



K. Powell

2010

# NATURAL AREAS PROGRAM ANNUAL REPORT



*naturally yours*



## Giving Back

Volunteers are a crucial part of the Natural Areas Program. Over 500 volunteers were involved in projects ranging from collecting scientific data to leading educational activities in 2010. Volunteers donated 11,452 hours of their valuable time, a savings of \$231,903 for citizens. The Natural Areas Program appreciates our volunteers and the difference they make!

**Master Naturalists** led educational programs and made it possible to provide 344 classes, field trips and activities for 12,665 people this year. **Adopt-a-Natural Area** volunteers visit their chosen natural area once a month to remove litter. Their actions make natural areas better. **Audio Frog Survey** volunteers visited natural areas on summer evenings to document the presence or absence of several frog species. This information has been helpful in making management decisions. Since 2006, **Bird Survey** volunteers have made monthly circuits of Bobcat Ridge Natural Area to document its avian life providing an im-

portant set of ongoing data. **Rare Plant Survey** volunteers searched natural areas and helped discover four previously undocumented rare plants! Students from Rocky Mountain High School got involved by checking the wildlife cameras at Bobcat Ridge Natural Area and downloading the photos. **Volunteer Gardeners** made the native plant garden at the Natural Areas Program's headquarters look the best it has in years. More than **150 Volunteer Ranger Assistants** conducted 653 patrols and made 402 public contacts. They also honed their skills through in-service trainings such as CPR/First Aid, Search and Rescue Protocol, and Map and GPS.

Several special volunteer groups helped out this year including: REI, Overland Mountain Bike Club, Northern Colorado Back Country Horsemen Association, Northern Colorado Climbers' Coalition, and Northern Colorado Astronomical Society. **Thank you!**



## Partners for Prairie Education

The often under-appreciated shortgrass prairie ecosystem was highlighted through education with a partnership with the US Fish and Wildlife Service's Black-footed Ferret Recovery Program. A \$20,000 grant funded an educator position to develop and offer educational events and activities for volunteers, the public and elementary school students. The project benefited the Natural Areas Program by building capacity to reach more people (848 in 2010) and increasing public awareness and support for local ecosystems. Thank you US Fish and Wildlife Service!

## Under New Management

Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space is now managed by the Natural Areas Program. The transfer was planned for in an agreement between Larimer County Natural Resources and the City when the site was jointly acquired. Larimer County Natural Resources Rangers still use the on-site building and provide site patrol. Land stewardship, maintenance of public amenities, and education responsibilities now fall to the Natural Areas Program.



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## Innovations for Visitors

This year, the Natural Areas Program renewed its commitment to core services such as maintenance of trails and public amenities. A few highlights include:

- At **Bobcat Ridge Natural Area** improvements were made to mountain bike trail features, a mounting ramp was constructed to assist horseback riders, and a bridge was installed to protect a wet meadow.
- At **Maxwell Natural Area** extensive improvements made the trail more sustainable under wet conditions.
- **Gustav Swanson Natural Area** got a “facelift”, which included replacing 22-year-old wood fencing, refurbishing the parking lot, and installing a new site sign.
- The crumbling pavers in interpretive pods at **Cathy Fromme Prairie Natural Area** were updated and more sustainable stone benches replaced some of the older wooden benches.
- Staff and a loyal volunteer, Charlie Sturgill, refurbished the large kiosk on **Running Deer Natural Area** near the Welcome Center just in time for the Center’s 10th anniversary.
- An Automated External Defibrillator was installed at **Gateway Natural Area** for visitor safety.



Front Range Exceptional Equestrians at Bobcat Ridge before the new mounting ramp

## Sustainability

The Natural Areas Program recycled an entire house in 2010! The house was on an 80-acre addition to Coyote Ridge Natural Area and it was moved instead of deconstructed. This large reuse effort saved over \$30,000.

The Natural Areas Program is committed to managing pollution in our day-to-day operations, too. This is the second year we’ve used sustainability checklists to track our efforts. Good progress is being made by purchasing products made from recycled materials, using more non-toxic or less-toxic supplies, and increasing efforts to recycle materials and reduce water use.



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## Stewardship

An update to the 1998 Cache La Poudre Natural Areas Management Plan was a major project in 2010. Balancing the priorities of natural feature conservation, education, and recreation at 19 popular, urban natural areas has been a rewarding challenge. More than 250 citizens commented via on-site and online surveys. The final plan is scheduled for completion in spring 2011.

The Natural Areas Program also embarked on an extensive effort to remove non-native Russian olive and Siberian elm trees at Poudre River natural areas. Removal of these invasive trees will allow more water to remain in the Poudre River, reduce competition to native cottonwood forests, and set the stage for future ecological restoration.

Prescribed fire is also proving to be a valuable stewardship

tool. In 2010, the Natural Areas Program was awarded \$36,000 from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to support two fire technician positions. Under their leadership, a 50-acre burn at Bobcat Ridge Natural Area for restoration and a 250-acre burn at Soapstone Prairie Natural Area to promote the habitat for the federally threatened mountain plover were conducted.

Monitoring the flora and fauna of natural areas is a critical component of world-class stewardship. In 2010, staff and volunteers searched for undiscovered populations of rare plants. They identified four new rare plants in the natural areas system. In addition, the Natural Areas Program worked with the Denver Botanic Garden to compile a permanent research herbarium representing the incredible plant diversity at Soapstone Prairie Natural Area.

