor.

"It speaks to me and does share the true beauty and wonder of Larimer County so well," said Commissioner Tom Donnelly.

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January 9, 2011

Volunteer hours worth \$1.3 million to county

Natural Resources tally increases by 1,000 to 53,000

BY KEVIN DUGGAN

KevinDuggan@coloradoan.com

Volunteers continue to provide valuable time and expertise to the Larimer County Natural Resources Department.

In 2010, volunteers donated about 53,000 hours to the department, which is worth an estimated \$1.3 million, CJ Cullins, the department's volunteer coordinator, told the county commissioners Thursday. The hours were about 1,000 more than in 2009.

The program's procedures, policies and training have evolved to the point that officials can "super target" the skills needed from volunteers, Cullins said.

The program has shifted from "finding things" for volunteers to do to seeking out volunteers with specific needs.

"If we know we need construction workers to build a ramp, we only request specific individuals with construction experience," she said. "We're not throwing our net far and wide any longer."

Popular volunteer positions include ranger assistants, naturalists and trail maintenance workers, she said.

An element of the program's success is connecting volunteers with field personnel who work well with volunteers, she said.

Evidence of the program's popularity came from unexpected financial donations in 2010, said Kerri Rollins, manager of the department's Open Lands Program.

Donations included \$2,000 from Cargill Corp. and \$5,000 from the Overland Mountain Bike Club, Rollins said.

For the year, the department received about \$1.7 million in grants and landowner donations, she said.

The donations are significant, but so is "the diversity that's starting to rise out of who's giving us money and why they are giving us money," she said.

Commissioner Lew Gaiter said he is pleased the Open Lands Program, which is funded by a dedicated sales tax, receives so much support from the community above and beyond the tax.

Additional Facts

By the numbers

Larimer County Natural Resources Department in 2010:

> **53,000:** Hours donated by volunteers

- > **\$1.3 million:** Value of volunteer hours
 - > **79:** Guided hikes led by volunteer naturalists
 - > **375:** Members of the public who participated
-

County parks offered something for all in '10

Commissioners review numbers in session about outdoors

By PAMELA DICKMAN
REPORTER-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Children play and learn in Larimer County's parks and open spaces.

Others seek out birds, hike, paint, take notes, fish, boat, study flowers and more.

"It's important for people to know there's something out there for just about everyone to enjoy," County Commissioner Steve Johnson said Thursday at a work session summarizing 2010 in outdoor Larimer County.

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For More Information

Visit www.larimer.org/naturalresources.

- in 2010, including \$120,000 in lottery money to pay for a study looking at ways to reconnect children with nature. That money brings the overall tally to \$32.6 million since 1996.

- Volunteers spent 53,000 hours helping the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources by teaching classes, manning campgrounds, helping rangers, working on trails and more. At a \$21.47 per hour rate, that equals \$1.3 million.

- Crews spent 217 of those donated hours repairing and cleaning trails.

- The most ever, 735 people, flocked to the Northern Colorado Birding Fair, which branched out from Fossil Creek Regional Open Space to other natural areas in the region.

- County rangers began tweet-



Reporter-Herald file photo

Larimer County Open Lands Education Coordinator Rob Novak walks a section of Devils Backbone Open Space last January. A new geology loop trail opened at the park in 2010.

ing trail conditions, and the Department of Natural Resources has more than 100 Facebook fans.

- Volunteers and staffers led 79 hikes, which drew a total of 375 people. Another 60 activities at campgrounds touched 1,433 people, and 600 people took in 17 programs at community groups.

- Improvements at the Devil's Backbone Open Space allowed the county to reach more students with a brand-new geology loop trail that ties into an open classroom.

In part because of that, the county offered 17 programs to Thompson and Poudre school districts students; 913 children attended.

Poudre River Trail open to the public

Special to the Surveyor

A new section of the Poudre River Trail, located near Windsor, Colo., opened for public access for the first time, at 8 a.m. on Saturday, Dec. 4, 2010.

