



Date: May 3, 2022
Time: 5:30 PM – 8:30 PM
Location: Larimer County Horsetooth Area Information Center: 4200 W. County Road 38E, Fort Collins, CO 80526, Mountain Lion Room & Zoom Webinar

PARKS ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

MEMBERS		STAFF		GUESTS
Bill Prater	I	Chris Fleming	I	Heidi Pruess (County) - I
Jill Wuertz	I	Daylan Figgs	I	Tara Piper (BOR) - V
Kathy Maher	V	Dan Rieves	I	
Kristina Kachur	I	Cindy Claggett	I	
Mandy Peters		*John Kefalas		
Pete Blume		Jordan Williams (minutes)	I	
Robert Harris	V	Sarah Watson	I	
Ruthie Rollins	I			
Scott Murray				
Spencer Clark				

V = virtual attendee

I = in-person attendee

*commissioner

Call to Order – 5:32pm

Public Comment

Agenda Review

Review and Approval of Last Minutes

Bill moved to approve the minutes from last meeting, Jill 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

February 2022 Sales Tax Distribution

- Daylan noted the increase in sales tax collection this year compared to 2021.

DNR Quarter 1 Board Report 2022

- Daylan commented on recent technology changes, including the new T2 windshield ticketing system, which saves staff time, increases customer efficiencies, and DNR will see a return on the \$100,000 investment in just a few years. DNR's biggest challenge now is filling seasonal positions. Pay scales were recently adjusted, but other agencies and businesses are also having a tough time with hiring. DNR is going through the 2023 budgeting process and is looking at various options, including models where the department would be less dependent on seasonal staffing with more full-time or longer term positions. There were some new hires and promotions, including Cindy to Visitor Services Manager and Trevor Knight to Senior Ranger at Carter Lake. With the financial report, lower expenses at the Open Spaces largely came from personnel changes, and increases in expenses at the Reservoir Parks was due to more staffing needs (e.g., boat rangers).
 - Kristina asked about doing exit surveys with County employees before they leave. Chris said DNR does exit interviews with full-time staff, but it is more difficult with seasonal staff because they all start and end near the same time. Staff noted that DNR has many people involved in the hiring process, but it is funneled through one department specialist then back to Human Resources. Jill mentioned the benefits of having a coordinator perform all the necessary hiring/off-boarding functions, and Chris said they are looking to potentially hire another Senior Ranger position that would be focused on administrative duties for Visitor Services.
 - Other discussion topics about hiring including career fairs at CSU, posting jobs earlier in the season, advertising to a broader geographic audience, and employee housing at remote places like Hermit Park.

Update and Reports

Board of County Commissioner update

[2021 LCDNR Annual Report](#)

- Daylan mentioned the switch to an online annual report and calendar option, which is less expensive, more environmentally friendly, less limiting with the formatting, and allows DNR to reach new audiences. Jill gave kudos to Korrie Johnston and DNR for the annual report's impressive graphics, pictures, and overall presentation.

Park District updates – Dan Rieves / Cindy Claggett

- Cindy noted that next week is the Sky View Campground grand opening event, and the Pavilion is getting completed. Also, Ranger Excellence School has 91 participants registered for May 16-20.
- Dan mentioned the Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) program and the challenges with hiring specifically for those positions. A press release with changes to the boat ramp hours came out, and that attracted a few more applicants. DNR wants to be honest with the public regarding challenges and operational changes through its communication efforts. Dan noted that a lot of the County's part-time staff leave for full-time jobs elsewhere after getting experience with DNR.
- Sarah commented on some issues with more drug test failures by applicants this year than average.

Visitor Services 2021 Year in Review – Chris Fleming

- Chris shared her screen: Visitor Services' mission is to oversee the day to day operations at Larimer County's 6 Open Spaces, 4 Reservoir Parks, and several regional trails while working collaboratively with other agencies. Visitor Services includes 22 full-time and 60-100 seasonal staff between Maintenance, Rangers, ANS inspectors, and Information/Customer Service Reps.
- Permit Sales and Visitation: On average there has been an 11% increase in annual permit sales over the last four years, with the largest increase in daily and annual permits in 2020. DNR estimates that there are over 500,000 visitors to Larimer County Open Spaces each year and Rangers put in 1200 miles of patrol on foot/bike. With this increased visitation, DNR is looking to adjust communication with the public through Know Before You Go campaigns, social media, and COTREX.
 - Bill asked whether to expect growth in permit sales this year, but Staff said it is tough to forecast this early in the season because of different permit types and population growth.

