



# Volunteer News

## Annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner!

It's time to celebrate! Let us show our appreciation for all you do for the Natural Areas Department. You and your family are invited to join us for this very special and lively event featuring good food, a cash bar, presentations, and lots of catching up with friends!

**Mark the date:** Friday, January 22, 2016, 5:30-8:00 p.m. at the Lincoln Center, 417 East Magnolia Street, Canyon West Room

**Schedule:**

5:30—Doors open and food served

6:30—Awards presentations

7:00—Dessert and fellowship

RSVP required! Sign up on [NatureTracker](#) or contact Susan at [sschafer@fcgov.com](mailto:sschafer@fcgov.com)



SEE YOU SOON!



*Volunteers enjoy the festivities at the Annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner, 2015.*



# Adopt-a-Trail 2015 Highlights

By Cate Dillon, Service Learning Educator

2015 marks the 5<sup>th</sup> successful year of the Adopt-a-Trail Program. Adopters commit to trail maintenance projects at least twice per year for a minimum of three years. I would like to extend a huge thank you to the five local organizations who dedicate their time to the program:

- ◆ Colorado Addicted Trail Builder's Society
- ◆ OtterCares Foundation
- ◆ REI
- ◆ Rocky Mountain Flycastors, Trout Unlimited
- ◆ Trailcology

Volunteers from these organizations have greatly improved trails at Coyote Ridge, Soapstone Prairie, Gateway, Pineridge, and Bobcat Ridge natural areas.

*Thank you for your dedication.  
You are a delight to work with!*



*REI jumps for joy at Soapstone Prairie Natural Area;  
photo by C. Dillon*



*Trailcology works at Bobcat Ridge Natural Area; photo by Chris Heron.*

# Service Learning 2015

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By Cate Dillon, Service Learning Educator

2015 was a year of record accomplishments for Service Learning Volunteers!

One of the biggest highlights of the season was the completion of the Cheyenne Rim Trail at Soapstone Prairie Natural Area. Over 200 volunteers donated 1,411 hours to construct 1.5 miles of the rerouted trail. This was not easily done. Soils were rocky and weather was variable, but volunteers prevailed with great attitudes, aching muscles, and a lot of smiles.

Partnerships played a huge role in this endeavor. I would like to extend a big thank you to the following organizations:

- ◆ Backcountry Delicatessen
- ◆ Colorado Addicted Trailbuilder's Society
- ◆ Larimer County Conservation Corps
- ◆ OtterCares Foundation
- ◆ REI

Restoration volunteers were not to be outdone by the trail builders. Volunteers planted an extraordinary 12,229 plants along the Poudre River corridor! Thank you to all who braved the rain, mud, and mosquitos to improve our natural areas, including our partners from Odell Brewing, OtterCares Foundation, and Anheuser-Busch.

A special thank you to Restoration Corps for giving these plantings extra time and energy.

Have a wonderful winter. Rest up –there is more work to be done next year!



National Trails Day at Soapstone Prairie.



Earth Day Planting



Planting at Springer Natural Area

All photos this page by C. Dillon



Phew! This season flew by as fast as a peregrine falcon! I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to all of you. You were kind and patient with me as I was learning the ropes this season. In addition, you provided some amazing programs and support over the season. Together we reached 4,600 individuals in more than 200 community programs! Yowzer! We interacted with children as young as infants and folks in their 90s along with different racial and economic groups. The scope of our programming was truly impressive as is the scope and expertise of you all, the volunteers! Your commitment and abilities are truly unmatched in my experience and I was continually impressed. Never doubt that you make a difference in the lives of our community and our lives here at the NAD.

*By Caitlin Cici, Community Programs Educator*



*Master Naturalist Dale Agger teaches about butterflies at Rigen Farms assisted living community.*



*Chris Polazzi shares her enthusiasm with Girl Scouts.*

**THANK YOU, EVERYONE!**



*Butterflies on the trail!*

# SPECIAL EVENTS 2015

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*By Gretchen Johnson, Education Assistant*

Thank you, wonderful volunteers, for an incredible season!

This year we connected with over 8,107 people through our outreach at 16 different special events. Only with your efforts was this possible. Our most popular special events included **National Get Outdoors Day**, **Nature's Harvest Fest**, and of course **Bison Welcome Home**.



Our smaller events also left large impressions. A young participant at **Wade the River** learned “that scientists can spend their lives playing in the river!” We have created scientists, explorers and natural areas stewards.

Thank you so much ! I look forward to seeing you out there in the future.



*Master Naturalist Cindy Tunney volunteers at the Bison Welcome Home ceremony and helps participants throw bison chips into the ecosystem!*

We sadly say “good bye” to Caitlin Ceci and Gretchen Johnson. They were wonderful, energetic, and creative additions to our staff.

