



-MWH hired to design water-storage project in Northern Colorado

by [Doug Storum](#) on September 13, 2016

Engineering and consulting firm MWH Global Inc. in Broomfield, a division of Canada-based Stantec Inc., has received an \$11.9 million contract to design the Chimney Hollow Reservoir dam that will be located between Loveland and Longmont.

The Municipal Subdistrict of the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District hired MWH to design a 360-foot-tall dam, spillway and outlet works for the 90,000-acre-foot reservoir near Loveland.

Officials said on Tuesday that the Chimney Hollow Reservoir dam, located on the west side of Carter Lake, will be the largest dam built in Colorado in 50 years. It will provide water storage for growing communities in Northern Colorado, including Broomfield, Longmont, Loveland and Greeley. The subdistrict estimates that its communities could see a water-supply shortage of 64,000 acre feet, or approximately 29 billion gallons, by 2030.

The design for the Chimney Hollow Reservoir Project is expected to be completed in 2018, with construction completed in 2021. The engineering services provided by MWH will include evaluating alternatives, final design and support during bidding.

MWH, acquired by Stantec in May, has nearly 100 years of waterpower and dam experience, including feasibility studies, design and construction management. MWH served as principal designer for San Diego County Water Authority's Emergency and Carryover Storage Project, delivering water storage to a region that sources drinking water from more than 400 miles away.

REPORTER-HERALD

U.S. 34 construction to force trail closure

By Reporter-Herald Staff - POSTED: 09/12/2016 06:41:33 PM MDT



Round Mountain Trail, which offers sweeping views of the Big Thompson Canyon, will be closed beginning Oct. 17 while work takes place on U.S. 34. (Pamela Johnson / Loveland Reporter-Herald file photo)

LOVELAND — A popular trail west of Loveland will be closed through the rest of the year because of highway work on U.S. 34.

The Round Mountain Nature Trail, south of U.S. 34 across from Viestenz-Smith Mountain Park, will be closed for the rest of the year while construction

crews alter the course of the highway to prevent future flood damage.

According to a release from the city of Loveland, the other trail that leads to the summit of Round Mountain, accessible from the same trailhead, will be closed beginning Oct. 17.

Visitors to the area are asked to observe all posted closures and signage for their own safety, the release stated.

The Rocky Mountain

Collegian

Backyard Travel: Devil's Backbone

September 8, 2016 By Katelyn Mitchell 0 Comments



Devil's Backbone (Photo courtesy of Skye Wiedow)

Colorado is one of those places where there are a million things to do pretty much anywhere you go, and Devil's Backbone doesn't let that reputation down.

Devil's Backbone Open Space, directly west of Loveland, is only a half an hour drive from Fort Collins and is well worth the trip. When the

park opened in 1998, they only had 6.1 acres of open space. Incredibly, the ridge property has grown and now runs all the way up from Loveland to Horsetooth, racking up to 2,198.3 acres according to the latest estimates from Larimer County.

Besides the hiking trails, the actual geological features are just mind blowing. Larimer Country has made it their mission to preserve the odd configuration of rocks so that they remain intact for generations to come.



The Keyhole, Devil's Backbone (Photo courtesy of Skye Wiedow)

The Keyhole is the noticeable gap that has eroded away within the ridge. It's a great photo-op for budding photographers and also makes for a great place to have a picnic. Devil's Backbone is also home to both wildlife habitats and a rare-plant community.

All the trails are achievable for most hikers, ranging from easy to difficult. Larimer Country has [created a map](#) including all the lengths and difficulties of each trail.

The Devil's Backbone Trail is the first one that you come to at the trail head. It is about a seven-mile round trip, rated at an easy to moderate difficulty.

About three-quarters of a mile in, there is the Wild Loop Trail. This trail takes you right up next to the ridge and The Keyhole. The little detour is only about a quarter of a mile longer. Fair warning, the Wild Loop Trail is closed in the spring due to the nesting of the ravens.



View from Devil's Backbone (Photo courtesy of Skye Wiedow)

Four miles in from the trail head is the Blue Sky Trail, which has just recently opened for the park. From here, you can turn around and stay on the Devil's Backbone Trail, or you can actually hike all the way up from Loveland to Horsetooth. Along this major trail are loops such as The Hunter Loop and Laughing Horse

Loop, both of which are under a mile long. There is also the Indian Summer Trail, which is a two-mile trail all in itself. If you continue all the way up, The Blue Sky Trail will continue to lead you all the way to Horsetooth. The total hike from the trail head to Horsetooth is a little over 15 miles one way.

