

Natural Areas Annual Report 2009



HISTORY

The Loveland Open Lands Plan was adopted in June 1996. This plan gave City staff direction to form an Open Lands Advisory Commission, which was completed in December 1996. Larimer County voters approved a citizens' initiative in 1996 to create an open space sales tax of 0.25%, which provides the majority of the funding for the Loveland program. In 1999, Larimer County voters extended this sales tax until the year 2018. The City of Loveland adopted an updated *Open Lands Plan* in March of 2003.

In 2002, open lands preservation efforts were enhanced by the City's adoption of a Capital Expansion Fee for Open Lands. A fee of \$778 for each new dwelling unit provides additional resources for open lands based on residential building activity.

OPEN LANDS ADVISORY COMMISSION

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

Members:

Lori Bell
Gale Bernhardt
Rick Brent, Vice Chair
Kathy Hartman
Andy Hawbaker
John Lewis, Chair
M. Stephen McMillan
Nancy Meredith
William Zawacki

Brian Hayes, Staff Liaison
Hugh McKean, City Council Liaison
Kerri Rollins,
Larimer County Liaison

Wild Property Preserved

The City of Loveland acquired a significant piece of Big Thompson River frontage in April 2009, with the purchase of a 26-acre parcel from Greg Wild. The Wild Property is located along the west Big Thompson River, just upstream of the Morey Wildlife Reserve at Mariana Butte. The site contains portions of two of the most highly-rated natural areas in Loveland's 2008 *Natural Areas Sites* report, with an exceptional diversity of habitat types including river-aquatic habitat, wooded floodplains, wetlands and upland grasslands. This area was also identified as a priority for preservation in the city's 2003 *Open Lands Plan*, as part of both the Morey West Priority Area and the Big Thompson River Priority Area. Public access to the site is contemplated for fishing and wildlife viewing on a reservation basis. The previous owner had planned to develop five custom home lots through Larimer County. The City's acquisition eliminates development along a highly visible section of the west Highway 34 corridor and preserves scenic views of the Big Thompson River floodplain.



Lafarge Brose Property Acquired

The City acquired a second key piece of Big Thompson River property in March 2009, when it purchased the 36-acre Lafarge Brose site located along south St. Louis Avenue. Two shares of Ryan's Gulch Reservoir water were also included in this transaction. The property contains a variety of habitat types, including upland grasslands, developing wetlands created by past gravel mining, and Big Thompson River riparian habitat. This combination of habitat types makes the site a valuable wildlife corridor and was the basis for the area's inclusion in the city's 2008 *Natural Areas Sites* report. The Natural Areas Division plans to work with the Stormwater Division to establish water quality wetlands on the site to improve water quality runoff into the Big Thompson River as well as enhance wildlife habitat on the property. The previous owner, Lafarge International, is in the process of completing reclamation required by the state for the impacts of gravel mining. Lafarge is being assisted in this effort by students from the Front Range Community College Exotic Species Elimination Project, who have volunteered many hours to help remove and control invasive Russian olive trees on the property. Future public access may include passive recreational uses such as wildlife viewing and environmental education.

Hermit Park Partnership Completed

In 2009, the City made the third and final partnership payment towards the purchase of Hermit Park Open Space near Estes Park by Larimer County. The 1,362-acre property is open to the public for a variety of recreational opportunities including campsites, cabins, reservable group use pavilion, and trails for hiking, horseback riding, and mountain biking. The Larimer County Open Lands Program oversees the site including recreational use, educational programming, and natural resource management.

Natural Areas Sites

The City had been using the 1996 report *In the Nature of Things: Loveland's Natural Areas* to review preservation projects as well as development proposals with regard to natural values such as wildlife habitat, plant diversity, and wetlands. Cedar Creek Associates was contracted to conduct site visits and evaluations of approximately 15 additional areas in and around Loveland, as an update to the 1996 report. A secondary goal of this update was to identify sites that have been developed or preserved and label those sites as "inactive."

