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South Platte Working Group honored for their outstanding achievement along the South Platte River Corridor

LITTLETON, Colo. --- Arapahoe County and a coalition of 18 cities, towns and local organizations working to beautify and enhance the connectivity of the South Platte River, were recently honored with the 2010 Blue Grama Award for Outstanding Achievement by the Colorado Open Space Alliance for their efforts to work together to improve the river corridor.

The award is given to a group or organization that has made significant contributions to the conservation of Colorado's open spaces and outstanding leadership achievement through either acquisition or management actions.

The South Platte Working Group was celebrated for its collaborative, consensus-based, regional approach to protecting the South Platte River corridor and having made an enormous impact – expanding the urban oasis of the South Platte River, improving wildlife habitat and enhancing trail connections.

“In just four years, this group has made significant impact along the corridor – connecting trails and creating open space buffers along the river – it is an incredible asset for our community,” said Arapahoe County Commissioner Susan Beckman, who founded the South Platte Working Group. “This award recognizes the power of this group of individuals. We are honored to receive this award.”

Convened by Arapahoe County in 2006 with a \$3 million pledge from the Open Space sales and use tax, the South Platte Working Group has racked up several accomplishments in its short existence. The group has secured more than \$25 million in funding, including a \$5.25 million Legacy grant from Great Outdoors Colorado; acquired several parcels; built trail connections and won the Denver Regional Council of Government's highest honor for their collaborative work to protect the South Platte.

South Platte Working Group partners include: Arapahoe County, the cities of Cherry Hills Village, Englewood, Littleton, Greenwood Village and Sheridan; the town of Columbine Valley, Arapahoe County Open Space and Trails Advisory Board, Great Outdoors Colorado, South Metro Land Conservancy, South Suburban Park Foundation, South Suburban Park and Recreation District, Trust for Public Land, Colorado Water Conservation Board, Trout Unlimited, Urban Drainage and Flood Control District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Colorado Division of Wildlife.

Much of these accomplishments would not be possible without the generous voters who approved the Arapahoe County Open Space sales and use tax in 2003. In seven years, the County has protected more than

15,500 acres of land that preserve natural habitats and wildlife corridors, protect sweeping vistas and provide outdoor recreation for residents of all ages. For more information, visit www.co.arapahoe.co.us.

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To download photos click on the following link:

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

BlueGramaAward_Caption: The South Platte Working Group, comprised of 19 cities, towns and organizations, recently received the Blue Grama Award for Outstanding Achievement by the Colorado Open Space Alliance for their efforts to beautify and enhance the connectivity of the South Platte River.

Photo from left: Englewood Mayor Jim Woodward; Cherry Hills Village Council member Klasina Vanderwerf; Sheridan City Council member Cliff Mueller; South Suburban Parks Foundation Board Chair Bev Bradshaw; Shannon Carter, Arapahoe County; Littleton City Council member Debbie Brinkman; Bobbie Sheffield, Arapahoe County Open Space and Trails Advisory Board; Commissioner Susan Beckman, Board Chair and founder of the South Platte Working Group; Justin Spring, Trust for Public Land; South Suburban Park and Recreation District Board Executive Director Dave Lorenz; Hillary Merritt, Trust for Public Land; Debbie Belcik, City of Greenwood Village; Charlie Blosten, City of Littleton; South Suburban Park and Recreation Board member Sue Rosser