

Equestrian campsites offered at Hermit Park Open Space

Reporter-Herald Staff Loveland Reporter-Herald

Posted:

ReporterHerald.com

Kruger Equestrian Campground at Hermit Park Open Space opened for reservations this week.

The newly renovated campground has five campsites that each feature a corral for two to four horses depending on site.

The campground also has a new restroom, parking for six horse trailers, and access to the Homestead Meadows Trail.

Hermit Park Open Space now features four campgrounds -- one of them a group campground -- as well as camper cabins.

These campsites will be held for campers with horses unless all other campsites in the open space are full. Reservations can be made at the call center only 1-800-397-7795 (they can not be made online).

For more information about Larimer County's parks and open spaces, visit larimer.org/naturalresources.



Meghan Oren <orenmc@co.larimer.co.us>

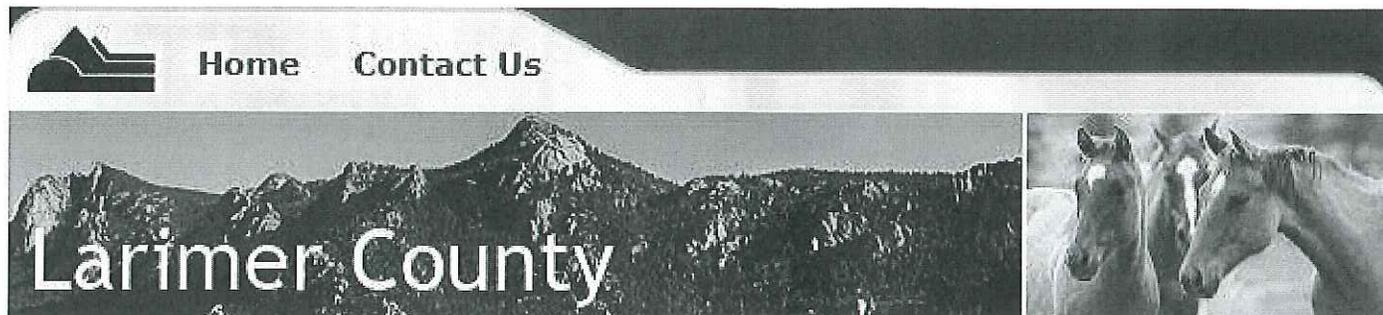
Larimer County Hot Topic - Roberts Ranch Donation Process

1 message

noreply@larimer.org <noreply@larimer.org>

Thu, Jan 17, 2013 at 5:11 PM

To: orenmc@co.larimer.co.us



A new Hot Topic has been published on the Larimer County Virtual Courthouse web site.

Subject: Roberts Ranch Donation Process

The Open Lands Advisory Board will take action on accepting a gift of an approximately 16,500-acre property in the Livermore Valley known as the Roberts Ranch. The Roberts Ranch was homesteaded by the Roberts Family in 1874, and is an active cattle ranch owned solely by Catherine Roberts, who has approached the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources to offer this generous gift. Per the standard Open Lands Program acquisition process the Open Lands Board took this proposal up for action and heard public comment at a meeting on January 3, 2013. At that time the board tabled the discussion until the upcoming Board Meeting on Thursday January 24, 2013. Information about the Open Lands Program is available at www.larimer.org/openlands At the upcoming Open Lands Board meeting the board will begin in executive session at 5pm, before opening the meeting to the public at 5:45 pm. At that time the board will hear a staff presentation concerning the Robert's Ranch Donation including an overview of the project and more information on potential management costs as well as a waste tire site on the property. Following the presentation there will be public comment from individuals who have not yet given comment on this topic. Following public comment the board will discuss the opportunity, and ultimately make a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners as to whether the county should accept the gift or not. The final decision of whether to accept the gift lies with the Board of County Commissioners. They will hold a hearing on the subject on Monday February 4, 2013. Important Meeting Details: Open Lands Advisory Board Meeting January 24, 2013 Loveland City Council Chambers 500 E. Third St, Loveland CO 5:00 – 8:00 p.m. 5:00 pm – Board Executive Session 5:45 pm – Public Portion of Board Meeting Begins, including presentations, public comment and action on the Roberts Ranch Donation Board of County Commissioners Hearing on the Robert's Ranch Proposal February 4, 2013 Larimer County Courthouse Offices 1st Floor Hearing Room 200 W. Oak St. Fort Collins CO 6:30pm Final Decision to be made concerning the Roberts Ranch Proposal at this meeting

Information about this can be viewed at larimer.org

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Bald eagles make Fort Collins their winter home

By Jessica Maher Loveland Reporter-Herald

Posted:

ReporterHerald.com

FORT COLLINS – The first time master naturalist Jack Hicks said he wanted to host a Christmas morning eagle watch at Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space, he was warned not to be disappointed if no one showed up.

