Open Lands thinks long-range

Group to study options for when sales tax expires in '18

BY JACKIE HUTCHINS
RIF Local News Editor

The Larimer County Department of Natural Resources will set up a committee to look at options for continued funding—which could include going to the voters with a tax request—to prepare for the expiration of the open space sales tax in 2018.

Kerri Rollins, Open Lands Program manager, said Thursday that the group will likely start meeting in July or August and will look at the department's needs for funding to continue to maintain its existing open space, as well as possible funding for future acquisitions.

The county's Open Lands Advisory Board heard a presentation Thursday night about future funding needs and how operations and maintenance of existing parks and open lands is taking a bigger chunk of the sales tax funding than it did when the tax first was passed.

The Help Preserve Open Space sales, and use tax was approved by voters in 1995 for eight years and was extended from 2004 to 2018 by voters in 2006. It is not charged on food or medicine purchases. The sales tax provides about 74 percent of the county's open space revenue.

The Department of Natural Resources currently manages 6,799 acres of parks and 23,488 acres of open space on a $12 million annual budget.

The open space sales tax, a 0.25 percent tax charged throughout the county, currently brings in about $8 million a year.

At least 35 percent goes to eight municipalities in the county based on a funding formula that brings in $1.3 million to Loveland, $2.4 million to Fort Collins and lesser amounts to Estes Park, Berthoud, Wellington, Windsor, Johnstown and Thompson.

At least 35 percent, or $4.8 million, goes to the county.

The remainder goes to the county and municipalities, too, but can vary year to year.

Accountant Lori Smith said projections indicate that by 2018, when the tax expires, it will be bringing $3.56 million annually into the county and $4.4 million of that money will be needed to fund operations.

Rollins said the committee being formed will be asked to look at long-term parks and open lands management costs as well as funding for new acquisitions and facility development.

She said some options that could be considered include decreasing the percentage of the sales tax that goes to the municipalities, increasing the tax or using the tax just for management costs while pursuing a new tax for acquisitions and development.

Other options that the county staff sees as less viable include creating an endowment fund for management, changing entry fees or closing or restricting access to open space areas.

Ted Swanson, chairman of the Open Lands Advisory Board, said he does not want to wait until 2018 to go to voters to extend the tax. Making a request early could give open lands managers time to adjust if the voters reject the request, he said.

Rollins said the municipalities will be asked to send representatives to the committee being formed, and the group also will include members of the county's Open Lands and Parks advisory boards.

Though the group will start meeting later this summer, there is no timetable for making a decision, she said. It's going to take as long as it needs to take.
High altitude
Hermit Park

By Bob McDonnell
The Surveyor

On May 23, 2008, the newest recreational area in Larimer County, Hermit Park Open Space Area, became available to local citizens.

The 1,862-acre park was owned by Hewlett-Packard until February 2007, and was only available for use by employees and their families. It is now managed by the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources.

Making the open space something for all to enjoy was a joint effort between Larimer County, Agilent Technologies, the Town of Estes Park, Estes Valley Land Trust, Estes Valley Recreation and Park District, Great Outdoors Colorado, City of Loveland, Erman Foundation, City of Fort Collins, McWhinney Foundation, Town of Berthoud and private donors.

The new area is surrounded by the Roosevelt National Forest, private land and land protected by conservation easements. It is located approximately two miles southeast of Estes Park on US Highway 36. At an elevation of 7,850-8,004 feet, the park offers a variety of amenities for those interested in the outdoors. The open space has a variety of topographic features including open high meadow grasslands, wetland meadow shrub, rounded granite rock outcrops and moderately steep forested slopes.

It is not uncommon for visitors to spot wildlife such as marmots, moose, elk, deer, bobcats and an occasional bear has been sighted. At times, the thin mountain air contains hawks and golden eagles soaring overhead.

The sprawling park has great views of the mountains including Twin Sisters and Longs Peak — and Kruger Rock that is on the property.

Campers may choose from campsites for tent camping, basic cabins and spaces for recreational vehicles. Campsites accommodate up to eight people for a maximum stay of 14 nights.

With so many acres of land and nicely spaced out camping areas, campers do not feel like they are with a crowd, and can enjoy the solitude of the area. Contributing to this sense of peace and quiet is the fact that cell phone service is spotty to non-existent.

The cabins offer bunk beds, propane lighting and heat, picnic tables and firepits. Each building has a table with benches, covered porch, propane cook stove, and port-a-potty. Visitors must bring their own linens or sleeping bags, cookware and firewood. Minimal water is available; fill your tank before arriving or bring bottled water.

