



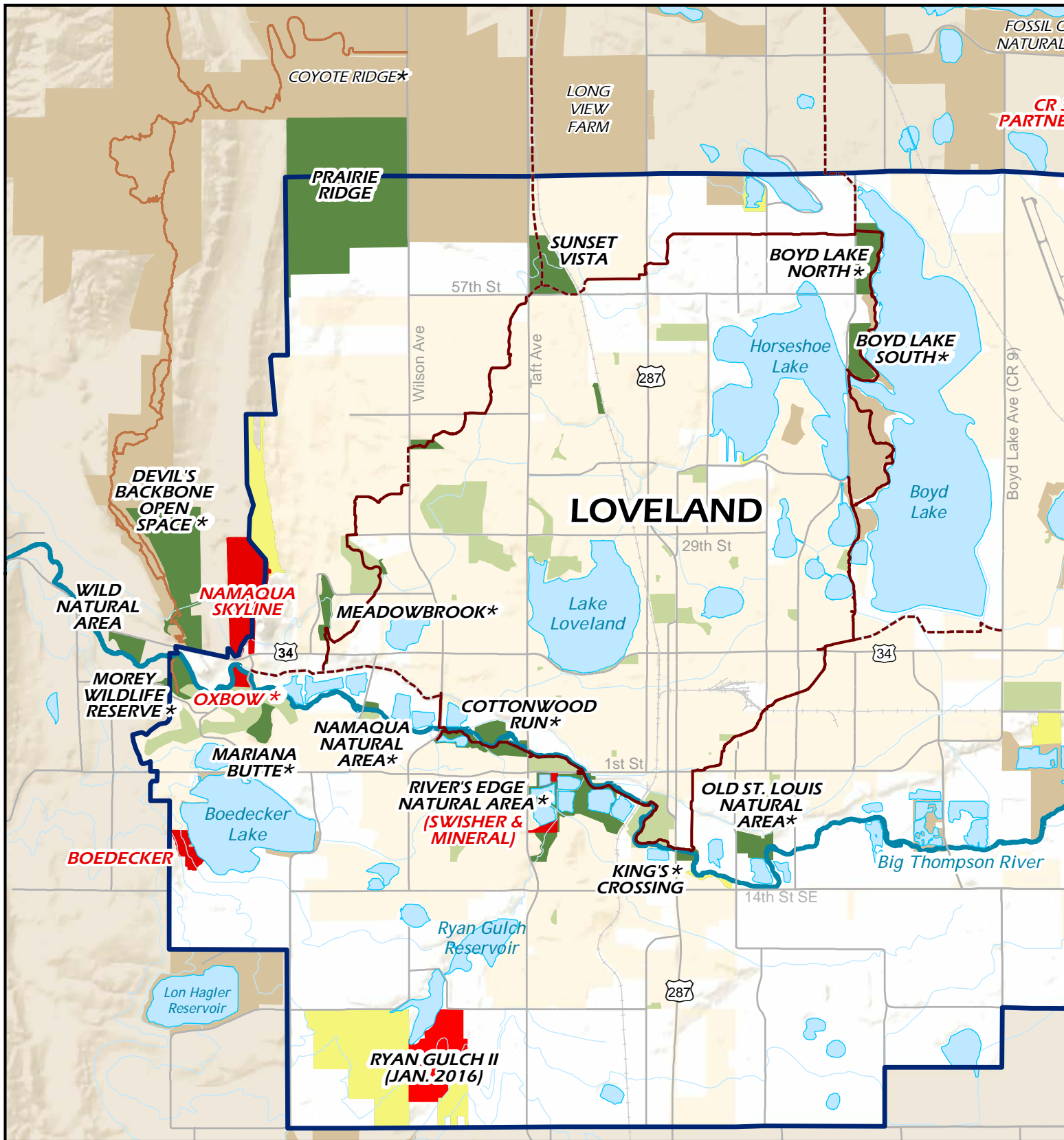
City of Loveland
Parks and Recreation

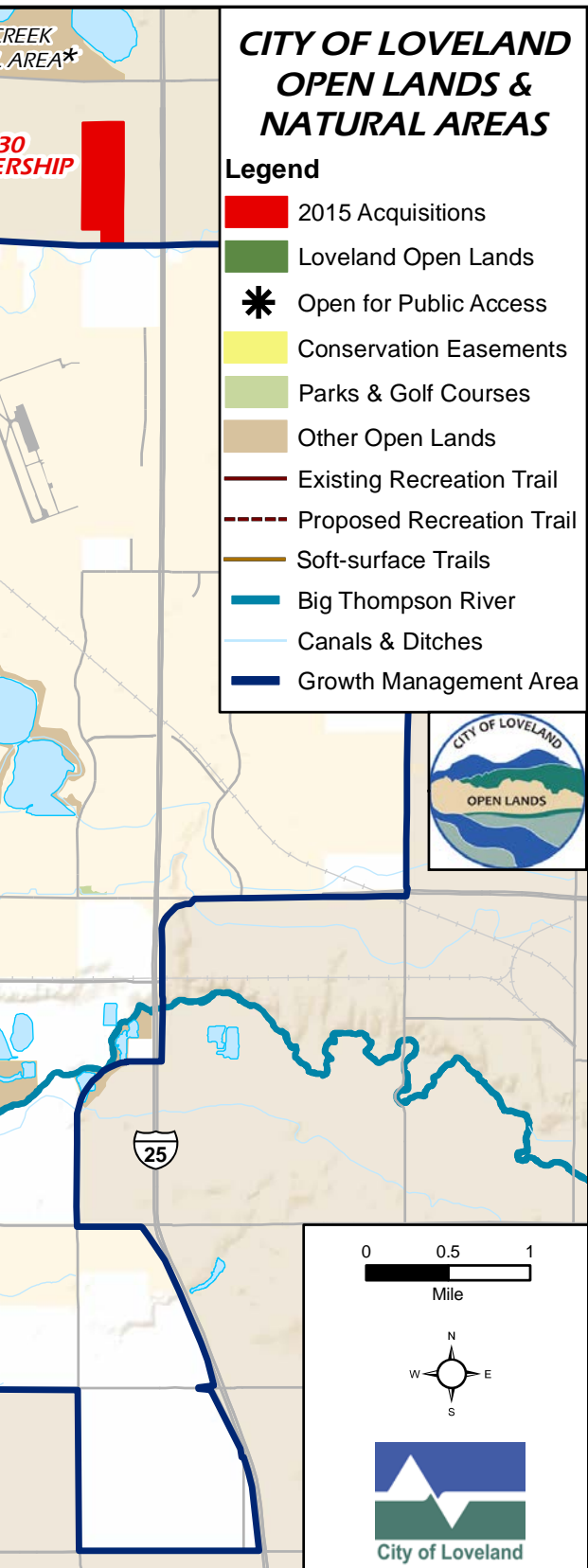
2015 Open Lands *Annual Report*



Golden Eagle by Charlie Johnson

Loveland's Open Lands





GET OUTDOORS...

2015 was a banner year for Loveland Open Lands!

We are a program on the move, and in 2015 we were able to capitalize on opportunities to acquire desirable open lands, provide new public access options, and expand our environmental program offerings and community outreach efforts.

Loveland is so fortunate to have an abundance of community-supported natural areas and open lands, to protect important wildlife habitat, conserve precious natural resources, and provide access to nature for our growing population.

We invite you to come out and explore some of our new open land sites; listen to the birds, watch the wildlife, learn about the environment, volunteer or take a hike. Get outdoors and enjoy some of Loveland's most beautiful sites and experiences!



STAFF

Elizabeth Anderson, Parks and Recreation Director
 Marilyn Hilgenberg, Open Lands and Trails Manager
 Debbie Eley, Open Lands Specialist
 Brian Hayes, Open Lands Coordinator
 Michele Van Hare, Environmental Education Coordinator
 Janet Meisel-Burns, Senior Parks and Recreation Planner
 Scott Sinn, Parks and Recreation Planner
 Merinda Bennett, Construction Coordinator
 Bree Knouse, Open Lands and Trails Maintenance Worker

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the City of Loveland Open Lands Program is to identify, preserve, protect and enhance open space, natural areas and other significant lands. This ongoing process is accomplished through cooperation with and respect for private and public landowners, surrounding municipalities and counties, natural resource agencies, and other organizations with similar interests.

Open Lands & Natural Areas (7,824 acres)

Big Thompson River Corridor (427 acres)

- Morey Wildlife Reserve*
- Wild Natural Area
- Oxbow Natural Area*
- Namaqua Natural Area*
- Cottonwood Run Natural Area*
- River's Edge Natural Area*
- Centennial Natural Area
- King's Crossing Natural Area*
- Old St. Louis Natural Area*
- Koppes Conservation Easement
- Waterford Conservation Easement



Wild Natural Area



**Dakota Ridge
Conservation Easement**

Foothills/Mountains Open Lands (4,995 acres)

