



**Date:** April 4, 2023  
**Time:** 5:30 PM – 8:30 PM  
**Location:** Larimer County Natural Resources Administrative Offices: 1800 South County Road 31, Loveland, CO 80537, Bison Room & Zoom Webinar

## PARKS ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

| MEMBERS         |   | STAFF                  |   | GUESTS      |
|-----------------|---|------------------------|---|-------------|
| Bill Prater     | V | Chris Fleming          | I | Jeff Stahla |
| Jill Wuertz     | I | Daylan Figgs           |   | Tara Piper  |
| Kathy Maher     | V | Steve Gibson           | I |             |
| Kristina Kachur | I | Cindy Claggett         | I |             |
| Adam Crossan    | I | *John Kefalas          |   |             |
| Pete Blume      | I | Andrea Weber (minutes) | I |             |
| Robert Harris   | V | Zac Wiebe              | V |             |
| Ruthie Rollins  | I |                        |   |             |
| Scott Murray    |   |                        |   |             |
| Phil Stout      | I |                        |   |             |
|                 |   |                        |   |             |

V = virtual attendee

I = in-person attendee

\*commissioner

### Call to Order – 5:33 pm

### Public Comment

### Agenda Review

### Review and Approval of Last Minutes

Adam moved to approve the minutes from last meeting, Kristina seconded, motion passed unanimously.

### Information and Announcements

Natural Resources events for this month: <https://larimer.org/naturalresources>.

To sign up for Parks Advisory Board updates, go to <https://apps.larimer.org/subscriptions.cfm>, enter your email, click “Subscribe,” and check the “Parks Advisory Board” box.

January 2023 Open Space Sales Tax Distribution Letter

### Updates and Reports

Park District updates - Steve/Cindy

- Cindy
  - Reported difficulties for staff with opening Carter Lake for the season, as weather patterns continue to change drastically from sunshine to snow, producing icy conditions.
  - The Carter Lake “Break the Ice” neighbor meeting went well. Staff and neighbors were introduced to one another and were able address and discuss common topics and issues.

- She reported good attendance both in-person and virtually and plans to host another similar meeting in the future.
  - DNR will create a “Welcome to the Neighborhood” flyer for new people moving into the area. It will provide information about what to expect living next to a county park.
- Ranger Excellence School will begin in May.
  - Staff have been working since January to enlist instructors and get registration up and running. This year RES received a lower number of outside agency registrations.
- Steve
  - Reported similar difficulties for staff with the weather patterns. The docks were frozen to the ground when it came time to put them out.
  - South Bay boat ramp is open, the Inlet Bay ramp will open mid-April when the marina opens and Satanka will follow shortly after.
  - Horsetooth maintenance crew is fully hired.
  - DNR is working with Delehoy construction and BOR to install a new decontamination station at South Bay. It is expected to be complete in May. It will be located near the shower house and be tied directly into the shower house drainage system. Tara said this project will include a better gravel containment system to catch water runoff.
  - The ANS shelter at Satanka has been pushed to the fall.
  - Trail conditions have proved challenging this winter with continued muddy conditions. If the trails remain open during these times, visitors go around the mud patches which leads to the widening of the trails (not desired). Ranger staff communicate with the trail crew, and vis-a-versa, to open or close the trails based on the conditions. Closures are announced on social media, COTREX updates, and press releases if they are large closures.
  - Reported 50 campers the weekend of April 1<sup>st</sup>. One camper intentionally set a grass fire in which other campers and citizens assisted in extinguishing while rangers were enroute. The camper was evicted from the park for 60 days.
  - The Horsetooth Mountain management plan is underway. Staff are working to find ways to reduce crowding. This includes going through a public process.
    - Automatic nightly closure gates will be installed, and staff are waiting on signage. These closures are intended to resolve various issues in the area that occur over night such as parking and camping at the trailhead and transients. The parking lot will be closed from 11 pm – 4 am. Visitors will be able to exit the lot at any time.
      - Jill asked about spill over into the neighborhood close by.
        - Kristina noted the HOA is very strict.
        - Steve said DNR have been working with the HOA for many years and does not anticipate it causing problems.
    - Dispersed back country campsites at Horsetooth Mountain Open Space are going into the reservation system.
  - Began boat academy for new seasonal rangers. They will train every weekend until RES. Lesson plans include learning coast guard regulations, self-rescues, boat handling and a swimming abilities test.
  - He has been working through many special events and concessionaire requests.
    - Requests start in December and will remain constant through May for summer events at both the reservoir and the open spaces. Special events are one-time things such as fishing events and races.
    - There are additional events occurring outside of the parks and open spaces that have an indirect impact on DNR, but improved communication has been helpful for the department with planning.
    - The process requires consideration of safety, conflict, medical planning, and staffing required.
    - The concession process is similar but is typically for long-term events, i.e., guided fishing trips throughout the season.
    - Feedback/Questions:

