



Date: February 23, 2023
Time: 5:00 PM – 8:00 PM
Location: Larimer County Loveland Campus Building, 200 Peridot Avenue, Loveland, CO 80537, Poudre River Room & Zoom Webinar

OPEN LANDS ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

MEMBERS		STAFF		GUESTS
Paul Hudnut	I	Daylan Figgs	I	
David Marvin	V	Meegan Flenniken	I	
Gale Bernhardt	A	Justin Core	V	
K-Lynn Cameron	I	Zac Wiebe	I	
Linda Stanley	V	Chris Fleming	I	
Mark DeGregorio	V	*Jody Shaddock-McNally	I	
Gary Miller	I	Andrea Weber (minutes)	I	
Peter Kelly	I			
Ward Nelson	I			
Mike Carter	I			
Steve VanderMeer	I			
Tom Shoemaker	I			

V = virtual attendee

I = in-person attendee

A = absent

*commissioner

Call to Order – 5:02 pm

Public Comment

Ellis Carpenter said he has a personal interest in land conservation. He joined to listen in.

Agenda Review

Review and Approval of Last Minutes

Tom moved to approve the minutes from last meeting, Gary seconded, motion passed unanimously.

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.

Heaven’s Door Ranch - Estes Gazette News Article

- Daylan noted DNR is hosting a follow-up tour on site with the Gazette reporter and BOCC this spring.

December 2022 Open Space Sales Tax Distribution

Update and Reports

Board of County Commissioner Update

- Commissioner Shadduck-McNally said she attended a grand opening of an affordable work force housing project in downtown Fort Collins.
- She participated in a National Association of Counties conference in Washington DC. She sits on the Environmental Energy and Land Use Committee and the Rule Action Caucus. Many of the topics discussed are in-line with work Larimer County is actively doing.
 - She learned more about the interplay with waters in the US. In 2016, there were changes made to wetland protections. Larimer County would like to see the full reinstatement of these protections, however, there are many headwater streams and important alpine watershed locations that have not been reissued.
- Spending time with experts in wildfire mitigation and forestry. She has been boots on the ground observing as well as doing mitigation work herself. There are many upcoming bills looking at wildfire codes and workforce housing for the Forest Health Council.
- She expressed her appreciation for the collaboration between LC and its neighboring municipalities on the work being done with NoCo PLACES 2050 and emphasized the importance of these relationships.

2022 Quarter 4 Board Report

- Daylan highlighted a few of the stories:
- Two long-term large scale restoration projects currently underway focused on invasive plant species control.
- Horsetooth Reservoir is facing some challenges with capacity and new recreational uses which DNR is assessing adaptive management options to address.
- A series of instream flow right designations are in the works. These assist in ecological sustainability of riparian areas for today and the future.
- DNR is engaged in a competitive marina project. It is a critical piece of how DNR manages the marinas and will provide new opportunities for the community.
- Discussion/Feedback:
 - Tom commented on how the report highlights the diverse management requirements for parks and open lands. He noted the expertise DNR provides in all sectors.
 - Paul said the two restoration projects involve herbicide spraying to control non-native species. He asked to know more about DNR's philosophy on spraying chemicals on the open spaces.
 - Daylan said the DNR Land Stewardship staff will attend a future OLAB meeting to share the department's philosophy on vegetation management and share the outcomes of this particular project to re-establishing native grasses via eliminating noxious vegetation like cheatgrass.
 - DNR received a RESTORE grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation for a landscape level project related to noxious weed control.
 - Meegan said the LSAB manager generally comes annually to OLAB to present vegetation management goals and outcomes around noxious weed control, use herbicides, and provide an overview/outcome of specific projects.

Discussion Items

OLAB bylaws review (advisory; conflict of interest; executive session confidentiality) – Daylan

- Daylan said DNR and the board revisit the by-laws each year. The current by-laws were updated in 2019. They are up to date on most items and discussion is open to any requested edits.
- OLAB's purpose is to advise staff and the BOCC on actions the department would like to take.
- Conflict of interest is a point that DNR and the board take seriously. If there is a situation in which a board member may be in conflict during a conversation or vote, it should be brought to the boards attention for discussion. Conflict is not unusual with the type of work board members are engaged in and it is also not a negative thing.

