



Date: February 16, 2023
Time: 5:00 PM – 6:30 PM
Location: Larimer County Courthouse, 200 W. Oak St., Fort Collins, CO, 2nd Floor, Lake Loveland Room & Zoom Webinar

LAND STEWARDSHIP ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

MEMBERS		STAFF		GUESTS
Patrick Bickley	I	Casey Cisneros	I	
Josh Wenz	V	Daylan Figgs	I	
Ryan Blake	I	Meegan Flenniken	I	
Ronald Harris	I	Jody Shadduck-McNally*	V	
Jesse Dillon	I	Andrea Weber (minutes)	I	
Michael Hayes	I	Maxine Guill	I	
Janae Malpas	A			

V = virtual attendee

I = in-person attendee

A = absent

*commissioner

Call to Order – 5:00 pm

Public Comment

Agenda Review

Review and Approval of Last Minutes

Pat moved to approve the minutes from last meeting, Jesse seconded, motion passed unanimously.

Information and Announcements

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

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

September 2022 Open Space Tax Distribution Letter

October 2022 Open Space Tax Distribution Letter

November 2022 Open Space Tax Distribution Letter

Casey said DNR began producing noxious weed management guides as a tool for staff site visits with landowners. The 7th edition was just released. Maxine handed out copies for the board members.

Updates/Discussion Items

2022 Noxious Weed Compliance Overview – Maxine

- Casey noted staff present to the board in February to inform on noxious weed compliance trends for the year and over time.
- Maxine said DNR's [website](#) shares information on noxious weeds including the Colorado Noxious Weeds Act along with a description of the weeds included, compliance procedures and herbicide information.
- She noted public lands are priority for weed removal and private lands are addressed after.
- The process is as follows, a citizen calls the weeds in, DNR has 5 days to respond and inspect. After inspection, if weeds are found, a courtesy letter is sent (if the weeds are high priority an enforcement letter may be sent instead). The courtesy letter informs the property owner they have 10 days to remove the weeds and staff will return after those 10 days to reinspect. If the weeds have not been removed, DNR will approach the BOCC with a Right of Entry request (approval takes a week and a half) and staff will remove the weeds and invoice the property owner. The process will be halted at any time if the landowner makes contact and requests further discussion.
- Noxious Weed Compliance Presentation
 - Staff completed 1,025 compliance inspections and 135 Myrtle Spurge (List A species) monitoring inspections.
 - 2022 Compliance Cases: 735 noxious weed compliance code cases
 - 593 follow-up cases from 2021, 70 complied, meaning the steps taken in 2021 by the landowner were effective.
 - Opened 142 new cases. 11 were in no violation meaning inspectors did not see noxious weeds (or the ones that follow criteria) and 19 required no further action.
 - Focus outside the Weed District included, public complaints, and Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR) species.
 - The EDRR program is funded via a grant awarded by the Colorado Department of Agriculture for noxious weed removal. It allows DNR to hire a two person crew to assist landowners with eradication of specific weeds including Absinth Wormwood, Black Henbane, Chinese Clematis, Common Tansy, Cypress Spurge, Hairy Willow-Herb, Japanese Knotweed, Mediterranean Sage, Myrtle Spurge, Orange Hawkweed, Oxeye Daisy, Plumeless Thistle, Purple Loosestrife, Spotted Knapweed, and Yellow Starthistle.
 - Staff spend extra time in three priority areas, Fish Creek and Dry Gulch in Estes, and the Storm Mountain subdivision.
 - Looking forward into 2023, staff have 603 compliance cases to follow up on from 2022, and already have set up 119 Myrtle Spurge, 33 Spotted Knapweed, 73 Yellow Toadflax monitoring inspections and 7 new EDRR cases to investigate.
 - Compliance Inspections
 - 2022** – 1,025 (compliance inspections half in and half out weed district)
 - 496 In District, 263 Estes Valley, 241 Other Outside District, 25 Cameron Peak Fire area
 - 2021** – 1,120
 - 630 In District, 223 Estes Valley, 229 Other Outside District, 38 Cameron Peak Fire area
 - 2020** – 719
 - 468 In District, 82 Estes Valley, 168 Other Outside District, 0 Cameron Peak Fire area
 - 2019** – 1,297
 - 800 In District, 194 Estes Valley, 303 Other Outside District, 0 Cameron Peak Fire area
 - 2018** – 1,021
 - 574 In District, 239 Estes Valley, 208 Other Outside District, 0 Cameron Peak Fire area
 - Courtesy Letters
 - 2022** – 199
 - 91 In District, 58 Estes Valley, 50 Other Outside District, 0 Cameron Peak Fire area
 - 2021** – 302
 - 188 In District, 52 Estes Valley, 57 Other Outside District, 5 Cameron Peak Fire area

