

State backs Windy Gap water storage project



[Kevin Duggan](#), 12:48 a.m. MDT April 14, 2016



Colorado officials endorsed a long-sought water storage project that would include construction of Chimney Hollow Reservoir southwest of Loveland.

Gov. John Hickenlooper on Wednesday voiced his support for the Windy Gap Firming Project, which would divert water from the Western Slope to the Front Range to shore up supplies for municipalities and farmers.

Operational plans for the project proposed by the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District, or Northern Water, include protective measures for fish and waterways on the Western Slope, according to a press release from the governor's office.

“Northern Water and its many project partners have worked diligently, transparently and exhaustively in a collaborative public process that could stand as a model for a project of this nature,” Hickenlooper stated in the release. “This is precisely the kind of cooperative effort envisioned for a project to earn a state endorsement in Colorado’s Water Plan.”

WATER: [Rain barrels could soon be legal in Colorado](#)

Participants in the water-storage project include Loveland, Longmont, Greeley, Broomfield, Platte River Power Authority and two water districts.

The project recently received a key water quality certification from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. The certification is needed to receive a final permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to build the project.

A decision from the Corps on its Section 404 wetland permit is expected later this year, said Brian Werner, spokesperson for Northern Water.

If the expected permits come through, final design on Chimney Hollow Reservoir would begin later this year with construction beginning in 2018-19, Werner said.

Chimney Hollow Reservoir would hold up to 90,000 acre feet of water. An acre foot is enough water to meet the annual needs of three to four urban households.

Larimer County would build and operate recreational facilities at the reservoir, which would be built west of Carter Lake. Carter Lake holds up to 112,000 acre feet of water.

NEWS: [Halligan Reservoir project EIS delayed to 2017](#)

The Windy Gap Firming Project has been under federal, state and local review since 2003. It has been challenged by environmentalists over the years because of its impact on the Colorado River’s ecosystem through increased water diversions.

In a recent email to the Coloradoan, the group Save the Colorado stated it would scrutinize the 404 permit decision from the Corps to ensure the project adheres to the National Environmental Policy Act, the Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act.

Supporters say the Windy Gap Firing includes measures that would mitigate its environmental impacts and protect fish, streams and water quality in Grand Lake and the Colorado River.

New trail at Devil's Backbone Open Space

Bobbi Sheldon, KUSA 12:16 PM. MDT April 13, 2016



(Photo: Photo by Joel Schwab)

LOVELAND – Outdoor enthusiasts will soon be able to enjoy a new trail at Devil’s Backbone Open Space thanks to the work of more than 60 volunteers.

The trail, which is scheduled to open in May, will be a multi-use trail for mountain bikers and equestrians.

Larimer County staff and volunteers constructed roughly 1,000 feet of trail on Saturday as part of the new Hidden Valley Trail being built in the open space west of Loveland.

About half of 1.8 mile trail remains to be built.

The trail will run from the Devil’s Backbone Trailhead to the north end of the Wild Loop Trail, which will become hiking only.

The project is the first in a series of volunteer projects arranged for the 20th anniversary of the Help Preserve Open Spaces sales tax in 2016.

Volunteers for the project consisted of groups from Larimer County, Overland Mountain Bike Club, Colorado Addicted Trailbuilders Society, Team B.O.B, and Arizona State University Alumni Northern Colorado Club.

For more information and to view other volunteer projects, visit: <http://bit.ly/1NopaII>

Horsetooth Reservoir HQ opening in July



Stephen Meyers 12:04 p.m. MDT April 9, 2016

Come July, Larimer County will open its \$5.4 million “front door” to Horsetooth Reservoir, welcoming recreators to the 7,000-square-foot Horsetooth Area Information Center.

Construction of the two-story information center began in January at the reservoir’s South Bay, between the camping and day-use areas. Mark Caughlan, Horsetooth district manager, said construction of the headquarters, which also includes an office building, workshop and storage facility, should be completed by June.

Horsetooth Reservoir and Open Space workers will begin working out of the offices at that time, “working out the bugs” before opening the information center to the public in mid-July, Caughlan said.

The project will cap nearly a decade of improvements to the reservoir, which include a new swim beach, a covered picnic area and modern amenities for camp spots. These improvements topped \$6 million, paid for with grants from the U.S.

Bureau of Reclamation, the state lottery and Great Outdoors Colorado, and fees from visitors.

NPS: Visit Colorado's parks during National Parks Week

Caughlan has routinely called the information center the “front door” to Horsetooth Reservoir, as it will serve as the central hub for visitors to get information about area recreation, buy permits and meet rangers. Horsetooth Reservoir is the third-busiest reservoir in the state, attracting more than 1 million visitor days each year.

“We haven’t had that central location for people to meet and get their questions answered,” Caughlan said. “People want to know where they can fish, hunt and shoot. Where they can go climbing or mountain biking.”

The Horsetooth Area Information Center will be staffed with rangers and information specialists to answer those questions and point people toward area recreation destinations like Horsetooth Mountain Open Space, the Blue Sky and Soderberg trailheads and even Rocky Mountain National Park. The information center will also have an interactive 3D map, showing recreationists the best area places to climb or mountain bike.

OUTDOORS: Take a hike at Horsetooth Reservoir

And when they open, the office building, storage facility and workshop will move park rangers, trail crews and gate attendants out of the modular buildings they’ve been working in for years.

“This will solve a lot of our problems,” Caughlan said, chief among them, interacting with visitors.

The reservoir opened its boating season on April 1, and summer camping reservations are nearly booked for holiday weekends. Entrance fees to the reservoir are \$7 for daily and \$75 for an annual permit for county residents. Campsites range from \$20 to \$30 nightly at the reservoir during peak season.

High Country News

For people who care
about the West

In bison recovery, scientists start small

A new approach to bison conservation focuses on many small herds on a patchwork of public and private land.

Joshua Zaffos April 4, 2016 *From the [print edition](#)*

Last Nov. 1, about 400 spectators watched in delight as 10 huge, shaggy bison rumbled out of a holding corral onto 1,000 acres of windy shortgrass prairie, 30 miles north of Fort Collins, Colorado. The fenced grassland here is part of some 32,000 acres of city and county natural areas stretching from the foothills of the Rocky Mountains to the Great Plains. Local managers plan to gradually expand the herd's range to 2,500 acres as it grows through a combination of natural reproduction and more reintroductions. The herd already has its own Facebook page and, of course, a limited-release commemorative microbrew, Prairie Thunder Imperial Brown Ale.

The release restores the bison to the merest sliver of the species' vast historic range, and yet it represents a major conservation success. These animals are descended from the bison in Yellowstone National Park, the only population to survive wholesale slaughter by settlers during the late 19th century, and the last major reservoir of bison genes that have not been polluted by cattle DNA from cross-breeding. Yet using them in restoration efforts outside the park has been difficult because many Yellowstone bison carry brucellosis, a disease that can cause cattle to abort or prematurely give birth. The Laramie Foothills herd, however, is brucellosis-free, thanks to novel assisted-reproduction technologies. That makes these bison an early test case for efforts to expand the species' gene pool outside Yellowstone.

