



Date: October 4, 2022
Time: 5:30 PM – 8:30 PM
Location: Horsetooth Area Information Center (HAIC) at 4200 W. County Rd. 38E, Fort Collins CO 80526 & Zoom

PARKS ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

MEMBERS		STAFF		GUESTS
Bill Prater	I	Chris Fleming	I	Tara Piper
Jill Wuertz	I	Daylan Figgs	I	
Kathy Maher	V	Dan Rieves	I	
Kristina Kachur	I	Cindy Claggett	I	
Adam Crossan	I	*John Kefalas	V	
Pete Blume		Andrea Weber (minutes)	I	
Robert Harris	V	Joel Schwab	I	
Ruthie Rollins	I			
Scott Murray	I			

V = virtual attendee

I = in-person attendee

*commissioner

Call to Order - 5:30 PM

Public Comment

Closed – No Comment

Agenda Review

Chris encouraged board members to check the Natural Resources events webpage to stay up to date on the latest happenings in DNR.

Review and Approval of Last Minutes

Bill moved to approve the minutes from last meeting, Jill seconded, motion passed unanimously.

Information and Announcements

New Board Member Introductions

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.

June 2022 Open Space Tax Distribution Letter

Update and Reports

Commissioner Update

- Commissioner Kefalas reported that the BOCC approved a sales tax exemption for personal hygiene products that will take effect January 1st, 2023.
- A new system has been put in place to help address miscommunication around boards and commissions. The fall recruitment for PAB ended on September 29th. The board has 9 members currently and a max capacity of 11. There were 2 applications submitted.
- Laurie K. was promoted to Assistant County Manager.
- Larimer County was approached with a proposal to host the USA Mountain Biking Ultra-Marathon race, which would have a significant impact on Horsetooth. The decision was made to not apply for the race due to the overall impact the race would have had.
- Commissioner highlighted the success of the National Public Lands Day.
 - Joel said there were events that took place including corridor work in Rotary Park, closing of social trails and trash clean-up.
- The County is in the middle of the 2023 budget process. This includes operational and capital improvements. BOCC staff have been sharing information and answering questions from the public. He referred board members to use Build-Your-Own-Budget and the Budget Explorer found on the Larimer County website.

Park District Updates

- Cindy said the water levels at Pinewood are low and coupled with Chimney Hollow construction, and an Xcel pipeline project, visitation at Pinewood has decreased.
- The Carter Lake maintenance team met to discuss winter projects.
 - The seasonal staff are leaving. Campgrounds are closing and water is being shut off.
- The Carter District is hiring a new Maintenance Supervisor. The job posting has closed, and the hiring process has begun.
- Dan said there have been staffing changes at Horsetooth, but as things are slowing down, staff are able to catch up on projects.
- Boat ramp hours are starting to be reduced.
- Visitor Services had a Staff retreat at the CSU Mountain Campus at the end of September.
 - Plans for the end of the year and regional happenings were discussed.
- DNR received a National State Boating Law Administrators Newsletter, titled "2022, Deadliest Year on Colorado Waters". 2022 saw 36 drowning related fatalities in Colorado and 34 of those were recreation based. Grant Brown the Boating Safety and Registrations Program Manager for Colorado Parks and Wildlife said there were common themes among these fatalities: alcohol, innertubes and paddle craft.
 - Dan and Daylan said that DNR and especially its rangers take the safety of visitors very seriously and put in a great deal of effort to be sure people are safe.
 - Scott asked if the newsletters show trends over time. Dan said Colorado typically stays around 20 or below in water-based fatalities each year.
 - Jill asked if any discussion has been had around making lifejackets mandatory in the state. Dan has not heard anything about it at this time.
 - Daylan explained that these deaths aren't happening in Larimer County in specific, they are occurring statewide

Trails Program Update – Joel Schwab, LCDNR Trails Manager

- Trails program staff average 10,000 hours/year maintaining trails and have a budget of ~\$123,000. Staff includes 1 full time trails supervisor, 2 ten-month employees, and 3 - 6 seasonal employees.
- The Colorado Trail Symposium (was hosted in Fort Collins with FOCO in 2021), was held in Colorado Springs last week. This is an opportunity for local land agents to get together and talk about trail topics like social trails and overcrowding on trail systems.

