

## Outpost

# Larimer County offers free outdoor programs

By Paul Albani-Burgio

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One of the great joys of living in Larimer County is the seemingly endless array of recreational spaces that are available to enjoy. But while these spaces can be great to explore on one's own, other experiences can be best experienced in the company of an expert in a particular facet of this space.

To that end, the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources offers several guides and guided programs on open space lands throughout the county. Best of all? These events are generally free.

Here is a look at five of those upcoming programs, including hikes, stargazing events and two recurring events specifically for kids. For a full calendar of events consult [offer.larimer.org/Calendar](http://offer.larimer.org/Calendar). Remember to wear appropriate footwear and clothing.

**Geology Hike at the Devil's Backbone:** The Devil's Backbone Open Space is frequented by many Loveland residents, and for good reason as the space's rock formations provide an impressive setting for hiking and biking. But far fewer of those visitors know much about the fascinating geological history of those eye-catching formations that this guided 1.5 hour walk with Larimer County naturalists attempts to illuminate. 9:30-11 a.m. Friday, Aug. 17. Adults 16 and over. Devil's Backbone Open Space, 1725 Hidden Valley Drive, Loveland. Free.

**Stargazing with the Northern Colorado Astrological Society:** Telescopes will be set up in the Devil's Backbone Open Space parking lot for this open-house style program and the group's astronomers will be on hand to help with the identification of stars, planets, galaxies and other celestial sights. 8 p.m.-10 p.m. Friday, Aug. 31 (Devil's Backbone) and Saturday, Sept. 1 (Hermit Park). Open to all ages. Parking lot at Devil's Backbone Open Space, 1725 Hidden Valley Drive, Loveland (Friday) and Hermit Park Open Space, 17 Hermit Park Road, Estes Park. Free programs; a \$6 per vehicle entry fee applies at Hermit Park.

**Red Mountain Stargazing and Night Sky Photography Workshop:** Another stargazing event with the Northern Colorado Astrological Society at Red Mountain Open Space in North Larimer County. Stargazing at 8-11 p.m. Friday, Sept. 7. Red Mountain Open Space, 799 Red Canyon Road, Wellington. Photography workshop the same evening and location at 7:30-9:30 p.m. (separate registration required). Free. Registration required [offer.larimer.org/calendar](http://offer.larimer.org/calendar).

### Programs for Kids

**Tiny Trekkers:** Get your little one started on a lifetime of appreciating the outdoors with this program for 2- to 5-year-olds consisting of crafts, stories and fun facts. The event takes place on the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month at various locations around Larimer County. Open to parents and guardians and their 2- to 5-year-old children. Next date: 9:30 and 10:30 a.m. on Tuesday, July 24, River Bluffs Open Space and Poudre River Trail, 6371 E. County Road 32, Windsor. Registration required (register online at [offer.larimer.org/calendar](http://offer.larimer.org/calendar)).

**Junior Ranger Hikes:** Older kids will enjoy this 2.5-hour program led by Larimer County naturalists that will include a moderate hike as well as some instruction in outdoor safety. Participants will also receive a Larimer County Junior Ranger guide. Programs held on varying days at various locations around Larimer County. Open to kids 8-12. Next Program: 5-7 p.m. Aug. 8. River Bluffs Open Space and Poudre River Trail, 6371 E. County Road 32, Windsor. Registration required (register online at [offer.larimer.org/calendar](http://offer.larimer.org/calendar)).

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## Long View Trail to open in August

### 4.4-mile pathway will connect Loveland to Fort Collins

BY PAMELA JOHNSON

REPORTER-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Residents can see the paved trail that parallels Taft Avenue between Loveland and Fort Collins from the lanes of traffic, but they can't run, walk or pedal on the surface just yet.

The Long View Trail, a 4.4-mile connection between Loveland and Fort Collins, is expected to open to the public in about three weeks.

A public grand opening and ribbon cutting is set for Saturday, Aug. 18, at Sunset Vista Natural Area, located at 57th Street and Taft Avenue with a parking lot for trail access. The trail may officially open before then, but that depends upon how quickly the final pieces are completed.

"Our goal was always summer of 2018, and we're going to make it with our August date," said Marilyn Hilgenberg, the city of Loveland's open lands and trail manager.

The Long View Trail, the second paved connection between Loveland and Fort Collins to open within the last year, is a joint project between the two cities and Larimer County as the trail runs through land in all three jurisdictions. In connecting the two cities, the trail also links 19 miles of paved Loveland Recreation Trail to 35 miles of existing trail in Fort Collins.

In Loveland, it starts at 57th Street and Taft Avenue and continues to north Fort Collins parallel to the east side of Taft Avenue (Shields Street in Fort Collins). About half of the trail is located in Fort Collins, while the second half was split between land in Loveland and Larimer County.

The trailhead at Sunset Vista has 23 parking spaces, and the trail itself includes five bridges over ditches and wetlands.

