

River trail takes mile-long step closer to done

By Robert Allen
RobertAllen@coloradoan.com

A recreation trail connecting Fort Collins and Greeley came another mile closer to completion Saturday morning when the River Bluffs Open Space was dedicated between Windsor and Interstate 25.

A small crowd of people with their dogs and bicycles headed out on the trail near the Poudre River shortly after a ribbon cutting ceremony. People took walks to view birds and other wildlife and a full-moon hike was offered Saturday night.

Kerri Rollins, manager of Larimer County's Open Lands Program, said families and anglers are encouraged to visit the Poudre River Trail's latest addition, financed in part through the county's voter-approved tax supporting open space.

The Poudre River Trail of more than 40 miles is an inter-governmental effort dating back to the 1970s, and only about four miles remain before completion. Rollins said the most recent addition is a significant step.

"The biggest part was the underpass," she said. "The federal government swooped in and saved the day."

Federal economic stimulus funds added \$487,043 to help pay for the area built in fall 2009 where the trail continues beneath Colorado Highway 392. The project's overall construction budget of \$1.58 million was contributed with finances from Larimer County government, the town of Windsor and Great Outdoors Colorado grants.

Gary Buffington, director of the county's Natural Resources Department, said the paved trail is the longest of its kind in Northern Colorado and among the longest in the state. The Poudre River Trail also fits into a long-term plan for a Front Range Trail, a Colorado State Parks project connecting New Mexico to Wyoming.

Meanwhile, the Poudre River

See TRAIL, Page A2



Cyclists ride through a ribbon Saturday to mark the official opening during the River Bluffs Open Space dedication ceremony. Below, Meegan Flenniken, left, and Masen Odell have a look around the new facilities during the ceremony. The ceremony celebrated the opening of a new bike trail running east to Windsor and Greeley. JEREMIE SCHATZ/THE COLORADOAN

Trail

Continued from Page A1

Trail is anticipated to have a crossing at Harmony Road and beneath I-25 as it closes the gap between Fort Collins and Greeley.

"We hope to connect to Timnath in a few years," Rollins said.

Much of the work involves acquiring property along the river corridor. The 161-acre River Bluffs Open Space was purchased for \$1.92 million in 2004 through the county and a \$1.2 million GOCO grant.

Access to the area is off County Road 32E, west of County Road 3. Bike racks with air pumps, flush toilets and a water fountain with access for



dogs are available at the newly opened trailhead.

The trail is open to biking, walking and other nonmotor-

ized use. It may eventually become available for equestrian use, according to information from Larimer County.

Larimer County open space to be dedicated Saturday

Written by

Coloradoan staff

10:49 AM, Apr. 13, 2011|

River Bluffs Open Space and the latest extension of the Poudre River Trail will be dedicated during festivities scheduled Saturday at the open space, near Colorado Highway 392 and County Road 32E.

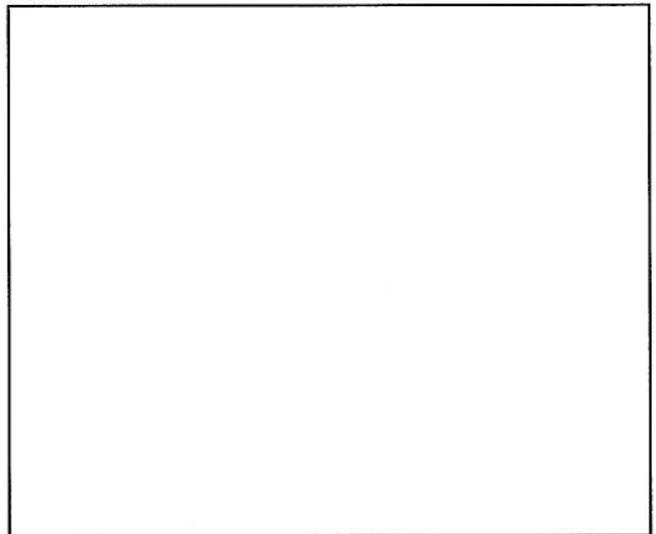
Activity booths will be open 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Dedication ceremonies will begin at 10:30 a.m.

