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## Healthy Lands, Healthy Communities, Healthy People

*Arapahoe County distributes \$12 million for open space, parks and trails projects*

**Littleton, CO** — Thanks to the citizens of Arapahoe County, the Board of County Commissioners Friday distributed \$12 million in Open Space sales tax revenues and awarded the Plains Conservation Center and West Arapahoe Conservation District with the *Our Progress Takes Flight* Stewardship Award during a ceremony at 17 Mile House Farm Park in Centennial.

Grants and awards were distributed to local cities, towns and eligible special districts during the County's Open Spaces Shareback and Grant award ceremony, which is held each June.

"Arapahoe County is home to some of the best parks, trails and recreational areas in the Denver Metro area," said Commissioner Rod Bockenfeld, who serves as Board Chair. "These amenities are what make our County so special, and thanks to the Open Space Tax, they continue to get better each year."

Funding for these projects is made possible by the citizens of Arapahoe County through the voter-approved Arapahoe County Open Space Sales and Use Tax, which is dedicated to preserve open space, enhance parks, build trail connections and protect our heritage areas. During the November 2011 election, residents voted to continue the Arapahoe County Open Space program that extends the quarter of a penny sales and use tax to Dec. 31, 2023.

Since the program's inception in 2004, the County's Open Space program, through strategic partnerships with municipalities, special districts and non-governmental organizations, has conserved more than 31,000 acres of open space, built more than 51 miles of new trails and created and enhanced neighborhood and regional parks.

### Stewardship Award

This year, the Plains Conservation Center and West Arapahoe Conservation District were presented with the *Our Progress Takes Flight* Stewardship Award, which annually recognizes an individual, local government or organization for displaying outstanding leadership, cooperation and stewardship to ensure the conservation and protection of the great outdoors.

As this year's recipients, both the West Arapahoe Conservation District and Plains Conservation Center were recognized for working hand-in-hand to protect and enhance significant open space lands on the edge of Aurora and eastern plains in the West Bijou Basin. These independent non-profit organizations are responsible for protecting more than 10,000 acres of rangeland in both Arapahoe and Elbert counties through a series of land

acquisitions, master planning and permanent protection through conservation easements. Funding partners on these efforts include the South Metro Land Conservancy, Trust for Public Land, Great Outdoors Colorado, Colorado Open Lands, Colorado Conservation Trust, Arapahoe County Open Spaces, City of Aurora and private donors.

The West Arapahoe Conservation District was originally formed as a result of the Dust Bowl of the 1930s, and continues its efforts to address agricultural and rangeland needs related to natural resources conservation. The Plains Conservation Center is an educational, research and land conservation organization, dedicated to effective land management while educating the public regarding wise stewardship of the regions natural resources. Since its establishment in 1949, the Plains Conservation Center has educated over 100,000 children and families. In addition, the organization has evolved from protecting 1,100 acres of short grass prairie to more than 10,000 acres today.

### **Open Space Shareback Awards**

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 \$85 million from the Open Space Fund has been distributed to municipalities since the program's inception. This year, Arapahoe County distributed more than \$10 million in shareback funds, which was divided among the following cities and towns, based on population:

• Aurora	\$5.99 million	• Englewood	\$630,073
• Bennett	\$7,425	• Foxfield	\$14,378
• Centennial	\$2.09 million	• Glendale	\$87,168
• Cherry Hills Village	\$124,886	• Greenwood Village	\$291,593
• Columbine Valley	\$26,212	• Littleton	\$823,032
• Deer Trail	\$11,383	• Sheridan	\$123,369

### **Arapahoe County Open Space Grants**

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 more than \$20 million in grants awarded since 2004 for 122 projects throughout the County. On June 28, Arapahoe County awarded more than \$2 million in grants for 15 open space, park and trail projects. Grant recipients generated an additional \$3.7 million dollars in required matching funds.

