



Board Summary Report

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Agenda Date: 2/25/2025

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To: Board of County Commissioners

Through: Gini Pingnot, Director, Open Spaces Department

Prepared By:

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Subject:

Richmil Ranch Open Space Parking Lot Expansion: Funding Request

Purpose and Request:

Staff requests approval of \$483,000.00 for the Richmil Ranch Open Space parking lot expansion project. Staff presented its recommendation during the February 4, 2025, study session

Background and Discussion: Arapahoe County acquired Richmil Ranch in 2007. The Park name is derived from the most recent owners, Richard and Mildred Helling who sold the property to the County. The decision to purchase the property was made to preserve the agricultural heritage of the property, the riparian zone of East Bijou Creek and for recreation development for the Deer Trail area.

The property is bisected on the north by I-70 and south by Hwy 40 and the Union Pacific Railroad. The property is visible from I-70. A monument sign along I-70 identifies the location which is 6 miles east of Byers and 3 miles west of Deer Trail. The property and area have a rich history located near Deer Trail where the first rodeo is said to have occurred in 1869.

The park is 352 acres in size. It consists of mixed upland grass, with some areas under alfalfa production, 250 acres of cottonwood forested natural area, and 100 acres that was under pivot irrigation. In 2010 and 2011 a master plan was created to design and build a public Open Space Park in the open space area south of I-70, north of Hwy 40.

A County Open Space Park was built and opened in 2012. The open space park provides 3.5-miles of crusher fines trails, one loop circling a historic center pivot irrigation field, and trails through the riparian area provide for wildlife viewing and shade. Shortly after the park opening, it was realized that the parking lot was undersized, as shown in the power point. The original design had constructed what was estimated to be room for 10 cars and 3 horse trailers. The ultimate popularity of the park was unknown, so the parking lot size was kept small for the initial phase. In addition, it was an unknown if equestrians would trailer at Richmil Ranch. After the park opened, equestrian use was discovered to be much higher than expected and equestrian visitors brought much larger trailers than expected. Today, if a group of 4 riders with trailers comes out, the parking lot is full. Other visitors are forced to park along Hwy 40, which is unsafe.

The expansion of the parking lot has been a desired improvement for a number of years. Open Spaces has secured a design that expands the lot to 6 horse trailer parking stalls, which can accommodate larger trailers, and 12 vehicle parking stalls, 3 which are ADA compliant. The design also includes a new ranch gate sign. The original entrance sign called for an overhead ranch gate sign. The sign has been hit by vehicles on several occasions causing it to fall down. Repair is expensive. It was decided that removal and constructing a new, ground based, off the roadway sign, is desired. This expansion will ensure that the park has safe, accessible parking for many years to come as the Byers and Deer Trail area continue to expand, and population increases.

Bidding and Construction management of the work will be overseen by a Public Works Engineer, Trent Marshall.

Alternatives: The Board could decide to delay, modify, or deny funding for this project.

Fiscal Impact: The Open Space Fund can support \$483,000.00 from the Acquisition and Development Fund for the construction of Richmil Ranch Parking Lot Expansion Project.

Alignment with Strategic Plan:

- Be fiscally sustainable
- Provide essential and mandated service
- Be community focused

Concurrence: This item was recommended by OSTAB for BOCC approval on December 2, 2024, and the Board of County Commissioners recommended this be added to a consent agenda for final approval in a study session on February 4, 2025.

Resolution: Attached is a copy of the draft resolution.

