

Communication Services
5334 South Prince Street
Littleton, Colorado 80166-0001
Phone: 303-795-4630
Fax: 303-738-7894
www.co.arapahoe.co.us

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Contact:

ANDREA RASIZER

Communication Services Director

Direct: 303-795-4284

Mobile: 303-882-1909

E-mail: arasizer@co.arapahoe.co.us

Three counties. One Vision.

Arapahoe, Douglas, Denver join local communities, organizations to work together to preserve, improve the Cherry Creek Basin

LITTLETON, CO --- The Cherry Creek is one of the most recognizable and treasured natural assets in the south metro Denver area. Confluence Park. Cherry Creek Dam. Miles and miles of trails that wind through Douglas, Arapahoe and Denver counties and links these communities together.

On Thursday, the Cherry Creek Basin got a big boost.

Arapahoe County, along with Denver and Douglas counties, launched a new multi-jurisdiction effort to work together to create a legacy for Cherry Creek and change the face of the corridor forever.

Arapahoe County's Open Space program convened the meeting of more than 20 jurisdictions and agencies to propose the establishment of a working group that will build off the past work in the Cherry Creek Basin and work together to make future improvements, such as adding open space buffers and connecting trails in an effort to beautify and enhance Cherry Creek.

These efforts will build upon the Cherry Creek Basin Open Space Conservation and Stewardship Plan, which was developed in 2002 and identifies priority conservation areas and outlines a land conservation strategy for one of the region's most rapidly developing areas.

Using Open Space tax dollars approved by voters in 2003, Arapahoe County will provide \$3 million in seed money, which would be used to help leverage new dollars for conservation in the Cherry Creek Basin. In addition, the current economic situation offers an opportunity for communities to secure open space along the Cherry Creek and preserve this natural resource for future generations.

Arapahoe County is hoping to capture the same enthusiasm and success of the South Platte Working Group, a coalition of 19 cities, towns and local organizations working to conserve land, clean up open space and improve connections to the South Platte River.

Convened by Arapahoe County in 2006 as a collaborative, consensus-based regional approach to protecting the South Platte River corridor, the South Platte Working Group has racked up several accomplishments in its two-year existence. The group has secured more than \$28 million in funding, including a Legacy grant from Great Outdoors Colorado; acquired several parcels; began a planning process and won the Denver

Regional Council of Government's highest honor – a gold award – for their collaborative work to protect the South Platte.

“We all know that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery and that is why we are taking the concept of the South Platte Working Group and applying it to the Cherry Creek Basin,” said Commissioner Susan Beckman, who serves as chairman of the Arapahoe County Board of County Commissioners. “There is a window of time that we can capture some unique opportunities to acquire and improve open space, water quality, address environmental clean up and connect the trails, such as the Cherry Creek Trail, as they come east from Denver, through Arapahoe and into Douglas county.”

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

Photo: Denver City Council member Peggy Lehmann, Arapahoe County Commissioner Susan Beckman and Douglas County Commissioner Jack Hilbert, attend an Arapahoe County Open Space meeting Sept. 25 to launch a new multi-jurisdiction effort to work together to create a legacy for Cherry Creek.