



Date: May 23, 2024
Time: 5:00 PM – 8:00 PM
Location: Horsetooth Area Information Center - 4200 W. County Rd. 38E Fort Collins, CO 80526- Mountain Lion Room & Zoom Webinar

OPEN LANDS ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

MEMBERS		STAFF		GUESTS
David Marvin	I	Daylan Figgs	I	
Gale Bernhardt	I	Meegan Flenniken	I	
Tom Shoemaker	I	Zac Wiebe	I	
Linda Stanley	I	Justin Core	I	
Gary Miller	V	Jon Plybon	I	
Peter Kelly	A	*Jody Shadduck-McNally	V	
Ward Nelson	I	Andrea Weber (minutes)	I	
Mike Carter	V	Zach Cook	I	
Ellis Carpenter	I	Casey Cisneros	I	

V = virtual attendee

I = in-person attendee

A = absent

*commissioner

Call to Order – 5:02 pm

Public Comment

Agenda Review

Climate Smart Future Ready presentation was moved to August.

Tax Credit Bill update by Justin Core was added.

Review and Approval of Last Minutes

Linda moved to approve the minutes from the last meeting, Ward 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.

2024 Quarter 1 Board Report

Dave Marvin noted it was his last meeting. Staff and board members thanked him for his leadership and wisdom serving on the board for the last nine years.

The June Open Lands Advisory Board meeting was cancelled.

Update and Reports

Board of County Commissioner Update

- Larimer County 101 held its graduation ceremony the evening of May 23rd.
- The Board of County Commissioners held a budget retreat this week. They will continue to discuss strengths, weaknesses and challenges within the budget.
- Waters of the US bill was signed and passed.

Discussion Items

Vegetation/Weed Management on Open Spaces – Casey Cisneros

- Habitat Management Efforts
 - Efforts on Larimer County open spaces, the primary focus is ecological habitat enhancement.
 - Efforts on private & other public lands include:
 - Education and implementation of vegetation management best practices
 - Enforcement of CO Noxious Weed Act
 - Provide services via cost share programs, herbicide sales, and enterprise for hire.
 - Notification to landowners of noxious weeds on their property. Staff will send a courtesy letter and advance to removal and send an invoice if necessary.
 - Fire/flood recovery and maintenance efforts and partnerships with US Forest Service
- Open Space Habitat Management Strategy
 - Goal: Achieve ecological outcomes that enhance habitat and soil health
 - Benefits: Habitat - native plant communities benefit pollinators, soils, biodiversity, genetic and species variability on the landscape. Soils – rebuild soil structure, nutrient cycling, stability and resiliency, c-sequestration. Aligned with LC Climate Strategy.
 - Actions: Restoration of native plant communities, integrated weed management, grazing management (to achieve a mosaic of plant communities), & wildlife friendly fence conversions.
- Integrated Weed Management
 - Goal: To utilize a combination of weed management tools (prevention, biological, chemical, cultural and physical) to yield the greatest ecological benefit/results that is cost effective.
 - Prevention is an important tool. The cost goes up as time goes on to control weed infestations.
- Invasive Annual Grass Control
 - Goal: Enhance native shrubland/grassland plant communities by removing invasive annuals.
 - Benefits: Improved wildlife habitat, soil health and increased soil c sequestration.
 - Current Efforts:
 - LCDNR has managed invasive annual grasses over 20 years with selective herbicides.
 - The soil seed bank for cheatgrass is viable for 4-6 years. The herbicide DNR uses is guaranteed 5 years and each year there is less to manage.
 - Focus on adaptive management at Eagles Nest and Devils Backbone open spaces
- Early Detection Rapid Response
 - Current focus on grass *Ventenata sp.* With state funding in the Laramie River Valley.
- Grazing
 - Goal: Sustainably apply grazing as a tool to help achieve habitat heterogeneity.
 - Benefits: Reduces decadent vegetation, encourages plant diversity, adds habitat complexity, restores nutrient cycle and soil health, and creates micro-niches.
 - Cattle are rotated between pastures to encourage different warm/cool season grasses.
- Wildlife Friendly Fencing
 - Goals: Remove all unneeded fencing that can be a barrier for wildlife, convert or rebuild needed fencing to wildlife friendly specifications.
 - Status: Since 2021, staff and volunteers have removed 1.6 miles of unneeded fencing and converted ~5.3 miles to wildlife friendly specs.
- Monitoring and Adaptive Management

- Use photo points, range monitoring, and plant and wildlife surveys
 - Allows adaptation to unexpected outcomes and constraints – adaptive management can include use of electric fencing, lease amendments, pasture rotations, seeding, and weed control.
- Green Infrastructure
 - Investing in healthy, beneficial vegetation around campgrounds and trailheads.
 - Ongoing tree maintenance, capital construction projects, regulatory compliance (storm water management) to provide ecological lift.
- Questions/Feedback:
 - Ward inquired about management of non-native plants. Casey said management of non-natives depends on the goals. Some non-natives can become naturalized, but staff may remove them in restoration areas to reduce competition with preferred natives.
 - Tom asked about the time expectation for an area to transition from a monoculture to natives. Casey noted 1 year if there is a good understory already intact.
 - Tom asked how DNR is sharing restoration successes. Meegan said bird and insect audio surveys can show improvements due to restoration efforts. Staff are investigating the best way to share successes with the community. Linda suggested using restoration signage at the sites.

