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GOCO grant will carry Poudre Trail over I-25

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Brook rides his bike near where the Poudre River Trail ends at the Colorado State University Environmental Learning Center on Wednesday, before heading back in the direction from which he came. A \$5 million Great Outdoors Colorado grant was awarded to extend the Poudre River Trail, bringing a its connection of Fort Collins and Greeley to within 5 miles of completion. / Dawn Madura/The Coloradoan

grant from Great Outdoors Colorado will enable cyclists in Fort Collins to soar over Interstate 25
Written by Patrick Malone

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The Poudre River flows as nearby traffic

The \$5 million grant announced Tuesday advances construction of the Poudre Trail and moves it closer to linking Fort Collins with Greeley along a 45-mile conduit set against the picturesque backdrop of protected open space along the Cache la Poudre River.

"The recreational value of this trail, being able to connect all these communities, is very significant," said Rob Novak, spokesman for the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources.

Larimer County and partner communities Fort Collins, Greeley, Timnath and Windsor will share in the windfall that inches the Poudre Trail to within 5

speeds down Interstate 25 on Wednesday at the Arapaho Bend Natural Area in Fort Collins. A \$5 million Great Outdoors Colorado grant was awarded to extend the Poudre River Trail, bringing the trail's sought-after connection of Fort Collins and Greeley to within 5 miles of completion. / Dawn Madura/The Coloradoan

miles of completion. The project has been 30 years in the making.

"It's been in the works for so long, and the citizens have such an interest in getting it completed," Novak said. "This grant will bring us closer to getting the project done than we've ever been before."



Bikers ride the Poudre River Trail near the Colorado State University Environmental Learning Center in Fort Collins. A \$5 million Great Outdoors Colorado grant was awarded to extend the Poudre River Trail, bringing a connection between Fort Collins and Greeley to within 5 miles of completion. / Dawn Madura/The Coloradoan

Currently the trail spans about 17 miles in Larimer County from Bellvue northwest of Fort Collins to Arapaho Bend Natural Area on the eastern end of Fort Collins. In Weld County, it stretches 20 miles from Island Grove Park in Greeley to River Bluffs Open Space.

The grant and contributions from partner communities will purchase 991 acres of river corridor for preservation, 1.5 miles of trail easements, construction of 2.5 miles of new concrete trail, a new trailhead in Timnath and an overpass over I-25 linking the trail from Arapaho Bend Natural Area to Timnath.

"Getting beyond I-25 is the most significant physical barrier to completing the Poudre River Trail," said Craig Foreman, director of parks planning and development at the city of Fort Collins.

The total cost of the project is \$8 million. Greeley will provide \$1.2 million; Fort Collins is contributing \$821,283; Larimer County will add \$254,375; Timnath is kicking in \$623,417; and Windsor's share is \$5,000.

The grant-funded work is expected to begin soon with a targeted completion date of 2015. When that phase is finished, only the 5-mile stretch between River Bluffs Open Space and the new Timnath trailhead will remain unconnected on the Poudre Trail circuit.

Novak said the communities that united to develop the trail this far will continue to pursue grants in hopes of completing the last 5 miles.

A subcommittee of Great Outdoors Colorado rated the Poudre Trail grant proposal highest among 17 competing for the lottery-funded outdoor and open space funds.

Eight projects emphasizing river corridors were awarded grants totaling \$29.2 million. The Poudre Trail project's \$5 million grant award was the largest.

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TODAY'S NEWS

\$5M to fund Poudre River Trail construction

By Steve Lynn June 20, 2012

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Several local governments will receive more than \$5 million in lottery funds to help pay for the Poudre River trail project, it was announced Tuesday.

The cities of Fort Collins and Greeley as well as the towns of Timnath and Windsor will receive nearly \$5.1 million for trail construction and land acquisitions, Larimer County said in a statement.

The project is one of eight developed by Great Outdoors Colorado to foster outdoor recreation and preserve land along the state's rivers. The state organization is governed by a 17-member board of directors appointed by the governor.

Land preservation and trail construction efforts along the Poudre River have persisted for more than a decade, but significant gaps remain.

"The public has been anxiously waiting to see the Poudre River Trail finished for nearly three decades," said Gary Buffington, director of Larimer County Natural Resources. "This partnership links Larimer and Weld counties together in so many wonderful ways."

The money will fund the acquisition of 23 acres of open space in Larimer County and 987 acres in Weld County along the river.

The project will also result in trail construction that increases connectivity to existing trail segments, and includes a two-mile extension of the Poudre River Trail from the Arapahoe Bend Natural Area to the Timnath Firehouse. The grant will also fund an Interstate 25 overpass for the trail near the Harmony Road exit.

After the project is completed, less than five miles of construction will remain to finish a 45-mile paved trail for recreation and commuting along the river from Bellvue to Island Grove Park in Greeley.

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Poudre River corridor project wins \$5 million grant

By Reporter-Herald and Denver Post Staff Loveland Reporter-Herald

Posted:

ReporterHerald.com

The dream of a 45-mile-long recreational corridor along the Cache la Poudre River took a big step closer to reality Tuesday with the announcement of a \$5 million grant from Great Outdoors Colorado.

The agency awarded nearly \$30 million in Colorado lottery grants to eight projects that will protect green space along rivers and creeks.

Five of the projects are in Front Range urban areas. Three are in urbanizing mountain areas. All rely on the lure of water for play, walking, kayaking, biking and fishing.