Campers may be reserved from May 1 until Oct. 1. Reservations can be made online at the county website or by calling 800-397-7085.

The park has a pavilion that can be reserved for special events. Trails for horseback riding, mountain biking and hiking are available. There are about three miles of natural trail within the park. The Homeland Meadows Trail system, an approximately 12-mile natural trail, is connected to Hermit Park.

The park is open year-round, although some areas close depending on the season, the weather and road conditions within the park.

Larimer County entrance permits and camping permits are required and can be purchased at the gate to the open space. Annual permits are available at the entrance gatehouse and online at www.larimer.org/naturalresources.

Summer in Berthoud 2010 • HERMIT PARK

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PLAY SAFE, PLAY HARD, PLAY IT AGAIN!
HORSEBACK TRAILS ◆ Summer in Berthoud 2010

By Kathleen Donnelly
The Surveyor

Every summer I look forward to riding my horses outside of the arena. As a horse professional that gives lessons, trains, and shows horses, I know that one of the best things to help my horse relax after a show is going trail riding. Here are some of my summer favorite trails near the Berthoud area.

Coyote Ridge
I like this trail especially during the week when there is less traffic making it easy to park my trailer. There are no dogs allowed on this trail. On the weekends this is a very popular trail with hikers and mountain bikers so make sure your horse will not be spooked by a bicyclist or hiker. However, one of my favorite memories on this trail is a mountain biker sharing his carrots with my horse to help my horse overcome his fear of the bicycles. There are no permits required for this trail and it is a good trail to start out on for a horse that is out of shape. Do watch for rattlesnakes as once in a while I have run across them on this trail. Coyote Ridge is located between Loveland and Fort Collins on the west side of the road off of Wilson in Loveland (Taft Hill in Fort Collins).

Devils Backbone
Devils Backbone is another excellent option however if you want to ride the entire seven miles then be aware there are points where this trail can become a little more challenging. I have turned around at some points with younger horses that may need more experience navigating trails. No permits are required for this trail however dogs are allowed on leashes. Make sure your horse is not afraid of dogs or would kick a dog. If you think your horse may not appreciate sharing the trail with a dog, the dog owner knows and get off the trail giving the hiker and dog space to get by. You may run into bicyclists and hikers along this trail as well. This is also another trail that I have come across rattlesnakes. To get to Devils Backbone turn onto Hidden Valley drive from Highway 34 approximately two miles west of the intersection of 34 and Wilson. Get an early start as the parking lot can fill up quickly.

Carter Lake
The Carter Lake area has two trails to choose from. The Sundance Trail is accessed from the North Pines or South Shore parking areas on the west side. The Pawnee Hollow Trail is located off of County Road 31 at the Southeast portion of the lake. I have not personally ridden on these trails although that may change this summer. I have heard...
HORSEBACK TRAILS • Summer in Berthoud 2010

through the horse grapevine that they are fairly easy trails and can be a good start to getting a horse in shape. Hiking, mountain biking, fishing accessies and rock climbing are some of the other uses for these trails. I would suggest checking out the parking lots in a car before bringing a trailer up. This way you know if a trailer and trailer will be a good fit in the parking lot. A permit is required.

Duvaucen

This is one of my personal all-time favorite rides, especially in the fall when the leaves are changing color. This is a beautiful trail, but needs a horse with a little more trail riding experience as you will encounter bridges, water crossings and some rocky areas. However I have taken young horses to this area to get them more experience. If this is the case make sure you bring a friend with an experienced horse to give your horse confidence. You are more likely to run across bears or mountain lions on this trail, so be alert at all times and listen to your horse if they get unsettled. Some trail riders will put bells on their saddle to help keep the wildlife away. Make sure your horse is used to the bells or any other equipment you want to bring along.

You may also run across hikers, dogs on leashes, and mountain bikers. You can access riding Rocky Mountain National Park from this trail and will want to check what permits may be required. To get to the Duvaucen Trailhead take Highway 34 up through Big Thompson Canyon. Turn off at Drake and go north-west about six miles. After the brown sign marking the Crease Trailhead, turn right onto CR 518 or the Dunraven Grade Road. Go about two miles to the parking area.

