

## GC Commissioners approve 1041 permit for Windy Gap Firming Project

DECEMBER, 4 2012

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GRAND COUNTY, CO COLORADO

Grand County Board of commissioners approved the 1041 permit for the Windy Gap Firming Project, with a long list of negotiated conditions and related agreements designed to protect the Colorado River and Grand Lake from continuing degradation.

In a 2-1 vote, with Commissioner Gary Bumgarner dissenting, commissioners granted the Northern Water Municipal Subdistrict a boost in their plans to build the Chimney Hollow Reservoir west of Carter Lake near Loveland.

During the board's initial approval on Nov. 20, Commissioner James Newberry called the arrival to a consensus among various parties "a historic moment."

The words echoed from the signing of the Colorado River Cooperative Agreement earlier this year, which also drew the interest various West Slope stakeholders.

"I think this is bigger than the Denver agreement by far," Newberry had said.

The permit's package includes critical measures that may resuscitate the Upper Colorado River, listed by the Colorado Water Quality Control Commission as being impaired due to high water temperatures.

A commitment from the subdistrict, Trout Unlimited, Grand County and the Upper Colorado River Alliance spells out how a possible river bypass at Windy Gap may be paid for.

And in spite of Northern's earlier contention that the Windy Gap 2012 permit — allowing for a greater supply of water to municipalities on the Front Range — should not be weighted down by past ruins of the federal Colorado-Big Thompson Project, an agreement tied to the permit secures the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District's support for addressing Grand Lake's clarity along with the Bureau of Reclamation.

The municipal subdistrict is expected to formally accept the permit conditions on Thursday.

But Commissioner Bumgarner, a Middle Park rancher, is still not convinced the collaboration that resulted in these agreements is enough to save the river and repair the "cloud" that plagues Colorado's largest natural lake.

"The river is in decline now. I'm not sure how taking more water out of it is going to make it better," he said after Tuesday's vote. Of the conditions and agreements tied to the permit, "there's no guarantee that's happening," he said, saying he fears the firming project may just be the "straw that breaks the camel's back."

The permit package has the support from Colorado's Trout Unlimited, as well as expected endorsements from the

**Permit-related agreements**

- Grand Lake clarity project — Provides a long-term commitment to attaining the state clarity standard in Grand Lake
- Windy Gap bypass funding — Addresses West Slope interest in a bypass around or through Windy Gap Reservoir
- WGFP agreement — Enhancements to water supply for Middle Park and Windy Gap water to Grand County delivered in a manner to benefit aquatic life in the Colorado River
- Northern Water agreement — Commitment to provide 5,400 acre-feet per year from Lake Granby in perpetuity
- Learning by Doing — Engage in cooperative process to do what's best for the aquatic environment of the Colorado, Fraser, Williams Fork River basin, and upstream of the Colorado River confluence with the Blue River.

Upper Colorado River Alliance, The Middle Park Water Conservancy District and the Colorado River Water Conservation District, among key players.

“These permit conditions provide critical measures for protecting the health of the Upper Colorado River and its world-class trout fishery,” said Mely Whiting, counsel for Trout Unlimited, in statements released on Tuesday. “TU has not been able to support this project in the past. But the subdistrict and the project participants have gone the extra mile to try to address our concerns and do what’s right for the river.”

In the permit package, Grand County gains up to 4,500 acre feet of Windy Gap water stored in Lake Granby for release to benefit aquatic life in the Colorado River, based on an agreement between Grand County, the subdistrict, Middle Park Water Conservancy District, the Colorado River District and the Northwest Colorado Council of Governments. This is in addition to more than 5,400 acre-feet of water to be released each year to help endangered fish while also increasing flows in the Colorado River between Grand County and Grand Junction.

On the Windy Gap bypass through or around Windy Gap in order to improve river habitats, the Municipal Subdistrict is committing \$2 million for it to be built. An additional \$2 million would be available from the Colorado Water Conservation Board if approved by the Colorado Legislature during its upcoming session. Grand County and an alliance of landowners and Trout Unlimited also are committed to helping finance the bypass.

The construction of the bypass would be based on findings from a \$250,000 study the subdistrict is currently funding, a report expected to be out by October 2013.

Before voting for approval, Grand County Commission Chair Nancy Stuart said she asked those in the room — attorneys, representatives of various organizations, citizens — whether they felt the river would be better off than it is now. She heard it would be.

“With the amount of work and all the issues that have come up and have been addressed, I cannot see any other way of moving forward to fix the river,” Commissioner James Newberry said in his approval of the permit conditions on Nov. 20.

