

**Larimer County Natural Resources  
Open Lands Program**

**Final Review**  
November 9, 2011

**Heron Lakes Phase I/2010-233**  
Heron Lakes Phase I

**Project Number:** 2010-233

**Staff** Johnson

**Public Name:** Heron Lakes Phase I

**Values (shown in bold):**

<b>Scenic</b>	<b>Significant Plants/Natural</b>	Agricultural
Buffer	<b>Communities</b>	Geological/Paleontological
<b>Wildlife</b>	<b>Outdoor Recreational</b>	<b>Educational</b>
<b>Wetlands</b>	Historic/Archaeological	Other (explain in narrative)

**Property Description:** This project area is located west of the US 287 Bypass, adjacent to and east of Lone Tree Reservoir and adjacent to McNeil Reservoir. It was originally identified as a priority in the 2001 Larimer County Open Lands Master Plan.

A short time after the Master Plan was adopted, the property was annexed to the Town of Berthoud and a plat approved. The current plat of the 591-acre Heron Lakes property allows for a golf course, commercial use and almost 600 homes. With new zoning allowances adopted by Berthoud since plat approval, density could double if applied for and approved by Berthoud.

The Town of Berthoud approached Larimer County to collaborate in the potential purchase of a portion of the Heron Lakes PUD, wanting to provide a mixture of open space and development for tax generating purposes.

The Phase I concept is to acquire 43.27 acres of the property in fee which will provide public trails. A 3-5 acre public trailhead with parking is also proposed near the east portion of this acquisition. The Partners recommend purchasing approximately 43.27 acres, (40.174 acres of open space south of McNeil reservoir and 3.092 acres for a 30' wide trail alignment north of McNeil reservoir) all of which are a portion of the Heron Lakes PUD. The Town of Berthoud will be responsible for all property management, facility development, and public recreational aspects of the project.

The larger vision of this project is the creation of a hub for trail connectivity (including the Colorado Front Range Trail) and public recreation for the citizens of Larimer County, the Town of Berthoud and the City of Loveland. Of significant regional importance is that this project will contribute major segments of trail for connection from downtown Berthoud to Loveland's Growth Management Area and beyond.

The proposed 40.174 open space acreage consists of flat grasslands surrounded by cottonwoods and McNeil and Welch reservoirs. The viewshed to the west includes a spectacular view of Longs Peak. The Colorado Natural Heritage Program has rated this area as "B5" for its significant bald eagle activity and the Colorado Division of Wildlife has recognized the area for significant waterfowl habitat. A regionally significant great-blue heron rookery is located on the adjacent property shoreline of Lone Tree Reservoir near the southwest corner of the property and is home to 52 nesting pairs. Additionally, an active and successful osprey nest is located on the south end of the property within the proposed open space area. Both of these wildlife resources will be protected by requiring appropriate seasonal closures of specific trail segments. Alternate trail alignments through the Heron Lakes PUD will allow for year-round public use. The 3.092 acre 30' wide trail corridor along the north shore of McNeil has been carved out of platted lots along the shoreline of McNeil.

**\*\*This recommendation is contingent upon the resolution of an access issue. This recommendation is also contingent upon the buyer obtaining control of a severed mineral interest which exists on a portion of the property. Both of these matters must be resolved to secure GOCO, County and City of Loveland funding.**

**Quadrangle:** Berthoud and Carter Lake Reservoir  
**Short Legal:** Sections 9 and 10 T4N-R69W  
**Acreage** 43.27  
**Current Zoning:** PUD  
**Adjacent Zoning:** PUD; A-Ag  
**Water Rights:** None  
**Mineral Rights:** Severed but being secured  
**Liens** Yes - A release or subordination of mortgage will be obtained  
**Appraised Value:** \$1,478,000 (or \$34,158/ac) based on a GOCO reviewed & approved appraisal

**Ownership**

Owner/Seller Jim Birdsall/John Turner/3rd partner

**Partners**

**Description**

City of Berthoud	Own and manage (management may be contracted)
City of Loveland	Co-hold GOCO CE with Larimer County
Great Outdoors Colorado	Funding
Larimer County Open Lands Program	Co-hold GOCO CE with Loveland
Owner/Seller	Donation

**Property Rights Involved (shown in bold):**

First Right of Refusal	<b>GOCO Conservation Easement</b>	Partial Interest
Option to Purchase	Lease	
<b>Fee Simple</b>	Development Rights	
Fee Simple w/Conditions		

**Purchase Price:** \$1,400,000 (Appraised value is \$1,478,000 – **landowner donation of \$78,000 related to 3.092 ac 30’ wide trail area**)  
**Price Per Acre:** \$32,355

**Funding Sources for Phase I:**

Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO)	\$950,000
Town of Berthoud	\$300,000
Larimer County Open Lands Program	\$100,000
City of Loveland	\$50,000

**Total: \$1,400,000**

**Closing Date(s):** Phase I December 2011

**O.L.A.B.**

**Recommendation** 11/9/2011

**B.O.C.C. Approval:**

**Evaluation Criteria**

Values	
Environmental/Ecological	Medium
Scenic/Aesthetic/Sense of Place	High
Outdoor Recreation	High
Historical/Archaeological	No Rating
Agricultural	No Rating
Geological/Paleontological	No Rating
Information/Education	Medium
Context	High
Political Factors	High
Price	High