Tips for enjoyable trail riding

- Wear an approved safety helmet. Newer helmets are lightweight and comfortable.
- Bring water for yourself and your horse. A trick I learned to bring water for your horse is to save five gallon buckets with lids. Put a garbage bag in the bucket and fill with water. Tie off the bag with a twist tie and put the lid on. This is a great way to transport water without spilling it.
- Horses need time to get in shape just like their human counterparts. Work up slowly with distance and difficulty. Check with your veterinarian to see if your horse will need shoes for rocky trails.

Make sure all your paperwork is in order especially if you are travelling a long distance or out of state for a ride. Colorado law requires a horse to have a current brand inspection if you are travelling out of state or more than 75 miles. You may also need a health certificate oroggas tag depending on where you are going. Check with your veterinarian to be sure.

Make sure all your equipment is in good condition. A trail ride is not a good place to discover stitching or leather has gone bad. Also make sure your saddle fits your horse properly so that they do not become sore on the ride.

Above all have fun and enjoy your horse this summer!

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Take a hike

- **Distance**: 5.4 miles one way
- **Elevation range**: 5,853 to 7,038 ft
- **Difficulty**: Moderate
- **Trailhead**: Lovelace Park, Fort Collins
- **Trail**: Benches, benches and trail behind benches, benches
- **Hike**: 2 miles to the base of Horsetooth Reservoir
- **Views**: Horsetooth Reservoir, Fort Collins, and the Front Range

**WHY GO?**
This is a great hike for experienced hikers looking for a challenging trek with stunning views. The trail offers excellent access to Horsetooth Reservoir, providing opportunities for fishing, boating, and swimming.

**WHAT'S GOING ON**

**Saturday**

**Cycling**
Loveland Bicycle Club Ride
- Time: 9 am, west of Park City, 5021 S. Lemay Ave., Fort Collins
- Distance: 30 miles

**Fort Collins Cycling Club**
- Time: 11 am, west of Park City, 5021 S. Lemay Ave., Fort Collins
- Distance: 30 miles

**Running**
- Time: 6 am, west of Park City, 5021 S. Lemay Ave., Fort Collins

**Biking**
- Time: 3 pm, west of Park City, 5021 S. Lemay Ave., Fort Collins

**Hiking**
- Time: 10 am, west of Park City, 5021 S. Lemay Ave., Fort Collins

**May 30**

**Cycling**
Loveland Bicycle Club Ride
- Location: Loveland Public Library, 300 N. Adams Ave., Loveland
- Distance: 60 miles

**CSU Oval Race**
- Distance: 4 pm, west of Park City, 5021 S. Lemay Ave., Fort Collins

**Running**
- Distance: 10 km

**June 1**

**Cycling**
- Location: Loveland Bicycle Club Ride
  - Distance: 30 miles

**Running**
- Location: Loveland Bicycle Club Ride
  - Distance: 10 km

**June 5**

**Cycling**
- Location: Loveland Bicycle Club Ride
  - Distance: 30 miles

**Running**
- Location: Loveland Bicycle Club Ride
  - Distance: 10 km

Get more information about these events and others on the Loveland Bicycle Club's website: [lovelandbicycleclub.org](http://lovelandbicycleclub.org)
Trail opens in Backbone

LOVELAND — The Morrison Trail, the newest trail at the Crowder Area of the Devil's Backbone Open Space, has opened to the public.

The 1.4-mile round-trip trail will provide access for hikers and wheelchair users (an assistant is recommended) at the south end of the existing Devil's Backbone Open Space Trailhead.

The trail was built this spring by Larimer County trail staff members on an 1.8-acre parcel donated by the Crowder family in memory of their son Russell.

To access the Devil's Backbone Open Space from Loveland, take U.S. 34 to approximately 2 1/2 miles west of Wilson Avenue. Turn south on Hidden Valley Drive and follow the signs to the trailhead.

To learn more, visit www.larimer.org/natureresources.

Boat owners can volunteer for Catch a Special Thrill

FORT COLLINS — The Catch a Special Thrill free fishing day for disabled children needs boat owners to volunteer for Saturday's event at Horsetooth Reservoir.

This year the event has had good registration, with more than 32 children signed up but only 17 boats secured as of Thursday.

Anyone who can volunteer the time and a fishing boat on Saturday is asked to contact Ken Lamb of the Bureau of Reclamation at 960-4736.

