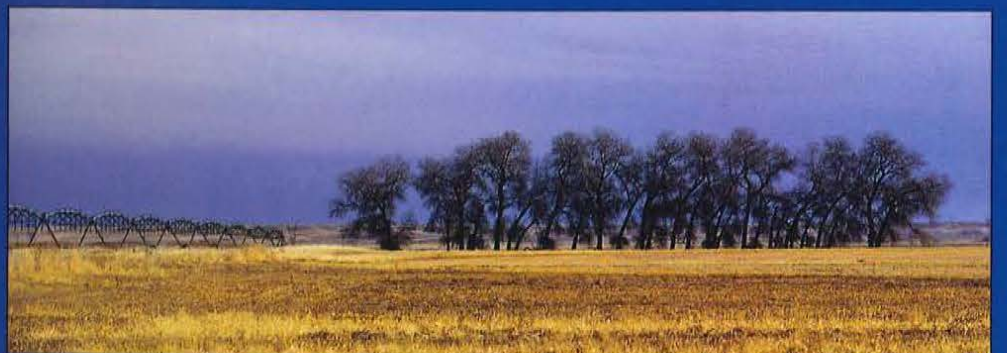


# *Larimer County Open Lands Program*

## *Annual Report 2003*

*Larimer County Parks & Open Lands*

*“Preserve and protect significant open space, natural areas, wildlife habitat, and develop parks and trails for present and future generations”*



A Message From the Chair

## Open Lands Priority Is Stewardship

This message from the chair is written as the Open Lands Program comes to a crossroads—perhaps not a crossroads, more a time when stewardship issues become the focus. From the first retreat held with the advisory board and staff in April 1996 came our Mission. Acquisition priorities were identified and refined during the years following that first retreat. Because we successfully focused on land acquisition and protection we have met many of our goals—the corridor between Fort Collins and Loveland (including Long View Farm, Cathy Fromme Prairie, Coyote Ridge Natural Area), Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space, Devil’s Backbone to Horsetooth, Eagle’s Nest Open Space, Red-tail Ridge Open Space and the Blue Mountain Conservation Area—to name a few. We have accomplished our land protection goals balancing fee simple

acquisition with public access and conservation easements that remain in private ownership.

Now that we have acquired these wonderfully rich and diverse open spaces the Open Lands Program will need to address new and different stewardship issues. Before open spaces can be made available for public use, management plans must be developed. Public comment is sought for each of these plans. After these open spaces are opened to the public, additional management concerns arise. Now such varied issues as protection of threatened species, appropriate trail placement (including seasonal closures), new recreational uses, weed management, hunting (or not) face the staff and advisory board with regularity. Each issue presents its own unique challenge and will continue to do so into the future.

*“I believe we have the best Open Lands Program in the state. Good stewardship of our open land’s tax money and natural resources does make a difference.”*  
Tom Bender,  
County Commissioner District 2

A final word of encouragement to the staff and next advisory board; we appreciate the difficulties encountered over time as stewardship of our protected lands becomes the main focus. Keep up the good work!

Nancy Wallace  
Chair, Open Lands Advisory Board

A Message From the Director

Our Open Lands Program has continued to attain greatness through difficult economic times in 2003. Our talented staff, committed Open Lands Board, and supportive Board of County Commissioners have creatively made adjustments to meet the intent of the “Help Preserve Open Spaces” initiative.

In 2004 we will embark upon a new management frontier by increasing our open lands public access opportunities with the opening of Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space. This unique area will allow our visitors to experience the wonder of waterfowl in an urban water based environment. This diverse habitat beckons over 180 species of birds and other animals to its welcoming solitude.

In 2005, the Eagle’s Nest Open Space will offer visitors an additional trail hiking opportunity along the North Fork of the Poudre River. Visitors will enjoy viewing rock outcroppings and feel the western flavor of northern Larimer County. With the addition of these two new open spaces, the department will then offer ten separate park and open space areas providing a wide range of outdoor recreational opportunities to our citizens and visitors within Larimer County.

It is exciting to anticipate the future of such a premiere program that will continue to be a regional champion in open space acquisition, conservation easements, and public access.

Gary Buffington  
Director, Larimer County Parks and Open Lands

## Open Lands Advisory Board

The Open Lands Advisory Board is a 12-member citizen advisory board that meets monthly to guide the Open Lands Program. The Board makes recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners regarding use of the Help Preserve Open Spaces sales and use tax.



Standing left to right: Kerri Rollins\*, Jim White, Duane Pond, Tom Bender\*\*\*, Nancy Wallace, Sue Sparling, Jean Carpenter, Brian Hayes, Lori Jeffrey-Clark, Gary Buffington\*, Jim Phebus\*, Matt Schulz\*, Dan Rieves\*. Kneeling: Ann Montoya\*, K-Lynn Cameron\*\*, Meegan Flenniken\*, Charlie Johnson.\* Not pictured: Wendell Amos, Peter Kast, Mark DeGregorio, Bob Streeter, Eric Hamrick, Charlie Gindler\*, Jerry White\*

\*Open Lands Staff  
\*\*Open Lands Manager 679-4575  
\*\*\*Commissioner Liaison

1	2	Cover:
		1. Dick Snell
		2. Charlie Johnson
		3. Mark Clevenger
3	4	4. Charlie Johnson
		5. Dick Snell
5	6	6. Walt Hubis

# Coming Together: Devil's Backbone and Horsetooth Mountain

Don't you just love it when a plan comes together? Protection of the Devil's Backbone to Horsetooth was a lofty goal achieved after a long effort by Larimer County, Fort Collins and Loveland.

Standing at the center of this eight-mile span of ridges and valleys, looking east and west, north and south, you can see a secured future for wildlife, recreation and scenic vistas. In 2003 Larimer County and Fort Collins acquired the remarkable addition of the 1545-acre Indian Creek Ranch north of the Devil's Backbone and the cliff-rimmed Culver Open Space mesa. These additions, and the historic Soderberg homestead and Rimrock Open Space, link the Devil's Backbone Open Space to Horsetooth Mountain Park, Lory State Park and Coyote Ridge Natural Area; a 12,000 acre conservation corridor with more than 70 miles of existing trails and seven miles of regional trails planned for 2006.

Wildlife can continue to roam from Horsetooth and Milner Mountains through the hogbacks to the plains as they have for thousands of years virtually unaffected by the sprawling cities of the Front Range just miles away. Owls, hawks, falcons and eagles can continue to perch and nest along miles of continuous cliffs. Native plant communities can flourish in an environment excluding houses, roads and over-grazing. Native plant and animal dynamics will be encouraged by weed control, managed grazing and controlled burning.

