

Clear Creek County Open Space Commission 2008 Annual Report

Clear Creek County Open Space has had a busy year in 2008 acquiring new properties, managing existing properties, and organizing and attending community meetings and events. Kristin Kahler has joined OSC as an alternate Commissioner; the entire Commission is now complete with nine Commissioners and two alternates.

Beaver Brook Watershed:

As of late September, the US Forest Service acquisition process for the purchase of a portion of the Watershed fell apart. The Forest Service informed the Commission that while the money for the purchase which had been “re-directed” to pay for the wildfires in California had been “returned” to the Forest Service, it was going into the “general” fund not back to the original appropriated items. OSC has informed GOCO and MALT of this decision. OSC is now placing its emphasis on long-term management of the Watershed as it is very likely that the USFS will not be purchasing the property. Without someone like Senator Allard to push for the funding, new funding is unlikely to occur. The Friends of Beaver Brook Watershed have taken an active role in the stewarding of BBW; they conducted a weed-pulling day last summer and are working on a volunteer ranger program. MALT conducted its annual conservation easement monitoring session in the Watershed in early August and the report stated that there is no degradation of the conservation values on the property and the weed mitigation efforts have made a noticeable improvement on the weed infestation. New signs have been produced and placed in the Watershed.

OSC, Friends of Beaver Brook Watershed, and the US Forest Service built approximately 250 feet of buck and rail fence at the Witter Gulch gate to the Watershed. A crew of about 15 people worked efficiently and completed the task in about three hours. The new fence and gate are significantly further from the road, which should prevent future snow removal related damage.

As a result of Kevin O’Malley’s letter in the Clear Creek Courant, which scolded those who stole the Ted Swem Memorial Bench from BBW, the bench was located and returned to its proper place in the Watershed. OSC conducted a field trip to BBW for several key County employees who had not been to the Watershed. OSC has received \$450 from the Friends of Mount Evans and Lost Creek Wildernesses to assist in weed management within the Watershed.

Frei Lands and Greenway Trail:

OSC is continuing to engage in discussions with the Frei family concerning the easement along Clear Creek for the Greenway.

White Water Park at Lawson:

Zoning of the white water park parcel has been changed from Commercial Retail-Office to Commercial-Outdoor Recreation. With help from Road and Bridge, a soil pit was dug

on site so the soil engineer can determine the stability of the soil. This is needed for construction of the changing facility. We are currently waiting for the Stormwater Construction Permit to be completed and approved by CDPHE. CDOT has obligated the funds even though all of the paper work is not completed. Once the Stormwater Permit is complete, CDOT will give us the “green light” to run the advertisements asking for bids.

Philadelphia Mill Site:

OSC is moving forward on refining our proposal to the Fishing is Fun Grant program for 2009. We are working with Mountain Design Group (MDG) to prepare a construction-ready design. MDG is working on the preliminary design, estimated to be \$2500. The BOCC has approved the work “not to exceed \$3000”.

Sheepkeep:

Frank Young and Martha have met with Ty Petersburg and Sheri Huewer from DOW several times to work on a cooperative management plan for the Sheep Keep. Next steps are to meet with DOW mapping experts to identify key parcels.

Arrastra Mill Site:

The OSC has initiated its stewardship program on this property. Members of the Mill Creek Valley Historical Society have volunteered to monitor the condition of this parcel and to help manage it. OSC hopes that this program can be expanded to other properties. The damaged fence at the site has been replaced which will protect the meadow from vehicle use. Inmates from the Sheriff’s Office did the work. On April 5th, the OSC joined others in the community to honor Katy Cannady. She was given a resolution from the OSC acknowledging her role in protecting the Mill Creek Arrastra. Sue Howell presented the resolution to Katy at the event.

Geneva Basin Iron Fen:

On August 9th, Colorado Native Plant Society conducted a trip to the fens. Dave Bathke, volunteer steward for the fen, led the group of 14 participants who got to see all that is unique about the fen. OSC has received a grant from the Wildland Restoration Volunteers. The purpose of the grant is to restore damaged wetlands on the Geneva Basin Iron Fen (GBIF). The Wildland Restoration Volunteers is a non-profit organization that provides an opportunity for people to come together, learn about their natural environment, and take direct action to restore and care for the land. They are a volunteer-centered organization that organizes about twenty-five high-quality ecological restoration projects on Colorado public lands each year.

Blue Hill:

The unfinished building on the property has been successfully taken down in one day by the Sheriff’s Office. Pete Helseth has gone back to the site and the only trace of the building is the lack of vegetation. The Greenway Plan calls for a Local Connection Trail that goes past the Animal Shelter and through Blue Hill. Frank Young and Martha Tableman have met with Rick Albers and Marni Krueger several times to discuss the construction of a fence that defines the path’s location and protects the Animal Shelter. The location has been determined and next steps are to determine what type of fence (e.g. chain link, wood) will be constructed.

Crystal Ridge Subdivision Referral:

The OSC carefully reviewed the referral for development at Crystal Ridge to determine if there was a way to provide public access across the properties to Hicks Mountain Park. The OSC concluded that such access was not feasible and was comfortable with the developer paying a sum in lieu of designating open space as required by the subdivision regulations. The OSC did suggest that the monies collected be placed in the Open Space Trust Fund for use to support other open space properties and/or to obtain an access route into the Mount Hicks and Mount Judge Parks. OSC is in receipt of approximately \$35,000 that we are being paid in lieu of dedicated open space lands in Crystal Ridge Subdivision. The Subdivision and Off-site Agreements were filed and recorded. The OSC is working with the USFS and Denver Mountain Parks concerning the best access route to the DMP lands.