Reservoir and entrance fees into Horsetooth will be waived for volunteers.
Your government at work

Cultural Services Board

to look at issues around downtown

Who: Loveland Cultural Services Board
When: 4:30 p.m. Tuesday
Where: Loveland Museum/Gallery, 503 N. Lincoln Ave.
TV/Internet: None

At Issues: The Loveland Cultural Services Board will hear several updates on issues relating to downtown during its regular monthly meeting on Tuesday. The agenda includes discussions about the alley naming project now under way, in which the city will name all downtown alleyways, and also to be discussed is the Art Labs and the process for downtown requests for development proposals. Other topics on the agenda are reports from the museum and radio theater. Recent activities also are on the agenda.

Commissioners to look at pot dispensary near Loveland

Who: Larimer County Board of County Commissioners
When: 3 p.m. today
Where: Commissioners Hearing Room, 200 W. Oak St., Fort Collins
TV/Internet: www.larimer.org/bcc/broadcast.cfm

At Issues: Commissioners will hear a request from the Larimer County Department of Environmental Quality for a variance to allow a medical marijuana dispensary operating at 433 E. Eighth St., Unit A, to be located within 500 feet of a residential area. The commissioners will decide how to proceed—grant the variance and allow the dispensary to operate within 500 feet of residential units or deny the variance because it is too close. If the variance is denied, the city will notify the city of their decision and the city can appeal it.

Construction Advisory Board to talk about North Cleveland plan

Who: Loveland Construction Advisory Board
When: 6 p.m. Wednesday
Where: Loveland City Council Chamber, 500 E. Third St.
TV/Internet: None

At Issues: Members of the Loveland Construction Advisory Board will hear a report from the city’s planning staff about potential changes that are being considered for development rules on the North Cleveland Avenue corridor, which is developing more commercial applications. Stated to speak to board members are Karri Burdett with Current Planning and Sean Felker with Transportation Development Review.

Commissioners look to charge for parking at Blue Sky trailhead

Who: Larimer County Board of County Commissioners
When: 10 a.m. Tuesday
Where: Commissioners Conference Room, 200 W. Oak St., Fort Collins
TV/Internet: www.larimer.org/bcc/broadcast.cfm

At Issues: Commissioners will hear a report from the city’s transportation department about potential park and ride fees at the newly improved Blue Sky Park and Ride at Fort Collins. When the master plan improvements are completed, the city is considering adding a fee for parking at the new facility. The fee is to be used to improve the transit system.
TODAY

Art exhibits
“Kent Pendleton: Scale”
FREE 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.,
Loveland Museum/Gallery, 501 N. Lincoln Ave., Loveland. Exhibit of paintings by the museum mural painter. Information: (970) 962-2410 or www.ci.loveland.co.us
“Light, Expert, Cruel”
10 a.m. to 1 p.m., The Center
t for Fine Art Photography, 400 N. College Ave., Fort Collins. A solo exhibition by Brook Reynolds. Information: (970) 224-1010 or www.cfap.org
“Elastic Expressions: Variations in Clay from Colorado Collections”
FREE 11 a.m., University Center
for the Arts, 1400 Remington St.,
Fort Collins. Showcases Colorado State University’s pottery teaching collection, comprised of pieces acquired during a 30-year period by faculty, alongside other significant Colorado pottery collections. Information: (970) 491-8489 or www.CSU/colofovartcom
“The Romance of Lace”
FREE 1-4 p.m., Arely House,
328 W. Mountain Ave., Fort
Collins. Special exhibit featuring
examples of intricate handmade and early machine-made lace that decorate Victorian and Edwardian dresses and accessories. Interpretive panels help identify vintage lace patterns. Information: (970) 221-0533 or www.poudrelandmarks.org

Arts
FREE 11 a.m., Chapangu

Red Mountain Open Space: The Whole Enchilada
FREE 10 a.m. today, Red Mountain Open Space, about an hour north of Fort Collins on County Road 23. Explore the county’s newest open space and learn the mysteries of the ecosystem. Registration is required online. Information: (970) 679-4561 or www.larimer.org/naturalresources/registration

Clubs and meetings
Loveland Bicycle Club Ride
9 a.m., Fossil Creek Park, 3821 S. Lemay Ave., Fort Collins. Thirteen-mile “tour de detroit” ride. Information: (970) 689-8855

Dance
Contina Dance
8 p.m., Club Tico, 1993 City Park Ave., Fort Collins. Hosted by Friends of Traditional Dance, Live music provided by Meadowlark with Barb Kirchner. Free lesson at 7 p.m. Cost: $6; $4 students. Information: (970) 493-8277 or www.fotd.org

Hiking
Red Mountain Open Space: The Whole Enchilada
FREE 10 a.m., Red Mountain Open Space, about an hour north of Fort Collins on County Road 23. Explore the county’s newest open space and learn the mysteries of the ecosystem. Registration is required online. Information: (970) 679-4561 or www.larimer.org/naturalresources/registration

Historic Homesteads
Hike
9 a.m., Hemnt Park. Larimer County master naturalists lead a trek through Homestead Meadows to give you a tour of the remaining homesteads and to share the history of the area. Cost: free, but park entrance fee applies. Information: (970) 679-1561 or www.larimer.org/naturalresources
For county open lands officials, there is no such thing as a typical workday.

