

Natural Areas Annual Report 2010



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 \$824 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, Vice Chair
Rick Brent, Chair
Chris Bryand
Kathy Hartman
Andy Hawbaker
Joel Johnston
M. Stephen McMillan
William Zawacki

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

Loveland Receives Conservation Easement Certification from the State of Colorado

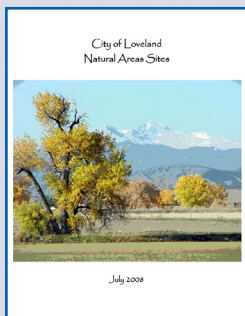
The City of Loveland became certified by the State of Colorado in 2010 to hold conservation easements for which a state tax credit is claimed. In 2008, the State passed House Bill 08-1353, in order to increase the standards, transparency, and accountability of conservation easement transactions in Colorado. The new law ensures that government entities, land trusts, and landowners are appropriately protecting property and accurately assessing the value of conservation easements. Government entities were required to be certified by the State of Colorado by January 1, 2011 to accept conservation easements for which a state tax credit is claimed. During 2010, Loveland submitted an application for certification to the State Division of Real Estate and became certified to hold conservation easements. The comprehensive application included information on the city's management of conservation easements with regard to easement review, documentation, stewardship, amendment, governance, enforcement, and finances. The application also required a thorough file review for a number of conservation easements currently held by the city. Loveland fulfilled all the requirements and received the highest rating on 25 of the 26 evaluation criteria. The new statute also sets a state-wide tax credit cap for conservation easement donations at \$72 million for the three-year period from 2011 to 2013. Landowners interested in preserving their property with a conservation easement can contact the Natural Areas Division for more information.



Chimney Hollow Conservation Easement

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. As an update to the 1996 report, Cedar Creek Associates was contracted to conduct site visits and evaluations of approximately 15 additional areas in and around Loveland. A secondary goal of this update was to identify sites that have been developed or preserved and label those sites as "inactive." In 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.cityofloveland.org/index.aspx?page=1413>

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.

Environmental Education at Viestenz-Smith Mountain Park and Morey Wildlife Reserve

The City of Loveland environmental education program continued to grow in 2010, hosting 36 wildlife programs at Viestenz-Smith Mountain Park during the spring and fall. Over 1,600 students from 29 elementary schools along the Front Range attended programs – an increase of over 400 students from 2009. The Parks and Recreation Department offers the program as a full-day field trip for 4th and 5th grade students from Loveland, Fort Collins, and other surrounding communities. Students who attend a wildlife program at Viestenz-Smith experience a day of outdoor learning facilitated by a dedicated staff of trained volunteers. In 2010, twelve volunteers donated 450 hours teaching students about Colorado's wildlife, foothills plant communities, Rocky Mountain life zones, and the Big Thompson River watershed.

A number of improvements to the historic Environmental Education Cabin at Viestenz-Smith Mountain Park were completed in 2010, with new roofing, new lighting and wiring, three custom display cabinets, and three new wildlife exhibits donated by the Colorado Division of Wildlife – a black bear rug and life-size mink and bobcat mounts. These enhancements improved the learning experience for students by providing more realistic and accessible wildlife exhibits and program materials.

Volunteer trail hosts logged 284 hours of service at Morey Wildlife Reserve in 2010. Trail hosts make regular visits to Morey to monitor public use, ecological status, and current conditions of the reserve. Site observations such as wildlife sightings, blooming plants, trail conditions, and visitor use are recorded in an online database for use by staff and other volunteers. Trail hosts also greet visitors and answer questions regarding Morey Wildlife Reserve's natural resources, history, and special use regulations.

Individuals interested in learning more about the City of Loveland's environmental education and volunteer programs can call 970-962-2725 or visit the city's web site at: <http://www.cityofloveland.org/index.aspx?page=225>.