“The permit conditions, along with the benefits they will provide to the Colorado River, demonstrate a great deal of dedication and commitment from the 13 firming project participants to address Grand County’s concerns,” said Jeff Drager, Northern Water’s project manager, in statements.

The subdistrict’s participants of 10 cities, two rural water districts and a power provider, are relying on the proposed Chimney Hollow Reservoir to help meet their growing water needs. The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation is expected to issue a final decision on the firming project in 2013.

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<http://www.skyhivalleynews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20121205/NEWS/121209996/1079&ParentProfile=1067&template=printart>

## WINDY GAP WATER PROJECT TAKES STEP FORWARD

By Bobby Magill

[BobbyMagill@coloradoan.com](mailto:BobbyMagill@coloradoan.com)

Northern Water's Windy Gap Firming Project, including Chimney Hollow Reservoir, is one step closer to being built. Grand County commissioners gave their blessing to the project Tuesday, approving Northern Water's permit for Windy Gap. The project, if approved by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, would help supply water from Colorado's Western Slope to about 825,000 Northeastern Colorado residents and build the Chimney Hollow Reservoir near Loveland.

"Grand County has secured protections for water quantity and quality in the Colorado River that never would have happened without the project and its permit," Grand County Commissioner Nancy Stuart said in a written statement.

With agreements in place to protect aquatic wildlife habitat in the Colorado River, the project is supported by sportsmen's group Trout Unlimited.

"For years, those of us living in Grand County have seen the once-mighty Colorado (River) in a state of serious decline," Kirk Klancke, president of TU's Colorado River Headwaters Chapter, said in a statement. "This agreement will provide protections and new investments in river health that can put the Colorado River on the road to recovery."

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# Winning the open-space JACKPOT



Special to the Reporter-Herald

Nature photographer John Fielder traveled 35,000 miles and visited all 64 Colorado counties to capture images of 1,000 of the 3,000 open spaces, natural areas, state parks and even private ranches conserved with Great Outdoors Colorado money. A portion of the profits of two resulting books — a photo tome and a guidebook — will go back into conservation efforts.

## IF YOU GO

**What:** Slide show of images of land preserved by Great Outdoors Colorado taken by famed nature photographer John Fielder. The slides are set to music to depict the success of 20 years of Great Outdoors Colorado.  
**When:** 7 p.m. Dec. 15.  
**Where:** Lincoln Center, 417 W. Magnolia St., Fort Collins.  
**Tickets:** \$15, available at [www.fielder2012.eventbrite.com](http://www.fielder2012.eventbrite.com)  
**Info:** Proceeds will benefit Legacy Land Trust and Larimer County Department of Natural Resources.

## Photographer John Fielder will help Larimer County celebrate its preserved lands on Dec. 15

By PAMELA DICKMAN  
Reporter-Herald Staff Writer

**F**amed nature photographer John Fielder believes Coloradans won the jackpot.

With beautiful vistas, stunning peaks, magnificent valleys, amazing wildlife, lakes and rivers, outdoors Colorado is what he considers one of the greatest places on Earth.

And 20 years ago, a group headed by Fielder passed legislation that assured the profits from the Colorado lottery would be dedicated to preserving nature, open lands and ranches.

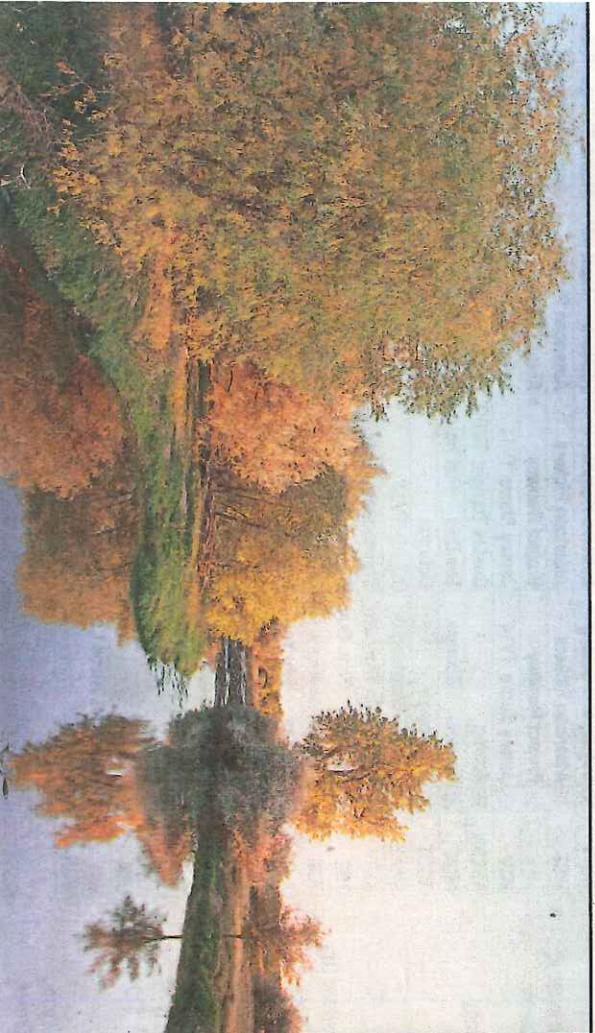
To celebrate 20 years of Great Outdoors Colorado, Fielder photographed 1,000 of the 3,000 open spaces, state parks, natural lands and conservation easements preserved with

