

Larimer County Natural Resources Department

Final Review

Roberts Ranch/2012-236

Laramie Foothills Ranch/2012-236

January 3, 2013

Project Number: 2012-236

Public Name: Laramie Foothills Ranch/2012-236

Values (shown in bold and italicized):

Scenic

Buffer

Wildlife Habitat

Wetlands

*Significant Plants/Natural
Communities*

Outdoor Recreational

Historic/Archaeological

Agricultural

Geological/Paleontological

Educational

Other (explain in narrative)

Property Description: BACKGROUND

This 16,500-acre ranch is located in the Laramie Foothills, a priority area identified in the 2001 Larimer County Open Lands Master Plan, and part of the Laramie Foothills Mountains to Plains Project. The entire acreage is currently under conservation easement (CE) held by The Nature Conservancy, with a portion held by the City of Fort Collins. Major tenets of the conservation easement are that the property can never be subdivided and that the conservation values (defined ecological, agricultural and cultural resources) be protected. The Roberts Ranch is a central feature of the Livermore Valley, homesteaded by the Roberts Family in 1874. The Roberts Ranch is adjacent to other state and locally protected lands.

Current land use includes a cow-calf ranching operation consisting of 349 cow/calf pair, 35 replacement cows and 11 bulls. On-going management activities are outlined in a management plan for the CE lands and include maintenance of facilities (112 miles of fence currently in place, 7 houses, outbuildings, irrigation systems, corrals, roads and other structures), restoration of the Campbell Valley, and weed management.

Specific natural values of the property include: globally and state-rare plant associations and plants (including the Larimer aletes and bell's twinpod), intact mixed grass prairie, habitat for the Federally threatened Preble's meadow jumping mouse, ponderosa pine woodlands, riparian areas, cottonwood forests and golden eagle nest sites. Significant cultural features have been documented on-site including tipi rings, hearths, points and buffalo jumps. The historic value is very high in that the lands include original homestead buildings and outbuildings, historic water diversion structures, portions of the Cherokee/Overland Trail, Signature Rock and features associated with our western heritage. Geologic landmarks such as Steamboat Rock are also on the ranch.

CURRENT PROPOSAL

Catherine Roberts would like to convey/gift the entire property fee-simple to Larimer County with a residential life estate for herself. Her step-son, David Roberts, was provided a life estate by Ms. Roberts on a 20-acre area near the ranch headquarters. The following conditions apply as part of the transfer per a signed letter of intent between Catherine and Larimer County: The property will always be called Roberts Ranch; The ranch will be managed as a working cattle

Larimer County Natural Resources Department

Final Review
January 3, 2013

Roberts Ranch/2012-236
Laramie Foothills Ranch/2012-236

ranch so long as it is economically/environmentally feasible; There will be no uncontrolled public access - access will be limited in type, timing, location and number of activities and size of groups and will be managed so as not to negatively impact the ecological and cultural resources. The transfer of ownership also includes all water rights including 30 shares of North Poudre Irrigation Company water as well as all livestock and equipment as well as personal items and artifacts for a future, on-site agricultural museum featuring the Roberts family.

FUTURE VISION

During a transitional period, Larimer County intends to manage the property as a working cattle ranch and take its time to learn the current management as well as understand the property's history. Outreach with the community will be an important component to this process. In the long term, a management plan will be developed that includes community and public input to identify new and ongoing resource management needs and that defines types and locations for limited public access while ensuring compatibility with the agricultural values. The management plan will follow the stipulations as set forth by Catherine Robert's wishes and any tenets outlined in the conservation easement. Start up and initial management costs, including infrastructure repairs and enhancements, personnel, etc. are expected to cost approximately \$400,000. These funds would come from the existing Help Preserve Open Spaces Sales tax.

Quadrangle:
Short Legal
Description

Livermore, Livermore Mtn., Table Mtn., Virginia Dale
Sections 19, 20, 21 and portions of Section 17, T11N, R71W
Section 33 and portions of Section 34, T11N, R70W;

Portion of Section 32, T11N, R69W

Sections 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 23, 25 and portions of Sections 24, 26, 28, 32, 33, 34 T10N R70W;

Sections 19, 29, 30, 31 and portions of Sections 28 and 33 T10N, R69W

Acreage:

16,500

Current Zoning:

O-Open

Adjacent Zoning:

O-Open

Water Rights:

Water rights are associated with the property plus 30 shares of North Poudre Irrigation Co., wells, springs and ditch rights

Mineral Rights:

Some are held by Roberts; some severed and owned by Union Pacific

Larimer County Natural Resources Department

Final Review
January 3, 2013

Roberts Ranch/2012-236
Laramie Foothills Ranch/2012-236

Value Estimate: \$9-12 million for fee value (un-appraised estimate)

Ownership Information:

Owner/Seller: Catherine Roberts

Partners:

Larimer County Open Lands Program
Owner (Catherine Roberts)
The Nature Conservancy/City of Fort Collins

Description:

Owner/manager of conveyed fee-simple property
Full donation of fee value
Holds Conservation Easement

Property Rights Involved:

Conveyance/Gift of Fee Value

Purchase Price: \$0.00

Price Per Acre: \$0.00

Funding Sources:

Larimer County Open Lands Program
Owner (Catherine Roberts)
The Nature Conservancy

Description:

Long-term management costs
Full donation of fee value
Monitoring Conservation Easement
Total:

Amount:

\$0.00
\$0.00
\$0.00
\$0.00

Closing Date(s): Early 2013

O.L.A.B. Field Trip: 9/22/2012

O.L.A.B.

Recommendation: 1/3/2013

B.O.C.C. Approval: Scheduled for 1/8/2013

Evaluation Criteria

Values	Staff Rating
Environmental/Ecological	High
Scenic/Aesthetic/Sense of Place	High
Outdoor Recreation	High
Historical/Archaeological	High
Agricultural	High
Geological/Paleontological	High
Information/Education	High
Context	High
Political Factors	Medium
Price	High = good