This half-mile section of trail is an extension of a 21-mile section of the Poudre River Trail that connects Island Grove Park in Greeley, to State Highway 392 west of Windsor. A pedestrian underpass at State Highway 392 was installed in 2009 and a connecting trail into River Bluffs Open Space was completed this year. This new section of trail, known as the Poudre River Trail at River Bluffs Open Space, has been planned since 2004, when River Bluffs Open Space was acquired by Larimer County's Open Lands Program.

River Bluffs Open Space is a spectacular addition to the Poudre River Trail legacy. Over a half mile of the Poudre River meanders through the property and provides habitat for waterfowl such as mallard ducks and large mammals like

white-tailed deer. River access provides new opportunities for fishing and other water-based recreation.

River Bluffs Open Space got its name from the large bluffs located along the western side of the property. These exposed bluffs are dry and desert like, providing habitat for uncommon reptiles like the horned lizard, a lizard popularly known as a horny toad.

River Bluffs Open Space is also a working farm and helps sustain local agriculture. The property is leased to a local rancher and is used for alfalfa production. Visitors to the open space may notice working irrigation ditches, farm equipment and livestock.

A trailhead for the open space contains parking for 30 vehicles, a water fountain, bike rack and pump, two picnic tables and a flush toilet. The trailhead is open but is not complete: The toilet and picnic area are under construction.

River Bluffs Open Space is open daily from dawn to dusk and there is no entrance fee. This is Larimer County Open Lands Programs' 10th publicly accessible open space and was funded through the Help Preserve Open Spaces sales and use tax, GOCO, the town of Windsor, and a grant administered by the North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization.

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

Coloradoan 12-4-2010

River trail section to open

Completion leaves 8 miles still to be built in 45-mile trail

BY KEVIN DUGGAN

KevinDuggan@coloradoan.com

A long-awaited section of the Poudre River Trail is scheduled to open this morning with little fanfare.

Barriers on the trail at the south and north ends of River Bluffs Open Space, which sits north of Colorado Highway 392 and west of the Larimer/Weld county line, will be removed by 8 a.m., said Jeffrey Boring, resource specialist with Larimer County Parks and Open

Lands.

The half-mile section of trail through the county-owned open space will be accessible for bikers, hikers, skaters and anyone else who cares to travel it, Boring said, and none too soon for some area residents.

"We've had a lot of questions about when it would open," he said. "There's interest in this from Windsor and Parmigan and the River Run area to the south. People are eager to get out and use it."

The new trail segment ties into the existing 21-mile length of trail that links Windsor to Greeley. It provides a safe way to get across Colorado 392 through an underpass built last year with \$495,994 in federal stimulus funds.

A trailhead on the south side of County Road 32E with a parking lot will be open, although toilet and picnic facilities that are part of it are still under construction. The trailhead is expected to be finished in February.

The trail was expected to be open earlier this fall but was delayed because of construction scheduling conflicts, Boring said. A metal bridge over the Poudre River was not delivered and installed until November.

A grand opening for the trail segment that will recognize the many partners involved in its construction, including the county, the town of Windsor and

See TRAIL/Page A4

By the numbers

- > 160 acres — Size of River Bluffs Open Space
- > 0.5 miles — Length of the Poudre River Trail through the open space
- > \$700,000 — Cost of the trail and trailhead at River Bluffs
- > 45 miles — Total length of the trail when complete from LaPorte to Greeley
- > 8 miles — Length of the trail remaining to be built

Trail

Continued from Page A3

run from Harmony Road around the Walmart Supercenter site to a point near a bridge on Interstate 25. The town is working with the Colorado Department of Transportation on details of the trail alignment, said town spokesman Kyle Boyd. From I-25 west the trail becomes the responsibility of Fort Collins, which eventually will tie it into the existing trail at the CSU Environmental Learning Center. From there, the current trail runs 15 miles to LaPorte.

Officials say the trail could be complete within three to five years, depending on funding and acquisition of easements.

A4. The Coloradoan, Saturday, December 4, 2010

GOCO selects Larimer County for pilot project

Special to the Surveyor

The Larimer County Department of Natural Resources has been selected to lead a groundbreaking pilot project to analyze the connections youth and families in Larimer County have to the natural environment.

The study, funded by Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO), will identify strategies for fulfilling the new goal area of the state organization's 2010 Strategic Plan to "increase the participation by youth and families in all areas" of the GOCO mission. GOCO receives its funding from the Colorado lottery.