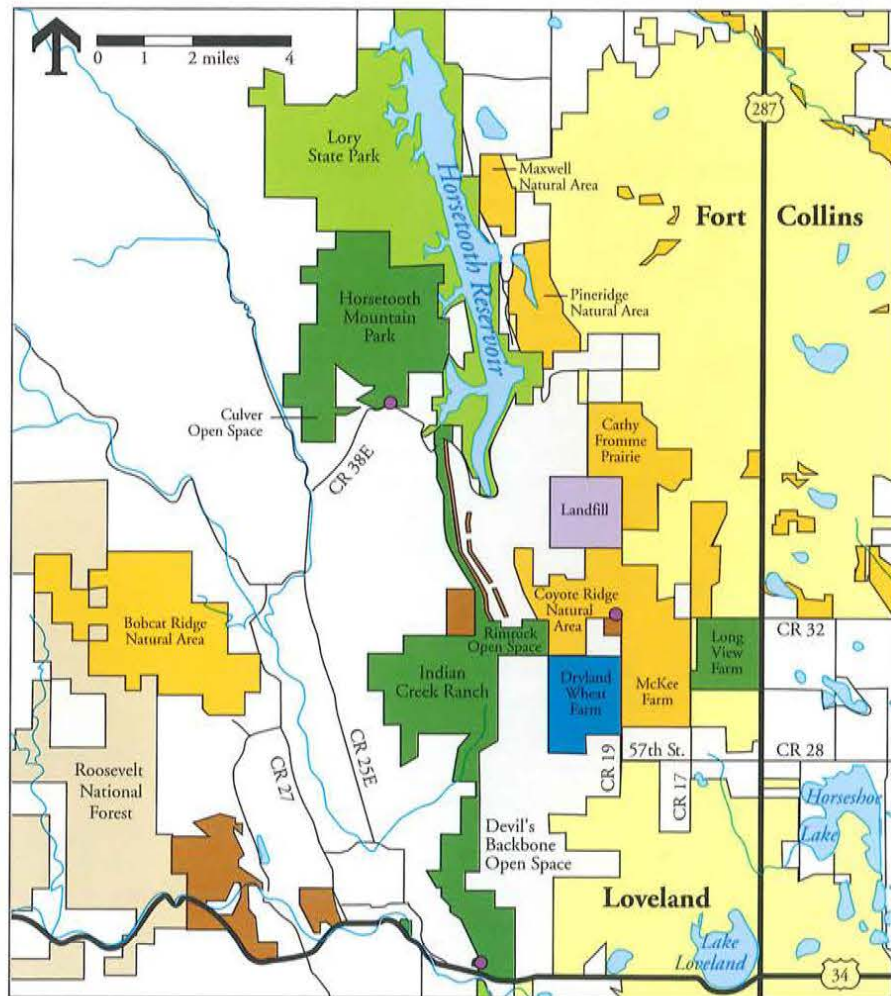
This coming together is much more than the convergence of open space boundaries. Collectively these open spaces provide for passive recreation managed to be integrated with plant and animal communities, soils, geology and the scenic expanses of uninterrupted quiet.

Fast forward to 2006: A third grade class stands awestruck on the trail, watching a black bear meander down from Milner

Mountain. The rider steps off her horse to rest on a hummock of buffalo grass and ponders the gray quartzite chips lying in the red soil left by Indians gone for over a thousand years. The mountain biker stops to witness the slithering tactics of a bullsnake and rattle-snake looking for an advantage to engage in battle. A hiker stands at the rim rock feeling the up rush of the evening air as a red-tail hawk catches the same breeze and glides sideways down the ridge. For those who look closely on the dewy morning ground, cat tracks the size of saucers circle a plum thicket where deer had bedded down last evening.



Hiking through the past and present at the Devil's Backbone: geology and history; spring wild flowers and baby wild critters. Photo: Rick Price



- Managed by Larimer County
- Other Open Space
- Managed by City of Fort Collins
- Managed by City of Loveland
- Conservation Easements (no public access)
- Existing Trailhead

# 2003 Acquisitions

*\*lead agency on project*

## Buckeye/Waverly Agricultural Lands

**A. Miller-Simon Conservation Easement II.** This agricultural easement will protect 35 acres of irrigated ranchland adjacent to other protected lands in the Buckeye area. The landowner participated in the State Tax Credit Program in order to recover costs of this project.

*Appraised Value: \$95,000*

*Partners: Landowner donation \$90,000*

*Larimer County Open Lands\*: \$5,000*

## Poudre River

**B. Fonken Conservation Easement.** This 35-acre conservation easement, located in the forested hillside of the Poudre Canyon is the second donation by the Fonken Family. Over the next several years, the Fonkens plan on protecting their entire 373-acre property, which borders USFS land.

*Appraised Value: \$100,000*

*Partners: Landowner donation \$100,000*

**C. Pleasant Valley Trail.** This 1-mile paved trail connects Lions Park in LaPorte to Vern's near Bellvue. This recreational trail also serves as a safe route for school children to the Cache la Poudre Elementary and Junior High schools.

*Total Cost: \$255,200*

*Larimer County Open Lands\*: \$255,200*

## Wellington Agricultural Lands

**D. Bee-Weber Agricultural Easement.** Protection of these 209 acres of irrigated farmland was accomplished in partnership with Colorado State University and the City of Fort Collins. This easement protects prime soils and scenic views from I-25, and acts as a separator between Wellington and Fort Collins.

*Appraised Value: \$563,440*

*Partners: City of Fort Collins \$281,720*

*Larimer County Open Lands\*: \$281,720*

## Devil's Backbone to Horsetooth

**E. Horsetooth Mountain Park—Culver Open Space.** This dramatic 284-acre cliff-rimmed mesa is a welcome addition to Horsetooth Mountain Park. This property boasts open meadows and ponderosa pine woodlands rimmed by red sandstone cliffs. Hughey Open Space borders Culver Open Space to the north.

*Appraised Value: \$1,500,000*

*Partners: Great Outdoors Colorado \$325,000,*

*City of Fort Collins \$200,000*

*Larimer County Open Lands\*: \$975,000*

**F. Indian Creek Ranch.** This 1,545-acre foothills ranch is the final piece in a long-range goal to protect a conservation corridor and establish a regional foothills trail connecting Loveland to Fort Collins. Public access to this unique foothills open space is planned for 2006. From south to north, this regional trail will span over 16 miles.

