



OPEN LANDS ADVISORY BOARD (OLAB)

MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, May 23, 2013

5:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Loveland Council Chambers, 500 E. Third St., Loveland

The mission of the Larimer County Open Lands Program is to preserve and protect significant open space, natural areas, wildlife habitat, and develop parks and trails for present and future generations. These open lands provide opportunities for leisure, human renewal and protection of our natural and cultural resources.

Members Present

Carl Sorrentino	At-large
Mary Banken	At-large
Nancy Wallace	Planning Commission
Peter Kast	At-large
Trudy Haines	At-large

Staff Present

Charlie Johnson, Land Agent
Gary Buffington, Director of Natural Resources
Kerri Rollins, Open Lands Program Manager
Meegan Flenniken, Resource Program Manager
Sandy Werkmeister, Dept Specialist
Travis Rollins, Natural Resource Mgr Visitor Services
Steve Gibson, Senior Ranger
Zac Wiebe, Fund Development Specialist
Casey Cisneros, Weed Control Specialist
Tim Meyer, Land Agent
Pam Mayhew, Volunteer Coordinator

Members Absent

John Phipps	Town of Estes Park
Suzan Fritchel	At-large
Ladonna Lee	At-large
Gerry Horak	City of Fort Collins
Paul Alaback	Town of Berthoud
Hugh McKean	City of Loveland
Steve Vessey	At-large

REGULAR MEETING

- Peter called the meeting to order at 5:05.
- There were no changes to the April 25, 2013 meeting minutes. There was not a quorum, so approval of the April minutes was tabled until June.
- There were no changes to the agenda.

INTRODUCTIONS: Kerri introduced Pam Mayhew, our new Volunteer Coordinator. Pam has extensive experience working with and managing volunteers both with the City of Westminster and most recently heading up the volunteer program for the 9Health Fair. Pam said she is spending her time getting to know the staff, volunteers and existing programs for the season. She is looking forward to the future and the potential for the program.

INFORMATION

- July OLAB meeting is cancelled.
- COSA conference is in Crested Butte September 9-11, 2013. Registration will begin in June. We will send a web link out to the board before the next meeting. Board members are encouraged to attend. Contact Zac at 679-4534 with questions.
- Kerri and Zac attended a GOCO stakeholder meeting. They will be applying for funds this year to construct Poudre River trail elements.
- Carl asked about June 6 in Hermit Park. Kerri passed around the press release of all the events occurring June 3-9 for Land Conservation Appreciation Week and National Get Outdoors Day. She also reports that the [Get Outdoors Colorado](#) website is launched and encouraged everyone to check it out to see what activities are available.

- Casey Cisneros reported that on April 13, bare root stock (275), willow cuttings (200) and cottonwood bulbs (50) were planted in the Indian Creek Drainage at Devil's Backbone Open Space as part of the continuation of the restoration of the area.
- Meegan met with Greeley Habitat Management and engineering to discuss repaving a section of the Pleasant Valley Trail in Lions Open Space, damaged by the restoration work last fall. The 170 foot section will be repaved in the next few weeks. The trail will remain open, but will be rerouted for a time. Natural Resources will cover 50% of the cost.
- Kerri relayed that the project with Colorado Lottery and a Light hawk helicopter to shoot video of our open spaces just finished shooting footage this morning. We get to keep the B-roll to use as we wish. The Board will have opportunity to view some of the footage.
- 2012 Annual Reports were handed out. We were able to build from last year's template, doing much of the work in house and using a little less expensive paper, which saved money. If you would like more reports, please call Sandy at 679-4592.
- The Commissioners approved the reappointment of three board members for a second 3-year term: Carl Sorrentino, Mary Banken and Suzan Fritchel. The Planning Commission also reappointed Nancy Wallace for a second 3-year term. Welcome all (again!)
- Gary Buffington reminded the Board of the Pro Challenge Cycling event on August 24, 2013. Riders will travel through Estes Park and down the Big Thompson Canyon, which will be closed for four hours for the event. It is going to hit most of northern Colorado and be a huge logistical effort for everyone. Gary will share the route with the Board, possibly by the next meeting.
- Report from the Open Lands Operations Manager - See enclosure. Travis highlighted a couple of the items from his report:
 - Three running events held at Horsetooth Mountain and Devil's Backbone. These types of events promote the running community taking some ownership of their open spaces. Travis generally schedules them on Sunday mornings early so the race is done in time for day users.
 - We hosted the third annual Ranger Excellence School on May 6-10, 2013 at the Ranch in the First National Bank building. This is tied in with the Colorado Open Space Alliance and is a great resource for gaining knowledge, particularly for those areas that do not have so many resources for training in their community. Fifty-eight (58) rangers attended from 15 different agencies.
 - Early trail repair really helped them out this wet spring.

