

**PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURE MEMORANDUM
#11-2025**

DATE: July 28, 2025

TO: Honorable Mayor Meredith Leighty and City Council Members

THROUGH: Heather Geyer, City Manager *hmg*
Jason Loveland, Deputy City Manager *JL 2*

FROM: Amanda J. Peterson, Director of Parks, Recreation & Culture *ajp*
Willis Waterhouse, Parks Operations Manager

SUBJECT: CR-69 – Open Space Management Plan

PURPOSE

To consider CR-69, a resolution adopting the updated Open Space Management Plan.

BACKGROUND

The Open Space Management Plan was adopted in 2002, with subsequent updates in 2004, 2008, and 2010. Building on the Noxious Weed Management Plan, the Open Space Management Plan provides a framework for the management of Northglenn’s six open space parcels.

UPDATE

Since the plan’s adoption, Northglenn’s open spaces have been actively managed through a variety of initiatives, including fire mitigation through tree pruning, wildlife habitat support, installation of interpretive signage, noxious weed management, mowing, grazing, soft-surface trail maintenance, tree planting, and overseeding.

The proposed update includes site-specific management highlights for each of the six parcels, to include goals, past maintenance efforts, ongoing maintenance and management activities, and proposed amenities.

BUDGET/TIME IMPLICATIONS

There are no specific budget implications associated with this item.

The draft update was presented to the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board on June 12. The Board unanimously approved recommendation to Council. The plan was also brought forward to City Council at the study session on July 7 for review.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of CR-69.

STAFF REFERENCE

If Council members have any questions, please contact Amanda Peterson, Director of Parks, Recreation & Culture, at apeterson@northglenn.org or 303.450.8950.

ATTACHMENT

1. Open Space Management Plan with significant changes highlighted

CR-69 – Open Space Management Plan

OPEN SPACE MANAGEMENT PLAN

A Framework for the Future

Adopted 4/11/02
Updated 2004
Updated 2008
Updated 2010
Updated 2025



Northglenn Open Space Management Plan

A Framework for the Future of Open Space in Northglenn

Have you seen the first rays of the sunrise reflecting on the ponds at Winburn Park?

Or sat on a bench to observe a red-winged blackbird swoop and clutch a reed in the marsh while clouds drift lazily across the sky at Croke Reservoir?

Isn't it amazing to hear the sound of leaves rustling in the trees while waves of prairie grasses roll in the wind at the Oscar Arnold Nature Area?

Have you watched a hawk circle an open space, watching for the movement of its prey?

Isn't it refreshing to see an oasis of natural landscape in the midst of urban development?

Do you appreciate walking down a trail toward the sun setting over the Rocky Mountains?

In the City of Northglenn, there are several parcels and corridors of land that undoubtedly improve the quality of our lives by providing quiet places and open spaces. These spaces include the Oscar Arnold Nature Area, the ponds at Winburn Park, Croke Reservoir, Fox Run Open Space, the Farmers' Highline Canal trail corridor, and Grange Hall Creek/Grant Ditch.

Northglenn has intentionally established guidelines for the long-term care and preservation of these valuable resources.

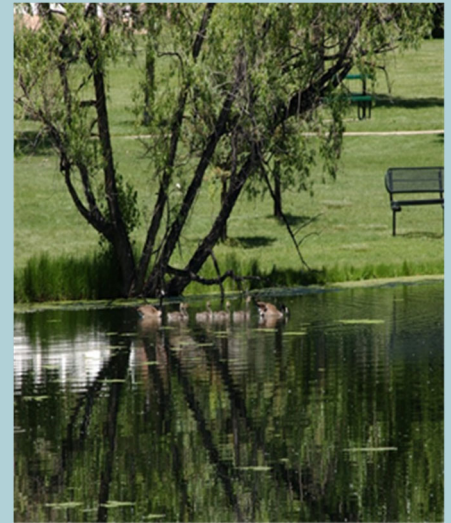
These places have aesthetic, recreational, cultural, educational and natural resource values that need to be conserved for today, tomorrow and for future generations of Northglenn residents.

Northglenn is a land-locked community with minimal opportunity to purchase additional open space land. Responsible stewardship must be practiced in the spaces that we have to properly care for them.

Within these pages, discover the location and features of Northglenn's open spaces and learn more about the issues, benefits, opportunities and challenges facing those charged with its stewardship: All of us.

This plan outlines a management plan for each open space or nature area, including a brief history of past maintenance, a proposed plan for current and ongoing maintenance, and a list of proposed future amenities.

The vision for Northglenn's Open Spaces is to enhance the quality of life of Northglenn residents and future generations by conserving and managing open space to provide a continuing community resource for ecosystem education and wildlife - - places where wildlife thrives *and people enjoy and experience it.*



Winburn Park Ponds

The Value of Open Space

The beauty of Northglenn's natural gifts is everywhere - the shady trees, an array of vibrant plants, refreshing bodies of water. Open spaces do many things for the natural environment and the human spirit:

- Maintain people's connection to the land
- Minimize the loss of critical wildlife habitat and restore habitat that is in decline
 - Provide passive recreation opportunities for Northglenn and area residents
- Provide opportunities for Northglenn residents to learn about the environment
- Enhance quality of life through the preservation of a dwindling local resource



Why Manage Open Space?

Some people think that open space manages itself. Experience teaches us otherwise. For example, based on resource inventories conducted on Northwest Open Space in 2001 it was apparent that the general trend of vegetation had been one of decline. Left unmanaged, noxious weed species will proliferate in each Northglenn Open Space parcel, and favorable vegetation is threatened, as are the animals that the favorable plant species support. The human impact on the parcels must also be managed. Because they are rare and valued lands, they get significant use. If we do not intervene and manage open space, the values that we associate with it will soon disappear. In addition, Adams County, the City of Northglenn and the State of Colorado have noxious weed management ordinances which direct the City to manage invasive species. Healthy open space ecosystems in urban settings cannot exist without management.

