

Natural Areas Annual Report 2008



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 the 2003 Open Lands Plan in March of that year.

In 2002, open lands preservation efforts were enhanced by the City's adoption of a Capital Expansion Fee for open lands. A fee of \$765 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
Kathy Hartman, Vice Chair
Andy Hawbaker, Chair
John Lewis
M. Stephen McMillan
Nancy Meredith
William Zawacki

Brian Hayes, Staff Liaison
Gene Pielin, Council Liaison
K-Lynn Cameron,
Larimer County Liaison

Morey Wildlife Reserve Opened to the Public

Following several years of restoration activities, Morey Wildlife Reserve was formally opened to the public on May 24, 2008. The City purchased this 28-acre natural area along the west Big Thompson River from the Morey family. A conservation easement held by Legacy Land Trust protects the property from development and allows for passive wildlife viewing, nature study, and environmental education. The conservation easement prohibits dogs, fishing, and bicycling in the wildlife reserve. A number of improvements were made to prepare the site for visitor use, including a natural-surface pedestrian trail, signage, benches, and an entrance kiosk with access to restrooms shared with Mariana Butte Golf Course. The east side of the pond is a wildlife conservation area and is not accessible by the public. A volunteer trail host program was implemented using the principles of Leave No Trace, to educate visitors about the variety of natural resources found at the reserve, as well as the rules and regulations designed to protect those resources. An innovative system developed by one of the volunteer trail hosts uses Google Docs to record and summarize visitor data. The system allows trail hosts to enter their site monitoring data, including the number of visitors, cars, and violations observed, as well as wildlife sightings and maintenance concerns. Staff and volunteers can access the information at their convenience. The Morey Wildlife Reserve is open during daylight hours year-round. For more information, please see the maps on pages 3 and 4 of this report, or view them on our website at: <http://www.ci.loveland.co.us/parksrec/opennatural.htm>



Dakota Ridge Conservation Easement Expansion

The donation of an additional 27 acres to the Dakota Ridge Conservation Easement brings the total protected land to 112 acres. This conservation easement eliminates development along the highly visible and scenic first ridgeline west of Loveland, and protects the wildlife habitat and spectacular scenic values of the property forever. The easement will provide future public access along a natural-surface pedestrian trail through the southern portion of the property, and will be the site of a partially-buried water storage tank in the northern portion of the property.



Horseshoe Lake Conservation Easement Donation

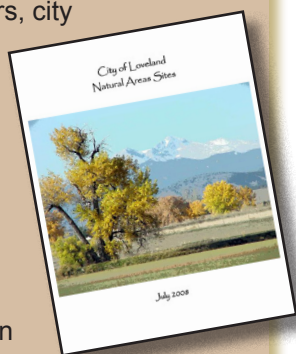
The donation of a 5.29-acre conservation easement will protect wetlands and uplands along the south shoreline of Horseshoe Lake. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers oversaw the wetland mitigation project and required a conservation easement to protect the property in perpetuity. The wetlands and upland buffer provide enhanced wildlife habitat, flood attenuation, sediment and erosion control, surface water filtration, and aesthetics. The landowner will maintain the property in its current condition.

Natural Areas Sites Updated

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, including undeveloped lands that were not a part of the original 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>



Environmental Education Program

The Viestenz-Smith Wildlife Program was held in the spring and in the fall of 2008. Over 1,400 students from 23 elementary schools in Loveland, Fort Collins, and Berthoud attended the program.