By Pamela Dickman
REPORTER-HERALD STAFF WRITER

BIG THOMPSON CANYON — Rain steadily fell throughout Larimer County’s parks and open lands Saturday, turning a typically busy day into a search for high water.

For Steve Gibson and the county’s 30 other rangers, weekends are usually filled with boaters, hikers, picnickers and the like enjoying the trees, wildlife, rivers and reservoirs that Larimer County has to offer.

But when the temperatures dipped and the rain fell, only a few brave souls were out and about as Gibson patrolled — a job that keeps him and his colleagues busy year-round.

For rangers, there really is no typical day.

“It’s extremely diverse,” said Dan Rieves, visitor services manager and a commissioned ranger. It could be helping a single mom put up a tent to helping a boater whose boat is broken down.

Rangers also patrol the trails on foot (about 10 miles per shift) and the reservoirs on boat, providing first aid and talk with campers and hikers about preserving the land. They also mend fences, literally, and mediate disputes. After all, arguments can brew in nature too.

“Any problem you could have in your neighborhood, you could have here,” Rieves said.

That’s why 12 of the county’s rangers, including Rieves, are state-certified officers. That means they are fully trained just like city police officers and county deputies.

They arrest drunken drivers, drunken boaters and others committing crimes. They investigate motor vehicle accidents. But those account for only 0.1 percent of the contacts rangers have with the public.

In most cases, they are helping out with a medical incident, simply visiting with hikers, protecting the natural resources or checking fishing licenses.

SEE RANGERS, PAGE B5
Larimer County Open Space Ranger Steve Gibson fills out a duty log after checking on the trailhead at Devil's Backbone in Loveland on Saturday afternoon.
RANGERS: Nature lovers dedicated to preserving the land

FROM PAGE B1

Windsor resident Mike Greenfield was delighted to dig his fishing license out of his wallet with fingers so cold from river water they were almost clumsy.

"Thanks for checking," Greenfield said. "It makes it worth paying for."

After a few minutes of chat about the trout he caught and released in the Big Thompson River at Sleepy Hollow Park that rainy Saturday, Greenfield returned to his rod and Gibson returned to patrol.

The ranger’s day included checking the trailheads, closing doors to prevent bears from entering, stocking brochures and repeatedly checking parks along the Big Thompson and Poudre Rivers. The winds blew high and fast, so Gibson and other rangers and if water had poured over the banks.

On other recent shifts, Gibson had been called on to herd cattle back into a fenced area — humorous and challenging — and to search canals for a woman who drowned.

Help those who help campers, hikers, land

Larimer County rangers are dedicated to helping those who enjoy the county’s parks and open spaces and to protect the land. Volunteers can give time to help the rangers with their mission.

Ranger assistants — described by the Department of Natural Resources as ambassadors and friendly faces — hike trails and visit parks and open spaces to offer information and to be added eyes and ears to the rangers.

The county has 12 full-time rangers and adds another 19 in the busy summer season.

Volunteer ranger assistants will receive 20 hours of training in park, ecology and other subjects and are asked to volunteer the same number of hours in return. They receive a free park pass and a chance to give back to the community and the land.

Training is set 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Aug. 3 and Aug. 5 and 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Aug. 7 and Aug. 9. Applications are due July 16.

More information is available by contacting Gifuro at 675-4552 or volunteers@larinet.org.

and keeping the peace.

Nearly 150 years later, rangers still are doing so on the county, state and national level all across America.

Larimer County’s ranger program dates to the late 1970s or early 1980s — more than 20 years after the Department of Natural Resources was formed.

The individuals who perform this task now are ambassadors, rangers, preservationists, medics and cops when they are called to be.

But first and foremost, they are nature lovers dedicated to saving our natural wonders.

"The idea behind it is trying to preserve a piece of our land for future generations," Gibson said. "I know that sounds cheesy, but it really is pushing us along."