- Daylan emphasized that conversations held in executive session are confidential and the board and department have a responsibility to the BOCC and participating landowners to maintain that confidentiality.
 - Previously, some executive session materials were distributed to the board members before the meeting via email, DNR would like to discontinue this practice and provide materials at the meetings only.
- Daylan asked board members to bring forward any questions or edits.
 - Steve noted the by-laws are outdated when referring to technology, it only references cell phones. He said conflict of interest is a spectrum and he would like to create and share examples with the board so members have a better understanding of what might qualify.
 - Daylan said this would be great and provide some clarification.
- Steve said as advisory board members, OLAB is one step removed from the governing process. He asked if there was a difference or distinction in conflict of interest between advisory boards and BOCC?
 - Commissioner Shadduck-McNally said certainly for land use items the BOCC is very strict. Typically, if there are no business dealings or personal/business interest, it's not a problem for individuals to participate in discussions. When there are topics that might be in conflict, the BOCC will reach out and discuss it with the county attorneys. Commissioner's emails are completely public, if there are some things that are private (personal cell phone numbers), they should be labeled as such.
 - The commissioners do their due diligence to ensure they appoint good people to the boards who don't have significant conflict of interest and are on the boards to provide critical thinking.
- Ward said sometimes people will try to gather information and learn what the counties intentions are on confidential topics and how a board member replies is important. He suggested letting people know it cannot be discussed at that time. He thinks recusal is an individual's decision and one will decide for themselves if it will influence how they view and vote on an issue. Commissioner Shadduck-McNally agreed and said board members should use their best judgement.

Restoration Projects Overview – Zac

- Zac shared his screen presenting: Restoration Projects 2023 – 2025.
 - Upcoming Work: Red Mountain Open Space – Table Mountain
 - Goal: Restore 0.25 miles of perennial stream, develop cattle water source/spring, restore 2 miles of roads and house footprint
 - Outcomes: Riparian and wetland creation (support most biodiversity but compromise <2% of county land cover). Improved habitat for native species (pollinators, native fish, grassland birds, amphibians – all currently in decline). Added ~1800 acres of grazing land to Red Mtn. OS. Enhanced use of water rights to instream flows, wetland creation, recharge wetlands that benefit ag, livestock water. Carbon sequestration and soil health.
 - Plans and permitting to remove a small dam which was in place to hold water from cattle, over grazed above dam, opportunity to bring ecological value, add vegetation and improve water flow.
 - Gary asked if the stream was Stone Creek? Zac said it is an unnamed creek, but likely Goodwin Creek. It is a natural spring that runs 0.5 miles on the surface and returns underground. It is a good isolated system for DNR to work within.
 - Upcoming Work: Overview of 3 projects
 - DNR is moving forward with restoration planning and implementation on three existing cropland areas.
 - Primary outcomes include restoration of 2 open space cropland areas back to riparian/wetland habitats or upland native grasslands. Areas restored to native habitat have significant ecological benefits while supporting grazing/ranching agricultural uses.

- LCDNR Guiding Principles around agriculture support that if primary use goals/outcomes are cropland agriculture, and public access is not desired/practical, consider transfer of fee ownership (encumbered with a CE) to a private farmer or entity. If primary goal/public benefit is not cropland; convert the cropland to a native plant community and apply grazing as appropriate.
- Restoration Benefits:
 - Habitat – native plant species, pollinators, biodiversity
 - Agricultural – native vegetation can be managed via livestock grazing
 - Soils – rebuild soil structure, stability and resiliency; C – sequestration
 - Water – water rights re-directed to instream flows, wetland creation
 - Matches LC climate strategy and State Water Plan goals
- Restoration Trade-off:
 - Less land where crops are harvested.
 - Existing leases change (to rangeland) or not renewed.
- Project 1: Red Mountain Open Space - Boxelder Creek Corridor
 - Goal: Restore hayfield and connect 1 mile of stream channel/riparian habitat.
 - Channel has been moved over the few decades before DNR owned it, it currently is diverted to provide water for irrigation to 100 acres.
- Project 2: River Bluffs Open Space – Poudre River Corridor
 - Goal: Restore hayfield to native wetland/riparian and grassland habitat.
 - Croplands on both sides of the Poudre River. DNR holds significant water rights on the property. Restoration is in concept phase, and DNR will seek proposals this year to refine the concepts.
- Project 1 and 2 outcomes:
 - Riparian and wetland creation (support most biodiversity but compromise <2% of county land cover).
 - Improved habitat for native species (pollinators, native fish, grassland birds, amphibians – all currently in decline).
 - Transition to rangeland agricultural use.
 - Enhanced use of water rights to instream flows, wetland creation, recharge wetlands that benefit ag, livestock water.
 - Carbon sequestration and soil health.
- Project 3: Long View Farm Open Space (current dryland wheat farm agricultural lease)
 - Short-term goal: Partner with lessee to implement practices aligning with DNR's land management strategy to improve soils and habitat values. Funding from NRCS EQUIP grant.
 - Long-term goal/outcomes: Restoration to native grassland/prairie system. Improved habitat for native species (pollinators, native fish, grassland birds, amphibians – all currently in decline). Transition to rangeland agricultural use. Carbon sequestration and soil health.
 - Lack of water creates a dryland environment.
 - Property is surrounded by significant restored public lands.
 - No current timeline.
- These 3 projects are larger in scale and will need to be phased. DNR is implementing smaller projects and always conducting some form of restoration work.
- Discussion/Feedback:
 - Gary asked for the Long View NRCS EQUIP grant, what the practices were and if the conversion to native grasslands was how DNR received funding?

