



# OPEN LANDS ADVISORY BOARD (OLAB)

## Meeting Minutes

**Thursday, January 22, 2015**

5:00- 8:00 PM

Civic Center Municipal Bldg • Council Chambers • 500 E 3<sup>rd</sup> St., Loveland CO

*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.*

<b>Members Present</b>	
Carl Sorrentino	At-large
Mary Banken	At-large
Peter Kast	At-large
Suzan Fritchel	At-large
Trudy Haines	At-large
Hugh McKean	City of Loveland
Nancy Wallace	Planning Commission
Paul Alaback	Town of Berthoud
Ward Nelson	Town of Estes Park
<b>Members Absent</b>	
Ladonna Lee	At-large
Gerry Horak	City of Fort Collins

<b>Staff Present</b>
Gary Buffington, Natural Resources Director
Kerri Rollins, Open Lands Program Manager
Charlie Johnson, Senior Land Agent
Alex Castina, Land Agent
Meegan Flenniken, Resource Program Manager
Jeffrey Boring, Resource Specialist
Sandy Werkmeister, Department Specialist
Travis Rollins, Open Space Operations Manager
Chris Fleming, Open Space Operations Manager
Zac Wiebe, Fund Dev & Spec Proj Specialist
Tim Meyer, Land Agent

- 1) CALL TO ORDER / INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS - Meeting was called to order by Peter Kast. Introductions of guests was held for item #5.
- 2) PUBLIC COMMENT - none
- 3) AGENDA REVIEW - One action item was moved up on the agenda to accommodate guest from Wyoming.
- 4) REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF LAST MEETING MINUTES - Motion by Nancy Wallace and second by Carl Sorrentino to approve the November 12, 2014 meeting minutes as submitted. Motion carried unanimously.
- 5) ACKNOWLEDGEMENT PRESENTATION
  - a. Presentation on *Wildflowers and Other Plants* guide – Heather Young, Paul Alaback, Jane Thomson  
 Heather- a committee of six volunteers have worked on this the last three years, donating over 10,000 hours overall. The right expertise came together to make the guide as great as it is today. Writers: Paul Alaback, Jenna McAleer, Lisa Matthews, Linda Bilsing; Editor: Linda Bilsing; Photo Editor: Janet Sitas (photos are actually from Larimer County Open Spaces); Illustrations: Lisa Matthews; Design & Layout: Jane Thomson; Project Manager: Heather Young  
  
 It was developed as a “plant guide for amateurs.” Jane and Paul shared their experience working on the guide, noting that several of the volunteers are Naturalists with the County or Fort Collins, who knew first hand what was needed in a guide. Heather said we are working on marketing and distribution now. The guide will retail for \$15. One of the guides sponsors, The Colorado Native Plant Society, will sell the guide on their website. The guides will also be for sale at the Natural Resources Administrative Offices, hopefully by March. We are looking into selling them at other locations, such as JAX, REI, Museum of Discovery, etc. This is a trial year, hoping to create a self-sustaining project to print more. Paul added that a web resource is another goal. They took the guide down to 88 species, but they started with 170, and more could be displayed on a complimentary website.

Heather wrapped up acknowledging Oscar Otto, a volunteer naturalist several years ago, as the first visionary for the project when he started documenting photos from our open spaces. When he retired from volunteering, he gave the photos over to Janet, the photographer for this project. Another volunteer naturalist had a program called “Wildflower Treasure Hunt” using index cards and those cards became the foundation of this guide.

Carl commented that it will be terrific on the trail! No matter what the topic is for a guided hike, someone will ask about a flower “over there?” The yellow section alone will keep them sane.

