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Preserving our ranching heritage and prairie habitat

Arapahoe County preserves 476 acres of open space including Kiowa Creek

ARAPAHOE COUNTY, CO. --- Protecting the ranching heritage and prairie habitat of eastern Arapahoe County is a high priority for the Open Space, Parks and Trails Program. Recently, the Arapahoe County Board of County Commissioners approved the purchase of 476 acres of open space at Kiowa Creek Ranch South, located 10 miles south of the Town of Bennett in unincorporated Arapahoe County for \$950,000 in Open Space funds.

“This property serves as a bookend for the preservation of Kiowa Creek in eastern Arapahoe County, 10 miles directly south of the Kiowa Creek North Open Space near I-70,” said Arapahoe County Commissioner Rod Bockenfeld, who serves as Board Chairman. “As the only substantial creek in the Bennett area, the County is committed to protecting water quality, native vegetation, wildlife habitat and its agricultural history.”

The open space adds to the growing network of public and privately conserved agricultural and wildlife properties that serve to protect the western heritage of Arapahoe County. The County will continue the current grazing lease with a rancher who uses the land for cattle grazing and some hay production.

The purchase will preserve the high quality, well maintained upland native grass pastures and dryland alfalfa, more than a quarter mile of cottonwood galleries along the meandering Kiowa Creek, two living snow fences protecting the southern boundary, a barn, windmill and set of corrals.

In addition, it serves as excellent habitat for numerous wildlife species including ground nesting birds such as the Meadowlark and Lark Bunting, Colorado's state bird.

The Kiowa Creek property addresses the plans and goals of the County as outlined in the Arapahoe County Comprehensive Plan and recently adopted Open Space Master Plan, all of which place high priority upon 1) developing an interconnected system of open space parks, trails and outdoor recreation; 2) protecting water resources, and 3) conserving prime wildlife habitats.

While the property is currently closed to the public, future plans include possible amenities such as horse and pedestrian trails, trailhead and interpretive signage, picnic shelters and regional trail connections.

Over the next few months, County staff will assess the natural resource conditions, meet with neighbors, define boundaries and place signage. Arapahoe County Open Space is committed to

creating a long-term asset for the surrounding community and being good stewards of their special places.

To learn more about the County's Open Space program, visit www.co.arapahoe.co.us and sign up to receive the Open Space newsletter.

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To download photos click on the following link:

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

KiowaCreekSouth2010: Arapahoe County Open Space buys a portion of Kiowa Creek South to protect water quality, wildlife and native habitat and the County's agricultural heritage.

KiowaCreeks_Creek2010: More than a quarter mile of cottonwood galleries are found along the meandering Kiowa Creek, where 476 acres of open space are now being preserved by Arapahoe County Open Space.