- Meegan said NRCS EQUIP funding is available for private landowners but not the county. The goal is to have property owners start implementing soil rebuilding practices. Zac said DNR is taking leases as they are renewed and building in some of these better practices.
 - Zac said the concept would be in line with efforts by surrounding partners such as the City of Fort Collins restoration work at Cathy Fromme Prairie. These projects are done in phases due to time and funding.
- Ward asked how much money and how long for these projects? Also, what the boards involvement was?
 - Zac said DNR has been treating these financially, similar to capital improvement projects (CIPs) and building them into the departments CIP. Restoration projects take a long time from initial implementation. There will be a few years of monitoring and adapting. Philosophically, DNR strives to implement projects that do not require extensive active monitoring or inputs post-restoration, selecting designs that are self-sustainable long-term.
 - Daylan said the dollar cost can be driven by ecological goals. The idea is to build projects that can be phased, providing DNR with the opportunity to know what to do and identify specific ecological goals.
- Tom said it makes sense to treat these as capital projects, having them smaller in scale first. He requested the board receive updates on the progress along the way as they might have input.
- Linda expressed support for using money toward restoration if it doesn't take away from land acquisitions. Meegan said financially, there is substantial grant funding available for these river restoration projects.
- Linda said at some point River Bluffs will be surrounded in an urban area. She asked if there was any benefit to restoring this property, or if there was another place/way to work with landowners to create more connectivity to avoid an island in an urbanized area.
 - Zac said to the north there are two properties with CE's, to the east is a Windsor Open Space, and to the south/southeast are state wildlife areas. The property is part of a more connected river corridor area.
 - Steve said there is a lot of development in this area, and this is even more of a reason to do these projects.
- Paul commented, lands are drying up and its very important to focus on more of these projects now.

Our Lands Our Future Regional Survey – Zac

- Daylan said DNR intends to refresh the Our Lands Our Future survey to gain insight into how the community would like to see the department spend tax dollars.
- Zac said the survey was first done in 2013. Results provided valuable data but has reached the point of needing to be refreshed to adequately understand the publics views and wants for recreation and land conservation. Many questions will be the same from the previous survey, but with more in-depth questions added.
- DNR convened its municipal partners to join in this effort. Partners met to discuss continuity of objectives. DNR is in the process of sending a Request for Proposal (RFP) to LC Purchasing for selecting a vendor to distribute the survey. Results from the survey are expected this fall.
- Discussion/Feedback:
 - K-Lynn asked if DNR plans to use the vendor from the previous survey. Zac said by sending out the RFP, other vendors will have an opportunity to bid. Who the vendor will be is not yet determined. The most important piece is the vendor providing statistically valid data.

- Daylan said the previous survey is on the website so any one can browse it. Many questions will be similar, but DNR is open to any new or different questions that were not previously included.
- K-Lynn asked if the survey will be focused on open lands only, or if it will include the reservoirs. Daylan said it will focus on open lands and tax dollars with a few questions about the reservoirs.
- Paul asked if conservation easements (CEs) would be included. Zac explained they were part of the 2013 survey and will be included in the new one. Paul thought the survey could be used as an opportunity to provide education to the public around the value of CE's.
- Linda said she is pleased to know DNR is focused on having a statistically valid survey. She finds it important the survey reaches all corners of the community including those who do and those who do not use the spaces and those who do not use them but highly value the conservation of them. She would like to see community members that do not use the spaces respond to the surveys, which means extensive outreach by DNR and its partners. She is interested to see response comparisons between 2013 and 2023.
- Zac shared the timeline milestones: DNR will issue the RFP this spring, consultant the board in spring/early summer, craft the survey (most time spent), distribute in late summer, and analyze results in the fall.
- Tom asked if the partners were sharing in the cost. Daylan said all municipal partners are paying proportionally to the open space tax monies they receive. DNR is covering 50% of the cost.

