

LARIMER COUNTY PARKS ADVISORY BOARD

MINUTES

Tuesday, November 18, 2014, 5:30 - 8:30 p.m.,
Natural Resources Administrative Office, 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:

Mark DeGregorio
Russ Fruits
Frank Gillespie
David Hattis
Rob Harris
Ron Kainer
Chris Klaas
Deborah Shulman

Absent:

Steve Ambrose
John Gaffney
Forrest Orswell
Stephanie Sigler
John Tipton

Staff:

Gary Buffington
Mark Caughlan
Dan Rieves
Deb Wykoff
Steve Johnson, Commissioner

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 pm. The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

After meeting with Mark Caughlan to learn about our internal and public processes, Deborah Shulman met with some of the people of Bellvue about the land north of the north dam at Horsetooth. As a group, they are not cohesive in their ideas, although they do have ambitious goals for the entire valley. There is an element which will resist any proposals for use of that land. The group will be meeting with Mark Caughlan, Horsetooth Manager, tomorrow.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

GENERAL INFORMATION:

- The Open Space Sales Tax extension was approved by voters on November 4, securing the future of the program through December 2043. It passed by a majority of 82%, which may be a state-wide record! We did not increase the tax; however the County's percent of the tax retained will increase to 50%. We

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currently have about \$3.5 million in our Acquisition Fund; over the life of the tax, we must invest 70% in acquisitions. Right now, long term management takes 49%, but over the life of the tax through 2018, it will average out to 70/30. Gary Buffington noted that effective management of the program over the past 18 years was also a key factor in the public support for the extension. He thanked the Board for their guidance and support.

- Commissioner Donnelly announced today that we have purchased seven acres on the west side of the Keyhole at Devils Backbone!
- [Horsetooth Mountain Open Space upper lot webcam](#) is up and very well received. Visitor comments have been “Should have done this sooner!” to “When are you going to install them at other locations?” It is solar powered and wireless.
- About 1000 adults & children visited our NewWest Fest booth over the weekend of August 16. Seventy-five percent of the visitors were on Saturday.
- At the Corn Roast Festival in Loveland on August 22-23 we saw about 400 people, with the majority of those (350) seen on Saturday.
- We worked with Colorado Lottery to promote LCNR at their County Fair booth. They featured several open lands properties such as Red Mountain Open Space.
- We have added [tipis at Flatiron Reservoir](#) which became available to reserve starting August 28. They have now been removed for the winter.
- Big Thompson Canyon Recreation & Conservation Plan has been awarded to [Logan Simpson Design](#), who has been a consultant for our master planning process and has been an integral part of the Big Thompson River Restoration effort as well. This is a GOCO funded planning effort as part of their flood relief dollars. There are now 90 properties on the list in the new flood damaged area; we hope to cluster those in areas that make sense for conservation and recreation, and not acquire properties that don't meet those criteria. Russ Fruits noted that there are some great opportunities in the canyon for conservation and recreation.
- We obtained a GOCO mini grant to supplement the grant for Pinewood improvements. The mini grant will cover environmental education components such as a natural playscape and an osprey viewing station. The boat ramp is now done; trenching for electrical service is also done.
- We have geo-pdfs (geo-referenced maps) that people can download to their device and use on our trails, with the right app. Cell service is not needed to use them. A staff team is working with the County GIS team to develop a County-specific application.
- We celebrated LCNR's 60th anniversary with the Board of County Commissioners (see poster, attached separately.) The retro design poster has been very popular!
- Trudy Haines/Glen Colton will host the annual board holiday gathering on Thursday, December 11, 2014. You will be receiving an invitation via email for you and a guest.
- 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:

Open Lands Master Plan – Zac Wiebe, Fund Development and Special Projects Specialist

- The Our Lands Our Future study preceded the master plan process – the study won several awards.
- Public feedback process for the Master Plan ends on Friday.
- We have heard overwhelmingly that we should continue to do what we've been doing:

