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Richmil Ranch Open Space in Deer Trail now open to the public

Natural area offers 3-mile trail for hiking, wildlife viewing and riding

Deer Trail, Colo. – Arapahoe County's Richmil Ranch Open Space in Deer Trail opened to the public on Oct. 29, following a year of trail and trailhead construction. The nature area preserves wildlife habitat and offers outdoor recreational opportunities that are in growing demand on the County's eastern plains.

The 352-acre open space is located three miles northwest of Deer Trail at 77910 E. Highway 40. Richmil Ranch was purchased by Arapahoe County in 2007 with funds from the voter-approved Open Space sales and use tax. The open space took its name from Richard and Mildred Helling, from whose trust the property was acquired.

Visitors to Richmil Ranch Open Space can enjoy three miles of soft-surface trails for walking, running, biking and horseback riding amidst prairie, farm and riparian woodlands. A new trailhead area offers parking for vehicles and horse trailers, restrooms, a picnic shelter and trail signage. The County also has restored a historic windmill on the site and rehabilitated a habitat pond for wildlife, which includes deer, pronghorn, raptors, wild turkey, birds and a variety of small mammals, reptiles and amphibians.

Richmil Ranch Open Space is open from dawn to dusk. Hunting, all-terrain vehicles, camping and fires are not permitted. Use of the picnic shelter is on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Arapahoe County held a comment period for Richmil Ranch in early 2011 and added horse trailer parking to the first phase of development at the request of citizens.

"We've heard from a number of citizens in Deer Trail who are eager to have public trails for equestrian use," said Commissioner Rod Bockenfeld. "The three-mile trail at Richmil Ranch Open Space is already seeing use from horseback riders who wanted a place to strengthen and train their horses and even teach their kids to ride."

Future stages of development will include installing hitching posts and interpretive signage on the site, and possibly developing expanded trails and a shelter on a parcel on the south side of Highway 40. The County also plans to work closely with the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service to develop management plans for an agricultural lease with a local farmer, which serves as local land stewardship and helps to offset maintenance costs.

The Richmil Ranch Open Space would not be possible without the generosity of Arapahoe County voters, who approved the Arapahoe County Open Space sales and use tax in 2003 and again in 2011.

Since its inception, the Open Space Program has conserved more than 18,000 acres of land that preserve natural habitat and wildlife corridors, built 30 miles of trail, and created and enhanced dozens of neighborhood and regional parks in the County.

A grand opening celebration for Richmil Ranch Open Space has not been scheduled – watch for more information in spring 2013. For more information about Arapahoe County's parks, trails and open spaces, please call 720-874-6540 or visit www.arapahoegov.com.

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To download photos of Richmil Ranch Open Space Park, please click the link:

<ftp://www.co.arapahoe.co.us/Pub/CM/Photos/OpenSpace/Richmil/>

Entry.jpg – Arapahoe County's Richmil Ranch Open Space is now open to the public from dawn to dusk for hiking, biking, horseback riding and wildlife viewing.

Shelter.jpg - Visitors to the Richmil Ranch Open Space, located on Highway 40 north of Deer Trail, can enjoy a picnic lunch under a shelter constructed of red cedar timbers.

Trail.jpg – A three-mile loop trail wanders through prairie, farm and riparian woodlands at Arapahoe County's Richmil Ranch Open Space.

TrailMap.jpg – Official trail map for the Richmil Ranch Open Space Park

WildlifePond.jpg - Arapahoe County has restored a wildlife pond at Richmil Ranch Open Space, which is home to a variety of deer, raptors, wild turkey and small birds and amphibians.

Windmill.jpg – A restored and working Aeromoter windmill now fills a wildlife pond at the Richmil Ranch Open Space Park in Deer Trail.