Open Space, as defined in the 2019 Unified Development Ordinance is:

“Intended to provide for recreational uses and natural areas and to protect those lands from being used for purposes other than recreational and natural areas. The Open Space district is intended to accommodate public and quasi-public open space, parks, and compatible accessory uses and structures.”

Additionally, Ordinance No. 1436, Series of 2006, provides an additional use by right of “Nature Area.” Nature Area is defined to “mean an area established primarily as a conservation district to preserve the environment and natural character of the landscape within the district. Land within the district shall be protected from development, but may also be used for unimproved trails, buffering between land uses, defining the edges of urbanization and the preservation of valuable natural features and ecosystems. Utilities and existing improvements located in a nature area may be maintained as necessary, but reasonable efforts should be used to minimize environmental impacts.”

Three parcels have been identified as Nature Areas by ordinance. These include the Oscar Arnold Nature Area (2006), Croke Reservoir Nature Area (2006), and Fox Run

Nature Area (2007).

The Open Space Management Plan was initially adopted by City Council in April 2002, with updates in 2004, 2008, and 2010. This plan works in conjunction with the Noxious Weed Management Plan, originally adopted by resolution in November 2001, with updates in 2003, 2005, 2008, and 2010.

What is an Open Space Management Plan?

An open space management plan allows open space in Northglenn to be viewed as a whole rather than as unrelated parcels. This view supports continuity in planning and management of open space as a collective resource. Each parcel was evaluated and examined to establish its unique position as open space and to determine what is appropriate in each area, what the neighbors want, and what the issues and opportunities are associated with each of the open spaces.

Conservation is defined as: *The act of preserving, guarding or protecting; preservation from loss, decay, injury or violation.*

The benefits of developing an open space management plan are numerous. A broad-based public involvement approach has been taken to allow for a participatory decision-making environment where residents and other interested parties are able to offer their input into the shape of their natural

surroundings. The participatory approach also allows for dialogue between the City of Northglenn staff, City Council, the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, residents, and other agencies and organizations. It is hoped that continuing dialogue will lead to a constituency that is informed about challenges with open space and a planning team that is aware of the concerns of community members.

Urban wildlife depends heavily on water resources. Eighty percent or more of animal species rely on riparian areas to fulfill all or part of their habitat needs. As such, special attention and management consideration must be given to the many riparian areas and water sources in Northglenn's open spaces: Croke Reservoir, Farmers' Highline Canal, Grange Hall Creek/Grant Ditch, Winburn Park Ponds and the wetlands in the Oscar Arnold Nature Area.

The Parcels

Farmers' Highline Canal Corridor

The Farmers' Highline Canal enters Northglenn at the western city limits at Northwest Open Space Recreation Area near Pecos and 112th Avenue and flows north and east to E.B. Rains, Jr. Memorial Park at 120th Avenue, then on into Thornton. A greenway trail runs parallel to the canal, providing over three miles of trail, including a pedestrian underpass at I-25. Water typically flows in the canal from mid-April through October. Homes line much of the corridor on both sides. People and wildlife co-exist, enjoying the long stretch of tree-lined trail. A respite from traffic and commotion, the canal and trail system provides an accessible corridor for wildlife, as well as habitat and a seasonal water source. In many segments, mature cottonwoods stretch their limbs to shade the trail. People use the trail to walk, run, bicycle, rollerblade, relax and rehabilitate.

Winburn Park Ponds

Located along the east side of Huron Street, south of 112th Avenue, the park features an inviting oasis for passive enjoyment. Willows and cottonwood trees, cattails and marsh surround two ponds. Picnic tables, benches and a gazebo provide resting places to soak up the environment. Visitors are invited to fish in the ponds, catching bass, blue gill and carp. A trail loop takes visitors on a quiet stroll around the nature area.

Farmers' Highline Canal Trail



Grange Hall Creek

Goals & Actions

Individual management plans were developed for each property. Each plan details needed improvements, including specific management recommendations and a schedule for implementation. The goals of management and stewardship in Northglenn's open spaces are to:

- Promote ecosystem
- Be sustainable
- Enhance and protect natural, cultural, educational and scenic resources
- Provide safe and enjoyable passive outdoor recreation activities.

Each of these goals will be achieved through specific management actions that may include:

- Control of noxious invasive weeds through an Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan
- Monitoring of vegetation, wildlife and water
- Planting of favorable plant species
- Maintaining trails
- Maintaining amenities such as fences, signs and benches, and introducing them as appropriate for enhanced management
- Working to provide educational opportunities through on-site informational materials and guided nature hikes where appropriate.
- Targeted enhancement based on public input

Grange Hall Creek

Grange Hall Creek flows across the southeast side of the city, and wanders through the Fox Run residential development. The Greenway Trail runs adjacent to the creek for much of its path. In the Fox Run development, the creek has two tributaries that run through grassland from west to east.

Fox Run Nature Area

The trail loops around a wetland area and runs past award winning erosion control structures, then meanders past the old Thede homestead, a historical site. This trail segment has very few trees. The only vegetation that is mowed is directly adjacent to the trail. The Grange Hall Creek open space is approximately 50 acres and is the most recent addition to the open space parcels.

Grange Hall Creek (West of Irma Dr.)

A railroad track separates the Fox Run area of Grange Hall Creek from the western area historically known as Grant Ditch. A pedestrian underpass has been completed to link trails from the Fox Run side to the Grange Hall trail west of Irma Drive. The Greenway Trail runs from Irma Drive west to I-25 and connects with the Farmers' Highline Canal trail, providing a continuous trail from the western city limits adjacent to Westminster. Stormwater drainage is one source of water in Grange Hall Creek, and it runs year-round. Homes border much of this wide corridor on

both the north and the south. Historically, most of the vegetation along this corridor was mowed several times each year; however, this practice is harmful to wildlife habitat.

Beginning in 2017, Northglenn shifted to a more natural approach, limiting the areas being mowed for restoration purposes.