But three years later, people bundled in snow suits, hats and gloves made their way to the pier throughout Tuesday morning where Hicks and other volunteers with Fort Collins Natural Areas set up scopes and telephoto lenses for viewing the regal birds in their temporary home.

at Fossil Creek Reservoir

What: Join a volunteer master naturalist to look for the bald eagles that congregate around the reservoir in the winter.

Where: Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space, located on Carpenter Road, one mile west of Interstate 25, Fort Collins

Info: Viewing pier is a short walk from the parking lot along a paved trail. The program is free, no registration is required and participants can drop in anytime during the program. Dress warmly. Contact 416-2815 for more information.

When: 2 p.m. to 4:45 p.m., Wednesday, Jan. 2

3 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., Sunday, Jan. 6

9 a.m. to noon, Saturday, Jan. 12

As many as 30 people have attended the Christmas event in past years. For Hicks, there's no better time than Christmas to watch the bald eagles.

“My kids are older and I think Christmas is about the little kids,” he said. “We do have a lot of people that bring their kids though ... after 7 a.m. on Christmas, we were always looking for something to do.”

The window for spotting the bald eagles around the Fossil Creek Reservoir is relatively small: they arrive in early December and are gone by March at the latest.

Usually in February, they begin to fly north or lay eggs and nest elsewhere.

“Colorado has more and more nesting pairs, which is great,” master naturalist Dawn Wilson said. “More and more are settling here year-round.”

The eagles choose to congregate around Fossil Creek Reservoir because it's the one body of water in the area that does not freeze. It provides the opportunity to swoop in and feed, usually on geese. When more water

opens up, they begin to move out.

Morning through early afternoon is the best time to spot the birds, said Wilson, who has seen as many as 20 bald eagles at one time in trees around the reservoir.

Most participants came with their own binoculars around their neck, but they are also available at every eagle watch. What follows is a chorus of “over there” and “there's one.”

Perched unsuspectingly in a tree across the reservoir, Hicks focused his scope on a large bald eagle and invited participants to take a look as the bird swung its head around, showcasing the characteristic white head that means it has reached maturity and is at least four years old.

“Oh wow!” Loveland resident Helen Bernotas said. “That was worth it.”

Bernotas and her husband, Vyto, recently moved to Loveland from Chicago. They celebrated Christmas with their family in Illinois last week and said they were glad for the opportunity to spend part of the day at the open space.

Volunteer master naturalists host several eagle watches in December and January each year.





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Written by Associated Press

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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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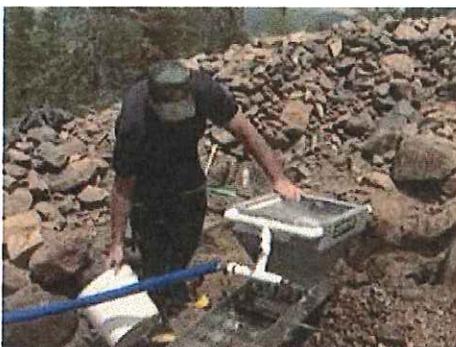
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(credit: CBS)

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

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There's gold panning in them thar Larimer County

Denver Business Journal

Date: Friday, December 21, 2012, 6:57am MST

Larimer County commissioners voted to continue to allow panning for gold, the Loveland Reporter-Herald reports.

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From around the web

Larimer County won't ban gold-panning in natural areas — for now

Written by Patrick Malone

Jan. 01

coloradoan.com

Optimism is the foremost tool in a treasure hunter's kit, and it delivered a payload Tuesday when Larimer County commissioners backed off a proposal to ban prospecting at county natural areas.