## 6) INFORMATION & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- a. Jeffrey reported on the upcoming second annual Poudre River Forum, put on by the organization “The Poudre Runs through It”--a multi-disciplinary group--all using water for varying reasons. The forum is intended to provide insight to new approaches in managing the river that will improve the environment and delivery of water for agriculture and other human uses. The forum is January 31 at The Ranch. The department is offering two complimentary passes if anyone is interested. Paul and Suzan will go.
- b. Jeffrey reported that The North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization awarded Larimer County, Loveland and Fort Collins a \$450,000 Transportation Alternatives Program grant to complete the Front Range Trail, Loveland to Fort Collins segment. This is the trail on Carpenter Road. We are planning construction to start in 2016.
- c. Larimer County’s, Loveland’s and City of Fort Collins GOCO “Concept Paper” for the Long View Corridor trail was approved and we’ve been asked to submit a full application, due March 4. We were one of just nine agencies asked to submit an application. We will ask for \$1 million.
- d. Kerri- Construction of the Poudre River Trail “Harmony to Timnath” segment is underway for bidding. The project will be awarded in late January and built on time. Our acquisition of the Swets property was an important piece of this. We are still working on some substitution pieces with our project partners (Greeley, Timnath, Windsor & Fort Collins).
- e. Charlie- The 7-acre Devil’s Backbone Keyhole property closed December 3, 2014. The parcel has already been incorporated into the updated management plan. This purchase received a lot of positive press.
- f. Jeffrey announced the third annual State of the Resource Report for 2014. It is a nice opportunity to draw attention to the subtleties of an open space such less known wildlife, rock wrens being a good example. They also use this report to highlight the great work that private landowners are doing, which in turn serves as a reminder to them that we must monitor the property each year. This report also typically carries the stories that don’t make the news but are crucial to our work. The board was very complimentary of the report. Peter Kast requested printed versions, as he thought it ideal for offices and front desks.
- g. Kerri and Hugh were part of an interview panel for the next Loveland Parks & Rec Director. Elizabeth Anderson will start on February 17. Anderson is currently the Operations Manager for Parks and Recreation in Sacramento, Calif., where her experience includes 1500 full-time employees and 2000 seasonal... an enormous operation.
- h. Kerri mentioned Travis’s visitor count report showing that The Devils’ Backbone and Blue Sky Trail ended 2014 with just over 106,000 visitors. Gary added that it rivals, or even beats, Horsetooth Mountain.
- i. A subcommittee member for the Artist of the Year Program is needed from OLAB. This person will review and evaluate artist applications as well as attend a committee meeting to discuss the applications in March. Diane Roeder, from our office and a local artist, will head up the committee this year. Suzan Fritchel volunteered.
- j. The Red Feather Lakes Library is seeking Larimer County sponsorship for a GOCO mini-grant to redevelop the parking area into a nature-based community use area and we are planning to sponsor them. Zac added that they have a few partners in the form of a friends group for some funding and a Girl Scout Troop for some labor. They will ask for \$45,000, toward a total need of \$60,000. There is also a chance they will come to this board asking for a contribution. Suzan chimed in that the library advertises 24-hr free wi-fi and this would be an area people could hang out in a more friendly area.
- k. The Big Thompson Conservation and Recreation Plan is well underway and the first public meeting is planned for February 12 in Loveland. This is a partnership endeavor with City of Loveland and GOCO. Zac explained that prior to this public meeting there has been two meetings of the technical advisory committee, honing in on areas that they believe have opportunity for acquisition, for conservation and recreation possibilities. The first public

meeting is to see if the technical committee is on the right track. Kerri- This project will likely go to a BCC work session with the progress and public feedback. Walt, from the audience, asked for information about this project and the meeting location. Paul asked how we decide which properties we might like to acquire given the likelihood of future floods. Zac responded that the Big Thompson Coalition Restoration Plan would be incorporated. In response to a question about FEMA properties, Charlie said we submitted an application for federal money to purchase 10-12 substantially damaged properties.

- \* Kerri added an Info Item, reminding the board that last year we heard a presentation from Colorado Cattlemen’s Agricultural Land Trust about a property up in the Laramie River Valley. They were looking for partnerships and we gave them \$5000 for transaction costs. The ranch that she presented has made it through phase 1 – conserving 1,280 acres along the river. The \$5000 was a good investment! They are working on Phase 2 and we may hear from her again this year.
- l. Rob Novak, Community Relations Specialist has left the County to be the Director of Communications for CSU’s Natural Resources Department. Rob contributed so many things to our Department is impossible to list them all but Plug in to Nature, all social media, and products and communications around the tax extension are a few recent big ones. We are in the hiring process now.
- m. Report from the Open Space Operations Manager(s) - Big Thompson & Hermit Park Districts  
Chris: Hermit Park is closed for the season right now. The wildlife really comes back. Over Martin Luther King holiday, Horsetooth Mtn and Devil’s Backbone were both at capacity.
- n. Sales Tax Report from prior month - Kerri reminded the board that our sales taxes are collected in arrears so we will not see the final 2014 report until March. We will look at overall performance compared to past years then. Timnath has shifted to receiving their tax based on sales tax rather than population, no doubt thanks to Costco. Lori will present cash flow at the March meeting as well.
- o. Acquisition and Development Spreadsheet – FYI for those who missed November meeting.  
Showing all the projects we’ve been talking about recently and estimated financial commitments.