Guided bird-watching and bicycle tours will be offered following the ceremony. A full-moon hike along the Poudre River will begin at 7:30 p.m.

Residents are encouraged to bring their bikes to ride the trail, which runs south under Colorado 392 and east to Windsor and Greeley.

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

Advertisement



Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

Report Herald 4-12-11
**Open space dedication
event features activities**

Celebrate the grand opening of River Bluffs Open Space from 10:30 to 11:15 a.m. Saturday west of the Interstate 25/Windsor interchange off of County Road 32E.

Bring your bike and help Larimer County's Department of Natural Resources dedicate the newest section of the Poudre River Trail. Activity booths will be open 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Guided bird-watching and bike tours will follow the dedication ceremony, and a full-moon hike along the Poudre River will be at 7:30 p.m.

Directions to River Bluffs Open Space and information regarding the Department of Natural Resources can be found at www.larimer.org/naturalresources/parkareas.htm.

North Forty News

and archives of the Fossil Creek Current

The community newspaper for northern Larimer County, Colorado

April 2011

[News](#)

[Home Page](#)

[About Us](#)

[Advertising Info](#)

[Community Page](#)

Colorado's growing population: impacts and prospects

By Gary Raham
North Forty News

The census takers have counted heads. The experts have drawn fine graphs. World population will top 7 billion this year.

If you are a baby boomer, you have seen world population more than double in your lifetime. United States population stands now at 308,745,538. Colorado has shared and prospered from some of that growth, expanding from 1,753,947 in 1960 to 5,160,189 million in the 2010 tally. It also suffers from the added pollution and pressure on water and mineral resources that growth creates.

What can we say about the state of our wonderful state – and our northern Colorado niche, consisting of Larimer and Weld Counties – as human numbers continue to climb in the coming decades?

According to the Colorado State Demography Office, most people in Colorado live in the counties of El Paso (622,263), Denver (600,158), Arapahoe (572,003), and Jefferson (534,543).

The state as a whole grew at the rate of 16.92 percent over the past decade, down from the more frenetic rate of 30.6 percent from 1991 to 2000. Larimer County seems to be growing at a rate very close to the state average, while Weld County ranks second on the growth rate list at 39.7 percent. Douglas County is growing at 62.4 percent. Garfield, Mesa and Eagle counties also showed strong growth while 26 percent of counties showed growth declines.

Fourteen municipalities doubled their size or more over the decade. Northern Colorado hosts some growth hot spots: Firestone (431 percent), Severance (430 percent), Frederick (251 percent), Erie (188 percent) and Timnath (180 percent).

Colorado is also becoming more diverse ethnically and racially. Colorado's Hispanic population (the largest minority) increased 41 percent (by 300,000). African Americans grew by 19 percent, while

Asians and White non-Hispanic increased by 45 percent and 9.9 percent, respectively. These increases occurred throughout the state and not just in metro areas.

Projections indicate that Colorado will continue to grow in the coming years at a rate of about 2.2 percent annually. Industrial activities in and near Denver will fuel a lot of that growth, but northern Colorado looks good for industrial growth, too. Embrace Northern Colorado (www.embracecolorado.com), a local nonprofit "think tank" attempting to identify and find solutions to growth issues over the coming years, notes several aspects of northern Colorado's economic base:

- Many businesses now compete in the global economy.
- Weld County ranks in the top 10 richest nationally in production of agricultural products.
- Colorado State University, technology and manufacturing dominate the economy in Larimer County.
- Weld County has nearly 12,000 oil and gas wells.

The State Demography Office (http://dola.colorado.gov/dlg/demog/pop_totals.html) also points out that Colorado's population is aging. Baby-boomer workers are reaching retirement age, and northern Colorado attracts aging immigrants who like beautiful places to visit, the university culture and strong urban services.

Demographers predict, "The population over age 65 will increase 78 percent during the next 15 years, shifting this age group's proportion of the total from 9.8 percent in 2009 to 17.4 percent in 2025."