*Appraised Value: \$5,410,000*

*Partners: City of Fort Collins \$4,057,500,*

*Great Outdoors Colorado \$500,000*

*Larimer County Open Lands\*: \$852,500*

## Fort Collins/Loveland Corridor

**G. Fossil Creek Reservoir—Siegmond.** This 10-acre inholding is the last piece of a puzzle surrounded by almost 500 acres of the Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space. The larger Fossil Creek Reservoir Area includes nearly 1,500 acres protected by Larimer County and the City of Fort Collins.

*Appraised Value: \$500,000*

*Partners: City of Fort Collins \$300,000*

*Larimer County Open Lands\*: \$220,000*

## Big Thompson River

**H. Sylvan Dale Conservation Easement V.** The 70-acre Eagle Ridge Conservation Easement provides an additional buffer to the more than 870 acres already protected by conservation easements on the Sylvan Dale Ranch. The landowner participated in the State Tax Credit Program in order to recover some of the project costs.

*Appraised Value: \$360,000*

*Partners: Landowner Donation \$176,000*

*Larimer County Open Lands\*: \$184,000*



Photo: Walt Hubbs

“Our Open Lands Program has become highly regarded in Colorado for many reasons. The commitment to our heritage and our citizens coupled with creativity and passion have helped create a product that we all can be proud of for years to come.”

*Kathay Rennels,  
County Commissioner District 1*

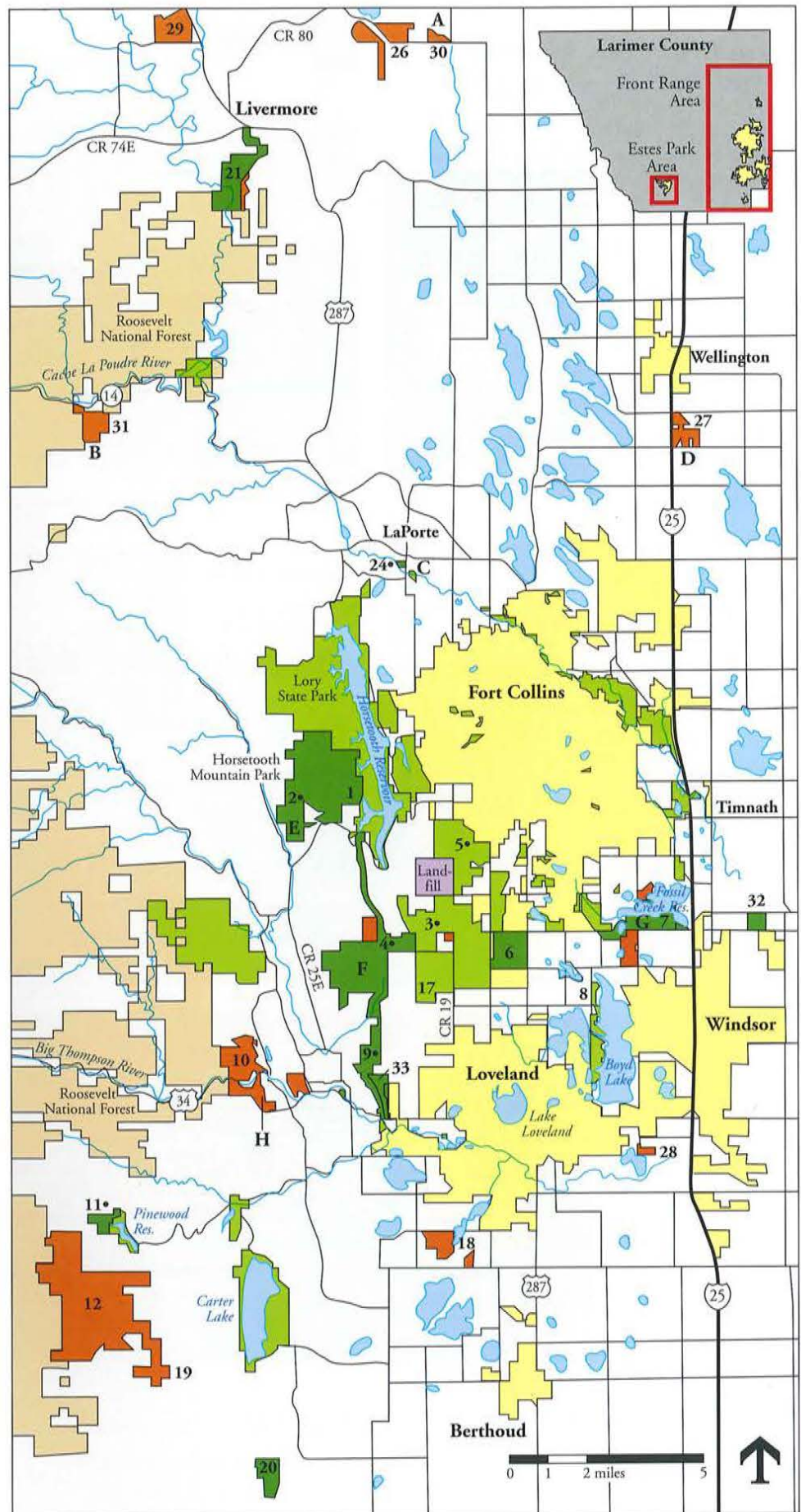
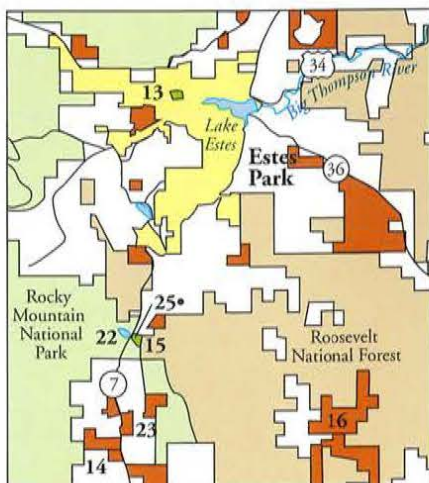
## 2003 Acquisitions

- |                          |                       |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| A. Miller Simon CE II    | E. Culver Open Space  |
| B. Fonken CE II          | F. Indian Creek Ranch |
| C. Pleasant Valley Trail | G. Siegmund           |
| D. Bee-Weber CE          | H. Sylvan Dale CE V   |

