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**For release: June 12, 2008**

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## **Going Places, Saving Spaces, Preserving the Place we Call Home** *Arapahoe County distributes \$12.5 million for open space, parks, recreation projects*

**Littleton, CO** --- Today, the Arapahoe County Board of County Commissioners distributed \$12.5 million in Open Space sales tax revenues and named the South Platte Working Group as the recipient of the County's second annual *Our Progress Takes Flight Stewardship* award during an outdoor ceremony at the Carson Nature Center in South Platte Park.

The grants and awards were distributed to local cities, towns, parks and recreation and special districts during the County's Open Space Share Back and Grant award ceremony, which is held each June.

Funds generated by the Open Space tax are dedicated to preserve open space and natural areas; protect lands that preserve water quality in rivers, lake and streams; provide, maintain and improve neighborhood parks, open space, sports fields, picnic facilities and multi-use trails; protect wildlife habitat and corridors; preserve agriculture and ranchlands; and enhance and maintain designated heritage areas.

The South Platte Working Group – a coalition of 19 cities, towns and local organizations working to beautify and enhance the connectivity of the South Platte River, was presented with *Our Progress Takes Flight Stewardship* award, which recognizes an individual, local government or organization that displays leadership, cooperation and stewardship to ensure the preservation and protection of the great outdoors.

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 brief existence.

The Group has secured more than \$20 million in funding, including a Legacy grant from Great Outdoors Colorado – the second largest grant awarded statewide; acquired a 2.6 acre parcel, begun a master planning process and in May, won the Denver Regional Council of Government's highest honor – a gold award – for their collaborative work to protect the South Platte.

### **Open Space Share Back Awards**

In November 2003, Arapahoe County voters approved a countywide .25 percent sales and use tax for the preservation of open space in Arapahoe County. Collection of the tax began Jan. 1, 2004 and 50 percent of the annual tax revenue is returned to incorporated cities and towns based upon population to enhance local parks, trails, recreation and open space. More than \$39 million from the Open Space Fund has been distributed to

municipalities since the program's inception. This year, Arapahoe County distributed \$10.2 million in Share Back Funds, which was divided among the following cities and towns:

- |                        |                |                     |           |
|------------------------|----------------|---------------------|-----------|
| • Aurora               | \$5.78 million | • Englewood         | \$700,842 |
| • Bennett              | \$6,945        | • Foxfield          | \$16,982  |
| • Centennial           | \$2.18 million | • Glendale          | \$103,501 |
| • Cherry Hills Village | \$133,785      | • Greenwood Village | \$291,671 |
| • Columbine Valley     | \$27,280       | • Littleton         | \$842,682 |
| • Deer Trail           | \$12,475       | • Sheridan          | \$117,805 |

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

In addition to Share Back funds, 12 percent of the annual tax revenue is set aside for competitive grants to eligible special districts and municipalities with more than \$9.2 million in grants awarded since 2004. On Thursday, Arapahoe County awarded nearly \$2.25 million in grants for 16 open space, parks and trails projects. The projects receiving funding include:

#### **Arapahoe Park and Recreation District, \$250,000, Spring Creek Park Development, Phase III project**

This grant will help Arapahoe Park and Recreation complete the final phase of the expansion of Spring Creek Park. This 29-acre community park has both natural and developed recreational amenities. More than half of the park consists of a stream corridor with surrounding vegetation and trails. The developed portion includes a soccer and baseball field, basketball court, picnic shelter and playground. Once completed, this multi-faceted park will include trails, 16 acres of natural open space with wetlands, five play fields, a playground, off-street parking and a pavilion. Arapahoe Park and Recreation District is contributing \$239,300 in matching funds toward this \$489,300 project.

