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Enhancing the quality of life along the South Platte River *Arapahoe County commits open space funds to support regional effort to improve South Platte River corridor*

Littleton, CO --- Runners, bikers, walkers and disabled fishing/trail enthusiasts will soon enjoy open space enhancements along the South Platte Greenway. As part of the South Platte Legacy Project, 19 government agencies and special districts have partnered to expand the urban oasis of the South Platte River, improve wildlife habitat and enhance connectivity to recreation trails for people in Western Arapahoe County.

Today, the Arapahoe County Board of County Commissioners approved two intergovernmental agreements to commit up to \$290,000 in open space funding to implement projects that create trails, bridges, parks and other recreational amenities so people can reconnect with nature as they walk, fish and bike along the river or kayak on its waters.

The County committed up to \$130,000 as a partial match towards the fee simple purchase of the Murray II property, 2.27 acres at the junction of Big Dry Creek and the South Platte River.

The property has been used as a dry goods auto salvage trading business, firewood lot and storage facility, but will be transformed in coming years by South Suburban Park and Recreation District into an open space park and trail access point, providing excellent and immediate access to the South Platte River Valley from Santa Fe Drive and the Big Dry Creek Regional Trail. Project partners include Trust for Public Land, Great Outdoors Colorado (\$242,500), South Suburban Park Recreation District (\$185,000), City of Littleton (\$185,000), and Urban Drainage and Flood Control District (\$50,000).

“This is one of my favorite projects along the South Platte. What a great opportunity to take a junkyard that sits along the river and turn it into a beautiful park,” said Arapahoe County Commissioner and founder of the South Platte Working Group Susan Beckman. “This acquisition is one of the 20 projects identified for conservation through the South Platte Greenway Legacy Project and demonstrates the extraordinary results of people working together.”

The second agreement commits up to \$160,000 for a set of proposed trail-related projects at South Platte Park in Littleton. Arapahoe County funding will support the addition of a handicap fishing pier and dual trail, handicap river access and educational signage. Other additions include energy efficiency upgrades to the Carson Nature Center, landscaping, restroom and picnic shelter installation and more funded by South Suburban Park & Recreation District (\$585,000), Great Outdoors Colorado (\$325,000), Colorado Division of Wildlife Fishing is Fun Grant (\$113,000), and the City of Littleton (\$104,000).

For every \$1 in County open space funds committed to the South Platte Legacy Project, up to \$8 is being contributed by partners.

In just five years, the County has protected more than 15,000 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.

The tax collection began Jan. 1, 2004 and is set to expire Dec. 31, 2013 unless citizens vote “yes” to continue the program during a future ballot question reauthorization.

Currently, the County is working to create an open space master plan, which will serve as a guide for making strategic decisions about the program’s future. A final draft of the plan and its recommendations are available for public review and input at www.greenways.com/arapahoe through April 2. The web site also provides resources, and residents can sign up to receive periodic updates via e-mail.

For more information, call Bob Finch, Arapahoe County Open Space, at 720-874-6734.

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

Photo Caption

SSParkHikers2009: A dad and his sons enjoy the amenities of South Platte Park, which is slated for trail-related improvements thanks to funding from Arapahoe County Open Space, South Suburban Park & Recreation District, Great Outdoors Colorado, Colorado Division of Wildlife Fishing is Fun Grant and the City of Littleton.