Offered each year to all local elementary schools as an outdoor environmental education field trip, the program focuses on Colorado wildlife and wildlife habitat. Students play a food chain game and visit five learning stations, four of which are taught outdoors in close proximity to the Big Thompson River. Volunteers lead small group discussions at each learning station where students are presented with information about



Colorado life zones, the Big Thompson watershed, aquatic wildlife, plants of the foothills, Colorado vertebrates, and the basics of wildlife management. Incredibly, that's just half of what students experience when they spend a day at the park! In addition to participating in small group learning stations, students are also given the opportunity to become wildlife detectives when they hike with a volunteer guide along the south end of the park. During their hike, students are challenged to find at least 15 items on a scavenger hunt list which includes various types of evidence that wildlife has been present in the area. Bones, feathers, vole runways, and wildlife scat are all examples of evidence left by wildlife which, when found by curious 4th and 5th graders, create moments of outdoor excitement and wonder. The Viestenz-Smith Wildlife Program is an excellent example of an environmental education program that offers children an opportunity to learn about natural resources in an outdoor setting, and have fun while doing it.

The engaging staff of dedicated volunteers makes the Viestenz-Smith Wildlife Program successful. Viestenz-Smith volunteers are individuals who not only enjoy the outdoors but also truly enjoy teaching kids. In 2008, eleven volunteers donated 428 hours to the environmental education program. This large donation of time makes it possible to continue to offer a quality environmental educational program through the City of Loveland while allowing the program to remain cost-effective. A generous donation of \$500 from the Bretting Family Fund also contributed to the program's cost-effectiveness, making it possible to provide updated materials and supplies for the program.

Individuals interested in volunteering and teachers interested in field trips to the Viestenz-Smith Wildlife Program can contact Pam Unfred at (970) 988-4105 or e-mail her at: unfred@ci.loveland.co.us.

"The river was my favorite part of nature. I liked it because I like the sound of it. I loved the ponderosa pines and the sagebrush. They smelled good." Cam, 4th grader
Thompson School District

"I loved going up that trail! I was also sort of scared because I do not like snakes. Beside all of that, I had the most fun I had in a long time!" Amanda, 4th grader
Poudre School District

"Thank you for the field trip. It was fun. The birds were beautiful there. The blue river smelled good."
Isaac, 4th grader
Poudre School District

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. The City is assisted in this effort by the Open Lands Advisory Commission, a citizen advisory board.

