



# OPEN LANDS ADVISORY BOARD (OLAB)

## MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, October 24, 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  
Nancy Wallace - Planning Commission  
Trudy Haines - At-large  
Suzan Fritchel - At-large  
Gerry Horak - City of Fort Collins  
Mary Banken - At-large  
Ladonna Lee - At-large  
Paul Alaback - Town of Berthoud

### Staff Present

Charlie Johnson, Land Agent  
Kerri Rollins, Open Lands Program Manager  
Jeffrey Boring, Natural Resources Specialist  
Sandy Werkmeister, Dept Specialist  
Travis Rollins, Natural Resource Mgr Visitor Services  
Gary Buffington, Director of Natural Resources

### Members Absent

John Phipps - Town of Estes Park  
Peter Kast - At-large  
Steve Vessey - At-large  
Hugh McKean - City of Loveland

### REGULAR MEETING

- Motion by Suzan Fritzel and second by Carl Sorrentino to approve the minutes of August 22, 2013. Motion passed unanimously. There were no changes to the agenda.

### INFORMATION:

- Kerri reminded the board that November 13 is the annual Regional Open Space Boards Summit meeting to be held at the County Courthouse Offices building in Fort Collins. Other open space or natural areas boards and commissions, as well as staff from our smaller towns are invited. A "save the date" notice was sent to everyone today. We plan to roll out Our Lands Our Future at the meeting, and have the Executive Summaries printed to distribute to everyone. The regular OLAB meeting will be held immediately following.
- Meegan Flenniken reported that the public meeting to share the trailhead carrying capacity issues and proposed solutions in Horsetooth Mountain Open Space area with the neighbors and other stakeholders will be October 28th from 6-8 pm at the Fort Collins Public Library, Harmony Branch. They sent notices to everyone within one half mile of Horsetooth Mountain Open Space.
- Meegan announced that Jeffrey Boring was selected by Larimer County as the August Employee of the Month for his fine work for Larimer County. His photo will be displayed in the courthouse for one year and there will be a reception in December to honor all Employees of the Month for 2013.
- Jeffrey Boring passed around a flyer and invitation for the Northern Colorado Trails Conference, to be held on Friday, November 1 at the Erie Community Building. It is an all day conference about trails; essentially a tool kit on how to run a successful Trails Program, including fund raising, trail planning, health benefits and the highlight which will be a regional trail plan that was completed earlier this year showing long range plans of trails connecting Wellington to Fort Collins to Windsor to Berthoud. The conference is \$30, and registrations are accepted through October 25. Visit CPRA-WEB.ORG to register.

- Jeffrey informed the Board that on Saturday, October 26th, staff will lead volunteers from DNR and Colorado State Forest Service to remove buckthorn trees (a non-native and invasive tree taking over the oxbow) from the northern edge of Lion's Open Space. There are 40 volunteers expected! It is also a partnership with the "Daughters of the American Revolution" group who will be there too.
- Jeffrey relayed to the board that plans to submit a grant application to State Trails to build a two-mile section of the Colorado Front Range Trail between Carpenter Road and Loveland's Recreation Trail were postponed to 2014 due to the flood.
- Charlie Johnson said we were approached by Colorado Dept of Transportation to grant a temporary construction easement to the National Guard at the Hermit Park Open Space so they could store emergency truck and materials. We ran the proposal by Estes Valley Land Trust and granted the easement. To date, they have not used it and it expires on December 1. There were some restrictions on the easement such as no fuel storage, except within vehicles and payment expected for stewardship and restoration after.
- Kerri related that Great Outdoors Colorado is replicating the 2012 Plug in to Nature Study across the state through other grants, to pool data and tell a story and kids in nature in Colorado. Rob is assisting with this in two of the communities.
- Kerri shared that Education staff Heather Young has been working on Project Noah and Project Budburst. The sites are up and running and in the new year Heather will come in and present on how they are working locally. We learned last month that Paul Alaback was a founding member of Budburst, and he asked if he could have 10-15 minutes to introduce the project when Heather presents. Kerri asked him to tentatively plan for the February meeting.
- Kerri explained that the Northern Colorado Nature Fest (formerly the Northern Colorado Birding Fair) was canceled due to issues related to the flood.
- MARK YOUR CALENDAR - Kerri announced the date and location for the Natural Resources Board Christmas party. Thursday, December 12 at Peter Kast's home. A more formal invitation for everyone to RSVP will follow.
- Charlie Johnson asked board members to step outside for an OLAB photo, to be used in various publications.
- Report from the Open Lands Operations Manager - See enclosure.
  - Travis Rollins highlighted their presentation on capacity issues, shown at the COSA conference, which was so well attended there was capacity/seating issues with their conference room (which they played up of course.)
  - Travis shared the latest Action Plan Update - They purchased the web cam for Horsetooth Mtn Open Space today. It will be set to upload a picture of the parking lot about every 5 minutes. Once it is up and installed, public education and outreach will begin. The camera will not point at the trailhead. He explained that at this time the purpose is to capture whether there is parking available.
  - The two new Park Aide positions are customer service focused and will work at Horsetooth Mtn Open Space and Devil's Backbone. The one at Horsetooth will rotate between the three trailheads with capacity issues (Horsetooth Mtn, Blue Sky & Soderberg.)
  - Travis said *all* of the Action Plan items they have implemented so far are already helping.
  - We hosted the Blue Sky Trail Marathon again this year, with 218 participants. Recall that this marathon was voted the top trail marathon in the state last year!
- 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
- Natural Resource Events for November. See website <http://www.larimer.org/naturalresources>

