

# Agricultural water in Larimer County: Issues and Opportunities



Larimer County Agricultural Advisory Board

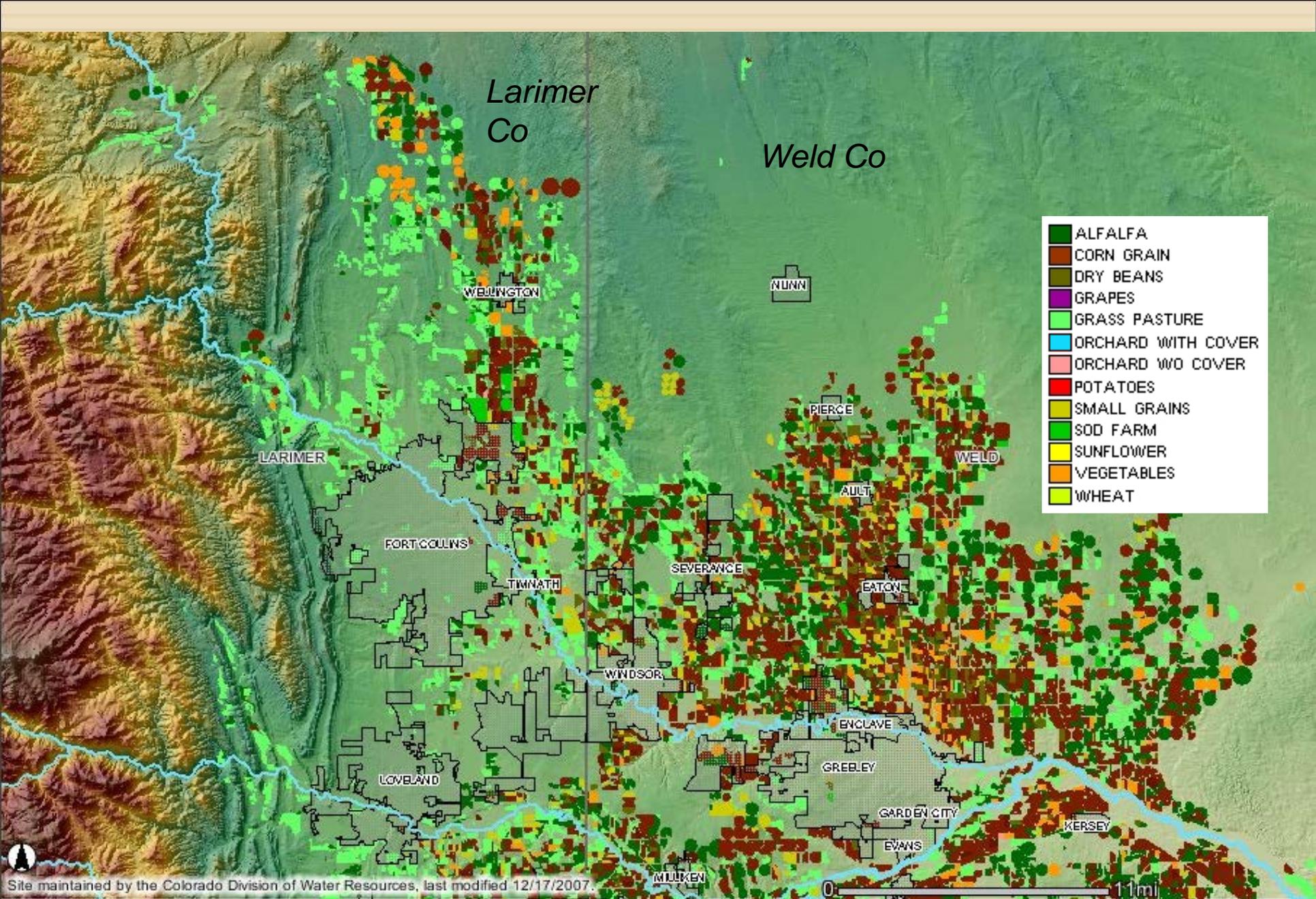


# Larimer County Land Statistics 2007

Type of land	Acres
County area	1,684,320
Farms and ranches	489,819
All Cropland	119,984
Pastures and rangelands	313,416
Irrigated cropland, pasture	63,405



