

EP Trail Gazette 8-10-12

Are changes in store for Hermit Park?

among other things, provide increased availability of diverse camping opportunities to the Estes Park area by allowing horses and dogs alike.

In the need/urgency portion of the notice it mentions how the purchase of Hermit Park was an

unforeseen opportunity for Larimer County and details many of the costs. It goes on to say that the Roundup Riders of the Rockies has committed \$10,000.00 for the development of this campground and that the funding could be re-allocated should the grant application be unsuccessful.

The notice included a sample letter to be sent to:

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Ride Easy Pard

Victor T. Anderson



equine specific renovation of six existing campsites, which would include vehicle with trailer parking spaces, corrals, fire grates, picnic tables, new tent pads, and would include a new, large parking area designed for equestrians complete with kiosk, signs and a horse manure disposal dumpster.

The notice goes on to tell about the benefits of the project and that it will,

In the notice, they state the specific project proposes to do some things that I think we, as horse people, are pretty much in favor of. Mentioned is a new vault toilet, improved and safer access to camping areas and

letter of support. Hermit Park. They ask for a needs help in re-developing stating that the department Jan. 15 to various supporters Hermit Park? Plus, Resources sent a notice on Department of Natural equestrian campsites for re six new

is there an improved parking area and restroom facilities in the future? Yahoo, I'm for it.

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trailrides

CONTINUED FROM PG. 30

did too.

I hope these 6

campgrounds become fact

and that the roads and

parking areas are improved.

I hope it all comes together

and I thank those who sent

letters, I especially thank the

Roundup Riders of the

Rockies for their generous

donation. This is what was

promised to the equestrians

who attended the meetings

when discussions were

taking.

Since I first heard about

The Great Outdoors
Colorado Board, C/O Jackie
Miller, 1600 Broadway, Suite
1650, Denver CO, 80202. I
don't have space enough to
include the sample letter. I'd
suggest you keep them

short and to the point and I
hope that you mention you
are for these improvements.
Catherine and I both
wrote a letter stating our

support and members of the
Estes Park Equestrian club

this, on the 27th of last
month, the Larimer County
Dept. of Natural Resources
has been in contact with
various horse groups
including the Estes Park
Equine Club, the Back
Country Horsemen, and
others.

Please get your letter of
support to The Great
Outdoors Colorado Board,
so we can have camping
facilities available for
ourselves and, better yet, for
visiting horsemen.] And as
the notice says, it will also
benefit dog owners, so if you

have a dog owner friend, let
them know about this also.
I'd like to say Thank You
to the Roundup Riders of
The Rockies for their
generous donation that kind
of kicked things in the lower
hip area and got it started.
Ride easy pards ...Vic

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Poll clears path for ballot item



Jeremy Papasso | Camera

Rebecca Knewtson, of Erie, pushes her 2-week-old son, Wesley, on Tuesday along the Coal Creek Trail in Erie. A proposed property tax extension to fund the purchase of open space and trail construction will be on the town's spring ballot.

Erie voter survey finds support for open space tax extension

By John Aguilar
Camera Staff Writer

ERIE — An early survey of voters indicates that a proposed property tax extension to fund the purchase of open space and trail construction, which will appear on the town's April 3 ballot, will have no trouble prevailing.

A poll conducted last month shows that 78 percent of Erie voters "definitely" or "probably" support the measure, while 21 percent are against it. One percent of those polled was undecided.

Inside
Erie eyes agreements with oil and gas operators. Page 9A

the last week of January. The poll has a margin of error of plus or minus 6.2 percent.

"Voters were overwhelmingly supportive of continuing this tax," Lori Weigel, a partner with Public Opinion Strategies, said at a Board of Trustees meeting Tuesday night.

The board voted unanimously Tuesday to place the issue on the ballot.

"Ballot measures that get this kind of support are poised to do quite well when they go before voters in an election."

The ballot question asks voters if they want to extend a property tax levy until 2024 to buy open space acreage, build trails, protect wildlife habitat and protect views in town. The tax, which amounts to \$111 a year on a house valued at \$350,000, could bring the town

Public Opinion Strategies interviewed 250 voters in Erie during

See **ERIE**, 9A

Erie tax extension polls well

Continued from 1A

\$16.8 million in revenues.

The existing open space tax levy, which was passed in 2004, has raised \$5.1 million and allowed Erie to build 6.5 miles of trails and add 115 acres of open space.

Weigel said the measure has broad support from men and women, Democrats and Republicans, and across all age groups, including from more tax-sensitive seniors.