He paused along the Big Thompson River, breathed the fresh, clean air and gen-
County survey says voters want more open space

By John Fryar
© 2010 Longmont Times-Call

BOULDER — Boulder County government should be preserving more open space, according to two-thirds of the people questioned in a county-commissioned poll this spring.

But in last year's election, 52 percent of Boulder County voters said no to a proposal to extend one of the county's existing open space sales taxes.

Boulder County commissioners are expected to decide by late July whether they'll put another sales tax question in front of voters in November.

An April public-opinion survey, reviewed by the commissioners last month and by the county's Parks and Open Space Advisory Committee on Thursday night, broached that question.

Of the 603 people who participated in the telephone survey, 73 percent said they voted in November's election. However, only 44 percent of those who recollected casting ballots in the 2009 election said they'd voted for the county's proposed open space tax extension.

But regardless of whether — or how — they voted last year, 79 percent of those polled in April said they approve of Boulder County's open space program.

Sixty-seven percent said they agreed with a statement posed by pollsters that "Boulder County government should be preserving additional open space areas."

And 61 percent said they disagreed that "Boulder County has gone so far in terms of protecting the environment and preserving open space that it is hurting the local economy."

Further, 66 percent agreed that "Open space preservation benefits our local economy."

Parks and Open Space director Ron Stewart presented the poll's findings on a variety of open space issues to the county's open space advisory panel Thursday. He said the survey "gives, I think, a good perspective on what the general public in Boulder County feels about open space."

Boulder County now oversees more than 93,000 acres of open space. Of that total, the county is the owner or co-owner of more than 59,000 acres. And it holds or shares conservation easements limiting development on more than 34,000 acres of property that remain in private ownership.

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<th>The results</th>
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<tr>
<td>What image comes to mind when you think of Boulder County?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• 25 percent: outdoors and open space</td>
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<tr>
<td>• 20 percent: the Flatirons, mountains, or other geological features</td>
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<tr>
<td>• 5 percent: a county's small-town or rural character</td>
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<th>What justifies the closure of open space?</th>
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<td>• 90 percent: protecting wildlife during certain times of the year</td>
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<td>• 88 percent: preserving certain sensitive wildlife areas</td>
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<td>• 78 percent: keeping the public off lands leased to farmers</td>
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<td>• 69 percent: waiting two or three years for the creation a plan for</td>
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<td>managing the land</td>
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<td>• 15 percent: closing open space to the public is never acceptable</td>
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<th>Rate the importance of ways Boulder County now uses its open space funds.</th>
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<tr>
<td>• 92 percent: to preserve wildlife habitat</td>
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<td>• 86 percent: to provide trails</td>
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<tr>
<td>• 81 percent: to create buffers of undeveloped land between cities and</td>
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<tr>
<td>communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>• 79 percent: to keep open and ranch land from being developed</td>
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<tr>
<th>What open space activities are personally important to you?</th>
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<tr>
<td>• 95 percent: enjoying nature</td>
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<tr>
<td>• 93 percent: hiking</td>
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<tr>
<td>• 78 percent: picnicking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 66 percent: walking dogs</td>
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<tr>
<td>• 61 percent: mountain biking</td>
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<tr>
<td>• 55 percent: fishing</td>
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<tr>
<td>• 42 percent: horseback riding</td>
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Talley-Drake Research and Strategy Inc. interviewed voters about open space issues in the April 19-27 telephone survey. The Boulder-based firm divided its 603-person sample in half to probe voters' opinions about two potential open space ballot questions. The results:

When 300 of the people surveyed were asked about extending collections of the existing 0.25 percent sales tax beyond 2019 and selling bonds to make more open space purchases, 48 percent said they’d vote in favor of such a proposal.

When the other 303 people were polled about the possibility of a new 0.1 percent county open space sales tax for the next 15 years, 63 percent said they’d vote for it.

Stewart said that even though it may seem “kind of counterintuitive,” the April survey showed that “passing a new tax is a lot more popular than extending the old tax” that’s set to expire in 2019.

Stewart suggested voters may not understand, or aren’t convinced, that almost all of the next 9 1/2 years of the county’s collections of the existing 0.25 percent sales tax already are committed.

Officials have said current open space tax revenues will be tied up by such obligations as repaying open space bonds the county issued to finance some of its past open space purchases.

John Fryar can be reached at 303-684-5211 or jfryar@times-call.com.