In July 2008, City Council approved the updated report, *City of Loveland Natural Areas Sites*.

This update will continue to be valuable for land-use decision-makers, city planners, developers, and property owners to make informed decisions regarding urban development, open lands, and natural resource preservation and enhancement opportunities.

The report is available on our website:

<http://www.ci.loveland.co.us/parksrec/opennatural.htm>



Natural Areas Programming in 2009

Located in the Big Thompson Canyon, **Viestenz-Smith Mountain Park** offers students an opportunity to not only learn about the environment, but also experience the environment up close and personal. The City of Loveland hosted 28 Wildlife Programs at Viestenz-Smith Mountain Park in 2009. Over 1,200 students from a number of northern Front Range schools spent a day at Viestenz-Smith learning about Colorado's life zones, mammals, plant communities, and wildlife management. Students who attended the program also participated in a guided nature hike where they had the opportunity to search for various signs of wildlife, including scat, fur, bones, feathers, dens and rubbings. The Viestenz-Smith Wildlife Program remains one of the most popular and affordable local field trips for elementary level students from Loveland and surrounding communities. In 2009, the program was made possible by a dedicated staff of 10 adult volunteers. The Wildlife Program would not continue to be successful year after year without the generous donation of time made by these volunteers who enjoy sharing their knowledge of and passion for the outdoors with children.

In 2009, the City of Loveland became partners with the **Leave No Trace Foundation** for Outdoor Ethics (LNT). The mission of Leave No Trace is "to promote and inspire responsible outdoor recreation through education, research and partnerships." Leave No Trace is an educational program based on seven basic principles used as a means to build appreciation, respect and stewardship for outdoor recreational areas.

Partnering with Leave No Trace allows the City of Loveland to post LNT information and principles on natural area and park kiosks, receive teaching materials at a reduced cost, and teach the LNT principles to members of the community. Three environmental education volunteers have been trained to teach Leave No Trace to youth ages 8-12 and two pilot classes were offered during the summer of 2009. Looking forward to 2010, the Natural Areas Program may offer the Leave No Trace program as an after-school seminar for elementary schools in addition to the summer classes for the community.



The **Trail Host Program** continued with three volunteer trail hosts for Morey Wildlife Reserve in 2009. The small yet dedicated trail host staff logged over 70 volunteer hours monitoring the site, noting the number of visitors encountered, wildlife and plant observations, maintenance concerns, and violations. According to trail host data collected, in addition to observations by nearby residents, the presence of dogs on the reserve appears to be the most common violation. The Morey Conservation Easement does not allow dogs on the reserve in order to protect sensitive wildlife resources. Beginning in January 2010, the Trail Host Program will be expanded to include Meadowbrook Natural Area and volunteer training will be offered on the third Thursday of each month.

If you are interested in attending an environmental education program, donating your time as a Volunteer, or making a donation to any of the City of Loveland's environmental education programs, please contact Pam Unfred, Environmental Education and Volunteer Coordinator, at (970) 988-4105 or unfred@ci.loveland.co.us.

Information about the Environmental Education Center at Viestenz-Smith Mountain Park is also available online at:

<http://www.ci.loveland.co.us/parksrec/EECenter.htm>

Mayor Gene Pielin Honored for Years of Service

The Open Lands Advisory Commission thanked former Mayor Gene Pielin for 10 years of dedicated service as a City Council Liaison to the commission. Mayor Pielin was a strong advocate for the preservation of open lands and natural areas throughout his tenure on the City Council.



In appreciation of his service, he was honored with a framed photograph of Devil's Backbone

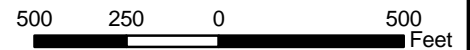


Open Space, a Loveland landmark preserved for its scenic, wildlife and recreational values.