- Namaqua Skyline Natural Area
- Hidden Valley
- Devil's Backbone Open Space (Larimer County Partnership)*
- Dakota Ridge Conservation Easement
- Viestenz-Smith Mountain Park Open Space
- Hermit Park Open Space (Larimer County Partnership)*
- Chimney Hollow Conservation Easement (Larimer County Partnership)
- Sylvan Dale Conservation Easement (Larimer County Partnership)

Neighborhood Natural Areas (87 acres)

- Meadowbrook Natural Area*
- West Boedecker Lake
- Horseshoe-Coulson Conservation Easement
- Walden West Conservation Easement

Recreation Trail Natural Areas (184 acres)

- Boyd Lake North and South*
- Emerald Glen Natural Area*
- Fairgrounds Natural Area*



Great Horned Owl



Dunkin Conservation Easement

Community Separator - North (1,464 acres)

- Prairie Ridge Natural Area
- Sunset Vista Natural Area
- Long View Farm (Larimer County Partnership)
- County Road 30 Fort Collins Partnership

Community Separator - South (667 acres)

- Lazy J Bar S (Raptor Ridge) Conservation Easement
- Hopkins Conservation Easement
- Dunkin Conservation Easement
- Heron Lakes CE (Larimer County & Berthoud Partnership)
- Ryan Gulch II (Jan. 2016)

* Sites open for public access

2015 Acquisitions

Namaqua Skyline Natural Area

- 157 acres
- 360-degree views
- Foothills hogback shrubland habitat
- West Loveland trail connections
- "Namaqua Star" ridge



Oxbow Natural Area

- 12 acres
- West Loveland location
- Big Thompson River access
- Soft-surface trail for fishing access & wildlife viewing

West Boedecker Lake

- 25 acres
- Wildlife buffer to Boedecker Lake
- Active Bald Eagle nest



River's Edge Additions

Mineral Property:

- 7 acres
- Trail access from Taft Ave.
- Wetlands & wildlife habitat

1st Street Property:

- 2-acre enclave
- Improved access to ponds

County Road 30 Separator

- 113 acres of irrigated farmland
- 50 shares of CBT water
- Partnership with Fort Collins Natural Areas and Loveland Water



Public Access Improvements



New sign kiosk at River's Edge Natural Area

Quick-win Projects

The *Parks & Recreation Master Plan* prioritized additional public access to natural areas.

Improvements in 2015 included:

- **Oxbow Natural Area** - new soft-surface trail provides access to the Big Thompson River
- **King's Crossing Natural Area** - new soft-surface loop trail and parking area
- **Mariana Butte Trail** improvements (*see below*)
- **Morey Wildlife Reserve** - reconstruction of soft-surface trail and site amenities (*see above right*)
- **River's Edge Natural Area** - reconstruction of trails, parking lot, boardwalk, and pond access points (*see opposite page*)

Mariana Butte Trail



At Mariana Butte, 0.6 miles of sustainable soft-surface trails were constructed with assistance from CATS (Colorado Added Trailbuilders Society). Informal social trails were removed and revegetated. This project will be completed in early 2016.



Northern flicker by Helmut Retzer

Morey Wildlife Reserve

The 2013 flood filled in the former 10.5-acre Morey pond with sand and sediment, essentially returning the site to its condition prior to gravel mining. Hydraulic modeling revealed that a simplified approach to restoration of the site would be most beneficial and cost-effective. In 2015, the natural-surface pedestrian trail was reconstructed and an additional loop trail through the restored site is planned to enhance recreation experiences. The former pond area, wetlands, and river banks will be restored to a healthy riparian corridor with a variety of native trees and shrubs. Community volunteers and conservation corps crews will assist with planting in spring 2016, and grant funding will leverage city dollars.



River's Edge Grand Opening



River's Edge Natural Area Grand Opening - September 2015

River's Edge Natural Area is the crown jewel of the Loveland Open Lands system. Following extensive repairs due to 2013 flood damage, River's Edge was fully opened for public access in September 2015, nearly two years to the day after its scheduled grand opening. The 163-acre site is located in the heart of Loveland on W. 1st Street.

