ANNUAL REPORT 2011

GOCO Funding for Clear Creek Greenway

Clear Creek Open Space was aggressive in their pursuit of funding and establishing relationships to promote the development of the Greenway from the Jefferson County line up to the Twin Tunnels. This was in part due to the CDOT decision to widen the Twin Tunnels and also the establishment of the River Corridor Initiative Program by GOCO. During 2011, the following efforts to move the Greenway Project were completed.

Greenway Google Flyover

In cooperation with the Mapping Department, a map that shows the current status of the Greenway, in terms of acquisitions and construction, has been prepared. It has been posted on the OSC Website and has been used in conversations with Jefferson County Open Space, CDOT and GOCO. OSC was joined by Commissioners O’Malley and Mauck in March at Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) to discuss the possibility of obtaining funding for construction and acquisition for the Clear Creek Greenway. With assistance from Matt Taylor from the County Mapping Department, Pete Helseth prepared a video using Google Earth showing a flyover of the Clear Creek Greenway. It showed where the trail exists as well where the trail is proposed. The response was very positive and GOCO invited OSC to submit a grant application for design of the segment from the Jefferson County line to Idaho Springs. To support that application, OSC completed an aerial survey and topographic map of the segment.

GOCO Grant Requests

OSC hosted GOCO and CDOT staff on a Greenway tour in early June. The tour concluded in Georgetown with a meeting of all involved to discuss the need for flexibility in funding for the Greenway. Many good ideas were identified and were pursued as we proceeded with the Greenway project. GOCO also spoke about a proposed new initiative which they are considering to fund “river corridor” projects (The GOCO Board approved this new program in June, 2011). The Clear Creek Greenway would be an ideal candidate. If approved by the GOCO, it is thought that the first round of applications will be due March 2012. Martha, Marion Jennings and Bert Weaver met with Jefferson County Open Space representatives in August to discuss submitting proposals that were complimentary for the new GOCO initiative. The conclusion was that a cooperative action would be viewed favorably by GOCO. Martha shared the Clear Creek County concept paper with Jeffco Open Space staff and they also shared their concept paper. During those discussions, it was suggested that our mutual goal of a continuous trail from
the Eisenhower Tunnel to the airport be called the “Peaks to Plains Trail” and that the greenway trails through Clear Creek Canyon were critical to the completion of this trail. The Clear Creek concept paper was submitted in October.

On Thursday, August 25, 2011, OSC submitted the Planning Grant Application to GOCO for funds to prepare schematic design drawings for Clear Creek Canyon to Twin Tunnels portion of the Greenway. The drawings presented the exact location of the trail, identify where specific trail types are used, and provided an estimate of construction costs. We asked for the maximum amount ($75,000) and will receive some matching funds from CDOT. The GOCO Board made its decision on December 13, 2011. Clear Creek Open Space was awarded the $75,000 grant on 12/13/2011. Loris and Associates was awarded the contract to prepare the schematic designs on 12/19/11. GOCO also invited Clear County to submit a full application to the River Corridor Program. In discussions with GOCO prior to the invitation, GOCO asked Clear Creek County to refine its proposal to complement the Jefferson County Open Space application. As a result, Clear Creek County will focus its efforts on the trail through the Oxbow down to the 119 junction and Jeffco will construct the segment from Mayhem Gulch to the same junction.

Martha Tableman and Marion Jennings met with Peter Loris and an associate on November 30th to discuss the project, funding and timetable for tasks completed. In mid December, Loris and Associates held a kickoff meeting with their subcontractors, CDOT representatives and Clear Creek Open Space. In addition to reviewing information needs, a tour of lower Clear Creek Canyon was conducted.

The schematic design drawings need to be finished and submitted to GOCO as part of the River Corridor application in March. Jefferson County Open Space and Clear Creek Open Space will be working on the application for the River Corridor Initiative in early 2012 cooperatively as GOCO has requested a joint effort.