MEADOWBROOK NATURAL AREA

Legend

-  Meadowbrook Natural Area
-  Nature Trail (soft-surface)
-  Recreation Trail (paved)
-  Louden Ditch
-  Information Kiosk



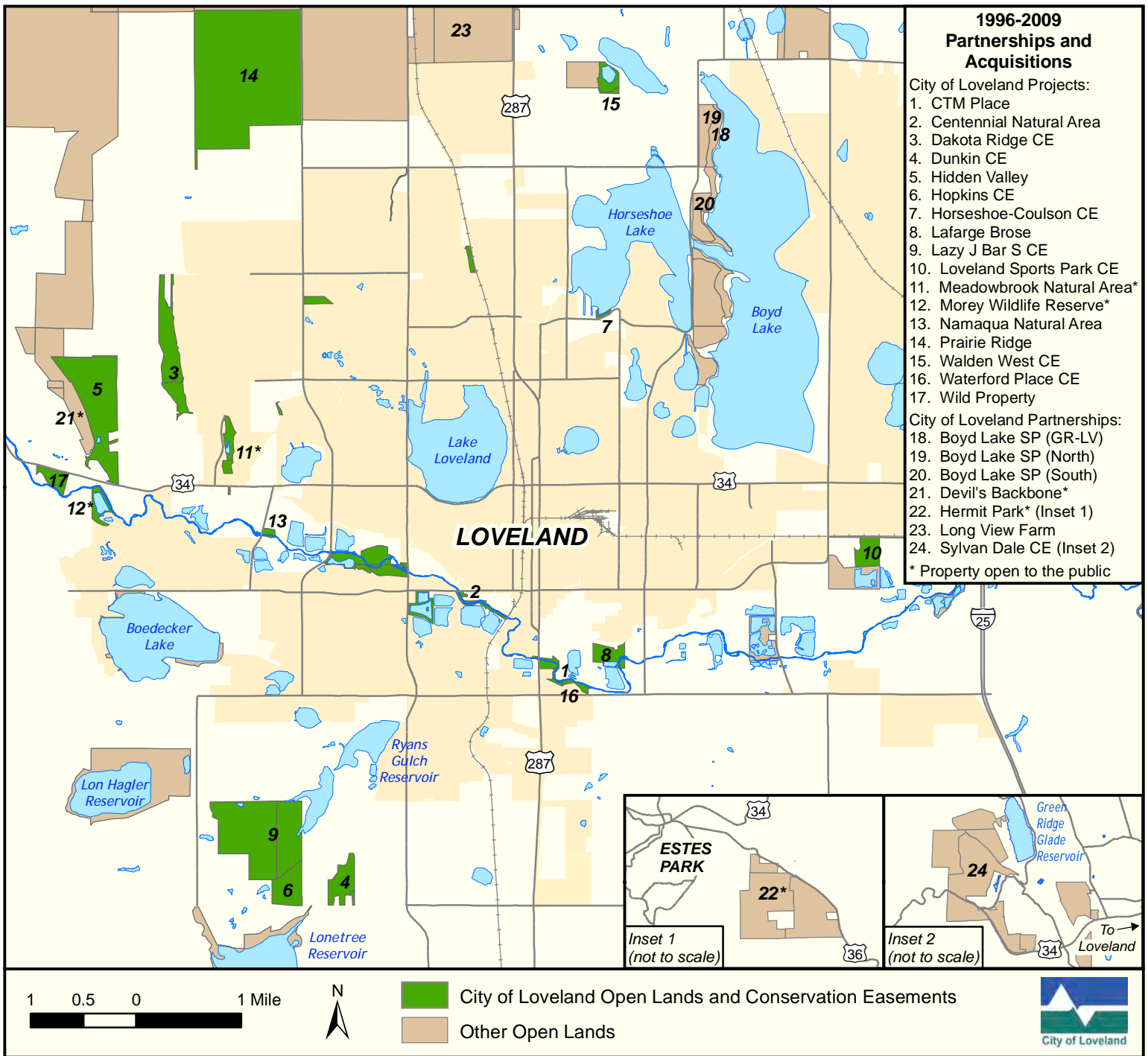
Capital Improvements

Every spring at Morey Wildlife Reserve, runoff and irrigation water caused flooding of the pedestrian trail on the west side of the pond, making the trail impassable to visitors. In 2009, a new culvert was installed under the natural-surface trail to improve drainage to the pond. The culvert works as intended and the trail is now usable year-round.



MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the City of Loveland Natural Areas 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.



We'd like to hear from you....

Please tell us about lands you'd like preserved, your experiences at open spaces, suggestions, questions, ideas or comments:

- Would you like to learn more about preserving your land?
- Are you interested in serving on the Open Lands Advisory Commission?
- Are you interested in volunteering with Open Lands?
- Would you like to be added to the Open Lands mailing list?

Please return to:
Natural Areas Program
500 E 3rd Street, Suite 200
Loveland, CO 80537

How can we contact you? Name: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Address: _____

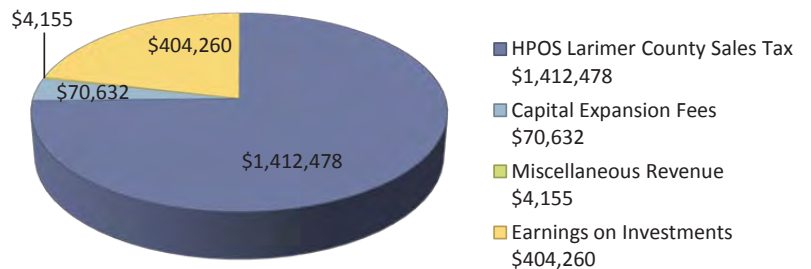
Natural Areas	Acres	Acquisition Value \$	Loveland's Funds \$	Donation \$	Partnerships	Public Access/ Management
Boyd Lake/Greeley Loveland Irr.	25	302,040	13,520		GOCO, State Parks	Yes/State Park
Boyd Lake North-Hirsch	40	554,064	277,032		State Parks	Yes/State Park
Boyd Lake South-Hirsch	42	558,570	279,285		State Parks	Yes/State Park
CTM Place	1	100,000		100,000	NA	No/Loveland
Centennial Natural Area	1	150,000		150,000	NA	No/Loveland
Dakota Ridge CE	112	1,885,000		1,885,000	Legacy Land Trust	Future Trail/Owner
Devil's Backbone-Hunter	247	833,000	75,000		Larimer County, Stryker Short	Yes/County
Devil's Backbone-Wild	135	472,500	75,000		Larimer County	Yes/County
Dunkin CE	52	294,635	104,635	100,000	Larimer County, Berthoud	Future Trail/ Owner
Hermit Park Open Space	1,362	8,700,000	420,000	2,200,000	Larimer County, Estes Valley Land Trust, GOCO, Town of Estes Park	Yes/County
Hidden Valley 1st	42	395,765	395,765		NA	No/County
Hidden Valley 2nd	178	1,688,235	1,479,835		Larimer County	No/County
Hopkins CE	60	339,700	188,100	130,700	Larimer County	No/Owner
Horseshoe - Coulson CE	5	296,240		296,240	NA	No/Owner
Lafarge Brose	36	300,000	300,000		N/A	Future Trail/Loveland
Lazy J Bar S CE Parcel 1	100	506,250	130,244	160,006	GOCO, Larimer County, Berthoud	No/Owner
Lazy J Bar S CE Parcel 2	191	1,112,586	678,586	100,000	GOCO, Larimer County, Berthoud	No/Owner
Lazy J Bar S CE Parcel 3	35	70,847	70,847		NA	No/Owner
Long View Farm	479	2,464,507	410,669		GOCO, Larimer County, Fort Collins	Future Trail/ County
Loveland Sports Park CE	37	378,981	378,981		NA	Future Trail/ Owner
Meadowbrook Natural Area	26	600,000		600,000	NA	Yes/Loveland
Morey Wildlife Reserve	28	762,142	54,142	533,000	GOCO Legacy	Yes/Loveland
Namaqua Natural Area	6	102,078	2,078		GOCO Legacy	Future Trail/Loveland
Prairie Ridge	785	3,139,836	1,892,829		GOCO, Larimer County, Fort Collins	Future Trail/Loveland
Sylvan Dale Ranch CE's	766	1,702,980	140,220	546,750	GOCO Legacy, Larimer County	No/Owner
Walden West CE	31	78,000		78,000	NA	No/Owner
Waterford Place CE	10	150,000		150,000	NA	Future Trail/Owner
Wild Property	26	726,744	654,070	72,674	N/A	Future Fishing/Loveland
Totals	4,857	\$28,664,700	\$8,020,838	\$7,102,370	\$13,541,492	