## Natural Collaborations

The Natural Areas Program is participating in the community campaign to end homelessness in Fort Collins by the year 2020. In 2010, Natural Areas Rangers participated in Homeward 2020 by leading volunteer groups through the Poudre River corridor to establish a registry of all homeless individuals and families.



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## Award Winning Signage

The Natural Areas Program garnered a Gold Award from the Association of Marketing and Communication Professionals for the interpretive signs at Soapstone Prairie Natural Area. Developed with ECOS Communications, Inc., the signs convey the diversity of life of the prairie ecosystem and highlight the lives of the Folsom people who used the site extensively as much as 12,000 years ago.

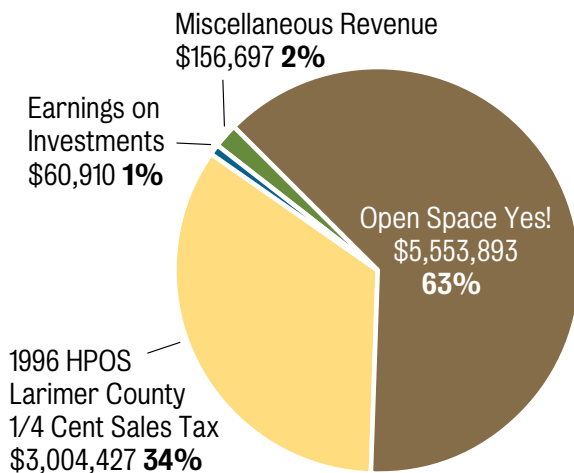
# 2010 in Review

After several years of major land acquisitions and projects, 2010 was a year for the Natural Areas Program to catch its breath and refocus on core services. In this report you'll read about a year filled with innovations, customer service enhancements, and efforts to be more sustainable.

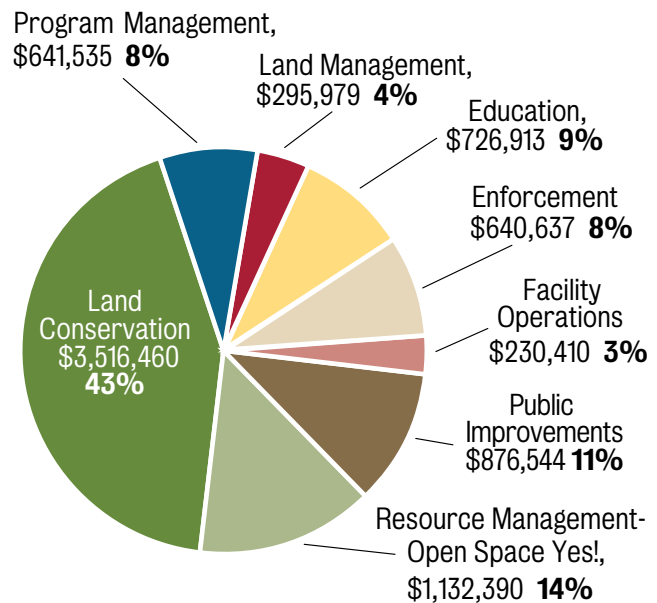
It's all made possible by you! Since 1992, citizens have voted for several ballot measures that created dedicated sales tax funding for land conservation

and stewardship. These taxes make it possible for everyone to enjoy 43 natural areas locally and regionally. The Natural Areas Program's mission is to conserve and enhance lands with existing or potential natural area values, lands that serve as community separators, agricultural lands, and lands with scenic values. Conservation of natural habitats and features is the highest priority while providing education and recreation for the Fort Collins community.

**Natural Areas Program  
2010 Revenues \$8,775,927**



**Natural Areas Program  
2010 Expenditures \$8,060,868**



2010 expenditures included funds carried over from prior year's revenues.

## Land Conservation

**Three Bells Conservation Partnership** – The Natural Areas Program partnered with Larimer County, Windsor, Timnath, and Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) to conserve 338 acres along the Poudre River north of Windsor that will allow the Poudre River Trail to be extended by 1.2 miles.

**Fossil Creek Trail** – An 8-acre parcel was acquired along Fossil Creek that will allow the Fossil Creek Trail to be extended in the future from Cathy Fromme Prairie Natu-

ral Area to Redtail Grove Natural Area. The Fossil Creek Trail will also connect with Fossil Creek Park and the Mason Trail.

**Fossil Creek Reservoir** – A 23-acre peninsula was acquired on the east side of Fossil Creek Reservoir. The shoreline of the peninsula is lined with large cottonwood trees that serve as night roosts for bald eagles during the winter months and provide nesting sites for raptors during the spring.

## Measuring What Matters

Natural Areas and Trail Rangers are there to serve you, answer your questions, make you feel welcome, and enforce regulations to keep you safe. The great majority of contacts provide information and visitor assistance. For the first time, these contacts were logged as an indicator of customer service. In nine months, rangers logged 6,187 customer service contacts, ten times the number of tickets issued.



## CITY COUNCIL/CITY MANAGER

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**Lisa Poppaw**, District 2

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**David Roy**, District 6

**Darin Atteberry**, City Manager

**Diane Jones**, Deputy City Manager