8) ACTION ITEM (first of two)

- a. Final review – Green partnership – Tim Meyer

Tim has been working with Brent Lathrop from The Nature Conservancy in Wyoming since last summer, when he presented the initial review. Brent is here for any questions about this request. Tim has worked with the County Attorney for any requirements needed for partnering on a property in a different state, included in the Final Review. Meegan added that the upper Sand Creek is on the property, which flows into Red Mountain, and is also the favored habitat for green back trout. Ultimately, the City of Cheyenne is planning to purchase the property. The Final Review shows known funding, highlighting the remaining funding need of \$120,000.

The Board was comfortable with the project, discussing how the property directly ties to our areas and is the start of a new partnership into the future. Suzan stated that she would be comfortable with \$75K (which would cover everything left except staff direct costs.) Nancy moved for a recommendation to approve the partnership and that we proceed with a contribution of \$75,000, subject to the conditions set out by the county Attorney in the document. Second by Suzan Fritchel. Motion carried unanimously. Kerri will see about arranging a tour for us.

7) DISCUSSION & UPDATES

- a. Department of Natural Resources re-organization – Gary

Gary went over the department organization chart showing plans for two new FTE’s – a part-time Graphic Designer and a fulltime Resource Ecologist. An additional fulltime Ranger has already been added to Horsetooth. In the Visitor Services area, due to a Human Resource action event, we moved from three districts to four. Dan Rieves moved from the Visitor Services Manager position into a District Manager at Carter Lake.

--Peter asked for an update on Chimney Hollow. Gary responded that the last meeting with Northern indicated 2018 or 2019. Kerri stated that Meegan may start on the management plan later this year, and once that process starts, it may reveal a new level of public interest and pressure. The Board discussed the pros and cons of trying to open to the public before there is a reservoir.

- b. Open Lands Master Plan update, final draft link, presentation attached separately - Zac and Alex

Zac told that Board that since they saw the plan, we have incorporated their feedback, put it out for a 30-day public comment period, incorporated public comments and are holding a work session with the Commissioners on February 23. Zac is planning to come back to the Board on February 26 for a final recommendation. Final approval of the plan has been delayed a bit to give the Commissioners one final review that includes the recent policy and procedure changes. The majority of the public comments were 1) supporting emerging farmers and ranchers in the future, which is already in the plan by using an agricultural criteria rather than specifying agricultural priority areas, and 2) mountain bikers making sure that natural surface trails be emphasized equally with regional paved trails, which affected some wording changes. Zac highlighted a few pages from the plan.

The Board received four revised policies from Alex Castina by email on December 29, 2014. Alex thanked the sub-committee (Nancy, Suzan & Mary) for their help with these policy revisions. She highlighted the main changes to our acquisition policies and process, which was to bring them up-to-date with State of Colorado conservation easement rules and regulations. They also broke out acquisition type to separate partial donation from ownership. Due diligence procedure was edited to reflect updated information about conservation easements and water & mineral rights. Policy for amending and phasing conservation easements were tightened up a bit. The contingency plan is new, put in place for the circumstance of needing or wanting another entity to become stewards of the open spaces we own and manage. Reviewing for updates will be required at 5 years or as needed, making it possible to update anytime.

8) ACTION ITEM (second of two)

- a. Devil's Backbone Management Plan update – Jeffrey

Jeffrey reminded the Board that they have seen and discussed this management plan twice before. Due to consistent over-capacity issues, the new plan became based on three basic tenets: 1) reconfigure the trailhead to get more cars into the parking and off of Hidden Valley Lane, 2) Add another trail to alleviate congestion at the start and 3) Separate uses of the trails. There were online survey tools, two neighborhood meetings, four public meetings, two open house events and two intercept events (asking for input from people at the trailhead.) All three concepts were popular and supported by 70-80% of the participants in the process. With Devils Backbone being the most popular property for school field trips, there are also some changes and enhancements for our education program.

Jeffrey finished by telling the Board that this is a unique plan in that the County Manager and Fort Collins City Manager must sign it. We hope to make these improvements in 2016 or 2017. Meegan responded to Peter that a goal to have a west side trailhead is still in the plan but currently we do not actually have an access route. The Board discussed equestrian and mountain bike users. Motion by Trudy Haines that we recommend the adoption of the 2015 Devils Backbone Management Plan, second by Hugh McKean. Motion carried unanimously.

- 9) EXECUTIVE SESSION: Pursuant to C.R.S. 24-6-402 (4)(a) for discussion regarding the purchase, acquisition, lease, transfer, or sale of any real, personal, or other property interest, motion by Nancy Wallace, 2nd by Trudy Haines to move into Executive Session.

END