



Larimer County Natural Resources

QUARTERLY BOARD REPORT

Q4 2025

OCTOBER · NOVEMBER · DECEMBER

PHOTO BY RANGER CHRIS GARDNER

COMPASS PRIORITIES

NATURE-BASED OPPORTUNITIES

PROACTIVE LAND CONSERVATION & MANAGEMENT

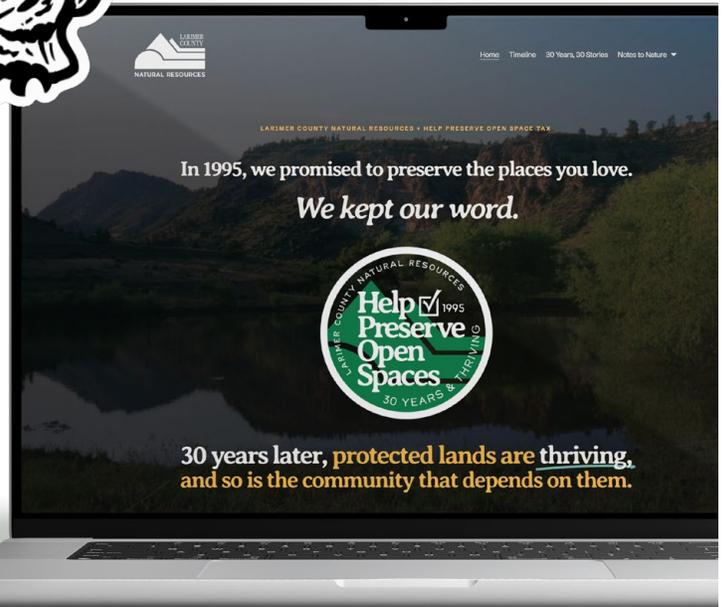
30 and Thriving: Celebrating 30 years of open space in Larimer County

In November 2025, the Department of Natural Resources launched 30 and Thriving, a public awareness campaign celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Help Preserve Open Spaces sales tax. The campaign highlights three decades of conservation success and community impact by exploring the stories behind beloved places and profiling the people who helped shape Larimer County's open lands program.

Through an interactive website, community profiles, and a 'Notes to Nature' storytelling collection, the campaign invites the public to engage in this milestone celebration.



30 and Thriving runs through April 2026 and can be visited at larimerdnr-30andthriving.org

