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To Preserve and Protect

Arapahoe County commits funding to City of Littleton to preserve greenway buffer

ARAPAHOE COUNTY, CO. --- *To Preserve and Protect*: It's an oath Arapahoe County took seriously when voters approved the creation of the County's Open Space program five years ago.

On Tuesday, Arapahoe County once again demonstrated its pledge to *Preserve and Protect* native land, wildlife habitat and greenway buffers when the Board of County Commissioners committed up to \$105,000 in Arapahoe County Open Space funds to the City of Littleton as a partial match toward the purchase of the Lee Gulch property, 5.48 acres intended for open space, trails and outdoor recreational purposes in Littleton.

Located at 6591 S. Santa Fe Dr, the future site features outstanding views of the South Platte River Valley, excellent upland native vegetation, habitat for a variety of wildlife and an opportunity to buffer and preserve the greenway for outdoor recreation along the regional trail system.

"It's almost unbelievable that this coalition had the good fortune to be able to purchase this land. It's a missing piece of the puzzle," said Arapahoe County Commissioner Susan Beckman, who serves as Board Chairman. "With current access to the regional trail system somewhat limited, this site will provide additional trailhead access for residents, not only to Lee Gulch but to the entire 14-mile trail loop system with the Mary Carter Greenway serving as the backbone."

Funding partners for this acquisition include Great Outdoors Colorado (\$750,000) as well as the City of Littleton and South Suburban Parks and Recreation District (for up to \$875,000) and the generous citizens of Arapahoe County through the voter-approved Arapahoe County Open Space Sales and Use Tax. The total project cost will be approximately \$1.5 million and is tentatively set to close in June.

"It's exciting to see governments working together to give our residents incredible opportunities to enjoy the outdoors," Beckman added. "We're proud to support the City of Littleton with this purchase."

In 2003, voters approved a quarter-cent sales and use tax to pay for the preservation of open space in Arapahoe County. The tax is used to preserve urban and rural open space and natural areas; protect lands that preserve water quality in rivers, lakes and streams; provide, maintain and improve neighborhood parks, open space, sports fields, picnic facilities and multi-use trails; protect wildlife habitat and corridors; preserve agriculture and ranchlands; and enhance and maintain designated heritage areas.

Since the program's inception, Arapahoe County has distributed more than \$39 million in sales tax revenue for open space, parks and trails projects.

The \$105,000 is part of the \$3 million that Arapahoe County set aside for the South Platte Legacy Project that continues to expand the urban oasis of the South Platte River through the partnership of the South Platte Working Group. Convened by Arapahoe County in 2006 as a collaborative, consensus-based regional approach to protecting the South Platte River corridor, the South Platte Working Group continues to improve wildlife habitat and enhance connectivity to recreation trails for people in Western Arapahoe County.

To ensure this parcel is available for future generations to enjoy, the County and GOCO will require a conservation easement to ensure that the property is used for open space, trail connectivity and passive outdoor recreation forever. To learn more about the County's Open Space program, visit www.co.arapahoe.co.us.

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