Croke Reservoir

Croke Reservoir, located at Huron and Naiad, is home to a variety of wildlife: fish, snapping turtles, waterfowl, heron and red-winged black birds, muskrats, raccoons, and an occasional fox. Willows and cottonwoods surround the area on three sides, providing a peaceful place of rest. Cattails provide a wetland habitat. Fishing is permitted from April 1 through October 15. Fishing is prohibited on the north side of the reservoir for environmental reasons. Fish species include bass, perch, carp and blue gill. There is an ADA accessible fishing pier. Dogs, boats, skateboards and bicycles are prohibited in order to restrict the disruption of the wildlife. The reservoir is manmade. In 2009, a rehabilitation of the Croke Reservoir Nature Area was completed, including repairs to the shoreline erosion. Homes border the north side of the property.

Oscar Arnold Nature Area

The Oscar Arnold Nature Area is located at 112th and West 111th Way. This parcel was



named in honor of the homesteader who settled there and eventually deeded the land to the city. The Farmers' Highline Canal runs along the south border of the property, providing a trail from which to observe the area. Several informal trails have been worn through the center of the property. This area has a unique blend of wildlife habitat including a wooded area with mature cottonwoods, cattail marshes, and other wetland plants. The site hosts a variety of wildlife including foxes, coyotes, raccoons, hawks, and owls. The wooded area is often vandalized by illegal dumping, encampments, or other vandalism. Vegetation was disturbed as soil was excavated from the south side of the property in the late 90's to build berms for the adjacent soccer fields. Homes border the east and west sides of the property. After resource inventories were completed in spring 2001, management activities such as weed control and wetland delineation began. Currently, control efforts are centered around Teasel and Canada Thistle.

Opportunities & Benefits

Open space presents many benefits. The benefits are certainly environmental in nature, but are also social, physical, emotional, educational and economic. A well-managed open space can contribute to a sense of peace, provide opportunities for wildlife viewing as well as passive recreation, protection and rehabilitation of ecosystems, filtration of storm water run-off, increased property values, and a strengthened sense of community, to name but a few. Other opportunities articulated by the 2004 task force and still relevant today include:

- "Quiet Places and Open Spaces"
- Sense of stewardship for the land
- Natural places for future generations
- Observation and enjoyment of wildlife
- Relief from development
- Purification of air & water
- Corridors for wildlife
- Ecosystem education
- Protecting the balance
- Connections between communities

- Encouraging favorable vegetation
- Developing a sense of "place"
- Conservation of a rare urban resource
- Public understanding & involvement
- Volunteer involvement & ownership

Challenges

Along with benefits come challenges. One of the biggest challenges is the presence of highly aggressive invasive non-native plant species in the open spaces. Those species negatively impact vegetation and, consequently, the wildlife that the plant habitat supports. If steps are not taken to manage the threat, the natural environments that Northglenn residents have come to value could be irrevocably compromised. Noxious weeds identified in Northglenn to date include: Canada Thistle, Scotch and Musk Thistle, Field Bindweed, Yellow Toadflax, Purple Loosestrife and Poison Hemlock.



Another challenge lies in the officially recognized use of the properties. City ordinance classified these parcels as “Open Space,” along with parking lots, cemeteries, golf courses, and many other uses that are not consistent with the vision articulated in this document. Other challenges include:

- Noxious weed management
- Staffing/funding for maintenance
- Public education & input about open space management techniques, etc.
- Domestic pet waste & wildlife disturbance
- Informal trails—good or bad?
- Community consensus on vision
- Prairie dogs
- Off-trail uses
- Dumping
- Drainage
- Mosquitoes
- Fire
- Water to establish favorable vegetation
- Wetland delineation & management regulations for open water
- Feeding of wildlife
- Encampments

Alternatives

In the management of open space, three options emerge

1. Do Nothing
2. Integrated Pest Management
3. Integrated Pest Management and targeted resource enhancement

Doing nothing is not a viable alternative. Inaction will allow undesirable species to choke out favorable plant species and consequently wildlife species. The State of Colorado and Adams County require a program for noxious weed management, for which the City has developed the Noxious Weed Management Plan, which was most recently revised and adopted by Resolution No. 10-60, Series of 2010.

A program of Integrated Pest Management which focuses heavily on weed management is currently in place. However, due to the stronghold of noxious

weeds in some areas, more intensive practices such as mechanical and chemical treatments are required to establish control. Based on public input, there is also an opportunity to enhance both wildlife habitat and the recreational and educational opportunities for people in Northglenn's open spaces. A continuing program of public involvement will help determine which course of action community members would like to take in each open space site.

How Can You Get Involved?

- Respond to this document
- Attend public meetings
- Volunteer to help in the maintenance or enhancement of the parcels
- Help educate your family, friends, and neighbors about the values of open spaces and how each of us can help maintain them



Designated Open Space & Nature Area Parcels in Northglenn





Legend

- Major Streets
- ▭ City Limit
- ▨ Nature Areas
- ▭ Open space
- ▭ Water Bodies

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Prepared: January 26, 2009
File: OoenSpace2.mxd



Management Highlights

Farmers' Highline Canal

Management Goal

To control noxious weeds and promote desirable vegetation along the Farmers' Highline Canal corridor by applying appropriate open space management techniques that enhance the experience of Greenway Trail users.

Past Maintenance

The Farmers' Highline Canal corridor has been regularly mowed, with noxious weed infestations managed and eradicated as needed. Trees and shrubs have been trimmed to maintain trail clearance and safety. In 2018, the asphalt trail section east of I-25 was replaced with concrete. Underbrush was removed near Pinnacle Creek Townhomes to mitigate fire hazards. Hazard tree and branch removal projects were conducted in 2022 and 2024 to enhance public safety, reduce liability, and support long-term landscape health. An annual volunteer cleanup has been held each March to remove trash and debris.

