

# Preservation in Progress



Jefferson County  
Open Space  
*enriching life*

**2015 Annual Report**

**Plus:  
26 Things  
To Do in  
Jeffco Open Space**



Great Blue Heron  
Photographed at Pine Valley Ranch Park  
by Park Ranger Eric Holzman

# Commit

**At Jeffco Open Space, we take action every day** to support our vision of enriching life throughout Jefferson

County with an abundance of open space, parks, trails and nature-based experiences. Doing so involves balancing residents' desire for outdoor recreation with their desire to see us preserve and protect lands.<sup>1</sup>

In 2015, we progressed toward our vision in new and dynamic ways. We made significant land acquisitions, celebrated trailhead openings, expanded education offerings, and lauded volunteers, who set a record for service hours. We restored and advanced trails, invited visitors to become stewards, and initiated a countywide effort to connect youth and nature. All the while, we applied conservation practices informed by staff-guided, volunteer-supported research of animal and plant life on open space lands.

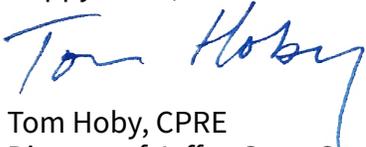
In the Douglas Mountain Area, we acquired properties totaling 1,036 acres—our largest acquisition in nearly 15 years. At Apex Park and Crown Hill Park, we completed reimagined, amenity-rich trailheads. In Clear Creek Canyon Park, the 4-mile segment of the Peaks to Plains Trail progressed to connect Jeffco segments with Clear Creek County—a project supported by Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) through Colorado Lottery proceeds.

To extend the mind, body and spirit benefits of nature to more youth, we brought together a 31-partner coalition to receive GOCO funding for the Inspire Initiative. A \$75,000 planning grant opens doors for community-based action and potential implementation funding.

Through the power of social media and interactions in our parks, we encouraged visitors to protect natural resources, be safe and be respectful. We completed recovery work on 24 miles of trails damaged by epic 2013 storms. Re-aligned trails at North Table Mountain Park and White Ranch Park were built to better withstand future storms and include trail features popular with visitors.

As we continue to fulfill our mission to preserve open space and parkland, protect park and natural resources, and provide healthy, nature-based experiences, we invite you to follow our progress in this report, Preservation in Progress 2015.

Happy Trails,



Tom Hoby, CPRE  
Director of Jeffco Open Space & Parks



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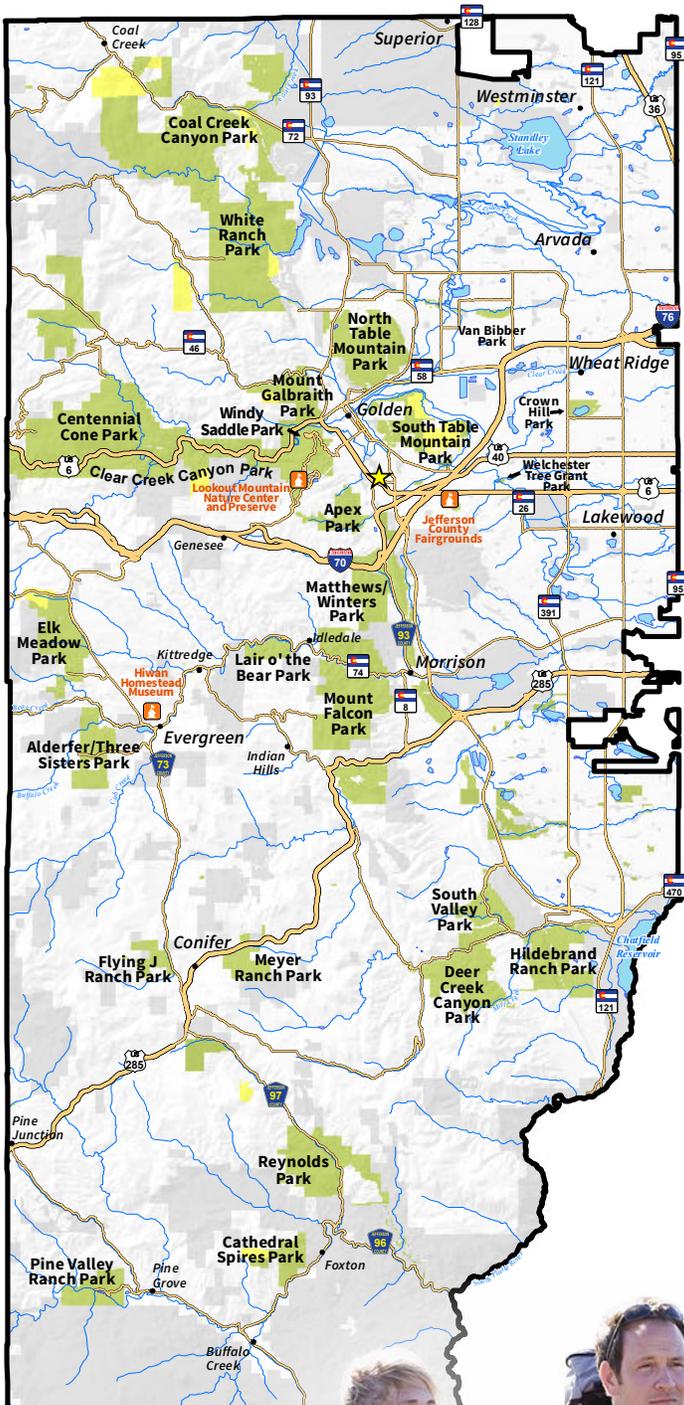
### 26 Things to Do

