

Planned burn near Fort Collins prompts 911 calls

A heavy column of smoke visible directly west of Fort Collins on Tuesday prompted many area residents to call 911 to report what was actually a planned and controlled 21-acre burn at Horsetooth Mountain Open Space.

Larimer County officials were managing and monitoring the fire, which they intentionally set to improve forest health, increase understory plant diversity and return fire to a natural area that benefits from low-intensity fires. The burn is part of a fuels-management project in Horsetooth Mountain Park.

The project is being implemented in cooperation with the Colorado State Forest Service, Southern Rockies Wildland Fire Module, Larimer County Department of Natural Resources, Nature Conservancy, Xcel Energy and the Larimer County Sheriff's Office of Emergency Services.

For safety purposes, several area trails are closed, including sections of the Towers Road Trail, Spring Creek Trail and Carey Springs Trail. Larimer County Rangers will be on hand to explain closures and signs will be posted where trails are closed.

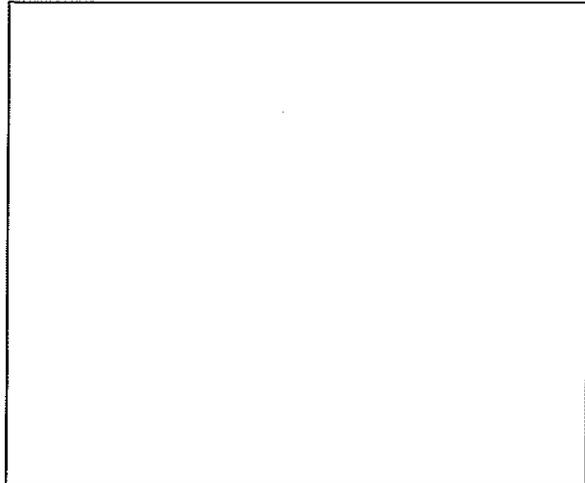
The burn area is located southwest of Towers Road, near the junction with Carey

Springs Trail.

The number of calls to 911 and the Poudre Emergency Communications Center prompted officials to ask the media to publicize that the burn was planned and under control, despite the large amount of smoke.

The National Weather Service rated smoke dispersal conditions as "poor" on Tuesday night, due to generally low winds.

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Heron Lakes Open Space contract approved

By Rudy Hemmann
The Surveyor

The phase one contract for purchase of properties and transfer of properties to the town for the proposed Heron Lakes open space and trail project was presented to the Berthoud Town Board Tuesday evening. The four governmental entities involved in the phase one funding have agreed in principle to pay the following amounts:

GOCO \$950,000, Town of Berthoud \$300,000, Larimer County \$100,000 and the City of Loveland \$50,000 for a total outlay of \$1.4 million.

An information sheet prepared for board members by town staff states:

"As part of the due diligence process to move forward with the Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) grant for phase #1 of the Heron Lakes Regional Recreation and Open Space project, the town needs to provide a

signed contract to the GOCO review committee. The attached contract is weighted heavily in the town's favor in terms of conditions whereby the town can pull out of the contract without penalty."

It was noted during the meeting by Town Administrator Mike Hart that there are no such safeguards for the developer in the contract. He also reported that the town would "own the dirt" that changes hands as a result of the agreement, but the conservation easements will be shared by Loveland and Larimer County.

Hart also stated, "Berthoud hosts the (GOCO) grant. The agreement with the other agencies and with GOCO is that Berthoud has to sign the contract to purchase the property from the developer. There are quite a few back doors in the agreement (for the town); the other governmental agencies have to send their money to Berthoud before the closing, but Berthoud is the agent for this whole transaction. That is why Berthoud is the entity which approves the purchase agreement."

Jim Birdsall of The Birdsall Group, representing Heron Lakes Investments, LLC, the seller, presented the contract proposal to the trustees.

Following the presentation of the contract particulars to the board Birdsall stated, "We are getting close to finalizing a fantastic deal. You guys should be getting excited."

He reported the grant funding of phase one should be wrapped up this fall, with phase two grant funding scheduled to be completed next summer. He also announced that Heron Lakes Investments

was looking for private funding to build the golf course. Birdsall acknowledged that banks were under quite a bit of pressure with regard to lending of funds. He went on to inform the board if everything fell into place as expected that work on the golf course could begin next spring.