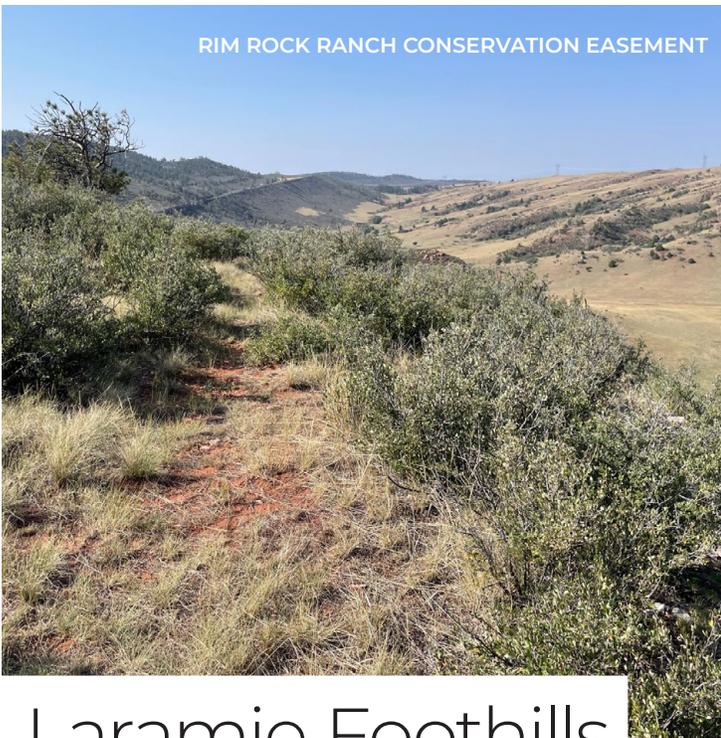




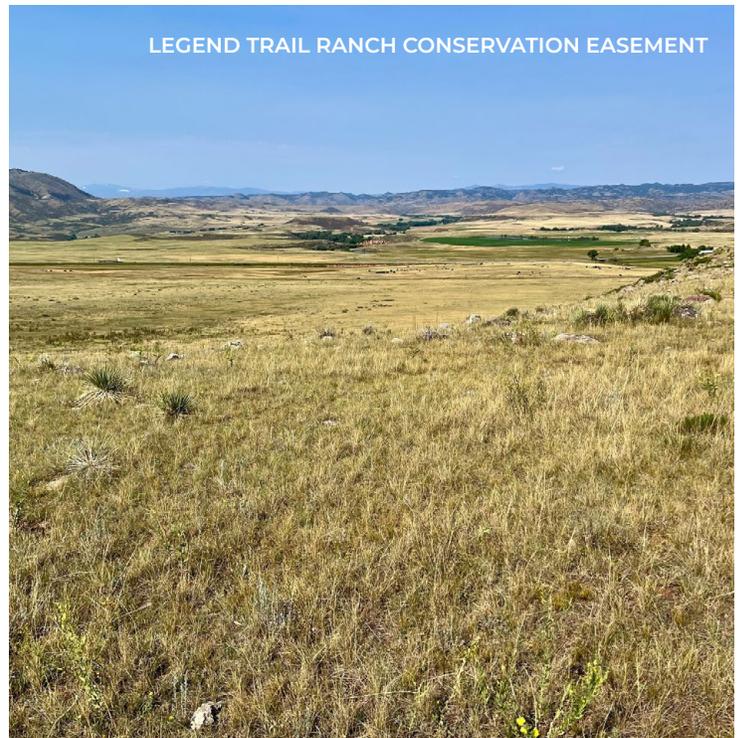
Banner year for land conservation

The Department of Natural Resources conserved 6,569 acres in 2025, marking the second-highest annual total since voters approved the Help Preserve Open Spaces sales tax three decades ago. Working with willing landowners and funding partners, the county has now protected 64,232 acres countywide. These acquisitions follow the Open Lands Master Plan's priority conservation areas, focusing on buffering existing protected lands to strengthen landscape and habitat connectivity. The milestone arrives during the 30th anniversary of the HPOS program, which first achieved its highest single-year conservation total in 2004 with 15,400 acres protected. Each acquisition represents collaboration between landowners who choose to conserve their properties and community investment in preserving the agricultural heritage and natural character that define Larimer County.

RIM ROCK RANCH CONSERVATION EASEMENT



LEGEND TRAIL RANCH CONSERVATION EASEMENT



Laramie Foothills conservation footprint expands

In late fall 2025, the Department of Natural Resources completed two conservation easements on large ranches in northern Larimer County. Both ranches are in the Laramie Foothills, an area identified as a priority for land conservation in the Larimer County Open Lands Master Plan, where significant conservation work has already been completed. The 675-acre Legend Trail Ranch features rolling grasslands, rock outcroppings, and working agricultural lands along U.S. Hwy 287. It buffers two sides of other privately owned conservation easements, creating a connected landscape of protected lands. The expansive 800-acre Rim Rock Ranch protects diverse wildlife habitat and buffers the west side of Red Mountain Open Space.

Both conservation easements were made possible by the generous donation of the easements by the landowners. Larimer County is honored to work with landowners like these to ensure protection of lands that support wildlife habitat, keep important viewsheds intact, and create landscape connectivity.

Bay to Bay Trail at Horsetooth Reservoir wins Golden McLeod Award



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PHOTO: BRENDAN BOMBACI

The Bay to Bay Trail at Horsetooth Reservoir has earned the Golden McLeod Award at the Colorado Trails Symposium, which recognizes trail projects that showcase ingenuity in construction and maintenance. Department of Natural Resources' professional trail staff, working alongside community volunteers, built a sustainable 1.8-mile trail that connects to a larger trail system west of the reservoir. The team navigated challenging terrain while protecting sensitive plant communities and minimizing visual impacts through thoughtful design and construction methods. Great Outdoors Colorado and the Bureau of Reclamation made this project possible through their funding support—we're grateful for their investment in expanding outdoor access for Larimer County residents.