Not only is Devil's Backbone a great place for hikers, bikers, horseback riders and even dirt bikers, but family trips with the dog are more than encouraged. It truly is a trail for all.

Be sure to be prepared when hiking at any time. Bring lots of water and proper attire including shoes and snacks that match your needs, which can vary due to the length of the hike. Also, beware of snakes and other wildlife near the trail.

All in all, Devil's Backbone is just one of the many places that can show us how incredible nature truly is, and it's right in your own backyard. So go adventure!!

REPORTER-HERALD

Fort Collins to attack cheatgrass from air

Aerial spraying slated at four natural areas

By Pamela Johnson

Reporter-Herald Staff Writer

POSTED: 09/07/2016 05:49:25 PM MDT

Land stewards will attack a nonnative grass that can diminish wildlife habitat in grasslands and the foothills from a new vantage point — aircraft.

The city of Fort Collins Natural Areas Department will, for the first time, apply herbicide to battle cheatgrass through aerial spraying on four natural areas starting this month.

The process will result in short closures of those areas, Reservoir Ridge, Coyote Ridge, Bobcat Ridge and Soapstone Prairie, while the spraying is occurring.

Cheatgrass is a non-native grass that overtakes grasslands and habitats, essentially "cheating" native vegetation out of its natural habitat. This affects vegetation and the wildlife that rely upon it for survival.

Dry cheatgrass also is like a tinderbox for wildfire in the late summer and early fall, when its yellow-brown color tints the foothills.

Traditionally, Fort Collins land managers have sprayed meadows and grasslands with herbicide via vehicle or backpack sprayers but have been unable to reach the steep slopes and rough terrain of the foothills, noted Rick Bachand, natural areas environmental program manager.

He wondered how it would work to spray aurally, which would allow application of those areas that are unreachable by traditional methods. So, the city conducted a trial spraying via helicopter that was about 25 feet above ground on a 20-acre plot last November, and Bachand was pleased with the results, which he described as both effective and cost-effective.

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The spray made it onto the cheatgrass but did not spread out and did not affect native plants or wildlife, Bachand said. And he expects that to be the case with the much larger spraying, which will cover about 500 acres this fall.

"We use 5.5 ounces per acre," Bachand said. "That's only a little bit more of this than a mouthwash carry-on you take when you are traveling. It's a very low amount, very effective."

He hopes that other land agencies will to use the same method to target what has become a problem across the western region.

Spraying is expected to begin the week of Sept. 19 and will occur when the weather allows between then and November. The timing depends upon the weather as well as other factors, such as when trees in the foothills shed their leaves.

The spraying will occur within the interior of each site, so it will not affect neighboring properties. Four-hour closures are expected while spraying is underway.

These closures will be posted at the affected trailheads and online at www.fcgov.com/naturalareas/status.php.

Horsetooth Reservoir boat ramp schedule to change

By Reporter-Herald Staff POSTED: 09/01/2016 07:34:40 AM MDT



Boaters will find boat ramp hours changing at Horsetooth Reservoir next week. (Charlie Meyer / Denver Post file photo)

Larimer County staff will change the hours of operation at the Satanka boat ramp at Horsetooth Reservoir after Labor Day.

Beginning Tuesday, the ramp will be closed Monday-Wednesday, and open 8 a.m.-6 p.m. Thursday and Sunday, 8 a.m.-9 p.m. Friday and Saturday, according

to a press release.

After Sept. 22, the Friday and Saturday hours will be reduced to 8 a.m.-6 p.m.

Hours at the South Bay and Inlet Bay ramps remain 6 a.m.-10 p.m., seven days a week.

Hours at the north ramp and South Shore ramp at Carter Lake, also remain 6 a.m.-10 p.m., seven days a week.

Hours at the North Pines ramp are 8 a.m.-4 p.m., Wednesday through Sunday.

