

Larimer County Parks Advisory Board

The mission of Larimer County Department of Natural Resources 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.

MINUTES

Scheduled times are subject to change.

Date: March 13, 2018

Time: 5:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Location: Larimer County Courthouse, 200 W. Oak St., Fort Collins, CO, 2nd Floor, Lake Loveland Room.

Contact: Please contact Emmy at ellisoea@co.larimer.co.us or 970-619-4462 if you are unable to attend.

Members		Staff		Guests	
Brian Rasch		Dan Rieves	x	Kathy Maher	
Chris Klaas		Gary Buffington	x		
Deborah Shulman	x	*Stephen Johnson	x		
Frank Gillespie	x	Ken Brink			
Mark De Gregorio		Mark Caughlan	x		
Michael Robinson	x	Emmy Ellison (minutes)	x		
Nick Clark	x	Lori Smith	x		
Robert Harris	x	Todd Blomstrom	x		
Russell Fruits	x				
Stephanie Hansen	x				
Steve Ambrose	x				

x = present

*commissioner

1. CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS – 5:44 p.m.
2. PUBLIC COMMENT
 - a. Commissioner Johnson mentioned a concern from a citizen regarding mountain bike issues on Larimer County trails including being hit by cyclists/trail damage. Suggestion for separate trails for cyclists, hikers and horses (similar to Bobcat), weekends without mountain bikes, etc. That citizen also had a concern about dogs being off leash. It was noted that those concerns did not require a response and that the problem cyclists are

likely not the regular users. Concern will also be passed on to the Open Lands Advisory Board members.

3. AGENDA REVIEW

4. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF LAST MEETING MINUTES

- a. Robert Harris moves to approve last meeting's minutes, Stephanie Hansen seconds. Motion passed.

5. INFORMATION & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- a. Natural Resource events for this month: See <http://www.larimer.org/naturalresources>.
- b. To sign up for Parks Advisory Board minutes, go to <http://larimer.org/subscriptions.cfm>, enter your email, click 'Subscribe,' and then check the 'Parks Advisory Board' box.
- c. Introduction of Kathy Maher from the Colorado Native Plant Society (CoNPS), who stated that a member of that group will be attending the PAB meetings moving forward. Kathy described the Colorado Native plant Society and its relevance to and interest in PAB meetings. Member question regarding the North Dam's proposed 3D archery range and the potential willingness of CoNPS to provide revegetation guidance. It was noted that CoNPS may be able to assist, particularly with a volunteer force.

6. UPDATES & REPORTS

- a. General plan for updating the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) over the next three months, including the involvement of Parks and Open Lands Advisory Boards – Todd
 - i. Last year was Larimer County's first CIP, where all departments identified projects to be delivered over the next 5 years for improvements that are over \$50,000. Primary objectives are to set priorities, identify funding and utilize public involvement. First year is most challenging.
 - ii. Process includes strategic alignment, project programming, community priorities, fiscal constraint, and funding sources and allocations. Larimer County is seeking assistance from board for some of those elements. Will be working a little every month (shifted down one month from schedule on slide show). In April, review Strategic Alignment and Master Plans and review funding sources and eligibility. In May, review potential projects and costs and review criteria for setting priorities. In June, review the draft of the 5-year CIP and provide comments. In July, recommend 5-year CIP for Natural Resources.
 - iii. Member question regarding what minimum fund balance is and how the accounts are prioritized. It was noted that the alignment of priorities between PAB and OLAB can be a challenge and there may be a joint meeting. Accounts can't be drained to zero, so a minimum fund balance exists to avoid that.
 - iv. Great opportunity for board members to represent citizens of Larimer County through advising on county spending.
 - v. Meegan will attend in April to discuss Master Plans for Parks and Open Lands. Will then discuss community priorities, then funding sources.