Seniors will fuel a larger portion of the economy over the coming years (especially after 2015) and may also have to fill a gap in the work force. Embrace Northern Colorado predicts labor shortages between 2012 and 2030 as numbers in the workforce decline following the boomer generation.

Water use and availability will play a key role in Colorado's future, with growth issues sometimes conflicting with both agricultural needs and environmental concerns. Colorado serves as the source of major rivers, yet that water doesn't "hang around" all year. Much of it is confined in reservoirs and then moved to agricultural land or urban areas.

The Big Thompson Project, which moves water from the Granby area on the Western Slope to Larimer and Weld counties, serves as a prime example of water diversion in Colorado. Other areas of strong growth, like Douglas and Arapahoe counties, depend heavily on deep groundwater sources – legacies of the last Ice Age that are nonrenewable.

Agriculture uses 90 percent of Colorado's water, but municipalities have been consistently buying agricultural water rights from farmers for urban development. That practice is likely to continue as long as selling water is more profitable than farming.

According to Embrace Northern Colorado, domestic water use for the region's current population is approximately 76,000 acre feet/year (an acre foot is 326,000 gallons) and, at current consumption rates, northern Coloradoans will need an additional 126,000 acre feet annually by mid century.

Some relevant sites about Colorado water issues can be found at www.cwi.colostate.edu, <http://co.water.usgs.gov> and www.colorado.edu/law/centers/nrlc/publications.

National Geographic magazine points out in "Enter the Anthropocene Age of Man" (March 2011) that geologists are contemplating designating the last 11,500 years as the beginning of a new epoch in the history of Earth – one dominated by human activities and population growth.

It takes 38 percent of Earth's ice-free surface to feed us. Our waste fills the oceans. (In 2006, the United Nations Environment Program estimated that every square mile of ocean hosts 46,000 pieces of floating plastic.) Our carbon emissions, since the invention of agriculture and especially since the industrial revolution, are changing atmospheric composition and altering climate. We are a force of nature that will leave at least a thin page in the geologic record.

Fortunately, the little piece of the world called Colorado has fared reasonably well so far and largely benefitted from a stunning landscape that has attracted steady growth and mostly clean industry. With diligence, informed vigilance – and a bit of TLC – there's no reason that Coloradoans can't extend that prosperity into the foreseeable future

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.

[News](#)

[Home Page](#)

[About Us](#)

[Advertising Info](#)

[Community Page](#)

© North Forty News 2011

Send your comments and questions to info@northfortynews.com

Web site by S. Virginia De Herdt, Freelance Writer

Send your comments and questions about this web site to webmaster@northfortynews.com

Page updated 3/31/2011

Open Lands grants to be awarded

REPORTER-HERALD STAFF

Thirteen groups will receive the Open Lands Programs' 2011 Small Grants for Community Partnering awards on Thursday.

The Larimer County Department of Natural Resources will make the awards, totaling \$20,000, for community projects throughout the county, program coordinator Sue Burke said in a press release.

The groups will get their awards at the 5:45 p.m. Thursday meeting of the Open Lands Advisory Board, at city council chambers in the Loveland Municipal Building, 500 E. Third St.

The program uses sales tax dollars collected for open spaces to help with community projects that connect people to the land, Burke said.

Each year, the county awards \$20,000 through individual awards of up to \$2,000 per project. Among this year's recipients are:

- Loveland Historical Society, Milner Schwarz House — Phase 2, \$2,000.
- Conrad Ball Middle School, Garden of Eaten, Loveland, \$908.
- Big Thompson School of Nature and Science, Outdoor Education Center Revitalization Project Phase II, west of Loveland, \$1,832.
- Friends of Gardens on

Spring Creek, wetland and riparian demonstration site, Fort Collins, \$1,800.

• Poudre Wilderness Volunteers, 2011 Stock Patrol Operations, Arapaho-Roosevelt Forest, \$1,465.

• Mulberry Community Gardens, Hoop House at Mulberry Community Gardens, Fort Collins, \$2,000.

• Colorado Youth Outdoors, mulching equipment for Swift Ponds Facilities south of Timnath, \$1,500.

