

LARIMER COUNTY PARKS ADVISORY BOARD

MINUTES

Tuesday, June 10, 2014, 5:30 - 8:30 p.m.,

Natural Resources Administrative Offices, 1800 S. County Road 31, Loveland, CO

The mission of the Larimer County Parks and Open Lands Department is to establish, protect, and manage significant regional parks and open lands, providing quality outdoor recreational opportunities and stewardship of natural resource values. We are committed to fostering a sense of community and appreciation for the natural and agricultural heritage of Larimer County for present and future generations.

PRESENT:

Parks Advisory Board members:

Steve Ambrose

Mark DeGregorio

Russ Fruits

Frank Gillespie

Rob Harris

David Hattis

Ron Kainer

Chris Klaas

Linda Knowlton

Stephanie Sigler

John Tipton

Absent:

Mark Caughlan

John Gaffney

Steve Johnson, Commissioner

Forrest Orswell

Staff:

Shannon Barnes

Gary Buffington

Chris Fleming

Dan Rieves

Heather Young

Public:

Charles Grant: Resident of Bellvue, CO which is located 1.5 miles from the former sports track site managed by Larimer County. He is a avid off road motorcyclist. He will be speaking during the Area North of Horsetooth Dam Management Options discussion.

Deborah Shulman: She is a candidate for our new position on the Parks Advisory Board. She will be getting her official notice from the commissioners next week.

The June 10, 2014, meeting of the Parks Advisory Board was called to order at 5:35 p.m. Minutes of the last meeting were approved.

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BOARD MEMBER REPORTS: Linda Knowlton has completed 2 terms on the Parks Advisory Board. Linda's journey with us began in 2006 when we started the Task Force for the Master Plan. Linda has been very dedicated to our department and has served as Chair several times. Thank you for all of your hard work and dedication!

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

GENERAL INFORMATION:

- Our Lands, Our Future partnership planning project received another award – this one from National Association of county planners. This is the third award for this fabulous planning project!
- Our first public meeting kicking off our Master Plan update was held 4/30 at the Agave Room in Fort Collins. About 45 people attended.
- Roberts Ranch tire cleanup has kicked off successfully and is expected to be complete by the end of June.
- Our Big Thompson River Conservation & Recreation planning project is awaiting posting for bids. We hope to have it kicked off in June.
- Walsh Construction was selected to do the Hermit Park flood repairs.
- Signup to receive the latest issue of NR News in your email the 4th Thursday of the month. NR News includes events, updates and all the latest happenings from Larimer county Natural Resources.
- Natural Resource Events for this month: See website <http://www.larimer.org/naturalresources>.
- To sign up for Parks Advisory Board minutes go to <http://larimer.org/subscriptions.cfm> put in your email and click 'subscribe', then check "Parks Advisory Board" box

PRESENTATIONS:

Jr. Ranger Guide Update – Heather Young, Education Program Coordinator:

- The Jr. Ranger Program has been in the research and planning phase for the last 10 years.
- 2012 we decided to implement a Jr. Ranger Program.
- The guide highlights our department's Parks and Open Spaces.
- A committee of rangers from all of our different locations and our education team brainstormed and worked together to develop the guide.
- Junior Ranger Guides from other agencies were studied during the process to see what we liked and didn't like.
- The guide is an education tool used to connect kids and their families to our properties and the area.
- There are 15 activities in the guide.
- The guide is a self-directed activity guide.
- The guide focuses on activities families can do together.
- The guide is designed so a family can complete it over a weekend at one location, or during the entire summer at several properties.
- This is the pilot guide. We will be compiling input from families over the summer before we commit to the final version of the guide.
- 1000 copies were ordered to last the summer and we are running out. 2000 more have just been ordered. The public is very excited for the Jr. Ranger Guide.
- There is a survey on the back of the guide that will provide feedback from parents.

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- We will make final revisions to the guide this winter.
- The final version of the guide will be out next year.
- We do not anticipate many changes to the guide because so much research was done during the development phase.
- The participants will need to complete 5 activities and a pledge to receive a Jr. Ranger badge.
- REI in Fort Collins donated back packs, water bottles, and compasses. Anyone who completes the entire guide will be entered into a drawing to win one of the bigger prizes.
- The Junior Ranger Guide fills a niche for folks who don't want to do a guided hike or campground program.
- The guides will be available at all of our Open Spaces and Parks.
- One of the objectives with the guide is to soften the image of the Park Rangers.
- One of the activities in the guide is the "Meet a Park Ranger Activity" where the child will interview a ranger and ask them questions.