SALES TAX REPORT & TRENDS REPORTS

- Kerri announced the good news that for the first time since 2008, sales tax revenue is beyond the 2008 level and moving upward again.
- She reminded the Board that the sales tax report shows the old distribution calculations on one side and the new method (including Berthoud, Johnstown and Windsor) on the other. The cities receive the distribution based on population or sales tax generation, whichever benefits the city the most. For this April of 2013 report, Fort Collins, Berthoud, Wellington & Windsor received it by population. The others by sales tax generation.
- At the beginning of the tax, Larimer County received about 41% of the tax. Today we are receiving about 42-43%. Per the ballot language, we can receive no less than 35% and no more than 55% and we remain just about in the middle.
- Mary asked whether we are considering the implication of the Internet sales tax situation. Kerri responded not yet and agreed it is time to start asking questions.

PRESENTATION

- Casey Cisneros started by sending around their latest publication titled *Knapweeds in Colorado*, as well as earlier publications *Weed Management Reference Guide* and *Thistles of Colorado*.
- Casey presented about Weed Management on Larimer County Parks and Open Lands" which encompasses nearly 33,000 acres and 79 miles of trail. *All* activities promoted on the lands are great ways to spread seeds. His presentation included:
 - What is a weed, types of weeds and an explanation regarding the competitive edge of weeds.

- The goal of controlling weeds in Larimer County parks and open lands.
- Methods for Controlling Weeds.
 - Emphasis on Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR)
- **Integrated Weed Management (IWM)**. Preferred method because results are more sustainable & effective, they minimize adverse effects to non-target plants, allow use of herbicides judiciously and allows for work on rainy or windy days.
 - Physical Control
 - Cultural Control and Re-vegetation
 - Biological Control (what can be used is determined by the Dept of Agriculture Insect and Weed Programs)
 - Chemical Control
 - Monitoring & Mapping
- Resources and Publications
 - LC Weed District website - <http://larimer.org/weeds/>
 - TG, KG and Weed Management Reference Guide
 - CDA, CWMA, CSU Extension, SER, ELSA websites
 - USDA Plants Database

The entire presentation is available by request from the Department of Natural Resources.

- When asked about the impact of the recent fire Casey responded that from a weed standpoint, the fire causes any perennial plants in the area to explode all over the landscape. Increased numbers and bigger. The Weed District has received funding from the State to go into private property and offer help with this surge of new weed growth.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Our Lands, Our Future Regional Study – New information & new results

- Zac Wiebe indicated that the study will be wrapped up in about a month and reminded the Board that the impetus for the study (for us) is to renew our 2001 Master Plan.
 - A part of showing overall economic benefit is enhanced property values. Based on various studies, Larimer County is using a 5% enhanced property value for property located near conserved lands.
 - Trudy questioned why we are being so ultra-conservative, when reports clearly indicate higher percentages. Zac responded that the Board of Realtors had a similar response, yet, he suggested that for public outreach and political purposes, we want to be conservative. We may create more of a range, depending on County geographical location, once the report is final.
 - Peter agreed that a range will be helpful, but also agreed that you cannot present numbers that are not realistic to the public or they are easily dismissed.
 - Meegan added that our study is focused on local lands, not Colorado as a whole, which can create some of those larger numbers.
 - Zac confirmed that showing an overall annual \$750,000 property tax gain is based on the 5% figure.
 - Regarding recreation & tourism, several board members and staff questioned the number of non-resident visitors indicated on the survey. Other tracking systems have shown that 60% of park visitors are not Larimer County residents. Discussion ensued about the difficulty of tracking such data accurately. Zac will follow-up on these numbers.
 - Zac shared the Agriculture Industry economic impact numbers, which support the continuation of conservation of our working farms and ranching for economic reasons as well as conservation reasons.
- Zac explained to the Board that we are taking more of a qualitative approach to the numbers rather than highlighting the numbers themselves. Conservation does spur economic development. Time and time again this area ranks as one of best places to live. Our statistics support this idea. Our message is “Conservation = High Quality of Life = Economic Development”.
- Trudy questioned that we are listing Fort Collins as having 21 Fortune 500 companies, while not mentioning all of the smaller companies that probably started up here because of the land, and employ the majority of the people.
- Zac updated the Board on 2nd survey numbers, outreach efforts and public involvement overall, cautioning the Board to remember that these 2nd survey results are not a statistically valid survey—neither group. After much

discussion, Nancy summarized it nicely, that for the purpose of learning what people are interested in, for what to emphasize in the master plan, the survey is valid. It is not a survey to use for quoting numbers of people.

