



Date: December 6, 2022
Time: 5:30 – 8:30 PM
Location: Horsetooth Area Information Center (HAIC) at 4200 W. County Rd. 38E, Fort Collins CO 80526 – Mountain Lion Room & Zoom Webinar

PARKS ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

MEMBERS		STAFF		GUESTS
Bill Prater	I	Chris Fleming	I	Jeff Stahla
Jill Wuertz	V	Daylan Figgs	I	
Kathy Maher	V	Dan Rieves	I	
Kristina Kachur	V	Cindy Claggett	V	
Adam Crossan		*John Kefalas		
Pete Blume	I	Andrea Weber (minutes)	I	
Robert Harris		Lori Smith	I	
Ruthie Rollins	I	Julie Enderby	I	
Scott Murray	V	Steve Gibson	I	
Phil Stout	I			

V = virtual attendee

I = in-person attendee

*commissioner

Call to Order – 5:31 pm

Public Comment

None

Agenda Review

Addition of “Introduction of new board member Phil Stout”

Review and Approval of Last Minutes

Pete moved to approve the minutes from last meeting, Bill 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.

August 2022 Open Space Tax Distribution Letter

September 2022 Open Space Tax Distribution Letter

Update and Reports

Park District updates - Dan/Cindy

- Dan
 - Dan said all boat ramps at Horsetooth Reservoir have been closed for the season.
 - The Aquatic Nuisance Species inspectors celebrated the year end with a staff party. This party emphasized the importance of mission critical staff that keep this program running.
 - The water level at Horsetooth is representative of a typical draw down year. The numbers for next year are showing a good water level forecast. There will be some water level impact this fall at Carter Lake from the Chimney Hollow construction.
 - Road and Bridge have been monitoring a section of road on the first curve past Spring Canyon Dam on 38E for the last few years. The road had weakened significantly and there were concerns about it failing and collapsing. Crews planned to bore 30-32 holes in the road and tie it deep into the bedrock. The timeline for the project is unknown.
 - Bill asked if the heavy truck traffic might impact the road? Dan said not that he is aware of.
 - Phil asked if this area of road was unique to the strata of rock compared to other road sections. Dan explained this section of road was placed in that location based on the landscape and not because of the type of rock below.
- Cindy
 - Cindy reported things are slow and quiet at Carter Lake and now is a good time for training.
 - A ranger was sent to an OC pepper spray instructor course. That ranger will teach the seasonals how to use it properly and safely. All ranger staff are exposed to the OC in order to understand what the experience is like and how to “work through it”.
 - DNR’s Senior Ranger Trevor Knight will be attending a mental health crisis training.
 - DNR is hiring a full-time maintenance staff for the Blue Sky District.
 - Carter Lake will continue to be drained.
 - Bill asked if Pinewood is down all the way?
 - Cindy said Pinewood will continue to be drained into December and will begin to be refilled later. She will have an update at the next PAB meeting.
- Steve
 - Steve introduced himself as the Blue Sky District Manager (DM). He manages the open space areas and regional trails for DNR. There are 32 personnel that work under him. He works closely with the other DM’s (Dan and Cindy).
 - Ruthie said she really enjoys the new Nomad Trail. Steve said this trail extension, as well as many trail updates that are still to come, was included in the Horsetooth Mountain Management Plan.
 - Phil asked, when a new trail is put in, how does the public know about it? Steve explained there is a lot of public outreach that happens and DNR will put up signs and provide news releases.
 - Chris stated each DM oversees the people within those areas/districts, which typically includes 3-to 5 full time and up to 100 seasonal staff.

2022 Quarter 3 Board Report

- Daylan said the report touches on topics including DNR’s new land acquisitions, ongoing and new projects, volunteer highlights and the financial summary report (where DNR is to-date on budget and revenue sources).

Financial Projections Overview– Lori Smith

- Daylan introduced Lori Smith and explained the importance of the financial model, created from expert input and previous studies from the past.
- Lori said the current sales tax began in 2019 and will end in 2043. The master plans for the department’s open spaces and parks are directed by the ballot language. 35% of the sales tax revenue

goes to land conservation and restoration, 50% to long term management, and the remaining can flex towards either. The goal of the department is to identify how to spread these dollars out over the life of the tax.