## 1996-2002 Acquisitions

1. Horsetooth Mountain Pk. (Soderberg OS)
2. Horsetooth Mountain Pk. (Hughes OS)
3. Coyote Ridge
4. Rimrock Open Space
5. Cathy Fromme Prairie
6. Long View Farm
7. Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space
8. Heinricy
9. Devil's Backbone Open Space
10. Sylvan Dale Ranch CE
11. Ramsay-Shockey Open Space
12. Blue Mountain Bison Ranch CE
13. Knolls-Willow
14. Childers/Henning CE
15. Lily Lake (Roessler)
16. Smitherman Ranch CE
17. Dryland Wheat Farm
18. Ryan Gulch CE
19. Harper CE
20. Red-tail Ridge OS & Southdown Trailhead
21. Eagle's Nest Open Space
22. Lily Lake Water & Recreation Rights
23. Enos Mills CE
24. Lions Park
25. Homer Rouse Trail
26. Buckeye Agricultural Partnership
27. Kerbel CE
28. Kauffman CE
29. Tepee Rings CE
30. Miller-Simon CE
31. Fonken I CE
32. Jacoby Open Space
33. Hidden Valley I Open Space

- Open Space (OS) Managed by Larimer County
- Other Open Space
- Conservation Easements (CE)
- Project Currently Open to the Public



“ I liked the story about Alfred Wild and where he grew his crops. The gypsum was cool because it was like chalk. ”

Ashley, 4th grade  
Stansberry Elementary



Photo: Rick Price



Photo: Walt Hubis

“ Larimer County Open Lands Program provides a significant benefit to the business community as it enhances the quality of life for both employers and employees within the County. ”

Peter Kast, Partner,  
Realtec Commercial Real Estate Services, Inc.



Photo: Charlie Johnson



Photo: Charlie Johnson



Photo: Charlie Johnson



Photo: Walt Hubis

“ I am most appreciative of the commitment to the protection of open spaces and the education about it's benefits. ”

Janna Six,  
Sierra Club Member

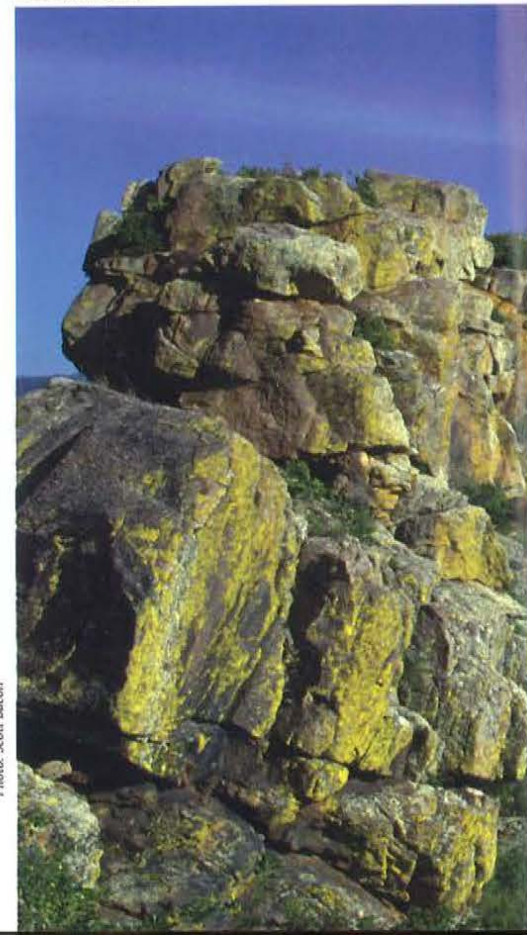


Photo: Dick Snell

“ I have enjoyed working with both City and County open space programs. As an agricultural landowner, these programs have allowed my children and I to continue farming. ”

Harry Sauer, Landowner/Farmer

Photo: Scott Bacon



“As a volunteer naturalist I am able to give back in a small way to the program that has opened my eyes and heart to the great beauty of our natural areas. I feel so blessed to live here and to be able to share my enthusiasm.”

Jacquie, Volunteer Naturalist



Photo: Efrain Padro

“The Blue Mountain Bison Ranch public tour is awesome. It’s great to have the opportunity to see this beautiful natural area and know that our tax dollars are well used.”

Carol Van Hofwegen & Richard Winter, Loveland



Photo: Mark Clevenger



Photo: Charlie Johnson

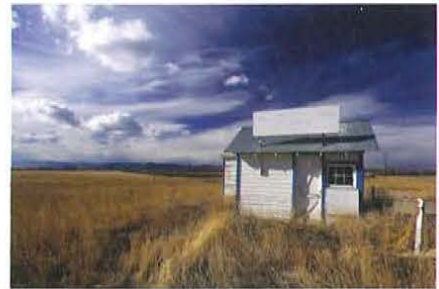


Photo: Walt Hubis

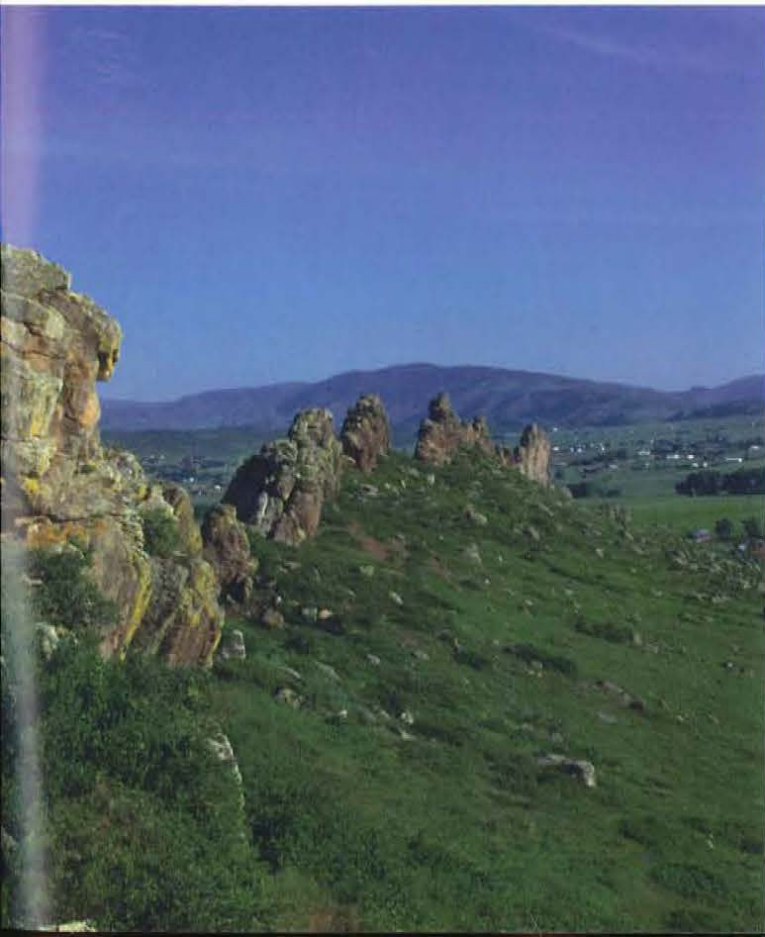


Photo: Virginia Soderberg

“Thank you for taking us to the keyhole. Can we do it again?”