Ongoing Maintenance & Management

- Survey for noxious weeds annually, assess desirable vegetation, and treat infestations as needed.
- Monitor tree health, trimming to maintain trail clearance and removing hazard trees or dead brush as needed to reduce fire risks.
- Maintain tree plantings along the ditch corridor.
- Perform limited mowing: 6–8 feet along trails and 10 feet along fence lines to maintain firebreaks.
- Conduct full-area mowing at the end of each growing season.

Proposed Amenities

- Replace old benches and install new benches, tables, and/or shelters throughout the trail corridor as needed.
- Evaluate opportunities to partner with volunteers to install bird nesting boxes in suitable trees.
- Assess and prioritize areas for additional tree plantings where long term sustainability is most likely.
- Evaluate potential installation of additional dog waste stations.



Management Highlights

The Ponds at Winburn Park

Management Goal

To manage the native area of the park as an open space and improve the water quality of the wetlands.

Past Maintenance

A wooden boardwalk through the area was rebuilt in 2002 by Boy Scouts. At this time, most of the bridge has been replaced with a crusher fine trail. Ponds have been dredged periodically. Trees have been cleared and dead wood has been trimmed around the pond and along the pathway on a regular basis.



Ongoing Maintenance and Management

- Survey for and treat noxious weeds as needed.
- Monitor ponds throughout the growing season for algae and treat as necessary to support water quality and mosquito mitigation.
- Mow along pathways regularly.



Proposed Amenities

- Restore pond aeration system to ensure functionality
- Consider the addition of a significantly larger solar aeration system to assist with water quality
- Continue to add more trees to the area
- Work with volunteer groups to install stand alone bat boxes

Management Highlights

Grange Hall Creek & Fox Run Nature Area

Management Goal

To establish a native open space setting for the residents of Fox Run and the users of the Greenway Trail System.



Past Maintenance

Since 2001, the site has been actively managed to support native vegetation and reduce invasive species. Initial mowing excluded the riparian corridor to encourage native grass establishment, and since 2003, mowing has been limited to pathways, streets, parks, and fences, a practice that continues today. Noxious weeds such as Salt Cedar and Russian Olive have been controlled through chemical and mechanical treatments. Purple Loosestrife has not been observed since 2010, though wetland monitoring continues. Treatment for Canada Thistle is ongoing. Enhancements to the space include two bat boxes installed by Eagle Scouts in 2017. In 2024, a pollinator garden featuring over 400 native plants was installed in partnership with the Butterfly Pavilion and community volunteers. It features a butterfly sculpture, “Metamorphosis,” acquired through the Northglenn Arts & Humanities Foundation’s annual Art on Parade program People’s Choice Award.

Ongoing Maintenance & Management

- Survey for and treat noxious weeds as needed to prevent re-infestation.
- Evaluate control efforts, support native vegetation recovery, and reseed where necessary.
- Collaborate with adjacent landowners to manage and prevent prairie dog encroachment into open space.
- Mow firebreaks 6–8 feet along paths and streets, and at least 10 feet along fences.
- Resurface crusher fines trail system as needed.

Proposed Amenities

- Evaluate adding bat boxes, bird nests, or a bee hotel to enhance wildlife habitat
- Provide additional educational signage
- Assess areas that may be viable for planting of trees, based on the highest likelihood of sustainability

Management Highlights

Croke Reservoir

Management Goal

To maintain the natural condition of the site, continuing to manage the site as an urban fishery and waterfowl/wildlife habitat.

Past Maintenance

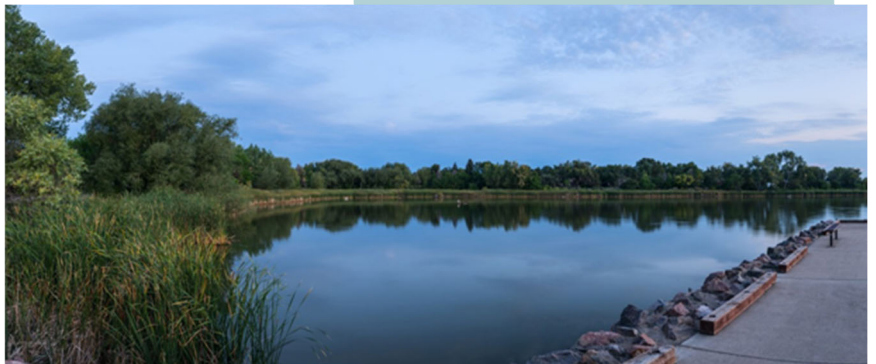
The pathway around the reservoir is mowed 6 times a season. Hazard trees are identified and removed as needed. In 2008, a significant rehabilitation of Croke Reservoir was completed. The reservoir was drained, the shoreline stabilized, additional trees planted, additional annual and perennial beds installed and new benches, tables, signage, shelters and pathways were added. In 2018, multiple structures were placed in the reservoir to enhance fish habitat. In 2019, a sub-committee was developed to provide additional recommendations for improvements to the site. In 2023, an ADA-compliant fishing pier was installed to improve accessibility. Additional interpretive signage and low-profile fence barriers were also added to protect sensitive habitat areas and enhance visitor awareness.

Ongoing Maintenance & Management

- Survey for and treat noxious weeds as needed; monitor vegetation recovery and habitat conditions.
- Identify, prune, or remove hazard trees as needed.
- Support Public Works in monitoring water quality and fishery health; assist with maintenance of the aeration system.
- Preserve and support wildlife habitat.
- Maintain trails regularly.

Proposed Amenities

- Install nesting boxes for birds and bat boxes
- Install additional benches/shelters
- Continue to coordinate with Colorado Division of Wildlife to stock fish



Management Highlights

Oscar Arnold Nature Area

Management Goal

Reduce weed infestations to a level that does not impact the natural environment of the site.