Larimer County and its partner cities of Fort Collins, Greeley, Windsor and Timnath will receive \$5,098,150 for the Poudre River Corridor and Regional Trail Initiative, according to a press release from Kerri Rollins, Open Lands Program manager for Larimer County.

The grant will move the partners closer to completing their decades-long goal of "a regional swath of open spaces and connected trails along the river corridor," the release said.

The money will fund the purchase of almost 1,000 acres of land along the Poudre and the construction of a trail overpass over Interstate 25 near Harmony Road in Timnath.

With the completion of the lottery-funded work, less than five miles of trail construction will remain in the 45-mile corridor from Bellvue northwest of Fort Collins to Island Grove Regional Park in Greeley, according to the release.

GOCO officials say they hear repeatedly from communities statewide that residents want better recreational opportunities close to home, value rivers and seek more trails.

The eight river and creek projects picked by the GOCO board for grants are among 42 projects around the state named to receive a total of \$37.3 million from state lottery proceeds.

GOCO officials, through a river corridors initiative, are trying to create 3,000 acres of new public-access open space along creeks and rivers.

Since 1994, about 3,500 projects in all 64 counties have received lottery open space grants.

The following five Front Range projects received grants:

- Poudre River Trail Corridor Improvement Project - \$5 million.
- Denver South Platte River Vision Implementation Project - \$4.6 million.
- Plains to Peaks Trail in Clear Creek Canyon - \$4.6 million
- Triple Creek Greenway Corridor Project in Aurora - \$3.4 million
- Fountain Creek Watershed Trails and Recreation Projects between Colorado Springs and Pueblo - \$2.5 million

In addition, three GOCO grants were awarded to develop recreation-oriented corridors along the Colorado

and Yampa rivers.

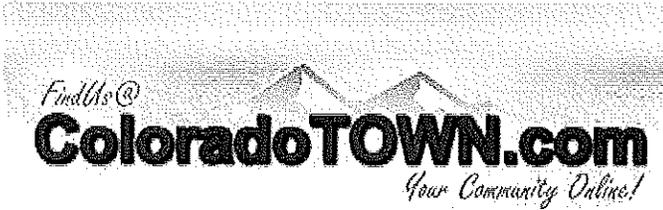
- Colorado River Conservation and Recreation Project in Eagle County - \$3.9 million
- Colorado Riverfront Trail Project in Fruita - \$2.9 million
- Yampa River Legacy Project in Steamboat Springs - \$2.4 million

Denver Water and other utilities play a key role in determining how much water remains in rivers because they use them as delivery systems for municipal and industrial water supplies.

"Water quality in the South Platte is a very serious problem, due to pollution runoff from lawns and industry. The algae is starting to bloom, in some places waving with long strands like kelp in the ocean. As the river flow drops, the sun is starting to bake the algae into a stinking mess," said Gary Wockner, state program director for the Clean Water Action advocacy group.

"This drought is painting a bullseye on Colorado's rivers," he said. "The state's water laws are designed to drain every river first and foremost so that other needs get met while our rivers get devastated."

"Our state, and folks here in Denver, have been doing a good job buying land and building parks and bike trails along rivers. But the next big step is to ensure healthy water quantity and quality in those rivers so that Denver and other Colorado cities still have rivers running through that people can enjoy."



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Poudre River Corridor awarded \$5 million +

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Poudre River Corridor awarded \$5 million +

POUDRE RIVER CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS AWARDED MORE THAN \$5 MILLION IN GREAT OUTDOORS COLORADO/LOTTERY FUNDS

The Cache la Poudre River Corridor is poised to become an integrated open space, trail and recreation resource thanks to a powerful partnership and more than \$5 million in funding from Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO). The GOCO Board has awarded Larimer County and its partners, the Cities of Greeley and Fort Collins, and the Towns of Timnath and Windsor, a \$5,098,150 GOCO/Lottery grant for projects along the Poudre River, including trail construction and land acquisitions that will dramatically increase opportunities for public recreation along the river. "It's really something special to see all of the hard work of so many individuals and organizations working on the Poudre River Corridor honored with the support from the Lottery and Great Outdoors Colorado," said Kerri Rollins, Open Lands Program Manager for Larimer County Natural Resources.

One of eight projects funded via a special River Corridors Initiative developed by GOCO to foster outdoor recreation and land preservation along Colorado's rivers, the Poudre River Corridor and Regional Trail Initiative builds upon existing partnerships, years of prior efforts, and past GOCO grants to move closer to achieving a regional swath of open spaces and connected trails along the river corridor. "The partners in Northern Colorado put together a well-balanced project that fit the special River Corridors Initiative perfectly," said Chris Leding of GOCO.

The Poudre River exits Poudre Canyon northwest of Fort Collins and flows southeast to its confluence with the South Platte River east of Greeley. It has been the center of land preservation and trail construction efforts for more than a decade, but significant gaps remain. The latest GOCO grant will help achieve strategic land acquisitions and trail construction, giving the public new opportunities to reach and recreate along the Poudre, including safer, convenient access for additional neighborhoods, schools and recreation centers.

"The public has been anxiously waiting to see the Poudre River Trail finished for nearly three decades," said Gary Buffington, Director of Larimer County Natural Resources. "This partnership links Larimer and Weld Counties together in so many wonderful ways."

Components of the Poudre River Trail Corridor Improvement Project include the acquisition of 23 acres of open space in Larimer County and 967 acres in Weld County. All of the land acquisitions are located along the Poudre and will provide direct public access to the river and the Poudre River Trail. Additionally, each property is easily accessible to the public with expansive views and important wildlife habitat. "The increased public access and nearly 1,000 acres of new open space along the Poudre River will be a fantastic community amenity and contribute to the overall quality of life in the area," said Rebecca Safarik, Assistant City Manager for the City of Greeley.