- Alderfer/Three Sisters Park**  
View Evergreen Lake from "The Brother" rock formation
- Apex Park**  
Explore Enchanted Forest Trail
- Cathedral Spires Park**  
Photograph majestic cliffs

<sup>1</sup> RRC Associates, Inc. 2011 Jefferson County Open Space Citizen Survey Overview of Findings, (December 2011) 22.

# Plan

## Goals, 2014-2019



### 1. Land Preservation

Increase land preserved by at least 1,700 acres, from 52,817 acres to a minimum of 54,517.

### 2. Land Stewardship

Refine stewardship standards and systems and implement for all Jeffco Open Space lands.

### 3. Trails

Expand the Jeffco Open Space trail system by 25 miles, from 227 miles to 252 miles.

### 4. Communications and Community Involvement

Develop and employ a Communications and Community Involvement Plan.

### 5. Nature and Park-Related History Education

Increase current program participation by 27,000, from 75,000 people per year to 102,000 people.

### 6. Volunteerism

Increase volunteer support by 16,850 hours, from 22,500 hours per year to 39,350 hours.

### 7. Visitor Stewardship

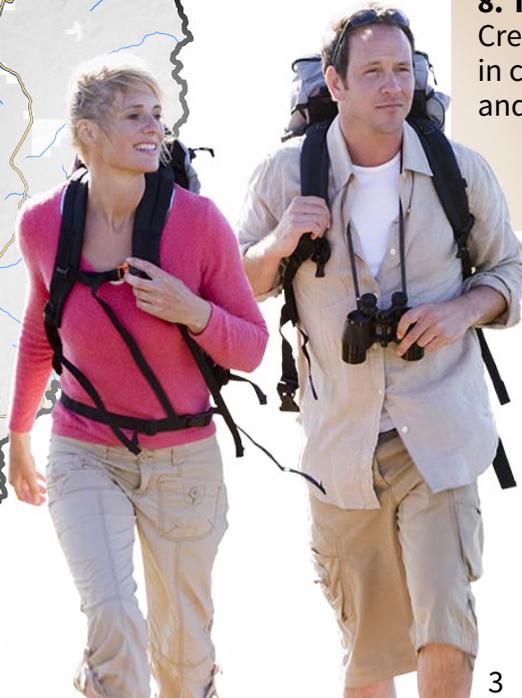
Create "Share & Care" program to promote individual and group stewardship of public lands and increase educational contacts by 12,000, from 11,000 to 23,000.

### 8. The Nature-Health Connection

Create five additional regional Jeffco Outdoors maps in collaboration with the Jeffco Outdoors Foundation and private partners.

**Pike National**

- Jefferson County Parks Education Center
- Jeffco Open Space Office
- Jefferson County Boundary
- Major Road
- Lake or Pond
- Stream or River
- Jeffco Open Space  
*Please know local Rules and Regulations before entering each Open Space Park.*
- Jeffco Open Space Conservation Easement  
*Public Access is limited or prohibited on most Jeffco Open Space Conservation Easements.*
- Other Public or Conservation Land



- Centennial Cone Park  
After the Elk Range Trail seasonal closure, conquer a 12-mile loop
- Clear Creek Canyon Park  
Access a heritage-rich waterway
- Crown Hill Park  
Spot a bird from our checklist
- Deer Creek Canyon Park  
Travel "The Wall" on Plymouth Trail

## Goal 1

# Preserve

Working with willing landowners, Jeffco Open Space acquired three properties in 2015. The acquisition of these properties added the greatest number of acres to the agency in 15 years. When added to the 800 acres preserved in 2014 the 1,072 new acres allow us to exceed our Master Plan goal to preserve at least 1,700 acres by 2019.