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- Focus on conservation values: Agriculture, river corridors, resources stewardship and water and mineral rights.
- Recreation Vision: Trails, trails, trails!
- We will continue to focus primarily on natural landscapes, river corridors, and ag priority areas with willing landowners.
- Agricultural lands – we will focus on larger acreage, unincorporated areas, with water right. We also want to support emerging younger farmers and ranchers.
- Mineral rights: We have developed maps of locations for drilling which will have the lowest impact on natural resources; and will work with energy development companies.
- Conservation Priority Areas are largely the same as before, with the addition of the Laramie River drainage in the NW corner of the County, where there is a large wedge of privately held land surrounded by USFS land.
- Trails are always #1 of all recreational opportunities we offer. Trails of all types – paved, natural surface, for all types of uses. We are currently applying for 4 grants for trails in the corridor. The Poudre River Trail should be completed in the next 3-5 years. Connecting Loveland and Estes along US34, and/or Lyons and Estes is another priority. There are a total of 5 top priority trails in the plan.
- Backcountry camping, non-motorized boating, and dog off-leash areas were popular ideas for new recreational opportunities.

Board and staff comment:

Deborah Shulman: Can we build trails on conservation easements?

Zac: It depends on terms of the easement agreement. Sometimes we can.

Frank: What about GMA's?

Zac: Growth management areas for the cities – we generally try to avoid those areas. The separator between Ft. Collins and Loveland is no longer a major priority with citizens, because much of that area has been preserved already.

Steve Johnson: There are intergovernmental management issues involved with the GMA's. What we acquire there would eventually be transferred to the city to maintain.

Deborah: What about the Bellvue area? What is the difference between the City and County?

Zac: Bellvue and the Pleasant Valley is a high priority area for both Ft. Collins and the County. There have been discussions with land owners, but nothing has come up yet. The cities currently receive 58% of the total county tax, plus Ft. Collins has its own open space tax, which allowed them to extend out to neighboring areas which impact Ft. Collins. Ft. Collins is also working on a master plan, and may limit their reach in the future.

Gary: The lines are blurred between the County and Ft. Collins – we partner on many projects, and decide on a case-by-case basis which agency should take the lead. The City can hold conservation easements outside the city limit.

Frank: How large an area for dogs off-leash?

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Zac: As big as possible, probably! Boulder has a 100 acre space dedicated to that. However, people always want it to be close to home. Areas on the east side of Horsetooth which would qualify are all managed by Ft. Collins, which will not be offering that option.

Gary: A Parks Master Plan process will be started sometime next year, and this Board will be an important participant in that process.

ACTION ITEMS:

2015 Regulation Updates – Dan Rieves, Carter Lake District Manager

- These regulations fall within 29-7-101CRS, which authorizes regulations by counties for park areas, among other things.
- We have mirror image regulations for the most commonly used state regulations, like bag limits on fish, etc.
- For tickets written under Title 29 – the fines return to the County.
- Changes for 2015 are all “housekeeping” in nature and include:
 - “other reservable units” added to cover tipis
 - References to cabins at Flatiron removed, along with the cabins
 - Permit changes also required reg changes: For example, we no longer have boat permits, and permits are transferable.
 - Softened language on geocaching.
 - Marijuana use is prohibited for those under age 21, and in a public place by anyone. The definition of public place is somewhat hazy; i.e., inside a tent or camper? The intent of our regulation is not to intrude on our campers, unless there is another problem that requires intervention.
 - It is no longer prohibited to possess one ounce or less of marijuana. Possession over one ounce falls outside the scope of our regulations under Title 29.
 - We waited a year to change our regs until local law enforcement agencies decided how to address enforcement on this issue.
 - Two air chambers are now acceptable for inflatable floatables on the reservoirs.
 - Dan and Jim Hawkins took a trip to Illinois to look at patrol boats, and learned that their fines on water safety violations start at \$120.

Board and staff comments:

Russ: Which violations are most prevalent?