The project will also result in trail construction that increases connectivity to existing trail segments, and includes a two-mile extension of the Poudre River Trail from the Arapahoe Bend Natural Area to the Timnath Firehouse. The grant will also fund an I-25 overpass for the trail near the Harmony Road exit. "Getting beyond I-25 is the most significant physical barrier to completing the Poudre River Trail," said Craig Foreman, Director of Parks Planning and Development at the City of Fort Collins. "Being able to bridge that barrier in away that will provide year-round trail access to the public brings the Poudre River Trail closer to completion than ever before." Following the completion of the Poudre River Corridor and Regional Trail Initiative less than five miles of trail construction will remain to complete the 45-mile vision of a paved trail for recreation and commuting along the Poudre River, stretching from Bellvue north of Fort Collins to Island Grove Park in Greeley.

GOCO offered the River Corridor Initiative at the urging of citizens, local governments and many land trusts. "Great Outdoors Colorado spends a lot of time out in communities across Colorado and we heard the same themes repeatedly over the last couple of years," said GOCO Board Member Phil James of Fort Collins. "Coloradans stressed the importance of increased recreational opportunities close to home and the potential of rivers and trails, trails, trails." The partners and GOCO are planning a special event to celebrate this momentous achievement that involves the public in a fun and exciting way. Stay tuned for information about this community celebration, planned for sometime in July.

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



- ROBERT R. DENTON / For The Tribune

Greeley and other cities receive \$5 million grant for Poudre River trail

JUNE, 20 2012

BY [ANALISA ROMANO AROMANO@GREELEYTRIBUNE.COM](mailto:ANALISA.ROMANO@GREELEYTRIBUNE.COM)

Finally, Zach Brockman may no longer have to turn around at Windsor when he rides his bike along the Poudre River trail.

With a \$5 million grant to help complete the trail in three years, Brockman could ride all the way to Fort Collins, and maybe make stops at a few breweries on the way.

Officials with the city of Greeley, Larimer County, the city of Fort Collins, the town of Timnath and the town of Windsor were pleased Wednesday to announce that their joint efforts earned the millions of dollars from Colorado's lottery fund, which will go toward expanding and conserving the trail.

The money will fund construction of 2.5 miles of new trail, two more trail heads, an overpass crossing Interstate 25, and acquisition of 991 acres of river corridor and 1.5 miles of trail easements. After that, only 5 miles of construction will remain in order to connect the Poudre trail from Island Grove Regional Park in north Greeley all the way to Bellvue north of Fort Collins, according to a Great Outdoors Colorado news release.

"It's great for the community, because it's going to eventually really help in connecting Greeley to Fort Collins all the way," said Greeley City Council member Mike Finn, who sits on the Poudre River Trail Board.

He said the board was "ecstatic" to hear the news.

"The trail is certainly a real diamond for the northern Colorado area," Finn said.

Once the 5-mile gap between River Bluffs Open Space and Arapaho Bend Natural Area is closed, Finn said his vision for the trail will be complete with one cohesive corridor.

Eventually, Finn said, it may even bring people from Fort Collins to Greeley, as well.

One of eight river projects funded by Great Outdoors Colorado, the Poudre River Corridor and Regional Trail Initiative will include 967 additional acres of open space in Weld County and 23 acres in Larimer County, according to the release.

Kelly Tussey, 33, said from Rover Run Dog Park on Wednesday that a trail extension is great news.

"The more trails the better," Tussey said. "The more exercise people can get, the healthier they are, the longer they live."

Tussey said he tries to ride the trail three to four times per week. Like Brockman, Tussey said he and a buddy have ridden to Windsor before, but Tussey takes a side road to continue on to Fort Collins.

Still, biking along the river is always the best option, he said.

“It’s relaxing to hear the river while you’re riding.”

Tribune reporter Vanessa Harmoush contributed to this story.

<http://www.greeleytribune.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20120620/NEWS/706209995/1051&ParentProfile=1001&template=printart>

Several improvements touted at Larimer County properties

By Reporter-Herald Staff Loveland Reporter-Herald

Posted:

ReporterHerald.com

Larimer County officials are touting improvements they have made to several properties in the county's public lands system.

They include:

A campground remodel at Hermit Park Open Space, Hermit's Hollow Campground. The renovation last fall and spring included reworking of all campsites and expanding the number of campsites from 28 to 42. New, walk-in sites offer views of Longs Peak, privacy and rock outcroppings. Reworked roads improved the drainage and steep grades that were a limitation prior to construction. The installation of four, new vault toilets allowed the portable toilets to be eliminated.

Reservable Group Pavilions:

Six group pavilions were added to the reservation system, and can be reserved as far as two years in advance. Located at Horsetooth Reservoir's South Bay and Sunrise, Lions' Open Space in LaPorte, Hermit Park Open Space, Carter Lake South Shore and Flatiron Reservoir, they are available for weddings, family reunions, company picnics or other group events.

Pavilions hold 25-250 people depending on the site, and offer a covered pavilion, BBQ grills and picnic tables. Many have electricity and are close to reservoirs, hiking trails and other amenities. Campsites and pavilions may be reserved at www.larimercamping.com or by calling 800-397-7795.

Region banks on GOCO to connect pieces of Poudre Trail

Jodie and Brad Hamilton opened up the hatchback and out sprang their two golden retrievers from fancy carriers at the River Bluffs Open Space parking lot on Tuesday.