Up to 60 million bison once wandered the plains. The largest land mammal in North America, the bison is now recognized as a keystone species that helps maintain the ecology of grasslands. Their grazing habits influence the diversity of forbs and grasses, and their hooves help aerate the soil. Even their dirt wallows create seasonal habitat for birds and affect how fire moves through grasslands.

Today, there are an estimated 500,000 scattered across the plains but nearly all are managed as livestock, destined to become buffalo burger. Fewer than 21,000 are part of 62 "conservation herds" that are managed for environmental purposes with limited human intervention, and many of those have cattle genes. Even fewer genetically pure animals are considered truly free-roaming and "wild." Many scientists consider the species to be ecologically extinct, meaning that its

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Off shore, another world

SUN-FILLED DAYS AND SPAGHETTI NIGHTS. FROM APRIL TO OCTOBER, IT'S A FAMILY ON HORSETOOTH'S INLET BAY.

It's freedom"

LITTLE-KNOWN LIFE ON THE RESERVOIR

It's about a 20-minute drive from town, but talk to anyone on its six docks and they'll say Inlet Bay Marina is another world.

The winding ride around Horsetooth Reservoir on West County Road 38E – plus a quick turn on Shoreline Drive – will often lead to Daisy, a mammoth bloodhound with chestnut fur and dairy cow eyes. If she's not napping on the cushioned seats of someone's boat somewhere, she's on guard at the mouth of the narrow bridge to the main dock.

It's a slower way of life down there, on the small bay off the southwest side of the reservoir.

Just ask the Fort Collins couple who has more or less lived there almost every season for the past 25 years. Or the young guy with the parrot on Dock 1 who can't even be dragged into town more than five times during the marina's six-month season.

See the woman behind the register in the tiny dock store who, now 24, couldn't see herself doing anything else, and hasn't since she was 14. And the owner. Find him and he'll tell you it's all a labor of love, that there's a sort of magic to the marina. Maybe that's what got him through those five really bad years.

Depending on water levels, every year from mid-April to mid-October – this year's season officially ended on October 15 – Inlet Bay Marina offers up a different kind of life.

For those who rent one of its 250 annual boat slips or 40 moorings there, it means slower days — waking up to Horsetooth sunrises. It means wacky neighbors who, because of a rickety gate with a 4-digit combination at the entrance to your shared dock, jokes about it being “a gated community.”

It's about spaghetti nights on Dock 1 and cracking beers around dinky propane-fueled fire pits. It's about the people you see every summer, the kids you watch grow up on the water.

And it's about packing up every October, saying goodbye to your dock family, but knowing you'll be back.

“Everyone leaves all their crap at the shore,” slip customer Rich Toler said, trying to explain dock life during a quick stop in the marina store one sunny September afternoon. “You step on the dock and it's freedom.”



Ted and Lorrie

THE MARINA VETERANS

When I hopped aboard Ted and Lorrie Eiccholz's boat on Dock 4 for the first time, I wanted to talk to someone who'd seen it all, who called Inlet Bay Marina home.

It was an early Friday afternoon on their last weekend of the season on Inlet Bay.

The couple lives in Fort Collins, where Ted, 73, works as a truck driver.

But in the summer, their home is Ted's Place. And not the pit stop on the way up the Poudre Canyon.

"It's kind of like our cabin on the water," Lorrie Eiccholz, 60, said of the couple's boat, before taking me below to see all of Ted's Place's amenities — a little bedroom, convertible sleeping spaces, a bathroom, shower, air conditioning and heat.

"If you ask Ted, you can comfortably sleep two," Eiccholz laughed. "But we can comfortably sleep, like, 6."

It's the third boat the couple has owned since they fell in love with their first at a Denver boat show almost three decades ago.

Before moving from Illinois, they'd boated often on a lake in Wisconsin. But, after buying their first boat in Colorado, they wanted to find a marina where they could dock it.

So in 1990, they found Inlet Bay Marina — around the same time owner Glenn Werth first became a customer. And, besides the five years when low water levels forced its closure, they've spent most of the April through October season on the water.



The two usually put their boat in the water around Mother's Day, he said.

"This was May in 2014," Ted Eiccholz said, pulling a photo of their snow-dusted boat up on his phone.

This year, they pulled their boat out on Sept. 27.

Over the years, the Eiccholzes have lived on all but one of the marina's six docks.

And, like most of the slip customers, they'll spend almost all weekend every weekend on

the water, Ted Eiccholz said.

Their two sons — who were in high school when they first came to Inlet Bay Marina — "pretty much have somewhat grown up on Horsetooth," Lorrie Eiccholz said. They're now 42 and 39.

"We're a kind of a close-knit family," Lorrie Eiccholz said, adding that their summers are usually filled with weekend tie-ups, group dinners and evening chats with dock neighbors.

When asked about their neighbors, first names spew out so fast I can barely keep up. There's Skip, Doug, Kelly and Gene.

A lot come from the Fort Collins and Windsor area, as well as Denver and Lakewood. Though they don't know them, there's a couple they hear comes up from Texas.

Oh, and "when he's not here, Gary lives in Tortola," Lorrie Eiccholz said.

My eyes widen, as if I know where Tortola is. Ohio, maybe?

So wrong.

Turns out, it's an island in the British Virgin Islands.

Gary and Boomer

THE ISLANDERS

Though numbered, the four main docks of Inlet Bay Marina aren't exactly kept in exact numerical order, so Ted and Lorrie offer to walk me over to Gary's dock — Dock 1 — to avoid any confusion.

Horsetooth A large gazebo-like structure — the “cabana” — sits at the end of the dock and features everything you might need: picnic tables, a TV hooked to speakers playing reggae, decorative plastic grapes, a working ceiling fan, cabinets, a sink with running water. Above it, an engraved metal sign is fastened to the wall. “Preserve Wild Life,” it says. “Throw a Party!”

Having been to several Jimmy Buffet concerts, I instantly felt at home.

Then there was the live exotic bird.

“That's Boomer,” Lorrie Eiccholz says, as I realize what I thought was a decorative bird is indeed very much alive and clinging to a draped rope with the reservoir in the background.

It's the 15-year-old scarlet macaw's first season at the marina, but her owner's eighth.

Gary Lucas, 37, lives 7 days a week from May to October on his boat just a few steps away.

The Iowa native, who grew up on a reservoir and worked at a marina, is always on the water. He hasn't lived in Colorado full-time for a while but comes back every season to live on Horsetooth. In the winter, he goes back to the British Virgin Islands, where he owns a yacht charter company.

“This is my lake family,” Lucas said.



(Photo: Austin Humphreys)

Living full-time on his boat during the season, Lucas said he's probably there more than anyone else.

“I can count on one hand how many times I've left the dock this year and gone into town (since May),” he said.

“What's not to like?” he added. “It's relaxing. I've always grown up on the water.”

Lucas has lived at Dock 1 for five seasons, where its boaters are known for throwing themed nights. There are food nights, like Italian Night and Brisket Night. They've had Pirates of the Caribbean parties and Deadliest Catch parties where they eat crab, Dock 1 boater Gene Carnahan said.

A minister who happens to be a slip customer also runs a weekly worship service in the cabana every Sunday.