NATURAL AREAS REVENUE

\$1,891,525*

Revenue for year-end 2009 was lower than year-end 2008 by 10%. Capital Expansion Fees decreased by 50% from year-end 2008. The majority of revenue came from the Help Preserve Open Spaces (HPOS) Larimer County ¼-cent Sales Tax. Miscellaneous Revenue is comprised of a farm lease on the Prairie Ridge Natural Area and income from Meadowbrook Ridge Subdivision dedicated to the maintenance of Meadowbrook Natural Area.

Natural Areas Revenue 2009

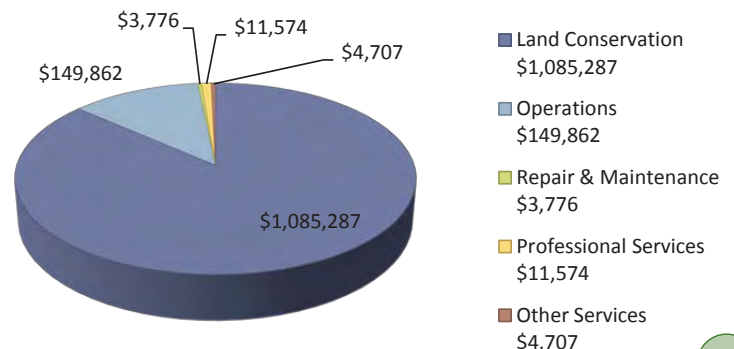


NATURAL AREAS EXPENDITURES

\$1,255,206*

Expenditures for land conservation in 2009 included the City's final installment of three \$140,000 contributions to the Hermit Park Open Space acquisition, located just east of Estes Park on Highway 36. In addition, the City acquired 26 acres of Big Thompson River land along west Highway 34 from Greg Wild at a cost of \$654,070 and 36 acres along the east Big Thompson River on St. Louis Avenue from Lafarge International for \$300,000.

Natural Areas Expenditures 2009



* Unaudited year-end figures

From the Chair of the Loveland Open Lands Advisory Commission:

For over a decade, Loveland has been able to purchase and preserve in perpetuity valuable natural areas in and around Loveland. Due to money generated from Larimer County's open space sales tax, City of Loveland General Funds and Capital Expansion Fees, our water and air is cleaner. Even though they can't speak, I feel that local animals, birds, and fish also appreciate our Natural Areas Program. Moreover, our children and grandchildren thank us.

As a member of the Open Lands Advisory Commission for 10 years, I have witnessed our hard-working City staff and commission colleagues initiate conversations with property owners, evaluate properties, and reach agreements with willing sellers and donors who also want to preserve the natural jewels in the Loveland area.

In 2009, the Natural Areas Program made significant strides with the fee simple acquisition of two properties that have great natural characteristics. The 36-acre Lafarge Brose Property on St. Louis Avenue will make a wonderful wetland and the 26-acre Wild Property located along the west Big Thompson River will become a fishing site with public trails.

In 2010, the Natural Areas Program will seek certification from the State of Colorado, continue our environmental education programs, and acquire additional critical properties.

Open Lands Advisory Commission monthly meetings are open to the public and we welcome input from residents and landowners. Please check out our web pages on the City of Loveland's web site.

Thank you for your support of Loveland's Natural Areas Program.

*John P. Lewis
Chair, Open Lands Advisory Commission*



Natural Areas Program
500 E. Third St., Ste. 200
Loveland, Colorado 80537
www.cityofloveland.org

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