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- vi. Board was advised not to focus too much on details at this early stage as it is a very dynamic process. Projects may not change much but allocations will.
 - vii. Member question about how projects are prioritized. It was noted that the Senior Leadership team discusses priorities, generally based on need (deteriorating infrastructure, generation of operational dollars, public interest, etc.). Helpful that design work is included in first phase.
 - viii. Member question regarding whether or not total cost is design plus construction and if annual expenditure might include design for a year. It was noted that the total estimated project cost will have each year's authorized expenditures subtracted from it. Any under budget items will have the savings rolled into other aspects of the same project.
 - ix. Importance of design as first phase, example of plan to build flush restroom at Carter Lake's South Shore. After further exploration it was discovered that due to lack of nearby utilities, it would have cost \$1 million to build. Planning and design had to go a different, more efficient and cost effective route.
 - x. Plan flexibility for grant funding opportunities, etc.
 - xi. Member question regarding whether or not the CIP is in lieu of a depreciation list. It was noted that there will be a fixed asset discussion in the future. Can either depreciate assets or monitor quality of assets, as indicated in GASB 34.
 - xii. Member question regarding a tour of CIP projects. It was noted that a group tour would be possible, likely a 3-hour Carter Lake project tour.
 - xiii. Member question regarding definition of 'closeout.' It was noted that closeout is a term that will be phased out, but is a construction term relating to the final, finishing year of a project, low expenditures but small amount left on contract. If a project has a shorter timeline, closeout is used towards the end.
- b. Park Law Enforcement Association (PLEA) conference update – Mark
- i. Agencies from every state belong to the PLEA. At conference in San Marcos, Texas, representatives from Florida, Georgia, Minnesota, Arkansas, California, Ohio, and Colorado attended. 'Natural Disasters' was the conference theme.
 - ii. Speakers from the National Weather Service (NWS) informed the group that their technology can track heat signatures and locate spot fires from lightning strikes. Also, if a special event is occurring (e.g., triathlon), a local NWS person can be assigned to assist in tracking the weather. Discussed the processes and effects of the latest hurricanes in Houston, TX and how to improve notification/warning systems during flood and/or fire situations. NWS can send local folks to assist at the command post during weather crises.
 - iii. Larimer County manages over 100 special events within county parks per year. Cincinnati Park Police handle regular, large special events (for example, every Thursday night in the summer they manage a 15,000 person Lake Erie beach concert). Uniting multiple organizations that handle large park crowds allows for valuable discussions regarding static issues such as overcrowding and funding.

- iv. Visioning session with Minnesota State Parks representative who is working with local Somalis to provide law enforcement training with the goal of reestablishing the Somali Police Force in Somalia. Shows the broad scope of the Park Ranger profession.
 - v. Two PLEA awards presented were the President's Award to the Larimer County Ranger Excellence School and the Member of the Year Award to Mark Caughlan. Congratulations!
 - vi. National organizations are working successfully to unify the profession – went from 500 members last year to 2,000 members this year.
- c. Park District updates and reports
- i. Dan Rieves, Carter Lake District Manager
 1. At Carter Lake, spring coming fast, hiring mode. Full-time Ranger II Brittan Kuhlman has completed training and is working successfully in his new role. Added an 11-month maintenance crew position, made job offer yesterday that was accepted. Fully staffed currently.
 2. ANS program – two bills, one passed last year for bridge funding to get to this point, second bill in the House for this year is tracking well. Specifically, House Bill 18-1008 passed 4-1 in Senate Finance, heading to Senate Appropriations, unknown hearing date. Should address the funding issues moving forward. This year is difficult because the funding is less than it was last year.
 3. 475,000 boat inspections done last year in the state of Colorado. 60,000 of those were on either Carter Lake or Horsetooth Reservoir. There were 3 interceptions of infested boats at Horsetooth which is tied with Pueblo as the highest in the state. Program is working.
 4. Member questions regarding details of the intercepted, infested boats and the process. It was noted that one boat was from Lake Mead, other two from Great Lakes. Infested boats are seized, quarantined and decontaminated. Process is lengthy and expensive. New bill addresses the cost, allowing the state or county to seek restitution for those costs.
 5. Process to provide quality customer service within a further reduced budget. Last year it was \$300,000, year before was \$365,000, this year will be \$260,000. Only two line items in budget, one is equipment (about \$5,000) and the other is program staffing (not including the overhead the dept. has to run the program which is about \$60,000). Best way to reduce costs is to reduce boating access (reduce number of inspectors out by shortening boat ramp hours, consolidating access to one boat ramp per reservoir during week, possibly two on weekends).
 6. Decontamination process is labor intensive and in 2016, Larimer County had 1,325 decontaminations and flushes. One species that previously triggered a decon/flush was delisted (Waterflea) which helped Carter Lake. Science of Waterfleas proved that the species considered a



nuisance was not at Carter Lake. Last year there were only 601 decontaminations and flushes, would like to cut that number in half moving forward and would like to transfer responsibility to boat owners. Proposing that during peak hours of peak seasons when capacity is an issue, if a boater needs a decon or flush, they may be told to come back during off-peak hours to allow the no-risk boaters in. May be bringing recommendation for approval to board. Also considering a soft opening for educating boaters about potential change, then will enforce the new policy after the official opening.

7. Member question about decon/flushing triggers. It was noted that it depends on if the boat is sealed, what the last body of water it was on, how much water is on board, inspection results. Industry working to build boats that are easier to decon/flush as well as building better decon machines.
8. Member question about inspections at Sail and Saddle Club at Horsetooth. It was noted that that launch is maintenance only. They launch boats at South Bay and are subject to the same rules and inspections as public.
9. Member question about clarification of rules regarding boats coming from Lake Powell. It was noted that if boats are sealed from Powell with receipt and have been out of the water for 30 days, that is acceptable.
10. Member question about how many inspectors are working at any given time and if volunteers are utilized. It was noted that it depends on the ramp, but there are up to 6 inspectors working at Carter Lake's South Beach and that volunteers are no longer used for inspections as certification is required by the state.
11. Funding partnerships are with Northern Water and Colorado Parks and Wildlife. Expecting \$150k from State of Colorado, hoping for \$100k from Northern, Larimer County will cover \$150k plus, plus overhead, staffing. If bill passes, it wouldn't start until July 2019. Bill is revenue generating and would raise boat registrations, require separate ANS seal, fees for out of state boaters – not contributing anything beyond bill to protect against ANS. Projected revenue is speculative but looks just short of full funding from 3 years ago. Will not help this season.
12. Commissioner question regarding what the danger is to the boating public and whether Northern or BOR could halt boating if the ANS program is not adopted. It was noted that Northern Water and BOR would both prohibit boating if an inspection protocol was not followed. Honor system that has been utilized in certain areas is becoming less popular, BOR and Northern both lean towards removing recreational boating if necessary. If ANS were introduced, results would be