“These are my buddies in the summer,” Lucas said, adding that he'll leave when the season officially ends — this year that meant Oct. 15.

“I'm here until they kick me off,” he said.

Emily

THE FRIENDLY FACE

I've been on the dock about half a day when I first reach out and try to pet Duke.

No dice.

The 14-year-old dock dog is a tiny thing — about the size of a Nalgene bottle, and picking him up feels like picking up a cellphone.

“He’s the grandfather of the dock,” 24-year-old Emily Connor said of the little white Chihuahua early one afternoon in the marina’s store with Duke comfortably perched in the crook of her arm.

The store around her looks lived-in, but in a good way — a floating version of how I’d imagine someone’s grandparents’ cabin. It’s a small structure, on the water and at the center of the action, with snacks, boating necessities and Inlet Bay Marina T-shirts lining its walls.



The four main docks – numbered 1 through 4

– stick off of the main dock like fingers. There are two other docks, as well, one on the north and one on the south side of the marina. But the little store is the hub.

Tacked up on a bulletin board to the right of the cash register is a collage of old pictures of the marina and its customers.

Behind it, on shelving, are binders of paperwork, plastic clothes hangers and little foam keychains shaped like anchors. Photos of marina fixtures — some employees, the dock dogs — sit like ducks in a row on a ledge.

And at the center of it — among the bottles of sunscreen, the plastic bin of extra elastic hair ties, the framed photos and the memories — is Connor.

She started working at the marina when she was 14, around the time it was reopening after a handful of tough seasons due to low water levels.

A decade later, “I can’t imagine doing anything else,” she said. “It’s what I look forward to every April.”

Connor knows the ins and outs of life on the marina. Serving as the store manager, she runs the register, is a point of contact for day boaters and fields constant calls about rentals.

“The store would not operate without her,” owner Glenn Werth said.

Connor has worked at the marina so long it’s become an almost year-round gig. In the winter, Werth said she helps out with paperwork and preparation for the next season.

“It’s (about having) a relationship with every single boat and who owns them,” Connor said of her job at the marina.

Since several slip customers own their own businesses, Connor said she’ll also help them with their books in the off-season.

Almost like on cue, slip customer Rich Toler walks through the door, leading to an exchange of “hey!”s and “how are ya!”s.

“Prime example,” Connor says with a grin, referring to the friendships that form with people on the dock. “They’re good ones — good souls.”

Boating season starts Friday at 2 Larimer County reservoirs

By Reporter-Herald Staff - POSTED: 03/30/2016 10:07:27 PM MDT

Larimer County will kick off boating season at several of its reservoirs on Friday.

Select boat ramps will open at Horsetooth Reservoir and Carter Lake, according to a news release.

At Carter Lake, the north ramp will be open 7 a.m.-7 p.m. seven days a week.

At Horsetooth Reservoir, boat ramps at South Bay and Inlet Bay will be open 7 a.m.-7 p.m. seven days a week and Satanka ramps will be open 8 a.m.-4 p.m. Friday-Sunday.

For information about annual and daily entrance permits, boat inspections and reservoir conditions for fishing, visit www.larimer.org/naturalresources.

Larimer County seeks volunteer naturalists

By Reporter-Herald Staff

POSTED: 03/30/2016 10:06:37 PM MDT

The Larimer County Department of Natural Resources is looking for volunteer naturalist assistants.

Volunteer naturalist assistants help with guided hikes and school groups and talk with visitors to Larimer County's parks and open spaces about subjects such as ecology, geology and local history.

No experience is needed.

Volunteers must attend a training, pass a background check and have transportation.

Training will be held at 6-9 p.m. Tuesday, April 12, at the Larimer County Courthouse Offices, Boyd Lake Room 152, 200 W. Oak St., Fort Collins.

For details or to sign up for the training, contact Heather Young at hyoung@larimer.org or 619-4489.

BERTHOUD WEEKLY SURVEYOR

"Covering all the angles in the Garden Spot"

APRIL 20, 2016 12:02 PM YOU ARE HERE: [HOME](#) [LOCAL NEWS](#) PRESERVING THE FAMILY FARM

Preserving the family farm

Posted by [editor](#) on March 31, 2016 in [Local News](#) | [1 Comment](#)

Larimer County purchases Malchow Farm for \$8.4 million in innovative deal



Peggy Malchow Sass, left, and sister Jean Malchow stand next to an 1800s beet shack that remains on their family farm southwest of Berthoud. The sisters agreed to sell the property with associated water rights to Larimer County Open Lands Department in an historic agriculture land preservation deal.

All photos by John Gardner / The Surveyor

By John Gardner
The Surveyor

Peggy Malchow Sass stood inside the iconic red barn at the entrance of the Malchow Farm and spoke about the time she spent with her late father, Howard Malchow, as a child; she described early mornings spent milking cows.

“It was just nice to spend that time with him,” Malchow Sass said.

When Malchow Sass and her sister Jean Malchow talk about the family farm, their connection to the land southwest of Berthoud is as evident as weathered red paint on the barn’s exterior.

“It was a really great place to grow up,” Malchow Sass said.

Peggy and Jean are happy the farmland where they were raised, and their father spent his lifetime farming, isn’t going to become a residential development and will remain agriculture land for generations to come after the Larimer County Board of County Commissioners unanimously approved the \$8.4 million acquisition of the Malchow Farm and the property’s attached water rights at its Tuesday meeting in Fort Collins.

The sisters knew from the beginning they wanted to see the land and water shares remain together after the sale, but it took some time to get an agreement in place.

“We knew that selling it was always on the horizon, we sort of assumed that development was the way it would go and that’s why we took so long,” Malchow Sass said. “We just couldn’t stand that thought that it might be developed.”



Larimer County Commissioner Tom Donnelly, right, and Larimer County Department of Natural Resources Open Lands program manager Kerri Rollins pictured in front of the iconic Malchow barn just off highway 287 southwest of Berthoud during a tour of the property on March 24.

John Gardner / The Surveyor

They finally accepted that they may have to sell it to a developer, until they were approached by the Larimer County's Natural Resources and Open Lands Department land agent, Alex Castino, in September 2015. The 211-acre irrigated farm is located north of the Little Thompson River adjacent to the west side of Highway 287 and south of CR 6, just outside of Berthoud's Urban Growth Area to the

southwest, and includes 240 Colorado Big Thompson Water shares and 16 Handy Ditch water shares.

The property will continue to be farmed by a lease agreement with proceeds going back to the county's Open Lands Department. This deal satisfies the sister's dream of keeping the property a working farm.

"We just couldn't stand to see it developed," Malchow Sass said. "Knowing that it's going to stay a farm is really satisfying to us."

The water for the property fills the Handy Ditch that gets water from the Big Thompson River, Malchow Sass said, adding that it's positive to keep the water with the land, not only for the farm, but for all the other nearby ranches and farms that utilize the Handy Ditch water.

"By leaving the water in the ditch enables many farmers along the way to get their water more easily; the more water there is in the ditch the more easily it is for farmers to get their water," she said. "That's a benefit directly to the Berthoud area."



A group involved in one way or another with the deal for Larimer County to purchase the Malchow farm listen to Peggy Malchow Sass talk about a pioneer grave that has been on the farm since the mid 1800s. A grave marker was placed some time ago by the Berthoud Historical Society.

