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Arapahoe County wins Colorado Lottery Starburst Conservation Award *Award recognizes County's use of lottery funds to preserve Middle Bijou Creek in eastern Arapahoe County*

LITTLETON, CO --- The Colorado Lottery Tuesday presented the Arapahoe County Board of County Commissioners with its Starburst Award, honoring the County for its use of \$800,000 in lottery funds, acquired through a grant from Great Outdoors Colorado, to preserve 20-acres of sweeping vistas and prairie views in eastern Arapahoe County.

Last February, the Board of County Commissioners purchased a \$3.2 million conservation easement on Middle Bijou Creek, and by doing so, forever protected this property from development.

“Middle Bijou Creek is a perfect example of what Arapahoe County Open Space dollars should be used for,” said Commissioner Susan Beckman, who serves as chairman of the Board of County Commissioners. “It’s a wonderful piece of land and a nationally significant project. It is nice that the Colorado Lottery has recognized the Arapahoe County open space program and all of the team members for this noteworthy effort.”

The Colorado Lottery Starburst Awards recognize excellence in the use of Lottery proceeds for projects that promote conservation of Colorado’s natural resources, partnership, community and commitment to the recreational needs of Colorado residents.

Middle Bijou Creek Ranch, located just south of Deer Trail and 40 miles east of Denver, occupies an important role in a growing network of public and privately conserved agricultural and wildlife properties that serves to protect the western heritage of Arapahoe and Elbert counties.

Encompassing more than 20 square miles of land, the conservation easement protects four distinct stream systems, 93 native plant species, and the breeding habitat for the western burrowing owl, a state threatened species. The conservation easement allows the property owner to continue the working farm and ranch operation.

The purchase of the conservation easement is a result of a partnership between Arapahoe County, Trust for Public Land, Great Outdoors Colorado, the Colorado Cattleman’s Agricultural Trust and Natural Resources Conservation Service.

It also is the largest conservation easement in Arapahoe or Elbert County and is the largest easement ever funded by the National Resource Conservation Service through their Farm and Ranchland Protection Program in the United States.

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Photo: ftp://www.co.arapahoe.co.us/Pub/CM/OPENSACE/

Arapahoe County received the 2008 Starburst Award for Outstanding Conservation Project for the Middle Bijou Creek Conservation Easement from the Colorado Lottery.

Pictured: Commissioner Frank Weddig, Bobbie Sheffield, OSTAB member, Commissioner Rod Bockenfeld, Ellen Belef, OSTAB member, Commissioner Jim Dyer, Commissioner Susan Beckman, Community Relations Specialist for the Colorado Lottery, Matt Robbins, Commissioner Pat Noonan, and Mike Rosser, OSTAB member.