Overview of CODEX Mapping Tool and NOCO 2050 efforts - Zac

- Daylan explained CODEX is tool used to better understand distribution of resources. The NoCo 2050 CODEX project is a joint effort including Larimer County, Jefferson County, Boulder County, Clear Creek, US Fort Service, National Park Service, and Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW). It is being used for regional planning to address population growth and how to continue conservation planning/efforts while simultaneously advancing recreation.
- Zac said the CODEX (Colorado Data Explorer) tool was developed by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP). It is the most comprehensive set of ecological data in the state of CO and also includes trails, parcels, trailheads, and other features.
- Data is expansive and includes information such as vegetation communities, rare and endangered species, species activity mapping (SAM), habitat types, soils, geology, and protected lands.
 - Filter option examples:
 - CNHP protected land status and landscape disturbance index and impact of human development.
 - Department of Health and Environment (Envrioscreen) access and equity map.
 - Meegan said the tool includes recreational infrastructure which can be overlaid on any given filter.
- From the user perspective, the tool is free, and it gives the user a lot of power. DNR is actively using CODEX to evaluate different properties.
- Two reports that can be generated:
 - User can choose any parcel on the map and run a report that will summarize all the data on that given geographic location. CODEX then returns a formatted report for use.
 - CSU conducted a study looking at return on investment of conserving properties. It was done through the lens of CE's, realizing ecosystem services and economic interests and assigning a dollar value. Through this data, the user can run an ROI report.
- This NoCo PLACES effort follows the lead of a Chaffee County project, Envision Chaffee, which created a conservation value summary map. Commissioner Shaddock-McNally gave reference that Chaffee County is 70% public lands and Larimer County is about 50%. The project compiles most of the ecological data sets and adds a weight to them based on project partner knowledge and technical

expertise. NoCo 2050 has also purchased and is analyzing cell data to understand movement of visitors in and around its properties. Zac shared the first draft of the ecological base summary map on the screen. There were no major surprises for Larimer County in the initial map. The goal is to help land management agencies work together more effectively and efficiently.

- Discussion/Feedback:
 - Commissioner Shadduck-McNally asked about missing data in the first draft. Zac said for some counties there was less data available for this mapping effort, but the map is just one tool of many in the development of this regional mission.
 - Tom asked if the plains were included and what the parcel scale is. Zac said the plains are included.
 - Daylan said as the map moves east, there is different data that needs to be included. Currently, the agricultural lands don't show much weight in importance. These are important areas but in different ways. The idea around NoCo PLACES 2050, is recognizing Larimer County has a growing population and entities are tasked with adapting management of the landscape in a way that honors and recognizes appreciation for these areas.
 - Tom asked if there was information within the tool to identify where the data came from. Zac said the sources for the data is all included on CNHP's website. Meegan continued, the metadata with data source info and a description, can be found by clicking on the filter.

Update on Glade Reservoir – Daylan

- Daylan announced Northern Water received a Record of Decision for Glade Reservoir. They have begun work on an adaptive flows management plan for the Poudre River, focused on ecological values, including land conservation, channel work, water flow regimes, and water quality. It will zero in on how they plan to implement management strategies to enhance the health of the river. Northern Water has also included items for the west slope, the Windy Gap Project, and a proposed channel for Chimney Hollow. This reservoir project is a long way out, but conversations are beginning now. Commissioner Shadduck-McNally said the BOCC will be having a conversation the week following this meeting to discuss the relocation of Highway 287.
- Daylan continued, DNR, and specifically Zac Wiebe and Meegan Flenniken, are working closely with Northern on this plan. Zac said the committee assembled for this management plan is extremely knowledgeable and will provide great insight and advice.

Action Items

None

Other Business

None

Next Meeting Scheduled

March 23, 2023 at the Larimer County Loveland Campus Building, 200 Peridot Avenue, Loveland, CO 80537, Poudre River 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 – 6:41 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.