Two properties of 532 and 504 acres north of Centennial Cone Park in the Douglas Mountain area, and 36 acres near Meyer Ranch Park further our mission to preserve natural, cultural, historic and scenic resources in perpetuity. The next steps for these new lands involve inventories of wildlife and vegetation species before evaluation of appropriate public use.



*Douglas Mountain*

- Elk Meadow Park**  
Reach the top of Bergen Peak
- Flying J Ranch Park** Picnic in the shelter overlooking the meadow
- Hildebrand Ranch Park**  
Photograph the scenic barn
- Hiwan Homestead Museum**  
Check out the Native American art collection

## Goal 2

# Steward

Our stewardship is grounded in scientific research that guides management of wildlife and habitat, and contributes to quality of life for area residents. In 2015 we published reports that inform our understanding of orchids, prairie dogs and nesting raptors on open space lands. We partner with other organizations to support sound management decisions. Staff assisted the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service with their recovery program for the endangered black-footed ferret by providing prairie dogs, which make up 90 percent of the ferret's diet. This effort helps to keep prairie dog populations in balance with the carrying capacity of habitat. Work continues with recreation groups to develop guidelines for practices consistent with natural resource protection.



***Our staff plays a leading role in Urban Coyote Safety and Awareness in Jeffco.***

### Goal 3

# Create

High-quality experiences in nature begin at a trailhead with clean restrooms and an informative kiosk, and extend into a park with well-maintained trails. We continue to improve the visitor experience. In October we celebrated the reopening of the Apex Park trailhead with County Commissioners, Open Space Advisory Committee, the public, volunteers and staff. We also completed restoration of flood damage on trails at White Ranch and North Table Mountain Parks, with dedicated volunteers helping us to realign sections and make them better able to withstand future storms.

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***Youth in the Trail Stewardship Team advanced the Peaks to Plains Trail in Clear Creek Canyon Park.***

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Progress continues on a 4-mile segment of the Peaks to Plains Trail construction in Clear Creek Canyon Park in partnership with Clear Creek County Open Space. Supplemental support provided by our matching fund partners and Great Outdoors Colorado will allow part of the trail to open in 2016, providing safer access to the heart of the canyon for many types of outdoor experiences.

- Lair o' the Bear Park**  
Connect to Denver Mountain Parks via Bear Creek Trail
- Lookout Mountain Nature Center**  
Learn about mountain lions
- Matthews/Winters Park**  
Get to a high point and admire Red Rocks Amphitheatre
- Meyer Ranch Park** Take a loop hike when the aspens are gold



### Goal 4

# Communicate

As part of our 2014 update of the Jeffco Open Space Master Plan, we committed to engage with the community based on three tenets: to Inform, Inspire and Interact. Providing accurate, consistent and timely information to visitors is critical to our vision. We communicate in a variety of ways, including public forums, social media, our e-newsletter [Panorama](#), community volunteer events and through [jeffco.us/open-space](http://jeffco.us/open-space).

Our bi-annual Trails Talk Forum helped us to evaluate interest in designated-use trails. We also strengthened our presence on Instagram, conveying regulation and safety messages through a social media platform that's highly popular with a growing segment of park visitors. Jeffco Open Space Park Rangers complement their patrols with Twitter messages conveying trail reports, photos and stewardship messages, and take to the television airwaves to reach an even larger audience.

[jeffco.us/open-space](http://jeffco.us/open-space)



## Goal 5

# Teach

*Halloween fun at  
Lookout Mountain Nature Center*



Tim Sandsmark

Research shows that time spent in nature inspires curiosity, encourages discovery and supports lifelong stewardship. We enrich the outdoor experience with interactive learning opportunities designed to connect visitors with the species, natural cycles and the cultural histories of preserved lands. Through our nature, history, and Park Ranger safety and stewardship education, we connected with 98,536 visitors in 2015, nearing our goal of reaching 102,000 people annually by 2019.

Lookout Mountain Nature Center was recognized with a state award for a unique partnership with Jefferson County Public Schools that creates young “EcoSystem Investigators.” Hiwan Homestead Museum staff continues to develop our History in the Parks program with volunteer support, revealing the colorful past with a personal touch.