- 2020** – 77
 - 68 In District, 3 Estes Valley, 9 Other Outside District, 0 Cameron Peak Fire area
 - 2019** – 308
 - 266 In District, 40 Estes Valley, 2 Other Outside District, 0 Cameron Peak Fire area
 - 2018** – 383
 - 169 In District, 97 Estes Valley, 117 Other Outside District, 0 Cameron Peak Fire area
- Weeds staff decided to start with an enforcement letter for continuous code violations/cases, which decreased the total number of courtesy letters. Casey noted if property ownership changed, staff send a courtesy letter first.
- Early Detection Rapid Response Grant Letters
 - 2022** – 51
 - 21 In District, 16 Estes Valley, 14 Other Outside District, 0 Cameron Peak Fire area
 - 2021** – 106
 - 19 In District, 42 Estes Valley, 44 Other Outside District, 1 Cameron Peak Fire area
 - 2020** – 66
 - 7 In District, 1 Estes Valley, 59 Other Outside District, 0 Cameron Peak Fire area
 - 2019** – 147
 - 19 In District, 60 Estes Valley, 68 Other Outside District, 0 Cameron Peak Fire area
 - 2018** – 41
 - 8 In District, 21 Estes Valley, 12 Other Outside District, 0 Cameron Peak Fire area
- Enforcement Letters
 - 2022** – 134
 - 65 In District, 31 Estes Valley, 29 Other Outside District, 9 Cameron Peak Fire area
 - 2021** – 107
 - 61 In District, 16 Estes Valley, 29 Other Outside District, 1 Cameron Peak Fire area
 - 2020** – 64
 - 44 In District, 6 Estes Valley, 14 Other Outside District, 0 Cameron Peak Fire area
 - 2019** – 90
 - 70 In District, 8 Estes Valley, 12 Other Outside District, 0 Cameron Peak Fire area
 - 2018** – 69
 - 46 In District, 6 Estes Valley, 17 Other Outside District, 0 Cameron Peak Fire area
- Property Owner Responses and ROE Requests
 - Staff strongly encourage property owners to reach out to DNR for assistance with weed removal. If a property owner calls, staff set up site visits and provide recommendations.
 - Responses/call back in 2022 were 34% compared to 31% in 2021.
 - DNR sent 28 ROE requests to the BOCC in 2022 and conducted 12 compliance management visits. The species on these properties were mainly List A, List B or EDRR.
 - Michael asked if property owners are often disagreeable with DNR staff entering their property to remove or spray weeds. Casey said most times the property owner is absent and not living on the property.
- Yearly Total Site Visits
 - 2022** – (74) **2021** – (120) **2020** – (84) **2019** – (187) **2018** – (158)
- Yearly Herbicide Sales (batches are divided into individual portions for landowners)
 - 2022** - 263 sales for \$41,895 (number of sales lower but cost increased due to supply shortage)
 - 2021** - 342 sales for \$42,490
 - 2020** - 224 sales for \$33,452
 - 2019** - 295 sales for \$34,833
 - 2018** - 219 sales for \$32,898
- Yearly Cost Shares
 - 2022** – \$2,097 – 10 herbicide and labor, 15 herbicides only
 - 2021** – \$1419 – 13 herbicide and labor
 - 2020** – \$2500 – 6 herbicide and labor
 - 2019** – \$348 – 3 herbicides only

