

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

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Contact:

ANDREA RASIZER

Communication Services Director

Direct: 303-795-4284

Mobile: 303-882-1909

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

Media Note: A photo from tour is available for download at <ftp://www.co.arapahoe.co.us/Pub/CM/photos/>

Preserving the South Platte River *Guided tour gives Arapahoe County coalition vision for river's needs*

LITTLETON, CO --- The convoy of golf carts traveling along the South Platte River was not searching for lost golf balls, or the next tee for that matter.

On this beautiful morning, a group of motorized travelers from Arapahoe County and a variety of local communities and parks and recreation interests, converged along the banks of the South Platte River in search of opportunity – the opportunity to preserve this historic and treasured gem that winds its way through the western edge of Arapahoe County.

In May, Arapahoe County and South Suburban Parks and Recreation District hosted a guided tour of the South Platte River Corridor for the South Platte Working Group – a coalition of representatives from key municipalities, agencies and organizations in Arapahoe County interested in working together to preserve the South Platte and improve the connectivity along the corridor.

Members of the South Platte Working Group consists of Arapahoe County, the cities of Littleton, Englewood, Cherry Hills Village, Sheridan, Columbine Valley, Bow Mar and Greenwood Village, as well as South Suburban Parks and Recreation and its Foundation, the Arapahoe County Open Space Advisory Board, Trust for Public Land and South Metro Land Conservancy.

Arapahoe County convened the coalition in September 2006 to develop a unified vision of how resources can best be invested in open space, recreation, connectivity and habitat conservation along the South Platte and the Mary Carter Greenway Trail.

The group's goal is to increase the recreational value of the corridor; to preserve the natural areas and protect water quality; and encourage land uses that are compatible with recreational uses, as well as uses that contribute to the economic well being of Arapahoe County.

To get there, the South Platte Working Group has embarked on an ambitious, comprehensive study to look at ways to improve the major east-west trail connections to the river, such as the High Line Canal, and to build upon the preservation and recreational activity that already exist.

So far, the South Platte Working Group has collected more than \$13 million in funding commitments and in-kind service support from participants. In March, the Trust for Public Land submitted a grant concept

paper requesting additional resources from Great Outdoors Colorado, which the Working Group hopes to attain a \$7 million Legacy grant that will help fund the monumental effort of preservation, clean up and enhancements along the South Platte.

“You don’t realize how beautiful the river is, and how important it is to our community until you walk or ride your bike along the trail, stand on the river bank and really take it all in,” said Arapahoe County Commissioner Susan Beckman, who along with Littleton Mayor Jim Taylor, Englewood Councilmember Jim Woodard, Sheridan Councilmember Cliff Mueller and Arapahoe County Open Space Advisory Board Chair Bobbie Sheffield, was among nearly 50 participants touring the South Platte.

“So much work already has been done to preserve this remarkable gem, but it’s clear that there is still much more work ahead.”

By the end of the five-hour, 10-mile tour, a few raindrops fell, but that could not dampen the spirits of those involved in the effort.

“No doubt, we have our work cut out for us,” said Littleton Mayor Jim Taylor, whose city has invested millions into preserving the Platte River corridor. “But, after spending a day along the banks of this breathtaking river, we know it will be well worth the effort.”

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