

Gov. Hickenlooper signs four bills aimed at helping Colorado outdoors

By Randy Wyrick Vail Daily News The Denver Post

Posted: 5/20/2013

DenverPost.com

AVON — Gov. John Hickenlooper signed four bills aimed at preserving and improving Colorado's outdoors Saturday.

Hickenlooper said the bills will help preserve and enhance hunting, fishing and the habitat that makes them possible.

"When I'm talking with entrepreneurs about locating to Colorado, they talk about quality of life," Hickenlooper said. "First they talk about the mountains, and soon they talk about the people attracted to the mountains."

One of the bills, Senate Bill 222, creates a "Protect Our Rivers" license plate Colorado motorists can buy.

Ken Neubecker, with Colorado Trout Unlimited and director of the Western Rivers Institute, said every dime raised is for the rivers.

"This is for habitat preservation and restoration. It cannot and will not be used for any political or lobbying purpose," Neubecker said. "This all goes back to the rivers."

Montana has a similar program that has been very successful in raising money.

"We decided that Montana did, and so can we," Neubecker said.

A similar bill died in last year's Colorado state legislature.

State Sen. Gail Schwartz, who represents Eagle County, had high praise for the bills, saying it improves hunting and fishing access, and for her House colleague Millie Hamner, a Summit County Democrat.

"There aren't that many legislators from western Colorado," Schwartz said. "We work together, and we stick together."

Among other bills, Hamner sponsored Senate Bill 175, which continues the wildlife stamp program, a voluntary program that raises money for wildlife habitat preservation and improvement and provides public access.

Those purchasing the stamp raised \$6.6 million and can be leveraged with money from Great Outdoors Colorado.

Hickenlooper said the money has preserved and improved 173,000 acres of wildlife habitat, provided 80,000 acres of new public access and created 25 miles of public fishing access to Colorado's rivers and streams.



National Get Outdoors Day is June 8

BY [NFN](#) ON MAY 21, 2013 IN [DISPATCHES](#) · [ADD COMMENT](#)

Jax Mercantile, in partnership with the City of Fort Collins and Larimer County Natural Resources, is hosting a National Get Outdoors Day event from 10 a.m. to 2 .m. on June 8. This event encourages healthy, active, outdoor fun and will be held at Spring Canyon Park, located at 3156 South Overland Trail in Fort Collins.

Get Outdoors Day will offer a mix of information centers and active fun areas where the public, especially children, can play frisbee golf, fish, hike, bike, climb, boat, backpack, take an up-close look at live native wildlife and more.

The event kicks off with a 9:30 a.m. run where beginners and advanced runners, young and old, are invited to join the fun.

Get Outdoors Day combats the effects of indoor, inactive lifestyles which are fueling the nation's obesity epidemic and threatening today's children with shorter life expectancies than their parents. Expert instruction and equipment will be provided for public use, regardless of previous experience. The primary goal is to introduce families and youth to outdoor activities, and reconnect them with the great outdoors.

For more information visit www.getoutdoorsnoco.org.



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LOCAL

Vintage Airstream Accommodations At Horsetooth Reservoir

May 25, 2013 3:37 PM

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Horsetooth Reservoir (credit: CBS)

FORT COLLINS, Colo. (AP) – Camping at Horsetooth Reservoir is about to reach a new comfort level.

A tricked-out Airstream Classic camper that boasts many of the amenities of home – including a flat-screen TV, DVD player and air conditioning – will be available for campers this summer in the Southbay Campground operated by the Larimer County Natural Resources

Department.

The shiny, 31-foot camper is equipped to sleep three adults or two adults and two children with linens provided. It has a fully outfitted kitchen along with a toilet and shower.

Camping in an Airstream is like staying in a hotel room, said Gary Buffington, director of the natural resources department. The rig is meant to round out the park’s portfolio of camping options, which include tents, recreational vehicles and cabins.

“We think it will be a popular addition to our camping program,” he said.