John Gardner / The Surveyor

Per the agreement, the water will continue to be used on the property seven out of 10 years but will also be available to local municipalities during times of drought. Acquiring the water rights is an innovative aspect of the purchase, according to Larimer County Commissioner Tom Donnelly.

"I think this is a great opportunity to really talk about what we want to do with water and how we want to see water addressed," Donnelly said. "The last thing we want to see is a lot of irrigated farm land bought then dried up. We want to make sure that we keep some of those resources with the land so that they can be used in perpetuity."

Craig Godbout, program manager for the Colorado Water Conservancy Board's Alternative Transfer Methods grant program, agreed with Donnelly, saying the CWCB's mission is to help preserve irrigated Ag land. And this is one of the first agreements that will have the water available for use by municipalities during time of drought.

"[Agriculture] is our second biggest industry contributing to our economy here in the state, and this project fits in really well with the state water plan because it helps close that municipal-industrial gap without permanent Ag dry-up," Godbout said.

This is only the second alternative transfer of water agreement that's been completed, according to Godbout, and it also creates a new mechanism that can be used as a model for future projects. It's also an innovative way for the county to explore partnerships with municipal partners and some local farmers, Donnelly said.

"I think we're doing some groundbreaking work here," Donnelly said.

The property consists of high quality agricultural soils, with approximately 188 irrigated, 18 pastures and five farmstead acres, according to a natural resources department report. Two homes remain on the property; one built in the 1860s and the other built in 1947. There's also the scenic red barn, once used to milk cows, located at the farm's entrance, and a beet shack that was built in the late 1800s.

This land adds to the county's open space catalog. The county's interest in this particular parcel grew from its updated 2015 Open Space Master Plan that included citizens' request for preserving irrigated farm and agriculture land according to Kerri Rollins, Open Lands Program manager.

"When we looked at our inventory across the board, we've done a whole lot of ranchland, we've done a really good job with ranchland; we've bought a few irrigated farms and conservations easements that we own, but they are certainly much smaller," Rollins said. "So this opportunity happened to come along at the right time and at the time of updating our master plan. We're excited to be moving forward with it."

Donnelly credited the county's Agricultural and Natural Resources Department for its work on making this deal happen and said that this deal has a wealth of opportunities. One of those opportunities could include an educational site for the Thompson School District's resurrected Future Farmers of America program, where students who could use the land for a hands-on approach to agriculture, or using the farm as an incubator for organic farmers.

The Malchow family has worked with the Berthoud Historical Society to preserve some of the property's historic features, including the beet shack and a pioneer grave.

One of the oldest ditches in Larimer County, the Eaglin Ditch, is located on the property. And the property also is located within the medium-to-high regional trail priority area for the Berthoud to Carter Lake Regional Trail Corridor.

Berthoud Trustee and Larimer County Open Lands Advisory Board member Paul Alaback said it's a project he's really excited about; one reason in particular is its proximity to Berthoud and its visibility from Highway 287.

"Because it's right on 287, that means all these educational opportunities are far better here than any other place I can think of," Alaback said.

Alaback also liked the historical aspect of keeping the farm's history and functionality intact.

"Berthoud really celebrates agricultural history and has a very active historical society, and it's hard to imagine a property that would be so good with so many attributes and in the right place such as this," Alaback said.

The county's Open Lands Department is actively pursuing grant funding to reimburse a portion of the county's investment to the conserve this property and has already received a \$178,425 grant from the Colorado Water Conservation Board to develop the Alternative Transfer Mechanism and water-sharing agreement.

The county will pay \$8.4 million for the land and its water shares with the intent of keeping it an active farm and making the water available to municipal providers in drought years. The land is valued at \$1.6 million while the water rights are valued at nearly \$6.9 million.

Rollins attended Tuesday's Berthoud Board of Trustees meeting and requested a \$100,000 contribution from the town's Open Space Tax Dollar fund to help pay for the land acquisition. Trustees advised town staff to see what could be done to participate in this partnership.

The county is also seeking contributions through Great Outdoors Colorado and a private foundation, according to a report from the Department of Natural Resources. The land purchase will be finalized in April.

Larimer County buys Berthoud-area farm for \$8.4M



Nick Coltrain, nickcoltrain@coloradoan.com 7:31 p.m. MDT March 29, 2016



(Photo: Jean Malchow/Submitted photo)

For three generations, the Malchow family farmed their plot to the southwest of Berthoud.

When they began preparations to move on from the property, the surviving sisters wanted to know their family's legacy would remain.

"When we knew we had to put it on the market, we realized it would end up covered in houses," Jean Malchow said of the 211-acre property. "We don't have anything against houses, but the property is too special for that."

She flipped through photos on her phone to show the sweeping views of emerald green pasture, Long's Peak in the background, and the snow-covered barn that dates back to when Theodore Roosevelt was president. The Overland Trail cuts through the property and with it, a stone marking the grave of an unknown traveler who died there five years after the Civil War.



The view of a Malchow Farm barn, built in 1907. The farm was bought by Larimer County on Tuesday. (Photo: Jean Malchow/Submitted photo)

Larimer County felt the same about the farmland, which it judged as some of the best in the area. On Tuesday, County commissioners approved the purchase of the property for \$8.4 million, almost \$7 million of which is for water rights associated with the property. It was bought through the Open Lands Program, which seeks to preserve open spaces in Larimer County, with money from an associated sales tax.

Gary Buffington, director of the county Department of Natural Resources, said the land would be preserved as a working farm — it historically grew corn and sugar beets, mostly — and educational space, though all of those details still need to be worked out. Kerri Rollins, Open Lands Program Manager, noted in the presentation to county commissioners that the county has received "a considerable amount of support for preserving irrigated agriculture and

irrigated agricultural values."

GALLERY: Historic buildings of Northern Colorado

The Malchows and county have been negotiating on the property since about spring 2014, Jean Malchow said. And as the family worked out what to do, a comment from her brother stuck out: "Just to have the farm stay a farm would be wonderful." The importance of the property in preserving the agricultural heritage of the Front Range, along with protecting the pasture-to-peaks views, were cited over and over as reasons why the county held the property in such high regard.

"We're going to do the best we can to be good stewards of the land, and we truly appreciate the gift I think you've given the people of Larimer County," Commissioner Tom Donnelly said.

Larimer approves farm, water purchase

Berthoud farm to include water sharing agreement

By Pamela Johnson - Reporter-Herald Staff Writer - POSTED: 03/29/2016 01:28:23 PM MDT



Larimer County is buying the water rights along with this family farm located just off U.S. 287 south of Berthoud and will enter into a water sharing agreement to keep the land in production and help meet growing municipal needs. The Malchow farm is one mile south of Berthoud and about two miles north of the Larimer-Boulder County Line. (Charlie Johnson / Larimer County)

FORT COLLINS — Larimer County will soon own a three-generation family farm south of Berthoud and the associated water rights per an agreement approved Tuesday.

The county commissioners approved a contract negotiated by the Department of Natural Resources to pay \$8.4 million for the 211 acres, including 188 acres of prime irrigated farm land, historic buildings and 240 shares of Colorado-Big Thompson water and 16 shares of

Handy Ditch water.