"We're excited about this project," said Birdsall, "This (open space) project is creating an opportunity to get this development off the ground that was not there before."

"The board was in complete unanimity in blessing this project after we had gone through an exhaustive study of potential town exposure. We see none. Town benefits, however, continue to sweeten the entire project. We are getting, even in phase

"You guys should
be getting excited."

— Jim Birdsall, The Birdsall Group

one, enough benefits and land to justify twice the price — let alone phase two and the income in perpetuity," said Mayor Tom Patterson.

(In order to give up the open space property from the Heron Lakes development and still provide enough area for an 18-hole golf course, the golf course tract needed to expand to the east, in effect, borrowing approximately 50 acres from the Bader Development which is adjacent to the northeast of the Heron Lakes Development. As a result, both developments will need to go through a re-plat process with the town. Birdsall stated that the Bader re-plat would need to occur in conjunction with the Heron Lakes re-plat. "One can't happen without the other," said Birdsall.

The board unanimously approved a motion authorizing the mayor to sign the purchase agreement between the town and Heron Lakes Investments, LLC.

The board also heard presentations from County Commissioner Tom Donnelly and Sheriff Justin Smith. Donnelly gave a county budget overview while Smith spoke about the cost reductions that had occurred in the area of public safety, but particularly with regard to the operation of the county jail.

Both men ended their respective presentations by stumping for repeal of two .02 percent sales taxes which support operation of the county jail, and replacing them with a .0375 sales tax intended to support the jail.

The trustees ended the public portion of the meeting by adjourning to executive session for the expressed purpose of receiving legal information regarding contract negotiations.

The negotiations in question were apparently not related to the Heron Lakes development.



Conservation tillage helping

Courtesy Illustration

The illustration above shows the new layout of the Heron Lakes development and municipal golf course. The plan has changed with the inclusion of the open space project around Lonetree and McNiel Reservoirs. Its completion moved one step closer during last night's town board meeting with the contract proposal being agreed to in principle.

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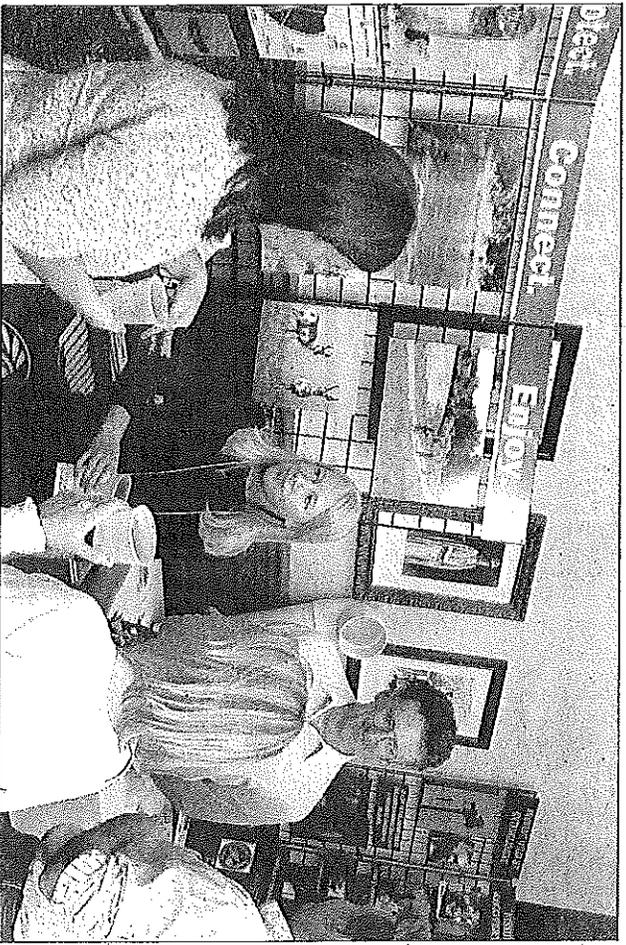
POST INDEPENDENT

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Volume 121, Number 263

TUESDAY, September 20, 2011



Jury Jerome Post Independent

The Colorado Open Space Alliance is meeting at the Hotel Colorado in Glenwood Springs for its 12th annual statewide conference. Socializing after the Monday sessions are, from left, Adams County Open Space program manager Shannon McDowell, Westminister open space coordinator Heather Cronenberg, Westminister open space technician Lauren Schvevets, John Vickery of Denver and Rod Larsen (far right), also with the city of Westminister open space program.

