



Clear Creek County Open Space Annual Report 2009

Clear Creek Open Space Board

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Mission Statement

The mission of the Clear Creek County Open Space Commission is to preserve and maintain the County's unique character and natural environment by protecting our streams, woodlands, meadows, wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, prominent vistas, geologic features and cultural resources to enhance the quality of life for residents and the enjoyment of the out-of-doors for residents and visitors.

Priorities for 2009

1. Restoration of Geneva Basin
2. Beaver Brook Watershed Appropriation funding
3. Lawson Whitewater Park
4. Philadelphia Mill Site Fishing is Fun grant
5. Access through Blue Hill property
6. Identify remaining County lands that would qualify for Open Space
7. Pursue weed grants
8. Coordinate with Denver Mountain Parks on trails and Highway 103 properties
9. Pursue public outreach with newspaper articles
10. Finalize bylaws
11. Special permit process for Open Space lands
12. Finalize policies/procedures for Open Space Commission
13. Look at sustainability practices and energy efficiency
14. Complete sheepkeep management

Geneva Basin Iron Fens Restoration Project

August, 2009

Volunteers: 100+

Volunteer hours: 1600+ hours

Geneva Basin Iron Fens contains a rare wetland community that occurs in 10 locations in Colorado and 11 in the world. Iron fens are very acidic. Unique rock terraces are formed from iron and other minerals precipitating on plant material producing limonite. Very unique plant communities are associated with the limonite. The vegetation in the area closely resembles the Alaskan tundra, including sphagnum moss, reindeer lichen, sedges, bog birch and dwarfed Engelmann spruce, along with several uncommon forbs.

This project intended to obliterate and re-vegetate undesignated roads that serve as primary access for illegal off-road vehicles into the fen.

Colorado Natural Areas staff partnered with Clear Creek Open Space in applying and receiving a grant totaling \$25,000 from Wildlands Restoration Volunteers for this project.

Partners in this project include:

US Forest Service – Denny Bohon, Biologist, Platte River Ranger District

Mile High Jeep Club – Linda Myers

Colorado Natural Areas Program – Brian Kurzel, Coordinator

Wildlands Restoration Volunteers – John Giordanengo, Project Director

Mile High Jeep Club built post and cable fences at five access points in two work days. They also completed welding the lock cover for the main gate and contributed the cost of the materials.

Wildlands Restoration Volunteers planned the restoration and implementation of the obliteration of 6,000+ feet of undesignated road. A USFS contractor brought in a backhoe and ripped the road sections. Work included construction of water bars and check dams, soil preparation for reseeded and transplanting plant material, laying erosion matting and straw and adding to natural barriers. Activity focused on areas of both USFS and Clear Creek lands. August 22, 12 volunteers collected 25 pounds of seed at the site for the re-vegetation. Volunteers completed the work on August 29 and 30. Access to the sites is difficult and involves an hour of travel time each way.

The U.S.F.S. helped with logistics including planning and implementation, including hauling materials and construction.

Brian Kurzel, Colorado Natural Areas Program, was responsible for coordinating the project from the beginning. Colorado Natural Natural Areas program contributed \$5,000 to the project.

White Water Park



Construction at the Lawson White Water Park was completed this fall. The in-stream portion of the project had to be completed by October 1st because of fish habitat regulations. The land part of the

project was completed in November. The signage is complete along with a beautiful rock sign that was placed by the entrance to the park. The plants placed along the ramps will need watering in the spring. Open Space Board members have already watered once and have volunteered to continue when needed during winter and spring months so that the plants can get established. The rock work in the stream has outlined a channel for the kayakers to use when navigating the park. The Clear Creek Recreation District is interested in providing some classes at the park this summer.

CDOT and Open Space managed this project. There will be a dedication of the park on May 22nd with state and local agencies who participated in the development. Local rafting companies have also voiced an interest in creating some competitions using the Whitewater Park.

Beaver Brook Watershed



The US Forest Service received funds in 2009 to purchase a significant piece, 900 acres, of the Beaver Brook Watershed from Clear Creek County. This transfer to the US Forest Service was envisioned when the Open Space Commission initially purchased the property. The County purchased the property as an interim measure to protect the Watershed from development. Funding proportionate to the value of those 900 acres was returned to the Open Space program as part of this transfer. The final 550 acres of the Watershed will continue to be managed by the Open Space Commission; trail planning for that area has begun. A ceremony was held on September 5th to acknowledge the purchase and transfer of the 900 acres and to recognize people from Great Outdoors Colorado, U.S. Forest Service, Congressional representatives, MALT, SOLVE, Clear Creek County Commissioners and Clear Creek Open Space Commission members who participated in protecting this key piece of property in eastern Clear Creek County.

Ballot Initiative

The Open Space Commission voted in August to place an initiative on the November ballot that would change the mandated allocation of Open Space Trust Fund from 75% for acquisitions/25% for management to 60% acquisition/40% for management. The amount of property acquired in the last 10 years has been significant and many properties need active management. Specifically, many of the properties that are accessible by road are highly used and need to have supervision, signage, weed management, trail construction, re-vegetation, fencing, and/or other management activities. The Open Space Commission's ability to do such activities was significantly constrained by the mandated allocation. The Initiative was passed in November and becomes effective in January 2010.

Greenway

The development of a greenway for Clear Creek County's residents and visitors has become a priority of the Clear Creek County Open Space Program, and a focal point of its 2003 Open Space Plan. Running alongside Clear Creek between Jefferson County and the Continental Divide, a greenway is envisioned to serve as the backbone of the County, and tie together communities with a string of open spaces, parks, recreational facilities and commercial recreation providers. It will embrace the County's unique cultural heritage and natural environment, and provide an outstanding resource for families, visitors and outdoor enthusiasts to enjoy.

The concept is to develop a main arterial trail and key open space areas to create an interconnecting corridor of parks, trail connections, recreational activities, and related amenities. This will incorporate, enhance, and create many types of active and passive recreation opportunities along Clear Creek. It will take advantage of existing features including bighorn sheep viewing, commercial rafting, and historic sites.



The latest purchase of property along the proposed Greenway was completed on December 30, 2009. Clear Creek County Open Space with financial assistance from Great Outdoors Colorado purchased the Oxbow Parcel. This key parcel is 74 acres in Clear Creek Canyon by Tunnel 5. The property includes a well known climbing wall, the Cat Slab, as well as Creek access and the abandoned railroad grade. This property borders Jefferson County Open Space and will allow the Clear Creek Greenway to connect with the Jefferson County Greenway which will come up Clear Creek Canyon from Golden. The sale was the result of many hours of negotiation involving Open Space Commission members, Clear Creek County staff, and Mel Andrew who offered to act as a facilitator between the landowner and the County.



Oxbow Parcel

Other Accomplishments:

1. Field trips to look at possible properties for acquisition.
2. Mapping workshop to highlight the County website Clear Map System with Matt Taylor
3. Conservation Easement Workshop to understand process and tax credits.
4. Alternative Energy presentation to understand proposed wind energy project .
5. Coordination with the Clear Creek County Bicycle Advisory Committee
6. Noxious Weed Work Days
7. Development of a plan between Denver Mountain Parks/Clear Creek Open Space to build a trail to Mt. Hicks
8. Collaboration on land acquisition projects with Silver Plume and Georgetown
9. Recycling Project working with Idaho Springs, Clear Creek County Transfer Station, Clear Creek Recreation District and Rite of Passage.
10. Working with Denver West Trout Unlimited on the Clear Creek Home River Initiative.