- **Trails** - 2.5 miles of soft-surface and accessible trails for pedestrian use, fishing access, bicycling, and wildlife viewing
- **Ponds** - five ponds, including Bass, Dragonfly, Sandpiper, and Jayhawker North and South, with numerous fishing access points
- **Fishing Docks** - two accessible fishing docks (Bass and Dragonfly)
- **Boardwalk** - for a close-up wetland experience at Bass Pond
- **Picnic Shelters & Restrooms** - with picnic tables & drinking fountain
- **Parking** - for 44 vehicles, 2 handicap spaces, and bus drop-off lane
- **Amphitheater** - with seating for up to 70 for educational programs
- **Recreation Trail Access** - connections to Big Thompson River trail
- **Interpretive Signs & Environmental Education Stations**

New interpretive sign at River's Edge Natural Area

Partnerships

Big Thompson Recreation and Conservation Assessment

Loveland partnered with Larimer County and other stakeholders to develop a vision plan for the Big Thompson River corridor following the devastating 2013 flood. With funding from a Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) Flood Recovery Grant, the partners developed “A Bigger Vision for the Big T: A Recreation and Conservation Assessment.” The plan evaluated pre- and post-flood conditions in the project area between Loveland and Estes Park, identified and prioritized recreation and conservation opportunities, and provided an Action Plan to “build back better than before.” City Council adopted the plan in July 2015.



Fishing at River's Edge



White-crowned sparrow by Helmut Retzer



Larimer County Conservation Corps Crews

Grants & Donations

Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) grants were awarded in several categories:

- **Open Space** - \$500,000 towards acquisition of 77-acre Ward Trust Property (planned 2016)
- **Flood Recovery** - \$281,000 towards River's Edge reconstruction, Recreation Trail Underpass at Hwy 287, and Recreation Trail/Wilson Bridge replacement between Taft and Wilson Ave.
- **Flood Recovery** - \$30,000 towards *Big Thompson Recreation & Conservation Assessment* (Larimer County partnership)
- **Youth Corps** - \$15,000 to fund removal of invasive Russian olive trees by Larimer County Conservation Corps



2015 Open Lands Advisory Commission

The Open Lands Advisory Commission is comprised of volunteers who live in or near the City and represent Loveland's diverse land use interests. The commission advises City Council regarding open lands issues. Meetings are held on the 2nd Wednesday of each month.

Members:

Gale Bernhardt
Rick Brent
Andy Hawbaker
Ross Livingston, Vice Chair
Darren Pape
Jim Roode
Nathan Thompson
Jean Whittaker
William Zawacki, Chair
Hugh McKean, City Council Liaison
Kerri Rollins, Larimer County Liaison

Volunteers & Outreach



Volunteer Educators & Trail Hosts
at River's Edge Grand Opening

Partnering with the Community

- **Annual Spring Waterway Cleanup**
117 volunteers removed 60 tons of debris from local waterways in May
- **Flood Recovery**
Johnson Controls donated \$1,000 and 12 employees volunteered for a half-day wetland planting project at River's Edge
- **Mariana Butte Trail Project**
CATS (Colorado Addicted Trailbuilders Society) members and volunteers donated 270 hours to build 0.6 miles of soft-surface trails
- **Front Range Community College Exotic Species Elimination Project**
Volunteer students and teachers removed hundreds of invasive Russian olive trees from natural areas
- **Volunteer Educators & Trail Hosts**
Provided programs for school students, PEEPs pre-schoolers & other outreach (see above right)
- **Larimer County Conservation Corps**
Crews built fences, harvested & planted willows, & removed Russian olive trees & other weeds
- **Loveland Fishing Club**
Members shared their knowledge and fishing skills at River's Edge Grand Opening

2015 Environmental Education

- New monthly **Preschool Programs (PEEPs)** for ages 2-5 at natural areas & Loveland Library
- **Urban Wilderness and Plants & Places** programs offered for school-age children
- New all-ages **river ecology programs** and **guided natural area bird walks**

More than 1,200 environmental education participants in 2015



Hands-on River Lab at Urban Wilderness Program

- **40 Environmental Education volunteers donated nearly 800 hours** teaching environmental education programs
- **24 Volunteer Trail Hosts contributed 70 hours** performing additional public outreach

Total Volunteer Hours in 2015:
1,285 hours

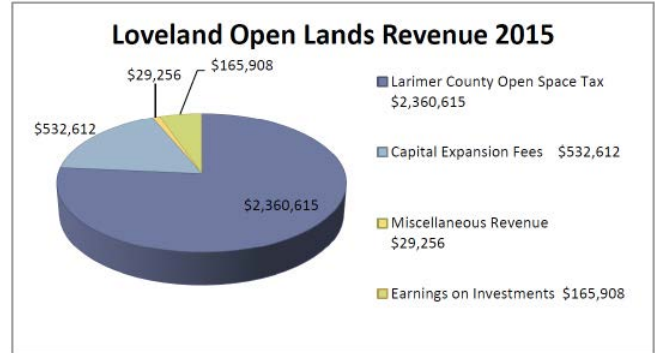
Our goal is...

to preserve and protect significant open lands, natural areas, and wildlife habitat, and to develop trails and citizen opportunities to connect with nature for present and future generations.