Most of the major construction is complete with some final touches to occur within the coming weeks. Loveland's piece, including the parking lot, is 95 percent complete with just final touches left, according to Hilgenberg. Seeding and planting along the trail will be completed in the fall. "It looks great," said Hilgenberg, explaining that residents seem excited about the new trail and at parks and recreation events the status of Long View is the number one question asked.

"There's an incredible amount of interest," she said.

The parking lot at Sunset Vista Natural area, accessible off 57th Street just east of Taft Avenue, will be open with the Long View Trail. A soft-surface loop around that natural area and information on the old farmstead is the second phase of the project with a goal of completion next summer, Hilgenberg said.

The Long View Trail was budgeted at \$3.9 million including a \$1 million Great Outdoors Colorado grant and a \$1 million Transportation Alternatives Program grant from the Colorado Department of Transportation. The second half of the cost was split by the cities and the county with amounts proportionate to the work within their jurisdictions.

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**A new paved trail on the east side of Taft Avenue north of 57th Street, seen Tuesday, opens next month. The trail travels from north Loveland to Fort Collins.**

## Larimer to buy 800-acre enclave in Red Mountain Open Space

**County stepped in when other potential buyer considered development; Fort Collins expected to reimburse half the cost**

By Pamela Johnson

*Reporter-Herald Staff Writer*  
Loveland Reporter-Herald

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Larimer County is adding an 800-acre private ranch tucked inside Red Mountain Open Space to its protected lands north of Fort Collins.

The county commissioners on Tuesday authorized spending \$2.25 million to buy the Gallegos Ranch — money from the Help Preserve Open Spaces sales tax approved by voters solely for protected lands. The city of Fort Collins is expected to reimburse half of the cost as a partner in the project.

The property, which is an enclave inside the 14,980-acre open space, includes the highly visible Table Mountain, riparian areas and archeological resources, according to information from the county. It adds to the protected acreage of the open space as well as a larger conservation corridor.

"It's a great investment," said Lew Gaiter, one of three county commissioners who unanimously approved the money to buy the property.

Red Mountain Open Space is adjacent to the city of Fort Collins' Soapstone Prairie Natural Area, both of which share acreage that house a conservation bison herd. Those natural lands are part of an even larger partnership and effort to conserve vital habitat and views in a larger area called the Laramie Foothills Mountains to Plains project, which stretches to the Wyoming border.

That partnership has protected 140,000 total acres of contiguous land and spans from grasslands to foothills to the Rocky Mountains.

Larimer County, alone, has invested more than \$14 million in this larger project alongside \$11.5 million from Great Outdoors Colorado plus more from other partners, including Fort Collins; The Nature Conservancy; Legacy Land Trust; Cheyenne, Wyo.; and private landowners.

"In a way it completes the total landscape, which was the intent of the whole project," said Charlie Johnson, Larimer County's acting open lands director.

Larimer County will own the 800 acres of the Gallegos Ranch, and Fort Collins will hold a conservation easement that allows continued agricultural uses, trails and hunting and fishing. The property also could be used for biking and horseback riding, adding to recreational options at Red Mountain.

Previously, the ranch had been listed for sale for \$4 million, said Alex Castino, a land agent with the county. But when the sale price dropped to \$2.5 million and potential buyers were looking at dividing it into 35-acre lots for development, the county stepped in and negotiated the price down to \$2.25 million, she said.

"We think we struck at the right time," said Castino, explaining that the property is an important piece to conserve rather than develop.

"It contains much of Table Mountain," Castino said. "It's a major feature on the landscape there, and it will be wonderful to add that to our conservation in the area."

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Jami McMannes

Fort Collins, CO – We're connected! Long View Trail is a 4.4 mile stretch of multipurpose recreational trail that connects Fort Collins to Loveland. The \$8 million Long View Corridor Trail project was done in partnership with the City of Fort Collins, City of Loveland, Larimer County, Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO), and Colorado Department of Transportation. The Grand Opening of Long View Trail is Saturday, August 18 from 8 – 11 a.m., with the ribbon cutting to take place at 10 a.m. at Sunset Vista Trailhead in Loveland.

Northern Colorado LiveMarket

### THE COLONIAL SHOP

by North Forty / Scene Magazine - August 4, 2018

Long View Trail runs along the east side of South Shields Street in Fort Collins and North Taft Avenue in Loveland. The trail provides a safe, non-motorized alternative to traveling between the two cities. The trail passes through three City of Fort Collins natural areas, one Larimer County open space, and one City of Loveland natural area. The five public spaces, which consist of agricultural lands and wildlife habitat, offer trail users sweeping views of the foothills and mountains.

The Grand Opening of Long View Trail will take place on Saturday, August 18 beginning at 8 a.m. Partner organizations will be set-up along the trail to provide information about the project, as well as provide giveaways and bike maintenance support. Dignitaries and partner organizations will gather at Sunset Vista Trailhead in Loveland at 10 a.m. to give a short presentation and cut the ribbon to open the trail.

For more information about the Long View Corridor Trail and the Grand Opening, visit <http://bit.ly/LongViewTrail>.



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