



Date: March 24, 2022
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
Bob Hewson	I	Daylan Figgs	I	Tawnya Ernst - City of FC (I)
David Marvin	I	Meegan Flenniken	I	Alynn Karnes - City of FC (I)
Gale Bernhardt	I	Justin Core	I	
K-Lynn Cameron	I	Zac Wiebe	I	
Linda Stanley	V	Chris Fleming	I	
Mark DeGregorio	V	*Jody Shaddock-McNally	V	
Nancy Wallace	I	Jordan Williams (minutes)	I	
Peter Kelly	V			
Rick Brent	V			
Sherri Valentine	V			
Steve VanderMeer	I			
Tom Shoemaker	V			

V = virtual attendee

I = in-person attendee

*commissioner

Call to Order – 5:03pm

Public Comment

Agenda Review

Review and Approval of Last Minutes

K-Lynn moved to approve the minutes from last meeting, Steve 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

[Denver7: New Conservation Easement at Quarter Circle Lazy H Ranch](#)

[Denver7: Hermit Park and Red Mountain Open Space Reopening for the Spring](#)

[Northern Water: Bridge Install for Chimney Hollow Reservoir Access Road](#)

- Nancy asked about timeline for Chimney Hollow Reservoir construction and Meegan replied that the project is currently on schedule.

North Forty News: Quarter Circle Lazy H Ranch CE

Loveland Reporter Herald: Larimer County Seeks Input Horsetooth Mountain Management Plan

- Dave appreciates that the Loveland Reporter-Herald (LRH) covers activities by Larimer County Natural Resources (DNR), but he noticed that the most recent article about the Horsetooth Mountain Open Space Management Plan provided inaccurate information in that it cited there was not public support for entrance fees.

December 2021 Open Lands Sales Tax Distribution

2021 Quarter 4 Board Report – Daylan

- Daylan mentioned some highlights from the 2021 Quarter 4 board report and added that DNR staff will bring the 2021-year financial summary to the April meeting. However, staff would like more input on how the board wants to receive this data. Steve said he prefers visuals and snapshots rather than all the line items, with some highlights noted for future discussion. Tom would like to see a simple analysis of how things are going presently compared to budget and program projections. Gale mentioned the quarterly percent changes in certain areas. Daylan explained that open space expenses went down, and revenue went up from 2020 to 2021. Meanwhile, reservoir park expenses increased due to seasonal staff adjustments and additional smaller maintenance projects to address increased visitation following 2020.
- Daylan recognized Meegan for her inclusion as a “Women in Water” leader through the Poudre Heritage Alliance’s campaign.

Update and Reports

Board of County Commissioner update

- Commissioner Shadduck-McNally congratulated Meegan for her award during Women’s History Month. The Commissioner was not able to attend in-person due to a bill signing at the statehouse for legislation that originated in Larimer County. Commissioner Shadduck-McNally is proud of recent land acquisitions by the County, and she thanked DNR staff for the tour of the Laramie Foothills Bison herd at Red Mountain Open Space/Soapstone Prairie Natural Area. Linda Hoffman, County Manager, is retiring April 6th. A national search has begun for a new County Manager and Lorenda Volker will serve as the interim.

NoCo PLACES update – Daylan

- Daylan hopes to have more information for the board in April regarding collaborative projects from the NoCo PLACES group, which began two years ago and has been tasked with responding to the increasing population’s impact on public lands. The neighboring land management agencies want a concerted effort to address recreation needs while still fulfilling their conservation missions. The initial effort will involve a spatial analysis of the multicounty region, which will include recreational assets (trails, parking lots, etc.) and biological/wildlife information that will be contained in one database map to help inform management decisions. Additional financial support through outside grants is being looked at. For more information, visit the website: <https://www.nocoplaces2050.com/>

Discussion Items

Facility Maintenance Presentation – Chris Fleming

- Chris reviewed facility maintenance projects completed department-wide over the past year.
- Hermit Park Open Space Cabin Upgrades