**Clear Creek Canyon Survey**

In anticipation of that work, we needed to have a survey of the segment with one foot contours done by the beginning of December as it is necessary for the schematic design. Given the realities of weather in Clear Creek County, the land and aerial portion of the survey was done in October. To meet the County Purchasing Policy requirements, we posted the survey bid request by mid September and awarded the contract by the end of September. The survey was completed in November, 2011 and will be used to complete the schematic design project that started in December, 2011 and is to be completed by March, 2012.
CDOT Partnership

Throughout the year, OSC met with various CDOT personnel to discuss our plans for the Greenway through Clear Creek Canyon. In many places, the trail will be in CDOT right of way. The goal of the meeting was to inform CDOT of our needs and to learn from them what will be required for us to build the trail in the right of way. OSC will need to obtain special use permits for each separate place that the Greenway is in CDOT right-of-way. While it will involve lots of paperwork, CDOT is willing to work with us to get it done. Additionally, CDOT’s efforts around the Twin Tunnels include design and construction of a portion of the Greenway Trail. CDOT wrote a letter of support indicating their partnership financially and commitment to the Greenway Project which was submitted with the schematic design application to GOCO. CDOT’s expenditures associated with the multi modal trail will be used to leverage funds from GOCO and other funding sources.

The Open Space Commission has participated in the Twin Tunnel Project Leadership teams. There are three teams which involve the frontage road, the Twin Tunnels and the AGS. Pete Helseth has attended meetings with the Frontage Road team to assure that CDOT adequately plans for the Greenway trail. Special consideration has been given to the Scott Lancaster Bridge and how it can be preserved during and after construction. The Lancaster family has participated in discussions regarding the bridge.
Oxbow Site Plan

In the last quarter of 2010, Open Space advertised and received bids for the Oxbow Parcel Site Plan. 11 bids were received and reviewed by a subcommittee of the OSC. Two finalists were selected and presentations requested. Based on the presentations, Wenk Associates was selected as the consultant by the OSC. The selection was presented to the BOCC and on January 19, 2011, the contract to work with Wenk Associates was approved by the BOCC. The approval puts the planning effort about two weeks ahead of the tentative schedule outlined in the RFP. Wenk is ready to proceed and it is anticipated that the Steering Committee will meet in mid February. In addition to identifying Steering Committee members, Wenk will be conducting a thorough site analysis to determine if there are any geologic concerns on the property and to refine their knowledge of the physical characteristics of the site which will impact alternatives. The consultant, Wenk Associates, held the first Stakeholders Steering Committee meeting on February 17th at the Floyd Hill Fire Station. A diverse group of stakeholders identified issues of concern. We have had the first Advisory Committee meeting as well as the first public meeting. The Advisory Committee has representatives from rafting, rock climbers, cyclists (road and mountain), fishing, tourism, hikers, and community members. At the Advisory Committee meeting, key issues were identified (e.g., parking, potential user conflicts.) Wenk Associates took these concerns and developed several scenarios which were presented at the public meeting. The input received will be used to develop a proposed plan. Additionally, Wenk and Open Space have met with CDOT to consider access and parking issues.

The next public meeting was scheduled for April 26th. Stakeholders were presented several options which varied on location of parking, picnic areas, and trails. The consensus of the group was to provide as much parking as possible. No strong feelings about the placement of the other variables were raised except for the desire to have a “real” restroom. As a follow up to the Stakeholder meeting, a meeting with the consultants, the engineering firm, and CDOT personnel was held last week to clarify the comments received from CDOT on the proposed parking areas. A key item discussed was concerns raised by the Colorado Division of Wildlife (DOW) about parking proposed near the intersection of 119 and US 6. DOW indicated that the area in question is heavily used by Big Horn Sheep. They also reported that the cliffs above are used for lambing. Thus, they did not want to see parking in the area as the presence of cars, people, and dogs would push the sheep away from the area. A representative from the CDOT Environment Program indicated that they could not support the location if DOW was opposed. Open Space agreed that if the parking was detrimental to sheep we would not pursue the option. While the result would be less parking close to the Oxbow, we are planning to provide additional parking near Kermits. Additionally, when the greenway
trail at the Forks is developed through joint efforts from Gilpin, Jefferson, and Clear Creek Counties, the question of providing parking in that area can be addressed.

