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## **Future bright for Arapahoe County's parks, trails and open space** *Board of Commissioners approve Arapahoe County Open Space Master Plan*

**Littleton, CO** --- The Arapahoe County Board of County Commissioners unanimously approved the adoption of the Open Space Master Plan with two revisions during a public hearing Tuesday. Changes to the program's organizational structure as well as proposed timing for a ballot question reauthorization were removed from the plan for further review and discussion.

"Everyone agrees upon the valuable impact that the County's open space program has had on the community and that asking the voters to extend the program will be paramount to our ability to continue to preserve and enhance open space, parks and trails," said Arapahoe County Commissioner Chair Rod Bockenfeld. "The question we are still working to answer is when it should be placed on the ballot, knowing it will expire in 2013."

The Plan is a direct result of the feedback from thousands of residents and partners during the last year and outlines a 100 year vision, 25 year master plan and 5 year action plan to acquire, conserve, protect and steward strategic land and water resources. Key recommendations include creating an interconnected countywide system of parks, open space and trails and protecting natural resources that include water quality and wildlife habitats of key riparian corridors through varied conservation efforts.

The plan will serve as a guide for making strategic decisions about the program's future and supports the County's regional efforts in partnering with cities, towns and special districts to protect key natural features including the South Platte River Corridor, Cherry Creek Basin Corridor, Arapahoe Grasslands in eastern Arapahoe County and High Line Canal Corridor.

Arapahoe County's 70-mile width has what residents refer to as an "east and west" culture, with the west being predominantly urban, and the east being rural and less populated. The framework for implementing the Master Plan recognizes three distinct areas of the County: western, middle and eastern.

The focus for the western third is placed on "closing gaps" in the existing open space, parks and trails system to meet residents' current and future needs. For the middle third, where land development and growth is occurring, the goal is to establish a "greenprint" comprised of conserved land and water resources. The eastern third will remain predominantly rural during the next 25 years. The County will work with rural landowners and communities to conserve land and water resources to ensure a viable rural lifestyle and enable landowners who wish to continue farming and ranching activities.

Already, the County and its partners 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, thanks to the voters who generously approved the Arapahoe County Open Space sales and use tax in 2003.

For every \$1 spent in Arapahoe County, a quarter-of-a-penny is used to preserve urban and rural open space and natural areas; protect lands that preserve water quality; improve parks, sports fields, picnic facilities and trails; protect wildlife habitat and corridors; preserve agriculture and ranchlands; and enhance heritage areas.

To review the draft master plan, go to [www.greenways.com/arapahoe](http://www.greenways.com/arapahoe). The final plan will be available online next week.

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To download photos click on the link: <ftp://www.co.arapahoe.co.us/Pub/CM/Photos/OpenSpace/>

*Biker\_Bridge* – As a result of the Open Space Master Plan, Arapahoe County will focus on creating an interconnected network of parks, trails and open space across the County.

*FamilyRidingTrail* – Commissioners approve the Arapahoe County Master Plan which will focus on continued efforts to enhance the multitude of parks, trails and open spaces found across the County.