The county paid \$37,000 for the camper and \$2,000 to have it delivered from Georgia. Another \$6,000 was put toward refurbishing it.

Renting the camper will cost \$99 a night and carry a two-night minimum. Buffington said the county is likely to get its investment back in two to three years.



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The Airstream is likely to make appearances at community events such as the county fair and the Colorado State University homecoming parade. It may be moved around to other county parks that can provide full electrical, water and sewer hookups, Buffington said.

The camper was on display Tuesday at the Larimer County Courthouses Offices for inspection by county officials and passers-by.

Airstream camping is a growing trend across the country, said Dan Rieves, visitor services manager for the natural resources department. Some campers like to mix a bit of luxury into their outdoors experiences along with nostalgia for the vintage, aluminum-shelled camper.

"We're actually a little behind the times," he said.

- By KEVIN DUGGAN, *The Coloradoan*

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Lime Gulch Fire



Rocky Mountain National Park



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Parking crunch forces changes at Horsetooth Reservoir

One parking lot is still free on the reservoir's east side, but the no-charge 45-minute lots have been closed.

May 25, 2013 |



Purchase Image

A parking lot just south of the Soldier Canyon Dam at Horsetooth Reservoir is blocked out with boulders Wednesday. / V. Richard Haro/The Coloradoan



Written by

Kevin Duggan

With the exception of a single parking lot, visitors to the east side of Horsetooth Reservoir must now pay to park.

Parking lots that provided free parking for 45 minutes at popular spots such as Rotary and Sunshine parks have been closed. Instead, visitors will have to use “pay-to-play” lots that require daily or annual parks permits, said Dan Rieves, visitor services manager with the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources.

Enforcing the 45-minute limit at three lots was problematic for park rangers and frustrating for visitors, Rieves said. Parking spots were being taken up for hours and rangers were spending time writing parking tickets when they were supposed to be patrolling the park.

“The honor system for the 45-minute parking just broke down over time,” he said. “It had become kind of contentious.”

In addition, too many cars cramming into unregulated pull-over parking spots along the road had become a safety problem, he said. Large boulders were moved to block areas where parking is not permitted.

As a concession to park users making short visits to the reservoir for picnics and sightseeing, the parking lot at Skyline Picnic Area near the north end of the reservoir was made a free area.

The conversion provides more free parking spaces than were available in the 45-minute lots combined, Rieves said.

A daily permit for Horsetooth and other county-operated reservoirs costs \$7; an annual vehicle permit is \$75 for Larimer County residents and \$45 for resident 65 and older.

The county parks system relies on permit fees to help cover its operating expenses, Rieves said. Providing services carries a cost, even if the service is only a parking lot and a rest room.

Recent changes to regulations that allow hikers and cyclists to enter parks without permits and to make annual vehicle passes transferrable are meant to make visiting the parks easier, he said.

“I think we have as much or more access to our facilities as ever before,” Rieves said.

Briefs: Take it outside with your commissioner on May 31

Written by Coloradoan staff and news services

May 25, 2013 |

coloradoan.com

Larimer County Department of Natural Resources hosts its “Take it outside with your commissioner” hike 9 a.m. May 31 at Devil’s Backbone Open Space with Commissioner Tom Donnelly and Open Lands Program Manager Keri Rollins. The informal opportunity to visit with an elected official will give hikers the chance to ask Donnelly questions. The 2-hour program is free, but registration is required. Visit www.larimer.org/NRregistration to sign up. Information: Heather at (970) 679-4489.

National Get Outdoors Day June 8

Jax Mercantile, in partnership with the City of Fort Collins and Larimer County Natural Resources, will host the Fort Collins Get Outdoors Day event from 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. June 8 at Spring Canyon Park, 3156 S. Overland Trail, as part of National Get Outdoors Day. This event encourages healthy, active, outdoor fun.

This Get Outdoors Day event will offer a mix of information centers and active areas where people and their children can play frisbee, golf, fish, hike, bike, climb, boat, backpack, and watch wildlife.

