

# **WILLOW GROVE OPEN SPACE MANAGEMENT PLAN**



**Management Plan adopted July 11, 2007  
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Town of Silverthorne  
Update April 2013**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The intent of this document is to provide guidelines for sustainable enjoyment of the property Willow Grove Open Space for the people of Silverthorne, while protecting the open space values for which they were acquired.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **A. General Location of Willow Grove Open Space**

Willow Grove Open Space is located in the Lower Blue River Basin of Summit County, on the east side of the Blue River on Mesa Drive in Silverthorne, CO.

### **B. History of Ownership**

The approximately 10.857 acres was purchased in 2006 as open space, with funding assistance from Great Outdoors Colorado and the Summit County Government.

### **C. Conservation Easement**

The Property was first encumbered with a deed of conservation easement in favor of Grantor by the Grande Family Trust on December 17, 2002 (the "Grande Deed of Conservation Easement") to the Grantee, Continental Divide Land Trust. The Grande Deed of Conservation Easement was recorded in to the record at the Summit County Clerk and Recorder on December 18, 2002, Reception No.705486. Thereafter, Colorado Prebuilt Housing, a Wyoming corporation and successor-in-interest to the Grande Family Trust, sold the Property to the Town of Silverthorne, subject to the Grande Deed of Conservation Easement, on April 18, 2006. An Amended and Restated Deed of Conservation Easement was recorded on December 13, 2006, reception #842177 which amends, restates, and replaces in its entirety the Grande Deed of Conservation Easement.

## **DESCRIPTION OF WILLOW GROVE OPEN SPACE**

### **A. Location & Description**

The property is a generally level 10-acre parcel located in the heart of Silverthorne at the end of a cul-de-sac of Mesa Drive. The Blue River borders the west side of the property. A single family residence, zoned R15, is to the north and to the east and to the south are residential areas of single-family homes. The property fronts the Blue River as it runs through Silverthorne for approximately 1,000 ft. The parcel is irregularly shaped and has three distinct segments; "Willow Pond" which is approximately 4 acres, a 2-3 acre treed area, and a narrow triangular strip separated from the treed area.

### **B. Open Space Values**

1. Access – Willow Grove Open Space provides public access to the Gold Medal Blue River, a 4-acre pond, Blue River Trail and Tammy's Bridge.
2. Buffers – Willow Grove Open Space separates and provides a buffer between the Blue River and residential neighborhoods.
3. Open Space Extension – Willow Grove Open Space is an extension of 1298 Blue River Parkway, 2.22 acres of open space owned by the Town of

Silverthorne, and is contiguous with the privately owned Blue River Valley Ranch Lakes Estates (BRVRLE) property.

4. Recreational – Willow Grove Open Space provides public fishing access to a Gold Medal River, Blue River Trail alignment, and picnic area. It also includes a pond that can be used for fishing, swimming; small non-motorized boats and kayak roll clinics. A trail alignment of the Blue River Trail and a Pedestrian Bridge crossing over the Blue River offer recreational amenities on the property.
5. Unique Lands - Willow Grove Open Space, includes: 1,000 ft. of Gold Medal river frontage, a 4 acre pond, wetlands, wildlife habitat and migration, and some of the oldest cottonwood trees in Summit County.
6. View Corridor – Willow Grove Open Space provides scenic views of the Blue River to the public, wetlands, and cottonwood trees.

### **C. Environmental, Health and Safety Concerns**

To the knowledge of the Town of Silverthorne, environmental assessments completed on Willow Grove Open Space, property are limited to a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment, completed by HP Geotech on March 30, 2006. This Assessment identified no environmental, health, or safety concerns on the site.

### **D. Buildings and Structures**

In the treed area along the river there is a gazebo, benches, tables, horseshoe pits, and public bathroom facilities. A split rail fence follows the property boundary. There are two docks around the edge of the pond. There are utility lines crossing the property at the southern strip along the Blue River.

### **E. Roads**

A dirt road provides access from Rainbow Court across the northern boundary of the property to a private residence on an adjoining property.