#### **City of Aurora, Great Plains Park Shade Structures, \$60,000**

Since its opening in 2006, Aurora residents have flocked to Great Plains Park to enjoy its most popular feature – the “sprayground.” The sprayground is a grouping of colorful arches, poles and ground sprays that squirt water. This grant allows Aurora to install shade structures around the perimeter of the popular sprayground to enhance the user experience and provide protective shade for families to set up camp. Aurora will contribute \$30,000 toward this \$90,000 project.

#### **City of Aurora, Aurora Reservoir Noxious Weed Control Project, \$65,600**

The 1,676 acres of public open space north of the Aurora Reservoir and Pronghorn Natural Area were repeatedly disturbed over the last 100 years prior to city ownership. The land has been damaged by agricultural, industrial and urban impacts, as well as sludge disposal. It also is an area that has suffered through drought. In 2007, heavy rain caused an explosion of weeds that were lying dormant for years. As a result, these areas now have a significant amount of noxious and invasive weeds, including four B list species identified by the Colorado Noxious Weed Act. Aurora estimates that 684 acres will need treatment and will include mowing, chemical applications and biological controls. Aurora will contribute \$23,800 toward this \$89,400 project.

#### **City of Cherry Hills Village, Asphalt Trail Overlay, Phase III, \$42,900**

This grant funds an asphalt overlay project that will enhance and improve the major arterial trails throughout Cherry Hills Village. In 2006, Cherry Hills Village purchased equipment to perform the work in house, thus saving approximately \$24,600 per mile over the cost of contracting the work outside. The open space grant allows Cherry Hills Village to purchase the materials to improve the trails that parallel Quincy Avenue, Holly Street and Colorado Boulevard. Cherry Hills will contribute \$50,700 in inkind services toward this \$93,600 project.

#### **City of Cherry Hills Village, Meade Park Horse Arena Restoration project, \$27,900**

Cherry Hills Village sees the restoration of a high quality, safe and accessible public horse arena in the Village as an essential step in retaining the unique equestrian and rural culture of the Village and the Denver metro area. The Village currently has two horse arenas, one at Woodie Hollow Park and the other at John Meade Park. Built in the 1970s, the Meade Park arena has received heavy use for more than 30 years. Limited improvements and inconsistent maintenance have impacted the arena, making the surface dangerous for both horse and rider. With this grant, Cherry Hills Village will restore and maintain the arena to a standard that will encourage area equestrians to use the facility. Cherry Hills Village will contribute \$12,300 toward this \$40,200 project.

#### **City of Englewood, Platte River Bike Pedestrian Bridges, \$250,000**

The Mary Carter Trail runs north and south along the South Platte River linking Chatfield State Park through Littleton, Sheridan and Englewood to Denver. This project installs two bridges – Oxford and Dartmouth - across the South

Platte River for bicyclists, pedestrians and others to use. Englewood will match this grant at \$1.46 million for a total project cost of \$1.7 million.

**City of Glendale, Seminary Park Addition, \$250,000**

This grant will expand Seminary Park, which will become part of a larger 14-acre Civic Center Park complex called Infinity Park. In 2005, the City of Glendale dedicated \$4.2 million to purchase a four-acre parcel that was going to be developed into commercial. Glendale decided to turn this parcel into open space and a passive park that would give its residents a place in the heart of the city for recreational activities or family gatherings. Glendale will contribute \$338,500 toward this \$588,500 project.

**City of Greenwood Village, Highline Farm Conservation Easement Acquisition, \$250,000**

The Highline Farm Conservation Easement acquisition gives Greenwood Village the opportunity to preserve a critical view shed and wildlife habitat along the premiere High Line Canal Trail. This conservation easement permanently protects approximately 20 acres adjacent to the High Line Canal Trail in rural Homestead Greenwood Village, thereby forming a crucial trail buffer and preventing further residential development. This acquisition also helps preserve the open grasslands of the area that were part of the original Rural Homestead Area of Greenwood Village. Greenwood Village will contribute \$1.75 million for a total project cost of \$2 million.