We warmly welcome Diane Wendt our new Education Assistant for the 2016 season. Diane begins her position with us in February. You can say “hello” to her at the Volunteer Appreciation Dinner in January.

The Community Programs Educator position will be filled later in January and start in mid-February.

*By Rhonda Peckham, Natural Areas and Trails Ranger*

The City of Fort Collins Natural Areas Department and the Larimer County Natural Resources Department co-manage the Volunteer Ranger Assistant program. Volunteer Rangers Assistants (VRA) greet visitors on the City's natural areas and the County's open space trails, promote outdoor safety, and assist rangers by explaining the reasons for policies and regulations. These one-on-one contacts are invaluable to our visitors and to our departments.

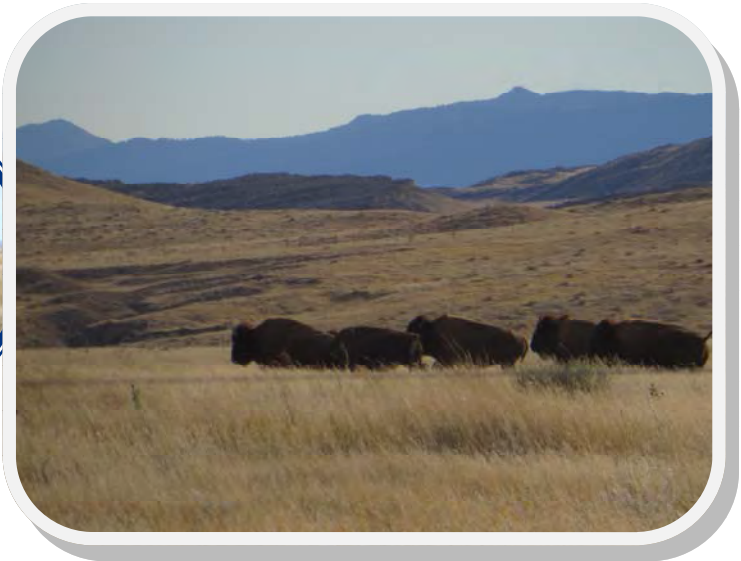
As the year drew to an end, we tallied the numbers over and over again in disbelief. VRAs had shattered previous year's numbers! This stalwart crew of dedicated individuals managed a 30% increase in hours spent in the natural areas and open spaces, and an incredible 55% increase in number of contacts with the public. We consider these numbers an indicator of the increase in visitor use and popularity of these lands. VRAs continue to step up to the challenges of greeting our visitors and maintaining a positive relationship with an ever-increasing population who enjoy where they live and play.



*VRA class of 2015*



*VRA Brent Bearden greets visitors at the bison release at Soapstone Prairie Natural Area, November 1, 2015.*



*Bison hooves are once more on the prairie!  
Photo by Deborah Price.*



By Susan Schafer, Volunteer and Education Coordinator

## School Field Trips Hold Steady in 2015!

Once again Natural Areas volunteers taught science outdoors and made learning fun! Master Naturalists and Assistants reached over 3,400 students on 68 school field trips this year. Students learned about trees and other plants, insects, ecosystems, and even geology in hands-on and meaningful ways. If we didn't have you we would only reach a fraction of these students. Thank you so much for all the expertise and enthusiasm you share with students!



## City Expands Commitment to Volunteerism

In 2015, the City of Fort Collins expanded its commitment to volunteerism with additional resources to help grow and nurture the almost 9,000 volunteers who serve in 40 different departments. In July, Charlotte Boney took up her post as the new Volunteer Services Program Coordinator. Charlotte's job is to unite volunteers in the City of Fort Collins and streamline many of the often cumbersome administrative hurdles that volunteers face. Charlotte has already combined language from many different departments to create City-wide volunteer *Policies and Procedures*. Charlotte also led the charge for the City to purchase a central volunteer management database (which just happens to be *NatureTracker!*) that will be deployed this spring. Future projects include City-wide recognition events, new branding for volunteer programs, and possibly City-wide benefits for volunteers (like discounts on tickets and memberships). While this may seem like another level of bureaucracy, Volunteer Coordinators look at it as another level of much-needed support. We are so excited to see what the new City-wide volunteer program will look like in 2016!



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## *Volunteer Appreciation Picnic!*

Every August we have a picnic with all of you. It's so much fun with good food, lots of games, hikes, and plenty of laughter. Here some highlights from 2014:



*From all of us at the Natural Areas Department: Thank you to every volunteer. No matter what your service is, we appreciate it and feel honored that you want to contribute your time, efforts, and talent to the natural areas. You make a difference every day!*