

# REPORTER-HERALD

## Thousands hooked by Fishing Expo

Larimer County expo offers tips and wares for Northern Colorado anglers

**By Alex Burness**

*Reporter-Herald Staff Writer*

POSTED: 03/09/2014 07:28:02 PM MDT



Jim Strawbridge of Frederick, left, and Colten Mohr, 6, of Fort Collins, practice casting lines, while Colten's mother Carol Mohr looks on at the 10th annual Larimer County Fishing Expo on Sunday afternoon. (Alex Burness / Loveland Reporter-Herald)

According to Morrison's Rob Schmac, one does not simply choose to love fishing.

"You either are a fisherman or you aren't," he said. "It's in your genetics."

If Schmac is right, the gene must be present in a whole lot of Coloradans, considering nearly 3,500 people packed The Ranch's First National Bank Building for this weekend's 10th annual Larimer County Fishing Expo.

The free, two-day event also attracted more than 50 vendors, plus several of Colorado's most expert anglers, who taught seminars on topics that included "Fishing from Kayaks and Small Boats," "Choosing the Right Baits for Any Time of Year" and "Latest Technology in Fishing Sonars."

The event originally started as a way to teach locals how to fish in reservoirs, since the Front Range and most of Eastern Colorado have no natural lakes.

"If you're fishing around here, chances are someone dug a hole," said Chad LaChance, a professional angler and host of television's "Fishful Thinker," which air on World Fishing Network and Altitude Sports.

The lack of natural lakes in the area, however, isn't all bad news.

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"We actually have some of the best fishing reservoirs in the state," said the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources' Mark Caughlan, who helped organize the show and currently manages Horsetooth Reservoir.

Caughlan said that reservoir angling is "almost like fishing in a fish bowl," since the county controls exactly which species are allowed, and in what numbers. Most reservoirs in this area are stocked with smallmouth bass and walleye, neither of which are native to Colorado.

While the weekend's event attracted visitors from across the state, its appeal came largely from the fact that every seminar was tailored specifically to Northern Colorado fishers.

"We're not out here talking about something happening in Southern Colorado or in Kansas," LaChance said. "It's very regional. Each area has its own idiosyncracies."

Though the seminars focused hyper-locally, a Larimer address wasn't a prerequisite for enjoyment.

"The people here are really into the fishing industry, and they have a passion just as deep as you do," said Frederick's Jim Strawbridge, who attended his fifth Larimer Fishing Expo. "To help teach people about what I love, just giving them a little information to help them become a better angler — that's what it's all about."

Strawbridge came to The Ranch representing his company, Galaxy Custom Rods. Other vendors sold boats, bait and guided trips, and there were plenty of people selling slightly quirkier items.

Schmac, for example, runs Replicas Inc., a company that builds and decorates fiberglass casts of fish.

"You don't have to kill the fish you caught," he said. "I'll paint it."

Joining Schmac were painters and jewelry makers, all offering fish-themed works, of course.

"Everybody here just likes the gadgets," Schmac said. "Even when they're unnecessary, we still like it."

The expo also attracted lots of families.

"We're really here for our little guy," said Fort Collins resident Carol Mohr, pointing to her 6-year-old son, Colten. Though he's still young and is yet to catch his first fish, Carol is certain her son has the fishing "gene."

"I don't know what he likes about it," she said, "but there's just something about fishing that sparks his interest."

LaChance advised Colten not to fixate on the catching aspect of the sport.

"Don't have a mental picture of trying to catch some big walleye," he said. "That's the charm of fishing. The definition of success depends on you."



## Larimer County's Red Mountain Open Space reopens to the public March 1

BY [NFN](#) ON FEBRUARY 28, 2014 IN [DISPATCHES](#) · [ADD COMMENT](#)

Larimer County's Red Mountain Open Space will reopen to the public on Saturday, March 1. Red Mountain Open Space closes from December 1 through February 28 each year due to winter weather conditions and to help protect winter range habitat for big game animals including elk and mule deer.

The Red Mountain Open Space is open from sunrise to sunset from March 1 through November 30.

## Controlled burn planned at River Bluffs Open Space

Ryan Maye Handy 2:31 p.m. MDT April 14, 2014



(Photo: Coloradoan library )

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Larimer County plans to start a controlled burn in River Bluffs Open Space this week, depending on weather, according to the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources.

River Bluffs Open Space is located east of Interstate 25, between Timnath and Windsor.

The controlled burns should remove weeds and dead grass along irrigation ditches to help with water flow to the hay fields in the open space. While the west ditches are being burned, the trail on the west side of the Poudre River will be closed.

Smoke should be visible just north of Colorado Highway 392 and east of Larimer County Road 3. Exact dates of burns and trail closures will be posted to the department's website, [www.larimer.org/naturalresources](http://www.larimer.org/naturalresources).