- Mount Falcon Park** See Walker Ruins. Imagine what a Summer White House might have been.
- Mount Galbraith Park** Enjoy this hiker-only park
- North Table Mountain Park** Stand atop Lichen Peak
- Pine Valley Ranch Park** Go fishing. License required.

## Goal 6

# Enlist

In 2015, volunteers set a record with 2,700 people contributing 33,000+ hours of time and talent. In just two years, volunteer hours have jumped by nearly 10,000.

Ongoing volunteers are at the heart of our operations—patrolling our parks, answering phones, giving tours, monitoring wildlife and modeling stewardship by caring for park resources. One-day volunteer events help us to complete park and trail projects. Groups build camaraderie in a natural setting and improve parklands through projects we customize to suit.

The number of hours our volunteers log annually is equal to the workload of 16 full-time employees. Based on the national value of volunteer time, our volunteers contributed the equivalent of \$776,813 to Jeffco in 2015.

Sign up for 2016  
Volunteer Trail Events

- June 4
- June 25
- July 16
- Sept. 24
- Oct. 8



[jeffcoopenspace.eventbrite.com](http://jeffcoopenspace.eventbrite.com)

*4-H youth in the  
“Pony Patrol”  
volunteer alongside  
Patroller Carol Von  
Michaelis to reward  
good deeds in  
the parks.*

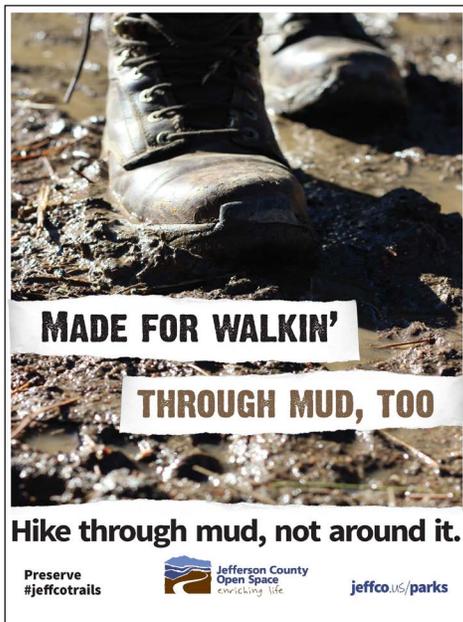


Carol Von Michaelis

## Goal 7

# Share & Care

Share & Care is a philosophy for interactions with park visitors, encouraging personal responsibility for sharing the trail, caring for the park and valuing natural resources. Visitors began with experiencing, then ultimately loving and actively caring for the



parcs, the resources and public trails in Jefferson County.

In 2015, we developed consistent and creative messaging to encourage safety, courtesy and Leave No Trace principles. Through the formal outreach of social media, signs, television appearances and Ranger-led events and programs, we encouraged such steps as avoiding trails when they



Above, Chris Kumm, @iliketrails on Instagram, helped spread the message to hike through mud.

are muddy—or walking through the mud when conditions present—leashing pets and preventing dogs from overheating.

In person, our Rangers made 20,268 contacts on the trails. Rangers issued warning and citations as situations warranted; however, visitor education in a friendly manner is our first choice and the most effective means of changing behavior. Rangers and volunteers are also quick to thank people who do the right thing.

- Reynolds Park  
Bike the entire North Fork Trail
- South Table Mountain Park  
Spot a mule deer on the mesa
- South Valley Park  
Photograph red rock formations as a scenic backdrop after a winter snow
- Van Bibber Park  
Survey the ponds from an observation deck

## Goal 8

# Connect

- Welchester Tree Grant Park  
Watch the leaves of a cottonwood dance in the breeze
- White Ranch Park  
Reserve a campsite and set up a tent
- Windy Saddle Park  
Photograph Clear Creek Canyon from Lookout Mountain Trail

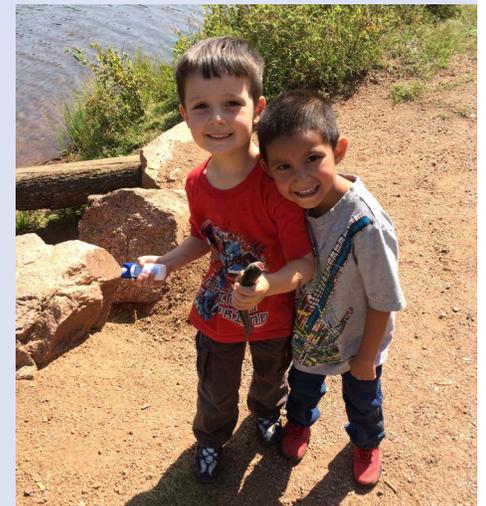
Whether through an interesting education program with classmates, recollections over a shared hike

with friends, or a conversation with a park host, connections enrich our lives. We foster those connections through partnerships we develop with other organizations.