"The question polled equally well from both sides of the county line," said Jonathan

Erie's open space and trails, by the numbers

- 115: Acres of open space added since tax passed in 2004
- 6.5: Miles of trails built since tax passed in 2004
- 487: Total acres of open space maintained in 2011
- 28: Total miles of trails maintained in 2011
- \$5.1 million: Open space tax collected since 2005
- \$16.8 million: Tax estimated to be collected from 2015 to 2025

Dauzvardis said, is language that talks about directing some of the tax revenues toward maintenance of existing open space parcels.

"We've got some infrastructure, and we have to take care of it," he said.

The board also voted to put a second issue on the ballot that will ask voters whether the town can sell three parcels of land it owns in the North-ridge subdivision to the adjacent property owners. The parcels, which run behind Fletcher Drive, are now used as a ditch and drainage chan-

nel back to the board at the next meeting, Feb. 28. The town is considering constructing a \$1.1 million portion of the park that would be built to Street League Skateboarding standards.

The design team behind the new Erie Public Safety Facility and Municipal Court presented a preliminary schematic plan for a 16,822-square-foot facility at the corner of County Line Road and Telleen Avenue. Trustees discussed where they would find the money to finance the construction of the

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'Iron rangers' to the rescue

Enjoying a day at Horsetooth Mountain Open Space can be sped up with a simple swipe of a card.

A new "Iron ranger" has been installed at the popular recreation area west of Horsetooth Reservoir that allows visitors to buy daily passes with credit or debit cards rather than with checks or cash.

The solar-powered automated pay station is a first for the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources. But it's a system that's likely to catch on and show up at other county recreation sites, said Dan Rieves, visitor services manager.

"I think we are going to see a drastic shift to the machine," he said Thursday morning.

"It's been here for 12 hours and nobody has bought a paper permit since it went in. We already have 100 percent use of the new machine."

A daily pass at the open space costs \$6. Having a digital collection device is expected to reduce the amount of staff time needed to monitor payments for passes and handle the cash, Rieves said.

The machine is "an employee who won't call in sick to work and who will always be here," he said.

Using it also will be more convenient and

efficient for park visitors, he said.

An automated pay station might be set up at a park's entry way so visitors may pay and get on with their hikes even quicker.

The device, which cost about \$8,100, uses a wireless connection to transmit information about sales transactions. It kicks out a paper pass that is placed on the dashboard of a visitor's car.

The machine can notify county officials by email or text if it is running low on paper or battery power.

Horsetooth Mountain Open Space has about 120,000 visitors a year, said Travis Rollins, visitor services manager for the county's open lands program.

County staff members are looking into the viability of placing automated stations at other sites, including the strength of wireless coverage, he said.

Automated pay stations are common at

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recreation areas around the country, Rieves said. Technological advances have allowed for them to be placed in relatively remote areas.

"It is something that has been a long time coming," he said. "It's been on the wish list for a lot of years."

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Larimer County naturalists offer facts about local trails, nature

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

Posted:

A prairie dog's vocabulary is extensive

enough to alert others not just that a person is approaching but what color that person is wearing, if that person has a weapon or if it is the same person they saw the day before.

How can I volunteer?

What: Larimer County is looking for volunteer naturalists to lead walks and presentations in the county's open spaces.

When: Training begins Feb. 29 and is every Wednesday through April 11 with some Saturdays during the duration. Training totals 60 hours.

How: Visit larimer.org/nrvolunteer/naturalists.htm to fill out screening questions and an application.

Upcoming hikes and presentations

Critter Scene Investigations.

Learn about wildlife through tracks in the snow. Program will be held when the weather allows. To be notified the night before a program, email Heather Young at hyoung@larimer.org or call 679-4489.

Nature Notes Club. Members meet at outings to immerse themselves in nature and learn about sketching, ecology, geology, wildlife, and other natural sciences to enhance the experience. Meetings will be 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., Feb. 8 and 1 p.m. to 3:30 p.m., Feb. 22. Email hyoung@larimer.org or call 679-4489 for more details and to sign up.

Wildlife Valentines. Learn about animals' wooing habits during a one-hour hike at Devil's

The pointed tufts of feathers atop an owl's head are not ears but simply for looks. Their ears, instead, are beneath the feathers inside an indentation in the bone and are keen enough to hear a mouse running under snow cover.

Windsor resident Carl Sorrentino did not know any of those interesting details about the wildlife he loved when the former public relations specialist first volunteered as a Larimer County naturalist. But he had a hankering to learn and to share those details with others.

"I'm an interpretive guy," Sorrentino said. "I tell the story behind the story."

He is one of a slate of volunteers who offer more than 200 different programs at Larimer County's parks and open lands, last year touching more than 5,000 people.

Volunteer naturalists share a love of wildlife, wildflowers, plants, geology and more. Their presentations focus on history, how animals survive the winter, ways to journal a love of outdoors and even raptors that live in Larimer County.