Board & Staff Comments:

Mark DeGregorio: Are the kids going to be required to attend a campground program or a nature program to get their badges or can they do any of the activities?

Heather Young: No, it is not a required component right now. They must complete 5 out of 15 activities to receive a badge. Attending a guided hike or campground program are activity choices. We would like to do a hike or program series specific to the Jr. Ranger Guide. Possibly 3 throughout the summer that are Junior Ranger specific programs.

Mark DeGregorio: For budgeting purposes, how are you planning for the growth of the printing of the badges? In my personal experience with the National Parks, we went from printing 10,000 badges to 20,000 badges in two years. It can be quite expensive.

Heather Young: We have a marketing budget and funds set aside for growth over the next 3 years. After that we will reassess. There are a lot of grants specific to education programs which may be an option as well.

Mark DeGregorio: It is a great program, but there are some challenges.

Frank Gillespie: Do you have an estimation of how much the program might impact the ranger's time?

Heather Young: We think it will be very minimal.

Chris Fleming: The rangers are very excited about the program. The interviews will probably take less than 5 minutes.

Frank Gillespie: At our February meeting there was a presentation on Ranger Program Activity Reporting. It listed the different types of contacts and jobs a ranger does. Will this be another category on the list?

Chris Fleming: No, it would fall under PR (public relations).

David Hattis: It is really difficult to assess the value of public relations. It goes a long way and is very important.

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Heather Young: We are hoping to get some statistics based on focus groups and from the surveys. We can also get some statistics from the number of guides that get turned in and how many badges we issue. The number participants that complete a guide and receive a badge is the true measure of success for the program.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

Area North of Horsetooth Dam Management Options – Dan Rieves, Visitor Services Manager:

- The area north of the Horsetooth Dam is in the Master Plan and was a former sports track site for off road motorcycles.
- A vehicle entrance permit was required and the sports track was managed by a variety of different operational models.
- There are very limited places to ride motor cross especially in the Front Range area.
- Due to complaints of noise and dust coupled with declining visitation, eventually the decision was made to close the sports track. The property has been closed for 10 years.
- This area is identified in the Master Plan, and one of the concepts for the area was an archery range.
- Location, visibility and terrain make the area a good location for an archery range.
- The concept of an archery range was well received. A lot of time, interest, planning and research was put into the concept.
- Some local residents had safety concerns, and were very opposed to the idea of an archery range.
- The archery range topic was very heavy and present at all of our board meetings. It was preventing us from completing other developments in the Master Plan. As a result, the concept was put on hold and preserved so we could focus on other areas in the Master Plan.
- The area is Bureau of Reclamation property.
- User groups interested in the property include: Archery, Motor Cross cycle track, Off road remote control vehicles.
- 85% of the Parks Master Plan will be completed over the next 2 years. We are still deciding what to do with this area.
- The area will be a new fee area in the Larimer County parks system.
- Club involvement or adoption would be helpful.
- Once the decision is made for the property, it will take time and approval from the Bureau of Reclamation.

Board & Staff Comments:

Rob Harris: How close are the neighbors to the property?

Dan Rieves: There are not a lot of houses close to the property. A lot of the noise and dust came from atmospheric conditions.

Deborah Shulman: I live in the area. The noise and dust were terrible. One of the problems had to do with how many people were riding on the track at once. Also, there is a pheasant farm across the street.

Dan Rieves: I have heard that. We would have periods of really high use during a pre-race season. The novice learning to ride were never really the issue. The issue was with the really experienced riders who were training for races. The dynamic of the track was totally different. I appreciate the neighbor's perspective.

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Mark DeGregorio: Several years back, the county looked at turning the area into another campground. There was some very vocal opposition from local residents. I get the feeling no matter what the decision is to put on the property, there will be opposition. Part of the consideration should be looking at the County's Master Plan as well not just the Parks Master Plan.

David Hattis: The department was considering putting a campground at the property?

Dan Rieves: Briefly, there were some challenges and we had other places identified in the Master Plan for campgrounds. We put our energy into those areas.

Linda Knowlton: Why is this property back on the agenda? Have the phone calls about the property increased dramatically?