Not all Jeffco residents have easy access or the confidence to get out and enjoy nature. That's why Jeffco Open Space coordinated the 31-agency Be Wild, Jeffco coalition. The coalition received a \$75,000 planning grant from Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) to identify barriers and devise a community-driven action plan to connect underserved youth and families with nature through the GOCO Inspire Initiative.

Partnering with the Jeffco Outdoors

Foundation, a series of eight durable regional maps have been created to highlight the number of outdoor experiences and trail connections offered by different agencies across Jefferson County.



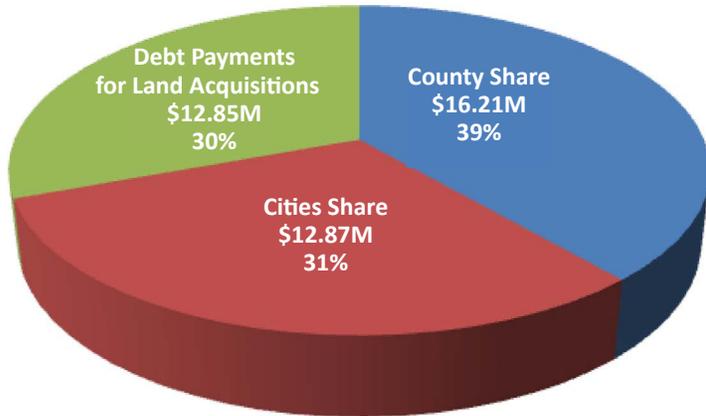
# Account

Every time you support Jefferson County businesses, you invest in public open space, parks and healthy outdoor experiences through a dedicated half-cent sales tax. Jeffco Open Space funds allow for management of nearly

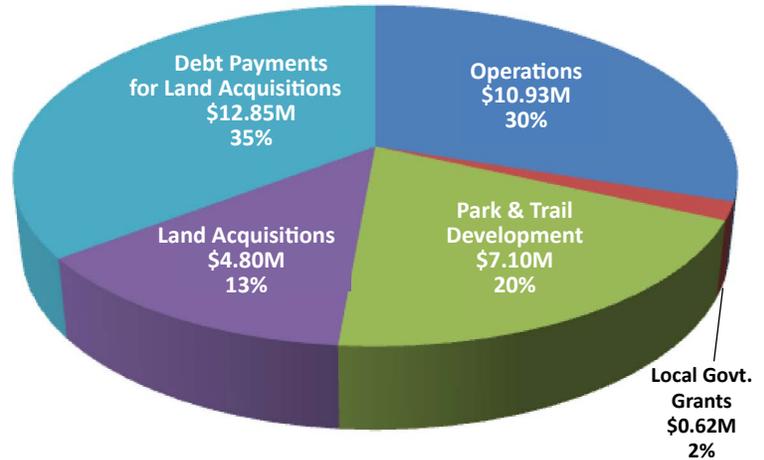
45,000 acres in Jeffco and 230 miles of trails for public, trail-based activity. Jeffco Open Space funds support supplemental projects in cities and park and recreation districts through local grants and distribute a portion of the County's Conservation Trust Funds from Colorado Lottery proceeds to nonprofits

providing outdoor experiences. We were founded as a land conservation organization in 1972. Our mission is to preserve open space and parkland, protect park and natural resources and provide healthy nature-based experiences.

## 2015 Actual Sales Tax Revenue Allocation \$41.93M



## 2015 Actual Expense Budget \$36.30M



**Thanks for your investment**

Every time you support Jefferson County businesses, you invest in public open space, parks and healthy outdoor experiences through a dedicated half-cent sales tax.

**jeffco.us/open-space**

Alex Kersis

### Board of County Commissioners

- Libby Szabo, District One
- Casey Tighe, District Two
- Donald Rosier, District Three

### Open Space Advisory Committee

- Janet Shangraw, Bob West, John Litz, Ken Morfit, Mike Dungan, Felicity Hannay, Jacy Rock, Rebecca Watson, John Wolforth, Paul Murphy

### Jeffco Open Space Leadership

- Tom Hoby, Director of Open Space & Parks
- Amy Ito, Planning Manager
- Don Klima, Support Services Manager
- Mary Ann Bonnell, Interim Visitor Services Manager
- Brian Hardman, Interim Stewardship Manager
- Katie Matthews, Interim Community Connections Supervisor

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