Dan: Marijuana citations are common – 90 at Horsetooth this year, and 90% of those were written on the east side of Horsetooth, at Rotary Park. “No PFD” tickets have declined – we have focused on education and providing loaner PFD’s.

David Hattis: Do other agencies have similar regulations and fines?

Dan: We have more than many, because of the diversity of areas we manage; but our fines tend to be lower. These are all petty offenses. We must go through Title 18 for misdemeanors. A few may qualify for a summons, e.g., if there is property damage for which restitution is appropriate.

Russ: How common is the 3.2% alcohol violation?

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Dan: That is state law. We use a common sense approach to enforcement: Quiet, peaceful campers enjoying a drink in their camper – no problem. If there's a big, loud party, where the alcohol becomes the center of the problem, underage drinkers, etc., then this reg is a tool to control the situation.

David: Impact of the rule on no marijuana under age 21?

Dan: It's becoming clearer for our seasonal rangers to know what to do; there is some increased use observed. We only cite about 2% of the people we talk to about offenses; and those are a small percentage of total public contacts. 98% of our visitors are having a good day, and complying with the rules.

David Hattis made, and Frank Gillespie seconded, a motion that the proposed regulation changes for 2015 be approved. Motion approved.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

Horsetooth Office Building Update – Mark Caughlan, Horsetooth District Manager

- Mark listed all the Master Plan projects completed at Horsetooth District over the past 10 years:
 - Inlet Bay Camper Services Building
 - South Bay Camper Services Building
 - 17 new full hook-up Sites at South Bay
 - Remodel of S. Bay swim beach and relocated group use area near it
 - New group use pavilion
 - New swim beach at Sunrise Day Use on the east side of the reservoir
 - Outdoor classroom at S. Bay
 - Reduced boat-in sites and added 3 back-country restrooms
 - And more
- Remaining projects:
 - North of Horsetooth Dam – Still seeking viable options – we're going to wait until the new master plan process to generate those options.
 - Trail connecting Satanka Cove to Lory State Park was not feasible due to steep terrain and private property.
 - Horsetooth new office building and maintenance facility will be built over the next 2-3 years.
- Mark displayed a map of the area to show the proposed location for the office and maintenance buildings
 - Horsetooth is the 2d busiest reservoir in the state, but there is no "front door." There is no obvious place to go to interact with staff, get information, get help, etc.
 - The current location is too small and crowded, and inaccessible to the public.
 - Proposed location is at the intersection of the day use areas and the camping areas, at the south end of the boat parking area at S. Bay.
- Purpose and components of the new office building:
 - Park HQ for Horsetooth Area
 - "Front Door" for Horsetooth Reservoir visitors
 - Office space
 - Visitor services
 - Carry over the "front porch" concept from the Administrative Office building

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- Meeting rooms
- Located near the water with a view up the reservoir
- Staff and visitor parking

- Next steps
 - Architects Studio will be the design and project manager
 - The first design meeting was in October.
 - Go out to bid in May, 2015
 - Construction start after the 2015 recreation season
 - Open June 2016.

- Maintenance building
 - Will stay in current location
 - Old building will be demolished and replaced
 - Improved parking and storage
 - Construction expected to begin in 2016.

- Cost
 - Office building: \$1.2-1.6 million, funded by Lottery, sales tax, and park fund balance
 - Maintenance building: \$750,000, pre-fab metal building

Board and staff comments:

Mark DeGregorio: Total square feet?

Mark: Not determined yet

Russ: Rentable space?

Mark: Not feasible, and not enough space – need to be able to accommodate 200 people and parking. A large room for meetings might be sub-dividable for more flexibility.

David Hattis: Even if it's too busy in the summer, could we attract use in the winter? It's an incredible location and it's close to town. You could do a lot with that property. Also what about educational opportunities?

Mark: Wedding season is the big money-maker for this type of facility. If we can't make it big enough to accommodate that use, then it's a waste to do it. There was also push-back on competition with private enterprise. Need 4000 sf just for that use, plus what we need for staff, etc.