## River restoration meetings kick off

About 70 people attended the first master planning meeting

*By Jessica Maher*

*Reporter-Herald Staff Writer*

POSTED: 04/12/2014 07:41:31 PM MDT



Big Thompson River Restoration Coalition chairman John Giordanengo, right, speaks to Glen Haven residents Jo McFadden, front, and Sandra Jokinen on Saturday during a coalition master planning meeting at Loveland High School. (Jessica Maher / Loveland Reporter-Herald)

Leaning over a map of the post-flood Big Thompson River in the Loveland High School cafeteria on Saturday, John Giordanengo asked Glen Haven residents to point to their properties.

Then the million-dollar question: How do you think the river should be restored?

The first of what's expected to be a series of master planning meetings hosted by the Big Thompson River Restoration Coalition focused on gathering input to that very question, as well as explaining the numerous factors that are involved in its answer.

The coalition, chaired by Giordanengo, has grown to include hundreds of stakeholders, nonprofit groups, local businesses and government entities, representatives of which were available Saturday to meet one on one with property owners.

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"As we're turning gears toward long-term recovery, us being able to coordinate on meaningful restoration will impact the river for years to come, including where you live," Giordanengo told meeting attendees.

In an hour-long presentation, about 70 people were introduced to the early stages of a master plan for the entire river corridor, which is being developed by Fort Collins-based Ayres Associates.

It started with an analysis of the kind of damage that occurred during September's historic flood, including bank erosion, channel shifting, flanking of bridges, loss of hillsides and massive sediment deposition.

"Our master plan effort will be largely focused on looking at these different types of damage and do what we can to mitigate and reduce the risk of those types of damage," said John Hunt with Ayres Associates.

A spring runoff assessment was also a top initial priority for Ayres Associates, and according to questions submitted by the audience, it's a widespread concern for stakeholders.

Chris Carlson, a public works engineer with the city of Loveland, said that the far-above average snowpack levels are a concern, but temperature is actually the must-watch factor.

"A worst-case scenario is that we have a very cold spring and so we don't see a lot of melting occurring ... and then the warm-up is very quick and sharp. That's when we see the higher flows on rivers and streams," he said.

Audience-submitted questions also focused on bridge reconstruction. With resilience as a theme for the coalition, Larimer County Engineer Mark Peterson said the county will address local bridges in conjunction with the Colorado Department of Transportation's upcoming design process for the permanent U.S. 34 reconstruction.

"We'll be out to maximize flow capacity as well as create structures that will hopefully withstand the flood event and not have to be totally reconstructed again," Peterson said.

Specific landowner questions and concerns were addressed following the presentation during on-on-one meetings broken up by area, where coalition members gathered input from residents.

The master plan is expected to be complete this fall, with three more master plan meetings anticipated.

For more information on the coalition, visit [bighthompsonriver.org](http://bighthompsonriver.org).

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## Grant to help Larimer County with flood recovery in Big T Canyon and at Hermit Park

*By Reporter-Herald Staff*

POSTED: 04/13/2014 07:13:20 PM MDT

FORT COLLINS — Larimer County Department of Natural Resources will receive \$84,300 from Great Outdoors Colorado to assist with flood recovery efforts in the Big Thompson Canyon and Hermit Park Open Space.

On Wednesday, Gov. John Hickenlooper and GOCO officials announced \$4.5 million in grants to help communities cover the costs of flood recovery projects. According to a press release, Larimer County will use its GOCO funds to complete an assessment of the Big Thompson Canyon's post-flood conditions to guide future conservation and outdoor recreation plans.

A portion of the funding will go toward completing road and trail repair throughout Hermit Park Open Space, which is located outside of Estes Park.

County officials hope for a July 4 opening for Hermit Park Open Space, according to the release.

Reservations for camping at the park won't be available again until a firm open date can be set. Residents can check in at [larimercamping.com](http://larimercamping.com) to find out when they can reserve sites for dates later in the summer, or book sites at other campgrounds.

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Lyons, Longmont, Jamestown and Boulder County among recipients

## Great Outdoors Colorado awards \$4.5 million in flood recovery grants

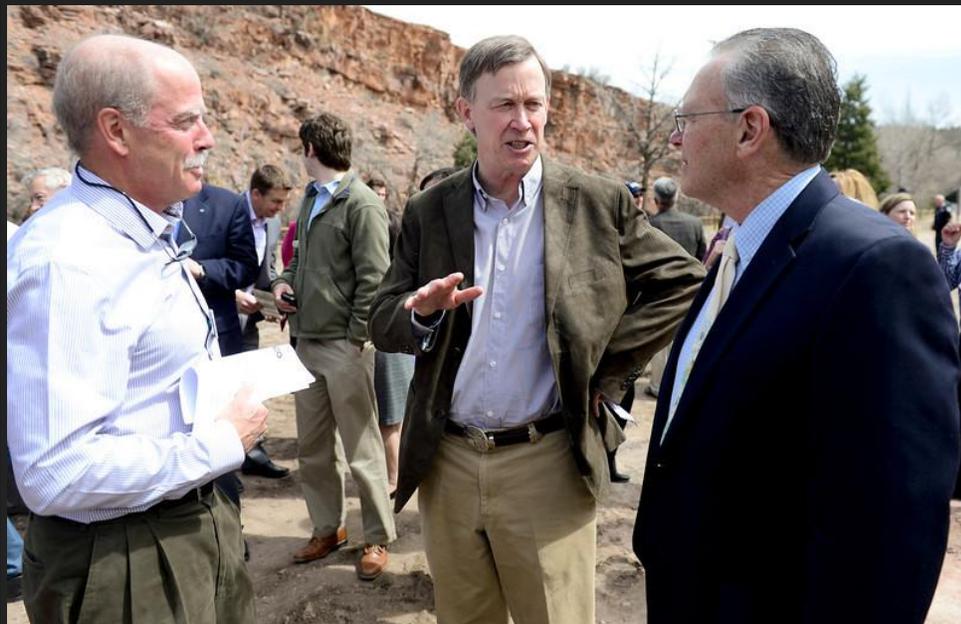
Funds to help repair parks, trails, open space areas

