



MASTER PLAN

Approved by the
Poudre Learning Center
Board of Directors on
February 12, 2004

Introduction

The Master Plan for the Poudre Learning Center outlines the conceptual development of a premier educational facility in Northern Colorado. This 65-acre site, located along the Cache la Poudre River and on a regional trail corridor, will support a wide variety of educational opportunities including:

- **An indoor center for school classes, laboratory instruction, and gatherings,**
- **A parking facility to support the Learning Center,**
- **Wetland habitat and ecosystems via outdoor classrooms,**
- **The hydrology of the Poudre River,**
- **Prairie areas,**
- **Outdoor classrooms, and;**
- **A system of barrier-free education pathways for exploring the site.**

The Poudre Learning Center is a cooperative effort by a wide variety of organizations and interested residents. The Eaton, Greeley-Evans, Johnston-Milliken and Windsor School Districts, the Poudre River Trail Education Board, the University of Northern Colorado, Weld County, the City of Greeley, the Town of Windsor, the Central Colorado Water Conservancy District, the Colorado Division of Wildlife, The Centennial, Greeley, Redeye and Windsor Rotary Clubs and George & Bret Hall of Hall-Irwin Corporation have all taken a special interest in developing the Poudre Learning Center.

Poudre Learning Center Goals

Objectives:

To create a center for interdisciplinary learning that will focus on the importance of history, science, economics, and aesthetics of the Cache la Poudre River Corridor.

- To be a keystone for the other learning opportunities along the Poudre River.
- To showcase the importance of the Cache la Poudre River to the wildlife, vegetation, and agricultural/municipal uses it supports.
- To provide outdoor classrooms in areas of natural, cultural, and economic significance.
- To establish habitats of vegetation that are representative of this region of Colorado with grasses and woody plants.
- To blend all amenities and structures into the natural setting of the land.

The Poudre Learning Center will develop and offer interdisciplinary education programs. These programs will help introduce and reinforce concepts presented in local school curriculums. The Learning Center will serve as a focal point for the study of the Poudre River through the use of labs, activities, and trips. The Center will include a system of barrier free, wheelchair accessible, educational pathways. An aquatic and hydrologic education area will be established as part of the Center.



Site

Background: The Cache la Poudre River in Weld County located between the South Platte River and the Weld County line offers a wealth of outstanding opportunities for learning various aspects of the environment including geology, river dynamics, natural systems, the Wild West days of early colonization, and the life styles of the Native Americans. As a learning environment the Poudre River is an outstanding resource.

The Poudre Learning Center will be located along the south side of the Poudre River at 83rd Avenue in West Greeley. It is bounded by Weld County Road 62 1/4 on the south and Siebring Reservoir on its west boundary. This location offers easy access to U.S. Highway 34 to the south and Weld County Road 64 just north of the Poudre River.

Students from Windsor, Greeley-Evans, Eaton, Johnstown, and other areas can reach the Center with just a short bus ride. This point along the Poudre also offers many of the best learning opportunities within a short distance up or downstream of the Center.

The Center will be the educational anchor for the Poudre River Trail Corridor and provide a central focal point for the rest of the interpretive stops along the trail. The Center will also conceptually bind the entire length of the trail into a single entity, and will offer an excellent chance to provide an interdisciplinary approach to education on the banks of the Cache la Poudre River. It will also further serve as a keystone to the future development of the Poudre River Trail and help in fund raising efforts. The Center should serve as the focal point for the interdisciplinary study of the history, science, and aesthetics of this region and its wetlands.

Site History: A trip up the valley from Greeley reveals numerous channels incised by the Poudre River into the surrounding high plains topography. For many years the Poudre meandered back and forth across this featureless prairie. But, settlers of the Union Colony would soon change that. The farmers from the east realized they could increase farmable acres if they could just straighten the river. One such channelized section was the Poudre learning Center site west of 83rd Avenue. According to area farmers, teams of horses and plows trenched this area. This operation leads to many years of successful farming at the site.

In 1986, Hall- Irwin Corporation purchased the Poudre Learning Center Site. Gravel mining operations began the same year. Gravel was extracted for roadways, concrete foundations, trails and roadbeds in the region. The resulting gravel pit will be used as a water storage reservoir by Central Colorado Water Conservancy District.