Past Maintenance

Treatment of Canada Thistle, Yellow Toadflax, Russian Olive and Teasel. Mowing of weeds along the north entry drive. A major project was conducted in 2019 for the removal and chemical treatment of remaining Russian olives on the site. Stumps were treated after the removal process was complete. Firebreak mowing areas were expanded to improve wildfire prevention, and a goat grazing program was introduced as a sustainable vegetation management approach in 2023.

Ongoing Maintenance & Management

- Survey for and treat noxious weeds using targeted chemical, mechanical, and goat grazing methods; adjust goat grazing program as needed based on ongoing evaluations.
 - Monitor control efforts and vegetation response; study vegetation changes from grazing and overseeding.
 - Spot treat weed infestations chemically and mechanically in dryland areas; mechanically in wetland and riparian areas.
 - Maintain firebreaks: mow 6–8 feet along paths and streets, and 10 feet along residential fences per North Metro Fire recommendations.
 - Monitor for new Russian Olive growth and treat as necessary.

Proposed Amenities

- Consider formalizing the existing social trail
- Addition of Interpretive signage
- Evaluate adding bat boxes, bird nests, and/or a bee hotel to enhance wildlife habitat.



Management Highlights

Northwest Open Space (south of Farmers' Highline Canal, exclusive of Athletic Fields)

Management Goal

Reduce noxious weed infestations, maintain the open area to safe and aesthetically pleasing standards.

Past Maintenance

Treatment of Canada Thistle, Yellow Toadflax and Field Bindweed. Weeds in open area mowed regularly.

Ongoing Maintenance & Management

- Treat noxious and undesired weeds throughout the area using chemical, mechanical, and biological controls; consider goat grazing where appropriate.
- Mow open areas regularly and maintain a minimum 10-foot firebreak along residential fences per North Metro Fire recommendations.
- Monitor for Russian Olive and remove or treat as necessary.

Proposed Amenities

- None identified



Acknowledgements

This plan was originally developed in 2002. It represents the combined efforts of a variety of individuals whose time was generously contributed in many ways including: attending public meetings to provide information about the community's priorities for open space properties, contributing technical assistance and participating on the Open Space Management Plan Revision committee. Each of these groups and individuals provided crucial input into the direction of this plan.

City of Northglenn

Northglenn Residents

Northglenn Parks & Recreation Advisory Board

National Park Service Rivers, Trails & Conservation

Assistance Program Colorado Division of Wildlife

Natural Resource Conservation Service

Adams County Weed District

Croke Reservoir Sub-Committee

Photography - Paul Weinrauch and City Staff

This 2025 update was reviewed by staff, the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board, and the Colorado State Extension for Adams County.





For more information, please contact:

City of Northglenn
Parks Maintenance & Operations
12301 Claude Court
Northglenn, CO 80233
303.280.7821

SPONSORED BY: MAYOR LEIGHTY

COUNCIL MEMBER'S RESOLUTION

RESOLUTION NO.

No. CR-69
Series of 2025

Series of 2025

A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE 2025 REVISED OPEN SPACE MANAGEMENT PLAN

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NORTHGLENN, COLORADO, THAT:

Section 1. The 2025 Revised Open Space Management Plan for the City of Northglenn, attached hereto, is hereby adopted by the City Council of the City of Northglenn, Colorado.

DATED, at Northglenn, Colorado, this _____ day of _____ 2025.

MEREDITH LEIGHTY
Mayor

ATTEST:

JOHANNA SMALL, MMC
City Clerk

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

COREY Y. HOFFMANN
City Attorney

OPEN SPACE MANAGEMENT PLAN

A Framework for the Future

Adopted 4/11/02
Updated 2004
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Updated 2025



Northglenn Open Space Management Plan

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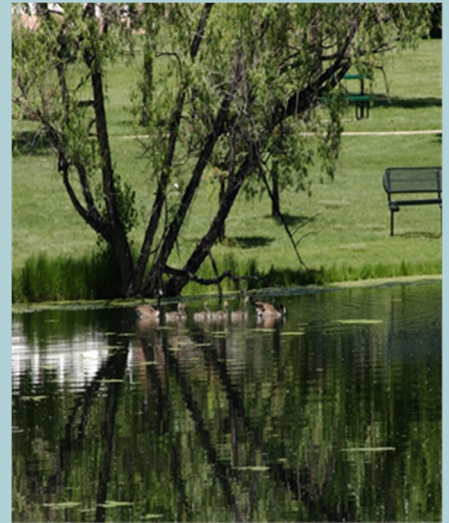
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The Open Space Management Plan was initially adopted by City Council in April 2002, with updates in 2004, 2008, and 2010. This plan works in conjunction with the Noxious Weed Management Plan, originally adopted by resolution in November 2001, with updates in 2003, 2005, 2008, and 2010.

What is an Open Space Management Plan?

An open space management plan allows open space in Northglenn to be viewed as a whole rather than as unrelated parcels. This view supports continuity in planning and management of open space as a collective resource. Each parcel was evaluated and examined to establish its unique position as open space and to determine what is appropriate in each area, what the neighbors want, and what the issues and opportunities are associated with each of the open spaces.

Conservation is defined as: *The act of preserving, guarding or protecting; preservation from loss, decay, injury or violation.*

The benefits of developing an open space management plan are numerous. A broad-based public involvement approach has been taken to allow for a participatory decision-making environment where residents and other interested parties are able to offer their input into the shape of their natural

surroundings. The participatory approach also allows for dialogue between the City of Northglenn staff, City Council, the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, residents, and other agencies and organizations. It is hoped that continuing dialogue will lead to a constituency that is informed about challenges with open space and a planning team that is aware of the concerns of community members.

Urban wildlife depends heavily on water resources. Eighty percent or more of animal species rely on riparian areas to fulfill all or part of their habitat needs. As such, special attention and management consideration must be given to the many riparian areas and water sources in Northglenn's open spaces: Croke Reservoir, Farmers' Highline Canal, Grange Hall Creek/Grant Ditch, Winburn Park Ponds and the wetlands in the Oscar Arnold Nature Area.