For a full schedule of boat ramp hours, visit

BizWest

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The city of Loveland, with the financial help of Great Outdoors Colorado and the Larimer County of Natural Resources, acquired the 78-acre Ward Trust property in west Loveland that will be preserved as open space and provide opportunities for trails, wildlife viewing and other outdoor activities. (Courtesy city of Loveland)

Loveland acquires 78 acres for open space

by [Doug Storum](#) on August 31, 2016

LOVELAND — The city of Loveland has acquired 78 acres of open space adjacent to the Morey Wildlife Reserve and Marianna Butte Golf Course on the west side of the city.

Most of the \$2.6 million purchase price— \$1.85 million — came from Loveland’s share of the citizen-initiated, quarter-cent Help Preserve Open Spaces sales and use tax in Larimer County.

Great Outdoors Colorado, or GOCO, provided \$500,000 from lottery proceeds used to preserve, protect and enhance the state’s wildlife, parks, rivers, trails and open spaces, and \$250,000 came from the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources.

The property, known as the Ward Trust property, will provide opportunities for trails, wildlife viewing and other outdoor activities in a rapidly growing area of Loveland, the city said in a prepared statement.



Hayfields are part of the 78-acre Ward Trust property that the city of Loveland acquired that will be preserved for farming and open space. (Courtesy Debbie Eley)

Currently used for farming, future plans may include a new parking area and increased trail access to open space throughout the area, which will buffer the dense neighboring residential development. Farming will continue to be a part of the management plan, at least for the foreseeable future, according to the statement.

The land is located along Cedar Valley Drive southwest of Morey Wildlife Reserve, near the Big Thompson River next to dense residential developments. It is visible from the keyhole of the Devil's Backbone, and it provides clear views of the rock formations and the mountains to the west.

The Trust for Public Land negotiated the deal.

“Access to parks, trails and open space is a key component of Colorado’s high quality of life,” said Jim Petterson, The Trust for Public Land’s director for Colorado. “We are thrilled to have played a critical role in protecting one of Loveland’s highest open space priorities. By helping ensure that everyone, particularly kids, have close-to-home places to get outside and experience nature, projects like this do much to improve health, strengthen communities and enhance local economies.”

Loveland granted a conservation easement protecting the property to Larimer County Department of Natural Resources, ensuring that the land and its water rights will be protected and accessible to the public.

Marilyn Hilgenberg, the city’s open lands manager, said the acquisition is an integral part of completing Loveland’s open-lands vision for the west Big Thompson River corridor outlined in the city’s Parks & Recreation Master Plan.

Great Outdoors Colorado’s executive director, Jim Spaanstra, said the land acquisition extends protection for a corridor that spans from north of Horsetooth Reservoir south for nearly 20 miles, culminating at the Ward Trust property.