*Source: USDA  
2007 Ag Census*



# Agriculture to Urban Water Transfers

- ❑ Originally 85 % of the CBT Water was allocated to and owned by agriculture
  - ❑ Currently, only 34% of CBT water is owned by agriculture
- 
- ❑ 72% of the 10,000 shares of the North Poudre Irrigation Company stock is now owned by cities and water districts (Ft. Collins Has 35.5%)

# Owned and Rented Water

- **Many large producers now depend on a combination of owned and rented water**
- **Small producers are even more dependent on water rental**



# Benefits of Renting Water to Ag

**Water rental is now essential to local irrigated agriculture**

**... which in turn provides benefits essential to a sustainable future**

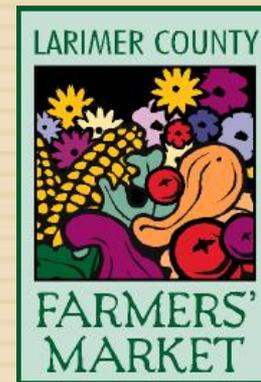
**.....which “buy and dry” will quickly diminish**

- **Locally-grown food/fiber**
- **Open space**
- **Community separators**
- **Wildlife habitat**
- **Robust economic activity**
- **Potential for water sharing**
- **Ground water recharge**
- **Flood surge control**
- **Boating flows in July/Aug**
- **Agricultural tourism**

# Local Food Supplies are in Demand

Rapidly growing interest in:

- Farmers' markets
- Community-supported ag (CSAs)
- Knowing where food comes from
- Knowing when food is safe
- Buying from within the region
- Reducing carbon footprint of food production



# Larimer County Farms, Ranches Provide Open Space

- **Public-private entities have chosen to invest millions in open space**
  - **Yet most private land open space is provided free by ag**
  - **Farms and ranches without needed water are likely to be sold and subdivided**
- \$\$ It takes millions more to replace that lost open space**



# Irrigated Ag Provides Wildlife Habitat

- Removing water from ag removes habitat across a large landscape
- Migratory waterfowl depend on the combination of irrigation reservoirs, wetlands and nearby crops