- There are key metrics the department uses with the financial model: a per capita basis, for example, X acres and X miles of trails per person. The department ensures that its growth in these areas keeps up with population growth.
 - DNR also looks at the “Our Lands Our Future” survey to get a better understanding of what taxpayers want to see tax dollars spent on. This is a foundational piece of the model that helps to make sure the department keeps a healthy budget through the life of the sales tax, ensures it’s on the desired path and it drives DNR’s approach to conservation and recreation development.
- The plan is to rebuild the model in 2023 so the financial strategy can be readjusted as needed. Tradeoffs are often built into the model to make sure it works and during mid-year updates the department can decide if those were the appropriate tradeoffs.
- Projections meet requirements of the sales tax (minimum 35% acquisition/restoration, 50% operating/development, 15% discretionary)
 - Need to set aside maintenance funds for current properties.
 - DNR is in a place of front-loading acquisitions. It’s best to utilize the money now while land is available.
 - These projections are not a crystal ball nor an annual budget.
 - This model is realistic but conservative. DNR has been tracking parks revenues/expenditures since 1954 and open lands funds since 1996, providing DNR with the opportunity to observe the financial history and find patterns. The model is often built and adjusted based on growth data that is observed and provided by experts in the field.
 - Many of these considerations are built into DNR’s land acquisition and management strategies. There is a fine balance of spending the money and meeting the departments goals without taking on more long-term costs.
 - The model provides a flexible plan to help guide decisions over an extended period and a way to track how decisions affect future choices.
- Financial Model Assumptions
 - Covers 2019-2043
 - Projected operating growth including revenues (sales tax, permits, camping, other) and operating expenses.
- Estimated capital needs
 - Projected needs for the master plans, deferred maintenance, and expansions/improvements.
 - Projected funding sources from the sales tax, lottery, and net revenues from operations. Model considers grants/partnerships from the previous 20 years to include and exclude as they come and go.
 - Lori explained the model is complex and starts with base assumptions and then focuses on trade-off such as when to open a new open space or choosing instead to put that towards managing another area. If too much is added or changed the model becomes very convoluted. It would take a lot of effort to re-enter and change the model every year, so it’s only done every few years.
- Next steps are to update the projections model mid-2023.
- Lori presented a document, *LCDNR Key Financial Metric Indicators: Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) Reservoirs and Open Lands*.
 - After 2023, 20% of the sales tax life would have passed. DNR is projecting to spend 23% of the sales tax in the first 5 years and this document represents what was projected to what has been spent so far.
 - Acquisition/Restoration Sales Tax – Projected **23%** VS Budget or Spent **13%**
 - Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) – Projected **8%** VS Budget or Spent **11%**
 - Operations/Maintenance – Projected **8%** VS Budget or Spent **7%**

- Daylan explained this is a good way for the department to check the math and ensure maintenance of operating costs with growth. CIPs are funded by any revenue left over in the budget after operating costs. DNR has been able to move a few of these projects forward in the timeline. It takes time to get properties online, thus DNR utilizes a front-loading strategy.
- Jill asked if there was an acreage goal associated with acquisitions.
 - Daylan said 24,000 acres. Half of them CE's and half Fee. The acreage goal reaches out until 2043 and is acreage per capita based on population.
- Discussion:
 - Phil asked, while part of the sales tax is to acquire open space, are a large percentage of acquisitions subsidized through grants? In 2019, DNR was already aware of what properties it wanted to purchase during the sales tax, but are there funds set aside for unexpected events or opportunities?
 - Lori said DNR will always be sure it maintains the things it already has. A general amount afterwards is set aside into a fund for the 3 to 5 expected open space acquisitions and the reservoirs that are in the future docket.
 - Scott said, with projections and growth, it makes sense that DNR is updating the data and projections, specifically after covid. However, in general, what inputs validate an update?
 - Lori said the projection model is not left in isolation. DNR staff look at it every year and follow-up with an update when things need to be readjusted.

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.

- Phil asked if these stations were run by volunteers? Chris said they are, and they have been a huge help, meeting people where they are and preventing things in the first place.
 - Satanka Bay Roving to provide visitors on the water with information about water safety.
 - 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
- Discussion/Feedback:
 - Julie said current staff includes two full-time employees and a seasonal.
 - Bill asked if the volunteer/education program is getting back to normal after Covid?
 - Julie said the program is building things back up as it was completely suspended during Covid. It did, however, provide an opportunity to re-evaluate what things were being done and what things could be done.
 - Bill asked if it would be possible to have a boat ramp volunteer. He thinks this is an important position. Julie said the duties of a volunteer in that position would need to be reimagined, but it is a role DNR is considering. She said DNR is thinking on how to meet people on water in the way visitors are met at trailheads. Paddle patrol is one way the program has strongly considered.
 - Bill asked if DNR shares volunteer resources with the City of Loveland, similarly to how the department does with Fort Collins. Julie said DNR does not share resources with Loveland, as they have their own patrol program.
 - Kathy asked how DNR recruits volunteers. Julie said the fall and winter is the time to get them on board and get them trained up. As far as recruiting goes, the department has been struggling to find volunteers this year. Staff are promoting online, but also looking for better ways to promote volunteer opportunities.