The third and final stakeholder meeting was held at the end of May. Stakeholders were presented the suggested alternative which has one parking lot just to the west of Tunnel 5. It was explained that the other parking lot near the intersection with Highway 119 had been eliminated due to DOW concerns about the impact on Bighorn Sheep. The consultants had also received the geotechnical report which showed that much of the area within the Oxbow has severe rock fall hazard. As a result, the potential picnic areas have been removed and will only be wide areas in the path which will allow users to pull off for a brief rest while letting others pass. The goal is to discourage users from lingering in areas of significant rock fall hazard. The consultants also presented initial cost estimates for construction of the trail in various areas through the Oxbow Parcel. Costs varied depending on the difficulty of trail construction. Some areas exceeded $1 million for a short stretch due to the need to blast. This made it very clear to all involved that construction of a trail through Clear Creek Canyon will be expensive and complicated.

The consultants refined the alternatives and supporting information and presented it to the OSC for consideration in October. Based on the presentation and subsequent discussion, Wenk finalized their report. The one page summary and the full report are available on the Open Space website. OSC will then submit a final report on the Grant to GOCO by the end of the year.

**Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado (VOC) Project**

Marion Jennings submitted a grant application in June to VOC for construction of a trail in the Oxbow property. The request was to construct a three foot wide pedestrian trail along the old railroad grade to enable the public to access the property. Martha and Marion completed a site visit with a VOC evaluator in August to explain the proposed project. We were informed that we were selected for a one day trail building project ($10,000) to be completed in the summer of 2012.

**Possible Donations of Mining Parcels**

Marion Jennings prepared a generic letter to send to key landowners of mining claims in the Sheepkeep and other areas of interest to ask them if they are interested in selling or donating their claims to OSC. She and Martha Tableman identified several parcels of interest and sent letters to the owners. Several positive responses have been received and are being pursued. To our benefit, these claims have been in areas of interest, primarily sheep habitat, and we have undertaken the necessary steps with assistance from the County Attorney’s Office to accept the donations. While some of the claims may seem rugged and inaccessible and of no value to residents of the County, they are the type of habitat preferred by the sheep. We are currently in
the process of doing the paperwork associated with the donation of four claims in the Red Elephant area (Noblit/Shannon Claims). We received a phone call and subsequently a letter offering to donate the North America Mining Claim which is located across from Georgetown. It too is sheep habitat and adjacent to parcels we already own as well as some owned by Historic Georgetown and CDOW. The county attorney is overseeing the appropriate paperwork to complete these transactions.

Philadelphia Mill Site

We have crossed a major hurdle on this project with the approval of the subgrant by the BOCC on February 14th and submitted a rezoning request for the property from M1 to Commercial – Outdoor Recreation which has been approved. With the subgrant in place, we have construction drawings and are in the process of submitting them to the county to secure the permits needed and solicit bids. The goal is to construct the various pieces of the project during the summer, 2012. We worked with CDOT to get an access permit as the entrance to the area from North Spring Gulch Road is on CDOT right of way to the parcel from CDOT as the entrance to the area from North Spring Gulch Road is in CDOT right of way.
Geneva Basin Iron Fens

The Wildland Restoration Volunteers visited the Fens to see how the revegetation work had fared. The following Monitoring update was sent to the OSC:

- Closure plan is working great – no evidence of continued use.
- Seedlings really loved what you did for them – an average of 37 vigorous seedlings per square foot were found across all roads inventoried, and well over 68 seedlings per square foot were found in many plots.
- Minimal, I mean minimal, evidence (very close to zero) soil surface erosion.
- In general, the sight looks fabulous.
- All those tiny branches and twigs you put on the ground helped to hold the straw in place. They provided great microclimates as well! The erosion matting is also staying in place very well.

The Native Plants Society had a field trip to the Fens on August 13th. Fran Enright reported that about 20 people attended. She also had been to the Fen in July when the annual monitoring was done. She reported that on that trip they had visited the Josephine Creek fens and traveled on the gated road. ATV tracks were found at Josephine Creek Fen #1 off of the old road. It was not clear where the ATV entered the Fen. They found that the water flow at the fens is more sheeted rather than channelized, reflecting a more natural pattern. No weeds were seen. Some willow regeneration has begun. The Wildlands Restoration Volunteers’ efforts in 2009 appeared to be in good shape and undisturbed.

