



Parks & Open Space

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PARKS & OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Time/Date of Meeting: 6:30 p.m., Thursday, November 20, 2025

TO: Parks & Open Space Advisory Committee
FROM: Aaron Clark, Land Officer
AGENDA ITEM: Parrish 3 and Parrish 4 Acquisitions
ACTION REQUESTED: Recommendation to the BOCC

Real Estate Land Commitment: For much longer than Parks & Open Space's history of stewarding open space, the land in this community has been important to American Indian, urban native, Indigenous, and other cultural communities that continue to live here. We are making meaningful changes to how we do our work that include them, 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.

Summary

Boulder County proposes to acquire fee title to 60 acres in Boulder County owned by Parrish Ranch Conservation Partnership, with any associated water rights. Boulder County also proposes to acquire a conservation easement over 83 acres in Larimer County, also owned by Parrish Ranch Conservation Partnership, with fee title to be transferred to Larimer County as part of the transaction. The total cost of both acquisitions is \$2,820,000. The property has an address of 15720 Parrish Road and is located near the intersection of Parrish Road and Larimer County Road 2. Staff supports this acquisition.

Background Information

The property is part of the Parrish Ranch; the family partnership (Parrish Ranch Conservation Partnership, LLLP) reached out to Boulder County regarding a potential acquisition in early 2024. The proposed Parrish 3 deal represents 60 acres in three parcels in Boulder County, and the Parrish 4 deal represents one 83-acre parcel in Larimer County. The property is adjacent to the Ron Stewart Preserve at Rabbit Mountain on the south and west, Larimer County's Redtail Ridge open space on the north and west, and Larimer County's Arrowhead-Redtail open space on the north and east. The property has been used by the Parrish family for agriculture and has also been used in the recent past for a campground and event space. The Little Thompson River flows through the property.

Deal Description

The acquisition will take place in two parts. The Parrish 3 acquisition involves approximately 60 acres of land in Boulder County that the County will acquire in fee, together with six units of the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District (CBT) and a 50% undivided interest in one share of the Supply Irrigating Ditch (Boulder County already owns the other 50%).

The Parrish 4 acquisition involves one parcel of approximately 83 acres in Larimer County, adjacent to Rabbit Mountain and between Larimer County’s Redtail Ridge and Arrowhead-Redtail properties. Larimer County will acquire fee title to the property. There is an existing conservation easement held by Colorado Open Lands that dates from 2000. As part of the transaction, Colorado Open Lands has agreed to transfer this conservation easement interest to Boulder County. Larimer and Boulder County will then work together to amend and restate this conservation easement. This will bring the easement in line with current Boulder County standards and enhance resource protection on the property. In particular, the amended easement will extinguish two building rights on the Parrish 4 property that the existing easement permits.

Acquisition Summary

Parrish 3 Fee Acquisition

\$2,062,000	Land Price (includes mineral rights)
<u>\$ 338,000</u>	Water Price (\$20,000 for a 50% undivided interest in 1 share of the Supply Irrigating Ditch Company, and \$53,000/each for 6 units of Colorado-Big Thompson water)
\$2,420,000	Total Price (Fund Source: Open Space Sales and Use Taxes)
\$2,420,000	Total Value

Parrish 4 CE Acquisition:

\$ 400,000	(Fund Source: Conservation Trust Fund)
<u>\$ 250,000</u>	(Fund Source: Larimer County Contribution—Larimer will hold fee)
\$ 650,000	Total Price
\$ 650,000	Total Value

\$2,820,000 Total Cost (to Boulder County) for Parrish 3 and 4 Acquisitions

Boulder County will acquire these interests:

- 60 Acres (Fee) [\$34,367/acre, or said differently, \$687,333/right for 3 Building Rights]
- 83 Acres (CE-will extinguish 2 building rights) [\$200,000/right for 2 Building Rights]
- 8 Buildings. The property contains one large structure, containing a dance hall and kitchen, that has been used for events and as part of the campground. The campground consists of several sheds and trailers as well as a number of cabins for camping. There is one barn that services the existing agricultural operation. The assessed value is \$528,400.
- 6 Units of Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District [\$53,000/unit]
- 50% Undivided Interest in one share of the Supply Irrigating Ditch Company [\$40,000/share]
- All Mineral Rights [valued with land price]

The property is not subject to an oil and gas lease.

Boulder County Comprehensive Plan Designations

The Boulder County Comprehensive Plan (Comp Plan) provides information about the area's agricultural, cultural, environmental, and other open space resources (including passive recreation, community buffers, and scenic viewsheds). Maps in the Comp Plan indicate the following designations of these resources near the property: Archaeologically Sensitive Area, Critical Wildlife Habitat, Environmental Conservation Area (Rabbit Mountain), B1 High Biodiversity Area (Rabbit Mountain), Natural Area (Rabbit Mountain), Preble's Meadow Jumping Mouse Conservation Area (Zone 5, Mouse Management Area), Riparian Areas, Significant Agricultural Land (Local Importance), Significant Natural Communities, and Wetlands.

Additionally, Larimer County documents show that the Parrish 4 property is in close proximity to the Little Thompson B4 High Biodiversity Area, and that it is of high geological complexity. In particular, Parrish 4 includes a mile of ridgeline that is a significant part of the mountain backdrop in this part of the Front Range urban corridor, readily visible from Highways 287 and 25.

Potential Uses

Boulder County will acquire 60 acres in fee as part of the Parrish 3 acquisition. Like all properties acquired for open space, the property will be managed for an open space use. The property is currently partially used for event space and partially for agriculture. The property will be closed to public use due to management review. Parks & Open Space may later determine whether other closures or public access is appropriate.

