

Revised – This version has the correct amount of conserved acres and miles of new trail.

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Arapahoe County voters to consider Open Space sales tax extension *Board of County Commissioners approve Nov. 1 ballot question extension*

Littleton, CO --- Today, the Arapahoe County Board of County Commissioners approved a ballot question that will ask voters on Nov. 1 to consider extending the 0.25 percent open space sales and use tax, which is dedicated to preserve natural areas, enhance neighborhood parks, build and maintain trail connections and protect heritage areas.

If approved by Arapahoe County voters, the current sales and use tax will be extended 10 years to Dec. 31, 2023. Most of the language of the original ballot question will remain the same, including the 50 percent shareback to participating cities and towns, and the 12 percent competitive grant program for cities and special districts. The minor revisions that were made Tuesday include:

- Allow incorporated cities and towns to use up to 20 percent of their annual shareback funds to maintain existing or new open space properties, neighborhood and regional parks, trails and sports fields. This is an increase from the current 10 percent cap.
- Allow a 1 percent increase in County open spaces administrative costs to a cap of 4 percent.
- Allow a 0.5 percent increase for designated Arapahoe County heritage areas to a 4.1 percent cap. Current heritage areas include the 17 Mile House Farm Park and the Fairgrounds and Regional Park. These funds can be used for maintenance, enhancement and the operation of current facilities but cannot be used to build new buildings.
- Change the amount of the funds used for the acquisition or development of open space and/or trails from 28.16 percent to 26.66 percent.

Fifty percent of the annual tax revenue is returned to incorporated cities and towns to enhance local parks, trails, recreation and open space. More than \$66 million from the Open Space Fund has been distributed to municipalities since the program's inception. In addition to shareback funds, 12 percent of the annual tax revenue is set aside for competitive grants to eligible special districts and municipalities with almost \$16 million in grants awarded since 2004 for 90 projects throughout the County. **Since the program's inception, the County's Open Space program has conserved more than 18,000 acres of open space, built more than 30 miles of new trails and created and enhanced neighborhood and regional parks.**

The resolution in its entirety will be available online beginning Wednesday, Aug. 31 by visiting the *What's New* section of the County's homepage at www.co.arapahoe.co.us. The countywide open space sales and use tax was created in November 2003 with 60 percent approval by Arapahoe County voters.

The original tax collection, which began Jan. 1, 2004, is set to expire Dec. 30, 2013 and equates to 25 cents on every \$100 purchase. To learn more about Arapahoe County Open Space, visit www.co.arapahoe.co.us and download the 2011 Community Guide *150 Ways to Enjoy Open Spaces* and/or sign up to receive the [Arapahoe County Open Spaces e-newsletter](#).

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