The event kicks off with a 9:30 a.m. run led by The North Face sponsored athlete, Diane Van Deren. Beginners and advanced runners are invited to join.

For more information visit www.getoutdoorsnoco.org

Free youth fishing fest is June 1 at West Lake

The U.S. Forest Service is hosting a free fishing fest for kids from 8 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. June 1 at the West Lake day-use area in concurrence with Colorado Free Fishing Day.

Participants younger than age 15 will receive a free fishing pole and fishing lessons by Forest Service fisheries biology staff, the Soaring Eagle Ecology Center and volunteers from Trout Unlimited.

Check-in time is from 8 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. Space is limited.

Participants must register online by May 28 at www.fs.usda.gov/arp and use the “Canyon Lakes Ranger District Kids Free Fishing Fest” link in the “Featured Events” box on the lower right-hand side.

For more information, send an email to christopher caroll@fs.fed.us.

Directions: Drive 21 miles north of Fort Collins on U.S. Highway 287. Turn left (west) onto Red Feather Lakes Road (County Road 74E), and drive approximately 22 miles. Turn right onto Dowdy Lake Road.

— Coloradoan staff and news services

Larimer County programs will celebrate Colorado Land Conservation

Appreciation Week June 3-9

By Reporter-Herald Staff Loveland Reporter-Herald: May 29, 2013

ReporterHerald.com

To celebrate Colorado Land Conservation Appreciation Week on June 3-9, several events are planned in Larimer County.

Thursday, June 6, will be a free day at Hermit Park Open Space with a "Hermit Park Treasure Hunt" at 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Discover all the treasures of the area: camping, cabin rentals, wildflowers, wildlife, hiking and the history of the area. Hermit Park Open Space is located off U.S. 36 just east of Estes Park. The program is free and no registration is required. Bring along water and dress for the weather.

"Get Outdoors Day" will be 9:30 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday, June 8, at Spring Canyon Park, 3156 S. Overland Trail in Fort Collins. Learn new ways to get outdoors, and learn where to go in Larimer County. Drop in any time between 9:30 and 2.

A naturalist will present "Tiger of the Skies" at 8-10 a.m. Saturday, June 8, at River Bluffs Open Space, located just west of the Interstate 25/Windsor interchange off of Country Road 32E. Learn why the great-horned owl is known as the tiger of the sky and more fun facts about these nocturnal hunters. Dress appropriately for the weather and bring along water.

"Hummingbirds: In a Heartbeat" will be presented at 7-8 p.m. Saturday, June 8, at Carter Lake Eagle Campground, located southwest of Loveland. Learn how hummingbirds migrate and how to tell the ruby-throated from the rufous varieties. The program is free, but a \$7 day use fee applies.

A search and rescue volunteer and local wildlife expert will present "Wildlife of Hermit Park" at 7 p.m. Saturday, June 8. The interactive program features skins and skulls to tell about the wildlife that call Hermit Park Open Space home. Meet at the Hermit's Cabin. The program is free, but a \$7 day use fee applies.

For details on any of the programs, call Heather at 679-4489.

A web page with more information and a complete calendar of local events during Colorado Land Conservation Appreciation Week is available at: appreciationweek.cclt.org/ or by following the appreciation week on Facebook: [facebook.com/colandappreciationweek](https://www.facebook.com/colandappreciationweek). We promise you a great time and hope to see you out on Larimer County's parks and open spaces to celebrate all the wonderful work done to protect the special places that make Colorado a phenomenal place to live, work and play.

Hermit Park Open Space "free day" Thursday, June 6

Special to the Trail-Gazette Estes Park Trail-Gazette

Posted: May 31, 2013

eptrail.com

Hermit Park Open Space - only 2 miles outside of Estes Park - will be opening its gate on June 6 and waiving the normal admission price of \$6 per vehicle (used for maintenance and upkeep). Just like a free day at Rocky Mountain National Park.

