



Date: December 13, 2023
Time: 5:30 PM – 8:30 PM
Location: Horsetooth Area Information Center: 4200 W. County Road 38 E Fort Collins, CO 80526 – Mountain Lion Room & Zoom Webinar

PARKS ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

MEMBERS		STAFF		GUESTS
Bill Prater	I	Chris Fleming	I	Tara Piper
Jill Wuertz	I	Daylan Figgs	I	
Kathy Maher	V	Steve Gibson	I	
Kristina Kachur-Webb	V	Cindy Claggett	I	
Adam Crossan	I	*John Kefalas	A	
Pete Blume	A	Andrea Weber (minutes)	I	
Robert Harris	I	Garrett Thompson	I	
Ruthie Rollins	I	Lane Fahrenbruch	I	
Scott Murray	I			
Phil Stout	I			
Geoff Townsend	A			

V = virtual attendee

I = in-person attendee

*commissioner

Call to Order – 5:31 pm

Public Comment

Agenda Review

Added end of meeting discussion to reschedule Jan. 2nd meeting.

Added Visitor Services Division Manager Update – Chris Fleming.

Review and Approval of Last Minutes

Adam 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.

Update and Reports

Park District Updates - Steve/Cindy

- Steve
 - Noted it is a slower time of year leaving some time for administrative type work. He has been working on 2024 concession applications that have been coming in and continues to work on long-term concession contracts.

- There was a broken ankle incident at Horsetooth (HT). The individual was safely recovered.
- Installed a new vault toilet at HT Mtn. Open Space (part of the management plan update) to assist with capacity issues.
- Continues to work on plans for updates at Rotary Park. He will bring a presentation to PAB later in the year.
- Most seasonal staff have left.
- Offered board members a ride along with ranger and maintenance staff.
- Cindy
 - Working on completing projects such as the kiosks at Pinewood, Devil's Backbone, and Flatiron.
 - Carter has been mostly quiet with little crime. Had one incident with a camper at South Shore found to be in a stolen vehicle with drugs and warrants. A full-time ranger took initiative and investigated the suspicious camper and did a great job.
 - Rangers are going through annual and special trainings while visitation is slower.
 - Engaged with the marina contract process and the Visitor Services presentation.
 - Ruthie asked when Ranger Excellent School (RES) is in 2024. Steve said RES will be mid-May. It is coordinated to fall when college students are out for summer break. Chris added planning for RES has already started. This is the time of the year for staff to do training and projects.

Quarter 3 Board Report - Daylan

- Daylan said DNR's trails crew received the Golden McLeod award. The trails crew create great trails and this recognizes their hard work.
- Larimer County has a new noxious weed. It is being managed by DNR's weeds team through the Early Detection Rapid Response Grant.
- DNR hosted a boat rescue training. Steve said this was a new program offered for staff in collaboration with partner groups that staff frequently work with (i.e. Poudre Fire Authority). The training was given to ensure rescues are done correctly and with the proper equipment. It will be offered again in 2024.
- Daylan noted, overall revenue is flat. 2024 projections are uncertain but will likely be similar.

Visitor Services Division Manager Update – Chris Fleming

- Special Events process for Larimer County (LC):
 - In 2023, LC experienced a large number of special events, which caused a high level of stress and took extensive amounts of staff time and resources to process and facilitate. In the Horsetooth District alone, there were 22 road race events in a short time window.
 - The LC special events core team met with the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) and received direction on proposals and changes the team requested.
 - DNR will have blackout dates around holiday weekends in 2024 and additional dates in 2025.
 - The team is looking to implement a permit application window and cap on the number of permits accepted.
 - Bill asked if most events are held on weekends. Chris confirmed and said most are from Memorial Day to Labor Day. These events have a huge impact on staff, visitors, and residents. The roads are generally not safe for these types of events as the shoulders were not designed for large crowds.
 - Daylan noted DNR subsidizes these events with staff time and is not something the department can continue to do. The BOCC has been supportive of the requested changes to the process. Chris added, if the event takes place on DNR property, DNR receives money for the event. If they take place on the road, and do not have any stop stations on DNR property, the department does not receive any money for the event, even though staff are spending time to facilitate it.
 - Phil asked if DNR received application fee money from the 22 bike race events. Chris said the county collects \$100 - \$250 in fees for each event. DNR does not get the money if it is not on DNR property. Each event has a huge impact on not only DNR but other departments as well and all have become inundated with special events.