The couple had driven from their southeast Fort Collins home to where the Poudre River Trail dead-ends between Windsor and Timnath for a hike with their beloved pets. They wished they'd been able to walk to the Larimer County Open Space just east of Ptarmigan Golf Course.

"I looked for a way to get from our home to here but just couldn't find any good way to do it," Jodie said. "We love this trail. It would be a lot more convenient to walk our dogs on the trail if we could do it from our home."

Several years from now, they likely will. The Poudre River Trail, which has been in active planning stages for nearly 30 years, will get a lot closer to completion of its 45-mile stretch from Bellvue to Greeley if a \$5.1 million Great Outdoors Colorado lottery money grant becomes reality June 19.

That's when the governor will announce the final dollar amounts awarded the eight winning projects of GOCO's latest round of

open space grant applications. The Poudre River Corridor and Regional Trail project finished tops among more than 60 initial project proposals recommended for funding from a committee. That gives project organizers, which include Larimer County and the cities of Fort Collins and Greeley and towns of Windsor and Timnath, hope that the funding comes through.

"If this works out and we get the full amount of the grant, this will get us very close to finishing the trail," said Kerri Rollins, Larimer County Department of Natural Resources open lands manager. "We've planned this project to death. Now it's getting time to fully implement the plan."

Funding fun

Project organizers will use the bulk of the funds to purchase 991 acres of river corridor and 1½ miles of trail easements, mostly on the west side of Greeley and in

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the Timnath area. Funding also will be used to build an Interstate 25 overpass and link the city of Fort Collins' Arapaho Bend Natural Area to the future trail east of the interstate, build two new trailheads at Arapaho Bend and near Timnath and build about 2½ miles of 10-foot wide concrete trail.

Rollins said that leaves 2 miles of the spine of the trail left to secure. Once the grant is completed, there will remain a little more than 5 miles of the 45-mile trail left to construct, key pieces which reside in the Fort Collins area. Rollins hopes those gaps may also close in a hurry, with users being able to bike, run, walk or inline skate the entire length possibly by 2015.

"That would be great," Brad Hamilton said. "We own a business in Greeley. It would be nice to get on my bike and ride from my house to the business. I probably wouldn't do it every day, but I would do it sometimes."

Craig Foreman, the city of Fort Collins parks planning and development manager, said he gets calls nearly every month from people asking when the project will be finished.

"This project is a big deal for many people; it's a signature piece for the city of Fort Collins," Foreman said. "Over the years, you look at projects and this was always out there, but we did bits and pieces of it as we could but couldn't quite finish it. The last couple of years it has been ripe and ready to happen thanks to the cooperation

of all involved and GOCO."

Obstacles overcome

Two major obstacles that delayed the development of the Poudre River Trail — willing landowners ready to sell and the I-25 overpass — have recently been solved .

Rollins said project organizers can only work with willing owners. She said through many talks, owners were found to secure large sections of land. However, she said negotiations remain on price for the parcels. Most of the land is in larger sections on the west side of Greeley. Smaller but strategic pieces of land are being negotiated near Timnath.

"We were fortunate on the timing," said Rollins, who worked to secure an \$11.6 million GOCO grant to help pay for the Mountain to Plains project that included purchasing Red Mountain Open Space in northern Larimer County. "We had letters of interest from key landowners who were

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willing and ready to sell. The timing could not have worked out any better.”

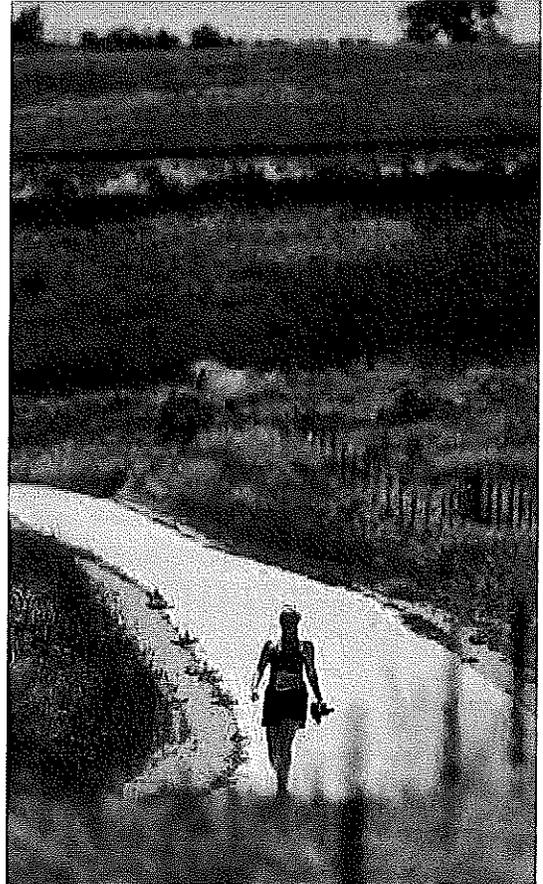
The overpass has been a major stumbling block. Foreman said initially the project looked at going under I-25 where the Poudre River crosses. However, he said there is only 4 feet of head clearance and the area is prone to flooding. When constructed, the overpass will be the first such structure over I-25.

Rebecca Safarik, community development director for the city of Greeley, has been part of the Poudre River Trail project from its inception. She said the overpass is a key piece in bringing closure to the project.

“Crossing the barrier of the highway is symbolic because it physically and psychologically tends to bring communities together,” she said. “It’s been a tremendous team effort with strong partnerships that hung in there and were able to keep the vision. And when it’s done, there will be some very happy campers.”