Open space leaders convene in Glenwood

Nature photographer John Fielder giving presentation

John Stroud
Post Independent Staff

GLENWOOD SPRINGS — Open space program managers, staffers, board members and volunteers from around Colorado are in Glenwood Springs this week to discuss issues related to the preservation and management of open space and public trails.

The 12th annual Colorado Open Space Alliance (COSA) conference is taking place at the Hotel Colorado through Wednesday.

The conference includes more than 200 participants, according to Linda Strand, an Arapahoe County Open Space board member and COSA steering committee member.

"We have workshops and presentations at a different location in the state each year to provide training and networking for those involved with open space," Strand said.

"Our membership is primarily from local and regional public open space programs, but we also tend to attract people associated with private land trusts," she explained.

The conference opened Monday with a variety of informational sessions focused on topics ranging from open space policy issues to some of the common challenges associated with managing public trail systems.

It continues this morning with additional work sessions and a keynote address by Jessica Sargent-Michaud, director of conservation economics for The Trust for Public Land. This afternoon, conference participants head out on field trips throughout the area.

The final day of the conference on Wednesday includes a presentation by renowned Colorado nature photographer John Fielder.

"Mainly, it's a great opportunity for peo-

ple from all across the state to network and discuss the things we've worked to accomplish over the past year," said John Armstrong, ranger for the Pitkin County Space and Trails program.

By having the conference in Glenwood Springs and Garfield County, which does not have an open space program, it's also an opportunity to offer information about ways to preserve natural open space, he said.

"We hope to express the value of open space, trails and ranch protection programs, which we believe to be important in maintaining the lifestyle and quality of life in Colorado," Armstrong said.

Many of the challenges in managing public open lands and trails locally are the same statewide and even nationally, he said.

"Dog complaints, whether it's dogs off-leash or dog waste issues, are the one issue that really ignites passion," he said. "It comes down to a matter of respecting other people and the natural environment."

Other common issues include faster bicyclists on trails failing to announce themselves before passing slower users, motorized use of trails for disabled persons, and managing popular rock-climbing areas along trails.

Rob Comey, Rio Grande Trail corridor manager for the Roaring Fork Transportation Authority, is also attending this week's conference.

He described the former railroad line that was purchased by valley governments in the late 1990s and converted into a public trail as "a 42-mile-long strip of open space."

"For us, what this conference represents is an opportunity to investigate what is being done in other parts of the state to enhance open space areas," Comey said.

Some of the information gathered from the conference could be used as RFTA works to revise the priorities in its corridor comprehensive plan. The revised plan is due out next year, he said.

jstroud@postindependent.com

Larimer County wins Lottery Starburst award for trail work

DENVER- The Colorado Lottery has awarded a 2011 Starburst Community Award to Larimer County Department of Natural Resources for using Lottery dollars to complete the Colorado Front Range Trail and Trailhead Development at River Bluffs Open Space project.

Larimer County utilized a Lottery-funded Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) grant of \$494,373 for the project.

The project has had many community benefits, including overcoming a major barrier (Colorado Highway 392) to the extension of the Colorado Front Range Trail from Greeley to Fort Collins and anchoring the Colorado Front Range Trail on the north side of State Highway 392 so the trail can be incorporated into the residential and commercial developments planned north into Timnath.

“According to the results of the 2007 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan Local Government Survey, community trails rank as the highest outdoor recreation need along Colorado’s Front Range,” said Kerri Rollins, open lands manager for the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources. “The