Colt, 4th grade  
Stansberry Elementary

“Having been a member of the Larimer County Open Lands Advisory Board since its inception, I am very proud of its achievements over these past years. Larimer County’s acquisition of open space has exceeded my wildest dreams, and justifiably is a leader in Colorado. My tenure on the Advisory Board will soon be completed, but I will be following and applauding its achievements for years to come.”

Wendell Amos, Open Lands Advisory Board 1996-2004

## 2003 Cities and Towns Spending Report

The Help Preserve Open Space (HPOS) sales tax revenue is currently shared with the county's six municipalities. With their recent growth into Larimer County, the towns of Windsor and Johnstown will receive a portion of the HPOS dollars in 2004. The revenue sharing agreement ensures that residents from throughout the county receive benefits from the Open Space sales tax.

### Berthoud

The Town of Berthoud continued to work closely with Colorado Open Lands to preserve agricultural lands, primarily through conservation easements. Larimer County Open Space sales tax dollars were used to help defray land protection costs. The town also used these funds for trail and park development.

### Estes Park

During 2003 the Town of Estes Park used over \$50,000 of their open space dollars to construct 1,500 feet of natural trail and a parking lot at the trailhead on the Knoll-Willows property. Knoll-Willows is an open space that has been preserved in the heart of Estes Park.

### Fort Collins

The City of Fort Collins participated in conserving 4,633 acres of land in 2003. Local projects included an 82-acre conservation easement on the north side of Fossil Creek Reservoir, 156 acres along I-25 south of Prospect Road, and the 27-acre McMurry Natural Area located along the Poudre River. Regional projects included protection of Bobcat Ridge, a 2,604-acre ranch in the foothills southwest of Masonville. Fort Collins also partnered with the County in acquiring the Indian Creek Ranch, the Bee-Weber Agricultural Easement, and a 10-acre inholding within the Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space.

### Loveland

The City of Loveland acquired the 219-acre Hidden Valley I Property for \$2.08 million in partnership with Larimer County. Preserving Hidden Valley, which is highly visible from the popular Devil's Backbone Open Space trail, was a high priority for the citizens of Loveland. Also in 2003, the 1.25-acre CTM Place property was donated, protecting wildlife habitat and wetlands along the Big Thompson River and providing a corridor connecting the REJY Natural Area and Waterford Place Conservation Easement.

### Timnath

The town is saving its share for future partnership opportunities to create community separators between Windsor and Fort Collins. Timnath also plans to contribute to the Poudre River Trail System that will eventually link Fort Collins, Timnath, Windsor, and Greeley.

### Wellington

In 2003, the Town of Wellington used its open space funds to further the development of town parks including facilities at Viewpointe Park, located southwest of Wellington. The Town also saved a portion of its funds for development and maintenance of Viewpointe and other parks for 2004.



Photo: Mark Clevenger

## Help Preserve Open Spaces: Tax Revenues Benefit All of Larimer County

Annual Revenue Distribution of Open Space Tax Dollars\*

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Total
Larimer County	2,259,975	2,485,421	2,707,553	3,067,810	3,294,869	3,565,146	3,527,084	3,532,580	24,440,438
Berthoud	71,154	80,969	87,574	101,539	110,862	122,889	124,129	123,913	823,039
Estes Park	161,905	178,198	193,453	224,779	222,608	2329,886	218,802	218,445	1,648,076
Fort Collins	2,107,473	2,319,562	2,487,606	2,850,066	3,109,001	3,323,372	3,235,748	3,205,119	22,637,947
Loveland	847,210	932,139	1,003,872	1,146,823	1,234,060	1,321,205	1,304,378	1,314,655	9,104,342
Timnath	4,221	4,646	5,025	5,732	5,742	5,887	5,599	7,083	43,935
Wellington	29,848	32,520	40,557	47,494	53,444	64,589	67,642	66,730	402,823
<b>Totals</b>	<b>5,481,786</b>	<b>6,033,455</b>	<b>6,525,640</b>	<b>7,444,243</b>	<b>8,030,585</b>	<b>8,632,974</b>	<b>8,483,392</b>	<b>8,468,525</b>	<b>59,100,600</b>

Money to fund Open Lands Programs comes from a 1/4 cent sales and use tax. The tax is not imposed on food.

The tax continues through 2018, and total revenue collected to date is over \$59 million. Distribution to incorporated areas is based on the highest yield of either population or sales tax generation.

\* These figures are unaudited. Audit to be completed in mid 2004. Figures in this chart have been rounded when appropriate.



# 2003 Cities and Towns Spending Report

The Help Preserve Open Space (HPOS) sales tax revenue is currently shared with the county's six municipalities. With their recent growth into Larimer County, the towns of Windsor and Johnstown will receive a portion of the HPOS dollars in 2004. The revenue sharing agreement ensures that residents from throughout the county receive benefits from the Open Space sales tax.

## Berthoud

The Town of Berthoud continued to work closely with Colorado Open Lands to preserve agricultural lands, primarily through conservation easements. Larimer County Open Space sales tax dollars were used to help defray land protection costs. The town also used these funds for trail and park development.

## Estes Park

During 2003 the Town of Estes Park used over \$50,000 of their open space dollars to construct 1,500 feet of natural trail and a parking lot at the trailhead on the Knoll-Willows property. Knoll-Willows is an open space that has been preserved in the heart of Estes Park.

## Fort Collins

The City of Fort Collins participated in conserving 4,633 acres of land in 2003. Local projects included an 82-acre conservation easement on the north side of Fossil Creek Reservoir, 156 acres along I-25 south of Prospect Road, and the 27-acre McMurry Natural Area located along the Poudre River. Regional projects included protection of Bobcat Ridge, a 2,604-acre ranch in the foothills southwest of Masonville. Fort Collins also partnered with the County in acquiring the Indian Creek Ranch, the Bee-Weber Agricultural Easement, and a 10-acre inholding within the Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space.