- Scott inquired if the new process would still require all involved departments to approve the events. Chris said the team is looking at new software (and has selected one) that would streamline the process and be more efficient. The process is on hold until agreement is made on who will be paying for the new system. The Planning department is sending a proposal to the BOCC to request funding from the County's General Fund.
 - Bill noted, these events can be a once in a lifetime opportunity for participants.
 - Tara asked if events typically invite large crowds of spectators. Steve confirmed and noted it is asked in the application but often unanticipated spectators in large numbers will show up.
- Permit Database and System:
 - The DNR permit core team is working on building an RFP for system implementation in 2025. The team is currently identifying locations for license plate readers. The new system will have a back-up database.
 - Core team staff are planning a site visit to Waukesha County, Wisconsin to gather information about their implementation process; lessons learned, public communication, etc.
 - Scott asked if the RFP would have system parameters included. Chris said the RFP will address all parameters and fit exactly what DNR's needs are for the system. Needs include how the department sells and accounts for permits and what the process would look like. Plate readers could include a QR code system to purchase permits.
 - Ruthie asked about the plausibility due to some areas having poor or no internet connectivity. Chris acknowledged connectivity is a challenge being considered.
- Working on updating the Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) contract with Colorado Parks and Wildlife and the Memorandum of Understanding with the Sheriff's Office.

Visitor Services Presentation

- Cindy said the Visitor Services Division includes 23 full time staff, 140 temporary staff, and 84 volunteers.
- 2022-2023 Review: Trends, Capacity, 2023 Rains, Permit System
- Visitation
 - Paid Parking Space by Type (County Wide):
 - 52.9% Standard Vehicle, 29.1% Campsite, 13.1% Vehicle/Trailer, 2.5% ADA, 2.2% Flex.
 - Campsite and Day Use parking by District:
 - 744 day-use spaces and 390 campsite spaces in the Horsetooth (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 by Area (2023):
 - 48% HT OS, 25% HT Reservoir, 19% Pinewood, 8% Carter Lake.
 - OS and Reservoir alerts are sent via text message and email subscription to receive a message when parking is at capacity. Users can choose between boating and open spaces. Total of 2,334 subscribers.
 - Annual and Daily Permit numbers (as of October 5th):
 - 2022 Annual = ~14,000, Daily = ~240,000
 - 2023 Annual = ~12,000, Daily = ~210,000
- Garrett – ANS Boat Inspections
 - Jim has been an inspector for 11 seasons and retired in 2022. Fawn has been with DNR for 13 years!
 - LC Inspections:
 - As of October 2023, HT had a total of 39,068 and Carter 19,023.
 - Statewide, as public reservoirs allowing motorized boats, HT had the 3rd greatest number of inspections and Carter had the 6th.
 - 22 muscle boats were intercepted in LC and 14 of those were at HT.