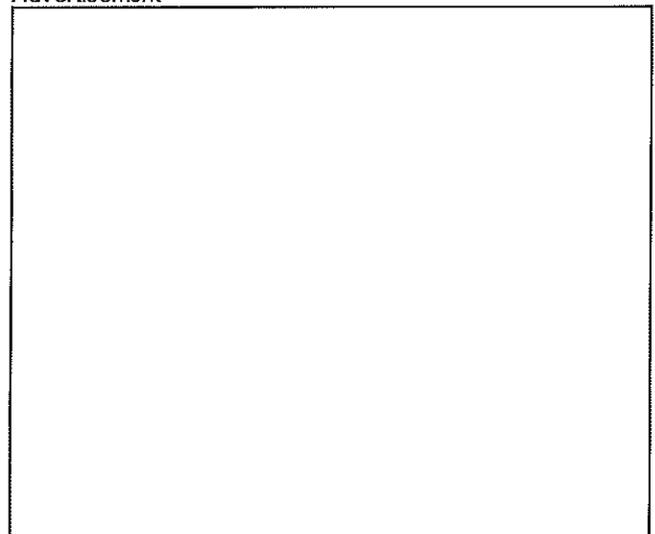
Like the Hamiltons.

“We didn’t know they were getting that close,” Brad said. “We can’t wait for that day. We might not hike all the way from our house to Greeley, but I bet we hike to here.”



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 Zaleigh Parker of Fort Collins walks Monday on the Poudre River Trail at the River Bluffs Open Space. A sought-after 2½-mile trail extension will bring the long-planned vision of connecting the 45-mile trail from Fort Collins to Greeley closer to reality. / Sam Noblett/The Coloradoan

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Where the grant money will go

Here is how project organizers will spend the expected \$5.1 million GOCO grant:

- 991 acres of river corridor
- 1.5 miles of trail easements
- Trail overpass over Interstate 25
- Two new trailheads at Arapaho Bend Natural Area southeast Fort Collins and near Timnath
- 2.5 miles of 10-foot wide concrete trail

Celebration

There will be a ceremony at 10 a.m. June 20 with a presentation of the check to project organizers at River Bluffs Open Space, located 0.2 miles east of the intersection of Larimer County roads 3 and 32E, just northeast of Ptarmigan Golf Course.

Who's in

- **Greeley:** \$1,272,600 for open space acquisition
- **Fort Collins:** \$821,283 for construction
- **Timnath:** \$623,417 for trail easements, open space acquisition and construction
- **Larimer County:** \$254,375 for trail easements, open space acquisition and construction
- **Windsor:** \$5,000 for trail easement acquisition
- **GOCO grant:** \$5,098,150
- **Total:** \$8,074,825

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Wetland Wildflowers: Take a classic nature walk and stop and smell all the wild roses along the way.

Hike to Kruger Rock: Join LCNR staff for a guided hike along the Kruger Rock Trail.

Breakfast will be provided by Catering for all Occasions and served at 8:00 a.m. Reservations are required! \$15 for adults, \$5 for kids K-12 and preschoolers are free! The cost of breakfast is payable by cash in the serving line. Bring a hat, sunscreen and water for after breakfast.

Note that this breakfast is on a Friday, June 15th. Please RSVP no later than 5 p.m. Monday, June 11 by calling EVLT at 970-577-6837 (you can leave a message) OR by emailing us at evlt@evlandtrust.org. Include your email address to receive your complimentary entrance pass. Also provide the first and last name for each reservation (for name badges). We will confirm your reservation.

Please join us for this morning of fun in Hermit Park, one of the special treasures of the Estes Valley.

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Land Trust Presents First Summer Breakfast: "Preserve Our Lands... Benefit Our Recreation"

Posted By [Estes Park News](#) On May 30, 2012 @ 6:40 pm In [Estes Valley Spotlight](#) | [No Comments](#)



[1]Event includes activities for the entire family

Friday, June 15th is the kick-off of Estes Valley Land Trust's summer breakfast series, which includes unique activities for all ages. So bring the kids! Hermit Park Open Space, located on Highway 36 just east of Estes Park, is the site of our first event, "Preserve Our Lands... Benefit our Recreation"...and there are plenty of recreational opportunities at Hermit Park, one of several EVLT conservation easements with public access. Hermit Park features 1,362 acres of fabulous beauty, wildlife, hiking trails, camping, cabin rentals, equestrian trails and... peace.

Our speaker will be Kerri Rollins, Open Lands Program Manager for Larimer County where she is responsible for land acquisition, fund development and education. Kerri leads the Colorado Open Space Alliance and is president of the board of the Colorado Coalition of Land Trusts. She will discuss a regional study and subsequent master plan on land conservation priorities in Larimer County. Kerri will also talk about progress and development plans in Hermit Park, recreational opportunities throughout the county's open spaces, upcoming events, and how you can get involved.

Recreational adventure begins immediately after the presentation with an exciting array of tours and activities for adults and children coordinated by Rob Novak, community relations specialist for Larimer County Natural Resources. Bring the kids and join in on one of the activities listed below.

Hermit Park Home Improvements: A driving tour of some of the grant-funded improvements that have been made to Hermit Park Open Space.

Wildlife of Hermit Park Open Space: Presentation on the myriad of wildlife that calls Hermit Park home.

Tiny Trekkers – Hermit Park Style: This is a guided toddler program, perfect for kids ages 2-5. We ask that at least one parent participate with their child.