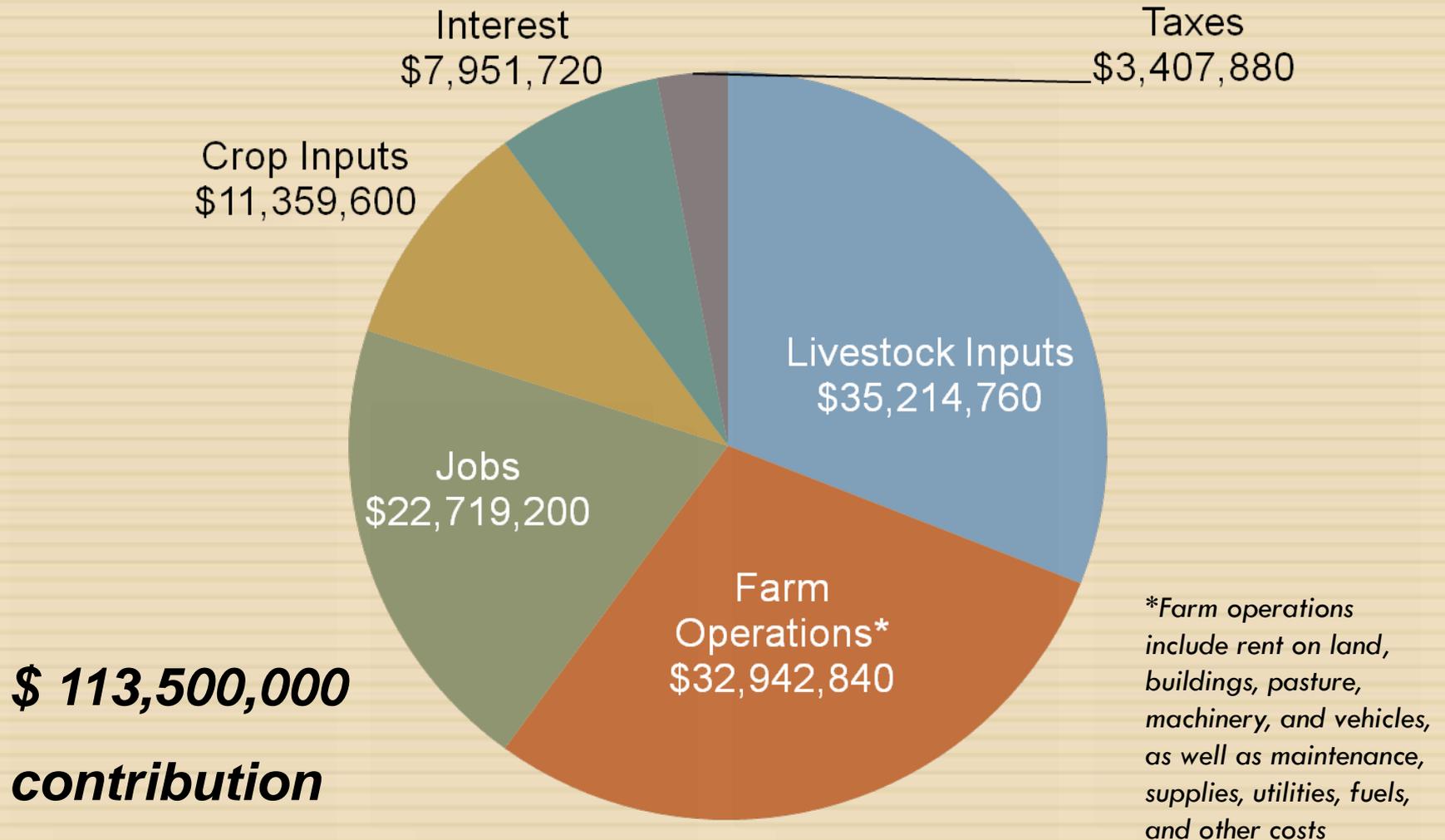
**Crop residues are food sources for ducks, geese, ibis, cranes, deer, antelope, pheasants, song birds**

# The Value of Agricultural Production in Larimer County

- Larimer County has 1757 farms with \$128,122,000 in sales
- 199 farms sell \$838,000 ag products directly to consumers
- 179 farms have developed value-added practices
- Direct sales to local consumers are increasing yearly

*USDA data in No. Colorado  
Regional Food Assessment.*

# Larimer County Production Expenses from 2007 USDA Census of Agriculture



# Irrigated Agriculture in Larimer Co Produces a Wide Range of Crops

- ❑ Livestock, poultry,
- ❑ Dairy products
- ❑ Grains and forage
- ❑ Vegetables and fruit
- ❑ Landscaping and nursery stock
- ❑ Specialty crops, herbs, flowers





**95% of all farms in Larimer County are family owned and provide us with a knowledge base that crosses generations**



## **Irrigated farmscapes are reservoirs**

**They can provide water in dry years if water-sharing agreements are developed**

# Partnerships: Win-Win for Cities, Farmers and the Taxpaying Public

**Irrigators can forgo some rental water and trade or lease some owned water to urban areas in dry years ...**

**... in return, they would want to be able to count on stable decrees for ag water, and on rental water for full production in normal years**



***... We can also develop and share “conserved water”***

# Future partnerships



***Sustainability requires collaboration and thinking about the long-term together***

# Thank You

**Your Larimer County  
Agricultural Advisory  
Board appreciates  
your consideration of  
these important  
issues. We look  
forward to a  
productive discussion  
about potential  
partnerships**

