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2008 was another successful year for the Natural Areas Program. We expanded the existing Dakota Ridge Conservation Easement, accepted an additional Conservation Easement donation, supported environmental education, updated our Natural Areas Report, and opened the 28-acre Morey Wildlife Reserve for public access.

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Thank you for your continued support of the Loveland Natural Areas Program. Open Lands Advisory Commission meetings are open to the public and we encourage you to provide us with any feedback you may have.”

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Chair, Open Lands Advisory Commission

Morey Wildlife Reserve Opened to the Public

Following several years of restoration activities, Morey Wildlife Reserve was formally opened to the public on May 24, 2008. The City purchased this 28-acre natural area along the west Big Thompson River from the Morey family. A conservation easement held by Legacy Land Trust protects the property from development and allows for passive wildlife viewing, nature study, and environmental education. The conservation easement prohibits dogs, fishing, and bicycling in the wildlife reserve. A number of improvements were made to prepare the site for visitor use, including a natural-surface pedestrian trail, signage, benches, and an entrance kiosk with access to restrooms shared with Mariana Butte Golf Course. The east side of the pond is a wildlife conservation area and is not accessible by the public. A volunteer trail host program was implemented using the principles of Leave No Trace, to educate visitors about the variety of natural resources found at the reserve, as well as the rules and regulations designed to protect those resources. An innovative system developed by one of the volunteer trail hosts uses Google Docs to record and summarize visitor data. The system allows trail hosts to enter their site monitoring data, including the number of visitors, cars, and violations observed, as well as wildlife sightings and maintenance concerns. Staff and volunteers can access the information at their convenience. The Morey Wildlife Reserve is open during daylight hours year-round. For more information, please see the maps on pages 3 and 4 of this report, or view them on our website at: http://www.ci.loveland.co.us/parksrec/opennatural.htm

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The donation of a 5.29-acre conservation easement will protect wetlands and uplands along the south shoreline of Horseshoe Lake. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers oversees the wetland mitigation project and required a conservation easement to protect the property in perpetuity. The wetlands and upland buffer provide enhanced wildlife habitat, flood attenuation, sediment and erosion control, surface water filtration, and aesthetics. The landowner will maintain the property in its current condition.
Environmental Education Program

The Viestenz-Smith Wildlife Program was held in the spring and in the fall of 2008. Over 1,400 students from 23 elementary schools in Loveland, Fort Collins, and Berthoud attended the program. Offered each year to all local elementary schools as an outdoor environmental education field trip, the program focuses on Colorado wildlife and wildlife habitat. Students play a food chain game and visit five learning stations, four of which are taught outdoors in close proximity to the Big Thompson River. Volunteers lead small group discussions at each learning station where students are presented with information about Colorado life zones, the Big Thompson watershed, aquatic wildlife, plants of the foothills, Colorado vertebrates, and the basics of wildlife management. Incredibly, that's just half of what students experience when they spend a day at the park! In addition to participating in small group learning stations, students are also given the opportunity to become wildlife detectives when they hike with a volunteer guide along the south end of the park. During their hike, students are challenged to find at least 15 items on a scavenger hunt list which includes various types of evidence that wildlife has been present in the area. Bones, feathers, vole runways, and wildlife scat are all examples of evidence left by wildlife which, when found by curious 4th and 5th graders, create moments of outdoor excitement and wonder. The Viestenz-Smith Wildlife Program is an excellent example of an educational environment program that offers children an opportunity to learn about natural resources in an outdoor setting, and have fun while doing it.

The engaging staff of dedicated volunteers makes the Viestenz-Smith Wildlife Program successful. Viestenz-Smith volunteers are individuals who not only enjoy the outdoors but also truly enjoy teaching kids. In 2008, eleven volunteers donated 428 hours to the environmental education program. This large donation of time makes it possible to continue to offer a quality environmental educational program through the City of Loveland while allowing the program to remain cost-effective. A generous donation of $500 from the Bretty Family Fund also contributed to the program's cost-effectiveness, making it possible to provide updated materials and supplies for the program. Individuals interested in volunteering and teachers interested in field trips to the Viestenz-Smith Wildlife Program can contact Pam Unfred at (970) 988-4105 or e-mail her at: unfre@ci.loveland.co.us.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the City of Loveland Natural Areas Program is to identify, preserve, protect and enhance open space, natural areas and other significant lands. This ongoing process is accomplished through cooperation with and respect for private and public landowners, surrounding municipalities and counties, natural resource agencies, and other organizations with similar interests. The City is assisted in this effort by the Open Lands Advisory Commission, a citizen advisory board.

NATURAL AREAS REVENUE

$2,100,753

Revenue for year end 2008 was less than year end 2007 by 3%. Capital expansion fees increased 2% from year end 2007. The majority of revenue came from the Help Preserve Open Spaces (HPOS) Larimer County's 1/4 cent sales tax. Miscellaneous Revenue is comprised of a farm lease on the Prairie Ridge Natural Area and income from Meadowbrook Ridge Subdivision dedicated to the maintenance of Meadowbrook Natural Area.

NATURAL AREAS EXPENDITURES

$354,154

Expenditures for professional services included the completion of a permanent water augmentation plan for the Morey pond and updating of the Natural Areas Sites report. Expenditures for public improvements included preparation of the Morey Wildlife Reserve for opening to the public. Land conservation expenditures included the City's 2nd installment of three $140,000 contributions to the Herm Park acquisition located just east of Estates Park on Highway 36.

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"Thank you for letting us visit the Morey Wildlife Reserve. I enjoyed the bear track. The bird nest on the ground was cool."
Shelby, 3rd Grader
Thompson School District

"Thank you for letting us experience all the animals and how they live and eat."
Daniel, 3rd Grader
Thompson School District
We’d like to hear from you....

Please tell us about lands you’d like preserved, your experiences at open spaces, suggestions, questions, ideas or comments:
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________________

☐ Would you like to learn more about preserving your land?
☐ Are you interested in serving on the Open Lands Advisory Commission?
☐ Are you interested in volunteering with Open Lands?
☐ Would you like to be added to the Open Lands mailing list?

How can we contact you?  Name: ___________________________ E-mail: ___________________________
Phone: ___________________________ Address: ___________________________

Thank you for your interest in protecting Loveland’s open spaces.
Find us on the web at: http://www.ci.loveland.co.us/parksrec/opennatural.htm
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Natural Areas Sites Updated

The City had been using the 1996 report "In the Nature of Things: Loveland’s Natural Areas" to review preservation projects as well as development proposals with regard to natural values such as wildlife habitat, plant diversity, and wetlands. Cedar Creek Associates was contracted to conduct site visits and evaluations of approximately 15 additional areas in and around Loveland, including undeveloped lands that were not a part of the original report. A secondary goal of this update was to identify sites that have been developed or preserved and label those sites as inactive. In July 2008, City Council approved the updated report, "City of Loveland Natural Areas Sites." This update will continue to be valuable for land-use decision-makers, city planners, developers, and property owners to make informed decisions regarding urban development, open lands, and natural resource preservation and enhancement opportunities.

The report is available on our website: http://www.ci.loveland.co.us/parks/reopenatural.htm

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500 E. Third St., Ste. 200
Loveland, Colorado 80537
www.cityofloveland.org

City of Loveland

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Permit #29

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