Films in the park and ethnic fests are just a few of Colorado's affordable events

By Claire Walter and Laura Daily Special to The Denver Post The Denver Post

Posted:

DenverPost.com

Summer in Colorado can be a season of sweet savings — especially for those who think ahead.

Free and affordable activities abound, in the cities and in the high country. But the clock is ticking. With about a month left until the official summer solstice (June 20), the time is now to plan to spend the season enjoying music, art, sports and this state's splendid outdoors — without breaking the bank.

Here are several budget-minded tips to help round out your warm-weather calendar.

Nature calls

The best freebie during National Get Outdoors Day (nationalgetoutdoorsday.org), June 9, is waived entrance fees at all 397 national parks including Rocky Mountain National Park.

Other free events on that same day include the family-friendly 5th Annual Fishing Frenzy Fishing Derby at Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Center (5656 Havana St., Commerce City; details at c3gov.com/recreation or fws.gov/rockymountainarsenal); the First Annual Backcountry Community Campout in Highlands Ranch, (hrcaonline.org); and an open house at Dinosaur Ridge (16831 W. Alameda Parkway, Morrison, dinoridge.org) with rockhounding, wildlife watching, guided tours of Dinosaur Ridge Trail, gold panning, metal detecting, fossil sifting, track painting and more.

Bargain hunters can have the joy of camping and doorstep outdoor recreation with the comfort of sleeping indoors in rustic but comfortable cabins. Save even more by preparing your own meals.

In addition to campgrounds that accommodate tents and RVs, nine of Colorado's state parks have, among them, 58 cabins and yurts that accommodate families or groups of four or more. Rental fees from \$70 per night. The closest is Golden Gate Canyon State Park; the most distant is Mancos in southwest Colorado. [parks.state.co.us/Reservations/Cabin Information](http://parks.state.co.us/Reservations/Cabin%20Information)

Also, Larimer County's Hermit Park near Estes Park has 15 rustic camper-cabins renting for \$80-\$100 per night. A bit farther afield, Larimer County rents two cabins at Horsetooth Reservoir and Flatiron Reservoir. Details at larimer.org or call 800-397-7795.

4 great Fort Collins hikes

I often get asked, especially this time of year, the best trails on which to take visitors to Fort Collins. With so many trails easily accessible, coming up with a few isn't the problem. The problem is matching a trail with the experience desired. I have four go-to trails within a short drive from Fort Collins that cover a range of experiences. None is a secret to locals, but the list offers the best of all worlds to visitors.

Foothills

Foothills Trail

Distance: 6.8 miles one way

Difficulty: Easy to moderate

Elevation range: 5,136 to 5,698 feet

Trailhead: You can start at Michaud Lane in northwest Fort Collins, Maxwell Natural Area behind Hughes Stadium off Larimer County Road 42C or along Larimer County Road 23 on the east side of Horsetooth Reservoir.

Fees: Free

Facilities: Restrooms and kiosks at Maxwell Natural Area and Michaud Lane

Pets: Allowed on leash

Information: Fort Collins Natural Areas Department, (970) 221-6640 or [www.fcgov.com/natural areas](http://www.fcgov.com/natural%20areas)

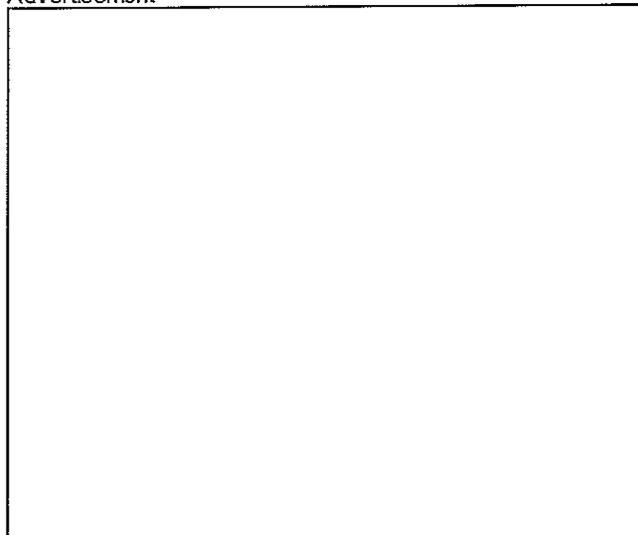
This is an excellent trail for those wanting to experience the area without overdoing it. It offers up a bounty of wildflowers and usually sightings of mule deer. If you feel energetic, you can switchback your way up the hogback, where the views of Fort Collins are reward for your effort. There are multiple ways to shorten this hike. The back side of the trail, which can be accessed off Larimer County Road 23 (Centennial Drive) on the east side of Horsetooth Reservoir, gets you right into the trail's best scenery. The trail here hugs the ridge above Horsetooth Reservoir, making for one of the more spectacular views of the reservoir and foothills.

Horsetooth Rock

Distance: 2.5 miles one way

Difficulty: Moderate

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Elevation: 5,755 to 7,255 feet

Trailhead: Take Larimer County Road 38E west around the south end of Horsetooth Reservoir for about 6 miles to Horsetooth Mountain Open Space parking lot.

Fees: \$7 daily entry fee

Facilities: Restrooms, water and information kiosk

Pets: Allowed on a leash

Information: Larimer County Parks, (970) 679-4570 or www.larimer.org/naturalresources

Trail talk: A hike to the top of the signature land formation is the area's must-do trail. The hike to the top of the 7,255-foot oddly shaped rock is the prime destination in this 2,500-acre park with 29 miles of trails. The moderate hike offers wonderful views of Fort Collins. It is very popular, so going on weekdays is advisable. Some rock scrambling is required to access the top. The easiest route to the top is by staying right when you start scrambling. You can access by veering to your left, but the approach is more difficult and dangerous, with more exposure. If you wish for something easier, try the relatively flat 1.2-mile one-way Horsetooth Falls Trail.