"We really want folks who want to inspire curiosity," said Rob Novak, education coordinator for Larimer County.

"It's all about connecting people to the resources we are protecting.

With a background in teaching and a love of the outdoors, Jay and Caroline Smith enjoy leading walks and presentations on wild flowers, geology and even the outdoors under the full moon. For 11 years, they have dedicated many hours to sharing that love and learning with residents of all ages at the free programs.

"You are working with people of all ages and hopefully helping them understand better the world around them," Caroline Smith said. "Hopefully they'll catch the bug and keep learning about it and wanting to protect it."

With several guided hikes and programs scheduled each month, Larimer County is looking for more people who want to volunteer and lead those hikes. With 60 hours of in-depth training starting Feb. 29, volunteers don't have to know a lot about the outdoors. Novak said. They just need to have a hankering to learn and enthusiasm to share.

When Sorrentino first started, he thought he would never lead talks on geology.

"That is just drier than a popcorn belch," he remembers thinking.

Now, geology is one of his favorite lessons to teach as he leads hikes on county natural areas.

He loves to point out quartz and explain how its discovery in 1880 led to the discovery of circuitry, which we use every day in computers and wristwatches.

Backbone Open Space, west of Loveland off U.S. Hwy. 34. No registration required. Wear layers and appropriate footwear and come with water and snacks for the trail.

Information on additional guided hikes are available online at larimer.org/naturalresources.

to the puzzle."

He loves to point out the red hues on the landscapes and connect that with rust.

And he loves to explain how iron is a mineral found in the landscape and in bread.

"I call my talk, 'Geology, it's not just for breakfast anymore,'" Sorrentino said.

"I want to make people appreciate what the county has set aside ... It's fun to go out and do things."

And it is fun to continue to learn and research new things to have something fresh to share on each hike, he said.

"Science is a search," he added, "We watch for new discoveries, look for more parts

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

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Eagles dance, dip above frozen waters of Fossil Creek Reservoir in Fort Collins

Larimer County residents invited to attend Eagle Watch events this month

By Madeline Novey | Staff Writer
Loveland Reporter-Herald

Posted:01/22/2012 12:02:28 PM MST

If You Go

What: Eagle Watches hosted by volunteer master naturalists with Larimer County/Natural Resources. Use loaned binoculars and scopes to spot one among dozens of bald eagles at Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space.

When: Friday, 3-5 p.m.; Sunday, 3-5 p.m.

Where: Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space is located on Carpenter Road in east Fort Collins about one mile west of Interstate-25.

Cost: These events are free and open to the public. No reservations required.

For more information: Visit fogov.com/naturalareas/.

FORT COLLINS -- Though winter winds whipped against heavy jackets and rendered mittenless fingers almost immobile in the cold, the world appeared serene through the lens of a scope pointed at a lone bird walking across the frozen waters of Fossil Creek Reservoir Sunday morning.

The winged animal, a grown bald eagle, stepped gingerly around chunks of gray and blue ice dotting the surface of the reservoir in east Fort Collins. A few moments later, it spread its brown wings and braced itself against strong gusts that bent branches of surrounding trees.

"There you go. You see him? He's flying right over the ice," volunteer naturalist and photographer Jack Hicks said. He bowed to peer through a powerful telephoto lens attached to the camera he uses to capture moments in nature similar to this.

"He's dancing for us," Fort Collins resident and outdoor enthusiast Stacy Williamson said, smiling. She stepped away from a green scope mounted on a tripod and gave her husband, Jeff, a chance to track the bird as it flew, dark against the muted ice.

The Williamsons were two of a dozen or so people who turned out for a morning Eagle Watch Hicks hosted at Fossil Creek Reservoir Open Space, located off Carpenter Road about a mile west of Interstate 25. And the bald eagle they spotted was one among upward of 35 naturalists and rangers have counted at the open space this winter.

Attendees used loaned binoculars and scopes to scan for the birds on a dock on the reservoir's southern shore. Larimer County residents have several more opportunities to do the same this month at two additional Eagle Watch events.

The program is free and requires no reservation to attend. Residents are welcome to stop by for a few minutes or stay for the duration of a scheduled watch.

Upcoming Eagle Watch programs are booked for Friday from 3-5 p.m. and Sunday from 3-5 p.m. Other events, including a stargazing night on Saturday from 7 to 10 p.m., are posted at fogov.com/naturalareas/.

Hicks often finds himself gazing at the natural beauty and life of the open space through a camera. Evening immediately before sunset is the optimal time to shoot photos, he said, when low light penetrates the tree branches upon which eagles and other birds will perch.

"It's amazing," he said of what he and other photographers call the "golden light."