*By John Fryar*

*Times-Call staff writer*

POSTED: 04/09/2014 11:45:00 AM MDT

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Governor John Hockenlooper talks with Great Outdoors Colorado board member Jim Smith, left, and mayor John E. O'Brien, right, in Lyons' Meadow Park Wednesday, April 09, 2014. (Lewis Geyer/Times-Call) TO VIEW A SLIDESHOW VISIT [WWW.TIMESCALL.COM](http://WWW.TIMESCALL.COM)

### Great Outdoors Colorado flood recovery grants

**Town of Lyons:** \$1 million for the restoration of Meadow Park.

**Boulder County:** \$720,000 for Boulder County Parks and Open Space Department outdoor recreation flood recovery projects at Pella Crossing, the Longmont to Boulder Regional Trail and the Boulder Canyon Regional Trail

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**City of Longmont:** \$599,798 toward restoration of the St. Vrain Greenway trail and repairs along Lefthand Creek.

**Town of Jamestown:** \$117,635 to re-establish the Jamestown Town Square and perform erosion control measures at Elysian Park.

**City of Louisville:** \$65,911 to reconstruct the Coal Creek Regional Trail.

**Estes Valley Park and Recreation District:** \$443,558 to restore sections of the Fish Creek Trail that connects Estes Park with Rocky Mountain National Park trails, to realign other segments of that trail system, and to repair the Homer Rouse Trail.

**Larimer County:** \$84,300 to assess the Big Thompson Canyon's post-flood conditions to guide future development and conservation plans, and to complete road and trail repairs throughout the Hermit Park Open Space.

**City of Loveland:** \$251,543 for restoration of the Big Thompson River's Edge Natural Area and Recreational Trail.

**City of Evans:** \$180,250 to repair or reconstruct several trail segments in Riverside Park and to hire a consultant to develop a plan for the park's future restoration.

**City of Fort Morgan:** \$505,650 to rebuild ball fields in Riverside Park

**City of Lakewood:** \$86,000 to stabilize the banks and stream channel running through Bear Creek Lake Park.

**Jefferson County:** \$110,000 to repair trails in Apex Park, Lair o' the Bear Park, North Table Mountain Park and White Ranch Park.

**El Paso County:** \$200,000 to repair trails, roads, a pedestrian bridge and land in Bear Creek Regional Park.

**City of Colorado Springs:** \$98,520 to clear debris in Harlan Wolfe Park and replace a flood-damaged century-old structure with a new outdoor classroom and pavilion.

Great Outdoors Colorado is awarding Lyons \$1 million to help pay for restoration of flood-ravaged Meadow Park to a usable condition in time for the community's summer activities.

Longmont will get a \$599,798 GOCO grant to help pay for restoring 3.5 miles of trail along the St. Vrain Greenway as well as to help fund repairs to the city's Lefthand Creek trail.

Another grant, for \$720,000, will help Boulder County repair flood damages at Pella Crossing Natural Park and segments of its Longmont to Boulder and Boulder Canyon trails.

Jamestown is getting \$117,635 to re-establish its Town Square center with tables, creekside seating, fencing and vegetation and to perform erosion control measures at Elysian Park.

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Those were among about \$4.5 million in emergency flood recovery grants noted in a news conference with Gov. John Hickenlooper in Lyons on Wednesday.

"Thanks to these GOCO funds that will support mostly volunteer-based flood recovery projects, we can build back better, stronger and more sustainable access to our most treasured Colorado locations," Hickenlooper said.

Wednesday's news conference was held in Lyons' Meadow Park, which has been closed since the flood but may be at least partially reopened by mid-June thanks to the GOCO grant and other flood-recovery assistance sources.

"Lyons' parks are our treasures," said Mayor John O'Brien, calling Meadow Park "our jewel among jewels."

The \$4.5 million in GOCO grants will go to help cover the costs of 14 flood recovery projects in Boulder, Larimer, Weld, Jefferson, Morgan and El Paso counties to restore damaged or destroyed parks, trails and open spaces. The state agency is keeping about \$500,000 more in a contingency fund in case it's turned out to be needed by the grant recipients.

GOCO Executive Director Lise Aangeenbrug said that the agency's grants "will help communities get started on restoring popular parks or trails or start the planning process to figure out how best to rebuild."