There are three grant categories: standard, small and planning grants. Planning grants emphasize the importance of project planning, helping agencies prepare construction projects to be "shovel ready," and thereby increasing chances to receive additional funding for future project phases. Offering three categories also allows for similar projects to be evaluated against each other, and has encouraged smaller agencies with smaller budgets to apply. The 2013 projects receiving funding include:

#### **Standard Grants**

#### **Arapahoe Park and Recreation District – Piney Creek Trail Crossing: Grant: \$200,000 Match: \$91,500**

The District will replace an existing bridge with a new bridge or low water crossing.

#### **City of Aurora – Del Mar Park Renovation: Grant: \$250,000 Match: \$1,940,600**

This grant will be used to renovate the park to include a destination playground, large group picnic shelter and improved public space.

#### **City of Aurora – Ponderosa Preserve Acquisition: Grant: \$250,000 Match: \$229,700**

Aurora will purchase approximately 10 acres of land for buffer and open space purposes.

#### **Dove Valley Metropolitan District – Happy Canyon Trail and Bridge: Grant: \$240,000 Match: \$90,000**

This grant will be used to design and construct a concrete trail and pedestrian bridge to connect the Happy Canyon Trail to the Cherry Creek Regional Trail.

#### **City of Englewood – Duncan Park Development Phase I: Grant: \$250,000 Match: \$175,000**

Englewood will develop a former school site to include a picnic pavilion, athletic field, restrooms, basketball court, playground, horseshoe pit, irrigation system, landscaping and walkway.

**City of Littleton – Lee Gulch Overlook: Grant \$125,000 Match: \$125,000**

Littleton will use this grant to design and construct site improvements including new trailhead information sign, trail connection from parking lot, overlook seating, interpretive signage and trail access to pond.

**City of Littleton – Murray Nature Discovery Area: Grant: \$250,000 Match: \$250,000**

Littleton will design and construct improved entry road, parking area, loop trail and nature discovery area.

**South Suburban Park and Recreation District – Willow Creek Park Improvements: Grant: \$250,000 Match: \$355,000**

South Suburban will improve the park's playground, pedestrian bridge and trail connections in an effort to increase, enhance and diversity current use.

**South Suburban Park and Recreation District – Centennial Link Trail Phase III: Grant: \$250,000 Match: \$400,000**

This grant will be used to complete the final link of the two and a half mile Centennial Link Trail.

**Small Grant**

**City of Greenwood Village – Tommy Davis Park Outdoor Fitness Equipment: Grant: \$25,000 Match: \$4,000**

Greenwood Village will replace out-of-date outdoor exercise stations with new, state-of-the-art equipment in an effort to support healthy lifestyles.

**Planning Grants**

**Arapahoe County Recreation District – Four Square Mile: Grant: \$50,000 Match: \$32,500**

This grant will be used to assess the needs and opportunity for potential open space acquisitions, potential new uses at established parks and neighborhood connectivity to nearby trails.

**Town of Bennett – Kiowa Bennett North Trail Link: Grant: \$36,000 Match: \$43,200**

Bennett will engineer and design the regional trail connection from Arapahoe County to Adams County.

**Byers Park and Recreation District – Byers Community Park Renovation: Grant: \$12,400 Match: \$3,700**

Byers will create a site plan and construction documents for the Byers Community Park.

**City of Cherry Hills Village – Quincy Farm Management Plan: Grant: \$25,000 Match: \$30,000**

Cherry Hills Village will develop a long-term strategy and management plan for the future of the Quincy Farm historic property.

**Town of Foxfield – Foxfield Trail System: Grant: \$30,000 Match: \$3,000**

With this grant, Foxfield will update the Town's trail map to incorporate connections to other regional trail systems.

To learn more about Arapahoe County Open Space, visit [www.arapahoe.gov](http://www.arapahoe.gov) and download the 2013 Community Guide *Protect. Connect. Enjoy.* and/or sign up to receive the [Arapahoe County Open Space e-newsletter](#).

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To download photos please use the following link:

<ftp://ftp.arapahoe.gov/Pub/Communication%20Services/2013%20Shareback%20Ceremony/>