## Loveland

The City of Loveland acquired the 219-acre Hidden Valley I Property for \$2.08 million in partnership with Larimer County. Preserving Hidden Valley, which is highly visible from the popular Devil's Backbone Open Space trail, was a high priority for the citizens of Loveland. Also in 2003, the 1.25-acre CTM Place property was donated, protecting wildlife habitat and wetlands along the Big Thompson River and providing a corridor connecting the REJY Natural Area and Waterford Place Conservation Easement.

## Timnath

The town is saving its share for future partnership opportunities to create community separators between Windsor and Fort Collins. Timnath also plans to contribute to the Poudre River Trail System that will eventually link Fort Collins, Timnath, Windsor, and Greeley.

## Wellington

In 2003, the Town of Wellington used its open space funds to further the development of town parks including facilities at Viewpointe Park, located southwest of Wellington. The Town also saved a portion of its funds for development and maintenance of Viewpointe and other parks for 2004.



Photo: Mark Clevenger

## Help Preserve Open Spaces: Tax Revenues Benefit All of Larimer County

Annual Revenue Distribution of Open Space Tax Dollars\*

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	Total
Larimer County	2,259,975	2,485,421	2,707,553	3,067,810	3,294,869	3,565,146	3,527,084	3,532,580	24,440,438
Berthoud	71,154	80,969	87,574	101,539	110,862	122,889	124,129	123,913	823,039
Estes Park	161,905	178,198	193,453	224,779	222,608	2329,886	218,802	218,445	1,648,076
Fort Collins	2,107,473	2,319,562	2,487,606	2,850,066	3,109,001	3,323,372	3,235,748	3,205,119	22,637,947
Loveland	847,210	932,139	1,003,872	1,146,823	1,234,060	1,321,205	1,304,378	1,314,655	9,104,342
Timnath	4,221	4,646	5,025	5,732	5,742	5,887	5,599	7,083	43,935
Wellington	29,848	32,520	40,557	47,494	53,444	64,589	67,642	66,730	402,823
<b>Totals</b>	<b>5,481,786</b>	<b>6,033,455</b>	<b>6,525,640</b>	<b>7,444,243</b>	<b>8,030,585</b>	<b>8,632,974</b>	<b>8,483,392</b>	<b>8,468,525</b>	<b>59,100,600</b>

Money to fund Open Lands Programs comes from a 1/4 cent sales and use tax. The tax is not imposed on food.

The tax continues through 2018, and total revenue collected to date is over \$59 million. Distribution to incorporated areas is based on the highest yield of either population or sales tax generation.

\* These figures are unaudited. Audit to be completed in mid 2004. Figures in this chart have been rounded when appropriate.

## Conservation Easements: Partnering with Private Landowners to Protect Important Resources

The Open Lands Program continues to place emphasis on the use of conservation easements to preserve important lands in the County. Conservation easements are useful when the goal is to keep the land in private ownership and to maintain the current use of the land; in most cases no public access is proposed.

The primary goal of a conservation easement is to protect the important features/characteristics of a specific site, e.g. agricultural, natural, scenic, wildlife or ecological. This protection is achieved by carefully defining in the document what is or is not allowed on the property. Every easement is tailored to a specific property and the needs of the individual landowners; the terms are negotiated between the landowner and the Open Lands staff. Annual monitoring of the site and maintaining communication with the property owner are crucial in assuring that the terms of the easement are respected.

There can be significant tax benefits to the landowner when an easement is donated or sold at a discounted price to the County. Colorado law provides income tax credits that allow donors to recover up to \$260,000 for each easement donation. The tax credits earned by a landowner are usually sold by a broker to a business or individual who has a significant state tax liability. The first \$100,000 donated will generate a \$100,000 credit. Any donation amount over \$100,000 will be valued at 40% for tax credit purposes (up to a total maximum credit of \$260,000). Thus, a \$500,000 donation would provide a \$260,000 credit. The Larimer County Open Lands Program is one of the leading public agencies in Colorado in helping landowners utilize the tax credit program.

If the conservation easement satisfies Internal Revenue Code requirements, there are also possible Federal tax benefits in the form of a charitable income tax deduction and an estate tax reduction.



Conservation easements keep land in private ownership while preserving our agricultural heritage.

Photo: Walt Hubis

Although the Open Lands Program has received conservation easements as full donations, it is more common that there is some compensation to the owners. In any case, conservation easements are strictly on a willing-seller basis. To be successful, the protection of the resource must be the primary motivation for both the landowner and the Open Lands Program.

From the perspective of the Open Lands Program, there are several distinct advantages to utilizing a conservation easement: 1) the cost to purchase an easement is normally about half that of purchasing the land outright; 2) the property remains in private ownership and on the tax roll; 3) the management and maintenance of the property remains the responsibility of the owner, rather than that of the County.

For more information on conservation easements, contact K-Lynn Cameron, Open Lands Manager at 970-679-4575 or Jerry White, Land Agent at 970-498-5715.

*“My family's lifetime concern for the future of agriculture in Larimer County has kept us looking for ways to preserve our way of life and provide alternative choices for our estate planning needs. Partnering with the Larimer County Open Lands Program has given us answers to our family inheritance issues and helped us in our ability to promote land conservation. Everyone wins.”*

Dan Miller and Mary Beth Simon

### Landowner Tax Benefits for Easement Donations

- Donors may recover up to \$260,000 per year from the State Tax Credit Program
- Reduce annual tax liability by charitable deduction
- Reduce capital gains at time property is sold
- Reduce estate taxes
- Reduce property taxes on non-agricultural lands

## People Making a Difference for Land Protection

Protecting the special places of Larimer County is so important to our citizens that some made cash donations, while others donated conservation easements, and still others sold land at discounted prices. Thanks to donations received in 2003, the Open Lands Program has an additional \$341,000 to leverage for land conservation. Since 1996, donations of property and cash from landowners and citizens now total more than \$5 million.

