



- Submitted illustration

Silt acquires 132 acres on Colorado River

Property sold for \$1.2 million, will be open space and wildlife habitat

STAFF REPORT

POST INDEPENDENT

GLENWOOD SPRINGS, CO COLORADO,

SILT, Colorado – Hikers, boaters and fishing enthusiasts soon will have a new access to the Colorado River at the Silt River Preserve, a 132-acre riverfront parcel formally purchased on Nov. 30 by the Town of Silt for \$1.2 million.

The purchase from the Dixon Water Foundation was the culmination of a year and a half of effort by the town and the Aspen Valley Land Trust (AVLT) aimed at preserving open space and riparian habitat along the river for public benefit.

The project, according to former acting town administrator Davis Farrar, was a cooperative funding effort by several entities.

Those include the town (\$40,000), lottery-funded Great Outdoors Colorado (\$906,000), AVLT (\$55,200), Garfield County (\$100,000), Gates Family Foundation (\$40,000), Bill Barrett Corporation (\$20,000), Encana (\$10,000), Williams Energy (\$15,000) and Antero Resources (\$25,000 in-kind value).

Future additional funding is anticipated by the Colorado River Conservation District (\$15,000).

The property, located across the river south of town, was once part of the proposed Stillwater development.

The purchase of the property, with a conservation easement held by AVLT, is meant to protect wildlife habitat that includes active bald eagle nests, a blue heron rookery, winter range for deer and elk, and vegetative cover for a variety of small mammals and birds, Farrar stated. A portion of the property will remain as irrigated agricultural land in keeping with Garfield County's agricultural heritage.

Future improvements on the property will include river access, a boat ramp, parking areas, restrooms, trails, educational waysides, a community garden site and possible pedestrian-bridge connections across the river, Farrar continued. He said that these improvements will be phased in over time as Town funding allows.

After completion of mining operations at an existing gravel operation directly west of the Silt River Preserve, that property will be transferred to the Colorado Division of Wildlife, resulting in more than a mile of protected Colorado River riparian habitat.

A public dedication ceremony will be held on the site in the spring when warm weather returns.

Further information about the property is available from the Town of Silt, (970) 876-2353.

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