



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS[®]
OF JEFFERSON COUNTY, CO

Mr. Tom Hoby
Director of Parks and Open Space Program
700 Jefferson County Parkway
Golden, Co. 80401

Dear Mr. Toby,

The League of Women Voters of Jefferson County helped establish the Open Space Program in 1972 and continues to monitor it today. Our comments regarding the Jefferson County Open Space 2013 Draft Master Plan follow.

Having read and commented on Open Space master plans through the years, we find the 2013 Draft to be in stark contrast to its predecessors which emphasized specific needs and priorities. The 2013 Draft is very general in nature with little detail about what could actually be accomplished. For instance, it does not provide a sense of what lands may be at stake, what lands qualify for conservation, or what properties may not be available for conservation. How will the population projections mentioned in the Draft specifically impact the direction of the Open Space Program? What is the proposal to preserve an additional 1,700 acres of land based on? Another example: Under Congruence with other Plans on page 9, three programs are mentioned, but there is no explanation of what they are or how they relate to the Open Space Program.

The 2013 Draft states on page 3, "Now with 52,000 acres secured...a shift is occurring from aggressive land acquisition to an emphasis on land management within the unincorporated County." That is a direction for the program that we find disturbing. While we agree that maintenance and management are important, it is the League's position that the first priority for the use of open space funds should be the acquisition of open space land: greenbelt, water resources including drainage areas, the mountain front, small plots in urban areas and mountain areas. It is not clear to us why the priority of the Open Space Program should change. If you do indeed plan to continue acquiring the County's valuable and unfortunately rapidly-vanishing parcels that qualify for conservation, what would the criteria be?

The 2013 Draft refers to concerns about the health of our population and the need for access to outdoor recreation space – which implies developed parks, not open spaces. The recent controversy over the proposed (and ultimately rejected) additional infrastructure for Crown Hill Open Space comes to mind. The League supports parks that are designed to encourage low-density activities with a focus on the natural aspects of the area. Open space conservation is widely credited with being beneficial for the health and quality of life of County residents but that connection is not made in the Draft.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns.

Sincerely,

Pat Mesec, President
League of Women Voters of Jefferson County