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### **Picture Perfect: A view protected for generations to come** *Arapahoe County preserves 265 acres of open space near the Town of Bennett*

ARAPAHOE COUNTY, CO. --- If you could take the perfect photo it would look a lot like this: wildflowers in full bloom, mule deer grazing while a small herd of pronghorn antelope run through the short-prairie grasses and rustle up a great horned owl. A land gradually sloping into a riparian area and stream, and just beyond, a mature cottonwood gallery that serves as home for various songbirds, and red-tailed hawks. Maybe even a porcupine in a tree against a dramatic Rocky Mountain backdrop.

This beautiful image doesn't need to be photographed to be preserved because thanks to Arapahoe County, it is saved for future generations to experience in person. In February, the Board of County Commissioners approved the purchase of 265 acres of Kiowa Creek for open space near the Town of Bennett with \$1.27 million in Arapahoe County Open Space funds that was made possible by the generous citizens of Arapahoe County through the voter-approved Arapahoe County Open Space Sales and Use Tax.

In 2003, voters approved a quarter-cent sales and use tax to pay for the preservation of open space in Arapahoe County. The tax is used to preserve urban and rural open space and natural areas; protect lands that preserve water quality in rivers, lakes and streams; provide, maintain and improve neighborhood parks, open space, sports fields, picnic facilities and multi-use trails; protect wildlife habitat and corridors; preserve agriculture and ranchlands; and enhance and maintain designated heritage areas.

The new Kiowa Creek open space is the second significant fee simple purchase since the program's inception which was made possible with the help of Trust for Public Land. Located south of the Town of Bennett on North County Road 137, the open space adds to the growing network of public and privately conserved agricultural and wildlife properties that serve to protect the western heritage of Arapahoe County.

"This land will be preserved for its excellent views, wildlife habitat and passive recreational opportunities," said Arapahoe County Commissioner Rod Bockenfeld. "I envision this property is exactly what the voters wanted us to protect when they approved the County's Open Space sales tax."

In a letter of support from the Town of Bennett, Mayor Sue Horn and the Board of Trustees identifies the Kiowa Creek corridor as a conservation area consistent with the Town's Comprehensive Plan. As the only substantial creek in the Bennett area, it needs to be protected as a regional open space resource.

"Preserving the beauty and ensuring the environmental integrity of the Kiowa Creek Corridor for future generation is of vital importance," said Mayor Sue Horn. "Arapahoe County Commissioners and Open

Space staff are to be commended for their foresight and efforts to preserve lands in eastern Arapahoe County and we look forward to working together to plan for and develop open space, parks and trails in our area.”

While the property is currently closed to the public, County staff will at minimum, over the next few months conduct additional assessments on the natural resource conditions, meet with neighbors, define boundaries, place signage, and conduct clean up. Arapahoe County Open Space is committed to creating a long-term asset for the surrounding community and being good stewards of these special places.

Future plans include the County engaging the local community on their thoughts and ideas for the property. Some ideas up for discussion include multi-purpose horse and pedestrian trails, trailhead and interpretive signage, picnic shelters and possible multi-county trail connections.

To learn more about the County’s Open Space program, visit [www.co.arapahoe.co.us](http://www.co.arapahoe.co.us).

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To download photos click on the following link:

<ftp://www.co.arapahoe.co.us/Pub/CM/Photos/Kiowa%20Creek/>

View from Ridge: Arapahoe County Open Space buys a portion of Kiowa Creek for wildlife preservation. Kiowa Creek in Winter: Picture perfect even in winter time. Arapahoe County Open Space protecting land and views for generations to come.

#### **About the Arapahoe County Open Space Program:**

In 2003, voters approved a quarter-cent sales and use tax to pay for the preservation of open space in Arapahoe County. The tax is used to preserve urban and rural open space and natural areas; protect lands that preserve water quality in rivers, lakes and streams; provide, maintain and improve neighborhood parks, open space, sports fields, picnic facilities and multi-use trails; protect wildlife habitat and corridors; preserve agriculture and ranchlands; and enhance and maintain designated heritage areas. Since the program’s inception, Arapahoe County has distributed more than **\$39 million** in sales tax revenue for open space, parks and trails projects. These are projects that are happening in your community.