

Boneyard land officially open space for Minturn

County open space fund paid for most of property

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MINTURN — After several years of off-and-on negotiations, a wild, but ultimately fruitless auction and, finally, a \$2.3 million payment, Minturn has a piece of open space to call its own.

The 4.4-acre Boneyard property had belonged for years to the U.S. Forest Service. In the past decade, that land was listed among Forest Service land that could be disposed of. Minturn officials were interested from the day the list was issued. But Minturn has never had much money in the bank, and federal regulations require selling land for its market value.

So the sale was stalled for several years until Eagle County officials offered to participate, using money from the county's dedicated open space account.

When the land went to auction early this year, the county and town submitted the winning bid of just more than \$1.6 million. Since the Forest Service had the land valued at \$2.3 million, the bid was promptly rejected.

After the auction, the town, county and Forest Service forged a deal for the asking price. Minturn put up \$232,000; the county paid the rest. The sale price will stay in the White River National Forest's bank account for use on regional projects.

The deed to the property was formally transferred to the town at Wednesday's meeting of the Minturn Town Council.

"This is the culmination of a lot of hard work," Minturn Town Manager Jim White

The Boneyard

Location: Minturn.

Size: 4.4 acres.

River frontage: 2,200 feet.

Cost: \$2.3 million

Minturn's portion: \$232,000.

When can I fish there? Probably mid-summer.

said.

Now, there's more work to do before the public can actually wander around on the property and use the roughly 2,200 feet of Eagle River frontage.

White said town officials will clean up the property, making sure to remove any old barbed wire or other items. The existing parking area will be cleaned up, and the town will put up some portable toilets — at least for the first season.

Future plans call for permanent restrooms, a trail around the property's perimeter and probably a few shaded picnic tables.

The future improvements will require the town to find some grants, something the county insisted upon in its agreement.

"We didn't just want to buy it and leave it as it is," Eagle County Commissioner Jon Stavney said.

The town will also ultimately put a conservation easement — a contract prohibiting development and limiting what can be built — on the land. That contract will probably be managed by the Eagle Valley Land Trust, White said.

"We're very excited here," White said. "We're looking to have a small celebration at the property when it gets a little warmer."