Initially, the stream of gold-panning enthusiasts that addressed the board checked their high hopes at the door of the commissioners' conference room and girded for a fight to preserve freely practicing their favorite pastime.

Concerns that the hobby is trampling the Poudre and Big Thompson rivers led commissioners to mull a prohibition on mineral extraction in its natural areas because rangers have observed an uptick in prospecting.

Prospectors characterized their hobby as an environmentally gentle, family-friendly way of connecting with nature that draws visitors to the area.

Rick Mattingly of the Rocky Mountain Prospectors and Treasure Hunters, an organization based in Fort Collins with a membership list of about 180, told commissioners that prospectors are stewards of the river with a great sense of pride in the community.

"Mostly to us, it's just a way to get family out in the outdoors," he said, noting that tourists frequently reach out to his group seeking guidance on how to go about prospecting adventures in the area.

Mattingly dismissed worries that prospectors are using high-powered machinery that is detrimental to the environment. He said most are equipped with little more than a shovel, a non-invasive sluice box and a pan. If anything, Mattingly said, prospectors leave the river and its banks cleaner than they found it.

Another prospector, Bryan Morgan, told the board any crackdown would not impact large mineral extractors, but families in search of some good, clean fun in the mud.

"It's a good opportunity for the kids and grandpa to go out and get wet, muddy and dirty, and nobody can holler at us," he said.

The proposed regulation would have added minerals to the list of items people are prohibited from taking from county natural areas. The existing no-no's include animals, vegetation, wood "or any other object."

County Attorney George Haas said he interprets the existing regulations to forbid panning for gold but said the new language that was proposed would have articulated that prohibition more clearly. Gary Buffington, the county's natural resources director, added that the county does not necessarily own the mineral rights within its natural areas, so it has no authority to allow their extraction.

Gold is virtually absent from the Big Thompson, and minimally present in the Poudre, Mattingly said.

In all practicality, Commissioner Steve Johnson said, other acts prohibited by the current county regulations go unenforced. He said common sense should guide the board's course on prospecting, and he suggested that prospectors should have a seat at the table to help shape the direction of policies related to the activity.

Commissioner Tom Donnelly agreed. Commissioner Lew Gaiter was not present.

While it stood down on the proposed prospecting ban, the board authorized a change in regulations to allow equine camping at Hermit Park, where five new campsites featuring corrals have been added. Another county regulation was adopted requiring hard-sided, locking food-storage containers at natural areas to minimize the likelihood that bears will be attracted.

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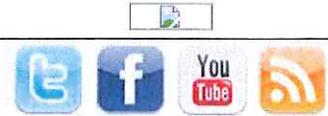
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Larimer County board puts off decision on Roberts Ranch donation

Most public comments during Thursday night hearing oppose gift of 16,500-acre property

By Craig Young Reporter-Herald Staff Writer

Posted: 01/03/2013 10:14:42 PM MST

FORT COLLINS -- After hearing comments from more than 30 people Thursday night about the proposed donation of the 16,500-acre Roberts Ranch, the Larimer County Open Lands Advisory Board voted to table the issue to gather more information.

If accepted, the gift of the historic cattle ranch near Livermore would be the largest such donation in the history of Larimer County.

Most of the speakers, including the three living descendants of 1874 homesteader Robert O. Roberts, urged the board to reject the gift.

Open Lands Board member Hugh McKean, a Loveland City Council member, expressed his concern about the ongoing cost of running a cattle operation, which is stipulated in the gift agreement.

"I'm suggesting that we don't have enough information to make that decision today," he said. Many in the crowd of more than 80 people wore cowboy hats and boots and work jeans, and a majority of the speakers identified themselves as neighbors or longtime friends of the Roberts family.

They objected to the county accepting a gift that would involve the property's 92-year-old owner giving the ranch to someone other than the Roberts descendants.