- Zac went on to share the rating importance of land conservation options which shows again that people are really looking for a balance between conservation and recreation. The Board discussed recreation preferences.
- Regarding visitation experience and level of crowding, Devil's Backbone and Horsetooth were mentioned most often, although people mostly indicated that the crowding did not bother them.
- Zac reported that while we are being very careful with stats regarding support of the HPOS tax, in general there seems to be pretty good support for an extension of the tax we already have. There is not as much support for an increase but preference for timing of the tax ranged from 10 years to perpetuity.
 - Trudy thought the actual data should be shared with the Board. Zac informed everyone that the Regional Study Committee agreed not to share specific data with anyone at this time.
 - Trudy suggested using the school of thought that if you put numbers out there that indicate "everyone" likes it, it can become self-fulfilling by that influence.
- Zac showed some of the capabilities of putting the data into the mapping tool, reviewed the report card of protected lands in the area and the financial model.
- Trudy requested to go back to the slide regarding support for future HPOS, She felt it was too mild, considering the strong support shown via the survey. After discussion, Nancy suggested "Both surveys reflect support for extension of the existing HPOS sales tax. Additional research and polling is needed to make final determinations." Zac agreed to take their input back for review.

Open Space Carrying Capacity - Overcapacity Issues, Current Efforts & Potential Long Term Solutions

- Carrying capacity refers to the number of individuals who can be supported in a given area, within natural resource limits, and without degrading the natural, social, cultural, and economic environment for present and future generations.

Travis Rollins said running over carrying capacity is often referred to as "Loved to death." Capacity issues are rapidly getting worse and it is quite amazing to see the changes of the last three years and even just the last six months. People are really enjoying the open spaces, particularly those most convenient to the towns and urban areas. Steve Gibson and Travis shared the issues this is causing from the field perspective.

Overcapacity Issues

- Visitor Experience - Parking Issues, Overcrowded. At HTMOS, what was put in as an overflow parking lot 5 years ago is typically full every day now during peak hours, all day on the weekends.
 - There are 84 spaces at HTMOS, matched to the miles of available trail for positive visitor experience. At least some equestrian spots are always kept open.
 - Travis added that the size of the parking lots is well thought out and intentional with capacity limits in mind.
- Neighbor Relations - Parking in neighborhoods and along County Roads
 - Problem Areas: Overhill Drive, CR 38E, Thompson Heights, Shoreline Drive, PFA Station 9, Skyline Drive, Hidden Valley Drive
- Resource Damage-
 1. Trail Widening - Large Crowds cause visitors to walk next to the existing trail to make room while they pass each other
 2. Wildlife Habitat - People ignoring "no entry" signs. Falcons did not nest at Devil's Backbone Open Space last year.
 3. Social Trails -

Current Efforts:

- Volunteer Ranger Assistants in parking lots (almost impossible to fill this job).
- Social Media, but need to increase followers/users for this to work.
- Training visitors to park first, then pay (if/when a parking spot opens in the lot.)

- Trying to direct them to other areas and even other local agencies: Eagle's Nest, Red Mountain, Ramsay Shockey & River Bluffs.
 - City of Fort Collins Natural Areas: Bobcat Ridge & Coyote Ridge.
 - CO Parks & Wildlife: Lory State Park.

Potential Long Term Solutions

- Technology - Utilizing live cams to check the situation – visitors check trailhead.
- Technology - Digital Road Signs showing status of park to update the visitor with current information.
- Technology - Mobile app specific to Larimer County properties.
- Implementing fee at Devil's Backbone to increase funding for higher maintenance requirements.
 - Automated Pay Station
 - Temporarily Decrease Capacity Issues
- Consider increasing user fee from \$6 to \$7 at Open Spaces to cover increased maintenance.
- Additional Personnel Resources and Funding

Other Opportunities and Solutions

- Prioritize new acquisitions - convenience to urban areas because our current close-in spaces are getting loved to death.
- Additional Trailheads at HTMOS and DBBOS – to distribute use
- Fast Track Future Public Access Areas

Gary Informed the Board that we will have a plan of action to address this issue in the next three months.

FINANCIAL REPORT:

- Natural Resources Capital Development and Acquisition Summary 2011- 2013. No updates (Refer to your summary prepared 03-04-2013)

EXECUTIVE SESSION: Per (24-6-402(4) (a) C.R.S. Purchase, acquisition, lease, transfer or sale of any real or personal property interest, Nancy Wallace motioned that the Board enter into Executive Session. Motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

NEXT REGULAR MEETING: Thursday, June 27, 2013 - Loveland Municipal Building, Council Chambers, 500 E Third St., Loveland.

PLEASE NOTE: No meeting in July.