The purchase of the Malchow farm, located one mile southwest of Berthoud on U.S. 287, will close in April.

As part of the sale, the county will implement a water sharing agreement to fallow fields or plant dryland crops in dry years and sell the water to a municipal provider in only those years.

That type of sharing agreement is one method recommended by the Colorado Water Plan to keep farmland in production and still meet the water needs of a growing population.

"This represents one of the cornerstones of Colorado's water plan," said Craig Godbout, who manages a Colorado Water Conservation Board program to promote alternative transfer methods for water. His board granted the county \$178,000 to help pay for the expertise to create the water sharing agreement.

Out of 14 projects statewide that have received a total \$4.5 million in grants from the conservation board, this is only the second that will actually transfer water, noted Godbout said. The rest were studies.

The county is paying \$8.4 million, most of which will come from Larimer County's sales tax for open space, for the property and the water. The natural resources department had \$7.4 million in the bank to buy new properties and recently borrowed another \$7.6 million from the Solid Waste Department for this and other upcoming purchases.

Natural resources will pay the money back over the next 10 years with future sales tax revenue at the same interest rate the money would be making if it remained in the bank, currently 0.7 percent.

The commissioners approved the loan last week and the purchase of the property this week, paving the way for the sale.

Sisters Peggy Malchow Sass and Jean Malchow grew up on the farm and represent the third generation of the Malchow family to own the acres since their parents and grandparents purchased it in the 1950s. They are excited that the land their parents loved will be protected as a working farm, that the county plans to use the farm as a way to teach about agriculture and that the rich wildlife habitat and history will be preserved.

The property has been farmed since the early 1900s, and before that, the Overland Trail crossed it midway on the trek between Denver and Laramie, Wyo. The grave of a pioneer who died in the 1800s while crossing the Little Thompson River on that trail is marked with a special historic marker.

The property also includes a majestic view of Mount Meeker and Long's Peak, attracts raptors, fox and even bear and is a part of the county's agricultural past and future, according to family members and county staff.

A preserved historic beet shack and an early 1900s barn remain on the property, which produces corn, sugar beets and hay. Natural resources staff members said they saw tell-tale signs of bear having dined in the beet field within the last year.

The natural resources department works to preserve land for wildlife habitat, for recreation and to preserve agriculture. In fact, the farm piece was a priority identified by residents in a recent community survey that shapes the department's activities.

"Agriculture is the second largest economic driver in the state," Godbout told the commissioners. "We'd like to see it remain that way. We'd also like to see rural lifestyles remain in the future."

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The Malchow farm south of Berthoud has been in production for more than 100 years and will remain so after Larimer County buys the farm. The \$8.4 million sale will close in April. (Charlie Johnson / Larimer County)

Boat ramps open Friday at Horsetooth Reservoir



Stephen Meyers, stephenmeyers@coloradoan.com 1:42 p.m. MDT March 29, 2016

It doesn't seem like it with the foot of snow that fell last week, but boating season is near in Fort Collins.

On Friday, boat ramps at Horsetooth Reservoir and Carter Lake open for the season. Horsetooth Reservoir boat ramps at South Bay and Inlet Bay will be open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., seven days a week beginning Friday, while the Satanka boat ramp will be open 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Fridays through Sundays.

The North Ramp at Carter Lake will be open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. seven days a week.

For information about annual and daily entrance permits, boat inspections and reservoir conditions for fishing, visit larimer.org/naturalresources.

Farm sale to preserve and make history

Larimer County to buy 211 acres, water southwest of Berthoud

By **Pamela Johnson** - Reporter-Herald Staff Writer - POSTED: 03/26/2016 03:45:51 PM MDT



Peggy Malchow Sass, at left, and Jean Malchow, talk about their memories on their family farm, located on U.S. 287 south of Berthoud on Thursday. The sisters said they are excited their family farm will stay in production after the purchase by the Larimer County Natural Resources Department is finalized. (Michael Brian / Loveland Reporter-Herald)

BERTHOUD — The Malchow sisters have story after story to tell about their family farm — working the land with their father, seeing wildlife live on their acres and learning the rich history of pioneers who crossed the Overland Trail and of farmers who settled the land.

They are delighted — as Peggy Malchow Sass and Jean Malchow are sure their father would also be — that the farmland, the history and the lessons will be preserved for future generations when Larimer County buys the 211-acre farm southwest of Berthoud.

And water experts also are delighted with the agreement in the sale that keeps the farm water with the farm and makes it available to municipalities in dry years through a water sharing agreement.

"The county is urbanizing," said Commissioner Tom Donnelly, who with the other two county commissioners will vote Tuesday on whether to buy the Malchow farm for \$8.4 million.

"We're expecting a lot of population growth in the county

over the next 25 years. I think it's important we start to take a real serious look at protecting some irrigated ag land."

A barn, a beet shack and a grave

Howard Malchow loved working the land and loved seeing the Rocky Mountains on the landscape as well as the deer, foxes and other critters that also lived on his farm.

"So many times he said, 'I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills,'" recalled Peggy Malchow Sass while walking across the farm recently.

"He felt spiritual out here. He loved it here."

The land offers a beautiful view of the Rocky Mountains, rich soil for growing crops, habitat for wildlife and a rich history of pioneering and farming.

Among the buildings are a 1907 gable roof barn and a small beet shack believed to have been built in the early 1900s.

The architecture style was that of German farmers who immigrated via Russia, and it is believed that such immigrants built and lived in the tiny shack while farming beets.



Howard Malchow on his tractor on January 23, 1993, when he was 77 years-old. Larimer County is buying his 211-acre family farm as its latest Natural Resources Department property, which will stay an irrigated farm. (*Special to the Loveland Reporter-Herald*)

"They probably lived in it in the summer," Malchow Sass said.

The Overland Trail, which ran from Laramie, Wyo., to Denver, crossed the property as did many pioneers who followed the trail.

One such pioneer died while crossing the nearby Little Thompson River, and the man was buried on land that is now part of the Malchow Farm. His bones remain in the original burial site, though the Berthoud

Historical Society added a headstone, indicating he died between 1850 and 1870. A cover of river rock was also added, which is likely what would have covered the grave in that era.

"My dad said he didn't drown; he just died," Malchow Sass said. "We don't know the exact cause of death."

But according to local lore, which is backed up by some facts, a couple of teenage boys dug up and removed the skeleton in the 1930s. A neighbor at the time — a man who later told the story to Howard Malchow — insisted they return and rebury the body.

The teenage boys did return the bones, though reportedly without the skull.

Local legend claims one of the boys threw the skull in a nearby lake. That has not been confirmed, but this teen did live near a lake, Malchow Sass said.

While several different families owned and farmed the land, starting with Frederick Mundt in 1904, the Malchow family has lived and worked on the land the longest, for more than 60 years.

Howard and his wife, Bea, bought the farm with his parents, John and Essie Malchow, in 1952. Together, they farmed for a decade before Howard and Bea took over and lived on, worked and loved the land for the rest of their lives.

