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## **Arapahoe County and South Platte Working Group strike Gold for their ongoing work to enhance the South Platte River Corridor**

LITTLETON, CO --- Arapahoe County and a coalition of 19 cities, towns and local organizations working to beautify and enhance the connectivity of the South Platte River, were honored April 30 by the Denver Regional Council of Governments for their efforts to work together to improve the river corridor.

The South Platte Working Group received DRCOG's Metro Vision Gold Award - the agency's highest honor in the Collaboration category - which recognizes public and private sector partnerships and service to the Denver Metro area.

"We appreciate this level of recognition, it just affirms how innovative, creative and forward thinking this group is," said Commissioner Susan Beckman, who founded the South Platte Working Group. "We are honored to receive such recognition."

The South Platte River is undergoing rapid change and redevelopment as it transforms from an industrial corridor to retail, office and residential developments, and it is critical to protect the open space along the river.

The South Platte Working Group was convened by Arapahoe County in September 2006 as a collaborative, consensus-based, regional approach to protecting the South Platte River corridor. At that time, Arapahoe County believed that local governments could achieve much more along the corridor by working together rather than by working alone.

In addition to Arapahoe County, the cooperating partners that make up the Working Group include: Trust for Public Land, South Suburban Parks and Recreation District, Great Outdoors Colorado, the cities of Englewood, Sheridan, Littleton, Greenwood Village, Cherry Hills Village and Centennial; the towns of Columbine Valley and Bow Mar, Arapahoe County Open Space and Trails Advisory Board, South Metro Land Conservancy, South Suburban Park Foundation, Colorado Water Conservation Board, Trout Unlimited, Urban Drainage and Flood Control District and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The South Platte Working Group has embarked on an ambitious, comprehensive study to look at ways to improve the major east-west trail connections to the river, such as the High Line Canal, and to build upon the preservation and recreational activity that already exists.

The first major project completed by the Working Group was the 2007 acquisition of a 2.6 acre wetlands open space parcel called the Oxbow Property, which is adjacent to the South Platte River. This project will protect water quality, wildlife habitat and scenic views.

In December 2007, Great Outdoors Colorado awarded a \$5.25 million grant – its second largest grant awarded in the State last year - to Arapahoe County and members of the South Platte Working Group for the South Platte Greenway Legacy project, which extends from Englewood to the Arapahoe Countyline south of Littleton.

When combined with more than \$20 million committed by the South Platte Working Group, this pool of money will enhance the South Platte River corridor as a recreational and habitat amenity by purchasing land from willing landowners to set aside for open space. Funds also will be used to construct recreational improvements, including nature education areas and trails.

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**To download photos click on the following link: <ftp://www.co.arapahoe.co.us/Pub/CA/>**

**Photo from left:** Greenwood Village Mayor Nancy Sharpe; David A. Lorenz, South Suburban Parks and Recreation District; Englewood Mayor Jim Woodward; Shannon Carter, Special Assistant to the Arapahoe County Board of County Commissioners; Commissioner Susan Beckman, Board Chair and founder of the South Platte Working Group; Bobbie Sheffield, Chair, Arapahoe County Open Space and Trails Advisory Board; Greenwood Village City Council member Ron Rakowsky; Columbine Valley Trustee Gale Christie; Littleton City Council member Jim Taylor; Justin Spring, Project Manager, Trust for Public Land; and Sheridan City Council member Cliff Mueller.