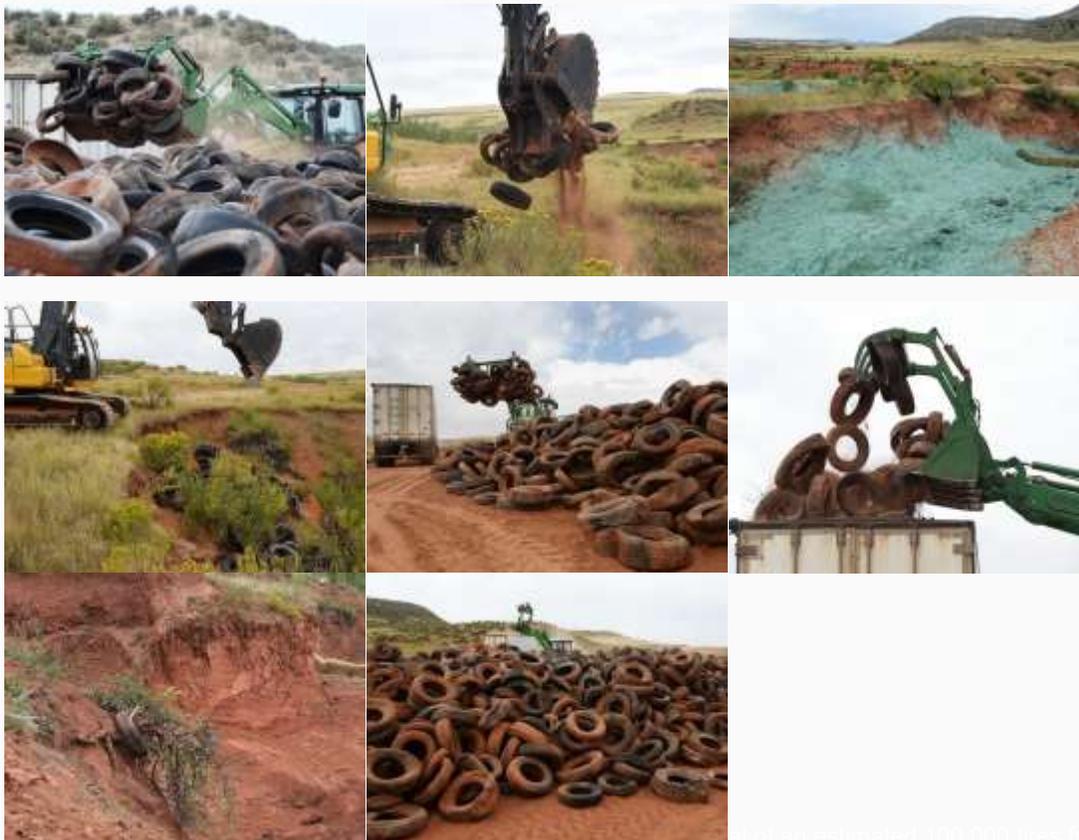


Cleanup begins on Larimer County's sea of 100,000 tires

Nick Coltrain, nickcoltrain@coloradoan.com 8:55 a.m. MDT August 30, 2016

Tire clean up at Roberts Ranch is nearing completion

The removal of an estimated 100,000 tires from Roberts Ranch near Livermore was nearing completion on Thursday. The tires will be recycled into rubber mulch. Larimer County received a grant of about \$495,000 from the state for the cleanup. Valerie Mosley/The Coloradoan



Part of an estimated 100,000 tires from Roberts Ranch near Livermore was nearing completion on Thursday. The tires will be recycled into rubber mulch. Larimer County received a grant

Tire clean up at Roberts Ranch is nearing completion

The black of tires is giving way to the red of dirt and, eventually, the green of prairie at a Larimer County ranch-turned-dump site.

Clean up at Roberts Ranch, a nearly 17,000-acre property north of Fort Collins and near Livermore, is well underway and ahead of schedule, Brian Gaboriau, the grant administrator overseeing the cleanup for the Colorado Department of Health and Environment.

And as a bonus, it looks like the tire problem isn't as bad as first predicted: An estimated 200,000 to 300,000 tires appears to be closer to 100,000, he said. The piles are enough of an environmental concern that the state awarded a \$495,000 grant to clean up the tire piles on the land, which is under a conservation easement to Larimer County.

The ranch [became home to the tires](#) in the 1970s, when the ranch patriarch was battling erosion caused by ditch breaks. The water carved finger canyons into the soft soil. Evan Roberts, ever mindful of the disaster of the Dust Bowl during the Great Depression, asked a Fort Collins tire company to bring a few tires up to serve as a base for a dam, his son, D.L. Roberts said in an email.

From there, it spiraled out of control. Before CDPHE got involved, the tires looked like large ponds of unknown depth in places.

That made accurate predictions — and removal — difficult.

"It's not your typical cleanup, because your typical cleanup is big piles on flat ground," Gaboriau said. "You just walk around and take a measurement and you know how many are there. This one, you didn't know."

Once removal started, workers realized the piles weren't as deep as feared. That, and cooperating weather, helped move up the estimated completion date for this phase of work from mid-November to the end of September.

That means quicker removal of a potentially toxic site, should the tires catch fire, and the end of a haven for mosquitoes — rainwater pools in the tires and tends to stick around. The stagnant puddles make for ideal breeding grounds for the bloodsuckers.

It also makes for a quicker pivot to the land mitigation and seeding of natural grasses, Gaboriau said.

"It's good to see, at this point, it coming to an end, and that we're going to have a site where the damage is mitigated," he said. "It gives me a good feeling that we're going out there and doing something positive, not just for the ranch but for the state."

The removed tires will be hauled to a recycling facility in Hudson, south of Greeley. From there, they'll be shredded and used as coverings for landfills.

The removal is the first step toward restoring the land to a more natural state. Sally Ross, Laramie Foothills steward for The Nature Conservancy, said she's optimistic about the restoration. She also praised the contractor, H2 Enterprises, for the care it has taken in removing the tires.

And while she's optimistic about restoration, she also cautioned that it won't be an overnight endeavor.