Howard retired from farming in 1990 to travel and hunt rocks, and leased the land to another farmer. He returned to the fields from 2002 to 2004 before dying in 2006. His wife, Bea, died in 2002.

Their children, the two daughters and their late brother, Stephen, inherited the farm and continued to lease it to a farmer.

Now, when they are faced with selling the farm, the family members said they are delighted that Larimer County is interested in preserving the irrigated acres as a farm and, someday, turning it into an educational property, perhaps even as a demonstration garden or an option for high school agriculture students.

"One of our big dreads, when we knew we were going to have to sell the farm, is that it would end up covered with houses," Malchow Sass said.

Instead, with the pending sale, the land will remain a farm in perpetuity.

Water, crops and education

Larimer County is buying more than just the farm acres and buildings on the Malchow Farm, located on the west side of U.S. 287 near the Little Thompson River. The county also is buying the water associated with the farm — 240 shares of Colorado-Big Thompson water and 16 shares of Handy Ditch water.

Officials have agreed, with the sale, to share that water with municipalities during drought years — a type of water sharing arrangement that is on the forefront of complex water issues right now and is encouraged by the newly adopted Colorado Water Plan.

"We're doing some groundbreaking work here," Donnelly said. "It's really exciting."

The idea is to keep the acres irrigated in most years, but during certain times when water is scarce, the farm could fallow fields or plant dry land crops and sell the water to a municipal water provider. This is a way to meet urban needs and to avoid what officials call "buy and dry."

"It helps close that municipal-industrial water gap without causing that permanent ag dry-up," said Craig Godbout, program manager with the Colorado Water Conservation Board.

These types of agreements are key to having enough municipal water in the future, and this particular agreement is at least one of the first in the state involving a government entity protecting farmland and sharing water at the same time, according to farmers and water experts.

For that, the Colorado Water Conservation Board awarded Larimer County a \$178,425 grant to implement the agreement.

County officials are still working to hammer out the details on who they will share the water with, how often and the amount of money involved.

Kerri Rollins, open lands manager, noted that her team wanted enough time to ensure the best deal for the county, so the sale is going forward with the caveat that an agreement will be put in place but without any real details on that sharing agreement.

One player could be the town of Frederick as its engineering manager, Dick Leffler, spoke about the agreement at a recent Larimer County Open Lands Advisory Board meeting

"We like to see this sort of thing happen," Leffler said. "It's a great concept, and we look forward to the opportunity to work with you."

Negotiations on the sale of the water will continue even after the property closes as will efforts to receive grants and partnerships to offset the \$8.4 million cost of the farm.

County Open Lands officials are excited because protecting farmland is part of their mission and is a goal residents asked them to focus on. It's also the largest agricultural project the county has undertaken and, with the water component, the most complex.

"It's an expensive acquisition," said Alex Castino, county land agent who worked on the deal. "We're not going to be able to save every farm with the money we have available, but we have the opportunity to save this one."

Devil's Backbone, other trails closed due to mud



[Stephen Mevers](#), 12:58 p.m. MDT March 25, 2016



(Photo: Elliott Foust/For the Coloradoan)

With spring comes along mud season.

Following this week's heavy snowfall — which promptly melted — local foothills trails are a muddy mess, prompting several closures.

Devil's Backbone Open Space and Maxwell Natural Area both closed Friday, while Lory State Park's trails are closed to biking and horseback riding.

The Timber Trail at Pineridge Natural Area is closed. North of Fort Collins, Soapstone Prairie is closed due to large snowdrifts on the road.

Trails are open at Horsetooth Mountain Open Space and Bobcat Ridge Natural Area, but expect to walk through mud. Trail users are encouraged to brave the mud in order to stay on the trail.

The primary reason for the closures is to prevent trail damage and help preserve surrounding habitat. Most trail closures last one to three days.

Larimer County Natural Resources closes its open spaces and trails 10 to 12 days per year. Fort Collins Natural Areas close 10 to 20 days a year due to the mud.

Most common muddy trails

These are the Fort Collins-area trails most often closed due to muddy conditions:

- Pineridge Natural Area
- Maxwell Natural Area
- Reservoir Ridge Natural Area
- Bobcat Ridge Natural Area
- Nomad Trail, Horsetooth Mountain Open Space
- Blue Sky Trail, Horsetooth Mountain Open Space

- Devil's Backbone Open Space

Check before you go

There are several ways to check trail conditions for Larimer County Department of Natural Resources trails and Fort Collins Natural Areas. Typically, trail closures last a day or two.

Larimer County: Department of Natural Resources posts frequent updates on its Facebook page, facebook.com/LCNaturalResources, and Twitter feed, @LCDNR. Or visit larimer.org/naturalresources/parkareas.htm for current conditions, or call 970-619-4570.

Fort Collins Natural Areas: Visit fcgov.com/naturalareas/status.php, updated by rangers from the field. Also visit the department's Twitter feed, @FCNaturalAreas, or call the ranger hotline, 970-416-2147.

Flood repairs progressing at Lions Open Space

By Reporter-Herald Staff - POSTED: 04/13/2016 09:54:15 PM MDT

The parking area at Lions Open Space in LaPorte has reopened to the public.

The area was closed in late February for construction, including stabilizing the bank of the Poudre River and repairing about a 20-foot section of the Pleasant Valley Trail that was damaged during flooding.

Lions Open Space offers access to the westernmost portion of the Poudre River Trail, which continues west as the Pleasant Valley Trail.

The Pleasant Valley Trail is open but will remain rerouted away from the Cache la Poudre River until a damaged section of the trail is repaired later this year, according to a press release from the Fort Collins Natural Areas department. Fishing access is available.

During the first phase of construction, crews stabilized the bank of the Poudre River and installed rock clusters to improve fish habitat and lines of rock to slow the river's velocity and reduce bank erosion.

The second phase of construction, which will start in late summer or early fall, will include revegetation and soil work on the river bank, and repairs to the damaged section of the Pleasant Valley Trail.

Hickenlooper endorses Chimney Hollow

Proposed reservoir west of Loveland needs just one more permit; it could start filling in 2021

By **Pamela Johnson** - Reporter-Herald Staff Writer - POSTED: 04/13/2016 01:16:28 PM MDT



The future site of Chimney Hollow Reservoir, in the valley above Flat Iron Reservoir, pictured in the foreground, received official endorsement today from Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper. Construction could begin in 2018. (Jeff Dahlstrom / Special to the Loveland Reporter-Herald)

Chimney Hollow Reservoir, which will solidify water supplies for 13 providers including Loveland, Longmont and the Little Thompson Water District, is one permit closer to construction and is officially endorsed by Gov. John Hickenlooper.

John Stulp, water adviser to the governor, read a letter from Hickenlooper officially endorsing the project during Northern Water's spring water users meeting

Wednesday. This is the first time Hickenlooper has issued an official endorsement for a water project during his terms in office, according to Stulp.

"With fixed attention to this final regulatory step, we will ensure that the project moves forward in a timely manner," Hickenlooper wrote in his letter.

Northern Water began the planning and permitting process for Chimney Hollow Reservoir west of Loveland in 2003 to store Windy Gap water that will be pulled from the Colorado River in wet years.