• Grow Forth! Grow Forth! Urban Farm, Fort Collins, \$1,994.

• North Fork Weed Coop, sustainable land stewardship for small acreages, Northern Larimer County, \$1,100.

• Vista Bonita Recreation Association, Baker Lake ecosystem enhancement, Fort Collins, \$1,800.

• Old Town North Community Association, Old Town North Community Garden, Fort Collins, \$1,000.

• Ridgewood Hills Master Community Association, restoration of Ridgewood Hills Natural Area, Fort Collins, \$1,300.

• Harvest Master Homeowners Association, Harvest Park Open Space Plan, Fort Collins, \$1,300.

To find out more about applying the small grants program, visit www.larimer.org/openlands/smallgrants.htm or call Burke at 679-4566.

• 11

Wednesday, March 23, 2011
LovelandConnection.com

Loveland man named county's '11 visual artist

Loveland Connection staff

The Larimer County Natural Resources Department Visual Artist for 2011 is Loveland photographer **Jim Digby**.

Digby will spend his term visiting Larimer County's parks and open spaces to search for inspiration for his photography and will ultimately create a photograph that he will donate to Larimer County for public display in a county building. Digby has worked in still and motion photography since the late 1950s and employs a technique called "optical extraction" to capture fragments of beauty to create purely visual experiences.

To learn more about the Open Lands Visual Artist Program, visit www.larimer.org/openlands/artist.htm.

Coloradoan
3-20-11
Local

SENIOR CONTENT EDITOR

IN BRIEF Department selects 2011 visual artist

The Larimer County Natural Resources Department Visual Artist for 2011 is Jim Digby, a photographer who resides in the Loveland area.

He will create a photograph inspired by Larimer County's parks or open spaces. Digby has worked in still and motion photography since the late 1950s and employs a technique called "optical extraction" to capture fragments of beauty to create purely visual experiences.

Digby will spend his term visiting Larimer County's parks and open spaces to search for inspiration for his photography and will create a photograph for donation to Larimer County for public display in a county building.

For more information, visit www.larimer.org/openlands/artist.htm.

Larimer County Open Space wears green all year

County, town have a history of partnering

By Juley Harvey Trail-Gazette
Estes Park Trail-Gazette

Posted:03/23/2011 04:30:46 PM MDT

It's not O' Larimer County, but the Estes Valley is lucky enough to wear a lot of green all year round, thanks to the county's Open Lands program. Kerri Rollins, Larimer County's Open Lands manager, spoke about the program at county commissioner Tom Donnelly's monthly Estes Park meeting at the senior center recently.

The program is funded by an open space sales tax, set to expire in 2018 and for which planners are already considering options. Rollins said Estes Park is the only town within the county that has always received open space sales tax generated, and other cities have adopted that alternative within the last three years. In 2010, she said Estes Park generated \$244,344.12 in sales tax. The \$9 million annually generated for open space is split up among the county's towns, with the county maintaining a balance of the monies -- 43 percent.

The county guidelines stipulate that 70 percent of the monies be spent on the acquisition and development of land, 15 percent on long-term management and 15 percent on stewardship and maintenance. This includes developing parks, open space, playgrounds and trails.

In the beginning, there was no land to manage, she said, so 85 percent of the money went to acquiring land. Initially also, there was no provision for bonding. In the election of 1999, voters granted the county permission to bond, which has provided \$15 million for major acquisitions such as the Devil's Backbone, Indian Creek and the public access corridor in Fort Collins.

Donnelly asked what has been done in the Estes Valley, for our tax money. Many times, Rollins said, the county partners with town.

"Land is expensive," she said. "We partner with cities to leverage money. We've partnered with the Estes Valley Land Trust, most recently with the Hermit Park Open Space."

According to the 2009 Larimer County Natural Resources annual report, the 1,362 acres of Hermit Park was valued at \$8.7 million, with a donation/bargain sale of \$2.2 million, \$4 million coming from Larimer County Open Lands and seven partners contributing \$2.5 million.