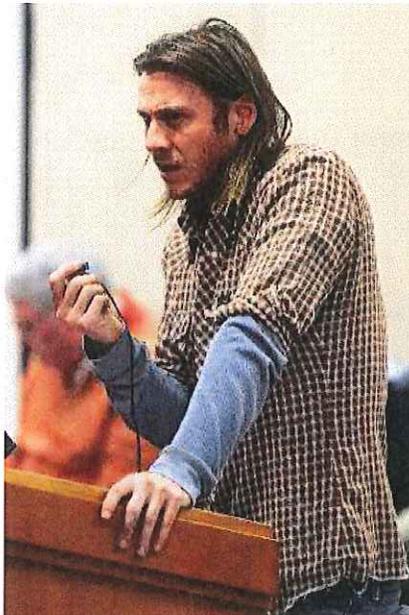
Catherine Roberts, the second wife of the late Evan Roberts and the stepmother and grandmother of those descendants, is sole owner of the land. Evan's only child, D.L. Roberts, and D.L.'s sons, Burke and Benjamin Roberts, are fighting the donation.

Many of the supporters of the three Robertses told the board it would be unethical to cut them out of their inheritance.

Lou Kinsley, who said he has known D.L., Burke and Benjamin Roberts for years, acknowledged that Catherine Roberts has the right to donate the land and the county can accept it.

"It's legal, but not ethical," he said.

Added Larimer County native Carl Judson, who said he has known the Roberts family for 65 years, "I think it is entirely inappropriate for Larimer County to contemplate a transaction that would disinherit three descendants."



Burke Roberts, a sixth-generation descendant of Roberts Ranch founder Robert O. Roberts, speaks against the proposed donation of the 16,500-acre property to Larimer County during the Open Lands Advisory Board meeting Thursday at the Larimer County Courthouse in Fort Collins. (Steve Stoner)

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But the board members said they had to stay out of any family feuds and focused their discussion on whether the county should or could operate a ranch, how much it would cost each year and how big a problem was posed by the hundreds of thousands of scrap tires dumped on a portion of the land.

They asked the county staff to do more research on those issues and then voted unanimously to table the issue until their next meeting Jan. 24 in the Loveland City Council Chamber.

"This is a tough decision," said board chairman Peter Kast. "Nobody in this room is unconvinced that this is a fabulous piece of dirt. No matter who owns it, Robert Ranch is a jewel.

"But I agree with Hugh," he said. "We need to know more."

After the meeting, Burke Roberts said he was surprised that the board didn't readily vote to accept the gift.

"I'm really appreciative that they realize this is something to put the brakes on and do a lot more investigation," he said.

Craig Young can be reached at 635-3634 or cyoung@reporter-herald.com. Follow him on Twitter: @CraigYoungRH.



Benjamin Roberts addresses the Larimer County Open Lands Advisory Board during the board's final review and recommendation meeting Thursday at the Larimer County Courthouse in Fort Collins. The proposed donation to the county of the 16,500-acre ranch would leave him without the property he thought he would inherit. (Steve Stoner)

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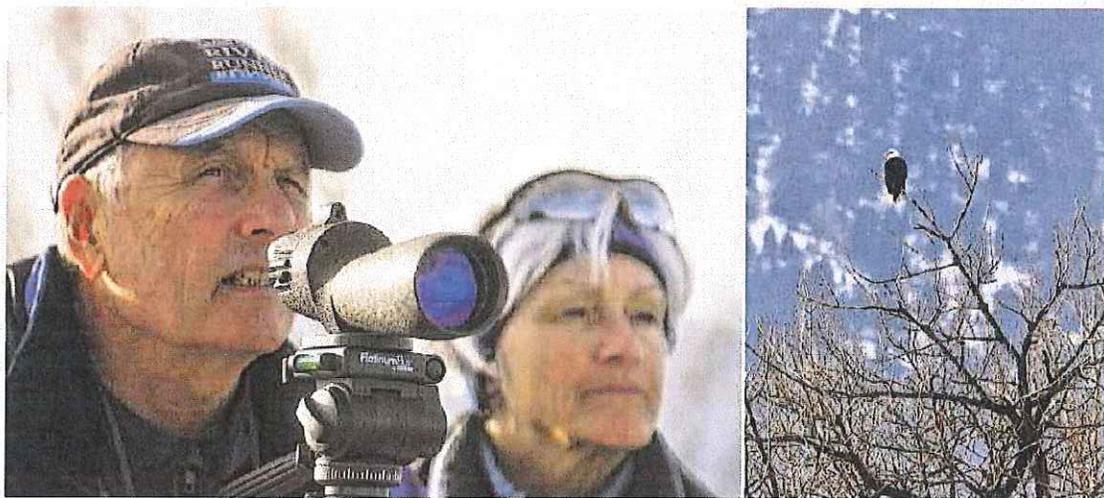
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Majestic sighting