Russ: Hotels in Loveland are at 98% occupancy year-round at this time.

Mark: The visitor lobby will be small and will feature a display by the Bureau of Reclamation about the Colorado-Big Thompson Water Project.

Gary: We plan a larger facility, at a more centralized location, which would include the educational component. We decided that Horsetooth was not the best place to locate that for visitor convenience and accessibility.

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Chris Klaas: Will access be reconfigured at the entrance? Can we move the entrance station farther back from the county road, so you can access the new building without going through the entrance station?

Mark: The steep terrain does not allow moving it.

David: Is the architect local? Have we used them before? What is the life of the building?

Mark: Yes, they are located in Ft. Collins. A life of 25-30 years is our planning objective.

Steve Johnson: Architects' Studio built the alternative sentencing office building for the County, among others.

Mark: This building will look similar to our other buildings, to fit in the setting.

Pinewood Campground Renovation Update – Gary Buffington

- Heavy construction should be completed by the second week of December. The hand work will begin in the spring.
- The total project cost will be around \$1.2 million, due to the much higher construction bids in the current economy; but we decided to go forward now, because this is much needed after 25 years of neglect.
- We hope to be open for the 2015 season.
- The trail all the way around Pinewood is being completed – much of the trail work is done.

STANDING AGENDA ITEMS:

Park District updates and Parks Master Plan Implementation Progress report – Dan Rieves, Carter Lake District Manager, and Mark Caughlan, Horsetooth District Manager

- Water forecast is good: We'll be full by March.
- Finishing Pinewood is the big project for the winter. Getting sites added to the reservation system, and all the other work required to open it is very time-consuming as well.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- Transfer of management for Estes campgrounds back to EVRPD
 - The first three years were difficult – we invested a lot in bringing the facilities back up to an acceptable standard.
 - The past two years were better, but we still haven't recouped all of our initial investment.
 - We left the property in much better shape than we found it.

David: How confident are you that EVRPD will manage it well?

Gary: We've done our best to assist them. Campground management is a lot more difficult and demanding than it looks. The Estes police department was concerned to hear that we are leaving.

David: What about other innovations like the cameras at Horsetooth Mountain Open Space (HTMOS)? Automated pay stations working well? Airstream? Tipis?

Mark: The camera at HTMOS is working out well – allows public to check it out before they make the drive up. The automated pay stations are also working great!

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Deborah: Boating day fees?

Gary: We have increased self serve revenues \$100,000 with the automated pay stations. We attribute that to the convenience factor – most people will pay if you make it easy for them.

Dan: Airstream is extremely popular. Tipis have also gotten a good reception, and look like they fit there on that site at Flatiron.

David: Would the new master plan look at back-country camping sites?

Gary: Start thinking about ideas you would like to see included in a new master plan. The board will be involved in the public process as well.

Dan: The financial viability of these campgrounds will be a point of discussion – different pricing models and tools are how we will stay viable over time, versus trying to expand our facilities indefinitely.

David: How did the parking changes on the east side work out?

Mark: We were spending an inordinate amount of time policing that area, where no fees were charged. So changing the parking rules and providing the free lot was a big help.

Dan: It really paid off. IT is a much cleaner area now.

Gary: With population growth, management of recreation will become more challenging over the next 5-10 years. At some point, we will have to start saying we're full, come back later. Reservations may become necessary.

Dan: Making sure it's also still an opportunity for a wide range of financial capabilities is also important.

David: Paddleboarding – how did that work out this summer? Did you experience any conflicts between uses?

Mark: Very few complaints this year. Users modified when they come up to lower use times.

Dan: We have lots of no-wake opportunities on the reservoir, and a lot of other places to go.

The holiday party is coming up – put it on your calendar! And remember to RSVP!

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The meeting was adjourned at 8 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Wykoff

APPROVED:

Russell Fruits, Chair

*Next regular meeting: December 9, 2014, 1800 S.
County Road 31, Loveland, CO*

Public can view agenda and minutes at
www.larimer.org/parks