catastrophic for both BOR and Northern power plant/energy infrastructures.

13. Colorado was mussel-free for 6 months, then found half of a mussel veliger in Green Mountain Reservoir. This year it was discovered that there were more than 16 launch points at Green Mountain Reservoir that were not being inspected.
 14. Press releases regarding ANS will be going out soon. Had boat ramp hour determination meeting today.
 15. Member question regarding non-motorized vessel exemptions. It was noted that non-motorized boats do not tend to hold water and they don't tend to stay in contact with water for long periods of time. There is still a large amount of information directed towards non-motorized users including ANS standards for fishing equipment. Harder to track non-motorized vessel use because they are not required to register.
 16. Member comment requesting greater accessibility of educational materials for non-motorized users.
 17. Will be bringing updated information to county commissioners once commitments have been gained from Northern.
 18. Fee structure study this year will include boat charges.
- ii. Mark Caughlan, Horsetooth District Manager
1. Hired ANS Coordinator, 10-month position, goal is to open Sunday, April 1st. Hiring supervisor for that position and in the midst of hiring the inspectors, ANS inspector training this weekend. Rangers hiring seasonals, cycle of retaining rangers right now.
 2. Ranger Excellence School is second week of May, new ranger Max is in FTO and will be full-time in June. Process usually takes one year from hiring to working and costs about \$100,000. Have opening right now, 50 applicants. Requires degree and two years' experience. Brittan and Max are exceptional professionals. Filling the opening may take until summer. It can take some time but is worth finding good candidates.
 3. Catching up on maintenance, finishing repairing damage around swim beach on Horsetooth, cleaning up dead trees that have fallen into reservoir, campground maintenance, Mike Rossi and his crew are busy and hiring.
 4. Rotary Park graffiti problem persists, have made several arrests over the winter, working to better manage the issue. Seeing more vandalism at some of the busy day-use areas on east side of Horsetooth.
 5. Visitor count study continues, just hired another seasonal to help with that, started last week. The day-use numbers on the east side of Horsetooth are very high. Campgrounds full this weekend, busy all year.
 6. Water levels look average for this coming year. Snowpack is not great, the basin is around 90%, still have another month or so to catch up.

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7. Member question about update on BOR dam repair. It was noted that the Soldier Canyon Dam, which supplies Fort Collins' water, had to have a bulkhead installed. Going through EA and NEPA process in order to install a secondary system within the next five years. Also working on the trash rack covering the main outlet structure at Horsetooth.
8. May present a vote to board regarding recurring vandalism issues. Electronic gates on east side of Horsetooth are being broken, been through 7 gates in last year and a half, \$1,500 to fix them each time. Plan to replace with hard gates and will close at night. May close some days in the winter, may close Sunrise all winter to curtail vandalism and graffiti (spent \$500 replacing bathroom windows last week). Costing time and money, closing may be best option.

7. DISCUSSION ITEMS - none

8. ACTION ITEMS - none

9. US BUREAU OF RECLAMATION UPDATE - none

10. BOARD MEMBER REPORTS - none

11. DIRECTOR'S REPORT: Gary Buffington

- a. Two-year goals from last year are rolling over to this year, one is the Visitor Count study/survey on Parks and Open Spaces. Hard numbers resulting from surveys and counts will be very helpful during budget times. That study should wrap up this fall, estimating over 2 million visitors. Recreation is expanding dramatically in Colorado.
- b. Working to increase accountability and responsibility in the budget process. Defining 'emergency,' maintaining flexibility within constraints.
- c. Office expansion at Carter Lake Administrative Offices, consultants doing staff interviews and working on design options to maximize building's footprint, possible 6-8 new offices out the south side of building.
- d. Hiring consultant to discuss fee structure, considering responsible increase. Last raised cost of a day use pass 8 years ago, state parks also considering fee increase, Rocky Mountain National Park looking at large fee increase. Can be tied to CIP if necessary.

12. NEXT MEETING SCHEDULED: 4/10/2018 at Natural Resources Administrative Offices, 1800 S. County Rd. 31, Loveland, CO.

13. EXECUTIVE SESSION: Pursuant to C.R.S. (24-6-402(4)(a)) for discussion pertaining to purchase, acquisition, lease, transfer, or sale of any real or person property interest.

14. ADJOURN – 7:12 p.m.

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