"Larimer County was selected for this pilot because of the good programs offered by non-profits and state and local agencies in the area," said GOCO Executive Director Lise Aangeenbrug. "In addition, we know there is a promising coordination effort in Northern Colorado primarily led by the informal Children and Nature Connection, that could use this information, but that does not have the resources to conduct this kind of analysis."

Larimer County will engage a diverse array of stakeholders to complete this project, including representatives from the Fort Collins Natural Areas Program, Colorado State University, the Children and Nature Connection - Northern Colorado, and many more. The study will provide gap analysis of nature programming and how families use them, available outdoor spaces and facilities, as well as identifying the bar-

riers to getting youth and families connected to nature. It will also map these gaps across Larimer County, creating a visual representation for future planning and programmatic efforts. This pilot study will serve as a template for similar projects across the state that when complete will pave the way for Great Outdoors Colorado to offer funding to address the identified gaps.

"Our agency is honored to lead this project," said Kerri Rollins, Open Lands program manager for the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources. "We hope that we can build upon the growing national interest in re-connecting youth and families to nature and the outdoors. Providing oppor-

tunities on lands that our entire community can celebrate and feel connected to can help maintain a healthy balance in this plugged-in era."

The issue of nature deficit disorder, or lack of

connection to nature, has gained national notoriety following the 2005 publication of Richard Louv's book "Last Child in the Woods" wherein a fourth grader claimed, "I like to play indoors because that's where all of the electrical outlets are." In the book, Louv identifies the current generation of children's lack of connection to nature and relates it to a wide array of consequences ranging from poor health and obesity to performance in school. Volumes of research since have shown a connection between unstructured time spent in the outdoors and the overall well-being of children.

Larimer County will be seeking proposals from consultants for this project in early January 2011.

To learn more about Larimer County's parks and open spaces, go to www.larimer.org/naturalresources

To learn about Great Outdoors Colorado, go to www.goco.org



Loveland Connection

Wednesday, December 22, 2010

Reservations for camping now open

Larimer County Department of Natural Resources is implementing a 180-day reservation window to reserve camping spots at Carter Lake, Flatiron Reservoir, Estes Park Campgrounds at East Portal and Mary's Lake, Hermit Park, Horsetooth Reservoir, and Pinewood Reservoir.

This allows campers to make and confirm summer plans earlier in the year.

Beginning at 9 a.m. Jan. 3, 2011, campers can make reservations 180 days in the future at www.larimercamping.com.

For more information, call 679-4555.

Loveland Connection

Wednesday, December 22, 2010

Reception to honor visual artist of the year

Loveland Connection staff

The Larimer County Department of Natural Resources will host a reception in honor of **Barbara Moore**, the 2010 Larimer County Natural Resources Visual Artist of the Year. An unveiling of Moore's

piece, "Red Mountain Autumn," will be at 10 a.m. Jan. 10, 2011, in the second floor lobby of the Larimer County Courthouse, 200 W. Oak St., Fort Collins.

Residents are invited to attend.

The Larimer County Open Lands Program Visual Artist

Program began in 2006. Each year the program partners with a local professional visual artist to increase public appreciation of Larimer County open spaces through visual art work.

For more information, visit www.larimer.org/naturalresources.

Briefs

Reporter Herald 12-21-10

Larimer County chosen for pilot study about connecting youths with nature

LARIMER COUNTY — Great Outdoors Colorado has chosen Larimer County for a pilot study on ways to connect youths with nature.

The Larimer County Department of Natural Resources will study the subject and come up with ways to increase families' use of outdoor recreations and identify gaps and barriers that exist.

Money for the study will come from Great Outdoors Colorado, which is funded by the Colorado lottery.

Larimer County will be seeking proposals from consultants in early January.

Briefs

Reporter Herald
12-20-10

Carter Lake boat ramps closed on Christmas Day

LARIMER COUNTY — Boat ramps at Carter Lake and Horsetooth Reservoir will be closed Christmas day.

This time of year, the ramps are open weekends as weather conditions allow.

