



South Metro

LAND CONSERVANCY

SMLC's mission is to increase understanding and appreciation of the profound importance of open spaces, natural areas and trails in the lives of people of all ages. SMLC does this through advocacy, open space acquisition and educational projects. <https://www.smlc.land/>

in this issue

>>>

Powers Park "Reimagining" Being Funded
Local's Words on Growing up by Powers Park
30th Anniversary Tree Planting Project
Kiowa Creek North
South Platte Working Group

South Metro Land Conservancy Annual Newsletter 2023

Dear SMLC Supporters:

SMLC is 30 years old! What a productive and fulfilling 30 years it has been. SMLC has initiated or participated in conservation and land preservation projects totaling 10,300 acres. Most recently, the "reimagining" of Powers Park, our signature project, got the go ahead for funding from South Suburban Park and Recreation (SSPR) and City of Littleton (see page 2).

For many years, SMLC was singularly focused on gobbling up as much land as possible for open space and parks in an increasingly urbanized south Denver region. For most of our existence, climate change was not a part of our vocabulary.

Today, we know that these lands are not just about our quality of life but are one way to act locally for a healthier planet. SMLC has always been committed to local action. We will continue to focus on how we understand, appreciate and enjoy those spaces – whether its natural space in your neighborhood park or tracks of short grass prairie on Arapahoe County's eastern plains.

SMLC is particularly proud of its work to get kids outside enjoying nature. As a partner of Generation Wild ("Kids Grow Better Outside"), a program of Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO), we can't say enough about their work. This year, Generation Wild wants all of us grown-ups to remember the love we had for the outdoors as kids and recreate it for our own kids and grandkids. Generation Wild is challenging all of us to reconnect to the awe that is found in nature and the outdoors.

To that end, we are offering reminiscences from Victoria Escobedo who grew up on Powers Park. You will love her story on page 3. There is no doubt that our childhood experiences outdoors affect us profoundly.

We are very thankful for your continuing support.

Sincerely,

Patricia Cronenberger, President



A rare sighting of an American Mink in South Platte Park. Photo by Maureen Ravnik.

<https://maureenravnik.crevado.com/>

There are a number of ways you can stay up-to-date on SMLC activities: Facebook, Instagram and our website (www.smlc.land). Also, in recognition of our 30th anniversary, we have decided every \$30 donation will benefit local tree planting efforts, with a goal of supporting Sheridan, Littleton, and other Arapahoe County efforts underway. Please see page 4.

Did you know?

"The German Center for Integrative Biodiversity Research found, through studying 26,000 people in 26 European countries, that exposure to bird diversity was directly connected to happiness. Additionally, when viewable birds increased by 10 percent, that raised the level of life satisfaction on par with a 10 percent increase in income."
Rachel Turiel writing in the June edition of "5280 Magazine"

“Reimagining” Powers Park is in the Funding Pipeline!

Last year, we unveiled the Powers Park Vision Plan funded by SMLC, South Metro Housing Options, Colorado Department of Health and Environment and a local foundation. This year, we are thrilled to tell you that both South Suburban Parks and Recreation (SSPR) and the City of Littleton have included funding in their budgets for the design of the park renovation. The plan is for the park to go beyond being a hole in the ground to retain flood water to be a true park that the neighbors will enjoy...A place where they can play, walk, roll, sit and connect with nature. Park design gets underway in the Fall. We will keep you posted.

Since the 1970s Powers Park’s main purpose has been as a stormwater detention facility to minimize local flooding with minimal park amenities. Photos below show the water detention “hole” before and during flooding.



SMLC asked the question, Is Powers Park serving the community in the best way possible given its location in a dense part of the city? Photos below show vision plan outreach (left) and previewing the vision plan with the neighbors.



SMLC commissioned Stream Landscape Architecture + Planning to develop a vision plan for Powers Park which would transform the park to be a place where neighbors can connect with nature.



In Her Own Words: Victoria Escobedo Remembers Growing up on Powers Park

My little brother and I were lucky kids to live right across the street from Powers Park. We were born and raised here in Littleton. This was the only home we both knew before we both joined the United States Marine Corps. Powers Park is where our father taught us how to ride our bicycles. We would play hide and seek, tag and other fun games with our friends until the streetlights lit up, indicating it was time for us to run home.

Summer afternoons were especially nice. For many years, many men would get together and play soccer at the sunken part of the park. Their kids would play in the playground with us. Once it was decided not to maintain the grass down there, wild weeds started growing, the goal posts were taken away and people avoided the sunken park area.

After big snowstorms we would sled down the east hill for hours until we felt like our toes were about to freeze off. Sometimes snowplows would collect snow at the top of the east hill creating a snow mountain and we would use it as an imaginary ice castle. Whenever my brother and I were headed home from long hours of playing in the snow, we could smell what my mom was cooking before leaving the park. The most comforting feeling was when we were welcomed home to a steaming dinner plate and delicious hot chocolate.

So many people have benefited from Powers Park: families throwing birthday parties and having cookouts; grandparents bringing their little grandchildren to play; and our lovely neighbors from the Cherrelyn Healthcare Center being walked over to the park to enjoy some fresh air. Many great memories were made at this park and I hope more children have the opportunity to experience Powers Park in the way that my brother and I did.