- A spike in mussel boat interceptions in 2021 is hypothesized to be result of many out of state boat purchases during 2020, when visitors wanted to be outdoors and boats were purchased out of state due to major shortages in inventory in state.
- Cindy - Maintenance Program
 - 2023 Challenges: Seasonal rainfall and road base applied (in tons) follow trend.
 - Stats at a Glance: 26 new trees planted, 54 tons of litter removed, 400 tons of road base applied, 1,000 acres of grass mowed, 26,000 rolls of toilet paper stocked.
 - Doing More with Less: Automatic Gate Installation saved DNR \$9,203.19 (76.7%) by doing the work in-house.
- Cindy - Ranger Program
 - Three districts, Horsetooth (HT), Carter, and Big Thompson (Big T) staff 15 full commissioned rangers and 35-45 limited commission (Day, night, boat shifts).
 - Body cameras are required to be worn by all post-certified fully commissioned rangers.
 - Rangers work with other agencies, training, and equipment.
 - Calls by month (come through Sheriff's Office (SO) dispatch to the rangers)
 - Calls received from January 2022 through October 2023 with peaks in July each year.
 - 77.7% proactive, officer/ranger initiated calls, 22.3% dispatched.
 - 1467 incidents: traffic related, motorist assists, Motor Vehicle Accidents (unknown injury, injury, extraction, non-injury), DUI's.
 - Top 5 reasons for calls: traffic stops (anytime a vehicle is associated), parks incidents, motorist assist, assist other agencies, suspicious.
- Garrett - Boat Patrol Program:
 - 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 was a nationwide Boating Under the Influence (BUI) enforcement program.
 - Operation Cliffhanger in July 2023 was an 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 (non-law enforcement): 223 total (143 paddle craft at HT and 26 total at Carter.
 - Water Rescues (injury or person in distress): 24 at HT and 11 at Carter.
 - Chris added, increased BUI numbers may be representative of more proactive rangers and good training to help identify signs of intoxication.
- Lane - Ranger Contacts
 - ~50% public relation contacts (answering questions, talking about DNR areas), ~20% law enforcement contacts. Less than 1% of ranger contacts result in arrest (most contacts result in warnings with occasional citations).
 - Of 416 total citations given, the top 5 citations were for: minor in possession of alcohol and marijuana, not enough life jackets onboard a vessel for each person, no fire extinguisher on board a vessel, failure to store wildlife attractants in the campgrounds, and unattended fires in the campgrounds.
- Lane - New Tech
 - Radios are the lifeline of field staff. DNR has a new contract with the SO for radio replacement and service.
 - Digital parking citations are now waterproof, the data is stored internally and can track repeat offenders. When a citation is given, the rangers must take a photo of the violation, aiding with potential contest of the ticket.
- Cindy - RES
 - Celebrating 13 years of RES reaching 70 students a year, 900 students served in total from all around Colorado and out of state.
 - RES focuses on engaging smaller agencies and trains all incoming DNR rangers.

- Todd Brackin was the Brendan Unitt Scholarship Awardee for 2023. This is an award given to one RES student each year.
- Garrett - Rescue at the Mtn Park
 - Medical assistance for a visitor experiencing a 95% blockage in an artery leading to a heart attack. DNR received follow-up, which does not happen often.
 - Ruthie asked how rangers located the visitor. Garrett said the visitor was able to tell dispatch where he was. Chris noted DNR rangers have in-depth knowledge of the open spaces and can pinpoint visitor location based on landmark observations and descriptions.
- Cindy said camp hosts do so much for staff and visitors. They live on site, and thus can provide things for visitors that staff cannot and are able to create lasting relationships with visitors.
- Looking Ahead: HT Mtn. OS Trailhead Improvements, Chimney Hollow OS, Carter Eastside Day Use, New Permit Sales program/ALPR.
- Feedback/Questions:
 - Ruthie asked if dispatched calls were a result of someone calling 911 and if they were just in the park, or out of park as well. Cindy confirmed and noted the calls also include the non-emergency number. The in/out of park calls depend on the situation and seriousness. The SO recognizes rangers need to be in the park but will call rangers depending on where the closest deputy is. Rangers will assist and leave when the SO officers arrive and take over the situation.
 - Phil asked why calls in July are significantly more. Staff noted it could be due to increased staffing and/or the holiday, 2023 rains (opening July up to nice weather and increased visitation), and illegal fireworks calls around the 4th of July.
 - Kristina inquired about the invasive milfoil in LC. Cindy noted Boulder County is the closest the milfoil is. She does not believe it is in LC currently.
 - Scott asked about the BUI process. Cindy said it is similar to the DUI process. Rangers assess the situation based on operating behavior, contact interactions and roadside evaluations. Rangers take being out on the water all day and sun exposure into consideration when assessing. Chris added, if there is probable cause, the individual will be taken in for a breath or blood test.
 - Ruthie asked how rangers can identify an intoxicated boater. Steve explained the boater is typically doing something they should not be or driving recklessly. When contact is made, the ranger often notes specific things that are off/concerning. Chris added, many times other visitors will call in about a boater being reckless.
 - Scott asked if there was a height requirement for cliff jumping. Garrett said all cliff jumping is against regulation. There are hidden rocks under the water, making it extremely dangerous. Rangers have discretion when giving a citation.
 - Tara asked where citation payment money goes. Cindy said all penalty assessment (Title 29) citation money goes back into DNR parks funding. Anything written through the SO does not go to DNR.
 - Bill asked when DNR will begin work on Chimney Hollow. Chris said the project will go out for public comment, review, and feedback in 2024/2025.