"In some cases, reopening damaged parks quickly is vital to a community's economic recovery," she said.

"Outdoor recreation is our bread and butter," Lyons town administrator Victoria Simonsen said.

O'Brien said the GOCO grant "will allow us to get started" on restoring Meadow Park, which he said "will be one of the few green oases in our community this year."

City manager Harold Dominguez said Longmont appreciates the size and timing of the grant.

Longmont officials have estimated the floods had about a \$19.7 million impact on its greenway trails, neighborhood parks and district parks, and Dominguez said the grant "will have a huge impact for the community."

The grant money comes from the portion of Colorado Lottery proceeds the agency gets for helping preserve and enhance parks, wildlife habitat, rivers and open spaces.

State officials also announced Wednesday that \$8 million in spending is planned for a partnership between Colorado Parks and Wildlife and the Colorado Department of Transportation to fund construction of a trail corridor to allow safer travel between Lyons and Estes Park.

Wednesday's news conference also featured the announcement of commitments of more than \$100,000 in private funds for smaller grants and assistance to help flood-impacted communities restore their outdoor recreation facilities, parks and trails.

The Oskar Blues CAN'd Aid Foundation, in a partnership with Colorado Parks and Wildlife and South Creek Limited, is presenting Lyons with \$31,875 that will be earmarked for a "Fishing is Fun" grant and used as local matching funds for a larger \$100,000 Parks and Wildlife grant for St. Vrain River restoration.

The Fund to Restore Colorado's Trails, Waterways and Parks — a fund launched by Active Boulder and supported by private industry, foundation and individual donors — announced \$67,000 in funding to help

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organize and support 20 volunteer-based and youth corps flood recovery projects. Most of those projects are expected to focus on restoring damaged trails but also are to include wildlife habitat restoration, in efforts that may mobilize nearly 900 volunteers.

Officials said that 11 of the 14 GOCO flood recovery grant recipients plan to use youth corps members or volunteers to help carry out their projects.

Contact Times-Call staff writer John Fryar at 303-684-5211 or [jfryar@times-call.com](mailto:jfryar@times-call.com)



Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper spoke in Lyons on Wednesday. Great Outdoors Colorado announced \$5 million in grants to Colorado communities for parks, trails and open space improvements. Lyons was awarded \$1 million. (Lewis Geyer/Longmont Times-Call)

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## Water level of Pinewood Reservoir lowered temporarily

*Reporter-Herald Staff*

POSTED: 04/07/2014 12:34:25 PM MDT

LOVELAND — Water managers lowered the water level in Pinewood Reservoir over the weekend to get ready for some maintenance work on a canal downstream.

According to a press release from U.S. Bureau of Reclamation spokeswoman Kara Lamb, the agency is doing routine maintenance this week on the Charles Hansen Feeder Canal, which takes water north to Horsetooth Reservoir.

Because the water flow down the canal will be interrupted, the bureau had to make room in Pinewood to hold the extra water that would have been released, Lamb said. The lake's level stands at 6,560 feet in elevation, and it won't go lower, she said.

The bureau expects to fill the reservoir back to its typical springtime level Wednesday and Thursday, Lamb said.

Pinewood, a water-storage reservoir in the foothills southwest of Loveland, typically sees fluctuating levels during the spring, summer and fall as downstream users take deliveries.

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## Namaqua Outdoors invites Larimer County naturalist to help give nature lessons

*By Shelley Widhalm*

*Reporter-Herald Staff Writer*

POSTED: 03/29/2014 03:22:29 PM MDT



Namaqua Outdoors participants, from left, Mary Liakas, 9, Jason Males, 9, Robin Bilodeau, 10, Ethan Farland, 7, and Kaitlyn Dell, 8, look for birds with Larimer County naturalist Heidi Lyons during the Calling All Bird Lovers event Thursday at Namaqua Elementary School. In addition to the birding walk, other activities included making homemade birdfeeders and nest building. (Steve Stoner / Loveland Reporter-Herald)

"Listen for the cooing."

Larimer County naturalist Heidi Lyons said this to the 11 elementary school students who quietly followed her Thursday to the end of the school grounds.

Lyons said the cooing likely came from a mourning dove and then pointed out another type of dove on top of a fence, identifying it as an Eurasian collared dove.

"This is a good opportunity to use your binoculars," she said to the students, participants in the Namaqua Outdoors after-school program at Namaqua Elementary School. "Pretty cool, isn't it?"

Forty students attended Calling All Bird Lovers, one of four activities during the 2013-14 school year hosted by the club to help spark an interest in nature and being outdoors. The students divided into groups to engage in bird-related activities: a birding walk with Lyons, making a bird feeder out of plastic bottles, creating a nest using materials a bird would use and learning about different types of backyard birds.

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But first Lyons, who volunteers with the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources, gave a 15-minute talk about birds and their habitats.

"Where do you find birds?" she asked the students, getting answers that included trees, fences, in the water and in the air.