the millions of dollars raised by the lottery. He traveled 35,000 miles and visited all 64 Colorado counties to capture lasting images of protected land.

The last stop on a tour showing slides of many of those places, including ones in Larimer County, and promoting two new books is Dec. 15 in Fort Collins.

Featured in the slide show are Red Mountain Open Space and Soapstone Prairie Natural Area — two adjacent protected lands owned and managed by Larimer County and Fort Collins, respectively. The remote sites are about 25 miles north of Fort Collins and stretch to the Wyoming border, showcasing meadows, red rock faces and teepee rings. Fielder said Red Mountain ranked high

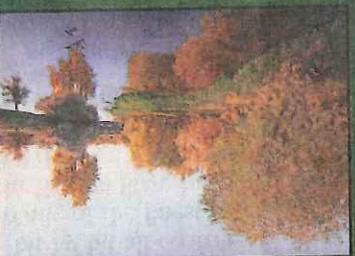
SEE LAND, PAGE A10



Special to the Reporter-Herald/John Fielder

The Three Bells Ranch on the Poudre River is an example of a way of life, land and beautiful views protected through Great Outdoors Colorado, a program formed 20 years ago to ensure that Colorado Lottery money is dedicated to conserving nature.

Fielder prides state  
GRATEFUL  
for preserved lands  
OUTPOST, A7





## LAND: 30 percent of Fielder's profits go to Legacy Land Trust

From PAGE A7

among the open spaces he photographed in Larimer County for this project.

"Those red rocks and the remoteness and the trail are extraordinary," said Fielder, who has a storied 30-year career as a nature photographer.

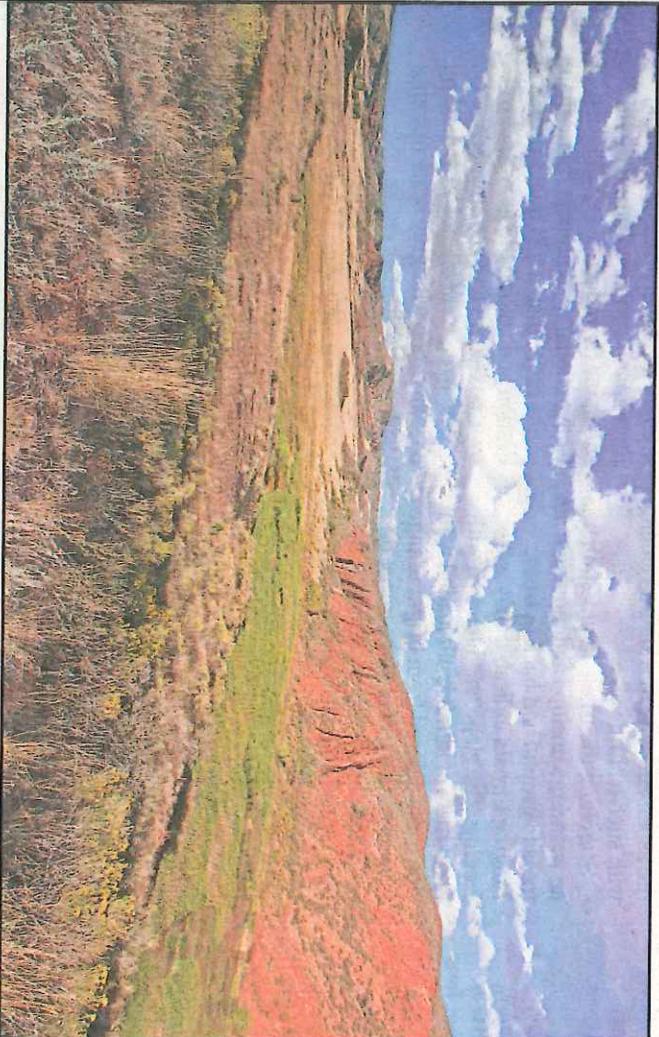
The Colorado resident describes himself as a city slicker child who grew up in Charlotte, N.C., and discovered a love of outdoors when a middle school science teacher took him and other students on a trip to Colorado. He was 14, and has never forgotten that journey in his teacher's old station wagon.

