



Date: October 27, 2022
Time: 5:00 PM – 8:00 PM
Location: Horsetooth Area Information Center - 4200 W. CR 38E, Fort Collins, CO 80526 – Mountain Lion Room & Zoom Webinar

OPEN LANDS ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

MEMBERS		STAFF		GUESTS
Gary Miller	I	Daylan Figgs	I	
David Marvin	A	Meegan Flenniken	I	
Gale Bernhardt	I	Zac Wiebe	I	
K-Lynn Cameron	I	Justin Core	I	
Linda Stanley	I	Timothy Meyer	I	
Mark DeGregorio	I	*Jody Shadduck-McNally	V	
Mike Carter	I	Andrea Weber (minutes)	I	
Peter Kelly	I	Julie Enderby	I	
Paul Hudnut	V	Melody Johnson	I	
Ward Nelson	I	Steve Gibson	I	
Steve VanderMeer	V	Lori Smith	I	
Tom Shoemaker	V			

V = virtual attendee

I = in-person attendee

A = absent

*commissioner

Call to Order – 5:00 pm

Public Comment

None

Agenda Review

25-year Financial Projections presentation moved to a later date.

Review and Approval of Last Minutes

Linda 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

July 2022 Open Space Tax Distribution Letter

Update and Reports

2023 Budget Update – Melody Johnson

- Melody provided an overview of the 2023 Budget that was submitted to the BOCC for approval.
 - DNR requested to convert 2 full-time limited term positions to full-time regular positions (a Boat Inspector and a Land Stewardship Technician).
 - Linda asked what a full-time limited term position is. Melody said they are benefitted employees that DNR can only employ for a set number of years.
 - DNR also requested the addition of 4 full-time regular staff positions including a Finance and Admin Department Specialist, Trail Technician, Communications Specialist and Maintenance Technician.
- DNR's total expected expenses for 2023 is \$13.2 million.
 - 61% of the budget is for personnel, \$8.1 million for staffing, \$6 million covers full-time and \$2 million covers seasonals and their benefits. The BOCC is providing all staff with a 2.5% cost of living pay increase, and those who meet all requirements will receive a 5% Merit increase on their anniversary.
 - 39% of the budget will cover the operating costs, totaling to ~\$5.1 million.
 - 47% of the operating expenses are the indirect costs that are paid directly to Larimer County. Every dollar DNR spends on personnel is 11 cents to LC.
 - The second highest cost is for fleet vehicles and fuel.
 - The third most significant cost is LC Facilities and IT services.
 - Mike asked if the countywide indirect allocation is analogous to a burden cost?
 - Melody said the allocation helps LC cover costs for the services provided to DNR. For example, human resources and legal services.
 - Daylan explained that because DNR is not within the General Fund, the department pays for the services provided by the County.
 - Linda asked if the cost approximated the use of services that DNR uses.
 - Lori said compared to other non-General Fund departments the payments are similar. She also noted this is a very common way of allocating the cost.
 - Steve VanderMeer asked if the General Fund is periodically reviewing its approach to that cost allocation formula? Does DNR feel like the allocations are appropriate?
 - Lori said DNR will intensively review the allocations every few years. Daylan said this year's increase seemed to be greater than would be expected. The indirect costs are a large percent of the budget that DNR has no control over.
 - Gale asked for the gross number percentage comparison from 2022 to 2023.
 - Daylan reported a ~3% difference/increase in the operating costs that DNR has control over. He said the board will go into further detail during a later meeting.
 - Pete complimented DNR for the great work with limited funds and resources. He thinks that with population growth and increased use, DNR needs to increase staff and budget. He posed a philosophical stance on changing the management and spending strategy and suggested looking to other counties for ideas.
 - Ward noted population growth and use will increase drastically, and usage is going to require a larger number of staff to keep the parks and open spaces well maintained and operational.
 - Daylan explained that growth is built into the financial projection model, but it's based on current funding sources and what budget the department must work within. It requires careful balance and ensuring that DNR spends the money where the public has voted it to be spent. He said it is difficult to compare LCDNR to other counties because funding is significantly different. DNR has a very small operating budget when compared to neighboring counties.
 - K-Lynn said the update to the "Our Lands Our Future" survey in 2023 will help inform DNR's strategy and focus based on public feedback.
 - Pete said he thinks DNR needs to step outside the box and make more drastic changes.
 - Linda said the ballot language notes the public wants land preservation, and DNR is accomplishing this through the acquisitions it has been making.

