

Communication Services
5334 South Prince Street
Littleton, Colorado 80166-0001
Phone: 303-795-4630
Fax: 303-738-7894
www.co.arapahoe.co.us

For release: December 5, 2007

Contact:

ANDREA RASIZER

Communication Services Director

Direct: 303-795-4284

Mobile: 303-882-1909

E-mail: arasizer@co.arapahoe.co.us

The South Platte River gets a boost

Arapahoe County Working Group set to beautify and preserve the South Platte gets \$5.25 million Legacy Grant from Great Outdoors Colorado

LITTLETON, CO --- The legacy for the South Platte River corridor – a vision of beauty, wildlife, preservation and recreation set forth by Arapahoe County and 15 entities - is about to get underway thanks to a \$5.25 million boost from Great Outdoors Colorado.

On Monday, GOCO awarded a \$5.25 million grant to Arapahoe County and members of the South Platte Working Group, a coalition of 16 local governments and organizations working together on the South Platte Greenway Legacy Project – a plan to beautify the South Platte River corridor and enhance its connectivity to the recreation trails and wildlife habitat in the region. The South Platte Greenway Legacy project extends from Englewood to the Arapahoe County line south of Littleton.

The South Platte Working Group has embarked on an ambitious, comprehensive study to look at ways to improve the major east-west trail connections to the river, such as the High Line Canal, and to build upon the preservation and recreational activity that already exists.

Arapahoe County's South Platte River is undergoing rapid change and redevelopment as it transforms from an industrial corridor to retail, office and residential developments. It is critical now to set aside open space along the river.

“Wow, \$5.25 million – the second largest GOCO grant in the State of Colorado. This money couldn't have come at a better time and wouldn't have happened if it weren't for the partnerships that came together last year,” said Arapahoe County Commissioner Susan Beckman, a founding member of the South Platte Working Group. “It's called a legacy grant for a reason. With the money that we've been able to generate for this project, Arapahoe County and its partners are going to leave a legacy for this area. This is fantastic.”

Arapahoe County will receive \$5.25 million, which when combined with more than \$20 million the South Platte Working Group has committed will enhance the South Platte River corridor as a recreational and habitat amenity by purchasing land from willing landowners to set aside for open space. Funds also will be used to construct recreational improvements including nature education and trails.

A dual trail for bikes and pedestrians traces the river's course, but access is difficult along segments of the trail. Critical east-west trail connections are missing and recreational users compete for limited trail space in

some areas. Other parts of the trail are marked by heavy industrial uses and automobile storage yards that eclipse the view of the river.

Members of the South Platte Working Group consists of Arapahoe County, the cities of Littleton, Englewood, Cherry Hills Village, Sheridan, Columbine Valley, Centennial and Greenwood Village, the Town of Bow Mar, as well as South Suburban Parks and Recreation and its Foundation, the Arapahoe County Open Space Advisory Board, Trust for Public Land, Urban Drainage and Flood Control District, South Metro Land Conservancy and Colorado Water Conservation Board.

Arapahoe County convened the coalition in September 2006 to develop a unified vision for how resources would best be invested in open space, recreation, connectivity and habitat conservation along the South Platte and the Mary Carter Greenway Trail.

The South Platte Working Group – using expertise from the Trust for Public Land - has identified a list of 21 viable projects that can be completed within the next three years.

The Working Group's first effort – the Oxbow property – a 2.6-acre parcel that straddles the Littleton and Englewood border, was purchased in late November.

The property represents a portion of the historic course of the South Platte River and it retains many of its original natural features, including a riparian habitat, wetlands, trees, vegetation and ponds. It is surrounded by commercial and industrial development and the purchase will protect water quality, wildlife areas and scenic vistas, as well as provide future recreational opportunities.

The \$730,000 purchase was funded by Englewood, Littleton, South Suburban Parks and Recreation and Arapahoe County using Arapahoe County Open Space funds. The property will be owned by South Suburban Parks and Recreation.

* * *

Photo: <ftp://www.co.arapahoe.co.us/Pub/CM/photos/>

(Goco-3.jpg)

Members of the South Platte Working Group, a coalition of representatives from key municipalities, agencies and organizations in Arapahoe County interested in working together to preserve the South Platte River and improve the connectivity along the corridor, stand with Gov. Bill Ritter on the steps of the Capitol following the announcement that Arapahoe County will receive a \$5.25 million grant from Great Outdoors Colorado.

Pictured: (Back Row) Cliff Mueller, Council member, City of Sheridan; Dave Lorenz, Executive Director, South Suburban Parks and Recreation; Jim Taylor, Council member, City of Littleton; and Jerry D. Call, Chair, South Suburban Parks and Recreation. (Front Row) Jim Woodward, Mayor, City of Englewood; Gov. Bill Ritter, and Susan Beckman, Commissioner, Arapahoe County Board of County Commissioners.

Other photos of the South Platte River are available on the County's ftp server.