"When I saw Longs Peak in the summer of '84, I said, 'This is where I want to live someday,'" said Fielder. "She's 94 now and still remembers when I said that."

His life would become about preserving that nature he loved so much on film then digital media and by conservation, ensuring that the land would be forever protected. Fielder has worked through Great Outdoors Colorado and by donating some of the profits from his books to conservation projects.

Of his two most recent books, a guidebook and a photo book of Great Outdoors Colorado sites, 30 percent of the profits are dedicated to Legacy Land Trust, which helps preserve working ranches. Both will be for sale at the Fort Collins event.

## LARIMER COUNTY



Red Mountain Open Space, with its red rocks and breathtaking views, ranks at the top of nature photographer John Fielder's list of favorite preserved lands in Larimer County. Images such as this will be featured during a three-hour slide show in Fort Collins on Dec. 15.

Special to the Reporter-Herald/John Fielder

Larimer County has a sales tax to help preserve open space and has partnered with other conservation agencies and Great Outdoors Colorado to protect more than 40,000 acres of land. Among those are River Bluffs Open Space, the Devil's Backbone and most recently an effort to complete the missing links in the Poudre River trail.

Colorado first approved the lottery in 1980 with the money earmarked for open spaces, trails, wildlife and protection of ranches, but there was a loophole in the legislation, said Fielder. In fact by 1990, two-thirds of the profits were being used to build prisons instead of parks, he said.

Fielder joined a group formed by then-Gov. Roy Romer to find a way to close that loophole, which they did with a 1992 initiative that formed Great Outdoors Colorado.

Twenty years later, GoCo as it is commonly called, is still protecting lands for the future — something Fielder believes is the ultimate payout.

Pamela Dickman can be reached at 669-5050, ext. 526, or [pdickman@reporter-herald.com](mailto:pdickman@reporter-herald.com)

## Larimer County park vehicle permits go on sale Monday

*Reporter-Herald Staff Loveland Reporter-Herald*

*Posted:*

ReporterHerald.com

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Larimer County will begin sales of 2013 Department of Natural Resources' annual entrance permits on Monday.

The permits allow use of parks and open spaces at Carter Lake, Flatiron Reservoir, Hermit Park Open Space, Horsetooth Reservoir, Horsetooth Mountain Open Space, Pinewood Reservoir and Ramsay-Shockey Open Space.

Major changes have been made in the annual permit system for next year.

Passes will be good for a year from month of purchase and transferable among vehicles registered to the same household.

People can get a combined vehicle and boat trailer, and no additional permit will be required for non-trailerred vessels, such as canoes, kayaks, belly boats, etc., carried on or in a vehicle.

Vehicle and vehicle/boat permits will be available for purchase online at [larimer.org/naturalresources](http://larimer.org/naturalresources); at Larimer County Natural Resources Administrative Offices north of Carter Lake (1800 S. County Road 31, Loveland); at Hermit Park Open Space (until Dec. 19), at the Citizen Information Center at the Courthouse Offices Building in Fort Collins (200 W. Oak); and at local businesses listed at [larimer.org/naturalresources/retail\\_outlets.htm](http://larimer.org/naturalresources/retail_outlets.htm)

For county residents, vehicle permits are \$75 and vehicle/boat permits are \$150. For non-residents vehicle permits are \$95 and vehicle/boat permits are \$190.

For senior citizens age 65-plus, vehicle permits are \$65 and vehicle/boat permits are \$120. For disabled persons, vehicle permits are \$10 and vehicle/boat permits are \$85.

Those permits must be purchased at Larimer County Natural Resources Administrative Offices, Hermit Park Open Space (until Dec. 19), and at the Citizen Information Center at the Courthouse Offices Building in Fort Collins. They are not available for online purchase or at local businesses.

## Larimer County may outlaw panning for gold on county property

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

ReporterHerald.com

When gold was discovered in Colorado in 1859, fortune seekers flocked to the state in hopes of striking it rich.