In addition to the free admission, there are special events and activities planned to be sure everyone becomes better acquainted with this local treasure. It's all part of the Second Annual Colorado Land Conservation Appreciation Week, a week-long celebration of all the work done to protect the special places that make Colorado a phenomenal place to live, work and play. The Hermit Park Open Space event is co-sponsored by Estes Valley Land Trust and Larimer County Department of Natural Resources.

Hermit Park Open Space will be hosting a unique treasure hunt on June 6 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., and all ages are invited to participate. There will be a treasure map to follow, with directions to visit and learn about all the treasures hidden in this scenic, publicly accessible conservation easement that includes camping, cabin rentals, wildflowers, wildlife, hiking, and the history of this unique gem of the Estes Valley. Plus there will be special treasures, activities and prizes just for the kids who bring their parents out for the event. Most of the day will be unscheduled to allow visitors to come and explore as they wish; however, guided hikes to the saddle on the Kruger Rock Trail will begin at 9:30 a.m. and 1 p.m., and guided wildflower walks are scheduled at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. for those who are interested in those activities. No advanced registration is required for any of these activities.

Hermit Park Open Space is a 1,362-acre natural area nestled into the hills at 7,880 - 8,964 feet elevation, just off Highway 36. Ponderosa pine forests, wetland meadows, and abundant habitat for an impressive variety of mountain wildlife characterize this beautiful property. Amenities include cabins, RV and tent camping, group campground, a group pavilion which can be reserved for special events, and trails for hiking, horseback riding, and mountain biking.

The preservation of this stunning area was a joint effort in 2007 between Larimer County, Agilent Technologies, Estes Valley Land Trust, Great Outdoors Colorado, Town of Estes Park, City of Loveland, Erion Foundation, City of Fort Collins, McWhinney Foundation, Town of Berthoud, and many more contributors.

The property was originally privately owned, but was purchased in 2007 and opened to the public in 2008. Hermit Park Open Space is operated and maintained for public use by the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources. Estes Valley Land Trust holds the conservation easement on the property, restricting its development in perpetuity. Unlike most conservation easements, this property is not privately owned, and the easement allows public access and recreational use.

Mark your calendar for a free visit to Hermit Park Open Space on June 6. Plan a picnic lunch, bring your hat and sunscreen and plenty of water, and enjoy one of Estes Park's close-by treasures. It's one of the reasons you live in the Estes Valley.

Open space is golden

Posted: June 7, 2013

eptrail.com

"Green" is usually considered good. Sometimes, how you get to "green" creates some discord — where county Open Space funds may be best used, for example. Bond Park is a green open space, in the midst of a town trying to grow its business. As such, it is a place of respite, an oasis for tired workers, shoppers, visitors and those just enjoying the view or an event there.

Bond Park, an "open space" in downtown Estes Park, has been refurbished using some Larimer County Open Space funds, to the dismay of some residents who feel that money should be better allocated for "true" open space areas. As the Association for Responsible Development (ARD) points out, the town does not own that many parcels of what can be truly considered "open space." Some residents bristle over the designation of Bond Park as "open space." Whatever can be kept green, though, by whatever means, should be applauded. Bond Park offers a respite on Estes Park's "main street." From this oasis, you can view the mountains, put your feet on the grass, grab a quick bite and picnic, watch the world go by and enjoy a cowboy sing-along. All these uses seem appropriate for an open space. That it also can accommodate the festivals that bring visitors and their money into town is an added benefit.

The mission of the Larimer County Open Lands Program is to preserve and protect significant open space, natural areas, wildlife habitat and develop parks and trails for present and future generations. These open lands provide opportunities for leisure, human renewal and protection of the natural and cultural resources.

In November of 1995, the citizens of Larimer County voted overwhelmingly to support a quarter-cent sales and use tax to protect open space, natural areas, wildlife habitat, regional parks (such as Bond Park) and trails. This initiative represented a grass-roots effort by a group of concerned citizens who joined together to form the Help Preserve Open Spaces Initiative. Since the passage of the tax, the Open Lands Program has successfully preserved more than 43,000 acres of land throughout Larimer County. These lands protect natural resources, as well as provide valuable recreational opportunities for the citizens of Larimer County.