*“Open lands: An irreplaceable legacy to leave our grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and future generations—a special beauty and peace that is found only in nature.”*

Mildred Johnson, Fort Collins

### Donation Over \$500,000

David & Susan Jessup (1999-2003)  
Jake Kauffman & Son, Inc. (2001)  
Paul Jonjak & Family (1999)

Sylvan Dale Ranch CE I,II,III,IV,V  
Kauffman CE  
Blue Mtn. Bison Ranch CE

### \$300,000—\$499,000

Curt & Jennifer Heckrodt (2000)  
Jack & Beth White (2000)  
Bob Ramsay (1999)

Red-tail Ridge Open Space  
Rimrock Open Space  
Ramsay-Shockey Open Space

### \$100,000—\$299,000

Dan Miller & Mary Beth Simon (2002-2003)  
H.A. & Elaine Fonken (2002-2003)  
Patricia Block (2002)  
Dave Sitzman (2001)  
Joe & Pat Harper (2000)

Miller-Simon CE I, II  
Fonken CE I, II  
Block CE  
Kerbel Agricultural CE  
Harper CE

### \$1,000—\$99,000

New Belgium Brewing (2002)  
Walmart of Loveland (2002)  
Southdown, Inc (2001)  
Robert & Ann Avis (2000)  
Anonymous Donation (2000)  
Byron & Beverly Williams (1999)  
First Choice Bank (1999)  
First National Bank (1999)  
Audra & Don Hughey (1998)  
Stephanie Steppel-White (1997)  
Loveland Wildlife Assoc. (1996)

Fossil Creek Reservoir Open Space  
Fossil Creek Reservoir Open Space  
Red-tail Ridge Open Space  
Eagle's Nest CE  
Future Project  
Fossil Creek Reservoir Open Space  
Devil's Backbone Trail  
Devil's Backbone Trail  
Horsetooth Mountain Park  
Coyote Ridge Natural Area  
Boyd Lake Property

### 2003 Donations

CE = Conservation Easement  
OS = Open Space

## We're Seeing Green! One Dollar Grows More Dollars!

Why limit ourselves to the sales tax revenue when we can stretch those dollars by partnering with other entities, applying for grants, promoting the tax credit program and asking for bargain sales from willing landowners? This was the successful strategy employed by the Open Lands Program in 2003 and it paid

off big time! Every dollar from the County's share of the open space sales tax was leveraged with \$2.43 from critical partnerships, grant awards and donations.

Partnerships are vital to the success of any open lands program. In 2003 the City of Fort Collins partnered with the county to protect over 1700 acres of important open space. Without this financial partnership, Indian Creek Ranch would be on its way to just another foothills subdivision.

Larimer County saw lots of green in 2003 in the form of successful grant awards from Great Outdoors Colorado! Culver Open Space and Indian Creek Ranch were awarded \$825,000 for protection of critical open space values on over 1800 acres. Inlet Bay at Horsetooth Reservoir and Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space received \$334,000 to construct recreation and trail facilities for the public to enjoy. Finally, \$50,000 was awarded to complete a comprehensive resource inventory with the Colorado

Natural Heritage Program. Total tally of dollars awarded to Larimer County is \$1,209,000!

Willing and generous landowners also help stretch our open space tax dollars through land donations, bargain sales and participation in the State Tax Credit Program. This is a most rewarding way to stretch our land conservation dollars. In 2003, two willing and able landowners with a strong conservation ethic donated \$341,000 in land value.

The Open Lands Program is serious in its effort to make the most of citizen open space tax dollars. By using one dollar to leverage over two dollars more, we can protect more land at today's prices while it's still available. Thanks to our partners, generous landowners and Great Outdoors Colorado! for our successful year!



Sandstone ledges and mesa meadows of the Culver Open Space will be a distinctive addition to Horsetooth Mountain Park. Photo: Dick Snell

# Inventory of Open Lands Acquisitions (through 2003)

Name	Acreage	Acquisition Cost	Larimer Co. Open Lands	Donation/Bargain Sale	Partnerships	Public Access	Comments
<b>Laramie Foothills</b>							
Eagle's Nest Open Space	755/*72	2,000,000	1,306,500	54,500	GOCO	639,000	Yes, 2005 LLT holds restrictive covenants
Tepee Rings CE	*504	170,000	69,000	100,000	LLT	1,000	No Managed by LLT
<b>Buckeye/Waverly Ag Lands</b>							
Buckeye Ag Partnership CE	*494	—	28,000	5,900	TNC & LLT	169,853	No Monitored by LLT
Miller-Simon CE Phase I & II	*70	60,000	60,000	130,000	—	—	No
<b>Wellington Ag Lands</b>							
Bee-Weber	*208	563,440	1,181,720	—	Fort Collins	281,720	No
Kerbel CE	*83	197,498	98,749	179,280	Fort Collins	98,749	No
<b>Poudre River</b>							
Fonken CE Phase I & II	*70	0	0	200,000	—	—	No
Lions Park	20.0	0	0	—	—	—	Yes
Jacoby	161.0	1,920,000	0	1,200,000	—	—	Future trail
Pleasant Valley Trail	1-mile	255,200	255,200	—	—	—	Yes
<b>Fort Collins/Loveland Separator</b>							
Cathy Fromme Prairie	240.0	1,000,000	180,000	—	Fort Collins	460,000	Yes Managed by Fort Collins, monitored by LLT
Coyote Ridge Natural Area	839.3	1863,500	523,583	21,500	Fort Collins	1,340,416	Yes Managed by Fort Collins
Dryland Wheat Farm	792.0	3,139,000	3,139,000	—	3 Partners	2,701,119	Future trail Managed by Loveland, monitored by LLT & Lar. Co.
Fossil Creek Regional Open Space	843.5	155,000	8,489,100	19,650	Fort Collins	4,524,550	Yes, 2004
Heinricy	30.0	405,000	405,000	—	5 partners	315,000	Yes Managed with Boyd Lake SP
Long View Farm	599.4	3,027,000	1,594,500	—	3 Partners	1,432,499	Future trail Leased for dryland farming
<b>Devil's Backbone to Horsetooth</b>							
Rimrock Open Space	472/*93.3	2,262,240	2,162,240	—	Fort Collins	100,000	Yes
Soderberg Homestead (HTMP)	114.0	460,000	460,000	—	—	—	Yes, 2005 Managed as part of HTMP
Devil's Backbone Open Space	2196.7/*1.6	9,315,020	3,031,420	—	3 Partners	6,283,100	Yes
Hughey Open Space	282.0	310,000	129,000	31,000	GOCO	150,000	Yes Managed as part of HTMP
Culver Open Space	287.9	1,500,000	975,000	—	2 Partners	525,000	Potential Managed as part of HTMP
<b>Big Thompson River</b>							
Sylvan Dale CE	*941.0	1,618,866	922,436	1,100,240	2 Partners	175,000	Possible trail Preserves viewshed
Block CE	*35.0	100,000	100,000	100,000	—	—	No
Kaufmann CE	*73.6	0	0	800,000	—	—	Future trail
<b>Berthoud/Loveland Separator</b>							
Ryan Gulch CE	*378.6	1,437,844	270,000	250,000	3 Partners	1,167,844	Future trail Monitored by Loveland
<b>Blue Mountain</b>							
Blue Mountain Bison Ranch CE	*4100.0	2,000,000	1,350,000	666,000	GOCO	650,000	Guided tours Co-monitored by IC and LLT
Harper CE	*240	0	0	295,000	—	—	No Monitored by LLT
Ramsay-Shockey Open Space	177.0	0	0	325,000	—	—	Yes
<b>Little Thompson River</b>							
Red-tail Ridge Open Space	320.0	951,559	286,500	286,500	4 Partners	665,059	Future trail Monitored by LLT
Red-tail Ridge Trailhead/Trail	**15.1	0	286,500	0	—	—	Future trail Monitored by LLT
<b>Estes Valley</b>							
Childers/Henning CE	*160.0	0	0	752,000	Private	48,000	No Monitored by EVLT
Enos Mills CE	*192.0	335,000	45,000	—	2 Partners	290,000	Homestead Monitored by EVLT
Homer Rouse Memorial Trail	1.5 miles	40,000	10,000	—	Estes park	30,000	Yes Managed by EVRPD
Knolls-Willow	19.6	345,000	55,000	—	2 Partners	290,000	Yes Monitored by EVLT
Lakes Estes Trail	4 mi.(ph.III)	232,500	100,000	—	4 Partners	132,500	Yes Managed by EVRPD
Lily Lake/Roessler	18.2	400,000	40,000	—	3 Partners	360,000	No Managed by RMNP
Lily Lake Water & Rec. Rights	14 acre-ft.	315,000	45,000	236,000	6 Partners	290,000	Yes Managed by RMNP
Lion Gulch Trailhead	—	21,521	10,000	—	USFS	11,521	Yes Managed by USFS
Smitherman CE	*520.0	520,000	130,000	—	2 Partners	390,000	No Monitored by EVLT
<b>Fee Simple Acreage Total</b>	<b>8,168</b>						
<b>CE Acreage Total</b>	<b>8,236</b>						
<b>Fee Simple &amp; CE Acreage Total</b>	<b>16,404</b>	<b>\$45,301,441</b>	<b>\$18,796,279</b>	<b>\$5,309,769</b>		<b>\$25,006,930</b>	