"Anything that's going to be adapted well is going to be a more long-term process in nature," she said, "We'll be looking into some more long-term restoration projects in that valley for a long time."

REPORTER-HERALD

Loveland buying 78 acres of open lands

New site across from Morey Wildlife Reserve

By Pamela Johnson,



An orange-belted bumblebee buzzes around wild flowers Wednesday in an open space that the city is purchasing soon. The area is south and west of Morey Wildlife Reserve near the Mariana Butte Golf Course in west Loveland. (Jenny Sparks / Loveland Reporter-Herald)



The city of Loveland is buying the 78-acre Ward Trust property for an open land that, sometime in the future, will be open for public access. This map, showing the location, was included in a packet of information provided to the Loveland City Council earlier this month. (Special to the Reporter-Herald)

Loveland will officially add 78 acres Friday that brings grazing lands, prime wildlife habitat and spectacular views to its portfolio of open lands.

The city is scheduled to close the deal Friday on the \$2.6 million purchase of the property, located just across Cedar Valley Drive from Morey Wildlife Reserve.

"It's a beautiful property," said Marilyn Hilgenberg, the city's open lands manager.

"We envision it will have trail access and wildlife viewing."

Those public uses are a few years out, after a public planning process. But first, the city will buy the property, which is known right now as the Ward Trust land.

The Trust for Public Lands negotiated the purchase of the property and actually bought the land from the Ward Trust. It will then sell the land to Loveland. The bulk of the \$2.6 million price will come from the city's share of the open lands sales tax. However, Great Outdoors Colorado awarded

the city \$500,000 toward the purchase, and Larimer County agreed to contribute \$250,000 from its open lands tax money.

The county also agreed to hold a conservation easement on the property, which is a requirement of the Great Outdoors Colorado grant.

Gary Buffington, director of Larimer County's Department of Natural Resources, said his open lands staff and Loveland's often partner on projects to protect land for everyone's benefit.

"Loveland is really doing a lot with its open lands dollars, and we want to support them," said Buffington.

The new property is a mixture of wetlands, cottonwood stands and irrigated pasture and, in addition to being leased as grazing lands, provides diverse wildlife habitat. Elk, deer, coyote, bears, bald eagles, red-tailed hawks, barn owls and many more species migrate through the property, which is near the Big Thompson River.

The site is visible from the Keyhole of the Devil's Backbone and offers views of the rock formation as well as the mountains to the west.

The land, which is across Cedar Valley Drive from the southwest side of Morey Wildlife Reserve, currently includes 36.8 acres of irrigated pasture. That use will continue until after the city has completed a management plan and developed the property for public access, which likely will include trail access.

Morey Wildlife Reserve is a 33-acre natural area that includes a one-mile loop trail and borders the Big Thompson River. Morey was damaged in the 2013 floods, but with the help of volunteers and grants, the city has repaired the site, replanted vegetation and expanded the trail.

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The city of Loveland is closing Friday on this new open space, seen Wednesday south and west of Morey Wildlife Reserve near the Mariana Butte Golf Course in Loveland. (Jenny Sparks / Loveland Reporter-Herald)



New natural area acquired for Poudre River trail

[Nick Coltrain](#), nickcoltrain@coloradoan.com 5:54 p.m. MDT August 23, 2016



(Photo: Coloradoan library)

Kerri Rollins uses a lot of superlatives when talking about the most recent accomplishment along the Poudre River Trail: "Icing on the cake," a "big step forward" and a comparison to a pearl necklace among them.

And, at the Larimer County Commission meeting Tuesday morning, that wasn't the only success Rollins, the open lands manager for the county, had to celebrate.

The Poudre River celebration was the final piece of a four-year effort, spread among many governments, to secure several parcels of natural area between Windsor and Greeley. The space that has finally, formally, fallen under a conservation easement co-managed by Larimer County and Windsor is 34 acres and home to deer, great blue heron, bald eagles and other animals.

That land was purchased as part of a \$5 million Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) grant from 2012.

"It's the icing on the cake for a much bigger project," Rollins said.

She described it as joining other "pearls along the string" that include the Sheep Draw, Poudre River Ranch and Cottonwood Bend areas.

The second plot of land lies south of the Devil's Backbone Open Space, west of Loveland. The county is chipping in about \$250,000 to purchase a 73-acre plot of farmland valued at about \$2.66 million. The city of Loveland is covering another \$2 million and GOCO will cover the rest.

