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Council Gathering Ring, Outdoor Classroom among new features at Cherry Creek Valley Ecological Park

New, recently completed features at the Cherry Creek Valley Ecological Park, 7600 E. Jasper Ct., Centennial, make the park even more attractive to visitors and for student field trips from nearby school districts.

The educational nature park in Arapahoe County, south of Arapahoe Road and east of Jordan Road, was jointly developed by Arapahoe County, which owns the Park, and the Parker Jordan Metropolitan District.

“The latest additions, including a Council Gathering Ring and Outdoor Classroom, expand the Park’s environmentally sensitive nature preserve for use by students and teachers, nature groups, and environmental training classes as well as the general public,” said Arapahoe County Commissioner Jim Dyer.

“We are extremely pleased with the County’s enhancements to the Park which also include fencing and planting improvements that will protect the Park’s natural habitat from its surrounding urban environment,” said Norman Sheldon, president of the Parker Jordan Metropolitan District.

Improvements to the Park were funded by Arapahoe County Open Space, Parks and Trails through the Arapahoe County Recreation District. The Open Space Program was approved by voters in 2003 to preserve urban and rural open space and natural areas; protect lands that preserve water quality in rivers, lakes 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 ranch lands and enhance and maintain designated heritage areas.

New projects, recently completed at Cherry Creek Valley Ecological Park, include:

A Council Gathering Ring: A 25-foot diameter discussion circle provides landscape boulder seating for 15 to 20 people.

Outdoor Classroom: A 15-foot stepped nature classroom offers stone seating for up to 25 people.

Entry Monuments: Two entry monuments have been installed. One, near the parking lot, features a series of poles up to 20 feet high topped with two sculptures of cranes, native to the area. A second entry monument is located near the park’s pedestrian bridge.

Evergreen and deciduous tree plantings: A total of 57 newly planted and irrigated trees create a buffer for the park from urban development on the south side.

Plank Fencing: The Park's western boundary is now defined by a plank type estate fence.

Both the Council Gathering Ring and Outdoor Nature Classroom, are surrounded by natural habitat and located on the park's east side, accessible from both the southwest and eastern entrances to the Park.

The Park's other amenities include the Cherry Creek Trail which runs through the park. There also is a boardwalk across the wetlands, a floating dock on the pond, educational signage providing a self-guided tour of the area, overlooks and benches along the creek and pond, and picnic tables and restrooms.

Future plans call for the design and construction of the Broncos Parkway Trailhead to be located in the southeast portion of the park adjacent to Tagawa Garden Center and the proposed Vermilion Creek development. Plans also specify extending the section of the Cherry Creek Regional Trail from Vermilion Creek to the existing trail section through the Park.

The Parker Jordan Metropolitan District recently published an Activity Book and a Teachers Guide to further encourage enjoyment of the Park. To obtain a copy of these materials, or to make donations to the Park, please call R.S. Wells LLC, district manager, at 303-779-4525.

The Cherry Creek Valley Ecological Park is owned and maintained by Arapahoe County Open Space, Parks and Trails. It is a result of a partnership between the County and Parker Jordan Metropolitan District to provide more outdoor recreation and natural resource education opportunities in Arapahoe County. It is one of the first parks of its kind in Arapahoe County that preserves the delicate riparian area surrounded by urban growth and development. To increase accessibility for area residents, an additional trailhead is planned for construction along Broncos Parkway in summer 2008.

The Park, 7500 S. Jasper Ct., can be accessed from the intersection of Arapahoe and Jordan roads. Take Jordan Road south approximately 1.3 miles, turn left on Jamison Street and then left on Jasper Court. The Park is open from dawn to dusk daily.

For information and rules regarding Park usage, please visit the Arapahoe County web site at www.co.arapahoe.co.us.

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