The Parcels

Farmers' Highline Canal Corridor

The Farmers' Highline Canal enters Northglenn at the western city limits at Northwest Open Space Recreation Area near Pecos and 112th Avenue and flows north and east to E.B. Rains, Jr. Memorial Park at 120th Avenue, then on into Thornton. A greenway trail runs parallel to the canal, providing over three miles of trail, including a pedestrian underpass at I-25. Water typically flows in the canal from mid-April through October. Homes line much of the corridor on both sides. People and wildlife co-exist, enjoying the long stretch of tree-lined trail. A respite from traffic and commotion, the canal and trail system provides an accessible corridor for wildlife, as well as habitat and a seasonal water source. In many segments, mature cottonwoods stretch their limbs to shade the trail. People use the trail to walk, run, bicycle, rollerblade, relax and rehabilitate.

Winburn Park Ponds

Located along the east side of Huron Street, south of 112th Avenue, the park features an inviting oasis for passive enjoyment. Willows and cottonwood trees, cattails and marsh surround two ponds. Picnic tables, benches and a gazebo provide resting places to soak up the environment. Visitors are invited to fish in the ponds, catching bass, blue gill and carp. A trail loop takes visitors on a quiet stroll around the nature area.

Farmers' Highline Canal Trail



Grange Hall Creek

Goals & Actions

Individual management plans were developed for each property. Each plan details needed improvements, including specific management recommendations and a schedule for implementation. The goals of management and stewardship in Northglenn's open spaces are to:

- Promote ecosystem
- Be sustainable
- Enhance and protect natural, cultural, educational and scenic resources
- Provide safe and enjoyable passive outdoor recreation activities.

Each of these goals will be achieved through specific management actions that may include:

- Control of noxious invasive weeds through an Integrated Noxious Weed Management Plan
- Monitoring of vegetation, wildlife and water
- Planting of favorable plant species
- Maintaining trails
- Maintaining amenities such as fences, signs and benches, and introducing them as appropriate for enhanced management
- Working to provide educational opportunities through on-site informational materials and guided nature hikes where appropriate.
- Targeted enhancement based on public input

Grange Hall Creek

Grange Hall Creek flows across the southeast side of the city, and wanders through the Fox Run residential development. The Greenway Trail runs adjacent to the creek for much of its path. In the Fox Run development, the creek has two tributaries that run through grassland from west to east.

Fox Run Nature Area

The trail loops around a wetland area and runs past award winning erosion control structures, then meanders past the old Thede homestead, a historical site. This trail segment has very few trees. The only vegetation that is mowed is directly adjacent to the trail. The Grange Hall Creek open space is approximately 50 acres and is the most recent addition to the open space parcels.

Grange Hall Creek (West of Irma Dr.)

A railroad track separates the Fox Run area of Grange Hall Creek from the western area historically known as Grant Ditch. A pedestrian underpass has been completed to link trails from the Fox Run side to the Grange Hall trail west of Irma Drive. The Greenway Trail runs from Irma Drive west to I-25 and connects with the Farmers' Highline Canal trail, providing a continuous trail from the western city limits adjacent to Westminster. Stormwater drainage is one source of water in Grange Hall Creek, and it runs year-round. Homes border much of this wide corridor on

both the north and the south. Historically, most of the vegetation along this corridor was mowed several times each year; however, this practice is harmful to wildlife habitat. Beginning in 2017, Northglenn shifted to a more natural approach, limiting the areas being mowed for restoration purposes.

Croke Reservoir

Croke Reservoir, located at Huron and Naiad, is home to a variety of wildlife: fish, snapping turtles, waterfowl, heron and red-winged black birds, muskrats, raccoons, and an occasional fox. Willows and cottonwoods surround the area on three sides, providing a peaceful place of rest. Cattails provide a wetland habitat. Fishing is permitted from April 1 through October 15. Fishing is prohibited on the north side of the reservoir for environmental reasons. Fish species include bass, perch, carp and blue gill. There is an ADA accessible fishing pier. Dogs, boats, skateboards and bicycles are prohibited in order to restrict the disruption of the wildlife. The reservoir is manmade. In 2009, a rehabilitation of the Croke Reservoir Nature Area was completed, including repairs to the shoreline erosion. Homes border the north side of the property.

Oscar Arnold Nature Area

The Oscar Arnold Nature Area is located at 112th and West 111th Way. This parcel was



named in honor of the homesteader who settled there and eventually deeded the land to the city. The Farmers' Highline Canal runs along the south border of the property, providing a trail from which to observe the area. Several informal trails have been worn through the center of the property. This area has a unique blend of wildlife habitat including a wooded area with mature cottonwoods, cattail marshes, and other wetland plants. The site hosts a variety of wildlife including foxes, coyotes, raccoons, hawks, and owls. The wooded area is often vandalized by illegal dumping, encampments, or other vandalism. Vegetation was disturbed as soil was excavated from the south side of the property in the late 90's to build berms for the adjacent soccer fields. Homes border the east and west sides of the property. After resource inventories were completed in spring 2001, management activities such as weed control and wetland delineation began. Currently, control efforts are centered around Teasel and Canada Thistle.

Opportunities & Benefits

Open space presents many benefits. The benefits are certainly environmental in nature, but are also social, physical, emotional, educational and economic. A well-managed open space can contribute to a sense of peace, provide opportunities for wildlife viewing as well as passive recreation, protection and rehabilitation of ecosystems, filtration of storm water run-off, increased property values, and a strengthened sense of community, to name but a few. Other opportunities articulated by the 2004 task force and still relevant today include:

- "Quiet Places and Open Spaces"
- Sense of stewardship for the land
- Natural places for future generations
- Observation and enjoyment of wildlife
- Relief from development
- Purification of air & water
- Corridors for wildlife
- Ecosystem education
- Protecting the balance
- Connections between communities

- Encouraging favorable vegetation
- Developing a sense of "place"
- Conservation of a rare urban resource
- Public understanding & involvement
- Volunteer involvement & ownership

Challenges

Along with benefits come challenges. One of the biggest challenges is the presence of highly aggressive invasive non-native plant species in the open spaces. Those species negatively impact vegetation and, consequently, the wildlife that the plant habitat supports. If steps are not taken to manage the threat, the natural environments that Northglenn residents have come to value could be irrevocably compromised. Noxious weeds identified in Northglenn to date include: Canada Thistle, Scotch and Musk Thistle, Field Bindweed, Yellow Toadflax, Purple Loosestrife and Poison Hemlock.