The land, which will also be placed under a conservation easement, will be used as a buffer to the wetlands near the Big Thompson River Corridor, with plans for preserved natural area to eventually surround the corridor. Agricultural production — the land produces hay — will continue.

REPORTER-HERALD

Residents ask for more at Larimer parks

County creating master plan for Horsetooth, Carter, Pinewood, Flatiron

By **Pamela Johnson**

Reporter-Herald Staff Writer

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Carter Lake, which draws sailboats as well as motorboats and fishing trollers, is one of four Larimer County reservoirs included in efforts to update the management master plan. Sailboats, pictured here in 2013, are part of a yearly sailing regatta at the lake. (*Lilia Munoz / Loveland Reporter-Herald*)

Initial surveys show people want more trails and camping at area reservoirs along with suggestions for teepees to rent at Pinewood Reservoir, more swimming at Carter Lake and more bicycle access to Horsetooth Reservoir.

Those suggestions are the result of an initial public survey, which county officials are adding onto this week with public meetings to update Larimer County's Parks Master Plan for Carter Lake, Flatiron and Pinewood Reservoirs, all west of Loveland, and Horsetooth Reservoir west of Fort Collins.

Officials hope to complete that vision by spring.

At the same time, through the same surveys and meetings, Larimer County is taking input on the future of The Ranch Events Complex, for which officials are creating a separate master plan.

Ideas for that include outdoor concerts, minor league baseball and soccer as well as a public ice rink and an indoor swimming arena.

For Natural Resources, the goal is to identify projects and goals for the future of recreation and conservation at the already busy county parks, balancing long-term use, resource protection and recreation.

"We've got our work cut out for us," said Ken Brink Jr., visitor service manager for the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources.

The county is already dealing with those issues, but that balancing act looks to increase as residents weighing in on the plan are asking for more.

"Our managers are doing a multitude of creative things to make those areas available while still protection the resources and still making something that is a quality experience," said Brink.

Those efforts, he said, will continue as manager sift through survey results and suggestions to determine the best future plans for each park.

Nearly 500 people responded to an initial online survey and about 75 attended a meeting Monday at Horsetooth Reservoir. While most there commented on ideas for that particular park, the survey results offered input at all four.

Areas of overall improvement mentioned in the survey were dealing with the availability of parking and with crowding as well as the fee structure, which funds 94 percent of operations.

The first two go hand-in-hand. Managers carefully plan the amount of parking based on carrying capacity.

"When the inn is full, there's no more places to park," said Brink. "Because of that, there's not going to be another boat on the water, another hiker on the trail."

This becomes more challenging as the county parks become busier, a trend officials expect to continue with population growth. Another 150,000 people are expected to live in Larimer County by 2040, part of another 2.5 million who will move into Colorado, according to county officials.

Right now, about 60 percent of those who visit county parks are from outside Larimer.

So the plan will look at new ideas and improvement on existing recreation with the filter that each area has a carrying capacity.

And in initial survey and meeting results, residents seem to be asking for more — more hiking, more swimming, more opportunities in general.

Those at the meeting at Horsetooth mostly had suggestions for that particular site that ranged from more trails and an improved swim beach to a permanent facility for rowing club and a fee scale that is cheaper for county residents.

Other input, shared on competing sticky notes asked for "no archery" versus "yes to archery."

Other suggestions from both the survey and meeting included boat-in camp sites at Carter Lake, multi-use and mountain biking trails at all four reservoir parks, a mountain bike skills area and more options for day use such as swimming and picnics.

One suggestion called for teepees to rent at Pinewood much like the ones that book up nearly every weekend at nearby Flatiron during camping season.

At the meeting, Brink also heard from some people who want more motorized boating at Carter Lake and less paddle boards and others who asked for the exact opposite.

Though new recreation areas were not on the table for this master plan, Brink said that may be the big picture answer for providing more for a growing population.

One specific possibility he mentioned is Chimney Hollow, a new water storage reservoir Northern Water is looking to build next to Carter Lake. The initial plan is for the new waters to specialize in wakeless recreation, such as kayaks and paddle boats as well as offer camping and trails.

However, for this master plan, Larimer County is looking for input on only the four existing reservoirs. Additional public meetings will be held Wednesday at The Ranch, and a second round of online surveys is open at www.onegreatcountytoplay.com.