Hall-Irwin Corporation has demonstrated a workable approach for private industry and landowners to help the educational community. They understand the important role that real, discovery experiences play in a student's understanding of ecological resources. With this proven commitment to education, Hall-Irwin Corporation decided to move to the next level by donating 65 acres of this prime Poudre River riparian land to the local educational community.



The above aerial photo of Siebring Reservoir and adjoining Poudre Learning center was taken in 1991 while the was being mined. The 65 acres of the Poudre Learning Center site is outlined and labeled PLC. (Looking east).

Design Program

Concept: The Poudre Learning Center is organized around a few concepts. Active areas are generally clustered at the southern portion of the Center with the heaviest concentration of activity at the southeast corner near the intersection of 83rd Avenue and Weld County Road 62 1/4. The northern portion of the Learning Center is more oriented towards passive observation or for wildlife habitat. The drawing on page 9 shows the conceptual plan for the Learning Center.

Program:

- The *indoor 4-season education facility* will consist of two classrooms and a covered patio.
- *Parking* will be located near the intersection of 83rd Avenue and Weld County Road 62 1/4.
- *Outdoor classrooms* will provide visitors a place to learn about the natural and man-made elements of the region, as they would commonly occur. These will be located along the *educational pathway* as well.
- *Display gardens and plots* will be established in certain areas of significance along the educational pathways.
- The *aquatic and hydrologic education* will utilize the reclaimed gravel pit , working in cooperation with Central Colorado Water Conservancy District.
- A system of *educational pathways* will lead visitors from the main parking area to areas of interest within the site.
- *Observation areas*, for both scientific and wildlife.
- A *storage facility* to support the activities of the Center.



The *indoor 4-season education facility* will include the architectural design of the historic Hazelton School into the new construction. The building will consist of two classrooms, office space, restrooms and a covered patio.

Interdisciplinary Focus

The Poudre River Corridor, specifically the 22 miles of the Poudre River Trail in Weld County, offers an exceptional opportunity to expand the interdisciplinary educational scope in the Greeley-Windsor area. The establishment of an interdisciplinary learning center on the banks of the Cache la Poudre River will be a keystone. The Center will serve as a focal point for the interdisciplinary study of the history, science, uses, and aesthetics of this river and its wetlands.

Upstream Learning Sites & Opportunities

Learning sites and opportunities located *upstream* from the Poudre Learning Center include:

- *B.H. Eaton & Whitney Ditch Headgates* and B.H. Eaton Homestead
- *Kodak Watchable Wildlife Park*- prime wildlife habitat
- *Missile Park*- Front Range Geologic & Historic Overlook, Nuclear Missile History Camping, Fox Hills Formation Outcrop and a transition zone from riparian zone to dry, upland short-grass habitat
- *German Prisoner of War Camp* - this is an important cultural area. It provides an important stopping point to gain a different historical perspective on the difficult conditions of World War II.

Downstream Learning Sites & Opportunities

Learning sites and opportunities located *downstream* from the Poudre Learning Center include:

- *Poudre River Ranch*- Jones Ditch, Signature Wall, Greeley Ditch #3 Headgate, and Overland Trail site.
- *Boyd's Crossing, near 35th Avenue*- site of Robert Boyd's sod house and sod corral
- *Island Grove Regional Park*- former site of: Thompson Sawmill, Greeley Zoo and Arapaho, Cheyenne, Sioux Burial Site, and Centennial Village Museum.

Conceptual Design Elements

- An indoor center for school classes, laboratory instruction, and gatherings,
- A parking facility to support the Learning Center,
- Wetland habitat and ecosystems via outdoor classrooms,
- The hydrology of the Poudre River,
- Prairie areas,
- Outdoor classrooms, and;
- A system of barrier-free education pathways for exploring the site.

Implementation Phasing

Phase I: The PLC Board of Directors with its partners will begin a fund raising campaign to secure funds to construct a building that will be used as a classroom. This phase will also include classroom structures, fixtures, parking area, landscape, and utility services.

Phase II: The remaining 59 acres will stay as unimproved natural open space, until future phases of the Master Plan are developed. The timing of the additional future elements of the Master Plan will be dictated by funding of such components. It is the intent of the Center to implement the full Master Plan as soon as possible.