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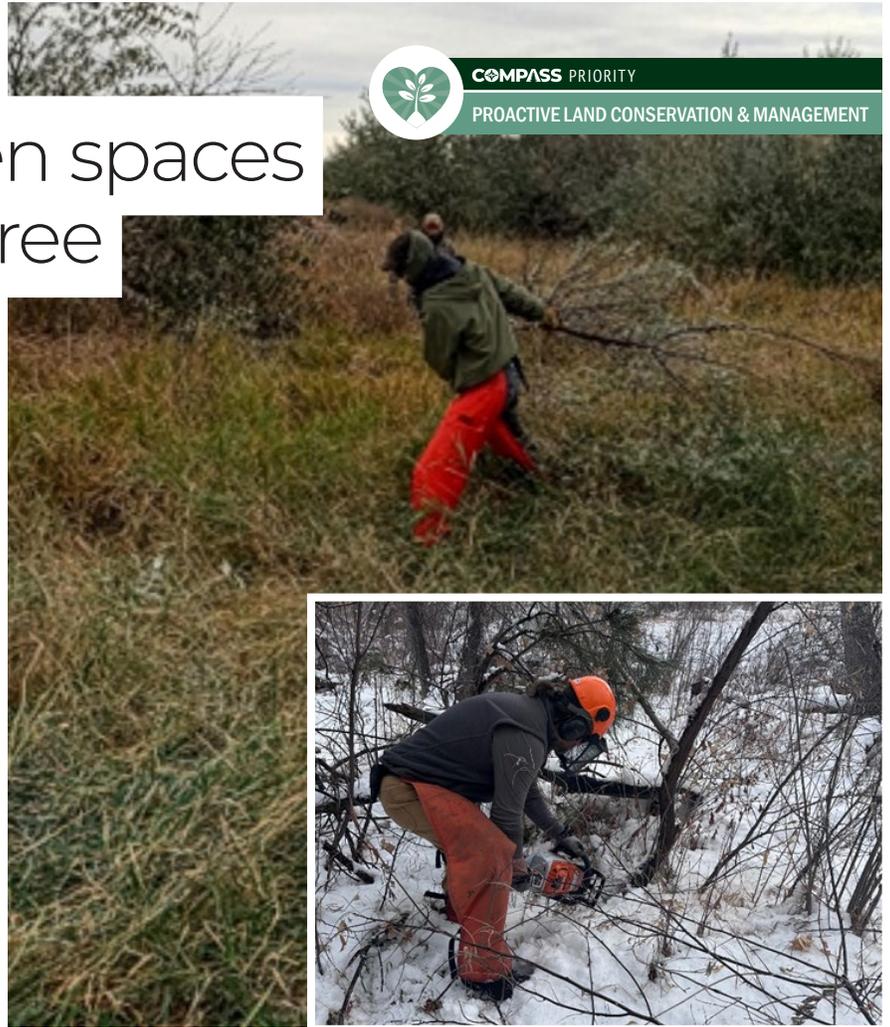
Canyon Edge Open Space sees significant restoration progress

Since acquiring Canyon Edge Open Space, the Department of Natural Resources has focused on ecological restoration to return the property to a healthier natural state. Staff completed removal of multiple buildings, extensive fencing, and several roads this winter—a significant milestone in preparing the site for its conservation purpose. The team has also coordinated forest health treatments, mapped wetlands and wildlife populations, and implemented large-scale invasive species control. These foundational efforts support early planning for future public access to the property. In coming years, staff will continue restoration work while developing infrastructure concepts including a highway turn lane from U.S. Hwy 34 and preliminary trail designs. Additional ecological and cultural resource surveys will inform thoughtful access planning that balances public recreation with protecting the site's natural and historical values.



Keeping our open spaces non-native tree free

This fall/winter Department of Natural Resources Land Stewardship staff continued the long, arduous process of removing non-native, state-listed noxious tree species from county open spaces. Removing invasive tree species such as Siberian elm (*Ulmus pumila*), Russian olive (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*), crack willow (*Salix fragilis*), and salt cedar (*Tamarix spp.*) is a critical component of ecological restoration. These species, which have been introduced for ornamental purposes, wind breaks, and erosion control, outcompete native vegetation, disrupt local ecosystems and put stress on already limited water resources. Ongoing invasive tree removals, including adaptive management as new seedlings may establish, will continue to occur system-wide during the winter months, as well as at newly acquired properties.