Election of OSC Officers

As required by the OSC Bylaws, elections were held in February. Pete Helseth had served his two terms as Chair, thus, a new Chair was sought. Marion Jennings volunteered for the position. Frank Young has stayed on as Vice Chair and Matt Sailor continues as Treasurer. No-one wanted to be Secretary so the position remains vacant.

Open Space Vacancies

In March, Roy Beaton informed the OSC that he had decided not to continue on the Commission. He indicated that he had enjoyed the experience and the people he had worked with and was very proud of all that had been accomplished. However, he felt it was time to step down. Hal Wahlborg informed the OSC that he too wanted to step down in May. Fortunately, the OSC had two qualified applicants respond to the Notice of
Vacancy. The OSC recommended the two applicants, Amy Karshbaum and April Snook, to the BOCC for appointment. Both candidates were approved. Amy Karshbaum resigned in December due to personal issues. Ads were placed in both local papers announcing a vacancy.

**Development of Rules and Regulations for Open Space Lands**

The OSC has prepared a series of rules and regulations for management of all Open Space lands. Until now, OSC has only had rules and regulations for Beaver Brook Watershed and Lawson White Water Park. The rules and regulations will inform users of what is allowed and what is prohibited. Additionally, they will identify when a special activity permit is required. They have been given to the County Attorney for review. Once they have been approved by him, they will then be presented to the BOCC for adoption.

**Hidden Valley Parcels**

The purchase of 119 acres that lies on both sides of I70 was completed on May 18th. The property was inspected prior to purchase to determine the purpose of a hole which contained a tire and a pole. It was concluded that the hole was used for drainage from a trailer which no longer exists. Open Space has been seeking possible historic names for this site. After consulting with Mrs. Bell and Christine Bradley, Masonville was selected.

**Mountain Rural Philanthropy Days**

Martha Tableman and Marion Jennings attended this conference in mid-June. It provided a good opportunity to meet with potential foundations as well as to learn some fundraising skills. Marion’s participation was funded by the Clear Creek Education Foundation so she “wore two hats.” The Greenway idea was presented to a number of foundations and received a “green light” meaning OSC should submit a grant application. The two positive responses were from the Gates Foundation and El Pomar Foundation. Each seeks to participate in capital campaigns at different points, so OSC will pursue both at the appropriate time. Martha and Marion also met with a representative from the Colorado State Historical Society and discussed possible funding opportunities.

**Ride the Rockies and Slacker Half Marathon**

OSC had a booth at both events to collect signatures on a petition to support the Clear Creek Greenway. Both events were successful. The petitions will be used to support grant applications.
Representatives from Open Space also participated in Georgetown’s Big Horn Sheep Festival and Evergreen’s Earth Day. Amy Karshbaum was the CDOW’s mascot, Elbert, at the Big Horn Sheep Festival. Her picture was printed in the Denver Post.

**Frei Property Acquisition**

A contract was completed and signed by the BOCC and the Frei family to purchase the easements and properties in and around the Frei quarry in Clear Creek Canyon. When the sale is completed, Open Space will have ownership or easements needed to complete the Greenway trail through Clear Creek Canyon. Much of the Fall has been spent obtaining environmental assessments, surveys and other efforts needed to complete the purchase. Closing is anticipated to occur in early 2012.

**Conservation Easement Monitoring**

Several of the Open Space properties such as the Elmgreen Homestead and the Anna Mining Claim are protected by conservation easements. It is required that these properties be monitored on a yearly basis. It is the responsibility of the conservation easement holder (e.g. MALT) to complete these inspections. All of our properties were evaluated and found to be in good condition.

**Maintenance**

Being a responsible landowner, OSC undertook several efforts to address weed management on its properties. Larry White did an inventory on the Oxbow and several other parcels to determine the type of noxious weeds present. With assistance from the County Weed Supervisor, the weeds were treated and destroyed. During the spring runoff, the Blue Hill parcel experienced a washout on the trail which parallels the creek. Road and Bridge helped repair the trail in time for the Half Marathon which uses that route.

Minor erosion was also treated at the WWP. This work was completed by volunteers. Also at the WWP, Road and Bridge paved the aprons to the parking lot for the entrance and the exit. This will minimize maintenance to the Alvarado Road and protect the parking lot.