Dan Rieves: I wouldn't say the calls have increased dramatically but they are getting more organized. I don't have a good answer for people. I think we have some capacity with the board's time to focus on the area and make some decisions. We would like to have some closure before the end of this Master Plan so it doesn't roll over to the next one. I would like to be able to give people an answer.

Frank Gillespie: What were the objections to the archery range?

Dan Rieves: The neighbors in the area were concerned about safety.

Charles Grant: I had spoken to Dan Rieves and inquired about the old motor track area. I understand the concerns about the dust and noise from a motor cross track. I think there are ways to overcome these issues with limited hours and watering the track down frequently. I can see there are a lot of potential options for the area and would like to hear everyone's opinions.

Steve Ambrose: In the Master Plan, it says this area will receive additional study and investigation including the necessary resource surveys and additional NEPA compliance if necessary. What is meant by NEPA compliance particularly in this case?

Dan Rieves: Anytime there is a change in use on Bureau of Reclamation property it has to go through the NEPA process. The Bureau of Reclamation does all of the NEPA work in-house.

Steve Ambrose: Would you have to have an environmental analysis or environmental impact statement?

Dan Rieves: It depends, the Bureau will make that determination.

Steve Ambrose: Working for the Forest Service, anytime we had a controversy of any measure we would go right to an environmental analysis. In terms of the discussion tonight, wouldn't this come up more specifically in the NEPA document adjustment?

Dan Rieves: First, internally we need to make a decision on what we would like to use the property for. Then our staff would do the modeling for the size and scope of the project. Then we will put in a formal request to the BOR. Whatever we do, it will be a process and take some time.

Ron Kainer: If the decision is to open it back up as a motor cross track, how much modification and design work would have to be done?

Dan Rieves: We would probably go through a consultant and get a design that is appropriate for the size and scale of the project. The density of the riders that used the track before was something that we were a little

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uncomfortable with because it is a compressed space. As far as the track construction, we can use experienced staff and equipment and probably complete work in a relatively short amount of time.

Charles Grant: If the track is designed for a beginner or intermediate rider, it would probably keep the more experienced racers on other tracks. This would be helpful with the noise and dust issues.

Dan Rieves: Can you paint us a regional picture of what is available for motor cross riders in this area.

Charles Grant: There are basically 2 places to ride. Berthoud Motor Cross Track and there is another one in Milliken. Larimer County doesn't offer very much for motor cross.

Frank Gillespie: Isn't there a ATV track by the Poudre River on Forrest Service land?

Charles Grant: There is trail riding in the Poudre and Risk Canyon areas, but I am not aware of a track.

Dan Rieves: Kelly Flats is geared toward motor cycles, 4 wheelers and Jeeps. It is off-roading, not track riding.

David Hattis: Is it possible to do compatible use for the property? You could have a track and an archery range?

Charles Grant: Maybe two days a week it could be a motor cross track and the rest of the week it is used as an archery range. It's a big piece of property.

Dan Rieves: Looking at the footprint, it could accommodate both. Anything is possible.

Russell Fruits: Archery targets are pretty easy to set up.

Dan Rieves: The demand for an archery range is about the same as the demand for a motor cross track.

David Hattis: Regarding wildlife habitat, the property is adjacent to riparian areas. Maybe there should be some further evaluation.

Dan Rieves: Since the motor track closed, wildlife is using the property. It is not pristine wildlife habitat.

Chris Klass: When did the motor cross track close? We are 8 years into the Master Plan and have completed 80% of it. This is a parcel that hasn't been completed. Is the county wanting some direction so it is not carried over to the next Master Plan?

Dan Rieves: The track closed in 1999 or 2000. It can be carried over to the next Master Plan. This piece of property garners attention because, in the Bureau footprint, it is one of the few flat accessible pieces of ground that currently doesn't have an activity on it. It is always a topic of conversation.

Stephanie Sigler: Has cyclocross ever been brought up, it seems cyclocross and motor cross would be pretty compatible?

Dan Rieves: Lory State Park offers some cyclocross and are doing a good job. Regionally do we need a cyclocross park? Is that need being filled? There are a lot of user groups interested in this property. We invite them to come to the meetings and present ideas and concepts for the property. I am hoping as a group over the next couple of months we can make some decisions so we can start putting together a package to present to BOR.

Rob Harris: Is there irrigation on this property or water close by?