- Adam asked if concessionaires or special events charge fees for events. Steve said both can charge fees for profit.
- Adam followed up and asked about worksheets and fees paid to DNR for the event. Steve replied, DNR provides a worksheet for the requestee to fill out and they pay a \$25 administration fee, but only if the event directly impacts or is on DNR properties. Chris noted the immense amount of time and county staff effort it takes to process each request.
- Chris said she would like to bring the process to the board in the future. A core team is working with county leadership to revamp the process. They are currently trying to find a vendor to facilitate and create a program that will work with all the LC departments who use special events.
  - Kristina shared her interest in having DNR bring the process and parameters to PAB to further discuss and work through.
- Ruthie asked if there was a singular department/person requests go through.
  - Chris said each event goes through the department in which it is directly related/impacting, and many go through multiple departments.
- Adam asked, if for larger events, are they meaningful enough line items to process, and are there less used areas where these events can be located to reduce destruction and overall impacts.
  - Chris noted the roads around DNR parks and open spaces are not equipped/were not designed to handle the requests that come in. There are no bike lanes, no shoulders, and a high number of residential and recreational users, so adding a large event on top of that extrapolates those challenges. She noted DNR is asking the BOCC to approve blackout dates for events at Horsetooth from Memorial Day to Labor Day.
- Jill inquired about a future position within DNR who works exclusively on special events and concession requests. Chris said it is a possibility. Presently, the focus is on getting an online system/software that works more efficiently and setting stricter rules.
- Phil asked if there were best practices from other counties/entities that DNR has considered using. Chris said, along the Front Range, most entities struggle with the process. Post-covid activities are booming, and the population is growing as well. Some agencies do not allow any special events, and some are super loose with them. More conversations will be had with partners to get insight into the best business practices.
  - Phil suggested looking into the Cherry Creek Reservoir process.
- Jill noted the City of Fort Collins revamped their process and now has a large events coordinator.
- Kristina suggested an event program that includes a mapping and event date system. Chris said the county is looking for an all-in-one program like this, and they are struggling to find one.

#### Satanka Area Core Team Update – Zac

- Objectives of the Satanka Visitor Survey were to collect data on visitor use type (ratio of use types), access (how people are getting to the water), and visitor safety (compliance with safety).
  - The core team included Dan, Jenn, Zac, Jon and Thanh.
  - Staff and volunteers, from late July to early September, randomly selected visitors to survey. They worked a total of 54 + hours in three hours shifts; 8-11 am, 11-2 pm, 2-5 pm, and 5-8 pm.
- Results:
  - Use: 94% hand launch and 0.05% motor craft. Total use of SUP/kayak/motorboat. SUP use = 74% of all visitors and includes all activities.
  - Access: 28% boat ramp and 72% trails.
  - Top activities: SUP, kayak, day use, trailed boats, fishing, other (jet skis, tubes, etc.).