MOREY WILDLIFE RESERVE

LEGEND

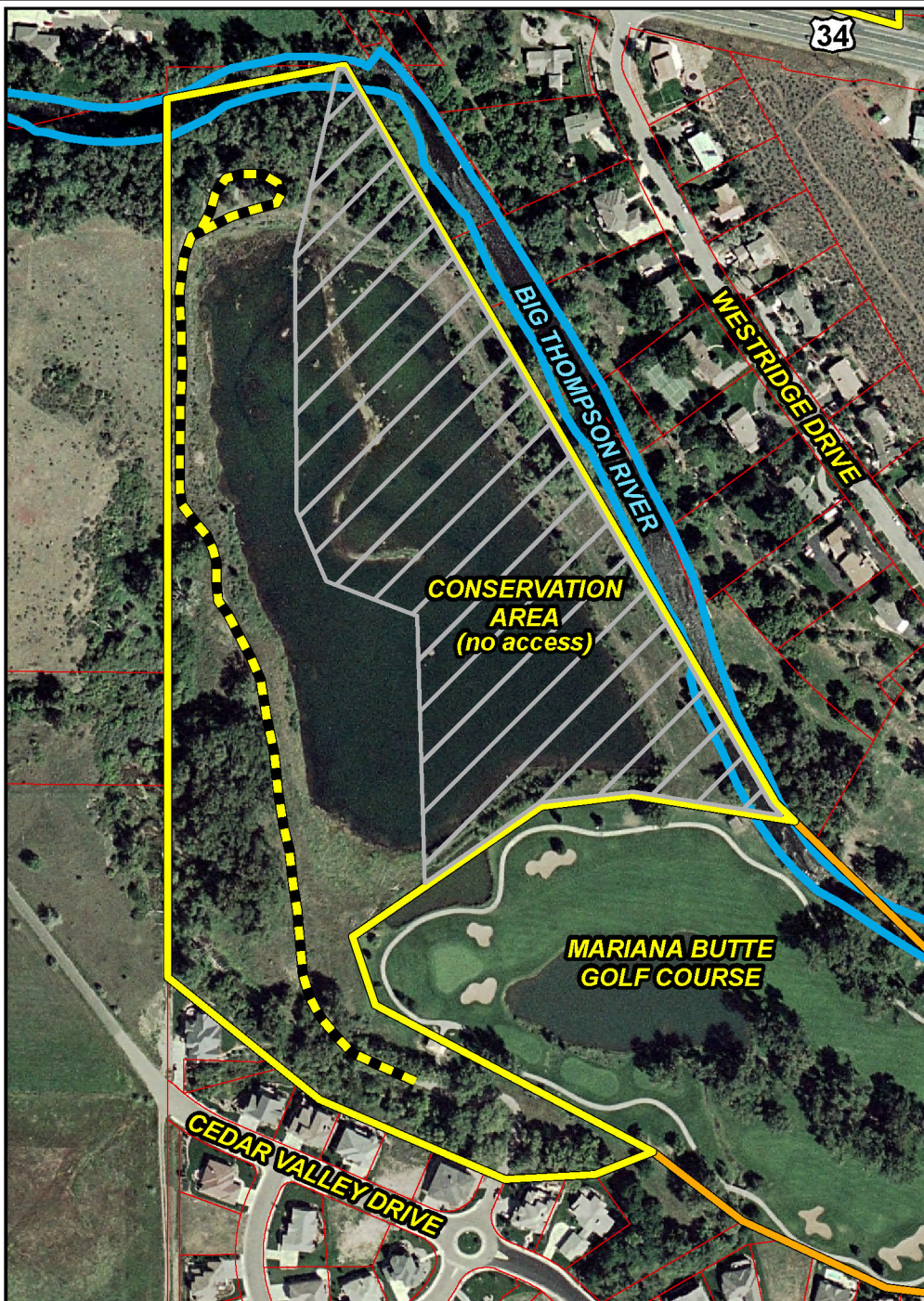
-  Morey Wildlife Reserve
-  Nature Trail (Pedestrian use only)
-  Conservation Area (no access)
-  Mariana Butte Golf Course

RULES & REGULATIONS

- Hours: Dawn to dusk daily
- Dogs are prohibited at all times
- No fishing or hunting
- Conservation Area closed to protect sensitive wildlife habitat
- No bicycling (park bicycles at rack provided)
- No swimming or boating
- No camping or campfires
- No firearms or fireworks
- No motorized vehicles
- No alcohol permitted on site