Lyons passed around the skull of an eagle, showing the students that the eyes of birds are one-third the size of their skulls. She showed examples of different types of nests, including one made out of pieces of blue plastic, which she said can become hot and be dangerous for birds to move around in when the materials could cause strangling.

"This is just sticks, feathers and leaves," she said holding up another nest. "One thing you can do to help birds is to get the trash in the trash can."

Mary Liakas, a third-grader, was among the group of 11 who first went on the birding walk before rotating through the other activities.

"I've enjoyed when you get to look at all the birds and how nice it is to enjoy the outdoors," the 9-year-old said.

Jason Males, also a third-grader, liked the "noises" birds make.

"It was cool looking for birds," he said. "You got to learn about birds nesting in outdoor club and all about birds."

Namaqua Outdoors, which has been meeting since spring 2010, is open to all students at the school who are interested in the natural environment, art in nature and ecosystems, among other nature-related topics.

"It's a great program, and kids really love it. They love the hands-on activities we do," said Michele Mandeville, a volunteer leader of the program and an informal educator for environmental education.

Namaqua Outdoors is helping the school build an outdoor classroom, expected to break ground in April. The classroom, which will span 1,000 square feet, will serve as a nature-based, outdoor learning area and will include five flagstone slabs for seating and a small stage.

The learning area will be designed with native plants with the help of the High Plains Environmental Center, Mandeville said. The nonprofit provided a list of native species that will fit the classroom's design and donated grasses and perennials, she said.

The project is expected to cost \$10,000, and the club has raised \$6,000 so far.

"It makes them appreciate nature where they live," Mandeville said. "It helps children focus better. It helps them have a healthier mindset."

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Ten-year-old Kevin Leidig, left, and his brother Trevor Leidig, 5, look at a bald eagle skull during the Calling All Bird Lovers activity Thursday at Namaqua Elementary School as part of Namaqua Outdoors. (Steve Stoner / Loveland Reporter-Herald)

## With warm weather comes runoff, muddy trails and several days of trail closures

Mar. 6, 2014



Lane Hale of Dijon, France, jumps over a wet spot on the trail at Devil's Backbone on Wednesday, as he hikes the open space. He is originally from the area and is visiting family.

Written by

[Stephen Meyers](#)

**StephenMeyers@coloradoan.com**

Hiking boots were caked with 2 inches of clay mud, and the white Chevy Suburban belonging to Larimer County Department of Natural Resources slid off a very muddy Towers Road in Horsetooth Mountain Space, getting stuck in a ditch.

Yep, it's mud season.

This is the period of time from late winter to late spring when Fort Collins trails soaked by snow and rain turn to a muddy mess, forcing their closure to the dismay of thousands of forlorn hikers, runners and mountain bikers eager to shake off the winter doldrums as the weather warms. ...



## Lions Open Space trailhead temporarily closed starting March 24

BY [NFN](#) ON MARCH 21, 2014 IN [DISPATCHES](#) · [ADD COMMENT](#)

Due to river bank repairs resulting from the September 2013 flood, the Lions Open Space trailhead and parking lot off of Overland Trail adjacent to LaPorte will be temporarily closed starting Monday, March 24.

Bank repairs are scheduled for 3-4 weeks and the trailhead and parking lot will be closed throughout the project term. The Pleasant Valley and Poudre River Trails will remain open throughout the project.

## Lions Open Space closes for flood damage repairs

*By Reporter-Herald Staff*

POSTED: 03/23/2014 08:23:40 PM MDT

FORT COLLINS — Larimer County crews will close the Lions Open Space trailhead on Monday for three to four weeks.

The closure is to allow repairs to the river bank that was damaged in the September 2013 flood. The parking lot off of Overland Trail also will be temporarily closed.

The Pleasant Valley and Poudre River Trails will remain open throughout the project.

To learn more about Larimer County's parks and open spaces, go to [larimer.org/naturalresources](http://larimer.org/naturalresources).

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## Larimer County reservoirs open for boating season

*By Reporter-Herald Staff*

POSTED: 03/23/2014 08:24:39 PM MDT

LOVELAND — Carter Lake Reservoir's north ramp will open for the season Tuesday, kicking off the boating season for 2014.

The Horsetooth Reservoir South Bay ramp also opens Tuesday.

Hours for Tuesday through Monday at both ramps will be 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

For information about entrance permits, boat inspections and reservoir conditions for fishing, visit [larimer.org/naturalresources](http://larimer.org/naturalresources).

## Horsetooth Rock: Always popular, always worth the visit

I found solitude while hiking to Horsetooth Rock one morning this week. It's a hard thing to do these days.

After making chitchat in the parking lot with running friends finishing their morning training, I hit the Horsetooth Rock Trail at Horsetooth Mountain Open Space for a solo hike to Fort Collins' signature destination.

The day before, I didn't even make it to the trailhead, as the parking lot swelled full of people eager to take advantage of the sunshine on the first day of spring. I should have known better. When the sun shines in Fort Collins, the people come out to play.

Larimer County Open Spaces Operations Manager Travis Rollins said Horsetooth Mountain Open Space was packed last week as Colorado State University and Poudre School District both had spring break.