Other Estes Valley acquisitions include: Childers/Henning conservation easement, 160 acres; Cohen conservation easement, 131 acres; Smitherman conservation easement, 520 acres; Homer Rouse Memorial Trail; Lake Estes Trail; Lion Gulch Trailhead; Lily Lake/Roessler, 18.2 acres; Lily Lake Water and Recreation Rights; Enos-Kiley conservation easement; Knoll-Willows Open Space, 20 acres; and American Legion Open Space, 1.6 acres.

Donnelly, said in the annual report, "Our open lands add greatly to the wonderful quality of life here in Larimer County and, as a parent, I am very interested in seeing that continue. Larimer County has made a commitment to preserving open lands and I am honored to serve as liaison to the Open Lands Advisory Board."

Rollins said Larimer County has also partnered often with GOCO, and is proud that the county is one of the top recipients of those funds. Leveraging is a critical part of the program, she said.

"We take the stewardship of the tax dollars we receive seriously," she said. "That includes leveraging through groups or asking the landowner for a donative component."

The county has received \$19 million from GOCO, just for its projects.

"It's a wise use of tax dollars," she said. "We're graced enough to have it, we might as well use it."

Donnelly observed that the funding speaks to how organized the county department and its communities are.

"A lot of counties flounder," he said. "They don't have a plan."

Rollins said GOCO has two funding cycles a year and the county is already planning for 2012. It takes a lot of forethought and much public input is involved, she said.

"GOCO doesn't want half-cocked projects," she said. "We have two representatives (Bill James and Bob Streeter) on the GOCO board. It's good to get to know them."

Asked to provide a definition of open space, the county officials said there is no widely accepted definition and it's a matter for the lawyers.

"You know it when you see it," a resident joked.

Planners are incorporating a commercial use policy, including agricultural leases, on open space properties. One of the trends, Rollins said, is to provide a plan for local produce growers with a place for vegetable and fruit stands. No one has approached officials to use the land in this manner yet, but there is a plan for it, she said.

Residents wanted to know what will happen when the open lands sales tax expires. County officials speculated that, if voters do not approve renewal of the tax, they would start closing some of the public open spaces, or require user fees,

such as the state and national parks. Probably the trails would degrade, and certain camping spots might be reduced to day use. There would likely be no additional maintenance provided for open spaces. Officials said it's possible that a group of citizens may seek extension of the tax by putting it on the ballot.

Donnelly said that his general perception is the county has done a really good job protecting natural resources, operating "cool" places for public access and "people have a taste for that." He mentioned community gardening and locally-grown food, for which there is a GOCO project. Larimer County has been selected for a pilot project in Colorado, to do an analysis of how to get youth back to the outdoors.

"How important that is," he said. "They kind of don't get outside, like before. We're trying to develop a plan to figure out what to do to facilitate that."

Mayor Bill Pinkham said Estes Park is fortunate to have a good working relationship with the parks and open lands officials, the county commissioners and Rocky Mountain National Park, to identify potential properties for open lands. Donnelly observed that the collaboration is not always just financial, and includes valuable expertise. Sue Pinkham said naturalist volunteers spend many hours educating the public as to why open space is important ecologically. At least 70 volunteers work in county programs, providing knowledge to dovetail why the purchase of open space is important and special, she said.

Rollins said the volunteers help get people out on the properties, learning, through such programs as full moon hikes, wildlife hikes and scat hikes. Whatever the subject, "we have a hike to cover it," she said.

"Or, if we don't, we'll make one," Pinkham added.

For more information, contact the county department of Natural Resources at (970) 679-4570 or see the website at larimer.org/naturalresources.

[Close Window](#)[Send To Printer](#)

County dedicates River Bluffs 4/17-2011

WINDSOR — Residents celebrated the many wonders of River Bluffs Open Space at a grand opening and dedication Saturday.

Larimer County's newest open space actually opened in November and has been growing in popularity.

But officials waited until spring for the official celebration, which featured bird-watching, cycling and learning about the ecosystem and history of the area.

Saturday's event included the dedication of the newest stretch of the Poudre River Trail, which ultimately will connect Bellvue to Island Grove Regional Park in Greeley.

— Reporter-Herald staff