

# PART 1: THE REPORT

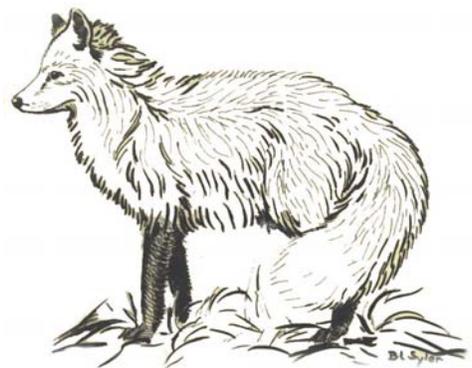


# CHAPTER 1

## THE NATURAL AREAS INVENTORY

*“The ultimate test of a moral society is  
the kind of world that it leaves to its  
children.”*

-Dietrich Bonhoeffer, German  
theologian



This study presents the results of a natural areas inventory prepared for the Town of Erie, Colorado, located approximately 25 miles north of Denver. The planning area is large and encompasses 50 square miles (Map 1) with Erie at its center. Work was conducted by a multidisciplinary team from Walsh Environmental Scientists and Engineers, LLC, including wildlife and plant ecologists, biologists, landscape architects, and Geographic Information System (GIS) and database experts. Public involvement was facilitated by Molly Tayer.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of the study was to delineate and inventory the natural features and unique characteristics of undeveloped lands for their uniqueness as natural areas. This study used systematic methods designed to objectively delineate, document, and assess locations for their unique value as natural areas.

*Erie's natural areas are those places with natural resources such as wildlife habitat and corridors, native prairie and plant diversity, aquatic habitats and wetlands, significant topographic features, and scenic views that potentially offer opportunities to preserve, enhance, and recognize Erie's natural heritage.*

This report is intended to be of value to Town of Erie staff, developers, landowners, and homeowners alike. It serves to highlight those locations and features that are worthy of sensitivity during land use planning. The first step in working with natural resources is to know what is present. Erie is in a very rapid growth phase, and this planning tool serves to facilitate an informed decision-making process within this context. This document is not intended to imply future land uses, development constraints, property values, or acquisition potential.

Like most of the Front Range, human land uses such as ranching, farming, mining, and urban development have resulted in relatively little native vegetation in the Erie planning areas. This situation can be seen as an opportunity for vegetation enhancement. This potential is emphasized with its own chapter – Chapter 5. The actions described there apply to all different planning levels, from large developments, to homeowners' associations'

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recommendations, even to a single backyard. Much can be done to benefit Erie's natural resources and natural areas.

Many of the qualities and assessment points in this document relate to vegetation and vegetation conditions. Vegetation has intrinsic value for ecological systems. It defines the ecological condition, provides aesthetic value and enjoyment for humans, and sustains wildlife.