



# 2018 | NATURAL AREAS ANNUAL REPORT



City of  
**Fort Collins**  
Natural  
Areas

*naturally yours*



Maxwell Natural Area Addition

## COMMITMENT TO CONSERVATION

### **Prairie Dog Meadows Natural Area Expansion**

An additional 3.5 acres was added to Prairie Dog Meadows. The parcel, previously owned by the Larimer Humane Society, was a priority for conservation because it was surrounded by the natural area. All the structures were removed and the new land was regraded and seeded with native grasses.

### **Rimrock Conservation Easement**

The Natural Areas Department contributed funding to Larimer County's purchase of 319 acres adjacent to the Blue Sky Trail and Rimrock Open Space. The City will hold the conservation easement on the ranch which supports agriculture and livestock grazing.

### **Maxwell Natural Area Addition**

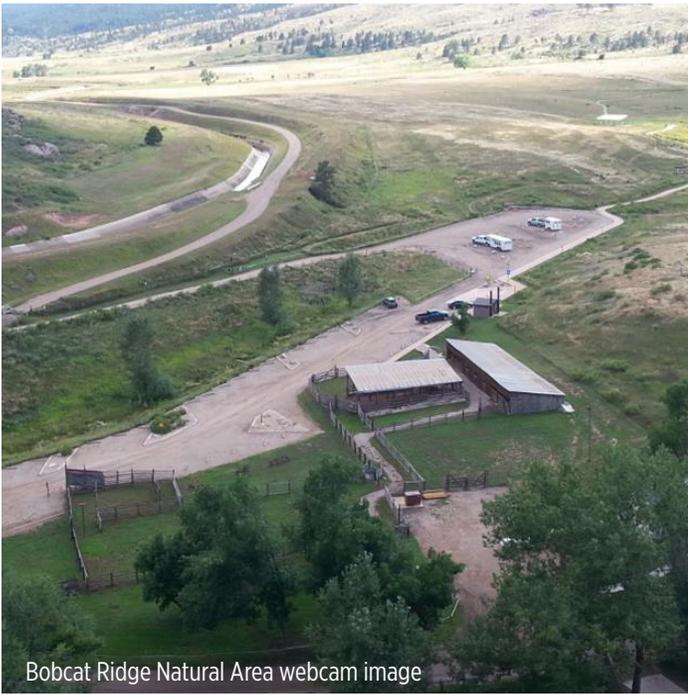
Just over 53 acres of grasslands and shrublands adjacent to the Foothills Trail and Maxwell Natural Area were acquired from the State Board of Agriculture. A variety of wildlife frequents the newly conserved land including mule deer and mountain lions.



Rimrock Conservation Easement

### **Poudre River Conservation Easement**

A 72-acre ranch that has been on the potential conservation list for more than a decade was protected from development. A "bargain sale" meant that the City contributed towards the total conservation easement value and the landowner will pursue state tax credits for the remaining donation.



Bobcat Ridge Natural Area webcam image



Bison at Soapstone

Credit: John Robson, City of Fort Collins

### New Tool to Plan Ahead

A new web camera at Coyote Ridge Natural Area shows real-time parking availability. Other information sources include a webcam at Bobcat Ridge Natural Area, facebook, twitter, NoCoTrailReport.org and fcgov.com/naturalareas.

### Nature in the City

Nature in the City is the next evolution of conservation in Fort Collins. Through innovative partnerships, policies, and projects, Nature in the City creates and enhances natural spaces while providing residents access to nature.



Nature in the City was recognized with a prestigious Real Food Award for its partnership with Big Green to provide learning gardens at all of Fort Collins' high needs schools.

Four planning grants supported design work which will connect people to nature and improve habitat for wildlife at La Familia/The Family Center, Preston Middle School, Council Tree Church, and Hickory Village. Another grant supported a yard landscape conversion from turf to pollinator and bird-friendly plants.

A nature connection element for the new park planned at Vine Drive and Lemay Ave was informed by ideas from a unique Speak Up and Play event.

### A Flourishing Bison Herd

Four females and their calves brought the total herd size to 44. One was the first bison calf conceived through in-vitro fertilization at Colorado State University.

### Ranger Services by the Numbers

In 2018, Rangers made 3,500 cordial contacts with natural area visitors including responding to 950 phone calls and providing education and nature interpretation to 1,900 visitors. Likewise, Volunteer Ranger Assistants contributed 1,985 hours through 898 site visits.

**3,500** CORDIAL CONTACTS BY RANGERS

**1,900** VISITORS RECEIVED EDUCATION AND NATURE INTERPRETATION

**1,985** HOURS CONTRIBUTED BY VOLUNTEER RANGER ASSISTANTS

**898** SITE VISITS MADE BY VOLUNTEER RANGER ASSISTANTS



Long View Trail

Credit: John Robson, City of Fort Collins



Wildlife camera image from Bobcat Ridge Natural Area



Black-footed ferret

## Two Major Trail Openings

The Long View Trail was completed and opened! This 4.4-mile paved connection between Fort Collins and Loveland also opened to the public four open spaces and natural areas including Hazaleus and Colina Mariposa.

The Fossil Creek Trail through Redtail Grove Natural Area was completed connecting College Avenue to Shields Street and Cathy Fromme Prairie Natural Area. Work included a railway underpass and 1.2 miles of new paved trail.