- The decks were initially built with residential level materials, so they are being upgraded to commercial grade (20+ year lifespan, composite plastic recycled material) over the next 5 years with staff maintenance crews.
 - Interior projects include installing laminate flooring, refinishing the furniture, rebuilding the lofts, replacing propane lights with electric via solar energy, and bringing everything up to code. K-Lynn said the new completed projects are amazing and the updated outhouses next to the cabins are very clean. Steve asked about safety issues with visitors using the propane lights. Chris noted that there are CO2 monitors and written instructions inside the cabins.
- Vault toilets are being upgraded with epoxy flooring to be more durable, easier to clean, and look nicer. In the past, staff would have to repaint every restroom floor once per year to keep up with wear and tear. Now, for example, the vault toilet at Devil's Backbone Open Space was redone with the new epoxy flooring in 2017 and the flooring hasn't needed maintenance since then. All the restrooms are being transitioned to the epoxy flooring, with eight remaining to be upgraded in the system.
- Entrance kiosks are being updated at Hermit Park and Devil's Backbone open spaces.
- Plastic sneezeguards were installed at the Hermit Park Open Space office.
- Fire grates have been upgraded with concrete bases to expedite cleaning and avoid the public moving them.
- Irrigation improvements at River Bluffs Open Space and replacement of stock tanks at Red Mountain Open Space.
- HTMOS Trailhead water fountain upgraded for year-round use.
- The Horsetooth Reservoir cabins have been replaced with 5 new commercial grade cabins with 30–50-year lifespans. Previously, the 7 cabins were kit models that required high maintenance and were at the end of their lifespan. Cost was \$1M with \$340,000 coming from the Help Preserve Open Spaces Sales Tax and the rest being covered by Reservoir Park user fees and lottery dollars. The new cabins include electricity/AC, open floor plans, concrete floors, and anti-graffiti materials. They will open to the public May 13th.
- Carter Lake Sky View Campground was constructed and opens May 20th to the public. It will provide group camping opportunities. The entire campground can be reserved together, or individual campsites can be reserved separately. This project cost \$4 million with support from the Bureau of Reclamation, a GOCO grant, and lottery dollars, but no sales tax. The campsites are electric with concrete pads and a pavilion for groups to gather.
- ANS shelters were installed at five of the six boat ramps in 2021. The shelters are made from repurposed shipping containers and provide shade, electricity, heat, and AC. The ANS team performed over 70,000 inspections and 2,200 decontaminations in 2021. Before the shelters, staff only had a picnic table with an umbrella, or they had to stay in their own vehicles. This project cost \$350,000, with 75% of the costs paid by the Bureau of Reclamation, and no sales tax dollars.
 - Bob asked if the ANS inspection process will continue indefinitely. Chris said they are looking to change some aspects of the program, including improvements to the decon stations and some inspections taking place at the State's ports of entry. Even though there no positive lakes in Colorado, 20 boats from Lake Powell/the Midwest were intercepted at Larimer County Reservoir Parks last year and the state can't risk impacts to critical water infrastructure. The Carter Lake decon process was discussed, and staff emphasized the importance of education so that boaters do not waste time going back and forth since the decon location is not changing for 2022.
 - K-Lynn asked how long the decon process takes. Chris explained that since the mussels are tiny, inspections can take 5-8 minutes if boats are drained/dry or 20 minutes or longer if water is present.
 - Sherri asked about funding for the decon process. Chris said that there is no additional charge by DNR currently, but the department does receive financial assistance from the Bureau of Reclamation and Northern Water. Daylan added that Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) gives the County \$300,000 through its registration process, and some money from the daily permit/boat combo charges support the program.

- Increasing visitation will mean that DNR needs to budget to replace or maintain aging infrastructure and make things more durable, including asphalt maintenance
 - Sherri asked whether there are options for pavers that allow better water drainage. Chris said they are looking at different asphalt options, including pavement, gravel lots, and recycled materials. Daylan said that asphalt will likely be utilized in high use areas and gravel will continue to be used in lower use areas.
- On the horizon
 - Road and parking improvements at Carter and Horsetooth reservoirs are funded through an \$8.6M federal grant and \$3M of Department funds with construction beginning in 2024-25.
 - Hermit Park Open Space Maintenance Shop
 - HTMOS Management Plan projects implementation
 - Chimney Hollow Open Space capital projects.