- Phil asked if Julie has considered using a newspaper platform such as the Coloradoan. She said using more press releases is something that is being investigated. Many organizations are struggling to find volunteers.
- Phil asked how many volunteers are typically engaged in the program, and what “shortfalls” she anticipates for the programs offered. Julie explained there are enough volunteers to complete the programs currently offered. However, DNR cannot grow the programs with the current capacity. She typically has 100 volunteers a year that consist of one-time and active on-going volunteers.
- Kathy asked if Julie uses Offero to log volunteer time and schedules. Julie said, yes. The program was designed specifically for public lands agencies and is a great volunteer management software.
- Ruthie gave compliments to board member Kathy and her daughter for the native plant project they have taken on at DNR’s Administrative Office. Lori said they have been planting and caring for native and environmentally smart plants to help make the area more sustainable.

Northern Water Update

- Jeff introduced himself as a representative for the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District, also known as Northern Water. It is a government agency that acts as a local partner for BOR. They are responsible for managing the delivery of water from project to customer on the Eastern Plains. He said there is much going on with the current water supply and Northern Water works closely with Larimer County.
- He said the best regional display of the Colorado Big Thompson Project (COBTP) is located at the Horsetooth Area Information Center.
- Northern is a water resources manager for the region. They are building a few reservoirs outside of federal ownership. Chimney Hollow is an example. Northern has also received final permitting for future Glade Reservoir.
- He provided an official update that work has been completed on tying Chimney into the big penstocks down the hill. BOR used this time to do work they needed to do on Lake Estes and at the east portal of the tunnel. Current reservoir levels will remain low until Northern has clearance to open the water.
 - Lake Granby is where the COBTP receives its water from, and because the tunnel has been closed for a month, water levels in the lake have risen. To release water and resume flow through the penstocks, Northern will effectively “pull out a giant stopper” at the end of Pinewood Reservoir.
 - The Chimney Hollow construction plan is to dig down the foundation in the first year and to then build up from there. The plan is to complete construction in 2025 and begin to move water in, in 2026. State law limits water level increases to 1 foot a day. The reservoir will be 350 feet deep and be full by the late 2020’s.
 - Tours are closed for the year but will reopen for 2023. Northern owns a property that sits above center axis of the reservoir, offering an amazing view of the construction site.
- Bill commented that it is often difficult for an average person to understand what is going on with the Colorado River and the impact it has on the southern reservoirs. He asked if Northern works on reservoirs such as Flaming Gorge?
 - Jeff said Northern is focused on the upper basin and is governed by an interstate compact that dictates how much water the upper and lower states receive. The upper states in the mid-50’s had built 3 reservoirs run by the BOR. Lake Granby is not a part of this water storage compact.
 - He said Northern will talk about water resources in a future PAB meeting and will bring in their experts.
- Northern Water’s area of the Colorado watershed has been doing well over the last 10 years. The COBTP brings about 250,000-acre feet of water each year. The lower basin states are using 10-million-acre feet. The sliver of water Northern manages is small on the larger scale of things.
 - Bill said the lower basin wouldn’t get much if they requested the upper basin for it.
 - Pete asked who the biggest water players in the state were. Jeff replied, Northern Water is the biggest diverter of Colorado River water in the state. Denver is the second largest.

Discussion Items

None

Action Items

None

U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Update

None

Board Member Reports

None

Director's Report – Daylan Figgs

- Daylan encouraged board members to attend a Northern tour of Chimney Hollow if they are able.
- He said things around the department are slowing down and it is the time for staff to take vacation and dive into creating work plans.
- The boat-in camp sites and conflict of use in the coves will likely open a community conversation of how DNR wants to manage the bays and what the public wants to see. This will be a focus in the second half of 2023.
- The marina contracts and concessionaire conversations will be another focus for 2023.
 - The main question will be "What does the community want for the marina areas? Do they want a traditional marina or something else?".
 - Bill said the one thing missing in Northern Colorado are places on the water that large groups can gather, specifically children and seniors. He suggested extending a ramp, or having a separate, large fishing dock that extends into the reservoirs. Currently, groups and fisher-people are limited to the shoreline and with the extreme variability in the water levels, many times these visitors are mucking through mud.
 - Daylan said the feasibility of a project like this is often influenced by the fluctuations in the water levels. However, DNR always welcomes proposals and ideas.
- Carter Lake's east side recreational planning will be a large project funded by ARPA dollars.
- FLAP dollars are focused on asphalt and parking lot projects. DNR is in the planning phase and will likely begin building in 2025/26.

Next Meeting Scheduled

February 7, 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 – 7:15 pm

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