The reservoirs will open Sunday, Dec. 26, with inspectors that clear each boat for invasive mussels on duty 8 a.m. to 9 a.m. and noon to 1 p.m.

reporterherald.com

Publish Date: 12/30/2010

'Dead plant hike' among January wildlife walks

By Jessica Benes
Loveland Reporter-Herald

Just because it's winter doesn't mean that outdoor excursions have stopped at area open spaces.

Kathy McMillin has about 30 plant books sitting within arm's reach. She loves plants and acts as a volunteer naturalist with the department of natural resources of Larimer County to lead outdoor hikes.

She and Bob Kreycik will lead winter time wildlife walks in January.

McMillin will guide a winter plant hike or, "dead plant hike" as she calls it, on Jan. 15.

There are many different half-alive, skeletal remains, or evergreen plant life to be seen when exploring Horsetooth Mountain Open Space, Devil's Backbone, Coyote Ridge or Bobcat Ridge.

One of her favorites is the Spanish Bayonet, which looks like a pincushion with sharp needles. The mother plant dies and new plants spring up through it. A special moth grows around the plant and pollinates it. The moth lays eggs in the plant and the babies bite their way out later. "These plants don't disappear in the winter like a lot of plants do," she said.

She also has seen prickly pears, sage and mulleins, a tall plant with a spire and big fuzzy leaves. The earliest wildflower she has seen has been a fillaree geranium in February.

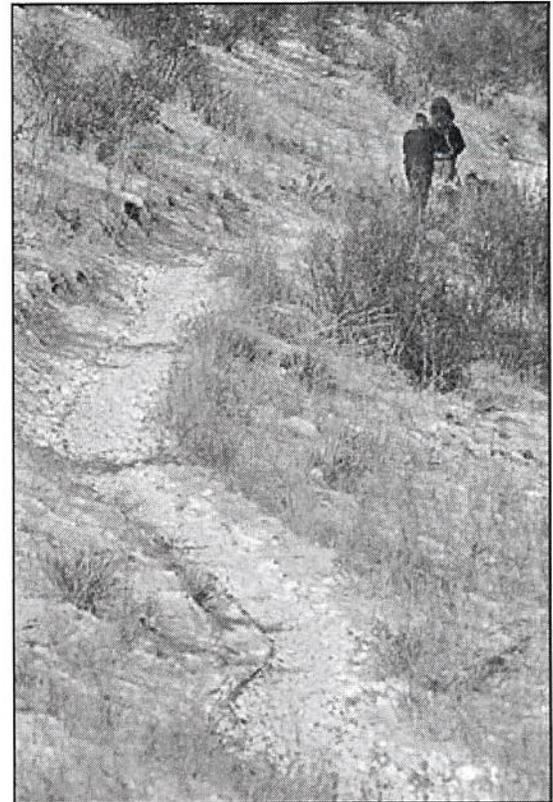
The three-leaf sumac, a small scrubby plant, remains during the winter and comes back to life in the summer.

McMillin enjoys hiking in the winter because it's a challenge to figure out what the plants are when they're dead. "But I like any excuse to get out and look at plants," she said.

It's important for hikers to have respect for plants, she said, because they are less likely to destroy nature.

Bob Kreycik, a former veterinarian and longtime volunteer, will focus on animals.

He said that there are three different practices animals go through during the winter to survive. For example, the marmot goes into a state of hibernation, the bear goes into torpor and the weasel and badger



Reporter-Herald file photo
Hikers walk along the Wild Loop trail at Devil's Backbone Open Space in this file photo. Larimer County Natural Resources Department will sponsor wintertime wildlife walks in January.

Want to take a winter walk?

- Wintertime Wildlife, 9 a.m., Saturday, Jan. 15, find out where the wild things go when things get cold. With Kreycik at the Devil's Backbone Open Space, west of Loveland off of U.S. 34. No registration required.
- Wintertime Plant Walk, 9 a.m., Jan. 15, with McMillin at Horsetooth Mountain Open Space, west of Fort Collins on County Road 38E. She will explain how plants handle the harsh winter season. Yak Traks recommended. A \$6 day use fee will apply for parking.
- Moon Over My Open Space, 5 p.m. with Kreycik for moonlit walk at Devil's Backbone Open Space. Look for nighttime critters and learn about owls. Registration required. Visit www.larimer.org/naturalresources/registration to sign up.

remain active. "The winter's tough on them," Kreycik said.