Praying Mantis at Viestenz-Smith Mountain Park



Environmental Education Cabin

Boy Scout Projects Completed

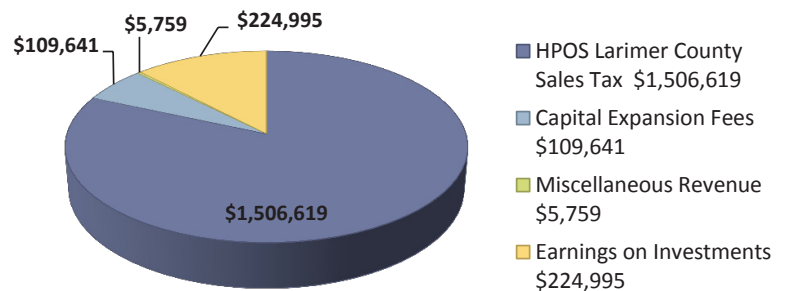
Two local Cub Scout troops completed habitat improvement projects at Loveland Natural Areas in 2010 as part of the Boy Scouts of America Operation OSPREY Project. The "Open Space Park Refuge Environment Year" celebrated the organization's 100th anniversary and challenged Scouts to complete a year-long conservation service project involving a local natural resource agency. Cub Scout Pack 389 built and installed a bluebird box near the pond at Morey Wildlife Reserve and members visit the site monthly to monitor and maintain the nest box. The box was not occupied in 2010, but the troop is hopeful that bluebirds will discover the site and use the nest box in 2011. Cub Scout Pack 184 completed trail improvements at Meadowbrook Natural Area, making it easier for visitors to walk from the trail along the Loudon Ditch down to the pond area below. Pack 184 also built and installed a number of nest boxes throughout the site for bird species such as bluebirds, larks, and kestrels.

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	Yes/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 CEs	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/Loveland
Totals	4,858	\$28,664,700	\$8,020,838	\$7,102,370	\$13,541,492	

NATURAL AREAS REVENUE 2010

The City of Loveland Natural Areas Division received \$1,506,619 in funding from the Larimer County Help Preserve Open Spaces Sales Tax (HPOS) in 2010. The City's Open Lands Capital Expansion Fee (CEF) can be used for capital expenditures to purchase open space and/or capital improvements on open space, to help fulfill the goal of preserving the priority projects described in the 2003 *Open Lands Plan*. 2010 CEF revenue for Open Lands totaled \$109,641, an increase of 54% over year-end 2009. The Natural Areas Division also received farm lease income of \$5,759 during 2010, from Prairie Ridge and Boyd Lake Natural Areas. Earnings on investments totaled \$224,995 for 2010.

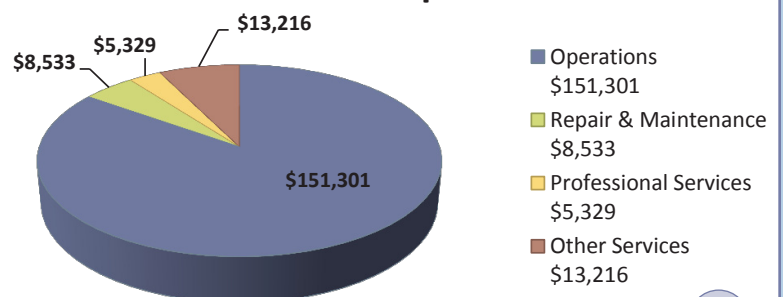
Natural Areas Revenue 2010



NATURAL AREAS EXPENDITURES 2010

Total expenditures for the Natural Areas Division were \$178,379 in 2010. The City of Loveland Natural Areas Program has helped to preserve over 4,800 acres of land since its inception in 1996. A large portion of existing properties conserved have been acquired with conservation easements and partnerships that help to keep operation and maintenance costs sustainable. A significant Big Thompson River land acquisition and a regional partnership are planned for 2011 that will total over \$1M.

Natural Areas Expenditures 2010



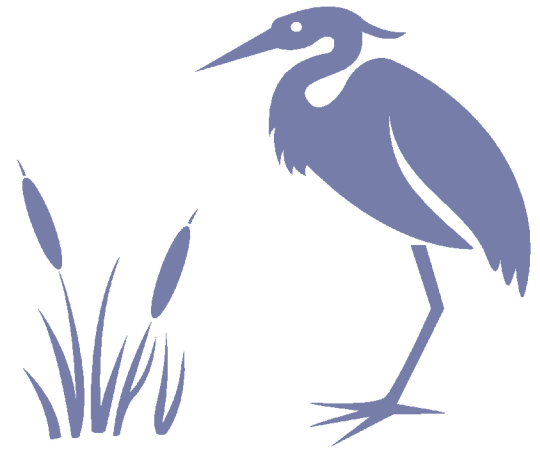
From the Chair of the Open Lands Advisory Commission:

Having been involved in the Real Estate business in Loveland for 26 years brings the awareness that we live in a very special place. Every day, we see families choose to live here because of all this community has to offer. Natural Areas play a big part in their perception of the quality of life in Loveland and the surrounding areas.

The City of Loveland and the Open Lands Advisory Commission are exploring the purchase of several significant parcels along the river in the heart of Loveland, which will enhance the quality of life we are already experiencing. These acquisitions are in line with our long-term mission of preserving Big Thompson River property. These areas also provide connectivity with core areas of our community, offering additional opportunities for public access, scenic viewsheds, and habitat protection.

Please support the City Council, Open Lands Advisory Commission and Loveland community in accomplishing our goals.

*Rick Brent
Chair, Open Lands Advisory Commission*



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