- Camping: 6% camping growth on average over the last five years means that visitors should not expect to show up on a weekday in the summer and find an open campsite. DNR estimates that there are 1.5 million visitors at the Larimer County Reservoir Parks each year with a 56% campground occupancy rate overall and a 78% rate during the peak season.
- The Maintenance staff includes 7 full time and 16-20 seasonals to clean 436 fire pits and 122 vault toilets daily, plus projects such as building decks for the Hermit Park Open Space cabins.
- Carter Lake and Horsetooth Reservoir are the 3rd and 6th busiest reservoirs in the state and include over 3000 surface acres of water.
- The Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) program started in 2008 and currently there are no positive lakes in the State. At the 6 Larimer County-managed boat ramps at Carter Lake/Horsetooth Reservoirs, 68,679 vessel inspections were completed in 2021 and 20 mussel infested boats were intercepted prior to launching. One full time staff member oversees 30-40 ANS seasonal workers.
 - The ANS program receives support from Northern Water, the Bureau of Reclamation, and Colorado Parks and Wildlife.
- Ranger staff made over 76,000 contacts with the public in 2021, and most of them were public relations/educational in nature. Only 0.1% of all contacts ended in a citation or arrest. Rangers responded to 150+ medical calls, made 5400 fishing/wildlife contacts, and completed 2400 citizen assists such as towing a stranded boater or changing a flat tire.
 - The top three most common citations are Life Jacket related, Minors in Possession, and Cliff jumping. Over 6000 tickets are written for windshield tickets/permits/parking each year.
 - Ranger Excellence School: 2022 is the 12th year of this one week, 40 hour training.
 - Of the boating contacts, 3% of enforcement contacts result in a citation or ticket and over 80% of ranger-to-visitor enforcement contacts in 2021 were positive.
 - In 2021 boat rangers made 5,200 contacts, 124 rescues, and 221 citations, which were mostly for life jacket issues. 20 Boating Under the Influence arrests occurred in 2021 at Carter and Horsetooth.
 - Currently 12 full time rangers on staff are trained to respond to emergency situations, natural disaster support, and have a minimal level of EMS/EMT training. All the training requirements mean that it can be up to one year before a new full-time ranger is solo capable. Chris noted that Park Rangers are the most assaulted of any law enforcement nationally.
 - 2021 Law Enforcement Contacts: There were 1,644 calls from the Larimer County Sheriff's Office to Parks with 80 percent being officer initiated and 20% from dispatch; 175 calls from Parks to local agencies included 33 DUIs, 42 fire/medical, and 18 suicidal party calls.
- Comments and Questions
 - Bill asked about the increase in boating violations, which Staff noted was largely due to a surge in paddleboarders without life jackets. Through a combination of regulation enforcement, education, and life jacket loaner programs, Staff is now seeing a downturn in violations.
 - Discussion followed regarding all the training requirements for Rangers, as well as the benefits for recruitment with that type of work culture. Jill noted her support for having well-qualified and effective rangers in the field.

U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Update

Memorandum of Understanding with Larimer County

- Tara said the final 25 year management agreement with the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) has been delivered to Larimer County. Daylan said that the document will be presented to the County Commissioners after the Parks Advisory Board makes a recommendation.
- Chris shared her screen: The current management agreement expires at the end of June 2022, and the new one can go into effect immediately afterwards. Changes to the updated MOU include new standard BOR partner language, integration of County legal requirements, Weed District work being included in the contract, and recreation area management responsibility clarifications such as debris in the

reservoirs. The marina operators are under a contract extension that expires in June 2022, which will be extended through 2023 after the new MOU is signed. Then a request for proposals will go out for new marina contracts to begin in 2024.

- Staff noted that the new MOU does not provide additional restrictions on services but it does include resource protections and regulation requirements for operators. The parameters of services such as marina operations is based on the size of the reservoirs. Glade and Chimney Hollow Reservoirs will not be included in this BOR MOU since they are Northern Water projects.
- Chris added that the public will not notice any changes from the new to the old agreement in terms of operations management. The new MOU will include addendums from previous years and retain the option for future addendums.
- Kathy asked about the unauthorized use section. Staff noted that recreational uses change over 20 years, so this section needs to be adaptable through approval processes for new uses. Tara said this section addresses trespassing issues, encroachment onto federal property, and neighbor relations.
- Jill asked about water quality requirements. Tara said the MOU mentions how potential spills/contamination issues and invasive species would be addressed to protect the natural resource. Dan noted there are a lot of other agencies involved with water quality including the Environmental Protection Agency, Northern Water, and the City of Fort Collins. DNR does water quality testing at swim beaches and can mandate boating emission standards.
- Bill asked about decision-making processes when it comes to no motorized boats at Pinewood or vessels on Flatiron. Dan said those decisions can be made by either the County or BOR, depending on considerations such as safety, staffing, infrastructure, or recreational use.
 - Daylan mentioned the designation of roles between recreation (DNR) and water levels (Northern Water/BOR), but DNR cannot make these reservoirs exclusive use.
- Jill asked about obligations for the different parties, and Dan said the MOU provides parameters on when to notify BOR while giving DNR purview in other areas. For example, permits and third party contractors can be determined by DNR while property issues and utility easements would go through BOR. The MOU dictates 10 year management plan cycles alongside a resource management plan.
 - Sarah mentioned the annual reporting needs that include revenue generated on the properties, special events, new campsites/trails, etc. Staff noted that permanent structures that are built on BOR property become property of the Federal Government if the Parks were vacated by the County.
- Jill asked about how properties are managed outside of the established recreation areas. Dan gave examples of development at Sky View campground and the South Bay to Inlet Bay trail, which go through federal review processes before development, but these types of projects can only be initiated by the County.
- Bill asked about DNR Staff's feelings toward the new document and Staff responded in the affirmative that any changes or new scenarios can be worked through and the County does not feel restricted by the new MOU.