- Daylan said the results from the “Our Lands Our Future” survey should be ready to present by the end of 2023.
 - Meegan noted that there are numerous regional partners in Northern Colorado providing these similar outcomes around recreation access and land conservation - many of our level of service metrics as indexed to population growth, we are meeting or exceeding.
- Melody said CIP projects will cost a total of \$8.6 million. 26% is funded by grants and the remaining 74% funded by DNR.
 - \$3.4 million is allotted for land acquisitions.
 - \$2.2 million will cover the cost for a new Land Stewardship Building co-located at the Ranch.
 - The grant funding is from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA).
 - Gary asked what the plan is for the old LS buildings.
 - Meegan said the Vine Street location is being vacated and the building on Mulberry will be sold.
 - Commissioner Shaddock-McNally said the Vine Street building would have been too expensive to renovate. LC purchased land by Loveland Airport for Road and Bridge to relocate to.
 - She announced Conor McGrath as the new director of The Ranch.
 - She expressed how proud and happy she is that the County Commissioners were able to acquire \$15 million dollars in ARPA from Congress and provide DNR with some funds.
- The projected revenues for 2023 total \$23 million. 54.24% of this is from sales and use tax, 30.58% various fees, 3.71% property taxes, 3.5% Lottery, 2.66% Land Stewardship, 1.56% ANS, 1.34% General fund, plus 2.72% from others.
 - Mike asked how the projected revenues for 2023 compared to 2022. Daylan said there is a difference around \$1 million. The revenues are also impacted by grants.

Review of OLAB meeting schedule topics

- Daylan said the Meeting Topics document will help provide DNR, the Open Lands Advisory Board and the BOCC with topics the department would like to see completed for the year.
- Gale asked for more information around the 2022 Tax Distribution Letters. She values the information provided but said that she has nothing to compare the expenses versus income to. She would like to know what challenges DNR is facing with the budget and expenses.
- Daylan and Lori said that DNR adjusts the budget revenue to what is anticipated.
- Melody said revenue projections for the sales tax is provided by the Sales Tax Manager with LC. They provide the projections and suggest changes and adjustments. Reports are run monthly so adjustments can be made in real-time.
- Mike suggested that DNR could provide comparisons to previous years or to the projected budget.
- Daylan noted we provide actuals in the annual report, but the department will work on finding a way to share the information more frequently.

Discussion Items

Education/Volunteer Overview – Julie Enderby

- Connecting people, nature, and place: Everything staff and volunteers do align with the goals and mission of DNR
 - Foster learning and promote knowledge about responsible recreation behaviors and Leave No Trace principles. Present science and best practices behind how behaviors effect the natural world.
 - Inspire stewardship and conservation by making meaningful connections – stresses the importance of hands-on connection, more than just giving facts to people.
 - Provide site-based learning opportunities and projects that can carry over to citizens everyday lives.
 - Engage the community with opportunities that are accessible and inclusive of the whole community.
- DNR's Values and Goals

- Engaging the community. Educating to inspire stewardship and responsible recreation behaviors. Enhancing the services that the department provides. Expanding staff efforts.
- Education Program: Promoting stewardship & responsible recreation
 - Types of programs:
 - Public education classes, school field trips, outreach education, non-personal media
 - Guided hikes and programs for 2022:
 - Public programs included 40 programs and 240+ participants.
 - School field trips included 10 trips, 7 schools and 471+ students.
 - Special request field trips included 20 programs and 127+ participants.
 - The S.E.E.K (Safety, Education and Eco Knowledge) stations are a volunteer-based program.
 - In 2021, DNR had 95 stations and were able to reach 14,810 visitors. In 2022, there were 62 stations and 3,812 + visitors reached.
 - Stations are located at the trailheads at Devils Backbone, Hermit Park, and Horsetooth Mountain open spaces, and some roving at Satanka Bay. They are open April – October on Saturdays from 9-2pm.
 - Special Program “Meet the Geologist” with Dr. James Hagadorn, DMNS who received a DNR small grant to help fund his research.
- Volunteer engagement: Volunteers work alongside staff to meet department needs.
 - Trail, facility, and stewardship projects include volunteers that participate in one-time projects or people that come back year-after-year.
 - Visitor services volunteers include campground hosts and ranger assistants.
 - Public and school education programs include volunteer naturalists, naturalist assistants, and education partners.
 - Stewardship and communication volunteers include raptor nest monitors and photographers.
- Volunteer contributions year-to-date
 - Projects from 2022:
 - Sky View Campground and River Bluffs OS tree watering, 2,918 ft of barbed wire fencing removed at Horsetooth Mountain OS, 6 miles trails restored/maintained, 14 campsites and day use restored/maintained, 15 picnic tables built, 16 trees mulched/ and or planted, and 182+ bags of trash collected.
 - Special events
 - Earth Day included trail maintenance projects and litter clean up with 57 volunteers.
 - National Public Lands Day included trail maintenance projects, litter clean up, and fence removal
 - The Horsetooth Mountain Open Space Nomad Trail construction with VOC (2 days and had 75 volunteers each day).
 - Shoreline litter pick up w/ Centennial Bass Club included 93 volunteers and 78 bags of trash.
 - Volunteers are an investment and staff must provide the following:
 - Clear expectations: role descriptions, training, safety, tools, messaging
 - Supervision: ensures quality and work matches department needs
 - Evaluation and feedback: review reports and volunteer performance
 - Communication: emails, newsletters, in-person events
 - Recognition