More than 150 years later, mining is still an important part of the state economy, and searching rivers and creeks for shining bits of fortune is a pastime shared by many amateurs with pans or gas-powered sluices and dredges.

But, if the Larimer County commissioners sign off on recommended rule changes, panning for gold will no longer be allowed in waters located on any Department of Natural Resources property, including Glade Park and River Bluffs Open Space.

The Larimer County Parks Advisory Board has recommended the county add "minerals" to the list of what cannot removed, collected or destroyed, joining vegetation, signs, fences and buildings.

The proposed change is in response to an influx in gold panners, said Dan Rieves, visitor services director for the Department of Natural Resources. The county does not have specific numbers, but Rieves said rangers have contacted more and more people seeking gold in rivers and creeks that run through the county open spaces and parks.

"On several sites, we don't own the mineral rights," Rieves added.

Larimer County is not rich in gold to be found, but residents should have the right to look, said Darrell Koleber, a Loveland resident who demonstrates the skill throughout the community as a member of the Rocky Mountain Prospectors and Treasure Hunters Club.

"I think they're sticking their nose in one of the few things we can go out and do and have fun and not spend a lot of money," said Koleber.

"Gold was what opened up the state."

Rieves said rangers have contacted hopefuls at Glade Park and on other county properties and asked them to stop panning for gold. They weren't likely to find any, though.

"There is no gold in the Big Thompson" said Koleber. "That's the only river in Larimer County that doesn't have gold."

Regulations for where people can pan by hand or with small motorized equipment vary depending on the type and size of the operation and the location and whether it is private, local, state or federal land, including national forest sites.

Larimer County does not have any rules on the books yet, but the proposed restriction is expected to go to the county commissioners in December.

Boulder does not allow recreational prospecting in city or county parks.

Rocky Mountain National Park prohibits panning for gold, and because the Poudre River is designated a Wild and Scenic River, gold panning is prohibited.

However, Jefferson County recently opened to prospecting an open space west of Golden, Koleber said. Private-property owners can allow prospectors onto their land. One of the prime gold-seeking spots, Koleber said, is where a business owner allows hobbyists to search Clear Creek as it crosses his property in the Denver area.

The discovery of gold in Colorado in 1859 launched the state's mining industry, which, according to the Colorado Mining Association, employs 5,000 people and pumps millions into the economy.

The most productive Colorado gold mine, located west of Colorado Springs, harvested 258,000 ounces of the mineral in 2008, according to the mining association website.

While some operations are big business, most hobbyists are in it for the thrill.

"It's just a way to spend time in the outdoors," said Rick Mattingly, one of three coordinators for the Rocky Mountain Prospecting and Treasure Hunters Club.

"No one does it to make a living. It's just the joy of the hunt."

Added Koleber, "Where else can an adult go up and play in the water? You're not going to get wealthy doing it. It probably won't even pay the gas money."

But, just like 153 years ago, there are still dreams and, sometimes, a big treasure.

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## Outdoors programs offered in Larimer County

*By Reporter-Herald Staff Loveland Reporter-Herald  
Posted:*

ReporterHerald.com

Though summer is over, free outdoor programs continue in area open space lands.

The Fort Collins Natural Areas Department will offer "Skygazing at Fossil Creek" at 7-10 p.m. Saturday at Fossil Creek Regional Open Space, on Carpenter Road, one mile west of Interstate 25, Fort Collins. Meet at the parking lot.

Participants can learn to identify constellations and view stars, planets and more through telescopes provided by volunteers with the Northern Colorado Astronomical Society.

Dress warmly and bring a blanket or chair to sit on.

No registration is required.

For details, call 416-2815.

The Larimer County Department of Natural Resources will offer a look at the large birds that use the Poudre River corridor with "Big Birds of River Bluffs Open Space, set at 10 a.m. Saturday, Nov. 24, at River Bluffs Open Space, just west of Interstate 25 on County Road 32E, Fort Collins.

The program will be repeated at 10 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 8.

Participants should bring water.

No registration is required.

For details, call 679-4479.

## Pinewood Reservoir west of Loveland set for a facelift?

The plan is to improve what's there but not to expand or change the rustic atmosphere

By Pamela Dickman Reporter-Herald Staff Writer

Posted: 12/15/2012 04:46:13 PM MST



With water low at Pinewood Reservoir, the boat ramp falls short of the water. An extension to the ramp along with new bathrooms and picnic tables, improved campsites and maybe turning the two-site Blue Mountain campground into a day use area are possibilities being considered for the recreation area. (Pamela Dickman)

By this time next year, an \$850,000 facelift could be underway to the campgrounds and facilities at Pinewood Reservoir west of Loveland.