Lory Loop

Distance: 7.75 miles

Difficulty: Moderate

Elevation range: 5,480 to 6,780 feet

Trailhead: Take Overland Trail north to Larimer County Road 50E (Bingham Hill Road). Turn left and go west to County Road 23. Turn left and go 1.4 miles south to Larimer County 25G. Take a right and drive 1.6 miles to the park entrance to pay. Then follow the road another mile to the Arthur's Rock Trailhead.

Fee: \$7 daily entrance fee

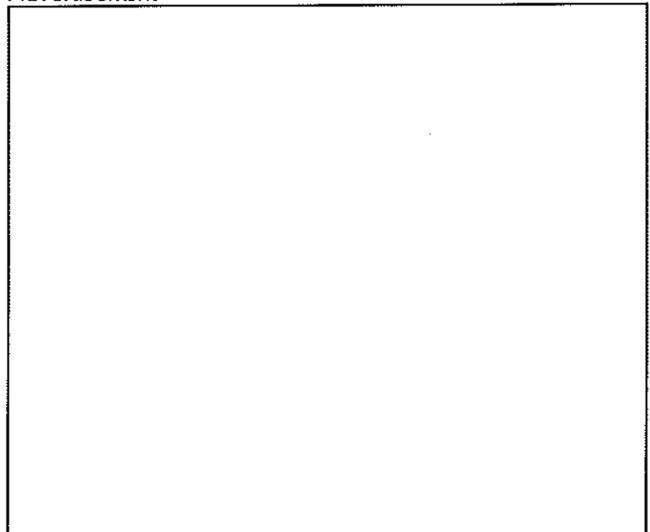
Facilities: Restrooms, water and information available at the visitor center

Pets: Allowed on leash

Information: (970) 493-1623 or <http://parks.state.co.us/Parks/Lory>

Trail talk: This loop hike offers a variety of experiences. The loop encompasses iconic Arthur's Rock, a true mountain hike experience, and some of the best

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wildflower viewing in the area. It includes approximately 2 miles of the Timber Trail, 1.25 miles of the Arthur's Rock Trail, 2 miles of the Overlook Trail and 2.5 miles of the Well Gulch Trail. There are a number of shorter options along the way.

Wild Loop

Distance: 2.1 miles one way

Difficulty: Easy

Elevation: 5,200 to 5,300 feet

Trailhead: From Loveland, take U.S. Highway 34 west to just past mile marker 88 (4 miles west of the Kmart). Turn right (north) onto Hidden Valley Drive just east of the old water tank. The trailhead is on your left.

Fee: Free

Facilities: Restrooms, kiosk

Pets: Allowed on leash

Information: Larimer County Parks, (970) 679-4570 or www.larimer.org/naturalresources

Trail talk: This trail offers the most scenic hiking of the 15 miles of trail in the nearly 2,200-acre Devil's Backbone Open Space just west of Loveland. Wildflowers dot the landscape, and wildlife of all kinds is common, especially if hiking in the morning or evening. The highlight is the impressive view through the Keyhole, a window in the rock formation that allows for impressive

views of the mountains to the west.

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Carter offers great views and climbs

LOVELAND — Carter Lake is one of my favorite road rides. It is a ride tucked away in the foothills just west of Loveland, offers great views and is easily accessible from Fort Collins.

Part of the reason I enjoy riding around Carter Lake is it often is overlooked by cyclists, campers and boaters, who tend to gravitate toward the larger Horsetooth Reservoir in Fort Collins.

The 1,100-acre lake is 3 miles long and about 1 mile wide. It offers boating, fishing, camping, rock climbing, scuba diving, hiking and cycling.

The reservoir sits about 1,000 feet above Loveland. To get there from Fort Collins, take Taft Hill Road south to Loveland, where it turns into Wilson Avenue.

Head west on U.S. Highway 34 to North Carter Lake Road and ride south.

A sign pointing to Carter Lake will appear on the right side of the road. From there, you have the option to head west toward the reservoir or continue straight and approach the lake from the south end.

On this day I opted for the latter, leaving the majority of the elevation for downhill rather than uphill.

Staying straight, the road curves and hits North County Road 23. Take a right and head south to West County Road 8E. The road is marked with a sign for the reservoir.

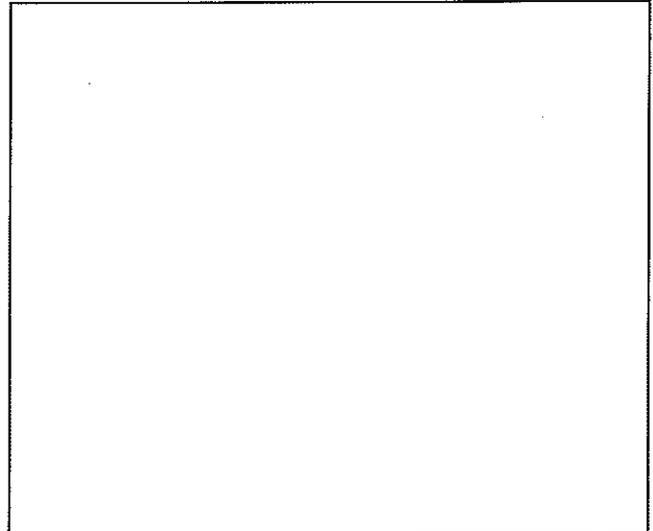
Turn right and head west toward the reservoir. Soon, the first dam comes into view and a series of switchbacks will lead up to the lake.

