



Date: April 24, 2025
Time: 5:00 PM – 8:00 PM
Location: Horsetooth Area Info Center - 4200 W. County Rd. 38E Fort Collins, CO 80526 – Mountain Lion Room & Zoom Webinar

OPEN LANDS ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

MEMBERS		STAFF		GUESTS
Jim Wurz	I	Daylan Figgs	I	
Debbie Hayhow	I	Meegan Flenniken	I	
Gale Bernhardt	I	Zac Wiebe	V	
Tom Shoemaker	I	Justin Core	I	
Linda Stanley	I	Lesli Ellis	I	
Wes Knoll	A	*Jody Shadduck-McNally	I	
Gary Miller	A	Andrea Weber (minutes)	I	
Ward Nelson	A	Aubrey Hilde	I	
Mike Carter	I	Chris Fleming	I	
Ellis Carpenter	I			

V = virtual attendee

I = in-person attendee

A = absent

*commissioner

Call to Order – 5:00 pm

Agenda Review

Review and Approval of Last Minutes

- Gale requested the March meeting minutes include specific discussion and comments shared by board members regarding future joint board meetings.
- March meeting minutes were tabled until the next meeting. Linda made a motion to table the minutes and accept the modifications. Tom seconded.
- Board members requested more member discussions be included in future minutes.

Information and Announcements

Natural Resources events for this month: <https://larimer.org/naturalresources>.

To sign up for Open Lands Advisory Board updates, go to <https://apps.larimer.org/subscriptions.cfm>, enter your email, click “Subscribe,” and check the “Open Lands Advisory Board” box.

February 2025 Tax Distribution Letter

New Release: Larimer County conserves nearly 5,000 acres of prime wildlife habitat and views in Livermore & Larimer County Finalizes conservation easement purchases

The Gazette: Water destination poised for Northern Colorado after years of controversy

Updates and Reports

Board of County Commissioner Update

- Commissioner Shadduck-McNally noted the legislative session is nearly complete. The County continues to advocate for the Forest Health Council bill. The 30-year Forest Health Plan is in the works and is expected to be finalized soon.
- The County is navigating an evolving state budget and looking to diversify its revenue streams. Some of the shifting budget considerations are tied to federal funding and policy.

2024 DNR Annual Report

- The DNR Annual Report has fully transitioned to online only.
- Staff are reevaluating the 2025 and 2026 budgets, with efforts underway to reduce operating costs and increase revenue. This includes freezing positions and cutting back on long-distance conference travel.
- Visitation numbers remain stable, and although there is built-in capacity, lots turn over frequently.

NoCo 2050 Update – Meegan

- Meegan provided an update on the NoCo 2050 regional conservation initiative. A recent field trip focused on the shared boundary between Larimer and Boulder counties where both entities continue to conserve and manage lands. The trip aimed to identify key conservation values and potential areas for collaboration.
- Colorado Natural Heritage Program notes significant ecological values in region including important plant communities such as mountain mahogany and Bell's twinpod. Commissioner Shadduck-McNally shared that over 50% of Boulder County's biodiversity is found in the Rabbit Mountain area.
- Meegan emphasized the growing importance of regional partnerships, including potential collaboration with Boulder County and even into Wyoming. Linda inquired about trail connectivity from Larimer to Boulder County. Meegan confirmed an easement exists, but plans are still to be determined.
- Conservation easements (CEs) created through the Rural Land Use Process can vary in term length – either 40 years or perpetual. DNR only does perpetual CE's as a key conservation strategy.
- Daylan highlighted that Larimer County was among the first counties to lead a regional partnership model in Colorado. This approach is gaining momentum with the adoption of the Colorado Outdoor Strategy, which was signed by state DNR and CPW leaders. GOCO has pledged \$50 million to support regional partnerships. He emphasized that regional partnerships are central to managing the growing presence of people in outdoor spaces.