## DISCUSSION ITEMS:

### Flood damage and assessment update

- Travis Rollins told the board that with such a wide-spread flood event, all of our open spaces were affected to some degree. He presented a photo tour of our open space properties "after the flood." The presentation is available for viewing, by request from the Department of Natural Resources. Some key points follow:
  - At Red Mountain, most damage has been fixed and all trails are open except for Bent Canyon Trail, which is closed indefinitely.
  - Eagles Nest saw mostly fencing damage and the bridge has been limited to pedestrian traffic until further assessment can be made. The cows that graze the area were lost for some days, but are back now.
  - Horsetooth trail washouts were repaired and reopened within two days of the flood.

- Lions Open Space was completely flooded. Jeffrey Boring said that only about 30% of the restoration was lost, so it held up really well for a flood event of this magnitude, and the restoration prevented it from being completely lost.
  - At Rivers Bluff Open Space the pedestrian bridge was totally inundated by water for 3-4 days. The bridge did well and is already open to the public. There have been three volunteers' projects since the flood to clean up the area.
  - Devil's Backbone sustained trail damage and the water was contaminated for a couple weeks. Trails were repaired and reopened within two days of the flood, without drinking water available, which visitors were very patient about!
  - Chimney Hollow was used as an evacuation route from Lyons.
  - Hermit Park – at least half of the roads have major damage, with holes 4-5 feet deep. The roads were the “best route” found by the water, and essentially became creeks during the flood.
  - Glade Park, due to it's proximity at the base of the Big Thompson, is a total loss.
  - Gary Buffington said the damages for Larimer County open spaces and parks is estimated at 2.2 million dollars, of which we hope to get 75% from FEMA, 12.5% from the State and for Larimer County properties, 12.5% from the County. Kerri added that Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) is also looking at offering a Flood Grant Cycle too.
- Hugh McKean added that overall the river [Big Thompson] moved about 150 yards south and the bed of the river is 3' higher in many areas. He reported that a lot of the less secure infrastructure of Rivers Edge is gone. Instead of three large ponds, it is now two. The fish survived. They are planning for some changes, possibly including a dry channel through the area. Their biggest challenge right now is dealing with the contractor insurance as well as FEMA when it comes to Rivers Edge. Currently, plans are to rebuild.
  - Hugh said VIESTENZ-SMITH MOUNTAIN PARK is gone and Loveland gave permission for CDOT to start excavating gravel and fill [for rebuilding roads]. He reminded board members that at Viestenz, the river used to be against the hill, and is now on the other side of the park [and what was the lot]. It is too early to tell if it will be rebuilt.
  - Travis Rollins reported that Colorado Parks & Wildlife contacted him to electroshock 420' of river around the Glade Road section. They caught 380 brown trout. Gary told the board that we are considering leaving Glade Park natural without any infrastructure.