During hibernation, the marmot empties his intestinal tract, seals up the entrances to his den, gathers all his relatives around, and spends the winter holed up. His temperature drops to a few degrees above freezing and heartbeat drops to 1-6 beats a minute. He lives off the fat he stored.

In torpor, the bear also stops producing waste, and his temperature drops only five to eight degrees. The young are delivered in winter. The mother wakes up long enough to clean her cubs before going back to sleep.

Other animals stay awake all winter. Badgers and coyotes get together and go into prairie dog town. A badger will dig into the ground and the coyote will wait at the exit. When the prairie dogs come out, the coyote kills them and shares the meal.

Pika gather food all summer. They are herbivores and pile their hay up in stacks in the summer. Before fall, they take it and move it underground so they have something to live on in winter.

Kreycik said hikers can probably see signs of rabbits, coyote tracks and deer when they go out at this time of year.

The department of natural resources education program offers ongoing "critter scene investigations."

"We need 3 to 4 inches of snow," said Rob Novak, education program coordinator. "Then we get a hold of our walk leaders and send out an e-mail to the group saying we'll be there at that time."

Volunteer naturalists help participants look for tracks, which is when the fun starts, Rob said.

A tracking guide is used to help identify the prints and learn something about what happened.

Blood usually signals a chase or prey situation, Novak said.

They have seen what appeared to be the footprints of bobcats or foxes chasing mountain cottontails (hares). They've also seen tracks of geese and bald eagles interacting.

On her hikes, McMillin teaches the importance of good outdoor practices such as "Leave No Trace," staying on the path and not making new paths.

"Nature is resilient, but also delicate," McMillin said.

• Tracks in the Snow , 9 a.m., Jan. 29, with Kreycik. Search for wildlife tracks at the Devil's Backbone Open Space. Winter is a great time to track in the mud and snow , and the Devil's Backbone has plenty of wildlife to track. No registration required.

• Dress appropriately for the weather on all hikes and bring water for the trail. Call Rob at 679-4561 with questions.

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December 4, 2010

River trail section to open

Completion leaves 8 miles still to be built in 45-mile trail

BY KEVIN DUGGAN

KevinDuggan@coloradoan.com

A long-awaited section of the Poudre River Trail is scheduled to open this morning with little fanfare.

Barriers on the trail at the south and north ends of River Bluffs Open Space, which sits north of Colorado Highway 392 and west of the Larimer/Weld county line, will be removed by 8 a.m., said Jeffrey Boring, resource specialist with Larimer County Parks and Open Lands.

The half-mile section of trail through the county-owned open space will be accessible for bikers, hikers, skaters and anyone else who cares to travel it, Boring said, and none too soon for some area residents.

"We've had a lot of questions about when it would open," he said. "There's interest in this from Windsor and Ptarmigan and the River Run area to the south. People are eager to get out and use it."

The new trail segment ties into the existing 21-mile length of trail that links Windsor to Greeley. It provides a safe way to get across Colorado 392 through an underpass built last year with \$495,994 in federal stimulus funds.

A trailhead on the south side of County Road 32E with a parking lot will be open, although toilet and picnic facilities that are part of it are still under construction. The trailhead is expected to be finished in February.

The trail was expected to be open earlier this fall but was delayed because of construction scheduling conflicts, Boring said. A metal bridge over the Poudre River was not delivered and installed until November.

A grand opening for the trail segment that will recognize the many partners involved in its construction, including the county, the town of Windsor and Great Outdoors Colorado, will be held in the spring, Boring said.

When complete, the Poudre River Trail will run from LaPorte to Greeley. About 8 miles of the 45-mile trail remains to be built.

County officials are negotiating with landowners north of River Bluffs to get easements for the county's remaining portion of the trail, which would connect with a section that will be built by Timnath, Boring said.

Timnath's portion would run from Harmony Road around the Walmart Supercenter site to a point near a bridge on Interstate 25. The town is working with the Colorado Department of Transportation on details of the trail alignment, said town spokesman Kyle Boyd.