A crowd of people stands on the viewing deck at the Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space on Sunday while looking for bald eagles wintering in Fort Collins. PHOTOS BY SAM NOBLETT/THE COLORADOAN



January 7, 2013
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01/07/2013 5:43 pm

County postpones decision on Roberts Ranch gift

Board considers ability to manage cattle operation and Roberts family feud over land.

By Bobby Magill

BobbyMagill@coloradoan.com

The Larimer County Open Lands Advisory Board has postponed its vote on whether the county should accept a gift of the 16,500-acre Roberts Ranch near Livermore.

The advisory board decided Thursday to table its decision until Jan. 24, citing the need for more information about the county's ability to manage a cattle operation, said board member Carl Sorrentino.

Catherine Roberts, 92, wants to give the ranch to the county for use as public open space and a working cattle ranch.

The ranch, which is east of U.S. Highway 287 near Livermore, was homesteaded in 1874 and is currently under two conservation easements managed by The Nature Conservancy and the city of Fort Collins.

"The decision to table was tied into getting more information on a management plan, cattle operation viability potential," Sorrentino said.

A feud among members of the Roberts family about the rightful ownership of the ranch also influenced the board's decision to postpone its decision. Board member and Fort Collins City Council member Gerry Horak said he wants it to be clear Catherine Roberts has clear title to the property.

D.L. Roberts, Catherine Roberts' stepson, claims the ranch rightfully belongs to him and his sons, all of whom are fighting the transfer of the property.

"It'll get really ugly for them," if this "land grab" is allowed to go forward, D.L. Roberts' son, Burke Evan Roberts, said Friday, referring to Larimer County.

The board will take up the matter at 5 p.m. Jan. 24 at the Loveland Municipal Building in Loveland.

Follow reporter Bobby Magill at twitter.com/bobbymagill and facebook.com/bobbymagill.

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LOCAL NEWS

Larimer County tables ranch donation, worried about cost of running it

PRINT EMAIL 4 COMMENTS

By Craig Young
Loveland Reporter-Herald

POSTED: 01/05/2013 12:01:00 AM MST

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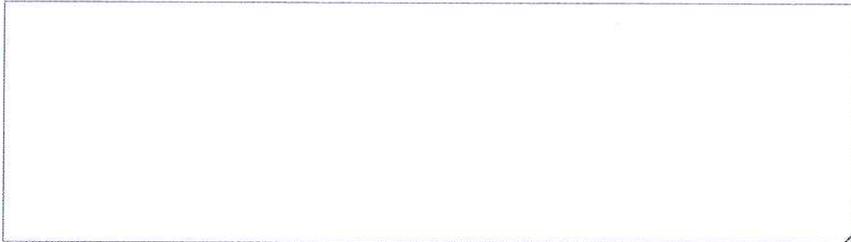
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"They need to talk to the folks down at Chico Basin Ranch in El Paso County. It's a successfully run working cattle ranch in the public trust. It's also 5 times the size of the Roberts Ranch."

True. But Chico Basin has a income for the State Land I

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January ARD meeting focus is public lands in the Estes Valley

By Juley Harvey Trail-Gazette Estes Park Trail-Gazette

Posted:

eptrail.com

The Association for Responsible Development (ARD) will hold its first meeting of the new year on Tuesday, Jan. 8, at 10 a.m. in the town hall meeting rooms 201-201. The public is invited to hear Zac Wiebe from the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources speak on "Our Lands -- Our Future." He will give a slide presentation of the final results of the 2012 County Citizen Survey, which includes responses from 922 county residents concerning their current use of and future preferences for natural areas and nature-based facilities in Larimer County.

Respondents from Estes Park were included in the survey, which is intended to help plan for the future of municipal and county natural areas.

Estes Park will receive \$261,000 in 2013 from the 0.25-percent county sales tax dedicated to the purchase and maintenance of trails and open space, according to The Town Bugle. ARD directors noted that the County Citizen Survey results showed a strong preference for future purchase of open space and expenditures for trail maintenance sponsored by this tax program.

