



Date: January 26, 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	A	Daylan Figgs	I	Danielle Reimanis
David Marvin	I	Meegan Flenniken	I	
Gale Bernhardt	V	Lesli Ellis	V	
Tom Shoemaker	V	Zac Wiebe	I	
Linda Stanley	I	Justin Core	I	
Mark DeGregorio	A	*Jody Shaddock-McNally	I	
Gary Miller	V	Andrea Weber (minutes)	I	
Peter Kelly	V	Zach Cook	I	
Ward Nelson	I	Cindy Claggett	I	
Mike Carter	A	Jennifer Almstead	I	
Ellis Carpenter	I	Lane Fahrenbruch	I	
		Chris Fleming	I	

V = virtual attendee

I = in-person attendee

A = absent

*commissioner

Call to Order – 5:02 pm

Public Comment

Agenda Review

Daylan announced, starting in March, DNR will hold OLAB meetings at the Horsetooth Area Information Center. It will allow for better, more sustainable internal management. The meetings will continue to have a hybrid option. The board agreed with the transition.

Review and Approval of Last Minutes

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

September 2023 Open Space Tax Distribution Letter

October 2023 Open Space Tax Distribution Letter

- Daylan noted revenues are declining a bit, associated with declining visitation, but DNR will adjust accordingly.

Update and Reports

Board of County Commissioner Update

- Commissioner Shadduck-McNally attested on the Wildfire Mitigation Pilot Program bill, which passed out of committee.
- Larimer County is endorsing the CE tax credit increase legislative proposal.
- LC is giving back \$5.5 million dollars to residents in certified mill levy tax credits.
- Engaged in conversations with the Suicide Fatality Review Committee around mental health.

Discussion Items

Larimer County Water Plan Overview

- Danielle Reimanis is the Water Master Plan project coordinator. Goals of the plan include:
 - Improve long-term planning for water supply in unincorporated areas.
 - Promote water-sharing strategies to preserve agriculture and sustain water supplies.
 - Address risks and sustainability.
 - Prepare responsive land use policies and standards.
- Previous Work (Phase 1) Findings 2021-2022:
 - Water Supplies: 57% local sources (Big T/Poudre River watersheds), 43% Colo River
 - Agriculture: 47% decline in irrigated lands
 - Water Providers: 124 centralized public water systems within LC, 385,600 people served by centralized water system, 25-90% projected growth in water demand at buildout.
- Current Work (Phase 2) through end of 2024
 - Tasks: public engagement, inventory review, gap analysis, vision and goals, baseline mapping, risks analysis, identify implementation strategies, draft/final Water Master Plan, Land Use Code.
 - Water Advisory Group (WAG) and Technical Advisory Group (TAG)
- Questions/Feedback:
 - Linda noted the City of Fort Collins already has a water and risk plan. She asked if LC's plan will focus on more rural areas that do not have the resources to create a plan. Danielle confirmed, and LC will engage with other municipalities and integrate their water plans in.
 - Ward inquired about the time frame for the Phase 1 findings. Danielle said 1980 to current. The projected growth extends to 2040.
 - Linda asked about crop type and mentioned the movement to less water-demanding crops. Danielle noted there is an increase in transition of irrigated lands to rangeland. She will investigate crop types.
 - Linda asked where the water rights go when irrigated lands are reverted to rangelands.
 - Danielle said the most common situation is called a "Buy out, dry out". Municipalities will buy the water rights from willing farmers, leaving the farmer with money and rangeland.
 - Ellis asked if the 47% decline was by acre. Danielle will follow up.
 - Linda asked if this was LC's first water plan. Danielle confirmed.