- Trails Key Facts: There are approximately 800,000 acres of public lands in LC and nearly 1,030 miles of public trails managed by various entities. LCDNR manages 98.15 miles of trails on 40,000 acres of public land which includes 10% of the county-wide trails on 2% of the total Larimer County land base.
- A Continuum of Service: High recreational use areas equal a high cost to maintain while lower use areas equal a lower cost. Many of LCDNR areas are high use areas. There is about 10 miles of trail on reservoir properties.
- 2021 Highlights
 - Achieved maintenance goal of 75% of trails with an extended work season through December 30th.
 - Trail signs continued to suggest one-way loops at Horsetooth Rock, Horsetooth Falls and Wild Loop.
 - The crew collaborated with the LC Conservation Corps to build steps around the road at Skyview campground.
 - The crew focused on the day use parking area at Sunrise. Staff worked on the network of trails leading down to the water, adding 110 steps, and using 15 tons of filler.
 - The goal was to focus people to stay on well-built trails down to the water by removing and reseeding social trails and adding signage.
 - Scott asked how focused DNR was on removing social trails and if there is a heavily used social trail, does DNR make that trail permanent?
 - Joel said if there is a permanent trail close to the social trail it will be closed and reseeded. There are many social trails, so the crew focuses on the ones in high use areas.
- 2022 Highlights
 - Improved wayfinding: Revamped Devil's Backbone Open Space "You Are Here" trail maps and added "You Are Here" trail maps at Hermit Park Open Space.
 - Maintenance:
 - Formalized Blue Sky connector trail
 - Focused on Shoreline and Nomad Trails
 - "Keep people on trail and water off"
 - Kruger Rock Trail – Hermit Park Open Space
 - Only the top 1,000 ft of trail was in the fire area. Staff spent May and June moving rocks and logs to reform the hiking trail that was burned over.
- Upcoming Projects:
 - Horsetooth Mountain Open Space
 - A new trail will provide an additional close-in loop and moderate single-track connection to Stout distancing 1.84 miles. This project will include volunteers from the Outdoor Colorado (VOC) Project October 15th-16th.
 - Adam inquired about the trail creation process and how new trail opportunities are identified.
 - Joel said for the Horsetooth Management Update plan there is a lengthy process that includes input from the public, staff, and examining the current trails system. DNR ensures its trails are not endangering wildlife or disrupting habitat and vegetation.
 - Dan said the Master Plan process provides direction of what to buy and Joel informs of where the best places would be to build a trail.
 - Jill asked for detail about how trails impact wildlife and thinks DNR could share this information with the public to enhance understanding.
 - Daylan said impacts depend on the species. Trails can create fragmentation of the landscape, which changes how wildlife move and interact within the landscape. DNR tries to double up certain trails and place people specifically on the landscape to help keep areas unfragmented and limit the overall wildlife and habitat impacts.

- Commissioner Kefalas asked how trail crews determine if a trail is too wet and needs to be closed, and how much water would cause erosion.
 - Joel said that decisions around closures are done via observation in the field. If mud is sticking to shoes, its probably wet enough to close the trail. Trail closures are also dependent on the trail composition, granite, soil, sand, etc.
 - Chris and Joel said DNR works closely with its partners in the Devils Backbone, Coyote Ridge, Soapstone, and Red Mountain areas with trail closures during the wet seasons.
 - DNR created and executed 14 volunteer projects that were planned for 2022.
 - FCNA (City of Fort Collins Natural Areas) combined event took place on June 11th.
- 2023 Highlights - Upcoming
 - Complete permitting for multi-use Bay-to-Bay Trail (2024 build).
 - Implement HTMOS management plan trail priorities (submitted a CYCA grant).
 - Conduct 6 trail sustainability projects at Horsetooth Reservoir including fence removal and trail adjusting at Sunrise.
 - Jill asked about future staffing for DNR's trail program.
 - Daylan said DNR plans to double trails staff, adding another full-time person to Joel's team. The plan is to maintain the 100 miles DNR has and add another 50 miles in the next 20-30 years.
 - Joel explained that the full time and seasonal staff can get the bulk of the work done during the season.
 - Daylan said that because Joel builds efficient and sustainable trails, time can be spent maintaining them versus rebuilding them.
 - Commissioner Kefalas asked how the trails program recruits volunteers and specifically, if there is a target for underrepresented groups.
 - Joel said volunteer groups typically consist of clubs, such as mountain bike clubs, youth groups and companies, but opportunities are open to the public. Trails do not target any specific groups.
 - Daylan said DNR works with the Equity board to enhance understanding of how to include more diverse groups into these projects and to ensure the department is soliciting to all groups.