OHV Committee:

This committee composed of Forest Service staff, a representative from State Parks, the Sheriff's Office, CCC Special Projects, and Open Space met in mid April. Representatives from Mile Hi Jeep Club made a presentation on their proposed adoption of the Silver City Road (also known as the Spring Creek Road). The adoption of the Road was supported by all of the various entities present. OSC submitted several letters of support for the Mile Hi Jeep Club's grant to State Trails to support activities associated with the Silver Creek Road. Frank Young assisted Mile Hi Jeep Club with its grant application. OSC is also continuing to work with the Jeep Club on its effort to adopt the road. Future efforts will consider the placement of a parking area at the base of the road on Open Space land.

Clear Creek County Bicycle Advisory Committee (CBAT):

Sue Howell of the OSC has been participating in this task force. She has kept the OSC updated on plans for the maintenance of existing bike paths and development of new bike paths. Such efforts relate to the overall Greenway Plan. OSC has expressed its concern that new paths along the Greenway corridor be built in accordance with the Greenway Plan.

Elmgreen Meadow:

This property is currently on the market as a commercial property. OSC has visited the site with funding agencies and has been discussing the possibility of preserving this very visible space along I-70.

Elmgreen Homestead and Easement Amendment:

MALT performed the annual conservation easement monitoring and found no problems. OSC, in consultation with the both the Clear Creek and Jefferson County Attorney's Offices, reviewed a proposed change to the access easement. . Initially the easement was

found to be acceptable, but research by MALT's attorney determined that there are some liens on the property that need to be modified to reflect the proposed change in the easement.

Sales Tax Initiative:

After much discussion, OSC decided after a review of current economic conditions to postpone pursuing a sales tax initiative earmarked for open space in 2008. We much appreciated the support received from TPL and the BOCC. We will revisit the issue next year and will determine whether 2009 or 2010 elections would be better.

Baines Mining Claims Donation:

The Baines Family Estate has written a letter indicating their desire to donate four mining claims to the Clear Creek County Open Space Program. Three of these claims are just east of Fall River Road and are bighorn sheep habitat. The fourth claim is near Georgetown and is in the midst of the Division of Wildlife's Sheep Area. Several OSC members hiked the three accessible claims near Fall River Road earlier this summer. They are landlocked and very steep terrain. It appears that the Baines Family (and their lawyer) proceeded on their own and have executed the necessary deeds to transfer the four claims to Clear Creek County. After a resolution for the BOCC to accept the claims has been drafted, the deal will be complete.

Noxious Weeds:

OSC participated in a "Weed Information Day" at the Idaho Springs Safeway to inform folks about noxious weeds. Several OSC members spent some time eradicating weeds at Blue Hill and the Philadelphia Mill Site. A work day is planned to "address" the weeds at the White Water Park.

I-70 PEIS:

Sue Howell attended a meeting with consultants for CDOT. She concurs with concerns voiced by Joanne Sorenson about the lack of coordination with the I-70 PEIS and the outcome of the Collaborative Effort on that study. She additionally noted that the effort to date is only considering buses and not other transit. She reported that the Greenway concerns were raised so that the consultants are now aware of the Greenway Plan.

Denver Mountain Parks/OSC Site Visit:

On August 12th, AJ Tripp-Addison and Susan Baird of Denver Mountain Parks (DMP) joined Sara Donahue, Fran Enright, Sue Howell, and Frank Young, to tour the Wahlberg property on 103 to determine if DMP had any interest in purchasing the property, which is adjacent to their current property at Echo Lake. Susan Baird of Denver Mountain Parks, explained they held great interest in this property and it was included in the Master Plan for Denver Mountain Parks acquisition. Denver Mountain Parks would pursue financial assistance to try to purchase this parcel. They said they currently do not have money to purchase, and also hoped that the Forest Service might be able to purchase the parcel since it is also adjacent to Forest Service lands. Pete Helseth joined the tour at

Witter Gulch and 103 for a discussion of public access to Hicks Mountain and adjoining DMP lands. The tour also visited possible sites of Forsberg Park which is near the Old Squaw Pass entrance to BBW. There is uncertainty about the specific location of Forsberg Park. We had discussions at length about potential cooperative projects with the two groups. Discussions will continue in 2009 to identify ways that the two organizations can work together.

Stewardship Program:

OSC has been approached by several people who are willing to help with various properties as a part of this program. Amy Karshbaum has volunteered to steward the Alps Mountain property. The Arrastra Mill Site had a steward this summer as does the Geneva Basin Iron Fens. Pete Helseth is going to update the Floyd Hill Homeowners Association about opportunities to assist Open Space through the Stewardship Program. Friends of Beaver Brook Watershed is a prime example of OSC receiving much help from citizens in a stewardship capacity. We are looking for opportunities to involve other interested people in being stewards of open space properties.

OSC Municipal Assistance:

The OSC continues to work with the municipalities of the county on their Greenway and Mountain Park projects. In addition to several recent projects with Georgetown, OCS is collaborating with the Town of Silver Plume on acquiring several private mining claims which are surrounded by the Silver Plume Mountain Park (former BLM lands).

Recycling:

Collaborating with the City of Idaho Springs, the Clear Creek Transfer Station, the Clear Creek Metropolitan Recreation District and Rite of Passage, OSC submitted an application for a grant co-sponsored by the National Recycling Coalition and Coca-Cola. On November 14, the grant was awarded for the maximum allowed number of sixty bins, to be divided among all the co-applicants. We were one of 85 winners out of 1400 applicants. The bins would retail for \$6000 and there was no financial match required. Because of Open Space's lead in this collaborative application, the award reads "Clear Creek County". The award will be announced in the press soon; any media mention of the grant must include the names of the National Recycling Coalition and Coca-Cola.

Earth Day: April 19th:

Once again, OSC had a booth at the Evergreen Earth Day festivities at the Lake House.