

Public Information Office
5334 South Prince Street
Littleton, Colorado 80166-0001
Phone: 303-795-4630
Fax: 303-738-7894
www.co.arapahoe.co.us

For release: June 17, 2003

Contact:

JULIO ITURRERIA

Long Range Program Manager

Direct: 720-874-6657

E-mail: jiturreria@co.arapahoe.co.us

ANDREA RASIZER

Public Information Officer

Direct: 303-795-4284

Mobile: 303-882-1909

E-mail: arasizer@co.arapahoe.co.us

Arapahoe County voters to consider Open Space sales tax *Board of County Commissioners approve November ballot question*

After nearly four years of discussion, the Board of County Commissioners Tuesday approved a ballot question that will ask voters in November to consider a .25 percent countywide sales tax to preserve Open Space in Arapahoe County.

If approved by voters, the tax would generate about \$17 million annually and be used to preserve urban and rural open space and natural areas; protect lands that preserve water quality in rivers, lakes and streams; provide, maintain and improve neighborhood parks, open space, sports fields, picnic facilities and multi-use trails; protect wildlife habitat and corridors; preserve agriculture and ranch lands and enhance and maintain designated heritage areas. The Open Space tax proposal also would:

- Become effective Jan. 1, 2004 and expire Dec. 31, 2013;
- Provide a 50 percent share back to incorporated cities and towns;
- Provide a pool of money for grants to special districts and incorporated cities and towns.
- Cap County administrative costs at 3 percent;
- Set aside money for heritage areas and maintenance costs.
- Provide money for open space and trails in unincorporated Arapahoe County.

Arapahoe County is committed to preserving open space and has completed several preservation projects with limited dollars during the last few years. However, it is the only county in the Denver metro area without a tax dedicated to preserving open space.

The sales tax proposal, which was approved unanimously by the Board of County Commissioners, was brought forward by the Open Space Trails Advisory Group, a five-member citizen's committee established by the Board in 1999 to study the possibility of creating an Open Space program for Arapahoe County.

During their three years of service, the advisory group attended more than 40 scheduled meetings, 14 meetings with the Board of County Commissioners, one public hearing and 13 presentations to Arapahoe County cities and towns. Working closely with County planning staff and Trust for Public Land, the Open Space Trails Advisory Group conducted two citizen telephone surveys, which indicated strong support for a program that would preserve open space areas. Suggestions and comments from these meetings and information gathered from the survey were used to develop the program.