



Parks & Open Space

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BOCC PUBLIC HEARING

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TO: Board of County Commissioners
FROM: Janis Whisman, Real Estate Division Manager
FOR: BOCC Public Hearing, 11:30 a.m., Tuesday, February 14, 2023
RE: 2022 Real Estate Division Accomplishments
MEMO DATE: February 6, 2023

For much longer than Parks & Open Space's history of stewarding open space, the land in this community has been important to the diverse Indigenous communities that continue to live here. We are partnering with Indigenous people to make meaningful changes to how we do our work that include Indigenous people, incorporate their perspectives, and honor their land stewardship legacy. Parks & Open Space operates within modern legal constructs of land ownership to steward Boulder County open space and accomplish these efforts on behalf of our community.

This memo summarizes the Real Estate Division's 2022 accomplishments. This is an informational topic and no BOCC decision is needed.

Acquisitions

The Real Estate Division is working with willing landowners on approximately 100 acquisition projects at any given time. These projects include new acquisitions and conservation easement amendments.

In 2022, Boulder County invested a net of \$18,809,595 to acquire a net of 1,615 acres. This included completing grant requirements and receiving \$1,250,000 in reimbursement from Great Outdoors Colorado for the 2020 Tucker acquisition. The county completed 16 acquisition projects that included three new fee properties, five new conservation easements, five conservation easement amendments, and 70 shares of priority agricultural water rights in the Goodhue, Highland, and Leyner-Cottonwood ditches. The year's most significant acquisitions were:

- Camp Tahosa CE: We acquired two conservation easements over 318 acres. One CE covers the land north of Beaver Reservoir Road and the other covers the land south of the road. Camp activities are allowed to continue. The CEs protect the undeveloped portions of the property and Tumblesom (a/k/a Tumbleson) Lake.
- Bald Mountain and Heil Valley Ranch State Land Board Property: We acquired fee title to these two properties, which have been long-time acquisition priorities. The county has been leasing the bulk of the Bald Mountain property since 1973 and the Heil Valley Ranch property since 1998. Heil Valley Ranch was the poster property for the 1993 passage of the first open space sales tax, and this acquisition protects the final 586-acre interior of the ranch from development.
- Rademacher Farm Water: We acquired 6 units of Highland Ditch water for irrigation use on open space. We also 'loaned' our land officer negotiating skills to the Boulder County Housing Authority to acquire water it needs for the future Willoughby Corner affordable housing project. In this deal, 184 units of Northern Colorado Water

Conservancy District water went straight to the City of Lafayette to be ready for use when that housing project gets developed. No county funds were used.

Dispositions

The Real Estate Division works on about 50 disposition projects at any given time. These projects primarily include takings and requests for temporary access from authorities with condemnation power over Boulder County. Sometimes we are also working on sales of agricultural open space to tenant farmers subject to county-held conservation easements.

In 2022, Boulder County received \$971,769 in proceeds from takings. The county completed eight disposition projects that included three non-exclusive easements, one fee title transfer with a conservation easement retained, and four fee dispositions. The most significant dispositions were:

- McLachlan: We sold the 73-acre McLachlan property to the City of Longmont. This property lies on the west side of Clover Basin Reservoir (just north of Nelson Road and about one mile west of 75th Street). This fulfilled a city-county partnership to protect the land for open space. The county acquired fee title initially to get the deal done and conveyed the land to Longmont after it had finished paying its portion of the purchase price. The property is now subject to a county-held conservation easement that ensures the property will remain as open space.
- Haley-Macy (Doris)-Smith (Joe)-2022 CDOT Takings: CDOT took several acres of county open space and a conservation easement property at all four corners of the intersection of Highways 52 and 287. CDOT needed this land for making safety improvements to that intersection.

Real Estate Stewardship and Maintenance

As we do every year, our 2022 stewardship and maintenance of real estate included:

- Monitoring several hundred conservation easement properties and resolving violations. (Boulder County holds conservation easements and similar restrictions over 850 private properties.)
- Coordinating the department's response to oil and gas operators' requests for approval to maintain wells on county open space, and also on private land where we assist the Community Planning & Permitting department in providing feedback to operators to minimize impacts to agricultural, real estate, plant ecology, and wildlife resources.
- Coordinating with the State of Colorado's Division of Reclamation, Mining and Safety (DRMS) to close hazardous hard-rock mine openings on county open space. (We typically average about 20 closures annually.)
- Ensuring that only allowed uses of open space occur.
- Maintaining data about the county's ownership of open space.
- Responding to inquiries about the county's open space real estate interests.