Tax Credit Update - Justin Core

- The bill was passed and signed into law.
- Expiration dates of the Oversight Commission and Certified Holder Program were eliminated (would otherwise have sunset in 2026).
- Amendments from original proposal:
 - Elimination of \$15,000 reserve for the waitlist. Applications will be selected by date of application submission.
 - Cap will increase to \$50 million on January 1st, 2025, and remain through 2031. There will not be a phased increase to \$75 million as proposed.
 - Basis for Credit will change from 90% to 80% by 2027. (Credits will be equal to 80% of the fair market value of the CE)
 - To counter this change, state income tax refunds for CEs will increase from \$50,000 to \$200,000 starting January 1st, 2027.
- The repeal date is set for 2031.

Capital Improvement Plan Update – Jon Plybon

- Help Preserve Open Space (HPOS) Sales Tax Allocation: Management of County Open Spaces (**48.9%**), Open Space Land Acquisition & Habitat Restoration (**35.3%**), Capital Improvements/Renewal on County Open Spaces (**12.7%**), Capital Improvements/Renewal at BOR Reservoirs (HT, Carter. Pinewood, Flatiron) (**3.1%**)
- CIP 2024 Review - \$6 million total (\$2.7 million grants secured)
 - \$2M – Capital Replacement
 - HT Mtn. OS Improvements – HPOS (**funding source**)
 - Waste Water Infrastructure Projects – American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)
 - \$3M – New Capital Infrastructure
 - Poudre River Trail – HPOS & 3 grants (GOCO, CPW, CDOT)
 - Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) Facilities – Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) & park fees
 - Hermit Park OS Maintenance Shop – HPOS
 - \$1M – Habitat Restoration
 - Eagle's Nest/Devil's Backbone invasive annual treatment – HPOS & RESTORE grant
 - River Bluffs Wetland/Upland Restoration – HPOS & future grants
- 5 Year Capital Plan (2025 - 2029) - \$16 million total
 - Capital Replacement - \$6M
 - New Capital Infrastructure - \$9M
 - Habitat Restoration - \$1M
- Ongoing Capital Asset Maintenance Projects

- Asset Maintenance: \$100k/year
- ADA Improvements: \$10k/year
- Asphalt Maintenance: \$50k/year
- Gravel Maintenance: \$50k/year
- CIP 2025
 - Capital Replacement
 - (\$440k) HT Reservoir Rotary day use parking lot rebuild – Lottery & BOR grant
 - (\$11M) Carter/HT Res. Access ('25-'27) – Lottery, park fees & FLAP grant
 - New Capital Infrastructure
 - (\$4.3M) Chimney Hollow OS ('25-'27) – HPOS & future grant
 - (\$610k) Carter day use/swim area – ARPA funds
 - Habitat Restoration -
 - (\$300k) Blue Mtn (Heaven's Door) habitat restoration – HPOS & future grant
- CIP 2026
 - Capital Replacement
 - (\$156k) Horsetooth Mtn. Open Space Soderberg parking lot rebuild - HPOS
 - Habitat Restoration
 - Red Mtn. OS Boxelder Creek restoration – HPOS & future grants
- CIP 2027
 - Capital Replacement
 - (\$60k) historic structure stabilization RMOS - HPOS
- CIP 2028
 - New Capital Infrastructure
 - (\$3.5M) Boxelder Regional Trail Construction – HPOS & future grant
 - Habitat Restoration
 - (\$250k) Long View Farm OS Restoration – HPOS & future grant
- CIP 2029
 - Capital Replacement
 - Increase asphalt, gravel & asset maintenance budgets
 - New Capital Infrastructure
 - (\$5M) Blue Mtn. Property ('29-'30)
- Questions/Feedback:
 - Linda asked if there's still a chance of selling the 4, 35-ac parcels at the Blue Mtn Property – Meegan noted DNR brought to the board that we will not be divesting of the 35's given they provide a significant buffer and they didn't hold enough value to make it a relatively good return.
 - Tom asked what process DNR uses to prioritize restoration projects. Zac said the Habitat Restoration Policy adopted by DNR in 2023, provides language used to define areas that need maintenance versus restoration. The policy aids in identifying restoration priorities such as marginal crop lands. He added, CIPs are projects over \$50,000. There are restoration projects under the threshold that are prioritized differently.
 - Tom asked about restoring the mined areas at DBB. Meegan said DNR worked with NRCS and found the mining dirt piles are in very good native vegetation condition, and have stable and rare plant communities on them. Some of the pits also contain historical remnants.

Action Items

OLAB Bylaws

- Daylan noted the bylaws were updated to align with LC's new Boards and Commissions policy.
- The board may need to readdress the bylaws if a youth member is appointed to the board.
- Ward made a motion to recommend adoption of the Open Lands Advisory Board bylaws. Linda seconded; the motion passed unanimously.

Other Business

Next Meeting Scheduled

July 25, 2024 – LC Dept. Natural Resources Administrative Office: 1800 S. County Road 31 Loveland, CO 80537 Bison 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 – 6:40 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.