Wiebe will also give a demonstration of an interactive mapping tool being developed by the county to aid efforts in prioritizing parcels for future use and preservation. ARD directors encourage all those in town who are interested in identifying the use of municipal and county natural areas and nature-based facilities, to attend this meeting and comment on the survey results.

The open space presentation will begin at 10 a.m., following the ARD business meeting, held from 8:30-9:45 a.m. in the same room.

ARD is changing its meeting venue for 2013 and will hold all meetings on the second Friday of each month at 10 a.m., at the town hall rooms 201-202 (excepting the January meeting, to be held on a Tuesday).

"We thank The Good Samaritan Society-Estes Park Village for hosting our meetings over the past several years," ARD directors said.

Further information will be announced before each monthly meeting in this newspaper.

ARD is dedicated to preserving the unique mountain character and natural beauty of the Estes Valley by fostering appropriate and responsible development.

For further information, contact: Tom at 586-9257 or secretary@ardestes.org.

Opinion: Columnists

Ron Arnold: Nature Conservancy embroiled in another land grab scandal

January 10, 2013 | 8:00 pm | Modified: January 10, 2013 at 8:05 pm

6 Comments



Ron Arnold
Contributor

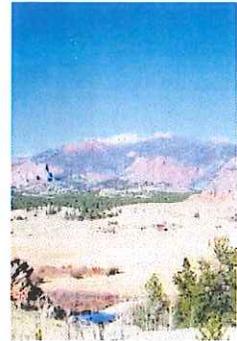
The Washington Examiner



One of Big Green's biggest outfits, the Nature Conservancy (2011 revenue \$997 million; assets \$6 billion), is once again under fire. The new accusation is that it used improper influence over an elderly landowner to get her to donate her family property.

This time it's the 16,500-acre Roberts Ranch in Larimer County, Colo., owned by a 92-year-old woman. TNC allegedly influenced her to donate the land and cattle operation to the county, where it would be run as open space at taxpayer expense -- or, if the county declines the donation, the ranch would go to "a conservation group," according to county officials.

The real kicker is TNC's questionable part in cutting off inheritance rights of three living descendants of 1874 homesteader Robert O. Roberts, Derek Roberts and his two sons, Burke and Benjamin. That's brewing up a storm of protest from hundreds of locals who know the heirs.



In 1993, something similar happened with the Gibbs Farm near Valparaiso, Ind. There was no cheering section to help the Gibbs brothers, Frederic and Erich -- both medical researchers -- get their property back from TNC when their elderly father gave it to TNC after many blandishments.

The father, Frederic A. Gibbs, M.D., had been a world-renowned doctor and medical scientist; he invented of the electroencephalograph. But he was in decline and of questionable mental ability when he signed documents giving the family farm to TNC, forcing the brothers to file a lawsuit they could not afford in order to get it back.

As plaintiffs, the brothers alleged that their father was not mentally competent to sign the documents and accused defendant TNC of fraud and undue influence.

Court documents show that on Oct. 26, 1993, after a lengthy trial, federal Judge Rudy Lozano asked the jury foreman, "Have the plaintiffs proven by a preponderance of the evidence that the legal documents executed by Frederic Gibbs on Sept. 26, 1991, are the product of undue influence?" Answer: yes.

The plaintiffs could not prove their father's mental incompetence or that TNC committed fraud, but the undue-influence verdict was enough to get the farm back. TNC appealed and lost. The farm went to the brothers, who told me they had to sell it to pay their legal bills -- a heartbreaking Pyrrhic victory.

The Roberts Ranch case looks eerily like the Gibbs Farm case. In a hearing last week, local news sources reported, nearly 100 people "in cowboy hats and boots and work jeans" -- including the three heirs -- heatedly told the Larimer County Open Lands Advisory Board to not accept TNC's gift of the Roberts Ranch, said the report.

The sole owner of the ranch is Catherine Roberts, the 92-year-old second wife of the late Evan Roberts. She is the stepmother and stepgrandmother of the three descendants. Derek Roberts is Evan's only child. He and his sons are fighting the donation -- and the ownership of the ranch.