Presentation on Boating Capacity – Dan

- Dan presented documents used by DNR to explain how the department determines boating capacity for its reservoirs.
 - Water Based Capacity: To develop a water surface capacity, the relative proportion of types of boats on the water and the desired areas of water for each boat was determined. They were generated using area standards used by various agencies in the United States (i.e., Acres/Boat for various types of boating).
 - Remains to determine the mix of boats utilizing Carter Lake and the type of experience boaters at Carter expect a capacity of **1 vessel per 6.11 acres** was established.
- How the county determined these numbers:
 - The total area of the reservoir was measured. Any areas 5 feet deep or less were subtracted, as well as stumpy and island areas. The end number is the total boatable acres. Next, boat demographics were considered. This identifies how many acres to assign per vessel type. The number of acres per vessel changes based on what the desired recreation usage and experience is.
 - There are high water, mid water, and low water measurements that calculations are made from (10-year averages).
 - Jill asked if wake boats/boards are more intensive then water ski boats? Dan explained that for the calculations, anything that is in the realm of towed water sports, fit into water ski boats.

- Dan said a future consideration would be to explore the wake, or the wave produced/water displaced by boating and include this measurement into the calculations.
- Things to consider:
 - It is estimated that approximately 25% of the time a boat is in the water, it is picking up or dropping off passengers or its occupants are enjoying offshore activities, thus freeing up 25% of the reservoir for additional boats.
 - The total number of vessels allowed on Carter Lake at any one-time ranges between 189 and 234, including boats that reside at the marina.
 - The total number of on-site parking spaces for boat trailers ranges from 145 to 189 depending on the water surface area.
 - In the spring, when the water level is high, there is a larger boating capacity but fewer parking spaces. During the fall, the water level is lower, leading to more parking along the boat ramps, but less boatable acres.
 - Decisions and calculations are based on demographics. Calculations take into consideration of what the on-water observations, on-site surveys, parking lot counts, and mail-back surveys.
 - DNR is engaged in a study at Satanka Bay, where staff member Zac Wiebe is looking at the demographic use. This will provide DNR with what the actual numbers are and what the turnover rate is.
 - Actual percentages of the demographics of watercraft have not been re-evaluated in 10 years. However, through DNR's Aquatic Nuisances Species (ANS). Inspection program, there could be an opportunity to have a live running total of boats at each reservoir.
 - ANS could implement a check-in, check-out program, which would eliminate the need to count parking spaces.
- Things that happen when staff call capacity:
 - Staff call capacity, not based on the number of parking spaces, but on the number of boats that are on the water.
 - Jill inquired about using the "edges" of the reservoirs for non-motorized watercraft, such as paddleboards.
 - Dan said if DNR were to add an additional 150-foot buffer, in addition to the 5-foot deletion, that would decrease the boatable area significantly.
 - The SMS messages influenced a change in use, noted in the second half of the summer.
 - Closure messages were sent out at 10 or 11 AM, including a message of reopening at 3 pm. Staff noted a second resurgence at 2:30 - 3 pm.
 - Ruthie stated she values that in addition to having capacity set on calculations, DNR Rangers can make calls in the field based on their best judgement.
- Next steps in the process for DNR and boating capacity:
 - DNR is looking to revisit demographic distributions. There is conversation around changing the number of acres per boat from 10 to 12.
 - Kristina asked if these numbers (boats per acre), were based mainly on user satisfaction, water quality or safety?
 - Dan said 85% safety, and 15% user satisfaction. He further explained that user satisfaction feedback is not a consistent measurement due to satisfaction being unique to each visitors desired experience. The goal would be to not exclude visitors from participating in recreating.
 - Dan said that based on previous feedback, the public does not want a reservation system at the reservoirs. However, with the new capacity system, some members of the public have expressed an interest in revisiting the possibility of implementing one.
 - It is possible to limit the number of spaces that are reservable. DNR would likely only consider this if the public was interested and requesting it.
 - Bill offered himself as an advocate for the reservation system. He has stopped using the parks on certain days because of the high visitor volume. He also shared his concerns about the people who may not come often being excluded because they are not well adept on how the system works.