2018 – \$267 – 4 herbicides only

- In 2022, DNR provided cost share opportunities to landowners who wanted to purchase 2-4 D somewhere else, as DNR was unable to acquire it (no supply available).
- In 2020, began to offer 25% of labor and herbicides.
- Daylan inquired about the availability of 2-4 D for 2023, and if staff anticipated being able to purchase it. Maxine said there is more stock this year and staff should know in March if they will be able to purchase it or if it will be reserved for agriculture/crop lands.
- Ron asked what the percentage increase in cost for the 2-4 D would be. Maxine noted the cost went up 300% in 2022 from 2021.
- Questions/Feedback:
 - Jesse asked about the weeds list and if the state is the party who creates and maintains it. Maxine said the List A species list is created by the state, as well as some of the List B species. Many List B species are treated by DNR as EDRR.
 - She continued, Spotted Knapweed and Toadflax were included in the EDRR grant, however if the volume of these weeds is too great for staff to remove, alternative options will be assessed.
 - Jesse asked, List B and C species have a small footprint in Larimer County, is DNR confident in being able to eradicate them? Casey confirmed.
 - Jesse asked if compliance inspections were all on private property. Maxine confirmed.
 - Pat asked what time of the year letters are sent to landowners. Maxine said staff look in April for certain species and then others in August. It is dependent on the species found.
 - Ryan inquired about staffing with the grant and if DNR is hiring in house for the program. Maxine replied, yes, and the state also has a crew that will come out and help the weeds staff.
 - Ron said it was mentioned that DNR had to do public areas before private, he asked if these overlapped. Maxine said when the weeds crew does private land surveys they are also looking out at the public lands in the area as well. There are times staff must put a hold on sending private letters until public areas are done.
 - Casey noted DNR provides site visits and does work in the Cameron Peak Fire area.
 - Ron asked if DNR is receiving significant follow-up from Cameron Peak Fire landowners. Casey replied, this year will probably result in more contacts now the area has settled and the roads and properties have been stabilized. It usually takes 4-5 years for landowners to reach out after a fire.
 - Ron asked how DNR lets landowners know about the program. Casey said information is sent out via targeted mailers go out to the landowners in the fire area post-recovery.
 - Maxine continued, DNR received natural disaster grant funds to be able to offer cost sharing for contracting and provide free herbicides. The grant money is also used to send the mailers.
 - Josh asked if the grants DNR received were fixed dollar amounts, and if the Weeds crew was able to use/maximize all the money from those grants? Maxine said when DNR applies, and the Colorado Department of Agriculture sets the dollar amount requested. Often, the full amount is used, and more is needed. In 2022, more than half of the grant funds were returned due to being unable to find staffing resources.

Board of County Commissioner Update

- Commissioner Shadduck-McNally shared she joined Casey for a ride-along to observe weed management processes and tour a rural property. She is appreciative of the information and updates.
- The Larimer County Strategic Plan for 2019 to 2023 is concluding.
- Finished the comprehensive plan for Estes Park and the Estes Valley in December which included many land use items.
- The Fleet campus is currently being built. The Ranch Events Complex infrastructure planning is underway, and the Behavioral Health Center should be complete and open in October.