Discussion Items

Visitor Management and Maintenance Update – Aubrey Hilde

- Aubrey provided a 2024 overview of LCDNR's ranger and maintenance staff.
- The department manages 15 campgrounds and 436 campsites with over 71,000 reservation nights/yr
- Permit sales totaled around 10,000 annual and 162,000 daily permits. The removal of off-site vendors accounted for an ~2.5% drop in annual sales, and wildfires reduced total sales by 3.5% from 2023.
- Permit kiosks were down 38% of the year, including over July 4th when 5 of 8 kiosks failed at Horsetooth Reservoir. As a result, DNR will fully transition to a Text-2-Park system.
- The Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) program inspected 55,089 watercraft, conducted 1,546 decontaminations, and intercepted 10 vessels with mussels. Of the high-risk boats, 772 were from CO and 1,094 were from out-of-state. The CPW Port of Entry Program continues to support early detection.
- Maintenance crews (9 full-time, 14 seasonal) completed road repair, kiosk and buoy installation, dock replacement projects. In 2024, they applied 500 tons of road base, removed 182 tons of trash, stocked 24,920 toilet paper rolls, mowed 1,200 acres, and pumped 237,500 gallons of waste.
- Rangers include 15 full-time officers and 35–45 seasonal staff, who together received over 6,900 training hours. Rangers made 43,629 land-based contacts (77% public relations), issued few citations (1.1% land, 2% water), and performed 90 water rescues across 3,000 acres. Rangers responded to 2,156 calls and made 145 arrests.
- In a notable case, an elk poaching incident at Red Mountain Open Space led to a guilty plea, a \$1,000 fine, a 15-point license penalty, and forfeiture of the animal.
- In response to board questions, staff explained DNR receives some ANS program funding but not for CPW stamps; and open lands staffing needs differ from reservoirs due to hours and visitor behaviors. Board members requested a clearer display of budget and staffing separation between open spaces and BOR reservoir management.

Approach to future combined board meetings

- Daylan noted this process is not a merger, it is joint meetings for shared presentations and discussions. Common information and discussions will be shared collectively but voting will remain separate for each board. Executive sessions will be held separately, with the other board excused during those times.
- Agendas and minutes will be shared but posted to the individual boards' web pages. Meetings will be capped at 2 hours with an additional hour reserved for executive session if needed.
- Meetings will be co-chaired, alternating monthly, with shared agenda review to ensure transparency and legal compliance. A draft agenda and combined work plan have been developed and were shared.
- July 24th will be the first joint meeting, hosted at the Longview Campus Behavioral Health Center.
- The board shared concerns that the boards have different purposes and missions. Some suggested defining a new meeting schedule instead of merging the boards. Members were also open-minded, wanting to see how it goes before deciding. They appreciated how DNR has presented unified department goals and see the board's role as continuing to ensure alignment with the mission and vision. Members asked if the format is being used elsewhere. Commissioner Shadduck-McNally noted other boards are being reviewed. Some have been combined, and some have dissolved based on efficiency, staff time, and need.
- Daylan emphasized that we will review how it's going after a first few meetings and adjust as needed.

Annual OLAB bylaws review

- Daylan provided a review of the OLAB bylaws, noting the bylaws were approved late last year and reviewed during this year's annual compliance training.
- He highlighted several key elements, including the code of conduct and conflict of interest disclosures.
- He also reiterated the board serves in an advisory capacity to the Board of County Commissioners, emphasizing the significance of this role in guiding decision-making at the county level.

Action Items

Other Business

- Linda shared that a citizen-led initiative is underway to extend the City of Fort Collins Natural Areas sales tax, originally passed in 1992, renewed in 2002, and set to expire in 2030. The goal is to continue the tax, ideally in perpetuity. The campaign begins May 8th and runs through July, needing 5,500 valid signatures from registered voters. Anyone 18 or older can collect signatures. Learn more or volunteer at yestonaturalareas.com; the effort is not connected to the Hughes Stadium issue.

Next Meeting Scheduled

Thursday, May 22nd, 2025 - Larimer County Horsetooth Area Information Center 4200 W. County Road 38E Fort Collins, CO 80526 - Mountain Lion Room & Zoom Webinar

Executive Session

Pursuant to C.R.S. (24-6-402(4)(a)) for discussion pertaining to the purchase, acquisition, lease, transfer or sale of any real, personal or other property interest.

Adjournment – 6:58 pm

Per the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Larimer County will provide a reasonable accommodation to qualified individuals with a disability who need assistance. Services can be arranged with at least seven (7) business days' notice. Please email us at weberan@co.larimer.co.us, or call (970) 498-7719 or Relay Colorado 711. "Walk-in" requests for auxiliary aids and services will be honored to the extent possible but may be unavailable if advance notice is not provided.