### **F. Trails**

Willow Grove Open Space receives pedestrian trail use, generally leading from Mesa Drive to the river or the pond. These trails are currently unmarked and formed on an informal basis. The Blue River Trail, including Tammy's Bridge, is on the west side of the property near the river. The Town will direct people to designated trails and the described areas of disturbance in order to protect the remaining conservation areas of the property through the use of signage.

### **G. Ditches**

The pond is fed by Bobo Ditch on the north side. The Bobo Ditch carries water, 1 CFS, from the Blue River beginning at the Highway 9/Blue River junction south of the property. The diverted water then flows along Rainbow Drive and into BRVRLE, north of the property. The Bobo Ditch is maintained by the Blue River Valley Ranch Lakes Estates Homeowners Association. The ditch then turns south and ultimately carries water into the northeast corner of the pond.

## **H. Parking and Access**

Public parking and handicapped access currently exist off of Mesa Drive.

## **I. Zoning**

Willow Grove Open Space, is zoned R-15 with no density assigned to the property.

## **J. Easements and Agreements**

A Water and/or Sewer Line Easements (Reception No. 306765, 306766 & 705486), was granted to the Town of Silverthorne.

A Cross Easements for the purpose of allowing BRVRLE to maintain its lake and in/outlet water resources to the Blue River. (Reception No. 797919)

An Intergovernmental Agreement with Summit County Government (Reception No. 846002) generally limits uses to those allowed in the Conservation Easement.

## **K. Encroachments**

No encroachments from adjacent properties have been noted.

## **L. Fences**

Repair, replace or remove any existing fences and build new fences for safety, property boundary marking, and separation of ownership and uses, and natural resource management and protection purposes. Additional fencing shall be designed and constructed in a manner that minimizes the adverse effect of the fencing on the Conservation Values or the native vegetation, wildlife, and habitat on the Property and does not result in pollution or degradation of any land or surface waters so as to have a demonstrable detrimental effect upon fish or wildlife, their natural habitat, or upon the natural ecosystems and their processes.

## **NATURAL AND ECOLOGICAL FEATURES**

### **A. Vegetation**

Vegetation consists of willow (*Salix sp.*) alder (*lnus sp.*) and narrowleaf cottonwood (*Populus angustifolia*) - all plant species typical of river edges in Summit County. This water dependent vegetation is interspersed with lodge pole pine (*Pinus contorta*) and Englemann Spruce (*Picea Englemannii*).

Where the property borders residential development to the east and the Blue River to the west, riparian vegetation shows signs of compacted soils, erosion, and loss of vegetation along the river banks. Encroachments and impacts to vegetation can be found in many other areas of the property bordered by residential development.

Similarly, vegetation around the pond is typical of riparian habitat. Willows and narrowleaf cottonwood are present on all sides. Narrowleaf cottonwood trees, however, are much smaller than those found along the Blue River. Paths are present in the vegetation and typically lead from homes to the water. Between the pond and Lots 11 & 13 to the south a large area has been disturbed and the ground is bare.

The forest on the Property is mixed conifer and the narrowleaf cottonwood present along the pond and the Blue River. The least disturbed stand of lodgepole pine and other conifers is located to the northwest along the Blue River, where no public access is permitted. Pines in this area are small in diameter. Shrub cover is a mix of Buffaloberry (*Sherpherdia Canadensis*), common juniper (*Juniperus communis*). Other grasses and forbs are present. Forest in the southern portion of the property is bisected by the path and bordered to the east by residences and by the river to the west.

### **B. Noxious Weeds**

Noxious weeds present on or near the property include scentless chamomile (*Matricaria Perforata*) found along the path that borders the Blue River. Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) is present along the dirt access road from Rainbow Court and in some areas around the pond.

### **C. Wetlands**

*Hydrology* – The riverine wetlands are supported by the alluvial aquifer of the Blue River. Additional hydrology may come from seepage along the steep slopes of the river. The Blue River is a regulated river with flows dependent upon the release from the Dillon Dam, located approximately one river mile upstream.

*Vegetation* – Wetland vegetation within the riverine ranges from facultative upland to obligate species. The dominant wetland vegetation throughout the property includes *Salix monticola*, *Salix exigua*, *Distigea involucrate*. Away from the river towards the wetland edge, the vegetation becomes dominated by drier species, dandelion (*Taraxicum officinale*), brome (*Bromus sp.*) and bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*).