From I-25 west the trail becomes the responsibility of Fort Collins, which eventually will tie it into the existing trail at the CSU Environmental Learning Center. From there, the current trail runs 15 miles to LaPorte.

Officials say the trail could be complete within three to five years, depending on funding and acquisition of easements.

Additional Facts

By the numbers

- > **160 acres** - Size of River Bluffs Open Space
 - > **0.5 miles** - Length of the Poudre River Trail through the open space
 - > **\$700,000** - Cost of the trail and trailhead at River Bluffs
 - > **45 miles** - Total length of the trail when complete from LaPorte to Greeley
 - > **8 miles** - Length of the trail remaining to be built
-

North Forty News

and archives of the Fossil Creek Current

The community newspaper for northern Larimer County, Colorado

December 2010

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Access ramp opens possibilities at historic schoolhouse

By Ellie Jones
Buckeye Community Club

The Buckeye Community Club recently celebrated a huge milestone in the community – completion of a wheelchair access ramp to the historic Buckeye School, which was built in 1925.

The schoolhouse, now a gathering place, is home to the Buckeye Buck-N-Ears 4-H group and the Buckeye Community Club. It is a two-story structure that required navigation of seven stairs to reach the main floor. For several members, this was a roadblock to participating in local events.

"It's not fair that individuals should be prevented from sharing community goodwill, camaraderie and good food," I said to myself. (The community club hosts a potluck supper on the second Saturday of each month.) So began my mission to make a change.

The schoolhouse was already being reviewed by City Visions Inc. architectural firm for structural soundness as part of a grant through the Colorado Historical Society. I asked City Visions personnel if they had any good ideas on where and what a wheelchair ramp should look like and how much it would cost. They provided us a base plan, and we modified it to meet the rustic nature of the schoolhouse and community.

Then the community club looked for funding options. In September 2009, we applied for a grant from the Larimer County Open Lands program. We received notice in January that the Buckeye Community Club was awarded \$2,000 to help build a wheelchair access ramp on the Buckeye Schoolhouse.

By the time the ramp was completed, material costs totaled approximately \$4,500, with the Buckeye Community Club raising the remainder of funds necessary for construction.

It has been a long road from design to permitting to construction. I was fortunate enough to find a helper

as passionate about this ramp as I was. Russell Wright, from Wright Way Construction, offered his services free of charge and provided the bulk of labor to make this happen. Several "work days" were planned to pour cement, build the framing, construct the actual ramp and decking and finally the handrails. Many people helped make this dream a reality, and I can't thank everyone enough.

The community club celebrated the completion of this monumental event with a dedication ceremony, ribbon cutting and potluck supper on Nov. 20. The Rev. Paul Joncas, a club member who suffers from multiple sclerosis, presided over the dedication with a few choice words for us all: "When a person becomes disabled, their world becomes very small. Over time, we begin to poke at the edges to see where we can expand it. From time to time, something like this ramp comes along and opens up new possibilities for us. It's a good thing."

Next on the project list, the community clubs hopes to raise money to add a wheelchair-accessible restroom. For more information about the historic Buckeye Schoolhouse or to send a donation, write to Buckeye Community Club, P.O. Box 6, Wellington CO 80549.

Do you have a news tip? Do you have questions about a news story? Please contact our staff by phone (970-221-0213) or e-mail info@northfortynews.com.

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Page updated 12/1/2010

Trippin'

Spring Creek Trail a path of history

Conservation also in the landscape

BY DAWN WILSON
For the Coloradoan

Spring Creek meanders across the landscape starting in the foothills, flowing into Horsetooth Reservoir and traveling east through Fort Collins where it joins the Cache la Poudre River. On any normal day, this creek gurgles through the city as it passes natural areas, neighborhoods and bike trails through the city.

But on July 27 and 28, 1997, this creek turned into a gushing torrent of water through Fort Collins, the result of more than 14.5 inches of rain that fell in 31 hours from an amazingly heavy summer rainstorm.

Five people lost their lives along Spring Creek during the flood. The flooding also caused more than \$200 million in damages across the city, as were as a freight train to derail and destroyed two trailer parks.