The Open Lands Program is located within the County's Natural Resources Department. A citizen advisory board made up of 12 members makes recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners about the workings of the Open Lands Program. The Open Lands Advisory Board meets the 4th Thursday of each month to discuss projects, possible land acquisitions and their uses and values to the citizens of Larimer County. These meetings are open to the public.

Larimer County is among the fastest growing areas in the nation. Given the current growth rate, open space protection cannot keep up with land development. Within the county limits exist many unique resources, including important wildlife habitat, prime agricultural lands, scenic vistas and landscapes ranging from plains to alpine tundra. However, places that are special to the citizens of Larimer County are being lost to increased development. At least Bond Park will remain green. Were there better places to put Open Space money? Perhaps, but also perhaps not.

"Green" is good. Bond Park is green for good. We can work forward from there. At least we have someplace green to plant our toes in the meantime.

Are open space buildings history? Future of aging Loveland farmstead at the former HP site is unclear

By Jessica Maher Reporter-Herald Staff Writer Loveland Reporter-Herald

Posted: June 15, 2013

ReporterHerald.com

What should happen to a set of century-old buildings that are an unassuming part of Loveland's newest natural area, link the city's past with its future, sit in a floodway and as such may never be able to be occupied again?

That's the question that multiple city staffers and board and commission members have come together to try and answer, and as might be expected, there have been some disagreements.

Ever since the city began discussing plans for the River's Edge Natural Area two years ago and presented proposed designs that included the removal of the 1890s farmstead known as Swartz farm, the Loveland Historical Society has resolved to save the structures.

"The citizens of Loveland own this property, and we want to have it available to the citizens," Loveland Historical Society President Mike Perry said.

In the Plans

The Swartz Farmstead on South Railroad Avenue is located on the property formerly owned by Hewlett-Packard and then by Agilent, and which the city acquired in 2011. It became the most-recent addition to the city's Open Lands Program and what is now the River's Edge Natural Area, which will feature access to ponds, a wetland boardwalk and trail connections.

But after initial meetings and proposals on the open space, what was placed into the River's Edge plans with respect to the historic farmstead was, in fact, nothing.

The matter was intentionally unresolved.

"The farm was specifically not included within the master plan so that the Historical Society proposal could be made," City Manager Bill Cahill said.

For the past year or so, the Loveland Historical Society has been working with the city Historic Preservation Commission on proposals -- they're on their third one. Perry, who is also a member of the commission, said that it had been a collaborative process and at a recent meeting in early May, the city gave the groups more time to submit a modified proposal based on economic concerns.

So when the city's Department of Parks and Recreation applied for a demolition permit for the buildings just days after that meeting, Perry said it came as quite a shock.

"It's kind of hanging over our heads that this could happen," he said.

Cahill said the demolition permit does not put the buildings in immediate risk of being razed but is inside the first step of a process that can take half a year. Once the permit is pulled on a property that may be historical, it's reviewed by a subcommittee of the Historic Preservation Commission. In this case,

commission members decided that the site may have historical significance and have started the process to nominate it to the local historic register.

"That effectively stops the demo permit and sets in place a process that can take 150 days before the issue can have a final decision," Cahill said.

Through future meetings with all parties involved, officials are hoping a decision can come much earlier than that.

Rob Burdine, Loveland's Open Lands manager, said that it remains the city's intention to continue working with the Historic Preservation Commission and Historical Society toward their common goals. But first they have to figure out where that common ground is.

"I don't think anyone's goal is ever to demolish all the structures," Burdine said. "Some of them make sense for our purposes."

In initial plans for River's Edge, the land where the Swartz Farmstead stands was used for eastern access to the natural area that's also accessible off First Street. Those preliminary plans also included parking space and a bus turn-around on top of the current structures.

There is some urgency to find common ground, however, with construction of River's Edge underway and set to open to the public this fall.