Restoration/Resource/Ecological Outcomes Management Update – Zac Wiebe

- Zac presented on the Ecological Outcomes and the monitoring work DNR is doing.
 - The objectives of the department are to:
 - Maintain healthy landscapes while also being conscious of staff limitations.
 - Improve habitat in the Parks and Open Lands, as well as county-wide. DNR participates in land-use codes and considers setbacks and wetland protections. The Weed District is one way this objective is met.
 - Minimize fragmentation of the landscape.

- Restore habitat including riparian areas, short grass prairie and demolition sites.
 - Employ sustainable practices for invasive species control, responsible agricultural practices, and forest management (working with partners to create plans).
 - Secure instream flow rights on most properties and CE that DNR owns and provide long-term protections for riparian areas.
- Monitoring requires temporal and spatial considerations. Timing includes things such as long-term monitoring for raptors and prairie dogs. Project specific monitoring for post-restoration sites. Geography can be property specific or on a landscape scale.
- Monitoring ensures DNR's mission to provide healthy landscapes. It allows the department to:
 - Observe change over time
 - Inform management decisions
 - Follow regulatory State and Federal requirements.
- Wildlife monitoring includes:
 - Raptors that are monitored every year with the help of volunteers. They are a human-sensitive group and require seasonal closures. Many of the raptors are protected by Federal laws.
 - Breeding birds on short grass prairies with the help of the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies. This also presents the opportunity to gather data on the potential impacts to the habitat from grazing activity.
 - Prairie dogs are mapped every two years. Populations tend to expand and contract regularly. They are a controversial species, so it is important to understand them well.
 - Elk and mule deer are monitored by Colorado Parks and Wildlife on a few DNR properties. There is a particular interest in recent herd changes in the foothills.
 - Fish are monitored by Colorado Parks and Wildlife as well as by DNR. An example of an ongoing monitoring program is at the River Bluffs Restoration site.
 - There are specific areas in LC that are home to rare species of butterflies. The Colorado National Heritage Program assists in monitoring specific species.
- Vegetation monitoring includes:
 - Ongoing forestry prescriptions work in collaboration with Colorado State Forest Service.
 - Weed management on DNR properties and across the county.
 - Post-disturbance (fire) monitoring, baseline data collection and restoration if needed.
 - Post-restoration monitoring. River Bluffs, for example, is being monitored for vegetation, fish, instream hydrologic activity, and storm water.
 - Where and how rare species are located and doing.
- Other areas DNR monitors include:
 - Soil health, specifically in agricultural areas.
 - Hydrologic activity, river health and instream flow activity.
 - Capital projects such as the Storm Water Management Plan (SWMP), states that when DNR builds, the department must ensure there will be no negative impact on the storm water.
 - The night skies and understanding the impact that light pollution has over time.
- Questions/Discussion:
 - Gale inquired about DNR monitoring of bears and cats.
 - Zac said it's been many years since DNR has monitored either. The data is difficult to understand beyond presence/absence with camera studies.
 - Gale suggested, due to the proximity to Horsetooth, DNR could use Lory State Park data as a resource for population numbers of bears and cats.
 - K-Lynn asked how DNR areas are doing?
 - Zac said overall DNR's properties are doing well. The vegetation communities and wildlife habitat are in good shape.
 - Meegan said when DNR makes a land purchase, the Natural Heritage Program conducts an intense initial evaluation of ecological condition and re-survey over time to resample and help make recommended adaptive changes.

- Tom requested to have these ecological updates added to the yearly meeting topics.
- K-Lynn inquired about a few raptors nest previously located at DBB and what the status of the nest were and requested a more detailed update to the board on how specific ecological indicators are doing.
 - Linda thinks there is value in sharing more detailed information to the public, allowing people to better understand the way they impact wildlife over time.
 - Daylan stated that well-designed and well-placed trails are one of the best conservation tools DNR has.
- Mark asked about any possible introduction of prescribed burns to LC lands.
 - Zac said DNR has used prescribed burns in the past and was planning to burn a few piles this year. However, with strict State laws and the scrutiny around these types of burns, DNR decided to hold off on any.
 - Meegan noted that grazing is a tool DNR uses as an alternative in certain situations to achieve similar ecological goals.