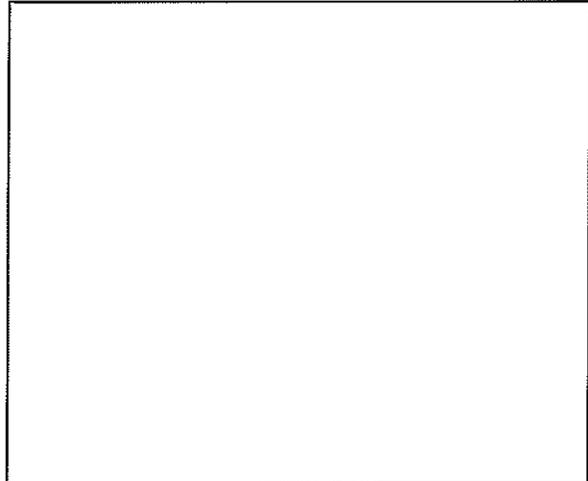
results also identified trails as the recreation need in highest demand. Regional trails have been a local priority for decades in Larimer County. The Poudre River Trail, from Greeley to Fort Collins, has been envisioned since the 1970’s. In fact, more than 15 local and regional transportation, open space, and comprehensive plans support the completion of the Poudre River Trail and this project is a major step.”

The Colorado Lottery Starburst Community Awards recognize excellence in the use of Lottery proceeds in community projects implemented to enhance a community’s environment.

In Fiscal Year 2011 alone, the Lottery distributed \$113.4 million in proceeds. Since its creation 28 years ago, the Lottery has returned more than \$2.2 billion to the state.

Lottery proceeds are distributed to three primary beneficiaries: GOCO, Conservation Trust Fund and Colorado State Parks.

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These organizations then provide grants and direct funding for parks, recreation, open space acquisition, trails, wildlife and conservation education.

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Fort Collins officials eye river park

Imagine a park stretching along the banks of the Poudre River from Shields Street to Old Town and Linden Street.

The park would include an in-stream "river trail" that would provide tubers and swimmers with easy and safe access to the water. The park would be managed in such a way as to preserve and enhance the river's natural environment.

That's the vision Fort Collins officials plan to submit in a concept paper describing a river-based recreation area in the heart of the city to Great Outdoors Colorado, or GOCO, to measure the potential for funding it through the agency's new River Corridors Initiative.

The concept of a river-focused park along the Poudre has been discussed for years, said John Stokes, director of the Fort Collins Natural Resources Department. This proposal would bring forward ideas that are already in plans for city-owned natural areas along the river as well as some offered through the UniverCity Connections project.

"You put it all together, and along that stretch of river from Shields to Linden there's a lot of potential for not only enhancing the natural riparian environment but for making it more accommodating and more fun for visitors," he said.

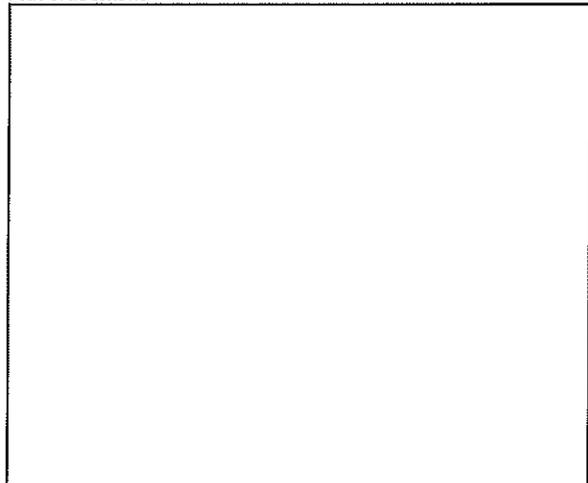
The deadline for submitting a concept paper is Oct. 14. After reviewing concepts submitted by entities around the state, GOCO is expected to invite a few to submit formal, in-depth applications for funding.

Ideas expected to be pitched in the concept paper include a water park, possibly around the existing Legacy Park, that could be a gathering place for a large number of people. The river has long been a popular destination for recreationists and appears to be getting busier each year, Stokes said.

Much of the land along the river between Shields and Linden streets is already publicly owned and managed by the city's Natural Areas Program or Parks Department. Possible improvements to the area would include building bridges and cleaning up the river's banks to improve public access and safety, Stokes said.

"I think there is tremendous opportunity down there," he said.

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A river park as envisioned might cost about \$5 million, Stokes said. GOCO might be able to cover 50 to 60 percent of the cost.

Following the application process, grants from the rivers initiative are expected to be announced in April, said Chris Leding, communications director for GOCO. About \$14 million to \$18 million in funding is expected to be available for projects.