Another challenge lies in the officially recognized use of the properties. City ordinance classified these parcels as “Open Space,” along with parking lots, cemeteries, golf courses, and many other uses that are not consistent with the vision articulated in this document. Other challenges include:

- Noxious weed management
- Staffing/funding for maintenance
- Public education & input about open space management techniques, etc.
- Domestic pet waste & wildlife disturbance
- Informal trails—good or bad?
- Community consensus on vision
- Prairie dogs
- Off-trail uses
- Dumping
- Drainage
- Mosquitoes
- Fire
- Water to establish favorable vegetation
- Wetland delineation & management regulations for open water
- Feeding of wildlife
- Encampments

Alternatives

In the management of open space, three options emerge

1. Do Nothing
2. Integrated Pest Management
3. Integrated Pest Management and targeted resource enhancement

Doing nothing is not a viable alternative. Inaction will allow undesirable species to choke out favorable plant species and consequently wildlife species. The State of Colorado and Adams County require a program for noxious weed management, for which the City has developed the Noxious Weed Management Plan, which was most recently revised and adopted by Resolution No. 10-60, Series of 2010.

A program of Integrated Pest Management which focuses heavily on weed management is currently in place. However, due to the stronghold of noxious

weeds in some areas, more intensive practices such as mechanical and chemical treatments are required to establish control. Based on public input, there is also an opportunity to enhance both wildlife habitat and the recreational and educational opportunities for people in Northglenn's open spaces. A continuing program of public involvement will help determine which course of action community members would like to take in each open space site.

How Can You Get Involved?

- Respond to this document
- Attend public meetings
- Volunteer to help in the maintenance or enhancement of the parcels
- Help educate your family, friends, and neighbors about the values of open spaces and how each of us can help maintain them



Designated Open Space & Nature Area Parcels in Northglenn





Legend

- Major Streets
- ▭ City Limit
- ▨ Nature Areas
- Open space
- Water Bodies

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Prepared: January 26, 2009
File: OoenSpace2.mxd



Management Highlights

Farmers' Highline Canal

Management Goal

To control noxious weeds and promote desirable vegetation along the Farmers' Highline Canal corridor by applying appropriate open space management techniques that enhance the experience of Greenway Trail users.

Past Maintenance

The Farmers' Highline Canal corridor has been regularly mowed, with noxious weed infestations managed and eradicated as needed. Trees and shrubs have been trimmed to maintain trail clearance and safety. In 2018, the asphalt trail section east of I-25 was replaced with concrete. Underbrush was removed near Pinnacle Creek Townhomes to mitigate fire hazards. Hazard tree and branch removal projects were conducted in 2022 and 2024 to enhance public safety, reduce liability, and support long-term landscape health. An annual volunteer cleanup has been held each March to remove trash and debris.

Ongoing Maintenance & Management

- Survey for noxious weeds annually, assess desirable vegetation, and treat infestations as needed.
- Monitor tree health, trimming to maintain trail clearance and removing hazard trees or dead brush as needed to reduce fire risks.
- Maintain tree plantings along the ditch corridor.
- Perform limited mowing: 6–8 feet along trails and 10 feet along fence lines to maintain firebreaks.
- Conduct full-area mowing at the end of each growing season.

Proposed Amenities

- Replace old benches and install new benches, tables, and/or shelters throughout the trail corridor as needed.
- Evaluate opportunities to partner with volunteers to install bird nesting boxes in suitable trees.
- Assess and prioritize areas for additional tree plantings where long term sustainability is most likely.
- Evaluate potential installation of additional dog waste stations.



Management Highlights

The Ponds at Winburn Park

Management Goal

To manage the native area of the park as an open space and improve the water quality of the wetlands.

Past Maintenance

A wooden boardwalk through the area was rebuilt in 2002 by Boy Scouts. At this time, most of the bridge has been replaced with a crusher fine trail. Ponds have been dredged periodically. Trees have been cleared and dead wood has been trimmed around the pond and along the pathway on a regular basis.



Ongoing Maintenance and Management

- Survey for and treat noxious weeds as needed.
- Monitor ponds throughout the growing season for algae and treat as necessary to support water quality and mosquito mitigation.
- Mow along pathways regularly.

Proposed Amenities

- Restore pond aeration system to ensure functionality
- Consider the addition of a significantly larger solar aeration system to assist with water quality
- Continue to add more trees to the area
- Work with volunteer groups to install stand alone bat boxes



Management Highlights

Grange Hall Creek & Fox Run Nature Area

Management Goal

To establish a native open space setting for the residents of Fox Run and the users of the Greenway Trail System.



Past Maintenance

Since 2001, the site has been actively managed to support native vegetation and reduce invasive species. Initial mowing excluded the riparian corridor to encourage native grass establishment, and since 2003, mowing has been limited to pathways, streets, parks, and fences, a practice that continues today. Noxious weeds such as Salt Cedar and Russian Olive have been controlled through chemical and mechanical treatments. Purple Loosestrife has not been observed since 2010, though wetland monitoring continues. Treatment for Canada Thistle is ongoing. Enhancements to the space include two bat boxes installed by Eagle Scouts in 2017. In 2024, a

pollinator garden featuring over 400 native plants was installed in partnership with the Butterfly Pavilion and community volunteers. It features a butterfly sculpture, “Metamorphosis,” acquired through the Northglenn Arts & Humanities Foundation’s annual Art on Parade program People’s Choice Award.

