

Grant sought to finish Poudre River Trail in Larimer County, Timnath, Windsor and Fort Collins

 denverpost.com/2019/06/14/poudre-river-trail-larimer-county/

June 14,
2019



Jenny Sparks, Loveland Reporter-Herald

Kate Mullarney rides her bicycle on the Poudre River Trail on Thursday, June 13, 2019, at the River Bluffs Open Space in Windsor.

By [Pamela Johnson](#) | Loveland Reporter-Herald

PUBLISHED: June 14, 2019 at 6:27 am | UPDATED: June 14, 2019 at 6:45 am

The final connections in the 35-mile Poudre River Trail could be linked within the next three years, capping off more than two decades of work involving multiple cities, towns and counties.

Larimer County, Fort Collins, Timnath and Windsor are applying for a \$2 million Great Outdoors Colorado grant to cover half of the cost of finishing the trail that stretches from Greeley to Bellvue. If the grant is approved this fall, the partners would have three years to finish the connections.

The trail runs through natural lands, city areas, neighborhoods and even farmland, hitting areas along the Poudre River, as it stretches from Island Grove in Greeley to Watson Lake northwest of Fort Collins, with just three missing links left to fill in over the next few years.

“We’re not looking to put the entire trail on the river corridor with that resource impact,” explained Meegan Flenniken, land conservation planning and resources manager for the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources. “It’s more of a community connector that has all those different experiences.”

The Poudre River Trail, which has been in play for more than two decades, has been pieced together throughout Weld and Larimer counties and various towns as funding became available and as a path for the trail, through preserved land and different easements, could be negotiated.

This week, Larimer County worked out one of its final easements needed for its piece of the connection. The Larimer County commissioners voted 3-0 Tuesday to allow the Department of Natural Resources to spend \$200,000 of its open space sales tax money to buy a trail easement from residents John and Brenda Graves, allowing a 1,700-foot segment of the trail to bisect their 99-acre property.



This new piece is a half mile north of the trailhead for River Bluffs Open Space — a stretch of the Poudre River Trail that runs along the river as it moves closer to Fort Collins.

“This piece for us is a key link with the portions of trail easement we already have in place,” said Flenniken. “This piece was a gap that will help our investment.”

So far, Larimer County has spent more than \$2.65 million of its open space money for the Poudre River Trail on land conservation, easements and construction of pieces of the trail itself; other jurisdictions have spent millions, too. The trail was included as a priority in the Department of Natural Resources’ 2001 Open Lands Master Plan.

Fort Collins, Greeley, Windsor and Timnath, too, have worked together to bring the trail together through their jurisdictions. There are three remaining gaps that will be built with the \$2 million grant, if approved, with Fort Collins, Larimer County, Windsor and Timnath

splitting the \$2 million match at a ratio based upon how much of trail will be located within their boundaries.


The last pieces include: a stretch from River Bluffs open space to Timnath; a section north of that through Timnath with easements already in place; and a piece from Interstate 25 west to the Environmental Learning Center in Fort Collins. Also missing is a safe trail passage from the east side of Interstate 25 to where the new trail will be built on the west side. That, however, is already scheduled and funded as part of the I-25 widening project underway by the Colorado Department of Transportation and will be built in conjunction with a new bridge.

The application for the Great Outdoors Colorado grant is due in August and a decision is expected in the fall. If approved, phases of work would begin in Windsor, then move to Timnath and Fort Collins with the entire trail completed by 2022.



