

## Larimer County officials searching for vandal who tagged rocks, signs, garbage cans in popular park

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<https://kdvr.com/news/local/larimer-county-officials-searching-for-vandal-who-tagged-rocks-signs-garbage-cans-in-popular-park/>

LOVELAND, Colo. (KDVR) — Authorities in Larimer County need help finding the person responsible for defacing a popular trailhead.

Park rangers say the suspect used spray paint to vandalize a 12-mile stretch of Devil’s Backbone, an iconic rock formation.

Known for its scenic hiking and mountain bike trails, Devil’s Backbone is one of the most visible geological landmarks in Larimer County.

“Someone tagged rocks, signs, garbage cans, you name it,” Chris Fleming, the Big Thompson district manager for the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources.

The suspect scrawled letters, symbols and a smiley face into the rock formation. Staff spent countless hours scrubbing them off.

“Like, why? I don’t understand why anyone would do that,” one hiker said.

Park rangers are seeing record visitation during the COVID-19 pandemic as well as an increase of trash on the trails and destruction of property.

“It seems almost daily we’re having more graffiti on our restrooms and again on our signs. It’s frustrating,” Fleming said.

Park rangers ask everyone to recreate responsibly.

“Please help us keep this area beautiful and open to the public,” Fleming said.

To check the status of the trailhead parking lot capacity, [click here](#).

## Larimer County receives \$800,000 grant from Great Outdoors Colorado to conserve Laramie Foothills

The conservation project will form a wildlife corridor between protected lands



Charlie Johnson / Larimer County

Larimer County received a grant from Great Outdoors Colorado to conserve more than 2,800 acres in the Laramie Foothills area north of Fort Collins. The project will create a wildlife corridor for several species.

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<https://www.reporterherald.com/2020/06/13/larimer-county-receives-800000-grant-from-great-outdoors-colorado-to-serve-laramie-foothills/>

The board of Great Outdoors Colorado has awarded Larimer County an \$812,475 grant to help conserve 2,893 acres in the Laramie Foothills north of Fort Collins.

The grant is part of Great Outdoors Colorado's special opportunity open space grant program, which has a minimum application requirement of \$1 million.

Meegan Flenniken, division manager with the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources, said the county applied for a grant of \$1 million. Despite receiving slightly less than it asked for, Flenniken said the county still plans to complete the entire project.

"We hope we'll still be able to do the full project, and we intend to," she said.

Great Outdoors Colorado has previously invested more than \$57.4 million in projects in Larimer County and conserved more than 64,000 acres of land, according to a release from the county.

In partnership with the city of Fort Collins, the county will use the grant money to conserve four ranches in the Laramie Foothills that serve as a wildlife migration corridor and are home to elk, pronghorn, mountain lions, deer and black bears, the release said.

The area has also been designated by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program as containing significant biodiversity. It contains shortgrass prairie and mountain mahogany shrub lands that come together to form an ecological transition zone, the release said.

The Laramie Foothills area is north of Fort Collins and extends up to the Wyoming border. The county has done conservation work in the area since the early 2000s, including on Soapstone Prairie Natural Area and Red Mountain Open Space.

Two of the four ranches are currently grazed by local ranchers, and the other two are large open areas in natural range land, Flenniken said.

“They’re spectacular properties,” she said. “They are large intact native foothills that provide habitat to a suite of native wildlife in combination to the already protected lands that they buffer.”

The goal of the conservation project is to preserve the buffer zone, which creates a corridor of conserved lands connecting the grasslands on eastern edge of the property up to protected forested lands on the western edge.