- Other observations: difficult trail access, significant parking lot prep for SUPs, trailered paddle craft (need for spaces for paddle craft trailers).
- ANS inspections (hand launch are not inspected)
  - South Bay = \$3.16 per inspection
  - Satanka = \$13.10 per inspection
- Discussion Topics – 2023 Efforts
  - Improved trail access with BOR assistance and approval.
    - DNR trails supervisor, Joel, has sent out proposed trail changes for the area, which includes closing social trails, and making more sustainable trails for visitors and staff.
  - Zac noted the ramp and parking area trail are heavily used and it would benefit to have a trail down to the water from these locations.
  - Continue/expand volunteer programs, alter/adjust parking areas, work on timing and process.
    - Volunteer Ranger Assistant program expansion. Volunteers on paddleboards share safety messaging and are a resource to visitors.
  - Most common visitor-ranger contact is visitors not having proper safety equipment, i.e., PFDs on their paddle craft.
  - Possible inclusion of seasonal motor-boat limitations in the bay from Memorial Day to Labor Day.
- Feedback/Questions:
  - Rob asked for clarification around the results. He said he was expecting a larger number of motorboats.
    - Zac said the percentages do not add up to 100% because it does not show other visitor uses such as swimmers and waders. There are also assumptions built into the data such that boaters will spend more time on the water than paddle craft, and thus they are less likely to be captured in the data. Paddle craft visitors spend less time on the water and more frequently enter and exit the reservoir from Satanka.
  - Bill asked if any observations were made during the time when ANS inspections were unavailable. Zac said observation times were restricted to when there were ANS inspections, capturing motorized visitor use.
  - Bill asked what the plans are, with data in hand, showing the ramp is heavily used by paddle craft visitors.
    - Zac said the change of use makes it difficult to make decisions. Major changes would require more feedback and would need to consider the entirety of the reservoir.
  - Ruthie inquired about continuing data collection in 2023. Zac replied, there are no current plans to collect more data. As DNR gets closer to redoing the Parks Master Plan, additional area surveys will likely take place.
  - Jill asked if there had been consideration of limiting the number of paddle crafts/boats and providing amenities for paddle craft users.
    - Steve said DNR is looking into including an airing station, in collaboration with BOR, and creating a prep station to get visitors out of the parking lot area.
  - Ruthie suggested using camera/videos and human data trackers to collect visitor data.
    - Steve noted DNR has used trail cameras in the past.
    - Zac reported in 2018, a survey using cameras and parking lot counts, provided visitor counts around 1 million.
  - An online attendee asked if there had been consideration on limiting the size of motorboats using the ramp. Cindy said DNR does not have restrictions on the size of motorboats visitors can have on the reservoir, but they will run into difficulties getting larger boats into the water from the Satanka ramp.
  - Kristina requested the trail from the lot to the water be made less steep, thus easier to use.
    - Steve noted the steep areas are the high water mark, so the process to make them a lesser grade is difficult.
    - Chris said this request would be something DNR could consider when redoing the master plan. It would be a tremendous process, including BOR and public input.

- Kristina inquired about the proposed parking lot that is in the current the master plan. Chris said recreational use in the area changed, so there has been discussion around the practicality of building the lot. Steve followed up, noting the reservoir already reaches capacity, so DNR must consider increased congestion from building another lot.

## **Discussion Items**

## **Action Items**

### **U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Update – Tara**

- Tara said BOR has approved its annual work plan. The plan captures CIP projects, which must be reviewed and approved. Some projects will go through a categorical exclusion checklist to ensure the project does not have an impact on resources.
  - Included in the plan is an approved list of chemicals that can be used for noxious weeds, a new ANS decontamination station for South Bay at Horsetooth Reservoir, and routine reservoir maintenance projects (i.e., boat ramp repair and painting structures).
  - BOR approved campgrounds for new trees to be planted whenever they need to be planted, capturing large areas instead of having to go through the long process every time one tree planting is requested.
  - Chris noted the work plans are a newer process to how BOR and DNR do business. It allows both entities to streamline projects and processes and be able to identify what tasks need to be included.

### **Northern Water Update – Jeff**

- Jeff said Carter Lake is on its way for the first fill come mid-April.
- A void has occurred in the Charles Hansen feeder canal that runs water from Flatiron to Horsetooth Reservoir. Northern Water has a crew on the ground to put a temporary grout fix in place. A permanent fix will happen in the fall, if necessary. This halted water deliveries to Horsetooth for a week, but he does not anticipate it will change water levels for the high point in June.
- Ruthie asked about who Charles Hansen was. Jeff said he was the father of the Colorado Big Thompson project (CBT).
- Chimney Hollow is on schedule. Crews will start 24 hour work, two 10-hour working shifts split by a 4-hour break for equipment maintenance. The dam will be built 180 feet this year, and the remainder will be completed in 2024-25.
  - Northern Water will brief the Flatiron camp host on the 24-hour work plans, so they are able to provide information to campers.
  - Pete asked if the work would include night blasting. Jeff said blasting will likely occur over the noon hour.
  - Phil inquired about board visitation to the construction site.
    - Jeff said Northern usually does a joint tour with the Open Lands Advisory Board.
  - He announced the west side access road is complete, which will be the future recreation access. The road was built to the required specifications of DNR.
  - Northern is planning to host a community day in the summer in the future parking lot area which has been used as a Northern Water construction staging platform.
  - Chris noted Northern did a great job working with DNR to make a great plan that saves both entities time and money.
  - Jeff said Northern has been included in the Carter Lake special events process, so they are able to plan for events and arrange large shipment deliveries to be at different times, ensuring safety for bicyclists on the road.
- Northern Water is hosting the Spring Water Symposium which will cover topics such as snowpack, soil moisture and non-CBT reservoir water levels. This event will take public comment, set quotas for the year, and allocate water to each water user along the front range. The allocations can affect how high or low the reservoirs are this year and possibly next year. A quota decision will be made on Thursday, April 13<sup>th</sup>.