At this point, the majority of elevation is behind you. The road curves back toward the north and parallels the reservoir across the dams. There are some fantastic views to the west of Carter Lake with the mountains as a backdrop.

The road curves past a series of campsites and passes by the Marina Store at Carter Lake. This is a fantastic place to stop for lunch.

They have a deck that overlooks the water and a sink allocated to nothing but cyclists who need to refill water bottles. Make sure to carry a bit of cash, though, as they have

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a credit card limit of \$10.

From here, there is a short climb and the road drops sharply back down to the north entrance into the park.

The drop is accented by some great views of surrounding bluffs and buttes.

The road intersects with Pole Hill Road, where you can complete the loop by riding east back to County Road 29.



Cycling Carter Lake Reservoir: Carter Lake Reservoir west of Loveland offers a remote and less crowded ride that may be a bit easier, but is just as scenic, and recreational opportunities such as cycling, boating, fishing, camping, rock climbing and scuba.

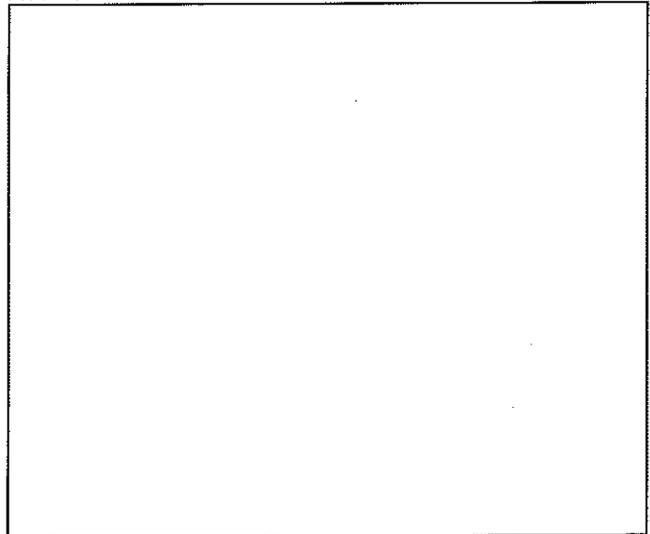


[Purchase Image](#) [Zoom](#)
The road on the east side of Carter Lake offers excellent views of the lake and mountains. / David Young/The Coloradoan

Trail notes

- **Ride:** Carter Lake Reservoir
- **Date ridden:** May 25
- **Distance:** 17.1 miles
- **Difficulty:** Easy to Moderate
- **Trail condition:** Great
- **Cost:** Free
- **Trail tunes:** Steppenwolf
- **Post-ride brew:** Budweiser
- **Video:** www.coloradoan.com/xplore
- **Information:** www.co.larimer.co.us/parks/carter.htm

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is still available locally



Reporter-Herald/STEVE STONER

Parker resident A.J. Valdez helps his mother, Denay, also of Parker, with tent poles while little brother Austin brings another pole around to his father, Alan, at Carter Lake. The Valdezes were camping at their lakeside camping spot for the Memorial Day weekend with a group of friends and family in this 2009 file photo.

WAT RES

Reserved spots are all taken, but others beckon first arrivals

By PAMELA DICKMAN
REPORTER-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Campsites at Hermit Park, Carter Lake and Horsetooth Reservoir have been booked for Memorial Day weekend for months.

Everything is reserved at Boyd Lake State Park for overnight camping.

And the sites that can be reserved are in the Canyon Lakes Ranger District and Rocky Mountain National Park.

But for the willing, the tenacious, hope is not lost.

There are campsites available on a first-come, first-served basis in the national park west of Loveland and the national forest west of Fort Collins as well as at the newly reopened Drake Campground on U.S. 34.

In Rocky Mountain National Park, camping is allowed only in designated campgrounds and campsites. Rules for camping in the National Forest can be

found at the agency's website.

In general for Northern Colorado, no camping is allowed within a quarter-mile of Colorado 14, upper Stove Prairie Road or lower Pingree Park road. Vehicles must be within 300 feet of the road and at least 100 feet away from water or meadows, according to the agency. Campers may not camp at trailheads, picnic areas or day-use parking areas, and off-highway vehicles are limited to open Forest Service roads that have numbered signs. The Penmock Pass road (County Road 44H) between Masonville and Pingree Park is open.

In the Poudre Canyon west of Fort Collins, 109 spaces are open for the first campers who arrive this weekend, but as visitor specialists advise: Don't wait until after work on Friday because these spaces always go fast on the unofficial kick off to summer.

Fire restrictions are in place across

the board, and for sites in the Poudre Canyon, campers may see residual smoke from a 7,685-acre wildfire that threatened homes last week. The Hewlett fire, started by a camp stove, is fully contained.

The National Weather Service is calling for temperatures in the 80s and 90s in Loveland and 60s and 70s at higher elevations over the holiday weekend — perfect weather for outdoor fun. Even if it's not overnight frolic, there are plenty of trails open, the swim beaches at Boyd Lake, Lake Loveland, Carter Lake and Horsetooth Reservoir are ready for splashing, and the Loveland recreation trail is a prime location for biking and bird watching.

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

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May 24, 2012

"Last minute camping is still available locally"

Outpost — Reporter — Herald