An annual trail assessment showed that 93% of natural areas trails are in good condition. Volunteers and staff devoted 1,800 hours to trail maintenance and construction in 2018, maintaining 50 miles of trail.

## Voice of the Community

Community members helped shape the Gateway Natural Area Management Plan, the Roundhouse Renewable Energy project, and the City of Fort Collins' comments on the Northern Integrated Supply Project Final Environmental Impact Statement through public engagement opportunities.

## Tools for Understanding & Management

Quality, long-term information about natural areas allows for better management decisions and better habitat restoration. To continually gain scientific understanding of natural areas, breeding birds were monitored along the Poudre River corridor. Results confirm that larger patches of high-quality habitat yield greater breeding bird

diversity. Prairie dogs at Soapstone Prairie Natural Area were treated for the fleas that carry plague to protect the endangered black-footed ferrets that rely on prairie dogs as their main food source. Six black-footed ferrets were found during monitoring this year.

Taking care of the plants and animals in natural areas continued to go digital this year. Restoration data was collected using mobile devices for accuracy and efficiency. With up to date maps in hand, crews can focus only on areas that need attention. Integrated pest management efforts in 2019 included controlling invasive weeds. Cheatgrass was a target, it is an annual grass from Eurasia which has degraded much of the western United States landscape. Over 700 acres of cheatgrass were sprayed from a helicopter at several natural areas. Native grasses and wildflowers are expected to now flourish. To ensure restoration projects use native seeds with local genetics, seeds are now collected and shared in a partnership with the City of Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks.



Fly fishing on the Poudre River

Credit: Mark Yoder



Restoration at Kingfisher Point Natural Area

### Water Happenings

The Northern Integrated Supply Project's Final Environmental Impact Statement was released by the Army Corps of Engineers for public comment. A City team developed technical and strategic comments to represent City's assets, investments, and the natural benefits of the Poudre River.

### Kingfisher Point Natural Area Restoration Underway

Restoration projects are an example of conserving and caring for natural areas for future generations. At Kingfisher Point, a stretch of the Cache la Poudre River is being reconnected to its floodplain to improve habitat. An additional 2.5 acres of wetland were created at Gadwall Pond. On National Public Lands Day, volunteers planted fruit-bearing shrubs- thank you!



ROOTS Club

Credit: John Robson, City of Fort Collins

### People + Natural Areas =

Fort Collins natural areas are treasured for many reasons. Community members connected to their natural areas by enjoying a variety of volunteer opportunities and educational programs. This year, 10,914 people participated in 319 activities.

A new club for teens, ROOTS was recognized with an Innovation Award from City of Fort Collins for successfully engaging an underrepresented audience. Club Outdoors was established at the two Boys & Girls Club locations in Fort Collins. The project was supported by a grant from Colorado Health Foundation in collaboration with Colorado State University's School of Social Work.



River Tour

Credit: John Robson, City of Fort Collins

Weekly natural area field trips and monthly family nights inspired appreciation for the outdoors in over 100 youth and their families.

Some very special people went an extra mile and volunteered with the Natural Areas Department. Nearly 1,200 volunteers shared their time (13,885 hours!) and talents in support of natural areas.

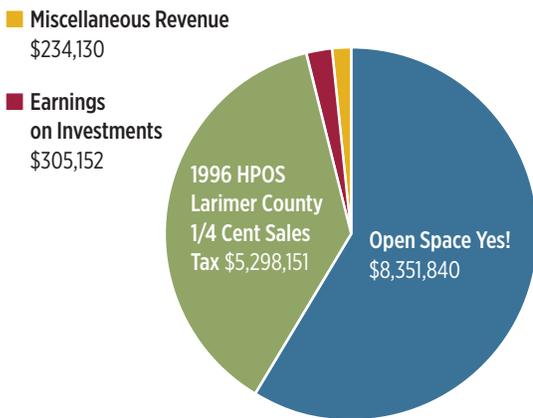


Facility Expansion

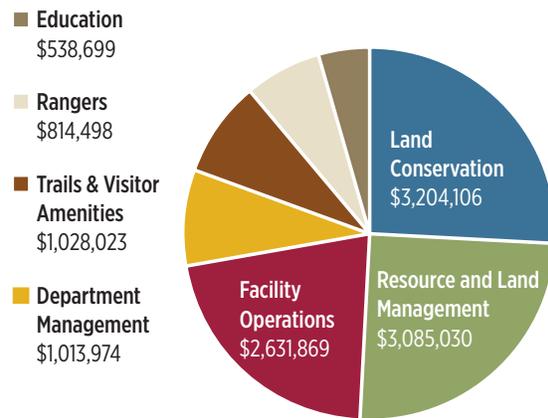
### Expanded Natural Areas Facility

At the Natural Areas Department’s headquarters at Nix Farm, a remodel and expansion were completed to meet operational needs for the next several decades. The equipment yard and maintenance shop were remodeled and expanded. In addition, a vehicle storage building and temporary office were added. The new buildings and additions provide net positive energy through new solar panels.

### 2018 Natural Areas Revenues \$14,189,273



### 2018 Natural Areas Expenditures \$12,316,199



The significant expense in Facilities Operations was due to the shop construction project. Revenues not spent in 2018 are carried over for future Natural Area investments.

## CITY COUNCIL / CITY MANAGER

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 Darin Atteberry, City Manager

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**Cover Photo Credit:**  
 John Robson, City of Fort Collins (top)

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