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Dan Rieves: No, it is fairly arid.

Russell Fruits: What are your action points moving forward on this topic?

Dan Rieves: I would like to come up with a list of possible uses for the property. As we discuss the possibilities and make eliminations, we will keep the user groups informed so they can focus their energy to finding other places to do their activity.

Russell Fruits: Is it too soon to put this on the next agenda as a discussion item at our next meeting?

Dan Rieves: No, I have been taking notes as we have been discussing this and have a list of some possible uses for the property. We can put it on our next agenda.

John Tipton: I would like to mention in regard to motor cross and cyclocross, the high school mountain bike team has been looking for a place to practice and host events. I think this area would be a great multiuse property.

Linda Knowlton: I remember the absolute vehemence from the local residents when we were considering this property for an archery range which is a quiet sport. I can only imagine how opposed they will be with any type of sport that will disturb the peace. I think it is going to be difficult.

Gary Buffington: Getting approval from the local residents is key.

Charles Grant: I am willing to speak with the residents. Not necessarily to get their approval, but to throw out the idea and see what they think about the property and the possible uses for it.

Dan Rieves: I don't think the archery range idea will be as big of an issue. A lot of people who live in the area were not included in the original conversation. I will work on a list of constraints and opportunities for each possible use for the property. As we begin to gain traction with an idea, we will invite some representatives of that user group to our meeting to speak on their own behalf.

Deborah Shulman: What is your budget? How are you going to develop it?

Dan Rieves: First, we will decide what the property is going to be used for. We will then do modeling for the size and scope of the project. Whatever the decision, it will be a fee area.

Deborah Shulman: How do you assess the size of the user group?

Dan Rieves: Talking with the user groups, the constituencies, clubs etc. We are ultra conservative. When it is a new use area, it's tough. We would try to go super heavy on the club adoption side to keep our cost low until we can get some real concrete numbers.

Charles Grant: Since I was a child and began riding, the areas to ride motor cross have diminished exponentially. I appreciate everyone's time and consideration.

David Hattis: On behalf of the board I would like to acknowledge Charles and all the good work he did in putting this together.

ACTION ITEMS - None

STANDING AGENDA ITEMS:

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Park District updates and Parks Master Plan Implementation Progress report – Dan Rieves, Visitor Services Manager, Chris Fleming, Blue Mountain District Manager:

Blue Mountain District:

- We are in the transition phase for the Estes Park Campgrounds at East Portal and Mary's Lake.
- Zenda Smith is the new Campground Manager for Estes Valley Rec. Park District (EVRPD).
- The Estes Park campgrounds opened a week later than scheduled due to water issues.
- Dave Myers is our new maintenance technician III for the Estes Park properties. He has been doing an outstanding job. He previously worked for the City of Fort Collins Natural Areas and has a wealth of knowledge and experience in Parks and Recreation.
- Hermit Park construction began last Thursday.
- We should know by the end of the week if we will be able to open Hermit Park for the July 4th weekend. The rest of the property is scheduled to open around July 19th.
- Walsh construction has begun doing the flood repairs at Hermit Park. We have a project manager living on site doing the day to day monitoring of the project.
- Meeting is scheduled with FEMA tomorrow regarding Hermit Park.
- Wildlife is abundant at Hermit Park since it has been closed. We have had 7 sightings of moose in the last 10 days.
- Carter Lake water levels are full and it is spectacular.
- The parks are extremely busy with camping and day use.
- Carter Lake Sail Club held its 60th regatta last weekend and had a great turnout.
- Ranger Excellence School went extremely well. We had 75 attendees from 15 different agencies.

Horsetooth District:

- Extremely high water levels are causing some parking issues.
- Mark Caughlan and Mike Rossi are out on medical leave.
- Most of the staff at both reservoirs are new and it is a bit of a challenge.
- CAST (Catch A Special Thrill) event was last weekend and went really well with a good turnout.
- Wake surfing tournament event is coming up at the end of June. This is the 2nd year for this event and it will be held at South Bay this year.
- Some supplies have been stolen out of the airstream.

Board & Staff Comments:

Frank Gillespie: Who is responsible for taking care of maintenance issues at the Estes Park campgrounds?

Dan Rieves: Larimer County is, but it is a more collaborative effort with EVRPD.

Chris Fleming: We had a pretty major sewer break at East Portal last weekend. Zenda got involved immediately and helped with the repairs. She has a very good attitude and is optimistic concerning the transition.