The Larimer County Department of Natural Resources, which manages recreation at the Bureau of Reclamation Reservoir, is seeking public input and grants to upgrade the aging facilities at Pinewood. The plan is to improve what's there but not to expand or change the rustic atmosphere at the quiet but popular fishing, camping and hiking haven.

"It's Pinewood's turn for a little TLC," said Chris Fleming, manager of the county's Blue Mountain District, which includes Herrmit Park, Carter Lake, Pinewood and Flatiron.

### If you go

**What:** A public meeting to share information and seek input on plans to upgrade facilities at Pinewood Reservoir in late 2013.

**When:** 5-8 p.m. Jan. 15.

**Where:** Larimer County Department of Natural Resources Administration Office (formerly the Bison Visitor Center), 1800 S. County Road 31.

The most recent improvements at Pinewood are a vault toilet installed 15 years ago, and many of the picnic tables, bathrooms and other amenities are at least twice that old.

The county hopes to install new toilets and tables, reconfigure camp sites so they are further apart, level tent areas at walk-in sites and maybe even extend the trail on the Ramsay-Shockey Open Space from just the back side of the water to a complete loop.

The plans are not yet firm. Campground managers are looking for suggestions.

"We want to hear what people have to say," said Fleming. "We're not doing these improvements for ourselves. We want to hear from the visitors, and we also want to hear what our neighbors think."

The exact budget could change as plans are firming up, but the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources anticipates an \$850,000 price tag.

Fleming said the department will apply in February for a Great Outdoors Colorado grant and will look at other possible grants from Colorado Parks and Wildlife to pair with department money and in-kind work.

If all goes well, construction could begin in September with the renovations complete in time for the 2014 camping season.

"We know Pinewood is a special place," said Fleming. "People come here because it isn't Horsetooth and Carter. It has that rustic feel. We don't want to change that."

Pamela Dickman can be reached at 669-5050, ext. 526, or [pdickman@reporter-herald.com](mailto:pdickman@reporter-herald.com). Follow her on Twitter: [@pameladickbee](https://twitter.com/pameladickbee).



Campsites such as this one in the Windy Pines loop at Pinewood Reservoir may be improved with level tent areas and new tables under a proposal by the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources. The county is seeking grants and input on the project. (Pamela Dickman)

## **Big Thompson Elementary natural playscape nets \$322,266 lottery grant**

*By Pamela Dickman Loveland Reporter-Herald  
Posted:*

ReporterHerald.com

Editor's note: This is an update to an earlier Reporter-Herald story.

A \$322,266 Great Outdoors Colorado grant approved Tuesday ensures that construction will begin this April on a native playscape outside Big Thompson Elementary School west of Loveland.

The \$540,000 project started as a dream three years ago, and through community efforts, donations and fundraising, will become the first of its kind in Larimer County.

"It's going to mean a lot to us," said Sarah Walgast, principal at the school.

"Curiosity is huge for kids, and they're going to be able to explore that in their own backyard."

The board that awards lottery grants met in Fort Morgan to consider 47 different outdoor proposals. Of the nine selected for funding, Big Thompson ranked third.

"It'll be the first natural playscape in Northern Colorado that we know of," said Kerri Rollins, Larimer County's open lands director and a Big Thompson Elementary parent.

"Teachers will be able to take the kids outside and use it as an educational forum."

The playground will feature native grasses, hills and rocks as well as traditional play equipment, a track, a recycled tire surface, a trail, a climbing wall and a natural method of filtering runoff before it drains into the Big Thompson River that runs near the school.

Construction is set to begin in April and be complete before the 2013-2014 school year begins.

The project began as a "design your dream" assignment for students and grew into a large, community effort that, over three years, has taken on a life of its own. Parents and school officials have worked together, and donations have come in the form of free design and engineering, physical construction, grants and special fundraisers.

So far, 25 different sources of money and in-kind work have been pledged for the playground, which will cost just over half a million dollars. Among these are a \$50,000 grant from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment to pay for a recycled tire play surface and \$20,000 from the Open Lands Advisory Board.

The new grant covers more than half the cost of the project, and combined with other donations, leaves only \$7,000 left to raise -- an amount the committee that started without any money and only a dream believes is within reach.

Parent James Prestien donated his landscape engineering skills to help design the project and, even though his daughter is now in middle school, is excited to see the plan become a reality, a romping, exploring and learning opportunity for children.