- Ruthie asked if the public would include farmers, and city/town representatives.
- Kristina inquired about lingering water quality issues from forest fires.
  - Jeff noted the East Troublesome Fire in Grand County did cause some issues in the watershed, noting increases in dissolved carbon and nutrients, but as water has gone through the system, Lake Granby, and Grand Lake, it has not required changes to standard treatment.
  - The Cameron Peak Fire on the other hand, has caused huge issues, especially after rainstorms. The runoff from the watershed is too thick to be treated. However, Northern has been able to work with local agricultural businesses and companies with ditch water, to trade untreatable runoff for clean, treatable water.

## **Board Member Reports**

### **Director's Report – Daylan Figgs via Chris**

- Chris said the update of the board by-laws has been put on hold. The BOCC has more than 50 boards and commissions under them, and they would like to re-evaluate the back-end details before each one updates its by-laws.
- DNR participated in a meeting regarding the future Glade Reservoir. The project has been greenlighted. DNR will likely be the recreation partner in conjunction with CPW. There will be an extensive public component. The project is in the conceptual stage, considering what amenities and services all entities would like to provide. Northern Water will hire a consultant to help further the plans moving forward.
- DNR has entered the 2024 budget building season. Managers will work to get a budget assembled for next year. The county is planning merit and cost of living increases for staff, and this will have a trickle down effect on the department's budget. DNR is mainly self-funded with the Open Space Sales Tax and revenue generated. There is little input from the county general fund.
- Staff attended an All-Staff meeting in March. The department's Strategic Plan known as COMPASS was discussed. Specific action items that focus on the department's priorities were explored and shared with staff. Korrie and her team created a brochure of the COMPASS plan, detailing these priorities and outlining the goals. DNR's Senior Leadership Team is working through proposed action items and prioritizing them among staff, being conscious of budgets and staff time and workloads.
  - Ruthie asked if there was an electronic version of the brochure.
  - Chris said not at this time, but Korrie is working on a webpage which will be used internally for staff with some public interface components. More information about this project will be brought to the next PAB meeting.
- Reported some staff changes and challenges.
  - Zach Cook, previously a senior ranger, has moved into the District Manager position for the Big Thompson District. This transition has left a senior ranger vacancy.
  - Visitor Services will enter the season at a 50% capacity of full-time rangers on staff. Some rangers are injured and on light duty, and others are moving positions or leaving. Maintenance will also enter with a small staff. Managers are working to get positions filled.
    - Ruthie asked if there were other departments around the county, with similar styles of work, that could assist DNR with maintenance tasks and projects.
    - Chris replied, most departments are having similar staffing difficulties, but more specifically, the work DNR maintenance crews engage in is very specific to the reservoirs (putting in and maintaining buoys and docks) and requires extensive (6-8 months) training.
  - Jill noted when quantifying the financial pain of turnover, it is estimated to be 1.5 times the loss of that position.
    - Chris said the department has savings from not paying for a position, but there is cost in staff time, burnout, overtime, unfinished projects, etc.
    - Kristina said time spent frequently posting jobs and interviewing also increases costs in administrative staff time and money.

**Next Meeting Scheduled**

May 2nd, 2023 – at Horsetooth Area Information Center: 4200 W. County Rd. 38 E. Fort Collins, CO 80526  
Mountain Lion 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 – 8:32 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](mailto: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.