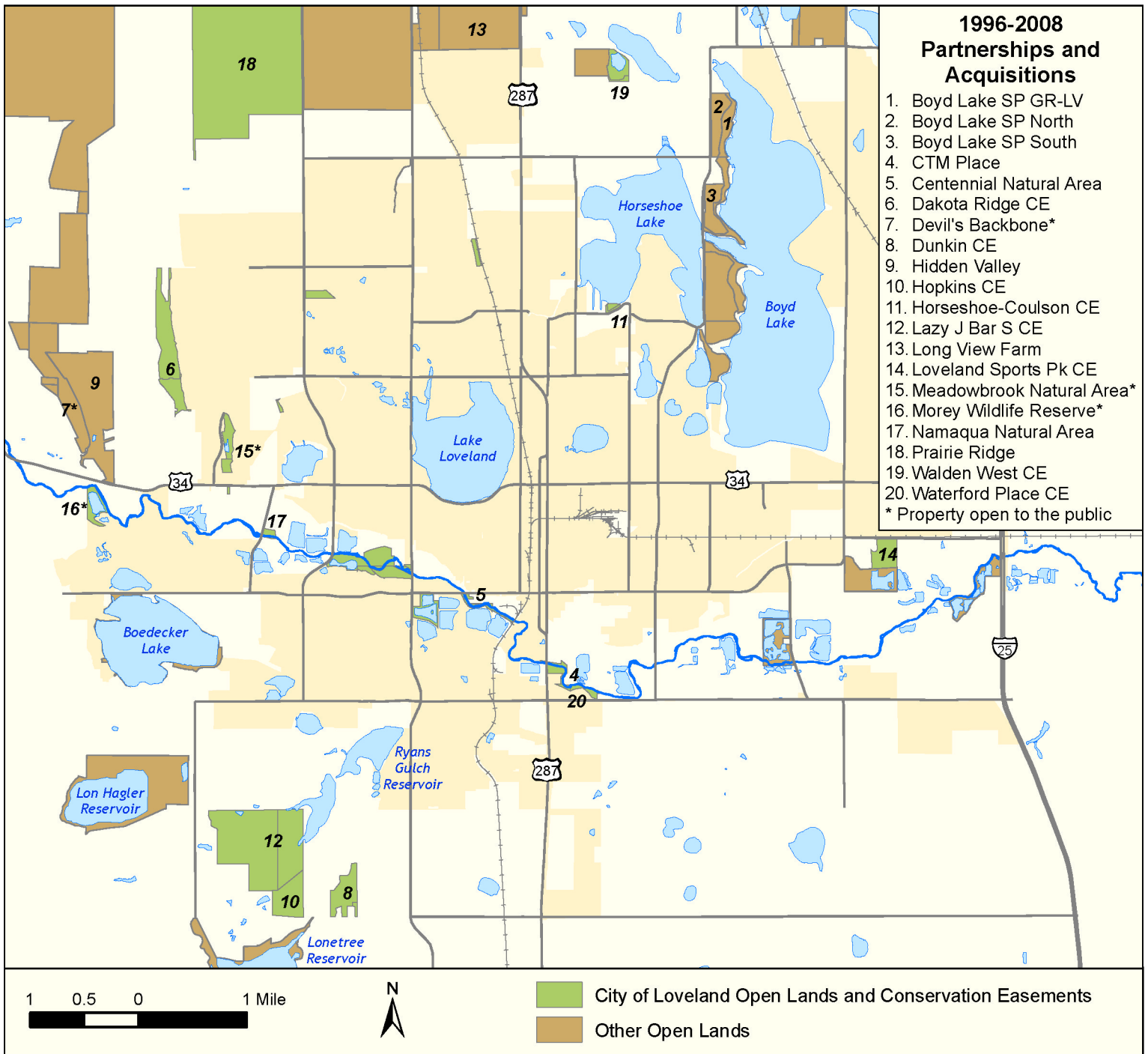


200 100 0 200 Feet

"Thank you for letting us visit the Morey Wildlife Reserve. I enjoyed the bear track. The bird nest on the ground was cool."
 Shelby, 3rd Grader
 Thompson School District

"Thank you for letting us experience all the animals and how they live and eat."
 Daniel, 3rd Grader
 Thompson School District



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: _____

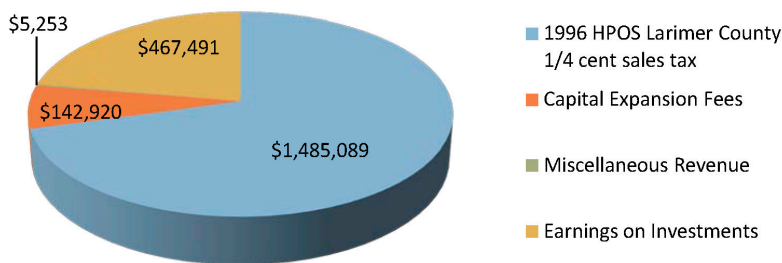
Natural Areas	Acres	Acquisition Value \$	Loveland's Funds \$	Donation \$	Partnerships	Public Access/ Management
Boyd Lake/Greeley Loveland Irr.	25	302,040	13,520		GOCO, State Parks	Yes/State Park
Boyd Lake North-Hirsch	40	554,064	277,032		State Parks	Yes/State Park
Boyd Lake South-Hirsch	42	558,570	279,285		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	280,000	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
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
Totals	4,796	\$27,637,956	\$6,926,768	\$7,029,696	\$13,681,492	