Discussion Items

Action Items

DNR Regulation Updates

- Chris highlighted a few of the updates, noting the proposed changes were in response to state regulation changes, property changes and new recreation.
- Regulations for updates:
 - U1: Restrict unregistered vessels from LCDNR properties (No operation, possession, or stowing). All vessels must be registered with the State.
- Additional regulations:
 - F15: To walk or operate a vehicle on the ice. Currently combined with ice fishing regulation. Made it a stand-alone regulation.

- T6: Require display of a white light for paddle craft sunset – sunrise. Formalizes unofficial requirement of a headlamp which is generally respected. No state requirements.
- DNR opened a public feedback period via My Social Pinpoint, from November 16th to December 7th.
 - Feedback included 120 users (total identified visitors), 8 stakeholders (total number of people interacting with the project), and 9 comments. All comments provided were in support of the regulation updates and the most common comment was in support of increased paddle craft safety.
- Daylan said if recommendation by PAB is made, the regulation updates will proceed to the County Attorney for review and then recommendation and adoption by the BOCC.
- Scott asked if DNR tracks each violation and looks at trends/spikes for certain regulations. Steve confirmed violations are tracked. Chris noted DNR will spend about 6 months educating visitors on new/updated regulations before doing any enforcement. The proposed changes are being presented because of an increase in occurrences.
- Ruthie asked for a motion that the Parks Advisory Board make recommendation to the LC BOCC to accept and approve the changes and updates to the DNR regulations. Scott moved the motion, Rob seconded, motion passed unanimously.

U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Update

- Tara said the BOR issued a license to Comcast to insert new fiber to run north and south along the east side of the main South Bay gatehouse. The fiber will supply a proposed new/improved cell tower. The tower will look identical to the current one but will be larger. Comcast and BOR are coordinating with DNR staff for implementation around February 2024. It should have minimal impact.

Board Member Reports

Director's Report – Daylan Figgs

- Coming in 2024:
 - Construction on the new Bay to Bay Trail (South Bay to Inlet Bay) will begin. DNR is looking to secure grant funding to have LC Conservation Corps assist with the build.
 - DNR is reassessing the operation and availability of campground dump stations. The department received feedback from campers in support of transitioning to a fee based system versus having no dump station available.
 - PAB by-law updates to align with the BOCC updates to boards and commissions.
- LC 2024 budget will be approved in December 2023. DNR will make no changes to the budget submitted.
- Jill asked for an update on the Our Lands Our Future survey. Daylan said the statistically valid survey closed, and the open access survey will close at the end of the month. Results will be analyzed into early January. Steve noted the results help the department to direct management plans and make decisions.

Next Meeting Scheduled – January 17th, 2024, at Horsetooth Area Information Center: 4200 W. County Road 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 – 7:08 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.