I contacted Derek Roberts by phone and asked about the ownership fight. "I feel like our heritage was stolen," he told me. He then went through a list of allegations that sounded all too familiar: forged signatures on key documents, a will that's being ignored, misrepresentations and broken promises, and undue influence by TNC.

Catherine Roberts has made herself unavailable for interviews. TNC only comments that "Catherine Roberts is the legal owner."

At last week's meeting, Derek Roberts and his two sons asked for an investigation of their concerns. The Open Lands Advisory Board voted to table the issue to gather more information.

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Larimer Co. could join others in designating shooting zones

A Tuesday discussion will center around whether to join an effort to decide where recreational shooting is appropriate in public spaces.

9:18 AM, Jan 12, 2013 | Comments

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Written by Patrick Malone

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Larimer County commissioners on Tuesday will decide whether to join other counties and agencies to help identify locations along the northern Front Range where recreational sport shooting should and should not be allowed.

“One of the driving factors behind looking at this is that population centers are not getting any smaller. They’re growing, and lots of people are outdoors hiking and using the trails,” said Gary Buffington, director of the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources. “There’s some recreational shooting going on that may or may not be safe and responsible. Right now, there’s not a guideline for that.”

The U.S. Forest Service and Colorado Parks and Wildlife are in the process of developing a recreational sport shooting strategy and asked Larimer, Boulder, Gilpin and Clear Creek counties to participate. Solutions will be sought primarily for federal and state land, but ultimately a clear presentation of where shooting should and should not be conducted that includes county land would be beneficial, in Buffington’s estimation.

“We don’t want folks guessing about where they’ll be able to go do this,” he said.

Participating groups are expected to contribute \$1,500 toward paying a project coordinator. Advantages of taking part include development of a responsible recreational sport shooting strategy for the area and giving the public a chance to comment on it. The disadvantage noted by staff is that additional regulations will require enforcement.

“People hiking a trail with bullets whizzing over their heads are going to have questions,” Buffington said. “The time is right to have that discussion.”

Take part

In person: 9 a.m. Tuesday, commissioners’ conference room, second floor of the Larimer County Courthouse Offices, 200 W. Oak St., Fort Collins
Online:
www.larimer.org/bcc/broadcast.cfm

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County joins group studying shooting restrictions on public lands

12:56 PM, Jan 15, 2013 | Coloradoan

By: Patrick Malone

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The ricochet from unfettered gunfire on public lands is ringing in the ears of federal, state and county government.

On Tuesday, Larimer County commissioners unanimously approved joining a consortium to study shooting on public lands with an eye on possible restrictions.

Increased recreational traffic on U.S. National Forest Service land, where wide-open rules allow recreational sport shooting without limitation, is creating some harrowing situations for hikers and others pursuing recreation, according to Gary Buffington, director of the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources.

“There is some unsafe things going on the northern Front Range,” he said.

LaPorte resident Bob Havis said an area near his cabin in the Crystal Mountain Subdivision adjacent to the Arapahoe National Forest is popular among gun enthusiasts and “sounds like there’s a battle going on” most weekends.

“During warm weather from Friday afternoon, Friday evening through Sunday afternoon, there’s pretty well constant firing off of this site,” he said. “They’re firing directly at my property and my cabin 1,000 feet away.”

Havis said he thinks shooting on public lands is incompatible with other uses and advocated for regulation of it. That is one possible result of the meetings that Larimer County will take part in during the year ahead.

The U.S. Forest Service and Colorado Parks and Wildlife are taking the lead to study shooting safety on public lands in the northern portion of the Front Range.

Larimer, Boulder, Gilpin and Clear Creek counties have been invited to participate. Each of the participating counties is expected to contribute \$1,500 toward a project coordinator’s salary. Buffington offered up Larimer County’s share from his department’s budget.

Buffington said Larimer County already limits shooting on its open spaces to hunting seasons.

“Most of this discussion will focus around the U.S. Forest Service property in Larimer County, because they do have pretty much an open allowance” on shooting, Buffington said. The intergovernmental study could change that.

“Some closures might be involved,” Buffington said, but designated locations for unsupervised recreational shooting or even supervised shooting ranges could be established by the forest service.