What Could Be

When Perry stands in the overgrown courtyard surrounded by the farm buildings that hint at Loveland's agricultural beginnings, he sees a future that would be invaluable to the Loveland community, particularly children. It's one of the few complete farmsteads still intact in the county -- a silo, machine shed, pump house, barn, chicken shed, farmhouse and more -- nine buildings total plus loafing shed ruins.

"This has all the buildings," Perry said. "It's the perfect opportunity for citizens to come in and see what a farmstead looked like."

The opportunity, of course, comes with a price tag. Late last year, the city hired a consultant to estimate the cost of renovating the entire farmstead. It came to about \$500,000 for all the buildings, which compares to estimated cost of \$30,000 to \$40,000 to demolish them all.

But the figure assumes that every building would be renovated, and Perry realizes that's a dream scenario. The Historical Society has eyed the two-story barn and the farmhouse as the buildings they'd most like to renovate for public use.

The farmhouse was most recently used as a meeting space when Hewlett-Packard owned the property and would likely need the least amount of work, Perry said.

"What our view of what we would use the site for is for small groups like the Boy Scouts," Perry said.

"They'd be able to camp on that site, gardeners could come in and learn about wildlife ... it would be a real good learning tool."

Structures that would be too costly to abate and renovate, like the chicken coop, would be on view but cordoned off in the most recent proposal.

In that most recent proposal, Historical Society members have conceded that they'd be willing to let go of the hope of having a complete farmstead. The core buildings listed in the proposal as being highest priority surround a courtyard and include the farmhouse, barn, chicken shed and carriage house. They've changed their position and told the city that the silo, machine shed and loafing shed ruins could be removed if necessary.

"We're willing to let go of those if we had to," Perry said.

Society members have also cited the possibility of grant funding toward the effort, and have pledged to provide an on-site manager who would live and work at the farmstead.

Stay Tuned

For the first time -- and which Burdine admits should have happened earlier -- the Open Lands Advisory Commission, Historic Preservation Commission, city staff and the Loveland Historical Society plan to sit down together in the coming weeks and discuss the situation from all angles.

"The first step really is to decide on the right path going ahead," Cahill said. "Depending on how this is all defined, it may or may not require demolition of some or all of the farmstead. We won't know until we get through this next step."

There's also another significant hurdle beyond coming to an agreement for moving forward. The entire farmstead sits in a floodway, and unless the structures receive a designation on the National Register of Historic Places, they cannot be occupied.

Perry said the Loveland Historical Society will begin working toward that designation, which can be also be a lengthy process, as members know firsthand from their efforts with the Milner-Schwarz house across the street.

"There's a lot of work, but there always is when you're trying to preserve history," he said.

Jessica Maher can be reached at 669-5050, ext. 516, or maherj@reporter-herald.com. Follow her on Twitter: [@JessicaMaherRH](https://twitter.com/JessicaMaherRH).

Two sailboats capsize on Carter Lake, no injuries reported

By Shelley Widhalm Reporter-Herald Staff Writer Loveland Reporter-Herald

Posted: June 16, 2013

ReporterHerald.com

A microburst on Carter Lake caused two sailboats to capsize Sunday afternoon, throwing the seven people on board into the water.

There were no injuries, but one of the two boats sank into the lake.

The sailboats were part of an informal sailboat race of the Carter Lake Sailing Club.

The Larimer County Department of Natural Resources received a call about the capsizing at 1:05 p.m. and responded, as did the Berthoud Fire Dive Rescue team, Thompson Valley Emergency Medical Services and the Loveland Fire Department.

The boat ranger arrived on scene first and with the help of the Carter Lake Marina staff was able to upright one of the sailboats, said Senior Ranger Will Talbott of the Department of Natural Resources.

"Microbursts coming through Carter Lake are extremely common, especially during the summer months," Talbott said.

The call was cleared by 2:20 p.m.

Shelley Widhalm can be reached at 669-5050, ext. 531, or swidhalm@reporter-herald.com