Properties managed by Larimer County Parks & Open Lands

EVLT Estes Valley Land Trust  
 EVRPD Estes Valley Recreation & Park Dist.  
 GOCO Great Outdoors Colorado  
 HTMP Horsetooth Mountain Park

LLT Legacy Land Trust  
 RMNP Rocky Mountain National Park  
 TNC The Nature Conservancy  
 USFS U.S. Forest Service

\* Conservation Easement

\*\* Trail Easement

## Of Mice and Men— The Pleasant Valley Trail

It's funny how we can fervently envision a plan, and then reality takes a whole new direction. Children are a good example. Another good example is the Pleasant Valley Trail, the Lions Park to Watson Lake segment of the Poudre River Trail.

We, Larimer County Parks and Open Lands, envisioned a recreation trail meandering along the Poudre River west from Lions Park. For six years we worked for trail easements along the river, but to no avail. Working with the residents of LaPorte and Bellvue, and the County Engineers we redesigned the vision as a more urban, asphalt path linking the communities and the LaPorte Schools. As the path snaked west from Lions Park a May 2004 completion seemed assured. But a wee beastie called a halt. The Prebles Meadow Jumping Mouse, though timorous, has a powerful ally in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, who said its habitat lay in our path and must be saved. We agree and hold fast while a biological assessment is completed and approved. While we stop, the opportunity to complete the Poudre River bridges during low water this winter is gone. We will proceed again this fall. For now those parts of the trail completed are enjoyed by strollers, joggers, bicyclists and students, anxious to soon travel even further. The City of Fort Collins will complete their new segment of the Poudre River Trail to Lions Park late this summer. So, looking forward we have no fear that our best laid schemes, though different, will be a path of joy.

“As the Open Lands Program continues to evolve, I am pleased to see varied recreational access in balance with resource protection. 2004 will be a particularly exciting year when two new open spaces and over eight miles of trail are opened to the public.”

Glenn Gibson,  
County Commissioner District 3



Cache La Poudre School principal takes students for the Honor Walk on the Pleasant Valley Trail.

Photo: courtesy of the North Forty News

### To a Mouse by Robert Burns

Wee, sleeket, cowrin, tim'rous beastie,  
... But, Mousie, thou art no thy lane  
In proving foresight may be vain:  
The best laid schemes o' mice an' men  
Gang aft agley,  
An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain  
For promis'd joy.

Still thou art blest, compar'd wi' me!  
The present only toucheth thee:  
But, och! I backward cast my e'e  
On prospects drear!  
An' forward, tho' I canna see,  
I guess an' fear!

## Coming Attractions Produced by Parks and Open Lands

Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space, opening in October this year, is a complex story of flight, pitiless migrations, espionage, and love. On a gray fall day thousands of weary refugees from 186 species, fleeing the ravages of winter and a chaotic world, wheel above a silver expanse of water amidst a teeming metropolis, trying to find their niche in this 1500-acre sanctuary of trees, wetlands, grasslands, open water and shore. Secretive rangers compile dossiers on these birds and promote a message of stewardship through signs and outdoor classrooms to eager visitors. The visitors will creep along trails to secret blinds to observe these birds feeding, fighting and mating. The doctrine spreads and a loving, utopian community of animals and humans begins to evolve.

The other feature, coming in early 2005, is Eagle's Nest Open Space; a gritty western set in the Laramie Foothills with veteran cowboys, cattle herds, a sometimes turbulent river, soaring crags, predators and prey. Near the frontier community of Livermore hikers will travel five miles of trail beneath the cliffs. Equestrians will explore hills beyond the river. The cowboy will settle his herd in a pasture and head for home. Unexpectedly they all converge on a narrow path. Two golden eagles perched on Eagle's Nest Rock lean forward to view the scene below. Tension builds like a bent willow twig. Hikers, cowboy and riders suddenly remember the trailhead sign encouraging cooperative multiple-use. They all laugh, shake hands, exchange stories, granola bars and bologna sandwiches, work out the right of way and go merrily on their way.



**Parks & Open Lands Department**  
1800 S. County Road 31  
Loveland, Colorado 80537  
970 679-4577