Simplified regulations improve visitor experience

The Department of Natural Resources redesigned its regulations brochure and webpage to improve accessibility and help visitors comply with the rules. The streamlined format translates complex regulatory language into clear, easy-to-navigate content so visitors understand what's allowed before they arrive. Updates include clarified swimming guidelines, life jacket requirements for children on all watercraft (including paddleboards), and confirmation that ice fishing remains prohibited at county reservoirs. The brochure also standardizes enforcement language and penalty structures while incorporating Colorado Parks and Wildlife's aquatic nuisance species inspection requirements and updated speed restrictions in wakeless zones. These changes help rangers and visitors interact more positively by making it easier for people to follow the rules voluntarily—most visitors want to enjoy county properties responsibly and appreciate having straightforward information in both print and digital formats.



Financial Summary

The Department of Natural Resources has five primary revenue sources including Colorado Lottery proceeds, the Help Preserve Open Spaces Sales Tax, user fees on open spaces, and reservoir parks, and the Weed District property tax.

YTD through 12/31/25 financial comparison for 2024 vs 2025 as of 2/10/26 (preliminary and unaudited).

Conservation Trust/Lottery

	2024	2025	% YOY CHANGE
REVENUE			
	1,045,412	1,058,783	1%

Open Spaces

	2024	2025	% YOY CHANGE
REVENUE			
Help Preserve Open Space Tax	11,820,726	11,068,892	
User Fees Revenue	1,498,332	1,557,730	
Service Charges Revenue	168,567	167,002	
Miscellaneous Revenue	8,940	14,251	
Grants/Partnerships <i>Livermore Conservation Project, Donated CE's (Legend Trail Ranch, Rim Rock Ranch), Fiduciary for Phemister Trail CSU grant, etc</i>	1,845,002	12,459,679	
Interest Revenue	1,411,253	1,316,922	
TOTAL	16,752,821	26,584,475	59%
EXPENSE			
Personnel Expenses	2,066,957	2,036,109	
Operating Expenses	3,638,443	4,612,213	
TOTAL	5,705,400	6,648,322	17%
Countywide Indirects	227,427	202,615	-11%
Acquisitions/Projects <i>Redtail, Livermore, HP Shop, Poudre River Trail, Legend Trail Ranch donated CE, Rim Rock Ranch donated CE, etc</i>	855,749	22,205,548	

Reservoir Parks

	2024	2025	% YOY CHANGE
REVENUE			
User Fees Revenue	4,549,643	4,228,135	
Service Charges Revenue	421,624	314,172	
Grants/Partnerships	917,353	792,623	
General Fund	134,081	67,000	
Miscellaneous Revenue	4,842	66,973	
TOTAL	6,027,543	5,468,903	-9%
EXPENSE			
Personnel Expenses	5,616,799	5,813,825	
Operating Expenses	167,338	129,802	
TOTAL	5,784,137	5,943,628	3%
Countywide Indirects	621,496	629,709	1%
Projects <i>Federal Land Access Project (FLAP), ANS Shelters, etc.</i>	443,087	1,180,336	

Weed District/Enterprise

	2024	2025	% YOY CHANGE
REVENUE			
Property Taxes	1,087,403	1,071,934	
Service Charges Revenue	726,240	713,770	
General Fund	105,149	108,000	
Miscellaneous Revenue	-	1,472	
TOTAL	1,918,792	1,895,176	-1%
SIGNIFICANT DONATION/OTHER REVENUE			
Sale of Mulberry Building	516,474		
EXPENSE			
Personnel Expenses	697,790	746,628	
Operating Expenses	827,834	786,405	
TOTAL	1,525,623	1,533,034	0%
Countywide Indirects <i>Indirect exemption for 2025</i>	39,422		



MISSION: We connect people, nature and place.
VISION: Healthy Landscapes, Healthy People.



PROACTIVE LAND CONSERVATION & MANAGEMENT



LIVING OUR VALUES



NATURE-BASED OPPORTUNITIES



SUSTAINABLE OPERATIONS & FINANCIAL STABILITY



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CONNECT WITH US

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