The 2,886-acre Horsetooth Mountain Open Space in the foothills west of Fort Collins attracts more than 100,000 visitors annually. No doubt the majority of these visitors have one goal in mind: Hike 7,255 feet high to the tooth.

Horsetooth Rock is where CSU students take their parents during graduation week. Its iconic image graces the logos of Fort Collins' businesses, and the name dons one of our city's southern streets. The oddly-shaped rock serves as the backdrop for our photos of the gorgeous summer sunsets. With its close proximity to Fort Collins, Horsetooth Rock often stirs memories of past visits. For me, that includes sunrise hikes during college.

Turned away Thursday afternoon, I came back to hike Horsetooth Rock on Friday morning to make another memory.

It was the second day of spring, but at 8 a.m., Old Man Winter still lingered. The temperature hovered below freezing, and the slight breeze nipped through my fleece.

Signs of spring were evident, however, as daisies popped up along the trail and in between rocks. It's deathly brown and gray now, but soon, the forest will flourish in vibrant greens and wildflowers will show their brightest colors.

The 2½-mile trail is a moderate climb through the ponderosa pine forest, and it takes about an hour or so hiking at an average pace. The trail was quiet for my morning hike, just the occasional hoot and holler from the group of college kids who started their hike before me.

I stopped to soak in the views of Horsetooth Reservoir and an awakening Fort Collins. On the trail, about the only view you don't have is of the rock itself. The rock, described by fur trappers in the 1800s as looking more like horse teeth, doesn't expose itself until about three-quarters of the way up.

After a bend where the Horsetooth Rock and South Ridge trails intersect, the toothlike formation juts up into the blue sky, framed by pine boughs.

From here, it's a short hike, a shorter scramble up the northern flank of the formation and you're on top of the landmark.

The scramble here is easy — any flatlander could do it — but if you opt to, you can take the south route to the top of the rock for a more adventurous climb.

# coloradoan.com

Once near the base of the rock, take the trail that leads to the south and west. The climb to the top takes some nerve, strength and smarts. There are several sections where you are exposed, meaning if you fall, you could get seriously hurt or even die. Not only consider your route up the rock, but also consider how you'll get down. Earlier this month, a young man became stranded on the icy face of Horsetooth Rock and was rescued by a group of nine quick-thinking CSU ROTC cadets.

I opted for the easier route to the north, navigating several icy and snow-packed sections to make my way to the top. The scrambling is easy to navigate, with handholds and step rocks to guide the way.

Atop the rock, I'm greeted with a gust of wind, but after 2½ miles of hiking, I've shaken out the cold from my core and settle in to enjoy the stunning views.

I said I found solitude, but I did bring a friend to the summit. His name is Flat Stanley.

Perhaps you've heard of him. Stanley Lambchop is the title character of the 1960s children's book "Flat Stanley." He's been flattened by a bulletin board and as a result, he visits his friends by being mailed in an envelope.

Today, Flat Stanley is on a tour of Colorado, visiting from the first-grade class of my niece, Reid, in Kansas City, Mo.

With instructions from Reid's teacher to mail a letter, postcard and photo of me and Flat Stanley to Reid's class, I figured what better place to visit in Fort Collins than Horsetooth Rock.

Here or a brewery, but a photo drinking with Flat Stanley probably isn't appropriate for 6-year-olds.

Flat Stanley and I take in the stunning views atop the tooth. The views from Horsetooth Rock live up to the reputation.

You can see to the east a shimmering Horsetooth Reservoir and Fort Collins. To the south, Loveland, and on a clear day, Pikes Peak. To the west, distant views of Longs Peak and below your feet beautiful Redstone Canyon. To the north, Greyrock and the Wyoming border.

I didn't see Longs this day, as dark clouds rolled into the area, but the sky was blue to the north and east and the air crisp at 7,255 feet.

After snapping some photos and eating a PB&J, it was time to come off the rock.

Instead of returning to the parking lot via the Horsetooth Rock Trail, I descend on the Audra Culver Trail, which after a mile hooks up to the South Ridge Trail. I like taking the Audra Culver Trail because it's much less traveled and offers spectacular views south to Milner Mountain.

A few more cars had piled into the parking lot during my three-hour hike, but the lot still hadn't hit capacity when I returned. Soon enough, I thought.

I'm supposed to mail Flat Stanley to another family member, but perhaps I should hold onto him for a while.

Horsetooth Falls will start running in April.

Follow Xplore reporter Stephen Meyers on Twitter @stemeyer or Facebook.com/meyersreports.

## Xplore in brief: Boat ramps at Horsetooth Reservoir, Carter Lake open

Mar. 21, 2014

Horsetooth Reservoir's South Bay ramp and the north ramp at Carter Lake will open for the season Tuesday.

Hours at both ramps are 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

All watercraft must be inspected for exotic invasive species before launch or departure at Horsetooth Reservoir and Carter Lake. Exclusions include hand-launched rafts, kayaks, belly boats, float tubes, canoes, windsurfer boards, sail boards or inner tubes.