Parks & Open Space will determine whether current uses of the property will continue or whether other open space uses of the property may be suitable. The process to determine specific future open space uses (including public access via trails or other passive recreation versus closures that protect a property's open space resources) is an involved planning process that can only be done after acquisition. Parks & Open Space staff need ample time after acquisition to evaluate the property, and no evaluations about other potential future uses have been made at this time.

Boulder County will acquire a conservation easement interest over 83 acres that will be owned in fee by Larimer County as part of the Parrish 4 acquisition. Larimer County will determine its management strategy for the property in cooperation with Boulder County as holder of the conservation easement. Larimer County intends to eventually offer public access via a trail across the property.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends approval. This is a significant opportunity for connection; protection of the Parrish 3 and Parrish 4 properties will consolidate protection of high-priority natural and scenic

resources, including critical wildlife habitat and riparian areas along the Little Thompson River, in a place that is a focus area for both Boulder and Larimer counties. This is a fine example of partnership between a conservation-focused property owner and multiple agencies. This is also the first opportunity for Boulder County and Larimer County to partner together on a joint acquisition.

POSAC Action Requested

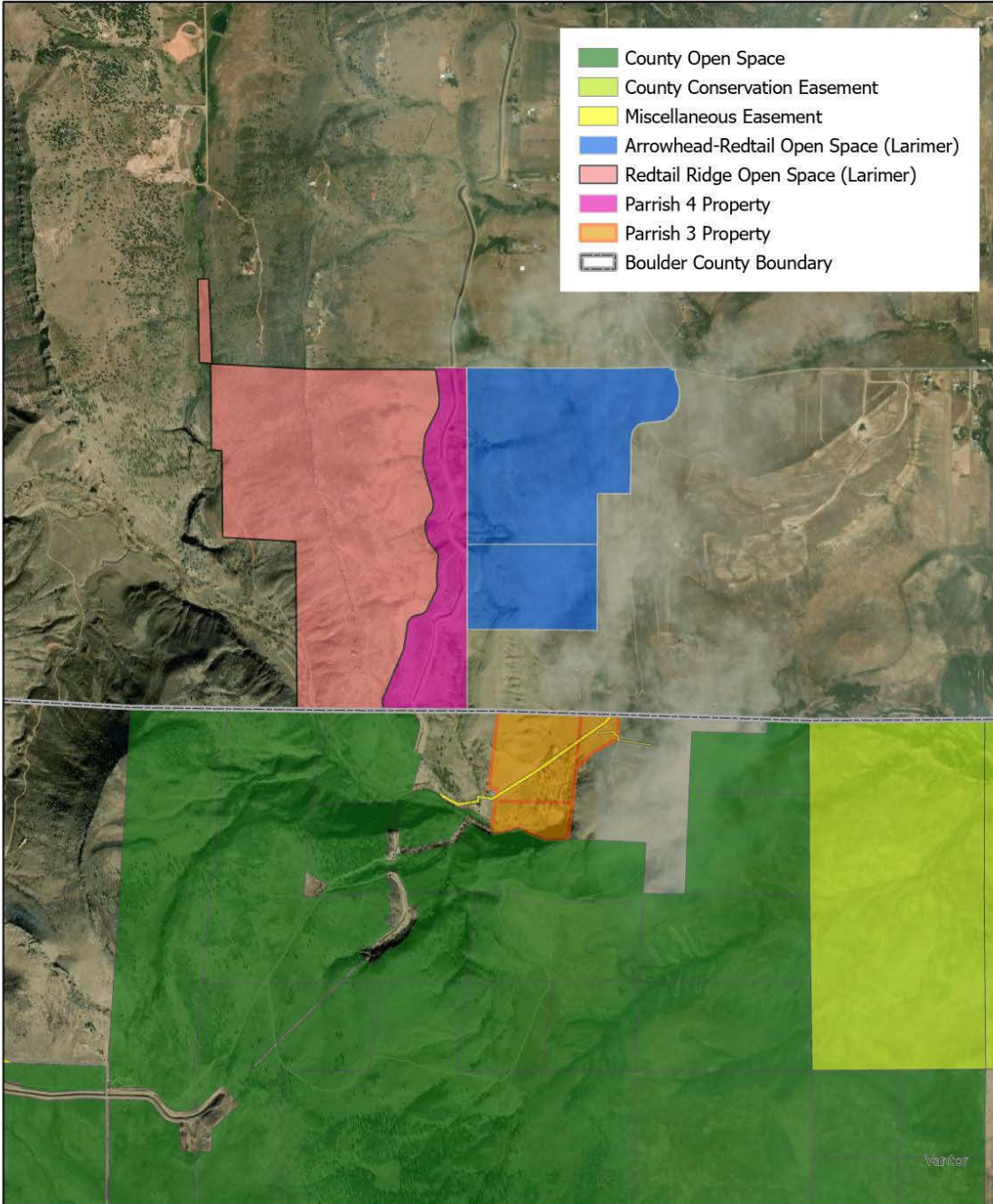
Recommendation to the Boulder County Commissioners for approval of the project as described above and as further described by staff at the POSAC meeting.

Suggested motion language: I move approval of the project as described above and as further described by staff in their presentation.

(see next pages for maps)

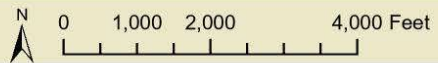
Vicinity Map

Parrish 3 and 4 Acquisitions



Map Printed: 2025
Aerial: 2020

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Close-Up Map