Gun enthusiast William Henderson of Fort Collins, an octogenarian whose marksmanship carried him all the way to the Olympics, told the commissioners we would support some restrictions on where shooting can be practiced, provided it still has a place on public lands.

“I’m very strong on getting areas specifically designated and equipped for people to come and shoot under supervision,” he said.

Currently, Larimer County is home to several private shooting ranges and one public shooting range operated by Estes Park recreation staff for the forest service.

Commissioner Tom Donnelly said the study group will move ahead with or without Larimer County, so he supported taking part in the discussion.

“If it pushes shooting completely out of the national forest, it may filter down into the county, so I think it’s in our best interest to be actively engaged in this issue,” he said.

<http://www.coloradoan.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2013301150021>

Grant will pay for youth to rehab popular natural areas

Written by Patrick Malone

Jan. 16

coloradoan.com

A grant will help Larimer County strike a balance between conservation and recreation, with the added benefit of setting youth on the right path as they rehabilitate a trail and learn forestry skills.

Great Outdoors Colorado in partnership with Colorado Youth Corps Association awarded \$40,947 to the county's department of natural resources to fund six weeks of habitat rehabilitation and trail repairs by Larimer County Conservation Corps.

Two crews with ages ranging from 16 to 24 will do the work, according to the Larimer County Workforce Center's Maelly Oropeza, the corps manager.

"The corps really thrives on diversity," he said. "We could have a recent graduate of the Warner College of Natural Resources, and we could have someone who's 19 and dropped out of high school and has had some challenges with education and employment."

"That's a big part of the grant," said Jeffrey Boring, of the county's natural resources department. "It will provide these kids professional skill development. It's really a stepping stone toward a career."

Oropeza said recruiting for the crews will begin next month.

Boring said the conservation work the corps will conduct for Larimer County will take place in June and July at Horsetooth Mountain Open Space. Participants will be tasked with reseeding burn scars, clearing ponderosa pine trees that are encroaching on Spring Creek Meadow and Soderberg Meadow and removing trees charred in an October 2010 prescribed burn that have become a hazard.

Clearing the pines will preserve the meadow habitat that over time could be threatened by shade if the trees are left alone.

"Twenty, 30, 50 years from now, we could have a forested area instead of a grassy area," Boring said.

In the Soderberg Meadow, the rare butterfly-like dusted skipper's native habitat is threatened by the encroachment of pines and will be spared thanks to the work of the corps. The corps also will make improvements to an eroded section of Stout Trail.

Larimer County joins recreational shooting discussion

By Pamela Dickman Loveland Reporter-Herald

Posted:

ReporterHerald.com

FORT COLLINS — Bob Havis has a cabin near Crystal Mountain that he cannot use because of target shooters at a nearby U.S. Forest Service campground.

Campers shoot directly at his cabin, which is about 600 feet from the campsite off Forest Service Road 132, Havis told the Larimer County commissioners Tuesday.

“Just about every single weekend during warm weather there's constant firing,” said Havis. “They're firing directly at my cabin... It sounds like a battle going on.”

He added, “I can't use my property. I'd be a fool to out of fear for my safety, and I don't see anything I can do about it.”

Because the shooting is occurring on U.S. Forest Service land, where it is allowed, county officials can't stop it either.

But they can offer input to a regional group that is working together to solve some of the problems associated with recreational shooting on public land and maybe even designate places it can occur safely.

The county commissioners voted Tuesday to officially join the regional discussion with Natural Resources Director Gary Buffington and Commissioner Tom Donnelly serving on the committee.

Also in the group are Boulder, Gilpin and Clear Creek Counties, the U.S. Forest Service and Colorado Parks and Wildlife. Each will pay \$1,500 to hire a project coordinator to help identify areas where recreational shooting should be allowed as well as areas it should be restricted.

“There could be some real positive things that come out of it,” said Buffington. “It's a collaborative discussion about this issue, and I think the county would benefit from having a seat at the table to give input and ask questions.”

The commissioners agreed it is important to have a voice on an issue that could affect Larimer County in many ways.

“If shooting is pushed out of the forest, it may filter into the county,” said Commissioner Tom Donnelly.

And the policies could affect Larimer County residents, like Havis.