Financial Overview

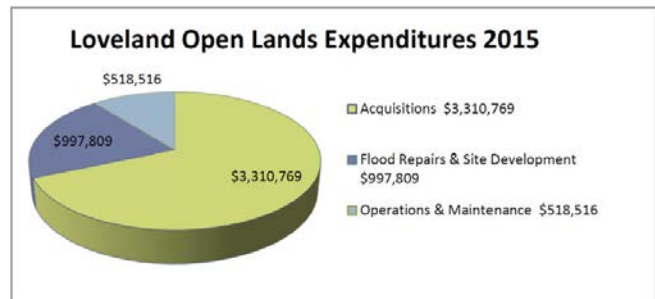
OPEN LANDS REVENUE – \$3,088,391*

The Open Lands Program is funded primarily by Loveland’s share of the Larimer County ¼-cent Open Space Sales Tax, which provided \$2,360,615 in revenue in 2015. The City’s Open Lands Capital Expansion Fees are collected on new residential housing units and generated \$532,612 for acquisitions & capital improvements. The majority of funding received as Miscellaneous Revenue came from utility and agricultural lease income. Investment earnings increased in 2015, amounting to \$165,908.



OPEN LANDS EXPENDITURES – \$4,827,094*

Capital Expenditures in 2015 for acquisitions totaled \$3,310,769, including the purchase of Namaqua Skyline, Oxbow, Boedecker, River’s Edge additions, and the CR 30 Separator Partnership. Flood repairs and site development expenditures, including new and rebuilt public access amenities and the Devil’s Backbone trailhead/ trail expansion project partnership, totaled \$997,809. Operations and Maintenance, encompassing professional services, personnel, and supplies, required \$518,516. Professional services included the Big Thompson Recreation & Conservation Assessment, as well as planning related to flood recovery projects. The Division policy to reserve 15% of annual open space sales tax revenues for future management and maintenance of open lands properties was changed in 2015 to a set reserve of \$3,000,000 for emergency management and operations.



*2015 Unaudited Year-end Figures

OPEN LANDS FUND YEAR-END BALANCE FOR ACQUISITIONS, PROJECTS & OPERATIONS – \$11,440,118

OPEN SPACE SALES TAX

Thank You for Supporting the Larimer County Open Space Sales Tax!

The primary funding source for Loveland’s Open Lands Program is the county-wide ¼-cent Open Space Sales Tax, originally passed in 1995. In 2014, voters supported the extension of the county tax until 2043, passing the referendum with 82% approval. Loveland’s share of this revenue is used for acquisition, development, public access, stewardship, and management of open space, natural areas, wildlife habitat, and trails in and around Loveland.



Namaqua Skyline Natural Area

2016 PLANNED ACQUISITIONS

As outlined in the Parks & Recreation Master Plan, the Open Lands Division will continue to focus on acquisition of strategic parcels identified in priority areas. In January 2016, Loveland partnered with Larimer County and the Town of Berthoud to purchase a 185-acre separator parcel in the Ryan Gulch area of southwest Loveland. This significant property is surrounded by 438 acres of conservation easement lands and provides a key connection for the Colorado Front Range Trail.



Ryan Gulch II Property

Also in 2016, Loveland plans to purchase the 77-acre Ward Trust property, in the west Big Thompson River corridor, with funding from GOCO and partner Larimer County. This irrigated agricultural property affords commanding views of Devil's Backbone and the Front Range, and will provide public access on trails connecting with existing open lands, including Morey Wildlife Reserve, additional property to be acquired at Oxbow Natural Area, and other potential river corridor acquisitions nearby.

MANAGEMENT & STEWARDSHIP OF OPEN LANDS AND TRAILS

Balancing public access with conservation of natural resources will be a focus of management and stewardship plans developed for open lands and natural areas. In 2016, plans for Sunset Vista and Namaqua Skyline Natural Areas will include opportunities for public input regarding desired recreational uses and site amenities, and will incorporate the evaluation of existing resources, opportunities, and constraints. Trails and connectivity will also be a major focus of the division, linking natural areas, open lands, and parks, and providing access for more citizens to connect with our great outdoors.



Ward Trust Property

NEW OPEN LANDS & TRAILS DIVISION

2016 brings organizational changes as well, including the creation of a new "Open Lands & Trails Division" under the Parks and Recreation Department. This change brings additional resources to support, manage, plan, program, and maintain Loveland's open lands, natural areas, and trails.





**City of Loveland Open Lands
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