David Hattis: I attended a meeting with the Bureau of Reclamation. Zenda was also in attendance and was extremely complementary of Larimer County and the staff. She appreciates the willingness to work with her through the transition of the campgrounds.

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Dan Rieves: We are trying to be very responsive to her needs. We want to have a smooth transition for the campgrounds and not have any setbacks. I think Zenda is going to do a good job.

Dan Rieves: There are not a lot of changes regarding the Big Thompson Canyon properties since our last meeting. We have received a request to apply for a grant to do fish habitat restoration for Glade Park. Forks Park is still in negotiation. We have done some in-house work and volunteer projects to remove debris from Glade Park and make it more safe. The initial debris removal has been done for Narrows Park. The first place we will put dollars on the ground will be Sleepy Hollow. We will most likely do the project in-house.

David Hattis: Are most of the Ranger Excellence School attendees from Colorado?

Chris Fleming: Yes, but we have had some from Wyoming & Kansas as well. This year they were all from Colorado.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

We are moving into the Sales Tax Renewal phase of the Our Lands Our Future Study we have been doing over the last 18 months. We have established a subcommittee, Mark DeGregorio is our representative from the Parks Board. We have enlisted the help from Trust for Public Lands which is a nationwide group that helps organizations with tax initiatives. Through polling, we have decided an extension vs. an increase of the tax is the direction we will most likely go in. It will be an extension of the ¼ cent sales tax over 25 years. We are trying to figure out the splits with regards to Larimer County's dollars. The current splits are: 70/15/15 (70% acquisition, 15% maintenance, 15% flexible). The new splits will be: 35/50/15 (35% acquisition & restoration, 50% maintenance & development 15% flexible). Polling results showed 59% would vote yes for the initiative. We would have liked to see 69%. We need to make a decision concerning the splits by July.

Colorado Parks and Wildlife informed our department the Governor wants to build a trail from Lyons to Estes Park on Hwy 36. They would like the collaboration of Larimer County and Boulder County to see if we can maintain these properties. Our first meeting was held last week. There are a lot of obstacles. The river would be between the highway and the trail. They would like the trail completed in 2 years. I will keep the board updated on the progress.

Board & Staff Comments:

Rob Harris: Is 59% for the tax initiative and 41% against it?

Gary Buffington: 59% was for the initiative, 24% was against the initiative, and 17% was unsure.

Russell Fruits: Are there any opposition groups?

Gary Buffington: None that we are aware of.

John Tipton: What was the sample size of the poll?

Gary Buffington: 500, it seems low, but 350 is an acceptable number.

Rob Harris: Would the new splits be that way for the entire 25 years or would it be gradual?

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Gary Buffington: Yes the splits would stay that way for the entire 25 years. In the last 18 years we have done a lot of acquisition. Over the last 10 years we have been using 29% for maintenance (15% flexible + 15% maintenance). That number will only get bigger.

Steve Ambrose: Are there any other initiatives out there?

Gary Buffington: There are a few small ones out there.

Rob Harris: It seems like a big jump when you see the splits on paper. If it were a gradual split over the 25 years it seems like it would be easier to position.

Gary Buffington: We looked at over 50 different combinations for the splits. We spoke with the citizen group, advisory committees, staff, and Commissioners. We have kicked these numbers around for the last 90 days with different combinations. We are in the final phase of looking at the percentages.

Linda Knowlton: I think the new splits are reasonable. It cost money to maintain these areas.

Chris Klaas: Will the percentages be in the ballot language?

Gary Buffington: Yes

Chris Klaas: The important piece, as you have stated, is to make it clear this is a tax extension not an increase.

Gary Buffington: Exactly, Trust for Public Lands has really helped with the ballot language. The first three words will say, "without increasing taxes".

Frank Gillespie: What are we giving up by not asking for a tax increase?

Gary Buffington: We will be doing less land acquisition. We need to take care of and maintain the properties we have.

Linda Knowlton: The county needs to improve the properties and make them more accessible.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Shannon Barnes

APPROVED:

Russell Fruits, Chair

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<i>Next regular meeting: July 8, 2014, Larimer County Courthouse Office Building, Boyd Lake Room, 200 W. Oak Street, Ft. Collins, CO</i>	Public can view agenda and minutes at www.larimer.org/parks
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