LOVELAND, CO – JUNE 13, 2019: Liane Weinberger and her dog, Kailie, run across a bridge on the Poudre River Trail on Thursday, June 13, 2019, at the River Bluffs Open Space in Windsor. (Photo by Jenny Sparks/Loveland Reporter-Herald)

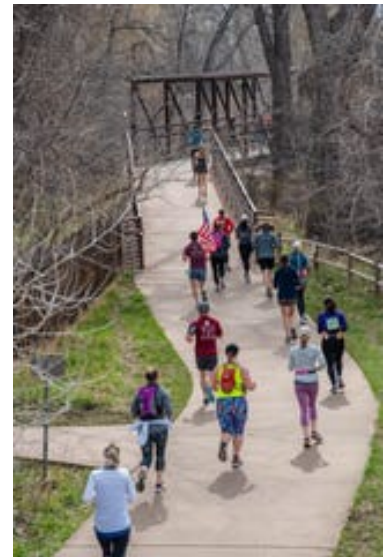
An end in sight? Plans to complete the Poudre River Trail clear a hurdle

 coloradoan.com/story/news/2019/06/18/poudre-river-trail-extension-plans-set-move-forward-bellvue-greeley-fort-collins-colorado/1423989001

Meredith Spelbring, Fort Collins Coloradoan Published 9:03 a.m. MT June 18, 2019 | Updated 11:23 p.m. MT June 19, 2019

Buy Photo

Participants enter the Poudre Trail east of Lyons Park during the Horsetooth Half Marathon on Sunday, April 14, 2019, in Fort Collins, Colo. (Photo: Tanya Fabian/For The Coloradoan)



The final pieces of the extended puzzle that is the Poudre River Trail are closer than ever to coming together.

Plans to grow the Poudre River Trail to a full 35 miles connecting Bellvue to Greeley are coming closer to fruition after Larimer County commissioners approved the purchase of an easement southwest of Timnath. It is on land owned by John and Brenda Graves, and the property will be home to a 1,700-foot addition to the trail.

The commissioners' unanimous approval June 11 allows the county to purchase the easement using \$200,000 of open space sales tax, which generates revenue specific to local parks and public open spaces.

The move marks one of the final steps in completing the trail.

More: [Long View Trail connects communities in Fort Collins, Loveland](#)

"It is rare that we will ever work on anything that has spanned literally decades and has involved partnerships with as many entities as the development of the Poudre River Trail has," said Tom Donnelly, chairman of the board of Larimer County commissioners. "It is a great amenity for Northern Colorado, and it is a really important link between our communities. I think it adds so much to the quality of life that people expect when they live in Northern Colorado, so we are very proud to be participants in this."

The approved purchase will give Larimer County access to run the proposed trail south of Timnath and closer to the existing trail at River Bluffs Open Space.

Several stretches of the Poudre River trail are in place, but key connections that would allow it to run through Fort Collins to Greeley uninterrupted are missing. For the trail to be complete, three gaps need to be connected:

- Colorado State Environmental Learning Center to where the trail picks up near Rigden Reservoir
- The south end of Arapahoe Bend Natural Area over Interstate 25 to the existing trail near Walmart Supercenter in Timnath
- Near the Poudre Fire Authority Station in Timnath down to the existing trailhead at River Bluffs Open Space

The 3/4-mile proposed trail, marked in orange on the above map, to be completed by both Larimer County and Timnath would stretch from the existing trail end near the Poudre Fire Authority Station and wind down to connect at River Bluffs Open Space.

Larimer County is working to secure the land for final connection to River Bluffs, said Meegan Flenniken, Larimer County's land conservation, planning and resource program manager. That section is marked in red on the above map.

When it comes to funding trail construction, which would cover all three gaps, the county faces an Aug. 3 deadline to submit an application requesting grant funds from Great Outdoors Colorado for \$2 million. The county would be expected to equally match the grant funds requested, bringing the total cost of the trail construction to approximately \$4 million.

More: [Fossil Creek Trail: No more 'missing link'](#)

The \$2 million match would be distributed across the contributing jurisdictions: Larimer County, Fort Collins, Timnath, Windsor, Greeley and Weld County. The entities would be required to complete the construction of the trail within three years of the grant being awarded, 2022.

The involved governments will contribute their portion of the match relative to its percentage of the total construction costs, Flenniken said.

Meredith Spelbring is a multimedia reporting intern for the Coloradoan. Follow her on Twitter [@mere0415](#).