Information: [www.larimer.org/naturalresources](http://www.larimer.org/naturalresources).

### **Lions Open Space closed beginning Monday**

Lions Open Space near LaPorte will be closed for three weeks to a month beginning Monday for repairs on the Poudre River banks.

Damage to the river banks occurred during the flooding in September.

The Pleasant Valley and Poudre River trails will remain open throughout the project.

### **40 in the Fort registration opens**

Registration is open for the fourth annual 40 in the Fort endurance mountain bike race June 28 at Lory State Park.

The race, which benefits Overland Mountain Bike Club, features two 20-mile laps, each with nearly 4,500 feet of climbing. Race divisions include open, sport and singlespeed. Entry fee is \$75.

There is also a team competition where teams of two each do one 20-mile lap, with results based on their combined times. Race divisions include men's, women's and coed. Team entry fee is \$100.

This year's race will offer a commemorative race jersey for purchase. To register, visit [www.overlandmtb.org/](http://www.overlandmtb.org/).

## Duggan: The 'popular' tax in Larimer County

Mar. 15, 2014

- [Columnists](#)
- [Kevin Duggan - News](#)

If there is such a thing as a popular tax, local levies used to fund the open lands program might fit the bill.

Historically, measures seeking voter approval of sales taxes to support the acquisition of open spaces and outdoor recreation — such as trails and park land — have enjoyed great success in Fort Collins and Larimer County.

They have passed relatively easily at the polls, although only after a lot of hard work by supporters to get out the word about the benefits of having a dedicated source of funding for conservation and recreation programs.

Voters might get a chance to reaffirm or withdraw their support for that concept soon.

Larimer County officials are discussing whether to seek an extension of the county's 0.25 percent sales tax for open spaces as early as this November.

They have time to talk about it, in terms of both this year's election or perhaps another time. The current tax expires in 2018.

And there is much to discuss. In addition to deciding if and when to go to voters, issues to be hashed out include whether to ask for the same amount of tax or perhaps more.

Another question is whether to change the distribution of the tax. Municipalities within Larimer County receive 58 percent of the revenue generated by the tax, which brings in about \$10 million a year.

Cities and towns use the money to leverage other funding sources for their projects. County officials want to keep that level of funding headed toward municipalities.

So a bump in the tax rate could bring a change in the dispersal in terms of percentage, if not actual dollars.

The county also has to decide whether to change how it uses its portion of the funding. At issue is how much to dedicate toward land acquisition, which is popular with voters, and how much to dedicate toward maintaining the land the county already has.

That's practical, but not real exciting.

Yet another question is how long the tax should be in effect. Should it go on in perpetuity or should it be limited and marched out for voter consideration again, say in 10 years?

Larimer County passed its first 0.25 percent sales tax for open lands in 1995, with 65 percent of voters in support. It was renewed in 1999 with 60 percent voter approval.

Other tax measures have not been that successful. A proposal in 2011 to extend a 0.2 percent tax to fund the jail failed with 56 percent of voters in opposition.

# REPORTER-HERALD

## Larimer County trail crews prep for mud season

Protecting area trails while allowing access a big challenge each spring

*By Jessica Benes*

*Reporter-Herald Staff Writer*

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Mike Smith of Loveland enjoys the weather at Devil's Backbone trailhead Wednesday afternoon. Smith said the trail was a little muddy but he didn't walk far so he had a good time. (*Jessica Benes / Loveland Reporter-Herald*)

It's almost mud season.

In the spring when snow is melting, many of the trails in Larimer County's open lands and Fort Collins Natural Resources programs are at their muddiest.

And then trails are closed.

And then families who have loaded up their children and grandparents for a day in the outdoors are turned away at the gate.

"Our aim is to make people aware when we're (closing trails)," said Rob Novak, community relations specialist for Larimer County Natural Resources.

The other aim is to educate the community on trail practices and how to treat recreation trails in wet conditions.

# REPORTER-HERALD



A sign announces a trail closure at Nomad Trail in Horsetooth Mountain Open Space. The trail was closed due to wet and muddy conditions. (Jessica Benes / Loveland Reporter-Herald)

When trails are closed at Horsetooth Mountain and Devil's Backbone open spaces, rangers add the most up-to-date information to Twitter (@LCDNR) and to the Larimer County Natural Resources Facebook page. They also add information to a current update at [larimer.org/naturalresources](http://larimer.org/naturalresources) once back in the office. Novak said an upcoming 10-year master plan will look at using text messages and email notifications on alerting people about closures to make the information available as widely as possible.

There are always those families that didn't see the news and show up at the gate, so ranger aids are now posted at the gates to deliver the news and be a human presence to discuss the situation.

The Fort Collins Natural Areas Department relies on website updates, signs posted outside the gates, QR codes on those signs and an on-duty ranger phone number to deliver news about trail conditions to users.

Nomad Trail at Horsetooth Mountain Open Space in Larimer County has been closed for several days and will continue to be closed another few days until people aren't left with a cake of inch-thick mud on their shoes when they walk down the trail.