It is amazing to look at this tiny creek today and picture the destruction it caused. Today, it is a peaceful stretch with more than six miles of paved bike trail along its banks.

A popular trail with bikers, joggers and walkers, the Spring Creek Trail offers a glimpse into land management in the city.

The trail passes through or near more than a dozen parks and natural areas, including Pineridge Natural Area where the city has preserved the land for wildlife, plant life and scenic value. As you follow the path, you will see dozens of waterfowl typical to life in Fort Collins, including mallards and Canadian geese. Keep an eye out for frogs and turtles that sometimes wander up onto the path to soak up the warmth of the concrete.

One particularly interesting spot to view wildlife is at

tailed prairie dogs. And where there are prairie dogs, red fox are sure to be nearby as well.

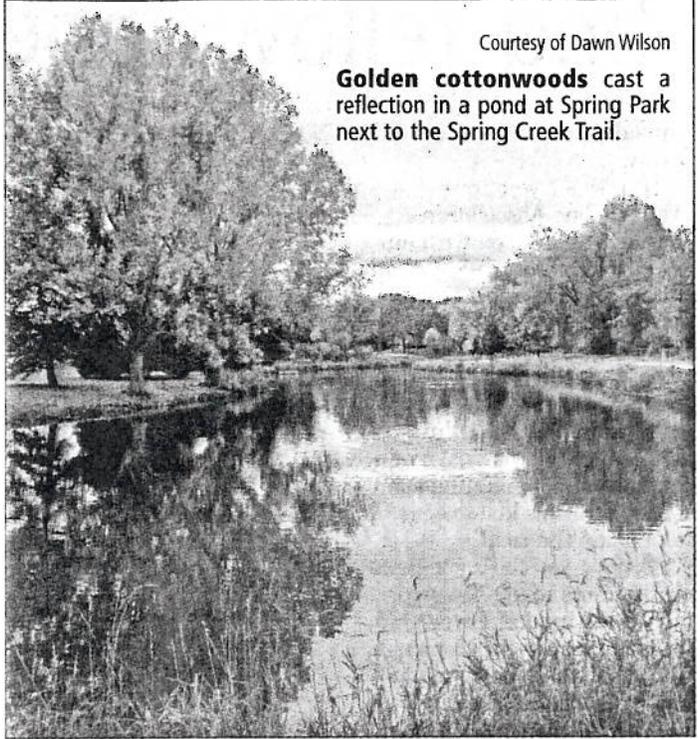
Watch the habits of the prairie dogs. Some of their patterns are dictated by when the red fox – and other potential threats, such as people – might be present. The prairie dogs retreat to their underground dens – identified by the huge mounds of dug up earth – about an hour before sunset. But the red fox, if it desires a prairie dog meal that evening, will arrive early and tip-toe through the tall grass. Listen for the high-pitched squeal of the prairie dogs to notify the other prairie dogs that danger is nearby. The entire group then gets going. On this particular day, the red fox won and skulked off with a prairie dog in its mouth.

Spring Creek Trail is available year-round for people to enjoy. Leashed dogs are permitted along the trail. Restrooms and drinking water are available at designated locations along the trail but may be closed during cold winter weather.

For more information and a bike trail map, visit the city of Fort Collins website at www.fcgov.com/parks/trails.php.

Courtesy of Dawn Wilson

Golden cottonwoods cast a reflection in a pond at Spring Park next to the Spring Creek Trail.



Prairie dogs hunker down along the Spring Creek Trail.

Coloradoan

11-2-2010

Volunteers needed for education push

The Larimer County Department of Natural Resources is looking for volunteer to help combat weeds and pine beetle.

Conservation Warriors educate homeowners' associations on weed and forestry issues, are involved in identifying and marking areas of infestation and help to protect natural resources. Training begins in early 2011.

For more information, contact CJ Cullins at ccullins@larimer.org or (970) 679-4552, or visit Larimer.org/naturalresources.