Action Items

BOR MOU Recommendation

- Kathy moved for the Parks Advisory Board to recommend approval of the 2022 Bureau of Reclamation Partner Agreement with Larimer County by the Board of County Commissioners, Kristina seconded, motion passed unanimously.
 - Bill commented on the low water levels at other reservoirs and how Larimer County effectively manages the recreation at their Reservoir Parks. Staff noted that DNR makes long-term plans with its partners for maintenance and safety projects that may require reservoir levels to be lowered so they can inform the public of changes ahead of time.

Discussion Items

2021 Year End Financial Review – Sarah Watson

- Department Revenue: \$23,250,750 in 2021, \$3 million more than 2022 with the largest categories being the Open Space Sales Tax and User Fees.
- 2021 Open Spaces Revenues: \$14,194,638 total, with 76% coming from the Sales Tax.
 - Open Space Expenses 5 year look: Operating expenses have been very level, with capital/project expenses varying more greatly.
- 2021 Reservoir Parks and Lottery Revenues: \$7,494,09 total with 62% coming from User Fees
 - Reservoir Park Expenses 5 year look: Operating expenses increased with more visitation in 2020/21.
 - Parks revenue is very strong, with support from the Open Space tax through a transfer of funds (3-5%).
- 2021 Operating Expenses Budget to Actual Comparison: The Reservoir Parks Fund is under budget by 2%; Open Space Fund under budget by 27%.
- Capital Improvement Projects for 2022 include \$10 million in Land Acquisitions, \$1.5 million in replacements of buildings/structures, \$4 million in New Capital Improvements, and \$655,000 in Capital Renewal.
- Extension of Open Space Sales Tax 2019 – 2043: Total revenue projected \$370M
 - 2019-2021 revenues are at \$29M

Larimer County Climate Smart Plan Update – Heidi Pruess

- Heidi shared her screen: The Process for the LC Climate Smart Plan includes three phases, and currently they are in Phase 2 – Community Outreach. Phase 1 was the plan framework and Phase 3 will be plan development.
- Community Outreach:
 - Event Series #1 (5 weeks) included presentations, tabling events, newsletters/articles, social media, and a questionnaire with over 600 responses.
 - Event Series #2 (6 weeks) included workshops, newsletters/articles, social media, and additional questionnaires.
 - Geographical representation was across the county, but most of the responders came from the heavy population centers in Fort Collins and Loveland.
- In Series #1, four overarching topic areas were identified: Housing and Economy, How We Move, Nature & Our Land, Our Wellbeing
- In Series #2, key themes were identified with top responses being multisector collaboration, waste diversion, air quality, and community involvement.
 - Participants were asked how the County should approach these issues, including incentives, education, rule changes, expenditures, advocacy, partnerships, etc.
 - Participants were also asked to look at ways to improve the overarching categories or highlight areas that may be missing, such as Equity, wildlife, and human health.
 - Jill noted that the recent wildfires may have impacted people's choices and priorities.
- The complete engagement summary can be found at www.larimer.org/climatesmart and community members can sign up for a newsletter as well.
 - Next steps for external effort:
 - May 4th: Climate Smart Task Force + County Staff
 - June 8th: Finalize recommendations report
 - June/July: BOCC Adoption and Phase III begins
- Internal Plan on Climate and Sustainability is how the County can “walk-the-talk”.
 - Methods will include mitigation and adaptation while focusing on areas such as sustainable transportation, efficient buildings, land use, education, partnerships, new energy systems, infrastructure upgrades, and emergency/public safety efforts.
- The final plan will include goals, objectives, short term/long term actions, departments engaged, goals/measures, costs/budget impacts, and priorities/timeline. BOCC adoption is planned for July.
- Questions and Comments

- Kathy noted the importance of public feedback, but if the community is reluctant to take on additional responsibility, then the County needs to maintain a leadership role and move things forward. Heidi added that Phase 3 will bring more partners together for goal setting and decision-making purposes while still engaging the public on an informative basis.
- Ruthie thanked Heidi for the presentation and added that the transportation-related items align with the work she is doing. Kristina asked about specific natural resources-focused plans, and Heidi said they are still developing those goals and action items.

Board Member Reports

Director's Report – Daylan Figgs

Next Meeting Scheduled

June 7, 2022 - Larimer County Natural Resources Administrative Offices: 1800 South County Road 31, Loveland, CO 80537, Bison 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 – 8:08pm

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 williajo@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.