The agency, which is funded by Colorado Lottery proceeds, is likely to receive several proposals, Leding said. There is great interest in doing river restoration projects, especially in urban areas, she said.

In recent years Grand Junction has revitalized a long-neglected section of the Colorado River and Denver has put considerable effort into cleaning up the South Platte River around downtown and making it a destination for recreationists, she said.

Fort Collins also plans to offer its support for a project proposed by the Larimer County Natural Resources Department aimed at completing the Poudre River Trail between Fort Collins and Windsor.

The county recently opened a section of the trail through its River Bluffs Natural Area north of Colorado Highway 392. County officials are still working on the route for the trail connecting to Timnath.

Fort Collins has long expected to finish its portion of the trail, which currently ends at the Environmental Learning Center, including a connection beneath Interstate

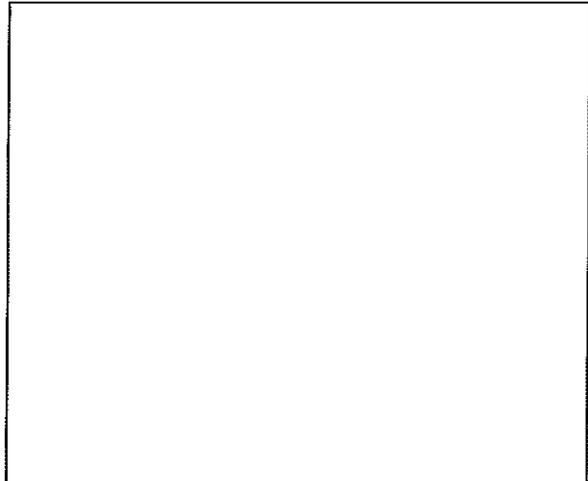
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The concepts are scheduled to be presented to City Council members this evening during a work session to get their input.

INTERESTED?

» The Fort Collins City Council is scheduled to hear a presentation on possible city involvement in the Great Outdoors River Corridors Initiative during a work session starting at 6 p.m. today at city hall, 300 LaPorte Ave. The meeting will be broadcast on cable Channel 14.

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Denny Olson takes the character of Professor Avian Guano to teach about birds. He will present a program at the Northern Colorado Birding Fair on Saturday.

Special to the Reporter-Herald

Knowledge on the fly

Naturalist to teach with humor at the Northern Colorado Birding Fair

World renowned naturalist Denny Olson is only half joking when he says, "Any time anybody calls you a birdbrain, that's a compliment."

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Professor Guano — whose first name means "knowledge of birds" and last name is another word for "droppings" — will land in Larimer County this Saturday to teach residents about birds at the Northern Colorado Birding Fair. Through his alter ego, Olson will teach while entertaining, a method he says makes learning fun and makes it stick.

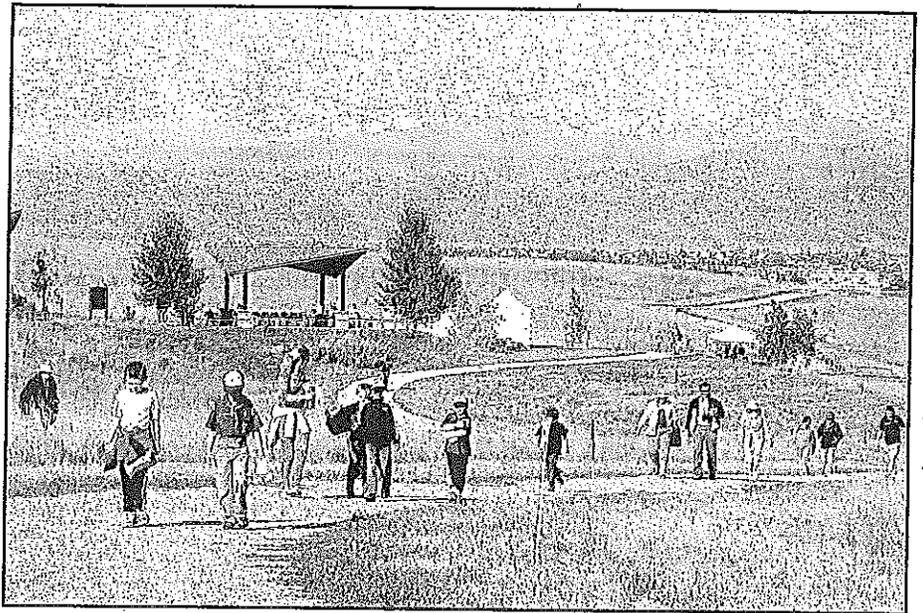
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Another of his characters is Doc Wild, a hermit who grew up in the north woods and gruffly teaches about wolves, bears, spiders, snakes and bats.