Thirteen years, \$15 million in permitting costs and a bunch of studies and permits later, the project needs just one more approval, a wetlands permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

A recent water quality certification from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment was the last step before the final federal permit.

With state agencies signed off on the project and nearly every permit in place, Hickenlooper has officially endorsed the project and offered state support to the final wetlands permit, which officials hope will come this year.

This is the piece that will detail what steps Northern Water will take to replace any wetlands that are destroyed by the reservoir.

"There's less than 2 acres of wetlands along narrow stream channels," project manager Jeff Drager said previously. "Our plan right now is to buy into a wetland bank. There are properties that restore or maintain wetlands (in lieu of those lost)."

Initial design of the reservoir has begun, and that process will kick into higher gear this year. A design firm should be chosen in coming months.

Construction of the \$400 million project is expected to begin in 2018, and water could flow into the new reservoir as early as 2021.

The 90,000-acre-foot reservoir will provide a place to store Windy Gap water during wet years to provide a stable supply for the 13 participants in the project — Loveland, Little Thompson Water District, Louisville, Broomfield,

Fort Lupton, Evans, Central Weld County Water District, Superior, Lafayette, Longmont, Greeley, Erie and Platte River Power Authority.

The water is pulled from the Colorado River and will be transported to Chimney Hollow, which will be located near Carter Lake, through the existing Colorado-Big Thompson system, which also is administered by Northern Water.

As part of the project, Northern Water will provide some funding to alter the existing Windy Gap Reservoir on the Western Slope to include a new channel that will enhance water flow and provide a path for fish migration to improve habitat, said Drager.

"We will be able to build this project and meet our water supply needs as well as improve water quality on the West Slope and in the Colorado River," he said.

"We'll build our project, but we'll actually leave the river better than it was before."

When Chimney Hollow is complete, Larimer County Department of Natural Resources will manage recreation on the reservoir and on a surrounding open space. Details on what will be available are not yet firm; however, initial plans call for hiking, nonmotorized boating and camping.

Loan between Larimer departments moving forward

Natural Resources plans to use money for new properties

By Pamela Johnson - Reporter-Herald Staff Writer - POSTED: 03/22/2016 12:14:56 PM MDT

FORT COLLINS — One Larimer County department is borrowing \$7.6 million from another to purchase and conserve lands, including a deal on a Berthoud farm that includes a water sharing agreement.

The county commissioners showed support Tuesday for a loan from the Solid Waste Department to the Department of Natural Resources and will vote on the issue next week.

The bulk of the money will be combined with \$7.4 million that natural resources already has in the bank to buy and conserve properties.

The first purchase, which is expected to close next month, is the 211-acre historic Malchow farm for \$8.4 million. Details on other potential purchases have not been made public, but county officials have said that opportunities are ripe right now, hence, the loan.

"You have some very good projects coming up, and the citizens approved this tax by 80 percent so you would add to the inventory," Commissioner Steve Johnson said at Tuesday's administrative matters meeting.

"I think they would want us to take advantage of these amazing opportunities you've identified."

Gary Buffington, director of natural resources, said the county has a list of about 20 potential properties right now and that he expects deals on three to five of those from this money. A small portion of it also may be spent on projects to improve current county parks, he noted.

When approved, natural resources will borrow \$7.6 million, a portion of what the Solid Waste Department has in savings, and then roll in another \$415,173 it currently owes solid waste from a similar past loan for a total of \$8 million.

The Department of Natural Resources will pay Solid Waste back over 10 years using its quarter cent sales tax revenue at the same interest rate the money would be earning if left in the bank. That is currently 0.7 percent.

The first three years, payments would be interest only, then payments would increase for the final seven years of the loan. During that time, the county would devote 14 percent of its sales tax revenue to repaying this loan.

As far as solid waste, the loan will not impair operations at the landfill, and Solid Waste Director Stephen Gillette has said he has other money saved for the future closure of the landfill and a new facility.

Larimer County's Open Lands Advisory Board will consider the loan request at this Thursday's meeting (5 p.m. in the Loveland city council chambers), and barring any new information, the commissioners will approve the loan next Tuesday.

Bicyclists tune up for spring riding

Bike shop owners, bikers prepare bicycles for spring riding

By *Shelley Widhalm* - Reporter-Herald Staff Writer - POSTED: 04/03/2016 06:13:08 PM MDT



Joel Arrington, from Loveland, rides up a rocky hillside Saturday afternoon at Devil's Backbone Open Space. Arrington rides the trails at Devil's Backbone three times a week on average. (Michael Brian / Loveland Reporter-Herald)

Loveland resident Hans Bakker rode his mountain bike from downtown Loveland to Devil's Backbone Open Space Saturday to kick off his riding season.

Bakker rode once about a month ago before the snow hit, but now he'll be riding once a week, taking 15- to 40-mile trips, he said.

Before he got on his bike, he took his bike to Lee's Cyclery in Loveland to get a tune-up and have his brakes checked. He also gets his chains replaced every year, because they stretch out, and regularly checks the tire tread.

"I generally get everything tightened up," said Bakker, adding that with a newer bike, he doesn't have the specialized tools to do the work himself. "They are so advanced now. The components are more difficult to work on."

Bike riders who ride during the warmer months in Colorado generally start riding in March or April through November, or whenever the first snow hits, according to local bike shop owners. Locally, they like to ride the city trail system and places like Devil's Backbone, Coyote Ridge, Bobcat Ridge, Lory State Park and Horsetooth.

"People will be coming out like crazy," said Rick Preiss, owner of Loveland Cycle 'N Fitness, 524 N. Cleveland Ave. "The faithful riders can't stand it when they can't ride. When the weather breaks, they want to be out."

Getting Prepped for Riding

Riders as they take their bikes out of the garage, shed or wherever else they store them should know a few things about making sure their bike remains in good working condition.

"What we tell people is they need a basic tune-up," said Rich Panozzo, owner of Breakaway Cycles, 2237 W. Eisenhower Blvd.

A tune-up, which Panozzo recommends annually, involves things like checking and adjusting the brakes, gears and chain, the bearings in the head set, crank and wheels, and the spokes and tires, plus doing an external lubing of all points.

"Make sure it's shifting correctly and braking correctly and nothing is loose that will rattle," Panozzo said.

Steve Stalgren, from Loveland, rides down a trail Saturday afternoon at Devil's Backbone Open Space. Stalgren rides the trail once a week. (Michael Brian / Loveland Reporter-Herald)



The wheels should be straight, and the tires should be able to hold air and not be cracked or dried out, making them more susceptible to going flat, Panozzo said. The chains can stretch or elongate and can slip, causing shifting to be less smooth, and should be replaced every one to two years, depending on frequency of riding, he said.

"Look at the brakes and the brake pads to see if they line up and are not hitting the tire," Preiss said. "Look at the side of the tire, and it will tell you the pressure it takes — the range of PSI, or pounds per square inch."

Tires lose air over time, brake cables can freeze up and derailleurs can get sticky, Preiss said. He recommends checking tires regularly, such as weekly for daily riders.

Tune-ups vs.Repairs

Bikes don't always need a tune-up, but may need actual repairs, and Preiss recommends getting tune-ups on an as-needed basis. A tune-up makes things work better because they're out of adjustment, while a repair fixes the problem and is followed by a tune-up for the adjustment, he

said.