Hiking

Loveland Mountain Club Hike

FREE 8 a.m., Kmart Loveland, 2665 W. Eisenhower Blvd., Loveland. Rabbitt Mountain: A 5-mile Class A hike through trees on the loop trail, finishing on the Overlook trail. A stop at the Stone Cup for coffee, etc. will precede the hike. Information: (970) 461-3195 or <http://lovelandmountainclub.org>

Nature

Nature Notes Club

8-11 a.m., Soderberg Open Space, Northwest of Inlet Bay at Horsetooth Reservoir, Fort Collins. Participants will be led through the process of creating their own nature journals. Each session will

include basic instruction on sketching, ecology, geology, wildlife, and other natural sciences and a short hike to a scenic location.

To sign up, call or email: rnovak@larimer.org. Information: (970) 679-4561 or www.larimer.org/naturalresources

monday

Clubs and meetings

Larimer County Dive Rescue Team Meeting

FREE 7 p.m., Larimer County Emergency Services Center, 1303 N. Shields St., Fort Collins. A regular monthly meeting of the Larimer County Dive Rescue Team. Information: (970) 498-5313 or www.lcdrt.org

The Coloradoan, Sunday, November 7, 2010

Editor's note: Beginning with today's edition of the Reporter-Herald, the RH Line will ask callers to identify what they consider to be the "Seven Wonders of Loveland" or the "Seven Wonders of Northern Colorado." What are those places and things in this area that you consider to be a localized version of the Seven Wonders of the World? We will publish calls on this theme through Sunday, Dec. 26. Likewise, from Dec. 31 through Jan. 2 we will publish comments listing your hopes and dreams for the coming year. Yes, we're hoping to keep the line positive over the Christmas and New Year holidays.

SEVEN WONDERS OF LOVELAND

"I have a wonder in Loveland. I love to walk down west on 4th Street until you hit the dead end where it curves to 5th Street, and you get the loveliest view of the mountains and the Big Thompson River, and there's a great big pasture with horses racing. It's my favorite spot in Loveland."

"Here are my Seven Wonders of Loveland. One, Lake Loveland. Two, Benson Park Sculpture Garden. Three, Fiestenz-Smith Park in the Big Thompson Canyon. Four, Devils Backbone. Five, bike path circling the city. Six, Fourth Street in downtown. Seven, children's water park."

Call the RH Line

To comment on any story in today's paper, or on issues important to you, call us at

635-3637

we're very fortunate to have that so close to us."

"This is our list of the Seven Wonders of Loveland and Northern Colorado. The Christmas Star, Sculpture Garden, Lake Loveland pathway, Devil's Backbone, Big Thompson Canyon, Trail Ridge Road and last but not the least, the intersection of Madison Avenue and Highway 34."

"My nomination for one of the Seven Wonders of Loveland is the heron rookery on Lonetree Lake. It's over on the southeast shore, and there is nothing more magical than floating in a canoe or hiking underneath those cottonwoods right before they bud out and seeing all these nests high up in the trees full of herons talking and mating and flying about and the cormorants that share their rookery with them. It's a magical time. It's a magical place, and it's magical for Loveland. And it's one of the reason why this place is so special to me."

"The Seven Wonders of the Loveland? What a wonderful idea. Hands down, Benson Park. From the moment you walk through the portal with those big cats to the very tipy top, the park, it is just a wonder to behold. Peaceful, calming, amusing, thoughtful, terrific art in a terrific city. I love living here. Thanks, Loveland."

"I live in Berthoud, but I think one of the best things about Loveland, in fact it's one of the best things on the Front Range, is Chapungu Park. We've been there many times. We bring out-of-town guests there. The whole scenery is beautiful, and the sculptures are incredible. Very moving, very well done. My middle school student used it as a photo subject for an assignment he had, and

"My Seven Wonders of Loveland would be the Big Thompson Canyon, Devil's Backbone, all the wonderful lakes that are in Loveland, Benson Park Sculpture Garden, the Mariana Butte Golf Course, the historical district that includes the homes and businesses in downtown Loveland and the Rialto Theater."

"My Seven Wonders. Location, location, location. Snow-capped mountain views. Rocky Mountain National Park. Horsetooth Reservoir drive. Devil's Backbone. Carter Lake drive. A look at Lake Loveland while driving east and west on Eisenhower."

"I think the best Wonder of Loveland are the blue and white lights in Centerra at Christmastime."