

# County vies for GOCO grant to purchase Lone Rock Ranch

By Lynda James Senior correspondent | Posted: Thursday, February 22, 2018 2:16 pm

Park County will know the first week in March if Great Colorado Outdoors has selected the county to submit a full application to help fund the purchase of Lone Rock Ranch, according to Land and Water Trust Fund Board Chair John Woodward after the Feb. 14 commissioners' meeting.

The ranch is located on the north side of U.S. Highway 285 between Pine Junction and Crow Hill.

Recreation Director Gary Nichols submitted a concept paper to GOCO in December. This is the second year he has submitted a concept paper for the purchase of Lone Rock Ranch.

The county was not selected to submit an application for the 2017 grant cycle. The county was notified that GOCO wanted financial support from at least one other state entity, such as Colorado Parks and Wildlife.

According to Woodward, 10 concept papers were submitted this year totaling \$33 million. He said GOCO has only \$13 million to award this year.

Woodward said CPW had submitted a letter with this year's concept paper stating CPW would like to help fund the Lone Rock purchase sometime in the future, but did not have funds now.

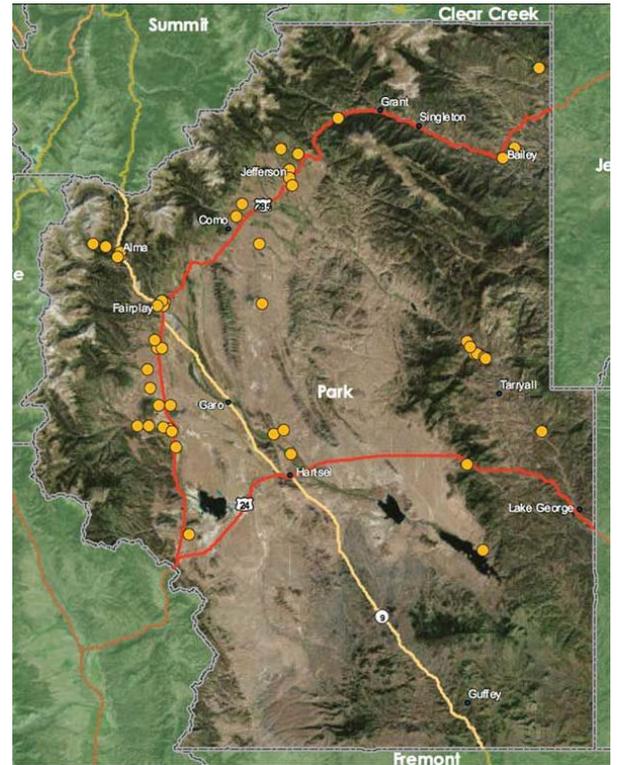
Woodward said CPW's top priority is \$6 million to purchase land on the eastern plains for a state wildlife area.

Woodward said if approved by GOCO, the Lone Rock proposal would request \$3 million from GOCO. The county hoped to obtain \$2 million from CPW and \$2 million from the LWTF.

He did not mention where the remaining funds would come from to meet Lone Rock's current purchase price.

Woodward said the LWTF board was split on whether the county should buy the Lone Rock property.

Last year, the majority of the LWTF board opposed the purchase.



## GOCO map

This map shows the locations (orange circles) of 69 Great Outdoors Colorado grants for projects in Park County. Some projects, such as the Coleman Ranch, Cline Ranch State Wildlife Area and Staunton State Park, received more than one grant. Over \$13 million was awarded for projects in the county. Projects range from land acquisitions, conservation easements and planning grants to trail/road construction, building a skate park and other outdoor recreation projects. (Courtesy of GOCO website)

According to GOCO's website, [www.goco.org](http://www.goco.org), GOCO will notify selected entities to submit full grant applications March 2.

If Park County is selected, the grant application will be due April 20.

GOCO will announce which applications will be awarded grants at its June meeting.

### **Total GOCO grants**

The GOCO trust fund was created by citizens' vote in the 1992 election.

From 1994 to 2016, 69 projects were funded in Park County with more than \$13.45 million from GOCO, according to [www.goco.org](http://www.goco.org).

A map and a list plus funding amount of all projects can be found on GOCO's website.

Project applicants for the 69 grants include Fairplay, Alma, Park County, Colorado Open Lands, The Nature Conservancy, Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust, Colorado State Parks and South Park Parks and Recreation District.

Over 24,400 acres in Park County have been placed in conservation easements using GOCO funds. A few are the Chiwawa Mines property on Buckskin Creek near Alma; Coleman Ranch, now the Lazy Bull Ranch, at the western base of Kenosha Pass; Santa Maria Ranch on the Middle Fork of the South Platte north of Hartsel; and Salt Works Ranch south of Antero Reservoir.