Noxious Weed Management Plan proposed updates – Maxine and Casey

- [2018 Weed Management Plan](#)
- Casey stated the LC Noxious Weed Management Plan describes noxious weed compliance, the list of weeds that are of concern, and priority ratings. The plan was written and adopted by the BOCC in 2018. It is best practice to go back through the plans to make sure they are working for DNR and not creating undesired impacts. Staff have identified recommendations on the following items for updating.
 - General topographical edits, website and contact information updates.
 - Remove Eurasian Watermilfoil from noxious weed classification section (List B). This species is too difficult to inspect because it is submerged in water. Water providers are vigilant for this species and DNR works closely with them.
 - Add a bullet to the noxious weed compliance sections that state List C species will not be subject to enforcement. List C species are “recommended” for management in Colorado, and the state suggests management through outreach and education.
 - Ron requested to add a “High Priority” clause to the bullet point to address List C species such as cheatgrass, which is a high fire risk.
 - Casey noted the request and followed up stating DNR does not have the staff resources to conduct compliance inspections on List C species.
 - Remove redundant enforcement language.
 - Bundle Chamomile species in priority ratings. Currently there are 4 species listed independently, however they are managed the same and have the same life cycles.
 - Remove Russian Olive from enforcement priorities due to exorbitant expense to meet compliance for this species. Landowners are not able to shoulder the expense which can be tens of thousands of dollars.
 - Ron asked if the responsibility would be transferred to another entity/agency?
 - Casey said it is a List B species. He agreed there is importance in taking care of this species, as it only gets worse if not. DNR is addressing the trees on the OS properties and other public lands, but it becomes overburdening to staff and landowners to manage this species.
 - Jesse asked if there were any Migratory Bird Treaty Act implications with treating Russian Olive. Ryan noted it only comes into play if there is a bird nesting in the tree and one wants to cut it down or do a foliar spray. Potential nesting habitat does not violate the act.
 - Mike asked if DNR was aware of how many landowners were impacted by Russian Olive and if it would be possible to create an extended management plan.
 - Maxine said there is data on the distribution of the tree found on [EDD Maps](#).
 - Mike shared his concerns with removing the species from the list and having negative implications on forward progress that has been made so far.
 - Casey said from a staffing standpoint having it be required is too overwhelming. From a landowner’s standpoint it is extremely expensive. The removal could be phased in over time, but if a landowner was unable to take care of it, DNR would have to go out and remove them then bill them for \$10,000 (only est.) worth of work.
 - Meegan said staff will find a way to address continued education without requiring staff to be in the field enforcing the removal.
 - Ron asked how Russian Olive spreads. Casey said the seeds are spread through birds and deposited into moist soils. Ryan added, if they are cut down, they will resprout.
 - Ron requested education and follow-up notification for change of property at the minimum.
 - Casey said staff will come back to the board with other suggestions and ideas for this bullet.
 - Pat asked if changing bullet #3 would reduce DNR’s flexibility. Casey does not see DNR having the resources, so he does not anticipate it having any impact.
 - Daylan said staff will look at alternative language for this item.
- The board was in favor of the changes, with more information and follow-up on items 3 and 6.
 - Staff will follow-up at the May LSAB meeting and circulate verbiage via email in the meantime.

- Ron asked when DNR is looking for the board to make recommendation to the BOCC. Casey said ideally before the growing season.

Open Space Restoration Projects – Meegan

- 2023-2025 Restoration Projects
 - Work DNR is currently engaged in, including Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) which are projects over \$50,000.
 - Moving forward with restoration planning and implementation on three existing crop land areas.
 - Key Outcomes:
 - Primary outcomes include restoration of 2 open spaces cropland areas back to riparian/wetland habitats or upland native grasslands.
 - Areas restored to native habitat have significant ecological benefits while supporting grazing/ranching agricultural uses.
 - LCDNR Guiding Principles around agriculture.
 - If primary use goals/outcomes are cropland agriculture, and public access is not desired/practical, consider transfer of fee ownership (encumbered with a CE) to a private farmer or entity.
 - If primary goals/public benefit is not cropland; convert the cropland to a native plant community and apply grazing as appropriate.
 - Ex. LTF – actively keeping CE but sell fee value to a private agricultural farmer.
 - Benefits:
 - Habitat – native plant species, pollinators, biodiversity, landscape connection
 - Agricultural – native vegetation can be leased for livestock grazing.
 - Soils – rebuild soil structure, stability and resiliency, carbon sequestration.
 - Water – water rights redirected to in-stream flows and wetland creation use for ecological benefits, ag recharge offsets for other agricultural owners in the County.
 - Matches LC climate strategy and state water plan goals.
 - Trade-offs
 - Less land where crops are harvested.
 - Existing crop land leases changed (to rangeland) or not renewed. Would be lost but could shift to grazing.
 - Current Project 1: Red Mountain OS – Table Mountain
 - Goal: Restore ~½ mile of perennial stream; develop cattle water source/spring; restore 2 miles of roads and house footprint (for cattle stream).
 - Outcomes:
 - Riparian and wetland creations (support most biodiversity but compromise <2% of county land cover)
 - Improved habitat for native species (pollinators, native fish, grassland bird, amphibians – all currently in decline)
 - Added ~1800 acres of grazing land to Red Mtn. OS.
 - Enhanced use of water rights to instream flows, wetland creation, recharge wetlands that benefit agriculture, livestock water.
 - Carbon sequestration and soil health.
 - CIP Projects:
 - Current Project: Red Mtn OS – Boxelder Creek Corridor
 - Goal: Restore hayfield and connect 1 mile of stream channel/riparian habitat.
 - The creek begins in Wyoming and flows 4 miles through Red Mtn OS.
 - DNR has a dedicated instream flow on the creek and owns water shares.
 - Current Project: River Bluffs Open Space – Poudre River Corridor
 - Goal: Restore hayfield to native wetland/riparian and grassland habitat.