### **D. Wildlife**

*Mammals*: This property is a relatively small parcel bounded by roads and urban development. As a result, the wildlife it supports will primarily include small mammals, such as raccoon, fox, striped skunk, and various rodents. Other species that have been seen include larger mammals, such as mule deer, elk, moose, and bear. These species may pass through the property on occasion, particularly as they move through undeveloped lands in the BRVRLE to the north to National Forest land on Ptarmigan Peak.

*Birds*: The diversity of trees on the Property may be used by a variety of bird species, but because field visits were conducted in fall, the species that may use the site for breeding were not determined. Birds observed in the area in October included Black-billed Magpie (*Pica pica*), Gray-headed Junco (*Junco hyemalis*), Black-capped Chickadee (*Poecile gambeli*), and American Crow (*Corvus corax*). American Dipper (*Cinclus mexicanus*) are common on the Blue River in both summer and winter and are likely breeders along the banks. The pond to the north is used by Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis*) and ducks, though none were present during field visits. Osprey nest near the property and forage for fish in the pond, as well as in ponds to the north in Blue River Valley Ranch Lakes Estates.

*Fish:* The Blue River is designated a Gold Medal fishery by the Colorado Wildlife Commission, a distinction awarded waterways that provide high quality aquatic hatches and support population of fish 14 inches or longer. Due to the river's controlled flows and the presence of mysis shrimp from Dillon Reservoir, the waters below the dam support large rainbow (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) and brown trout (*Salmo trutta*). Fishing in the area along the Property is catch-and-release only. **The Town of Silverthorne continues to work closely with the Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife and with the local fishing businesses to ensure that the Blue River maintains its Gold Medal status.**

The pond on the Property historically has only Brook Trout. In 1999, 300 German browns ranging in size from 9" to 12" were introduced. Fishing at the pond is limited to catch and release.

*Threatened and Endangered Species and Species of Concern:*

No Federally-Threatened, Endangered, or Candidate wildlife species are known to be present on the Property. Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), a Threatened species that uses the Blue River during the winter, may be observed occasionally on the property or in the vicinity of the property as it fishes the river, but its presence is not confirmed. One state sensitive species, Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) may also forage in the pond and along the river. This species has been known to fish in ponds in BRVRLE and nests are located in the area. Due to livestock in BRVRLE the water quality must be maintained in Bobo Ditch and in the Willow Grove Lake.

## **VISION FOR THE COMBINED PROPERTY**

This property is part of the Silverthorne Parks and Open Space Master Plan to provide and protect Greenways and Resource Conservancy areas. This property is part of the Blue River Way linear parks and open space corridors that serve recreational and conservation purposes. Included on this property are: multi-use trails, trailheads, non-motorized boats, fishing and picnic area, not exceeding 42,000 sq. ft. as stated in the Conservation Easement. Conservation and infrastructure objectives of greenways include preserving wildlife habitat and routes of wildlife circulation, protection of water, air, and scenic qualities, protection of historic and cultural values and helping to ensure public safety from floods.

This property provides a resource conservancy area where there are places with unique scenic quality, sensitive lands including wildlife habitat, routes of movement and migration.

Particular attention will be given to conservation of the native vegetation located in the triangle between the recreational pathway and the property boundary in the south "arm" of the property.

## **PUBLIC USES AND TRAVEL MANAGEMENT**

### **A. Motorized Vehicles, ATV's and Snowmobiles**

The 2006 Conservation Easement specifically states “To use motorized vehicles, including snowmobiles, for Property management purposes, but only in a manner that does not result in the degradation of the land and wildlife thereon, and that does not substantially diminish or impair the Conservation Values of the Property, including but not limited to increasing susceptibility of the soil to erosion or the disturbance of wildlife wintering areas during winter months. Off-road vehicle courses for snowmobiles, all-terrain vehicles, motorcycles, or other motorized vehicles are prohibited. No motorized water craft are permitted on the pond.”

### **B. Horses, Livestock, and Pack Animals**

Horses, livestock and pack animals shall be prohibited on the property in order to protect native vegetation and natural resources, as well as reduce the potential for spread of noxious weeds.