"This one tends to be one of ours — based on the soils — that takes a long time to dry," Novak said. Trails with a lot of natural clay in them stay wet longer while trails that have been integrated with a fill material like gravel or crusher stone fines tend to dry out a lot faster.

Parts of Nomad Trail have been elevated with rails and rocks to allow water to drain into the rocks instead of directly on dirt, according to Joel Schwab, a trail supervisor, but it's not feasible to do that to every part of a trail.

"We also have 80 miles of trail so we can't touch every mile of those trails every time," Novak said.

Trail supervisor Joel Wykoff said that trails are designed with topography in mind and grades that are not too steep so the water will run off the side of the mountain instead of down the trail.

Travis Rollins, open lands operations manager, said that there is a balance to reach. The public has the expectation to be able to use the trails, and the program wants to grant that while also preserving the open lands. He said that 100,000 people visited Horsetooth in 2013 so they look hard at problem areas in the heavily used trails to decide if any should be closed. Boots and tire trails will always take their toll.

"We get moisture events and soon thereafter with the wonderful climate that we live in, it warms up and ends up being 65 degrees out," he said. "Then the visitor says, 'It's 65 degrees out. Let's go for a hike,' so there is a real balance."

# REPORTER-HERALD

Chris Sabina, operations intern, said a tell-tale sign for him is when he sees users starting to go off-trail to circumvent muddy areas. This is a big problem for the trails because the paths eventually widen, making them harder to maintain. Hikers are asked to wear good boots in possibly muddy conditions, and walk through the mud rather than walking around it to protect the natural space.

The Fort Collins Natural Areas Department closed both entrances to Bobcat Ridge Open Space for a few days due to wet conditions.



Mud cakes to Travis Collins' boots as he talks about the importance of taking care of Larimer County's Natural Open Space trails in wet conditions on Wednesday. (Jessica Benes / Loveland Reporter-Herald)

"It can start with a single bike tire that starts with a little rain and that trench becomes bigger and deeper and someone comes along and walks around it, so now you don't have one trail to fix but another," said Todd Juhasz, public improvements technician for the Fort Collins department.

Wider trails also retain more water, so narrower ones are easier to maintain.

Not everyone wants a surface trail with gravel imported from elsewhere. "That's probably been the comment I've heard most more than than anything else in the 12 years I've been supervising the trail crew, 'Please don't urbanize the trails,'" Wykoff said.

The Fort Collins department started closing the trails in bad conditions about three years ago, which officials said has saved them money on repair, and helped them get ahead of the problem while they fix sections of the trail when it is closed to the public.

Mike Smith of Loveland enjoyed Devil's Backbone trailhead on Wednesday afternoon. He said he tried to go to Bobcat Ridge first but since it was closed he drove to Devil's Backbone to enjoy the nice day. "Was it muddy? Look at that," he said about mud splattered on his boots. "You just have to wear good boots if you're going to be out here. You can't wear tennis shoes. But give it a week of sunshine and it'll be good."

Fines for trespassing on closed locations are \$50-\$100 for all the open lands.

## Red Mountain Open Space to reopen Saturday

Feb. 28, 2014



[Purchase Image](#)

Rudy Lucero, left, of Fort Collins, and Mary Winegarner lead the pack during a guided hike at Red Mountain Open Space in this June 27, 2009, file photo. / Coloradoan library

Written by

[Ryan Maye Handy](#)

Red Mountain Open Space will reopen to the public on Saturday, according to the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources.

The open space closes annually from Dec. 1 to Feb. 28 due to winter conditions and to protect elk and mule deer habitats. The open space, which is north of Fort Collins, will be open from sunrise to sunset through Nov. 30.

Red Mountain is popular for elk hunting, which requires a permit issued by Larimer County awarded to hunters who apply, and who will then be selected in a drawing. The drawing for permits takes place during the first week of March.

## Blue Sky trailhead closed during construction

Feb. 24, 2014



**Purchase Image**

A construction project by Larimer County Natural Resources will close the Blue Sky trailhead and parking lot Mondays through Thursdays for the next three weeks. The project is part of an effort to improve parking capacity at the Blue Sky trailhead, Horsetooth Mountain Open Space and Devil's Backbone Open Space. / Stephen Meyers/The Coloradoan



Written by  
[Stephen Meyers](#)

Construction began Monday at the Blue Sky Trail trailhead and parking lot on Larimer County Road 38E near Horsetooth Reservoir, which will close the area Mondays through Thursdays for about three weeks.

The construction project by Larimer County Natural Resources is part of an effort to improve parking capacity at the Blue Sky trailhead, Horsetooth Mountain Open Space and Devil's Backbone Open Space. The trailhead will be open with some restrictions Fridays through Sundays, Larimer County Natural Resources said.

Other parking options to get on the Blue Sky Trail are the Devil's Backbone Open Space Trailhead outside of Loveland, the Coyote Ridge Natural Area Trailhead off Taft Hill Road, the Soderberg Open Space Trailhead near Inlet Bay and the Horsetooth Mountain Open Space Trailhead on CR 38E.