- From 2017 to 2019, DNR completed a restoration project to reengage the flood plain. The current project is in the next phase and will address the hayfields on both sides of the stream.
 - DNR owns substantial water rights on this property.
 - Commissioner Shadduck-McNally asked if these projects were happening before or after the bird surveys being done in the area.
 - Meegan provided information that the Bird Observatory is doing surveys in these areas, which started a few years ago. They will be ongoing and conducted before and after restoration efforts.
- Future restoration
 - Long-View Farm Open Space
 - Current dryland wheat farm agricultural lease.
 - Short-term Goal:
 - Partner with lessee to implement practices that align with DNR's land management strategy to improve soils and habitat values. Funding from NRCS EQUIP grant.
 - Long-term Goal/Outcome:
 - Restoration to native grassland/prairie system. Improved habitat for native species. Transition to rangeland agricultural use. Carbon sequestration and soil health.
 - Property includes 5000 acres conserved between Fort Collins and Loveland. The farm is approximately 640 acres.
 - There is an active lease which will be renewed for another 5-year term.
 - DNR is working with the landowner to implement an NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service) plan. This plan was co-developed with DNR and follows best practices for improving soil and habitat. It is possible to phase the planning.
 - The grant cost share from NRCS is available to landowners but not directly DNR.
 - Carbon sequestration and soil health are the most important goals.
- Questions/Feedback:
 - Ron asked about potential conflicts between leases and fencing properties. He continued, questioning how these would impact public access and the hunting program.
 - Meegan stated Red Mountain OS is a unique property and DNR has not had any issues with cattle and the public, but it is also addressed in the lease contracts. All hunters who draw a permit are given full information, rules, and regulations before they participate.
 - Ron noted the hunting lottery ends in February and is drawn in March. Ryan asked what species are hunted. Ron said elk, mule deer, and pronghorn. Hunters apply with DNR for the permit then receive a license from CPW.
 - Pat inquired if the hayfield to the west at River Bluffs would be removed or adjusted. Meegan replied this is something staff are still working out and using a Request for Information to engage possible options for. There are limitations to holding the water.
 - Josh asked if seasonals would assist with these restoration projects. Meegan replied, it will be both full-time staff and seasonals. For larger projects, DNR will hire a contractor and monitor with seasonals. Table Mountain will be conducted in-house.
 - Josh followed up, asking if the prospect of this type of work helps to recruit staff. Casey said job postings for the Land Stewardship Worker position include restoration language such as "adaptive management work".
 - Ryan inquired about water rights, and if DNR would be able to work through the courts to get use designations changed or if the department would be able to work around the wording to accomplish its goals.
 - Daylan noted it is an engineering exercise. To complete the wetland project, DNR may have to go through the courts for a decree. At Red Mountain, DNR

holds water rights and can donate the instream flows through the state for environmental purposes.

Pollinator Policy Statement

- Meegan said DNR is looking for a board member to participate in a subcommittee to work on development of a pollinator policy statement for the county.
- BOCC adopted the Pollinator resolution which is broad with little detail. DNR, other departments and various board members (including Agricultural Advisory Board, Open Lands Advisory Board and Environmental Science Advisory Board) are tasked with providing the details. Discussion will include ways Larimer County and its residents can address pollinators and describe what can be done and what is already being done to support pollinators and incentivize landowners to participate.
- Ron requested more information about the time commitment and the specifics of what the subcommittee is looking for.
 - Meegan said the subcommittee is small, will meet once in person and follow-up to review a few edits/drafts of the policy statement.
 - Janae shared interest in participating. Ryan Blake offered to be the backup. Meegan will follow up as Janae was absent from the meeting.

Action Items

Other Business

Daylan announced the spring application for the board is now open.

Next Meeting Scheduled

May 18th, 2023 - at 200 W. Oak Street Fort Collins, CO 80524 – Arrowhead Lake Room 433 and via 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 – 6:25 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.