"We wanted to give them a natural area to play in, to connect with nature," Prestien said. "For schools around here, I think it's pretty unique."

For more information or to donate visit: [bigthompsonelementary.org/playscape.shtml](http://bigthompsonelementary.org/playscape.shtml)

Pamela Dickman can be reached at 669-5050, ext. 526, or [pdickman@reporter-herald.com](mailto:pdickman@reporter-herald.com). Follow her on Twitter: [@pamelalittlebee](https://twitter.com/pamelalittlebee).

## Larimer County strikes down gold panning ban; prospecting still allowed

*By Pamela Dickman Loveland Reporter-Herald*

*Posted:*

ReporterHerald.com

FORT COLLINS – Gold panning enthusiasts left the Larimer County commissioners meeting with smiles on their faces after the elected board declined to ban panning in county parks and open spaces.

Commissioners Tom Donnelly and Steve Johnson struck down a proposal to include all minerals in the list of items that people cannot remove from county lands after hearing from a handful of hobbyists who spoke about the fun of searching for gold in Colorado's rivers and streams.

The third commissioner, Lew Gaiter, is on vacation.

"I don't think it's our job to enforce," said Johnson. "We're not the mineral owners.

"If we're going to do something with gold panning, I'd like to see us set up a committee and meet with these folks because they had some good ideas ... I'm not really convinced that we have the right approach here on the mineral part of it."

The Larimer County Department of Natural Resources brought three changes to regulations before the board Tuesday.

The commissioners approved new rules for equestrian camping and guidelines for food storage in campgrounds where bears are active, but declined the suggestion of prohibiting removal of minerals.

Natural resources staff and the Larimer County Parks Advisory Board recommended adding minerals to vegetation, fences, rocks and the rest of the list of items it is illegal to remove from county land.

"If we boil it down, this is not a countywide ban on gold-panning," said Gary Buffington, director of the department. "It affects seven areas in Larimer County, our parks and open spaces ... We don't think we own the mineral rights on those properties, so how can we allow the extraction of minerals?"

"It's not just about gold."

However, gold-panning enthusiasts took exception to the suggestion. Several told the commissioners how most prospectors in Colorado and Larimer County do so for fun, as a hobby, knowing full well they will not get rich. They revel in the history and the great outdoors.

"It's a good opportunity for the kids and grandpa to go out and get wet muddy and dirty," said Bryan Morgan, a member of the Rocky Mountain Prospectors and Treasure Hunters group, which is based in Larimer County. "It would just disappoint me to no end to see that opportunity go away."

Most gold panners do not harm the rivers or lands, and in fact, they pick up litter and the activity has been proven by Wyoming and Oregon fish biologists to improve trout spawning, they said.

The commissioners agreed with the enthusiasts and said they would like to meet with them before considering any regulations.

Perhaps there could be prohibited times, such as when fish eggs are present in the river beds, or ways to regulate only commercial activity without stopping those who go for the fun, Johnson said.

As the panning enthusiasts left the room after the decision, James Fariello of the Denver area turned back to the commissioners with a smile and said, "Thanks, gentlemen, for your insight."

# County won't ban gold-panning — for now

By Patrick Malone  
PatrickMalone@coloradoan.com

Optimism is the foremost tool in a treasure hunter's kit, and it delivered County commissioners backed off a proposal to ban prospecting at county with nature that draws visitors to the area. Prospectors characterized their hobby as an environmentally gentle, family-friendly way of connecting with nature that draws visitors to the stream of gold-panning enthusiasts that addressed the board checked their high hopes at the door of the commissioners' conference room and gridled for a fight to preserve freely practicing their favorite pastime.

Concerns that the hobby is trampling the Poudre and Big Thompson "Mostly to us, it's just a way to get some good, clean fun in the mud-ry, but families in search of would not impact large mineral extraction more clearly, Gary Buffington, Commissioner Tom Donnelly agreed. Commissioner Lew Gatter was not present.

Another prospector, Bryan Morton, told the board any crackdown would have articulated that prohibition language that was proposed to forbid panning for gold but said the County Attorney George Haas said he interprets the existing regulations to forbid panning for gold but said the County Attorney George Haas said "a non-invasive sluice box and a pan-ting no-no's include animals, vegetation, wood, or any other object."

The proposed regulation would "It's a good opportunity for the kids and grandpa to go out and get wet, muddy and dirty, and nobody can hold it at us," he said. Items people are prohibited from taking from county natural areas. The existing no-no's include animals, vegetation, wood, or any other object."