NATURAL AREAS REVENUE

\$2,100,753

Revenue for year end 2008 was lower than year end 2007 by 3%. Capital expansion fees increased 2% from year end 2007. The majority of revenue came from the *Help Preserve Open Spaces* (HPOS) Larimer County 1/4 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 2008

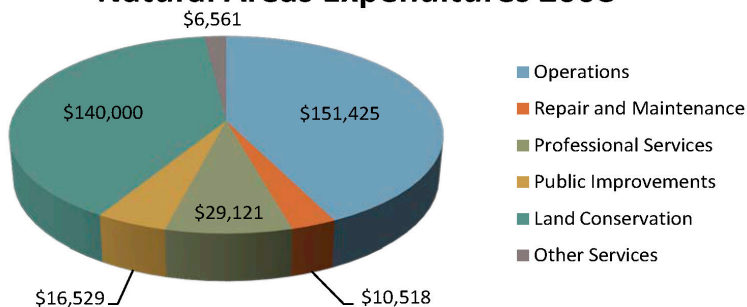


NATURAL AREAS EXPENDITURES

\$354,154

Expenditures for professional services included the completion of a permanent water augmentation plan for the Morey pond and updating of the Natural Areas Sites report. Expenditures for public improvements included preparation of the Morey Wildlife Reserve for opening to the public. Land conservation expenditures included the City's 2nd installment of three \$140,000 contributions to the Hermit Park acquisition located just east of Estes Park on Highway 36.

Natural Areas Expenditures 2008



From the Chair of the Loveland Open Lands Advisory Commission:

"I have always been passionate about hiking, camping, snowboarding, and anything else involving the outdoors. Now that I am the father of two daughters, I have become concerned about how to preserve the things I love about Northern Colorado for my kids and grandkids to enjoy.

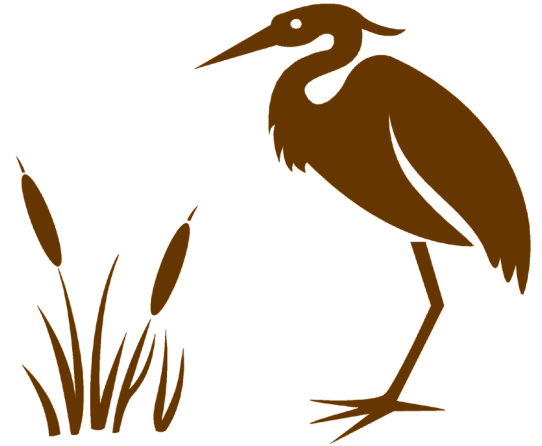
Serving on the Loveland Open Lands Advisory Commission has allowed me as a citizen of Loveland to help protect the special places in this area and help keep this a beautiful and enjoyable place to live. The natural areas and wildlife viewing opportunities are spectacular in our community and the Open Lands Advisory Commission and Natural Areas staff are working hard to use the voter-approved sales tax dollars wisely.

2008 was another successful year for the Natural Areas Program. We expanded the existing Dakota Ridge Conservation Easement, accepted an additional Conservation Easement donation, supported environmental education, updated our Natural Areas Report, and opened the 28-acre Morey Wildlife Reserve for public access.

We are looking forward to another outstanding year in 2009. We are fortunate to have many great opportunities to acquire vital open lands including property along the Big Thompson River. As always, we are working not only to preserve open lands but also to provide access to the public.

Thank you for your continued support of the Loveland Natural Areas Program. Open Lands Advisory Commission meetings are open to the public and we encourage you to provide us with any feedback you may have."

*Andy Hawbaker
Chair, Open Lands Advisory Commission*



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