## **MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES**

The property will be managed by the Town of Silverthorne Recreation & Culture Department in cooperation with the Silverthorne Public Works and Police Departments. Any substantial plans for improvements or changes in management shall be discussed with the holders of the Conservation Easement prior to implementation.

### **A. Guidelines for Improvements**

Improvements proposed for Willow Grove Open Space, include:

- Route identification and trail improvements to provide a sustainable asphalt/boardwalk surface trail connection across the property adjacent to the Blue River.
- Identification of a pedestrian bridge crossing and installment.
- Forest management activities that address other Forest Health concerns.
- Locate, design and construct warming huts.
- Locate, design and construct picnic shelters.
- Repair, remove and replace fencing on the property.
- Display informational and educational signage.
- Maintain up to three boat docks on the pond, and small memorial along the Blue River. Noxious weed management.

Improvements not deemed for Willow Grove Open Space, include:

- Access roads, other than the current private drive-way.
- Residential structures.
- Disturbance in the south triangle portion of the property, other than the current trail along the river.
- Improvements not consistent with the Conservation Easement.

Further discussion of these improvements follows:

#### Trails, paved pathways and pedestrian bridge

Resource impacts associated with any proposed trail alignment will be evaluated and discussed with Town of Silverthorne Council, the SPORT Committee and holders of the Conservation Easement prior to beginning any work.

#### Signage

Trailhead information and regulatory signage will be placed at entry points to the property to educate the public, reduce resource impacts and allow for enforcement of regulations if necessary.

#### Fences

Fencing around the property borders are currently in place.

#### Restrooms and Parking

Facilities were constructed in 2009 and are maintained by Town of Silverthorne.

### **C. Ongoing Management Provisions**

In accordance with the Vision Statement and individual sections of the Management Plan, the property will be managed to maintain conditions consistent with the vision and guidelines as outlined in the Conservation Easement and to avoid activities that require intensive management. This will minimize the ongoing management costs. The Town of Silverthorne also plans to utilize volunteer efforts through the SPORT Committee minimizing costs to the greatest extent possible. (Community members and nearby homeowners have volunteered to assist in management of property).

Management actions contemplated by this plan that will require Town of Silverthorne resources include:

- Removal of litter and other debris.
- Installation of property indemnification markers and/or regulatory signage.
- Actions required in designing the Blue River Trail and Pedestrian Bridge.
- Ongoing monitoring of the property, including notification to adjacent homeowners regarding the rules and regulations regarding the open space property.
- Treatment and monitoring of noxious weed infestations.
- Removal, replacement, or maintenance of fencing.
- Removal, replacement, or maintenance of docks.
- Ongoing forest management and monitoring.
- Maintain water quality and flow on the property.
- The Silverthorne Police Department has the authority to enforce any and all laws on the property.

The Town of Silverthorne will also undertake other management activities to protect Town ownership interests, or protect the natural resources or conservation values of the property, as deemed necessary. .

### **D. Monitoring**



The Town of Silverthorne will monitor the property throughout the life of this plan to insure that the conservation values of the property are being protected. Goals of this monitoring include:

1. Ensure that public uses are consistent with the Management Plan.
2. Management actions are consistent with the Management Plan.
3. Evaluate whether the provisions of the Management Plan adequately protect the identified resources.
4. Evaluate the necessity for modification or amendments to the Management Plan.

#### **MANAGEMENT PLAN APPROVAL**

The Willow Grove Open Space Land Management Plan has been reviewed and approved by the Town of Silverthorne Council as resolution #2007-18. The SPORT Committee made a recommendation to the Town Council to adopt this management plan at its July 11, 2007 meeting. The SPORT Committee discussed this management plan. The management plan was sent out to referral agencies, including the Division of Wildlife, Willow Grove HOA and BRVRLE HOA. The management plan was also reviewed by Great Outdoors Colorado and Summit County Open Space and Trails Department, Continental Divide Land Trust, the holder of the Conservation Easement covering the property.

In 2012 the Management Plan was reviewed and updated by SPORT Committee.

Continental Divide Land Trust approved the update on : \_\_\_\_\_20\_\_