The day before Professor Guano visits Fossil Creek Open Space, Doc Wild will

SEE BIRDS, PAGE B2



Special to the Reporter-Herald

Scouts and others participate in a previous Northern Colorado Birding Fair.

Did you know?

- A Clark's nutcracker can bury 35,000 to 80,000 seeds per year and remember exactly where each seed is located.
- Every loon has a slightly different song that is as uniquely identifiable as a fingerprint.
- Eagles mate in the air as they dive and tumble downward together.

Source: Naturalist Denny Olson

If You Go

What: Northern Colorado Birding Fair

When: 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday; activities throughout the day, including guided bird walks at 7 and 7:15 a.m. and a performance by Professor Avian Guano at 2 p.m.

Where: Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space, on Carpenter Road northeast of Loveland, one mile west of the Interstate 25 and Colorado 392 interchange.

Cost: Free.

More information: A full schedule of events at www.larimer.org/naturalresources/birding_fair.htm.

Doc Wild's World

What: Doc Wild's World, a family program featuring one of the humorous alter egos of naturalist Denny Olson.

When: 7 p.m. Friday.

Where: Rocky Mountain National Park, Beaver Meadow Visitors Center.

Cost: Free

More information: www.crittermansworld.com.

BIRDS: Professor Olson has spread knowledge to more than 2 million people in 49 states

FROM PAGE B1

teach about four-legged critters at Rocky Mountain National Park, using the same mixture of hard fact and hu-

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He admits his performances are filled with "craziness" and "fun" but also

with facts that spread his love and appreciation of nature.

Pamela Dickman can be reached at 669-5050, ext. 526, or pdickman@reporter-herald.com

Trail notes

Coyote Ridge offers close-to-home rides

By David Young

DavidYoung@coloradoan.com

Coyote Ridge Natural Area is a well-worn trail located close to Fort Collins and offering moderate climbs with great views of the Front Range.

Located between Loveland and Fort Collins about a mile south of the Larimer County Landfill on the west side of County Road 19, or Taft Hill Road, Coyote Ridge has a small unpaved parking lot that is free for bicycle riders, hikers and horse riders.



David Young

There are no dogs allowed on this trail. Because of its close proximity to Fort Collins, this trailhead often fills on the weekends.

The ride takes you on a climb along a ridge before dropping into a valley and ending in a loop up the next valley to the west. The trail provides the option to continue on to Blue Sky (www.coloradoan.com/xplore) where you can connect to Devil's Backbone Open Space or Indian Summer Loop.

Keep your eyes open for wildlife on this trail. Aside from the abundance of prairie dogs, there are deer and rattle snakes that frequent the area.

When I arrived at the trailhead, elevation 5,129 feet, there were several cars in the parking lot and storm clouds off in the distance. It was clear that fall was in the air. As I started down the dirt road, I figured I had a 50/50 chance of getting rained on.

Coyote Ridge starts off with a flat dirt road approach with a couple little warm-up hills before dropping down to the base of the first big ridge. Here, there is a small cabin, restrooms and a dirt singletrack trail to the left for riders where the ride really begins.

The trail traverses the ridge to the north before cutting up the valley with a gradual, slightly rocky climb. As you reach the first switchback, the trail gets a little bit more steep and rocky. By the third switchback, the trail is virtually all rocks and gets even steeper.

Eventually, the trail levels out at the top of the first ridge near 5,700 feet. There is a bench that provides a nice overlook of the mile trail that leads here. To the west, there is a clear view of what lies ahead in the valley — a

nice smooth dirt trail. To get there, you must first descend the ridge.

The trail rides along the ridge for a bit before dropping off the west side in a series of steep stair steps. In all my years riding this trail, I have never seen anyone ride up or down this section. It is a sure dismount and walk zone in my book.

