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Arapahoe County Open Space acquires land for conservation *Mule Gulch Property adds nearly 1,000 additional acres of rural open space*

Littleton, CO – The Arapahoe County Board of County Commissioners approved \$1.128 million in Open Space funds to acquire the 939-acre Mule Gulch property. Mule Gulch is located six miles southwest of the Town of Byers, the property is located next to, and is a part of the West Bijou Creek drainage area in eastern Arapahoe County.

“West Bijou Creek has long been a conservation focus for Arapahoe County Open Space and other conservation organizations,” said Commissioner Jeff Baker, District 3. “The purchase of Mule Gulch is a great addition to a much larger conservation effort in this area which now totals more than 16,000 acres. This was a rare opportunity to conserve a portion of the County’s agricultural heritage and provide unique recreation experiences for the public.”

Mule Gulch is neighbor to the West Bijou Site, owned by the Savory Institute (formerly Plains Conservation Center), which was recently designated as a National Natural Landmark. This federal program recognizes and encourages the conservation of sites that contain outstanding biological and geological resources and illustrate America’s natural heritage.

Since 2003, Open Spaces has acquired or conserved more than 28,000 acres of land that support our rich agricultural heritage, preserves native vegetation and provides sweeping views of the prairie landscape and mountains along the Front Range. These conservation efforts also enrich wildlife habitat and improve the quality of our waterways.

The Mule Gulch Property is planned to remain in agricultural production (currently winter wheat) until an inventory of its natural resources can be conducted and a master plan for the site is completed. In the future the property will be open to the public for a variety of passive recreational uses such as horseback riding, hiking, wildlife viewing, birding and picnicking.

In addition to Mule Gulch, Arapahoe County Open Space owns the adjacent Bijou Basin Open Space (2,820 acres) and three other rural open space properties including Kiowa Creek North, Kiowa Creek South and Richmil Ranch. The Richmil Ranch Open Space is a vibrant landscape near the Town of Deer Trail and offers 3.5 miles of soft surface trails for hiking and equestrian use. It provides excellent habitat for wildlife such as wild turkey, white-tailed deer and migratory birds along with sweeping views of the eastern plains. The remaining three open space properties are leased to local ranchers and farmers for agricultural production.

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