Policy Update – Tax Credit Increase for Conservation

- Daylan noted LC has gone on record to be in support of this legislation.
- Justin said Keep it Colorado has released/submitted a conservation easement (CE) tax credit proposal.
- Keep it Colorado is an advocacy group working on behalf of land conservation orgs across the state.
- Focused around 3 key priorities:

- 1. Eliminate the expiration dates of the CE Oversight Commission (application reviewers) and the Certified Holder Program. Set to expire in 2026.
- 2. Raise tax credit cap to \$75 million to meet demand. Current cap is \$45 million (set in 2014).
 - Beginning in 2021 CE donors can earn up to 90% (previously 50%) of the CE value in credits. With this increase, demand for credits has risen, and the \$45 million cap is met quickly (by January 3rd, 2024). This causes complications for multi-year projects.
 - Landowners fill a waitlist and can only earn a certain amount of tax credits.
 - The program is oversubscribed for 2024 and the 2025 waitlist is already full. 2026 will be the next available year.
 - Linda asked if this was due to increased prices for land. Justin noted the cap has not changed in 10 years. He added, land prices, along with conservation easement values, have also increased.
- 3. Expand the eligibility criteria for tax credit transfers.
 - Landowners can use credits themselves or sell them. This piece will create more flexibility with transferring credits and keep demand from tax credit buyers paced with the increased number of credits available.
- The policy is not yet in place. There are monthly policy group updates.
- Meegan noted many landowners DNR works with rely on the CE tax credit program, and DNR uses it as a tool to help bolster funding.
- Discussion:
 - Linda asked where Colorado legislators stand on the proposal. Commissioner Shadduck-McNally was unsure but would inquire.
 - Ward noted the 90% provides good incentive for landowners to participate.
 - Gale asked if CE tax credits or other funding incentives can be used to keep water in streams.
 - Justin said independently, no. They would need to be tied to land with a CE on it.
 - Daylan said Meegan's team works on obtaining dedicated instream flow rights in the county. And that water right holders can convert water for instream flow purposes.
 - Meegan said the CWCB and Co Water Trust both fund instream flow rights.
 - Meegan mentioned Keep it Colorado commissioned CSU to update a study in 2023 quantifying return on investment from lands conserved through the use of tax credits. Results: 2.3 million acres conserved since 2000 using tax credits, \$35-57 billion in annual return on investment which includes ecosystem benefits, wetland enhancement, C-sequestration, recreation, etc.
 - Meegan noted lands conserved by the county with Help Preserve OS tax dollars to date have a return on investment in ecosystem services valued at an average \$24 million annually.

Board Annual Work Plan/Agendas

- Daylan reviewed the Board annual work plan that includes topics DNR will bring to OLAB for the calendar year by quarter. The board may request changes and additions.
- Q1: Partnerships/Grants, Acquisition Strategy, Visitation Update, 25 year projection model, Chimney Hollow Management plan, Our Lands Our Future Survey, etc.
- Q2: Annual Report, DNR financial review, CIP update, Bylaw Updates, etc.
- Q3: Board elections, legislative items, trails program update, restoration/resource management update
- Q4: CE Monitoring/status, budget update, education/volunteer update, Glade Reservoir RFP, etc.

Visitation and Facility Maintenance Update

- Cindy said the Visitor Services Division includes 23 full time ranger and maintenance staff and 140 temporary staff who are split into three districts, Horsetooth (HT), Big Thompson (BT) and Carter Lake.
- 2022-2023 Review: Visitation
 - Campsite and Day Use Parking Space availability: 744 day-use spaces and 390 campsite spaces at HT District, 1062 day-use spaces and 260 campsite spaces in the Carter Lake District and 280 day-use spaces and 208 campsite spaces in the Big Thompson (Big T) District.