Victoria as a child growing up in Littleton



Victoria today

We met Victoria when SMLC held the first Powers Park neighborhood outreach meeting in 2021. Victoria, who had recently returned from her service as a United States Marine, was living at her parents' house and noticed the flyers left on the park picnic table advertising SMLC's outreach with the neighborhood. Victoria took it upon herself to personally talk with her neighbors and rally them to participate in the initial SMLC outreach. Her initiative contributed to making the event a success for which SMLC is most grateful. Today, Victoria is a project engineer intern at Saunders Construction while working towards her BS in Architecture at CU Denver.

Donate to the 30th Anniversary/\$30 Tree Planting Project to Support a Greener Community

To celebrate South Metro Land Conservancy's 30th anniversary, we have decided every \$30 donation will benefit local tree planting efforts, with a goal of supporting Sheridan, Littleton, and other Arapahoe County efforts underway. The donations will support providing free and discounted trees to local landowners in low tree canopy neighborhoods and other strategic locations. Half of each donation will go to a local tree planting program and half to SMLC for its conservation work in the community.

Trees play a critical role in creating healthier, safer, and more connected communities. They clean our air, filter our water, and even slow storm surge and flooding. Trees provide shade for people walking and biking, lower energy usage for homes, and cool the whole city by helping to alleviate the Urban Heat Island Effect. Trees support wildlife and aquatic life by providing habitat and helping to keep waterways healthy. While it will take many solutions working together to address climate change, trees are a proven, affordable, natural climate solution that can be implemented quickly.

To support greener neighborhoods and the 30th anniversary of a premier local environmental nonprofit, go to the South Metro Land Conservancy Website, <https://www.smlc.land/>, and donate \$30 today!

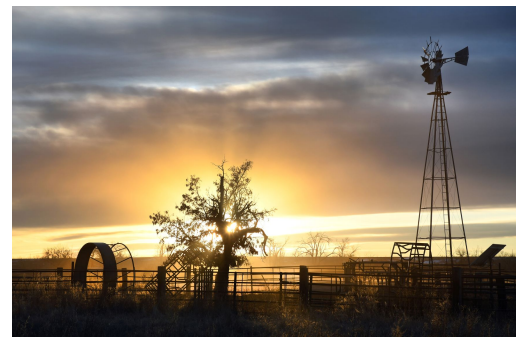


Kiowa Creek North Open Space Design is Underway

Arapahoe County Open Spaces is busy completing design plans for the Kiowa Creek North Open Space located near the Town of Bennett. This 265-acre parcel will soon be open to the public for uses such as hiking and wildlife viewing. The plan will minimally impact the vital Kiowa Creek corridor while providing visitors with opportunities to view mule deer and pronghorn antelope running through the short grass prairies. The property offers an amazing view of the Rocky Mountains.

Kiowa Creek North Open Space is one of several parcels the County has purchased with the 0.25% County Open Space Sales and Use Tax, which voters reauthorized permanently in 2021. While not all of these lands are open to the public they provide us with an opportunity to experience our agriculture heritage and riparian and upland ecosystems. Upland short grass prairie is an excellent habitat for wildlife, especially birds. One parcel is even adjacent to a property that is a designated National Natural Landmark. Many of these lands are of regional significance.

Kiowa Creek North Open Space will be open to the public in early 2025. You can learn more about all of the County's open spaces at <https://www.arapahoe.gov.com/1852/Open-Spaces>.



Photos of Kiowa Creek North compliments of Arapahoe County Open Spaces

South Platte Working Group Reconvenes

After a two-year hiatus, the South Platte Working Group, of which SMLC is a member, reconvened this Spring. Hosted by Arapahoe County since 2006, this regional collaboration has been responsible for 50 acres of acquired open space and numerous bike/pedestrian bridges and trails along the Platte River corridor. Current projects include a study of the Mary Carter Greenway Trail in Littleton, Sheridan, and Englewood to identify future safety, capacity, and amenity improvements and the design of major improvements to Reynolds Landing.



*Photo courtesy of Maureen Ravnik.
<https://maureenravnik.crevado.co>*

SMLC Nature Activity in the Park: August 30

SMLC will sponsor the South Platte Park naturalist staff at the August 30 Littleton Meet Greet and Eat at Promise Park. The naturalist staff will have aquatic animals and demonstrate the value of floodplain nature in parks. We'll be there from 4 – 6 p.m. and we look forward to seeing you!



The "Express" sponsored by SMLC at the June 21st Meet Greet and Eat. The S. Platte Park naturalist staff demonstrates how flood waters change the land.



*SMLC is delighted to showcase Maureen Ravnik's beautiful photos in our newsletter and on our website. Maureen has lived in Colorado since 1971, including 21 years in Littleton. She is retired and spends her time traveling and photographing. Thank you, Maureen!
www.maureenravnik.crevado.com*

our purpose

Without question, being outdoors and experiencing nature is central to our daily lives. South Metro Land Conservancy is the principled voice for nature in places close to home. Using creativity, strong relationships and unfaltering passion, we seek opportunities to preserve, educate, promote and align a grand vision for how we all connect with nature.



THANK YOU!

You may also make your donation electronically by going to the South Metro Land Conservancy website (<http://www.smlc.land>) and clicking on the “Donate” button on the homepage. Your contributions are vital to our work.

Facebook: @southmetrolandconservancy **Instagram:** smlc_co

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