CE Monitoring Update – Zac Wiebe

- DNR owns 56,000 acres and 40% of that land hold CEs. The department is required to monitor the easements on a yearly basis. DNR currently monitors 52 CEs and reported zero violations for 2022.
- K-Lynn asked if staff or volunteers conduct the monitoring surveys.
 - Zac said staff member Amy Gilboy, the Restoration Specialist, and her seasonal staff oversee the CE monitoring.
- Linda inquired about the monitoring process.
 - Zac said the State requires DNR to look at the entire property visually. Photo points around the property are taken when DNR first acquires a CE, providing reference photos to compare to each year.
 - Staff have implemented a rotation system between doing whole property, close-up inspections, drive-by inspections, and up-to-date aerial images. Each year during monitoring, the landowner is also interviewed to identify any changes or new activity on the property. If violations are noted, DNR will closely survey for the next few years.
- K-Lynn asked if DNR meets with new landowners when a CE property is sold.
 - Zac said DNR will always meet with new landowners. It is important to make sure they are aware of what's going on and how the process works.

Action Items

Recommendation on Hermit Park Open Space Conservation Easement Amendment – Justin Core

- Meegan provided context on the original acquisition and partnerships to acquire Hermit Park Open Space and that the Estes Valley Land Trust holds the conservation easement (CE). There have been 3 amendments to the CE to date to benefit the conservation values – extinguishment of homesites, strengthen language, update language standards, etc. The current proposed amendment essentially allows for the replacement of the existing “Bunkhouse” (storage) with a modern shop/garage and defines a building envelope at the entry area for all defined structures/improvements and associated height and square footage requirements.
- Meegan said DNR purchased the property in 2007 and Estes Valley Land Trust (EVLT) and Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) co-hold a CE on Hermit Park. 25% of the property is considered the “Developed Zone”, where the cabins, campgrounds and roads are located. DNR’s amendment policy states that if a change is requested, there should be conservation benefit to doing it.
- Justin reviewed the amendment which provides a positive benefit to the Conservation Values of the Open Space by incorporating the following items:
 - Public Access & Recreation / Improved Management
 - Delineation of a “Building Envelope” for support infrastructure with square footage and height limitations; allows for a variety of building types and uses that are intended for operation and management of the Open Space.
 - Scenic Values

- Siting within the “Building Envelope” protects views from HWY 36. Requirements for materials and colors to blend with the natural environment. Moving two group cabins (reserved) to the “Cabin Loop”.
- Other Included updates
 - Notice (for new / amended Reserved Rights)
 - References to C.R.S. §38-30.5-107,107.5 (codified requirements related to compensation for condemned CE’s – 2022) *This change is not related to this CE amendment
- Justin said that EVLT has similar CE language and policy to LCDNR, making this request process move forward smoothly. The EVLT attorneys have completed their review and it will now move forward to LC’s Attorney for review. Once the attorney has reviewed the proposal can be signed by EVLT, the BOCC, and GOCO.
- Linda motioned to recommend to the BOCC to move forward with the Hermit Park Open Space Conservation Easement Amendment with Estes Valley Land Trust. Mike seconded the motion, all voted unanimously, motion passed.
- Ward recused/abstained from the vote as he sits on the Estes Valley Land Trust Board.

Chimney Hollow Open Space WAPA Access Easement – Tim Meyer

- Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) has requested an access easement on Chimney Hollow Open Space. Chimney Hollow is a 1,600-acre property, purchased by DNR in 2004. The CE is held by GOCO and the City of Loveland (both assisted in funding the purchase).
- There are two powerlines on the property that WAPA owns and operates that predate DNR’s purchase.
 - The WAPA project is to combine the two current power lines into a single line from Flatiron powerplant to Estes Park.
 - WAPA is in the planning phase and is requesting for an access easement for three new access roads to complete the power line project. The new single power line towers will be significantly larger than the current towers.
- DNR is looking for recommendation from the board to the BOCC to grant this allowance.
- Linda asked how much of a visual impact the new towers will have on Chimney Hollow.
 - Tim said the towers will be like the ones around the reservoir; silver galvanized towers higher up to blend into the sky and timber colored for those on the landscape.
- Mike said the new towers will enhance safety and lead to improvement of infrastructure.
- Ward said that these should provide the structure to house more fibers and lead to better connectivity all around.
- Gary motioned to recommend to the BOCC, Ward seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Other Business

Next Meeting Scheduled

November 16, 2022 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 – 8:00 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.