# LOCAL

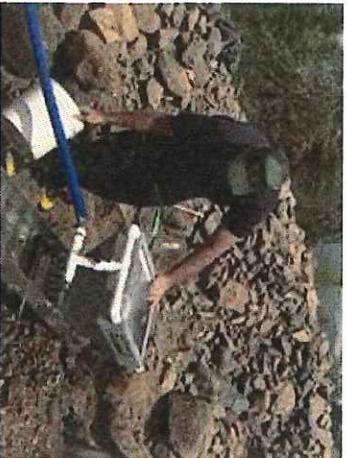
## Gold Panning Ban Defeated In Larimer County

December 18, 2012 8:30 PM

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**FORT COLLINS, Colo. (AP)** – Panning for gold in Larimer County will still be allowed after commissioners rejected a measure that would have banned it.

The Loveland Reporter-Herald reports that two members of the three-person commission rejected a proposal that would have prohibited taking minerals from county lands. A third commissioner was on vacation.

(reporter CBS)

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Gold Panning, Larimer County, Larimer County Parks Advisory Board, Loveland Reporter-Herald

The vote followed testimony from hobbyists who spoke about the fun of searching for gold in Colorado's rivers and streams.

Natural resources staff and the Larimer County Parks Advisory Board suggested the proposal after questioning whether the county owns the minerals on its lands.

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## Larimer County strikes down gold panning ban; prospecting still allowed

*By Pamela Dickman Loveland Reporter-Herald  
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DenverPost.com

FORT COLLINS -- Gold panning enthusiasts left the Larimer County commissioners meeting with smiles on their faces after the elected board declined to ban panning in county parks and open spaces.

Commissioners Tom Donnelly and Steve Johnson struck down a proposal to include all minerals in the list of items that people cannot remove from county lands after hearing from a handful of hobbyists who spoke about the fun of searching for gold in Colorado's rivers and streams.

The third commissioner, Lew Gaiter, is on vacation.

"I don't think it's our job to enforce," Johnson said. "We're not the mineral owners. If we're going to do something with gold panning, I'd like to see us set up a committee and meet with these folks because they had some good ideas. I'm not really convinced that we have the right approach here on the mineral part of it."

The Larimer County Department of Natural Resources brought three changes to regulations before the board Tuesday. The commissioners approved new rules for equestrian camping and guidelines for food storage in campgrounds where bears are active, but declined the suggestion of prohibiting removal of minerals.

Natural resources staff and the Larimer County Parks Advisory Board recommended adding minerals to vegetation, fences, rocks and the rest of the list of items it is illegal to remove from county land.

"If we boil it down, this is not a countywide ban on gold-panning," Gary Buffington, director of the department, said. "It affects seven areas in Larimer County, our parks and open spaces. We don't think we own the mineral rights on those properties, so how can we allow the extraction of minerals?"

"It's not just about gold."

However, gold-panning enthusiasts took exception to the suggestion.

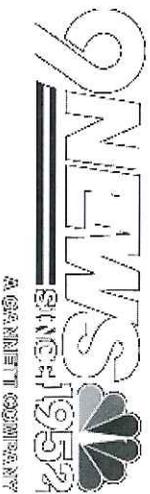
Several told the commissioners how most prospectors in Colorado and Larimer County do so for fun, as a hobby, knowing full well they will not get rich. They revel in the history and the great outdoors.

"It's a good opportunity for the kids and grandpa to go out and get wet muddy and dirty," said Bryan Morgan, a member of the Rocky Mountain Prospectors and Treasure Hunters group, which is based in Larimer County. "It would just disappoint me to no end to see that opportunity go away."

Most gold panners do not harm the rivers or lands, and in fact, they pick up litter and the activity has been proven by Wyoming and Oregon fish biologists to improve trout spawning, they said.

The commissioners agreed with the enthusiasts and said they would like to meet with them before considering any regulations.

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# Gold panning ban defeated in Larimer County

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Written by Associated Press

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FORT COLLINS, Colo. (AP) - Panning for gold in Larimer County will still be allowed after commissioners rejected a measure that would have banned it.

The Loveland Reporter-Herald reports that two members of the three-person commission rejected a proposal that would have prohibited taking minerals from county lands. A third commissioner was on vacation.

The vote followed testimony from hobbyists who spoke about the fun of searching for gold in Colorado's rivers and streams.

Natural resources staff and the Larimer County Parks Advisory Board suggested the proposal after questioning whether the county owns the minerals on its lands.

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