"You have to get them working first and then you can tune them to get them working correctly," Preiss said.

The tune-ups Preiss offers include a degreasing and pressure wash to remove grease and grime off the chain, drive gear and other parts of the bike.

After every one of his rides, Dave Schell of Longmont washes and relubes his bike — he rides both mountain and road bikes — including hosing off the drive train to get out the sand and grit.

"If you don't wash that, you'll go through chains so much faster," he said. "It will wear the components out faster. It's like sandpaper in there."

Schell, who has been riding for 10 years, recently got back into mountain bike riding and bought a new Scott-brand bike in September. He likes to get his bike tuned up once a year, and he makes sure to regularly check it for fit, such as seat height that can drop over time.

Schell rides most days, taking a 1- to 1 ½-hour ride during the week and a 2- to 4- hour ride on weekends. He likes riding in Longmont and coming to Loveland to ride Devil's Backbone, he said.

"It's a good place to ride. It's different terrain than out in Longmont," Schell said. "It's really technical and challenging."

Plus, Schell likes "just getting outside, seeing the sights, especially after a long winter," he said. "It's nice to get outside and hear the birds chirp."

Biking Benefits

Biking is a sport for all ages, Panozzo said.

"That's the beauty of bicycling," he said. "It's a great adventure. You get to see more scenery and travel more. ... It's healthy, and it's low impact."

Justin Haak of Fort Collins rode a product demo bike Saturday at Devil's Backbone that he rented for the day. He's been mountain and road biking for 15 years and wants to upgrade his mountain bike, he said.

Haak, on his first ride for the season, does his own tune-ups because he has the tools. He doesn't do a particular seasonal or spring tune-up, but makes sure his bike is in good working condition, he said.

"If it looks like it needs to be maintained, I do it no matter what time of year it is," Haak said.

Bike shop owners recommended bike riders wear a helmet and use front and rear bike lights. Helmets have a four-to-five-year lifespan, because the material will deteriorate and not be as protective, Panozzo said.

Preiss also recommends bringing a spare tube, a tire pump and a repair kit on the ride in case of a breakdown.

The preparation is for an activity that is healthy and saves on gas money, Preiss said.

"You feel better. You eat better. You sleep better," he said. "The daily exercise helps all that."

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Garry Preston, from Loveland, heads down a rocky slope Saturday afternoon at Devil's Backbone Open Space. Preston has ridden the trails at Devil's Backbone more than a hundred times. (Michael Brian / Loveland Reporter-Herald)

Northern Colorado regional network of trails in sight



(Photo: Brian Smith/For the Coloradoan)

What was once a patchwork of isolated trails is in the home stretch of truly becoming a regional network connecting Fort Collins to Loveland and Greeley. It's just a matter of time — and money — before cyclists and pedestrians will be able to travel between Northern Colorado's three major cities without taking to the streets.

Three regional projects are in the works, in varying stages of completion:

- A 2.2-mile addition to the Colorado Front Range Trail will connect Fort Collins' eastern portion of the Fossil Creek Trail to the Loveland Recreation Trail when it's finished in late 2016.
- The 4.4-mile Long View Corridor Trail will connect Fort Collins' western portion of the Fossil Creek Trail with the Loveland Recreation Trail when it's finished in summer or fall 2017.
- The Poudre Trail will connect Fort Collins to Greeley when its three remaining gaps are filled, but it's unclear when that will happen.

The Poudre Trail runs 39 miles with 5 to 6 miles of gaps along the way. If Larimer County can bridge those gaps, the Poudre Trail would be the longest paved trail in Northern Colorado, Larimer County natural resources specialist Jeffrey Boring said.

“It comes down to access and safety,” he said. “In practice, the trail is two separate trails, an eastern portion in Fort Collins and a western portion in Greeley. The idea is to unite it as one trail. It could be a tourist destination and the backbone of a larger trail system.”

Two of the gaps — one just west of Interstate 25 at Arapahoe Bend Natural Area and one east of the interstate from Stonefly Drive in Timnath to River Bluffs Open Space near Windsor — run across private land, so partners need to negotiate with landowners.

The other gap is more difficult because the trail would need to pass under Interstate 25. The plan is to raise and widen the interstate’s Poudre River Bridge so the trail can wind underneath it, but the Colorado Department of Transportation missed out on a hoped-for federal grant.

“We’re working with all the partners involved to keep this project a priority,” Boring said. “The big challenge there is funding.”

Raising the bridge is estimated to cost as much as \$30 million. Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper has designated the Poudre Trail as a “16 for 2016” priority project. It’s considered part of the Colorado Front Range Trail, an effort launched in 2003 to create a multipurpose trail from Wyoming to Mexico.

The “16 for 2016” designation doesn’t come with any funding, but Great Outdoors Colorado, the nonprofit that invests lottery proceeds in state parks, trails and nature, has earmarked \$10 million for these projects based on applications.

As for already-funded trail projects, construction on the Front Range Trail section connecting Fort Collins to Loveland will begin this summer.

The paved, shared-use trail will run from Fossil Creek Trail at Carpenter Road near Lemay Avenue in Fort Collins to Boyd Lake State Park in Loveland. The project is projected to cost more than \$1 million: \$450,000 comes from a Colorado Department of Transportation grant, \$350,000 from a Colorado Department of Parks and Wildlife grant, and the rest will be split among Fort Collins, Loveland and Larimer County.

Construction of the Long View Corridor Trail will take longer and cost more because it’s double the length. It will cost \$3 million to build; two-thirds comes from two grants, with the rest of the cost split among Fort Collins, Loveland and Larimer County.

The paved, shared-use trail will connect Fossil Creek Trail east of Cathy Fromme Prairie Natural Area and the Larimer County Landfill to a new natural area at the northeast corner of 57th Street and Taft Avenue in Loveland.

Trails

Miles of paved trails in Fort Collins: 39

Miles of trails in Larimer County parks and open spaces: 81

Major trails near Fort Collins, outside of city:

Number of natural areas maintained by Fort Collins: 43

Number of parks in Fort Collins: 51

Number of acres preserved through Larimer County’s Open Lands Program: 43,000

Horsetooth Reservoir: A well-known summer destination for Fort Collins Residents, Horsetooth Reservoir contains 2,040 acres of water and is surrounded by 1,900 acres of public lands.

Fort Collins trail hours: 5 a.m. to 11 p.m.

Larimer County trail hours: Vary, Many open dawn to dusk.

View a map of Fort Collins trails at <http://noconow.co/LarimerTrailMap>

View a map of Fort Collins parks at <http://noconow.co/parks>

View maps and information about Larimer County parks, trails and open spaces at <http://noconow.co/openspaces>.

RH Line calls printed March 20, 2016

Devil's Backbone

"Our children have environmental sensitivities and continue to be extra aware of what they're exposed to, especially when outdoors. For Larimer County to refuse to disclose soil test results and their environment impact studies for the Devil's Backbone trail head is more than a little concerning. As parents, taxpayers and people who are aware of the history of the Devil's Backbone, we have no other choice but to boycott that facility until the tests are requested and provided to the public."