Once back on smooth trail, you switchback down the hillside into the open valley. At this point, the trail widens and flattens as it starts to ascend the next valley towards the loop. There are a few technical sections on this climb with some rocky areas.

Eventually, you encounter a fork in the trail. This is the loop and can be ridden either direction. I have ridden it both ways and personally prefer counterclockwise, but both are good.

On the far side of the loop, there is a trail leading west with a metal signpost marking the way to Blue Sky Trail.

If you have the time and energy, this is a great way to extend the ride. If you are just out for a sunset ride after work, the loop is plenty.

This afternoon, the rainclouds were dissipating so I opted to head on to the Indian Summer Loop. The trail, which tops out near 6,000 feet, descends a series of smaller stair steps and zigzags down to the valley floor. You will want to go left at the Blue Sky fork to get there.

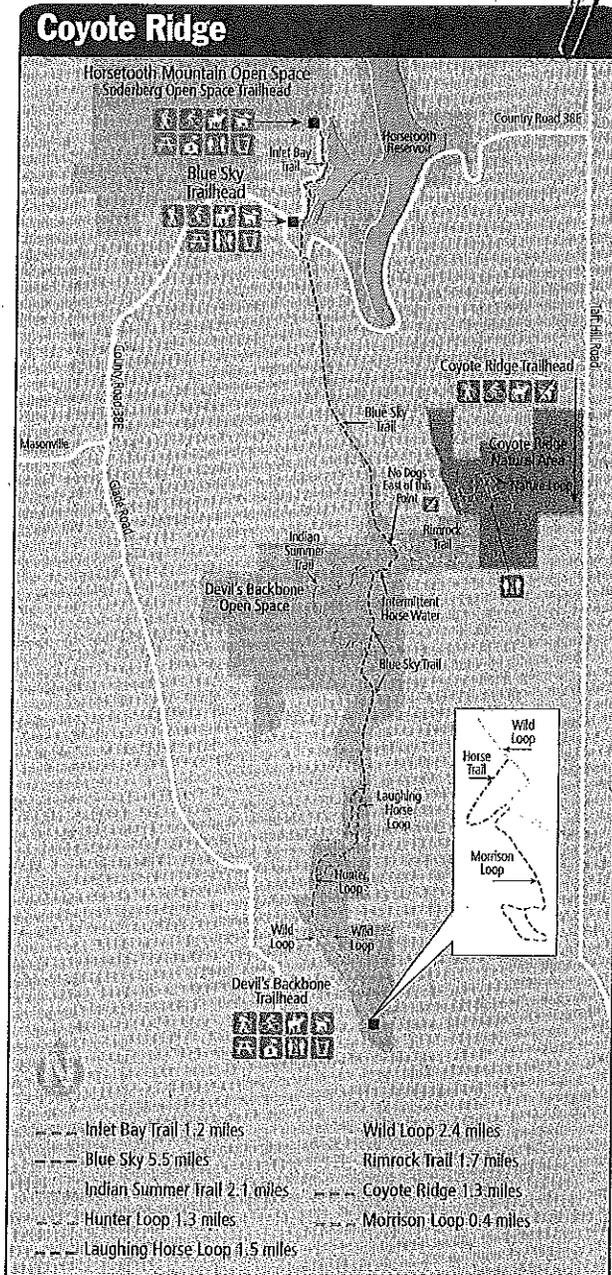
Here, you are faced with the Indian Summer Loop, the westernmost trail in this area. It can be ridden both directions. Again, I recommend counterclockwise. The packed dirt trail gradually winds up the mountain and offers spectacular views in all directions.

The sun was just starting to drop in the sky this day and bathed the entire scene in gold.

At the top, the trail curves back around and provides a fun, fast drop down to a road that connects to Devil's Backbone to the south or back to Blue Sky to the north.

I headed back out the way I came. The ride totaled 10.9 miles in just more than 2 1/2 hours. My maximum elevation was 5,808 feet and the minimum was 5,129 feet.

Coyote provides great riding options close to Fort Collins for riders looking for something a little more advanced than Blue Sky Trail.



