

Grand County's Open Lands, Rivers, and Trails Fund

Your Sales Tax Dollars Saving Our Open Spaces, Preserving Our Rivers, and Supporting Our Trails Since 2016



At the end of 2025, \$3M was awarded to the Town of Hot Sulphur Springs to acquire this project for open space and public enjoyment.



Cozens Ranch Open Space Conservation Easement - 72 acres will be permanently protected in Fraser with an anticipated closing date of summer 2026. Photo by Andy Cole.

In 2016, Grand County voters passed Ballot Initiative 1A with 60% support, establishing the Open Lands, Rivers, and Trails (OLRT) Fund. This dedicated sales tax fund was created to:

1. **Acquire lands** that conserve water, support agriculture, protect scenic open spaces, wildlife habitat, wetlands, and public river access.
2. **Secure water rights and water storage rights.**
3. **Maintain and improve hiking and biking trails** across Grand County.

In 2023, voters reaffirmed their support, this time with 72% approval, renewing the fund and expanding its purposes to include **new trail construction, water quality projects, wildfire prevention efforts, and operational support for nonprofits.**

Since its inception, the OLRT Fund has invested **\$9.3 million in 15 open lands and river projects and \$3.8 million in 99 trail and wildfire mitigation projects.** Explore each project on our website: www.co.grand.co.us/851/Open-Lands-Rivers-and-Trails-Advisory-Co. Thanks to this fund, and the voters who created it, we're conserving open spaces for future generations right here in Grand County.



Open Lands, Rivers, and Trails Advisory Committee members. Pictured left to right: George Sharpe (Winter Park Rep), Doreen Sumerlin (Granby rep), Laurie Pope (Kremmling Rep), Michelle Cowardin (Hot Sulphur Springs Rep, Chair), Cam Stone (Grand Lake Rep), Brian Kelly (District 1 Rep), Zach Wehr (District 2 Rep), Adam Cwiklin (Fraser Rep), Adeline Brackett (District 3 Rep).

2025 Highlights

- **Enhancing Water & Open Space Protection:** Grand County secured OLRT funds to purchase **58.5 Vail Ditch water shares**, improving streamflows in the Upper Fraser River. Funds were also awarded to purchase the **58-acre Windy Gap Ranch**, preserving key open space along the Colorado River.
- **Cozens Ranch Open Space Conservation:** Colorado Open Lands received funding to place a conservation easement on **72 acres along the Fraser River** in the Town of Fraser, protecting vital habitat for diverse wildlife species. Closing is anticipated in summer 2026.
- **Varra Family Open Space:** The Town of Hot Sulphur Springs received funding to acquire a 110-acre property outside of the town with Colorado River frontage. The property will be preserved as open space and open to the public for low-impact, sustainable, recreation.
- **Trail Improvements & Support for Local Nonprofits:** More than **\$830,000** was awarded for seven trail projects, including operational support for two Grand County nonprofits. Headwaters Trails Alliance received funding for its winter trail grooming program, and the Town of Winter Park received funds to reroute the Fraser River Trail.
- **Wildfire Mitigation & Community Resilience:** Over **\$320,000** was awarded for five wildfire prevention projects, including operational support for one nonprofit. Grants to Grand County Wildfire Council and Grand Fire will support fuels reduction in the Fraser Canyon and throughout Grand County.
- **Strengthening Grantmaking & Transparency:** The OLRT Advisory Committee refined the grant process to improve clarity, fairness, and efficiency

by updating the grant application and adding a third grant review meeting. These changes support more informed funding decisions across the county.

Partnerships & Matching Funds

Each OLRT-supported projects leverages additional investment from partners such as Grand County municipalities, U.S. Forest Service, Great Outdoors Colorado, Trout Unlimited, and many others. These collaborations multiply the impact of every sales tax dollar, ensuring resources go further for conservation and recreation.



Wilderness areas do not allow mechanized tools and equipment, so HTA staff receive training and federal saw certifications to remove hazard and fallen trees in Grand County's five wilderness areas. Photo by HTA.

In 2025 alone, OLRT awarded **\$5.6 million to support 11 municipalities and organizations**, bringing significant outside funding into Grand County and maximizing the benefits to our communities, landscapes, and watersheds.

Thank you, Grand County voters.

Your continued support ensures that Grand County's open spaces, rivers, and trails remain protected, accessible, and resilient. We are excited to for the work ahead, and grateful for your commitment to stewardship.

For more information, please contact Anna Drexler-Dreis at aldrexler@gmail.com.



Town of Winter Park received funds to reroute the Fraser River Trail. Photo by Anna Drexler-Dreis.



Next Grant Cycle:

February 9 - March 13, 2026. Visit our website and follow us on Facebook and Instagram @grandcounty_olrt.



Grand Fire Protection District No. 1 received \$200,000 to mitigate fuels in the Fraser River Canyon. Fire Crews removed excess fuels near Innsbruck and Winter Park Highlands, burning 300 to 800 piles per day. Photo by Grand Fire.



Grooming on the the Fraser-to-Granby Trail above the Fraser Sports Complex. This area sees the heaviest use of any of HTA's groomed trail areas. Photo by HTA.