- Dan said that DNR is always looking for ways to onboard new visitors into recreation activities and in understanding the best way to involve those who do not come often.
- Kristina said she would like to see more opportunities for underrepresented people and groups when it comes to making reservations and being able to have travel options to the parks and open spaces.
 - Dan said that DNR staff have experienced a significant amount of diversity at the reservoirs. He agreed that the department is tasked with educating visitors on how to access DNR areas and how to have a positive outdoor recreation experience.
 - Daylan said part of accomplishing this task is the “Know Before You Go” message. This program encourages visitors to learn more about the experience they are about to engage in.
- Ruthie asked if there was designated parking for the marina at Horsetooth. Dan said that there is not but that is a conversation that will be had. The marina does have a specific designated area that they work within.
 - Daylan said to keep this discussion in mind when talking about concessionaires and marina contracts. Things like parking can be inserted into the RFP.

Marina RFP Process Update – Chris

- The core team, which includes Tara, Dan, Cindy, Ruthie, Chris and the DNR purchasing agent, Les, had its first team meeting.
 - The general overview of the timeline and process were discussed.
 - The team will continue to meet regularly through the winter and plan to put out the RFP in April or May. It will sit through the summer and a vendor will be selected in the fall. The new contract will start in January 2024. DNR is offering both marina contracts as one, however separating them will be an available option.
 - Adam asked what the scope of the team was. Dan said the team is focused on short-term and long-term concessionaires at both Carter Lake and Horsetooth Reservoir.
- There was much interest from board members to participate in the core team and Chris wanted to reassure that all will have an opportunity to voice themselves. She will bring items and topics from the core team to the board to discuss.
 - Ruthie inquired about the PAB having a subcommittee. She thinks it would be beneficial for the board members that are interested in participating in the process and discussion.
 - Daylan said the board can get direction from county attorney on legality of a subcommittee. He says the board can go into Executive Session.
 - Jill requested that if a subcommittee route be taken, documents and topics be sent enough in advance that members can prepare for meetings.
 - Chris said that discussions will need to be confidential as DNR works through the RFP process.
- Les Brown and Tara provided RFPs from other BOR parks marinas to give a reference point while DNR builds a new RFP. Dan also said the department will likely send out an RFI (Request for Information), to understand the possibilities of use for the building space.
- Scott asked to have the current marina contracts sent to board members.

Discussion Items

None

Action Items

None

U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Update

- Tara shared that BOR and DNR staff work together on projects and plans.
 - She works closely with staff such as Joel on trails projects, like the Bay-to-Bay trail. BOR approves these projects and provides the environmental clearance needed.
 - BOR identifies if a project fits into the County RMP (Resource Management Plan) and is involved with DNR's annual work plans.
 - DNR staff work alongside the BOR to look at operations, replacements, and maintenance of the parks.
 - For many projects, cultural resources compliance takes 45 days.
 - The CEC will be approved at the end of October.
 - The trail project between DNR and the City of Fort Collins is waiting for approval but should be cleared in a couple months.

Board Member Reports

None

Director's Report – Daylan Figgs

- Daylan reported that DNR is working through the budget process, and the commissioners will review it in December. 6 new positions are included in the 2023 budget request. DNR moved funds around, limiting total new cost to the department.
- DNR is starting a new project which will relook at the east side of Carter Lake. There is existing development in the area and using an ARPA grant from the BOCC and FLAP dollars, DNR is planning to expand recreation opportunities in this area.
 - Funds from the BOCC will go towards the design and build and needs to be spent by 2026.
 - Jon Plybon handles the CIP projects and is keeping DNR on track with moving projects forward.
 - BOR always invests back into these places and their funding helps DNR to achieve new projects and objectives.
- DNR is investigating what options are available for the Chimney Hollow area. This will be a more focused conversation in 2024. The conversation from Horsetooth and Carter will help to inform what Chimney could be.
- In 2023, DNR plans to reassess how permits are issued.
 - A team of DNR and IT staff will assemble to assess new options for issuing permits.
 - The current system is bogged down with paper permits, audits and the need to sell in-person. These factors limit growth and require extensive staffing and energy.
- Commissioner Kefalas said the direction for all boards and commissions is to create a work plan for 2023. The goal is to provide a framework for the boards and commissions to be proactive and know what to expect for the next few years. He said Lorenda Volker has asked these be submitted by the end of October.
 - Daylan said DNR has created its general work plan but has not reached out to the boards yet. DNR will send the work plans out before the next meeting.

Next Meeting Scheduled

November 1, 2022, at Administrative Offices at 1800 S. County Road 31, Loveland, CO 80537 and Zoom

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 - 8:05 pm

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