**City of Greenwood Village, Marjorie Perry Nature Preserve Equestrian Crossing Project, \$110,000**

By providing a designated crossing, Greenwood Village will be able to manage equestrian traffic in order to reduce the impacts to the environment and preserve this unique equestrian feature of the Marjorie Perry Nature Preserve. Finding the optimum balance between natural resource protection, land management and safety and human enjoyment of Village lands is the core objective of this project. Greenwood Village will contribute \$27,500 toward this \$137,500 project.

**City of Sheridan, Persinger Community Park, \$135,800**

Located east of Federal and north of West Hampden, Persinger Park will serve residents living in the north section of the city. The park will include playground amenities, resting areas, shaded picnic shelters and a pedestrian pathway providing neighborhood access throughout the immediate area. Sheridan will contribute \$63,900 for a total project cost of \$199,700.

**City of Sheridan, West Oxford Avenue at Hazel Court Open Space Acquisition, \$150,000**

With this grant, Sheridan will purchase a .053 acre lot across the street from its municipal center and Sheridan High School for open space. It is the first step in an overall project goal to acquire the entire 4100 block of South Hazel Court, which will link Sheridan High School to Sheridan Middle Schools, as well as Sheridan School's athletic complex. Their vision is to create an area that is shared by the City and School District and to create safe passage for middle and high school students between the two campuses. It also establishes open space and recreational opportunities for both the community and students. Sheridan will contribute \$50,600 toward the \$200,600 project.

**The Hills at Cherry Creek Metro District, Hills Sports Courts and Fence Replacement, \$74,800**

The Hills at Cherry Creek is a community of 377 homes. The grant will complete a project started in 2006 to build an accessible playground, replace old equipment, tables, benches and a shelter. Hills at Cherry Creek will add a half-basketball court, sand volleyball court and replace 900 feet of old split rail fence with a 6-foot wrought iron fence. New trees will replace trees that are diseased or have been removed. Hills at Cherry Creek will contribute \$21,700 toward this \$96,500 project.

**Parker Jordan Metropolitan District, Broncos Parkway Trailhead Phase II Improvements, \$60,000**

In 2007, Parker Jordan received a grant for phase one of this project, which provides a connection to the Cherry Creek Regional Trail from Broncos Parkway. This trailhead is an important enhancement to the Cherry Creek Regional Trail in that it will deliver a high quality recreational experience and protect the natural eco systems of the corridor. Parker Jordan will contribute \$92,000 toward the \$152,000 project

**Smoky Hill Metro District, Gold Rush Park Renovation, \$30,400**

The Smoky Hill Metropolitan District is a quasi-governmental agency responsible for the maintenance of the common grounds shared by 1,361 homes in northeast Centennial. The community is approximately 30 years old and although well maintained throughout the years, the original playground equipment in all of the parks has reached the end of its useful life. Smoky Hill is replacing the recreational equipment and completing the necessary upgrades throughout all its parks. One park has been completed and this grant will be used to complete another, along with the removal of cottonwood trees that line Smoky Hill Road. Smoky Hill will contribute \$11,800 for a total project cost of \$42,200.

**South Suburban Parks and Recreation District, Oxbow Trail Link Construction, \$244,000**

This grant will complete the final link of the Big Dry Creek Regional Trail and Greenway - closing a critical gap in the trail from the South Platte River to the High Line Canal. It also includes a pedestrian bridge. South Suburban will contribute \$252,900 toward this \$496,900 project.

**South Suburban Parks and Recreation District, Willow Creek Park Upgrades, \$250,000**

Willow Creek Park includes eight athletic playing fields, one playground, one small picnic shelter and a walking path connected to a regional trail. Since the park opened in the mid-1980s there have been no major improvements. This grant will allow South Suburban to install a restroom and add parking, drainage improvements, park furniture, trees and a turf management plan for the athletic fields. South Suburban will contribute \$69,600 toward this \$319,600 project.

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