- Capacity Notifications Sent out by Area (2023):
 - 48% HT OS, 25% HT Reservoir, 19% Pinewood, 8% Carter Lake.
 - Alerts are sent via text message and email subscription to receive a message when parking is at capacity. Total of 2,334 subscribers.
- Annual and Daily Permit numbers:
 - 2022 Annual = ~14,000, Daily = ~240,000
 - 2023 (as of October 2023) Annual = ~12,000, Daily = ~210,000
- ANS Boat Inspections
 - As of October 2023, HT had a total of 39,068 and Carter 19,023.
 - Statewide, 150 mussel boat interceptions, 22 intercepted in LC, 14 of those were at HT.
- Maintenance Update
 - 2023 Challenges: Seasonal rainfall and road base applied (in tons) follow trend.
 - Stats: 54 tons of litter removed, 400 tons of road base applied, 1,000 acres of grass mowed, 26,000 rolls of toilet paper stocked.
- Ranger Update
 - Body cameras are required to be worn by all post-certified fully commissioned rangers.
 - Calls by month through Sheriff's Office
 - 77.7% proactive, officer/ranger initiated calls, 22.3% dispatched.
 - 1467 incidents: traffic related, motorist assists, Vehicle Accidents, DUI's.
 - Top 5 calls: traffic stops, parks incidents, motorist assist, agency assist, suspicious.
 - 2022 Top 3 Boating Citations: PFD, cliff jumping, 12 and under PFD.
 - 2023 Top 3 Boating Citations: PFD, 12 and under PFD, no fire extinguisher.
 - Operation Dry Water in July 2023 - boating Under the Influence (BUI) enforcement program.
 - Operation Cliffhanger in July 2023- underage drinking/cliff jumping enforcement program.
 - 2022: 5 total BUI's at Carter and HT.
 - 2023: 14 total BUI's at Carter and HT.
 - Boating assists: 223 total (143 paddle craft at HT and 26 total at Carter).
 - Water Rescues: 24 at HT and 11 at Carter.
 - ~50% public relation contacts; ~20% law enforcement contacts; ~1% result in arrest (most contacts result in warnings or citations).
 - Of 416 citations given, the top 5 were for alcohol/marijuana, not enough life jackets or fire extinguisher on boat, wildlife attractants not stored and unattended fires in campgrounds.
 - Digital parking citations can track repeat offenders.
- Ranger Excellence School (RES)
 - RES focuses on engaging smaller agencies and trains all incoming DNR rangers.
 - RES will be held May 13th – 17th in Estes Park. Participants outside of DNR pay a registration fee and some classes also have a fee associated.
- Questions/Feedback:
 - Dave asked if there is a relationship between underage drinking and cliff jumping. Staff confirmed and noted extensive education to visitors on the dangers of cliff jumping.
 - Ellis asked if DNR tracks hunting violations. CPW has cited an individual in a poaching case and corrected 2 others over the years DNR has offered hunting at various open spaces.

2024 Small Grant Award Recommendations

- Jenn said LC dedicates a portion of the OS sales tax to go back to the community. Awards are available to non-profits and community based projects.
- Since 1998, over \$400,000 has been awarded and 232 projects funded.
- The 2024 cycle had \$25,000 available. Projects could request up to \$3,500 with a 50% cash match.
- Categories: Enhance natural landscapes, provide nature-based education, provide access to nature for those experiencing barriers, connect people with local food production, research on county open space.
- Program promotion was done through multiple social media platforms and a grant webinar was offered live and recorded on the website, which was available for the program duration.

- Jenn thanked Gary, Linda, and Tom for serving on the subcommittee to select the awarded projects.
- 2024: 8 applications were received; subcommittee recommended 6 projects for \$19,670 in funding.
- 2024 Recommended Projects:
 - Friends of Lory State Park – Accessible Trail Signage at Lory State Park (\$2,450)
 - Signs for visitors with visual impairments and non-English speakers.
 - Red Feather Lake Community Library – Free nature-based educational workshops (\$3,500)
 - Will provide underserved families and older adults access to nature workshops.
 - Streamside Community HOA –Habitat Improvement Project (\$3,500)
 - Removal of Siberian elm along Spring Creek; City of Fort Collins agreed to treat elms in Mallard Natural Area, which borders the neighborhood.
 - Vibe Tribe Adventures – #Adventure for Everyone Larimer County (\$3,299.48)
 - Structured outdoor activities and events for underserved youth and adults.
 - Colorado Early Colleges Fort Collins – Farm to School Garden Improvements (\$3,500)
 - Upgrades to middle and high school community gardens.
 - CSU – Collective for Nature, Immersion, Science and Practice (\$3,450)
 - Community meetings at the intersection of nature immersion for health and wellbeing.
- Questions/Feedback:
 - Gary asked how many years the cap has been \$3,500 and if there were plans to raise this with increased costs. Jenn said the cap has been in place for 3-4 years. With costs going up, this is something DNR will discuss in the future.

Action Items

Approval of Small Grant Awards

- Linda moved to recommend to the BOCC the Small Grants Award projects, Ellis seconded, motion passed unanimously.

Other Business

Next Meeting Scheduled

February 22, 2024 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 – 6:55 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.