Ongoing Maintenance & Management

- Survey for and treat noxious weeds as needed to prevent re-infestation.
- Evaluate control efforts, support native vegetation recovery, and reseed where necessary.
- Collaborate with adjacent landowners to manage and prevent prairie dog encroachment into open space.
- Mow firebreaks 6–8 feet along paths and streets, and at least 10 feet along fences.
- Resurface crusher fines trail system as needed.

Proposed Amenities

- Evaluate adding bat boxes, bird nests, or a bee hotel to enhance wildlife habitat
- Provide additional educational signage
- Assess areas that may be viable for planting of trees, based on the highest likelihood of sustainability

Management Highlights

Croke Reservoir

Management Goal

To maintain the natural condition of the site, continuing to manage the site as an urban fishery and waterfowl/wildlife habitat.

Past Maintenance

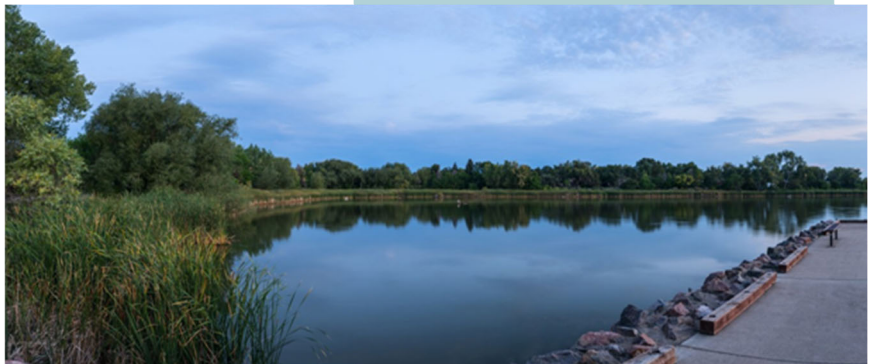
The pathway around the reservoir is mowed 6 times a season. Hazard trees are identified and removed as needed. In 2008, a significant rehabilitation of Croke Reservoir was completed. The reservoir was drained, the shoreline stabilized, additional trees planted, additional annual and perennial beds installed and new benches, tables, signage, shelters and pathways were added. In 2018, multiple structures were placed in the reservoir to enhance fish habitat. In 2019, a sub-committee was developed to provide additional recommendations for improvements to the site. In 2023, an ADA-compliant fishing pier was installed to improve accessibility. Additional interpretive signage and low-profile fence barriers were also added to protect sensitive habitat areas and enhance visitor awareness.

Ongoing Maintenance & Management

- Survey for and treat noxious weeds as needed; monitor vegetation recovery and habitat conditions.
- Identify, prune, or remove hazard trees as needed.
- Support Public Works in monitoring water quality and fishery health; assist with maintenance of the aeration system.
- Preserve and support wildlife habitat.
- Maintain trails regularly.

Proposed Amenities

- Install nesting boxes for birds and bat boxes
- Install additional benches/shelters
- Continue to coordinate with Colorado Division of Wildlife to stock fish



Management Highlights

Oscar Arnold Nature Area

Management Goal

Reduce weed infestations to a level that does not impact the natural environment of the site.

Past Maintenance

Treatment of Canada Thistle, Yellow Toadflax, Russian Olive and Teasel. Mowing of weeds along the north entry drive. A major project was conducted in 2019 for the removal and chemical treatment of remaining Russian olives on the site. Stumps were treated after the removal process was complete. Firebreak mowing areas were expanded to improve wildfire prevention, and a goat grazing program was introduced as a sustainable vegetation management approach in 2023.

Ongoing Maintenance & Management

- Survey for and treat noxious weeds using targeted chemical, mechanical, and goat grazing methods; adjust goat grazing program as needed based on ongoing evaluations.
 - Monitor control efforts and vegetation response; study vegetation changes from grazing and overseeding.
 - Spot treat weed infestations chemically and mechanically in dryland areas; mechanically in wetland and riparian areas.
 - Maintain firebreaks: mow 6–8 feet along paths and streets, and 10 feet along residential fences per North Metro Fire recommendations.
 - Monitor for new Russian Olive growth and treat as necessary.

Proposed Amenities

- Consider formalizing the existing social trail
- Addition of Interpretive signage
- Evaluate adding bat boxes, bird nests, and/or a bee hotel to enhance wildlife habitat.



Management Highlights

Northwest Open Space (south of Farmers' Highline Canal, exclusive of Athletic Fields)

Management Goal

Reduce noxious weed infestations, maintain the open area to safe and aesthetically pleasing standards.

Past Maintenance

Treatment of Canada Thistle, Yellow Toadflax and Field Bindweed. Weeds in open area mowed regularly.

Ongoing Maintenance & Management

- Treat noxious and undesired weeds throughout the area using chemical, mechanical, and biological controls; consider goat grazing where appropriate.
- Mow open areas regularly and maintain a minimum 10-foot firebreak along residential fences per North Metro Fire recommendations.
- Monitor for Russian Olive and remove or treat as necessary.

Proposed Amenities

- None identified



Acknowledgements

This plan was originally developed in 2002. It represents the combined efforts of a variety of individuals whose time was generously contributed in many ways including: attending public meetings to provide information about the community's priorities for open space properties, contributing technical assistance and participating on the Open Space Management Plan Revision committee. Each of these groups and individuals provided crucial input into the direction of this plan.

City of Northglenn

Northglenn Residents

Northglenn Parks & Recreation Advisory Board

National Park Service Rivers, Trails & Conservation

Assistance Program Colorado Division of Wildlife

Natural Resource Conservation Service

Adams County Weed District

Croke Reservoir Sub-Committee

Photography - Paul Weinrauch and City Staff

This 2025 update was reviewed by staff, the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board, and the Colorado State Extension for Adams County.





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