**CDOT Right of Way acquisition along Long View Farm Open Space – Notice of Intent to Acquire**

Charlie Johnson showed a map of our Long View Farm Open Space at the corner of Highway 392 (formerly Carpenter Road) and Highway 287. CDOT has approached us to acquire a right-of-way to facilitate a big 7x14 concrete box culvert underneath the intersection, and generally rebuild the intersection. We have received the letter of intent to acquire from CDOT, which is the first step in the federal acquisition process. Charlie expects to have a \$\$ offer for the easement by next week, which he will bring to the board for approval. He went on to say the impact to the area is pretty minimal. There are covenants and joint ownerships on the property so it may be a bit tedious for CDOT, and may require a complete amendment to the easement. Timing of the project is going to bid in April, and probably built in the summer. Jeffrey Boring asked if we could suggest timing the project away from nesting season. Charlie recommended using the City of Fort Collins restoration conditions (developed during Fossil Creek development). Charlie reminded the board that CDOT will no doubt be asking for a full length right-away one day in the future, to widen Highway 287. The board should remain prepared for changes to this area.

**Future open space tax considerations – OLAB subcommittee update**

Nancy shared that the subcommittee of herself, Ladonna, Steve, Peter and Kerri have met several times on open space tax considerations, and Kerri would be presenting an overview of their discussions. Kerri Rollins started by announcing that Our Lands, Our Future is wrapped up and we plan to distribute the Executive Summaries at the Regional Summit meeting on November 13, 2013.

She shared Our Lands, Our Future -- survey results overview:

- Activity Satisfaction - all activities rated high satisfaction (trails, riding, climbing, camping, etc)
- Things want more of- trails, trails, trails!

- Overall support of allocating dollars for buying new lands (67%) with some support for maintaining what we have (33%)

To support what the people say they want, next steps include thinking about the Help Preserve Open Spaces, which sunsets in 2018. One of the tools developed through the OLOF study was the financial analysis tool. Staff and the subcommittee have been using the tool to create different scenarios regarding the future of the open space tax. While the ballot language tells us what happens at sunset (We sell property to continue management of other properties until all of it is sold), we also must plan for an extension of the tax in the maser planning. There are multiple factors to consider regarding future tax considerations:

- Timing
- Initiative vs. Referendum
- Tax amount and Duration
- Share back (*allocations to municipalities*) board requirements, board representation
- Splits (*acquisition & development + long-term management + parks*)
- Bonding

Kerri went over each topic in a little more depth, and responded to questions and discussions from the board. To help us answer all the questions, Kerri and the subcommittee are recommending that we work with the THE TRUST for PUBLIC LAND (TPL.) TPL provides:

- Feasibility research: TPL explores funding and ballot measure options and evaluates their legal, fiscal, and political constraints.
- Public opinion surveys: TPL manages surveys by expert polling firms to gauge voter support for alternative funding methods and measure types.
- Program recommendations: TPL provides models and recommendations for operating conservation programs.
- Measure design: For ballot measures, TPL recommends the optimal funding method, amount of funding, election timing, and ballot language. For legislative measures, TPL recommends funding methods and amount, as well as advising on program design.
- Legislative support: TPL's services include bill drafting, expert testimony, and designing legislative strategies.

Ladonna mentioned that as a 501c3, they will tend to share any of their research, with anyone who asks. She is a believer that it is always best to make sure your campaign pays for any studies separately, so we own them outright.

Kerri reported that to use TPL, they require a technical assistance letter, usually from the Board of County Commissioner, *inviting* them in to help. Our Board of Commissioners is open to the idea. Ladonna shared and described potential groups that would be involved if we choose to move forward with a campaign.

Kerri added that TPL will be at the Regional Board Summit meeting to tell us more about what they we do. Their services are free; it doesn't cost us anything until the polling piece comes in. (They are funded by grants and donations.) They do bring legal staff to the table for some of the questions that already came up.

#### **ACTION:**

Motion by Trudy Haines and second by Gerry Horak that the Board of County Commissioners sends a letter to THE TRUST for PUBLIC LANDS inviting them in to assist Larimer County in open space tax considerations. Motion carried unanimously.

#### **FINANCIAL REPORT:**

Natural Resources Capital Development and Acquisition Summary 2012-2014. **No Updates.** Refer to latest report prepared 08-19-2013.

**OLAB meeting adjourned** at 7:00 p.m. and the board moved into EXECUTIVE SESSION: Pursuant to (24-6-402(4) (a) C.R.S. Purchase, acquisition, lease, transfer or sale of any real or personal property interest the board moved into Executive Session.

**NEXT MEETING:** Regional Open Space boards meeting, Wednesday, November 13, 2013; 5:00 - 9:00 p.m. at the Larimer County Courthouse Offices building at 200 W. Oak St., Fort Collins.