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## **Arapahoe County acquires first major Open Space property** *Purchase protects 1,363 acres of prairie and ranchland in eastern Arapahoe County*

Arapahoe County has purchased two conservation easements that protects 1,363 acres on a working farm and ranch near Byers from future development.

It is the County's first major purchase since voters approved the open space quarter-cent sales tax in 2003, although the Board of County Commissioners has awarded more than \$33 million in sales tax revenue and worked alongside cities, towns and special districts to preserve open space and historic areas, and provided parks, trails and recreational amenities for residents and future generations to enjoy for years to come.

"This is the perfect property for Arapahoe County to purchase because it preserves a portion of what makes Arapahoe County a special place, as well as our rich ranching and farming history," said Frank Weddig, Board Chair. "We are pleased to work with the Trust for Public Land and the Hasenbalg family to make it happen so that future generations will enjoy the beauty of the Eastern Plains."

The purchase of the conservation easements, which cost \$946,875 and was paid for using Open Space Sales and Use Tax revenue, permanently protects the 1,363 acres from development.

Working with the Trust for Public Land, Arapahoe County purchased the property from Ron and Ann Hasenbalg and Lawrence and Lois Hasenbalg, who will continue owning and using the land as a working farm as it has been in their family since 1949. The land is located along the West Bijou Creek in eastern Arapahoe County, an area teeming with wildlife and rich in agricultural history. The purchase preserves the land for farming and ranching and ensures the land will be protected from future development, even if the Hasenbalg's choose to sell it.

"This area is absolutely spectacular and the property is listed in the top 25 percent of the most visible lands in the eastern plains," said Justin Spring, Trust for Public Land Project Manager. "The topography of the prairie is very subtle and because of that, it is extremely sensitive to development along the ridgeline. We are pleased to work with Arapahoe County and the landowners to protect this land for future generations."

In addition to being an important agricultural property, the land also serves as riparian and upland habitat for a variety of birds and other wildlife. The property buffers more than two miles of private property already protected by conservation easements and continues a series of protected parcels in the West Bijou Creek watershed totaling more than 11,000 acres, including the Plains Conservation Center located just south.

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