Land purchases include Cline Ranch State Wildlife Area, Staunton State Park parcels in the county and two parcels for open space and trails in Alma.

Improvements and flood damage repairs were made at Eleven Mile State Park.

Wetlands preservation includes High Creek Fen, Alma River Walk, and extreme rich fens on the Coleman Ranch and other ranches containing wetlands.

Outdoor recreation includes improvements and trails at McGraw Memorial Park, Weakland-Fawks Park, Kenosha Pass and Placer Valley.

GOCO funded a new water well at Wilderness on Wheels.

Skate parks and playgrounds in Fairplay and Alma plus a basketball court in Alma were funded.

A few planning grants were awarded, including those to Mosquito Range Heritage Initiative, South Park Conservation Plan, and Platte Canyon Outdoor Resource Master Plan.

### **LWTF renewal**

The sales tax supporting the LWTF will expire in December if it isn't renewed by Park County voters at the November election.

It was approved in 1997 with a 2008 sunset date and renewed in 2006 with a 2018 sunset date.

Both ballot questions stated the sales tax shall be used “solely for the preservation, protection, acquisition, improvement and maintenance of Park County’s remaining water resources and lands containing associated water rights and resources.”

Last year, County Attorney Lee Phillips, Commissioner Richard Elsner and County Manager Tom Eisenman wanted to increase the uses when the question went back to Park County voters for renewal.

Those increases were operation and maintenance of water rights, open space and wildlife and recreation resources.

Phillips and Elsner maintain some funded projects don’t fit the 1997 language and therefore the new wording is needed.

Last year, Eisenman, also a LWTF board member, said the county could buy land that doesn’t have water resources, such as BLM in-holdings, if the language was changed.

Last May, the LWTF board voted five to two to put the renewal on the 2017 ballot with no changes. They maintained no changes were needed and that past projects were allowed under the 1997 language because the funded projects related to water resources.

In June 2017, Commissioners Mark Dowaliby and Mike Brazell voted to instruct the county attorney to prepare a resolution to approve the ballot language with no changes and place it on the 2017 election ballot.

Phillips confirmed at the Feb. 14 meeting that he had prepared a resolution to renew at the 2017 election. But that resolution was never scheduled for a vote by the commissioners.

Last year Elsner said he wanted to hold public meetings around the county in early 2018 to get input from voters as to whether more uses should be added.

To date, The Flume is unaware of any such meetings being scheduled or held.

Woodward said he will not be able to attend the commissioners, Feb. 28 work session when discussing the LWTF renewal is scheduled, but he opposes any language changes.

Woodward said he didn’t know if anyone on the LWTF board had changed their mind about not adding uses to the 1997 ballot question.

The commissioners are scheduled to vote on the ballot language March 8.

## **New Projects**

Woodward said the LWTF board met on Feb. 7 and recommended the commissioners approve four new projects for a total of \$197,268.

Two projects are river restorations. One is an abandoned mine water quality study. The last is an augmentation water purchase for a fire district.

These projects will be presented to the county commissioners March 7 by the applicants, with the commissioners’ decision being made March 22.

Woodward said he believed the LWTF should only fund one half of any augmentation water request and such projects should be loans, not grants.

The LWTF board never voted on adding those requirements.

To date, six applications have been received for water augmentation. All but one were grant requests.

The one was a loan request from Indian Mountain Metropolitan District because IMMD has a large tax base.

Eisenman said he believed the LWTF would see more and more requests for augmentation water because district water commissioners are cracking down statewide on ponds without augmentation.

Eisenman said he thinks augmentation water is the newest cycle of requests, just as ranch conservation easements were in the 2000s.

Elsner said he did not think augmentation water for private ponds fit the mission of LWTF, only governments should be eligible to apply for augmentation water and it should be a loan from LWTF, not a grant.

### **Tax liens**

According to Colorado Revised Statutes 39-11-148, any 15-year-old tax lien created by a tax sale certificate that was not paid must be canceled by the commissioners.

County Treasurer Michelle Miller presented 10 tax sale certificates and liens that were never paid for the year 2002.

Eight of the ten were in Pike San Isabel Village. Seven were 0.17 acre each and one was 0.33 acre.

One 0.15-acre parcel is in Harris Park, and one two-acre parcel is in Indian Mountain.

### **Vouchers**

Vouchers were approved for \$155,052 from ten of the fifteen funds.

The public works fund spent the most at \$76,331. The general fund spent the next highest at \$67,731.

Four funds spent between \$1,499 and \$5,000 each. They were the grant, E-911 authority, fleet services and self insurance funds.

Those spending between \$25 and \$400 were human services, sales tax trust, conservation trust and sheriff's seizure funds.

*Note: The author is a member of the LWTF.*