Action Items

Final Review Eagle Canyon Ranch Acquisition & Bobcat Ridge Expansion Project

- Meegan provided an overview of the acquisition being discussed and noted it is within the Open Lands Master Plan Redstone/Buckhorn priority area, where a lot of existing opportunities for public access exist and demand is high.
- Meegan showed a regional map of the project area which includes lands conserved both in fee-title and by conservation easement (CE) by Larimer County Natural Resources, the City of Fort Collins, land trusts, and the USFS. The Eagle Canyon acquisitions provide connection and protect a wildlife movement corridor between USFS lands to the west and conserved lands to the east (including a rural land use CE, other county-held CEs, and Horsetooth Mountain Open Space/Lory State Park). Buckhorn Creek runs through the Eagle Canyon Ranch and is within one of the County's two Preble's meadow jumping mouse recovery reaches.
- Justin covered the transaction process, noting the project will occur over two years (changed from three) with the City of Fort Collins as the lead. The first 414-acre property will be purchased in April 2022, and the eastern 261-acre property will be purchased in 2023.
 - The purchase price is \$4,062,800 for the Eagle Canyon Ranch in 2022.
 - Soaring Eagle Ranch will cost an additional \$2 million in 2023.
 - The total is \$6.3 million, with Larimer County contributing \$1,005,250 total.
 - Larimer County will retain conservation easements on Eagle Canyon, Soaring Eagle, and the existing 2,605-acre Bobcat Ridge Natural Area.
- Alynn said the City of Fort Collins is planning to close on April 29th at the first property and early January 2023 on the second one.
 - This 675-acre property is a high priority for the City of Fort Collins. Through this partnership, the FC Natural Areas Department will hold fee title and the County will hold the CE.
 - This acquisition will eliminate the development rights for 11, 35-acre home sites and a 28-lot subdivision, as well as conserve the scenic viewshed and significant wildlife habitat. The purchase includes 65 shares of Buckhorn Highline Ditch
 - Appropriate recreational opportunities will be evaluated through a management planning process.
 - Bob asked about the existing structure at the entrance of the property. Alynn said they are discussing options, one would be to keep the building and use it as a future events center, possibly like the Primrose Studio at Reservoir Ridge Natural Area.
 - Bob Hewson asked about a wildlife management plan for the area. Alynn said management plans through FCNAD going forward would be zone focused, with biological surveys as part of that process when assessing appropriate recreation. The group also discussed participation by CPW, especially regarding management of the elk herds in the adjoining protected areas.
- Dave motioned for OLAB to recommend that the Larimer County Commissioners approve the use of \$1,005,250 in partnership with the City of Fort Collins to acquire Eagle Canyon Ranch and accept a

conservation easement on the entirety of these parcels and Bobcat Ridge Natural Area. K-Lynn reiterated the motion, Gale seconded, motion passed unanimously.

- Meegan clarified that there is currently not a Conservation Easement (CE) in place at Bobcat Ridge Natural Area. Bob expressed concerns with monitoring and financial commitments to hold the CE, but Meegan added that on average it only costs \$2/acre to manage CE lands versus \$300/acre to manage fee-title lands.
- Gale asked about tax credits opportunities with CEs that are held by DNR. Justin explained that state statutes do not allow governments to benefit from taxes by applying a CE to government lands and entities cannot hold a CE on their own property.

Summary Presentation and Recommendation for Adoption of the Horsetooth Mountain Open Space Management Plan – Zac Wiebe

- Zac explained the status of the plan and provided an update on public outreach and feedback which was limited to 39 comments/26 individuals with mostly support for the plan elements. There will be a few tweaks based on this final phase of feedback before the new HTMOS Adaptive Management Plan is officially presented to the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC).
 - Zac noted a need for elaboration in some areas including trail options and wayfinding, zoning, implementation/timing, and forestry practices. Staff anticipate implementing construction of the most popular trail concept this fall, ideally in partnership with Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado.
- Meegan thanked Zac for all his work on project, especially considering the years long process of visitor surveys and stakeholder engagement.
 - Bob noted that the project feedback timeline was advertised in the paper, but not a lot of final comments seemed to get added. Gale said that she saw many comments during other phases and heard a lot of positive feedback about the map feature.
 - Steve congratulated staff on the robust public engagement process with multiple opportunities for feedback. Dave noted that important changes were made to the plan based on public input.
 - Bob asked about more forestry practices being included, but staff noted that forest management implementation has been underway with a Colorado State Forest Service Plan in place for quite a while, so they were not expounded upon as much in this plan.
 - Tom complimented Zac on the process and was appreciative of the additional explanations regarding tradeoffs with wildlife management that were included in the final version. Tom expressed support for the plan especially with the conservation zoning of the southwest area.
 - Pete asked about advancing the timeline for implementation and the ability to move forward more quickly by utilizing stakeholder groups. Zac noted that the plan includes several new projects for the DNR trail crew and maintenance team, so they are looking at prioritization options based on bandwidth. The popular concepts will move forward more quickly according to the criteria included in the plan.
 - Meegan noted that [DNR advertises volunteer opportunities on its website](#), social media, and the volunteer newsletter. Staff must balance other priority trail needs as well, like rebuilding the Kruger Rock Trail post-fire and ongoing maintenance systemwide.
 - Linda expressed concern for some trails in the plan that are not being returned to a natural state, but she is happy with the tradeoffs and feels more comfortable moving forward.
- Dave said tonight's recommendation is for staff to adopt the plan and to share it with the BOCC. Nancy moved that OLAB recommend adoption of the HTMOS Adaptive Management plan, subject to the changes discussed today. K-Lynn seconded; motion passed unanimously.

Other Business

Next Meeting Scheduled

April 28, 2022 at Larimer County Loveland Campus Building: 200 Peridot Avenue, Loveland, CO 80537 & 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 – 6:54 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 williajo@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.