For those people planning to bird-watch, Hicks recommends using a pair of binoculars or viewing scope. It's also helpful to bring along a powerful telephoto camera lens, as the birds flock to trees hundreds of yards across the reservoir from the viewing dock and are difficult to see without zooming capabilities.

Coats, hats, gloves and boots are also must-haves, he said.

But most importantly, people shouldn't expect to see every animal in the book every time.

"Be patient. Manage your expectations," Hicks said.

Madeline Novey can be reached at 669-5050, ext. 516, or mnovey@reporter-herald.com.

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NoCo50 challenge: Spectacular views a fitting reward for first challenge

There's a Fort Collins road named after it. A liquor store, a bed and breakfast and a reservoir all bear its name. It's easily NoCo's most recognizable landmark, a NoCo50 Challenge #1, is Horsetooth Mountain.

At 7,259 feet in elevation, the mountain derives its name from the distinctive appearance of the large rock formation at its summit. We know what it looks like but were shocked to discover the 1,400 feet elevation gain this rock offers as a hike!

We invited fellow 50'ers (we've already given those accepting our NoCo50 challenges a collective nickname) to join us at 10 a.m. on MLK Day (Monday). Our spirits sank when we saw Saturday and Sunday hikers enjoy temperatures in the high 50s while we watched Monday's forecast sink to highs in the 30s with snow.

It was overcast and cold when we drove past Horsetooth Reservoir at 9:45. I (Scott) knew that with the exception of the hardy members of the Coloradoan staff vowing to make the trek with us we would be alone on the trail. Imagine our surprise when we were joined by at least 30 hikers, layered up and ready to tackle NoCo50 Challenge

No. 1.

The 5-mile roundtrip trail showed me just how out of shape I am. With the exception of the final few hundred yards, the trail is not that technical. A few icy spots presented some challenges (and a pretty good bruise on my right hip) and the summit introduced me to the term "bouldering", previously thought to be an activity practiced by CU students. Other than a sturdy pair of shoes, no special gear is required. It's just that the steep parts got to me. I needed several breaks to catch my wind. These air-sucking stops provided great opportunities to chat with fellow hikers.

I was thankful for David, an experienced hiker who impressed me with his ability to converse and climb at the same time. I couldn't do that! Vern had hiking poles, little spikes to put on his shoes so he wouldn't bite it on the ice and pleasing trail banter.

Gary Buffington, director of Larimer County

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Natural Resources which oversees management of Horsetooth Park, delightfully made the trek with us. He provided insight on the mountain, generous handfults of his wife's homemade trail mix and an accurate answer to the question, "how much farther?"

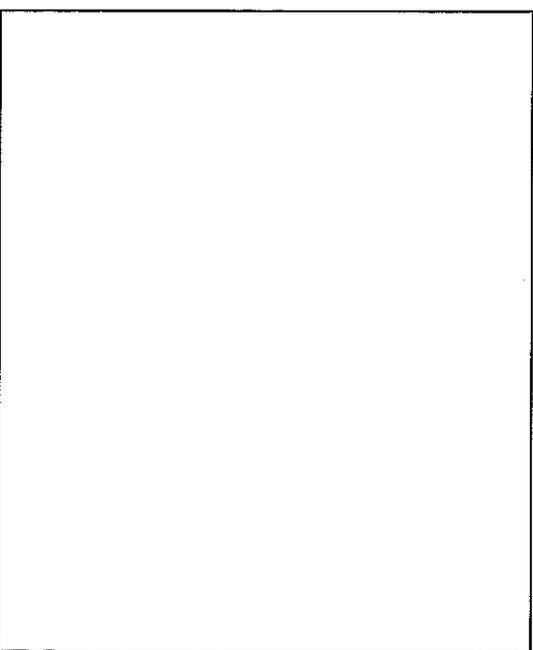
It was good to see a few fellow taters off the couch and inspired by NoCo50. Eli Hoyt of LaSalle decided to celebrate her 45th birthday by accepting our challenge. She made the journey with her daughter and found several new friends along the way. She says she looks forward to the next 49 adventures. We look forward to seeing her.

My broadcast partner, Sadie, had the line of the day, "I've never walked this far without knowing there was a Burger King at the other end." Sadie completed the journey in 40 minutes less time than I did. She's young and she wanted to get out of the cold. I made the roundtrip in 3 hours, 45 minutes.

The view from the top was spectacular. Yes, it made the trip worth it. Do I feel a sense of accomplishment? Yes. Do I feel more like a local? Yes. Did I appreciate a jetted tub and my bed that night? Darn right.

NoCo50 Challenge No. 1 was a fitting kickoff to what is going to be an adventurous year. Are we ready? I think so, but please let us know if you see a sale on ibuprofen. We need to stock up.

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