COYOTE RIDGE NATURAL AREA

» **Date ridden:** Sept. 20, 2011
 » **Distance:** 11 miles (roundtrip)
 » **Difficulty:** Moderate
 » **Trail condition:** Good

» **Cost:** Free
 » **Trail tunes:** DJ Shadow & SBTRKT
 » **Post-ride brew:** IPAs
 » **Video:** www.coloradoan.com/xplore
 » **Information:** www.larimer.org/openlands/os_coyote_ridge.htm

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NCBR ARTICLE

Counties, towns receive lottery funds

By NCBR staff
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September 19, 2011 --

DENVER - Counties, towns and special districts throughout Colorado received \$10.245 million from state lottery proceeds for the second quarter of 2011.

The quarterly Conservation Trust Fund payments were made by the state's Department of Local Affairs to 466 counties, municipalities and Title 32 special districts that provide park and recreation services, on a per capita basis.

Funds can be spent on projects that involve the acquisition, development and maintenance of new conservation sites and for capital improvements and maintenance for recreational purposes on public sites.

Cities, towns and districts within Larimer County received a total of \$604,233, with the majority of the funds going to the county itself and the cities of Fort Collins and Loveland.

Weld County received \$85,631 of the total \$515,828 provided, while the Town of Windsor received \$31,541. This was in addition to \$6,256 Windsor was granted through Larimer County.

"In these challenging economic times, the Conservation Trust Fund supports recreational infrastructure and maintenance activities that might otherwise fall by the wayside without these dollars," said DOLA Director Reeves Brown in announcing the awards. "We're proud to administer these funds so that local governments can realize their goals."

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COUNTIES, TOWNS RECEIVE LOTTERY FUNDS

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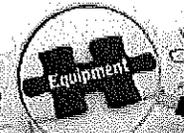
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- 9/29/2011 - Oil & Gas Industry Job Fair
- 10/12/2011 - We Broke It, We Can Fix It: Modifying Human Behavior to Achieve Sustainability
- 10/29/2011 - Legacy Land Trust Art for Conservation Show

Submit an event



Northern Colorado Birding Fair: Knowledge on the fly

Naturalist Denny Olson to teach with humor at weekend event

By Pamela Dickman Reporter-Herald Staff Writer
Loveland Reporter-Herald

Posted:09/21/2011 06:30:59 PM MDT

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More information: A full schedule of events at larimer.org/naturalresources/birding_fair.htm.

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More information: crittermansworld.com.

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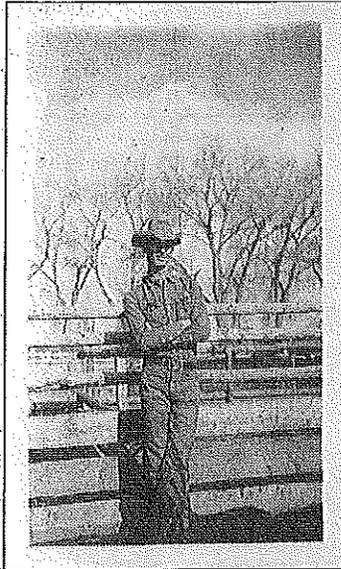
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* Obituaries

Charles Peter Miller



Charles Peter Miller was born May 24, 1921, to Eva H. Zoellner Miller and Jacob Alonzo Miller in Gunnison. Chuck passed away peacefully with his family by his side on Aug. 15, at Good Samaritan in Fort Collins. He was 90 years old.

Chuck's occupation was rancher and cowboy. He was a student leader on campus and the president of the rodeo club at Colorado A&M, where he graduated with a degree in animal husbandry in 1948. He had a successful dairy farm and cow-calf operation and an outstanding ribbon-winning herd of registered American Quarter Horses. He was an active member of the American Quarter Horse Association. He won many championships with his Angus and longhorn cattle, including grand champion at the National Western Stock Show. He was a decent saddle bronc rider and a fine calf roper who liked to try to rope just about everything off his horse, including cattle, pronghorn, coyotes and once, successfully, a bobcat. He also survived a lightning strike

Chuck was the first rancher in the Buckeye area to place a series of conservation easements on his land, beginning in 2001, preserving it from development into perpetuity. The Chuck Miller Ranch alongside the bordering Roberts Ranch and several smaller neighboring ranches and public lands together now constitute a foothills corridor of more than 50,000 acres of conserved open space on the last remaining ranchland and open land in northern Colorado. Chuck always provided for his family. He left his life's dream

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