

## 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

**Date:** November 5, 2019

**Time:** 5:30 – 8:30 p.m.

**Location:** Horsetooth Area Information Center (HAIC), 4200 W. County Road 38E, Fort Collins, CO 80526

**Contact:** Please contact Sidney at [smichl@larimer.org](mailto:smichl@larimer.org) or 970-619-4462 if you are unable to attend.

Members		Staff		Guests
Amanda Peters		Daylan Figgs	x	Jeff Stahla (Northern Water)
Brian Rasch		Dan Rieves	x	James Bishop (BOR)
Daniela Lawler		Mark Caughlan	x	
Deborah Shulman	x	Zac Wiebe	x	
Kathy Maher	x	*Stephen Johnson		
Michael Robinson	x	Sidney Michl (minutes)	x	
Robert Harris	x			
Russell Fruits				
Ruthie Rollins	x			
Stephen Amundson	x			
Steve Ambrose	x			

**x = present**

**\*commissioner**

1. CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS – 5:36 p.m.
  - a. Introduced new board member, Stephen Amundson.
2. PUBLIC COMMENT – none
3. AGENDA REVIEW
4. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF LAST MEETING MINUTES
  - a. Rob moves to approve last meeting minutes, Kathy seconds, motion passed unanimously.

## 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. The Open Lands Regional Board Meeting is scheduled Wednesday, February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020 from 5:00 – 8:30 p.m. in lieu of the February 2020 monthly meeting – Daylan
  - i. Daylan extended an invitation to board members to attend the meeting on behalf of PAB, Deborah and Kathy expressed interest and will attend.
- d. Update on Larimer County oil and gas regulations – Daylan
  - i. Update on the Oil and Gas Task Force, Meegan Flenniken is the DNR liaison along with OLAB member Sherri Valentine. Purpose is a citizen task force to help the County draft regulations, now onto staff to draft code that will be taken to the BOCC for vote. Daylan presented Energy By Design (EBD) as an approach that may be used by the County to manage surface impact issues on conserved land when surface use is the only viable alternative. EBD was applied as a tool at Red Mountain Open Space and Soapstone Prairie Natural Area in 2013, a similar process of resource mapping and defining surface occupancy zones would likely be replicated for future use. Overview of best management practices.
  - ii. Deborah asked about private mineral rights that might fall beneath Larimer County surface property, Daylan clarified mineral estate access generally cannot be denied, often there are ways to access mineral estates from offsite horizontal wells and EBD would be applied if surface use is the only viable option. The County buys surface rights if possible, acquiring mineral rights under sensitive areas is more difficult. Best management practices are meant to address development impacts like air quality, noise pollution, light pollution, etc.
  - iii. Mike asked about the oversight process, Daylan clarified the County is currently establishing regulations per the Oil and Gas Task Force, other parts of LC code will apply as well. Mike asked if we are working with other counties, Daylan noted SB 181 gave counties authority to draft their own rules.
  - iv. Kathy asked about current development, Daylan responded there is no activity on any LC properties, some pressure at Little Thompson Farm but a no surface use agreement is in place. Kathy commented the resource maps are wonderful, Daylan noted Red Mountain and Soapstone maps can be replicated and that we have the biological data needed to do so. Most of the maps are publicly available.
  - v. Steve asked if the County would require a developer to submit a site plan to address EBD practices, Daylan affirmed and clarified the state requires mineral companies to work with surface owners. Ruthie asked if oil and gas stakeholders were involved in the process, it was noted EBD was influenced by a collaborative effort between The Nature Conservancy and mineral owners and that the State

Land Board and an oil company were engaged in the process for Red Mountain and Soapstone.

- vi. Mike asked if the process would include other agencies throughout the County, Daylan said DNR will work with surface owners but rulemaking will have a larger involvement from other County departments and advisory board liaisons.
- e. Department of Natural Resources Agricultural Land Strategy – Daylan
  - i. Daylan explained the purpose of the Agricultural Land Strategy is to identify lands to conserve and to implement agricultural practices on land managed by the County. Current portfolio includes 31,000 acres of conserved land in agriculture (60% fee, 40% CE). Conservation outcomes centered around soil and water health, habitat, and connecting acquisitions.
  - ii. Mike asked if the County would work directly with farmers to implement new practices, Daylan affirmed, Dan said lease agreements outline these practices also. Deborah asked about dryland farming, Daylan clarified there is no irrigation involved, discussion about incentivizing no till farming.
  - iii. Mike asked about extending our lease contracts, it was noted that procurement rules limit contract lengths, Mark said the County’s contract with BOR does not exceed 5 years.
  - iv. Kathy asked about the bidding process, Mark said bidding goes through Larimer County Purchasing, Dan said several staff members sit on a panel to review bids for best fit.
  - v. Next steps are to share strategy with department boards, staff team will develop draft plan, then stakeholders and eventually the BOCC will review the plan in Jan. or Feb.

## 6. UPDATES & REPORTS

- a. Department Quarterly Report – Daylan
  - i. Transitioned from monthly to quarterly reports over the summer, effort led by communications staff. Goal is to focus on department-wide projects and activities including land stewardship, capital projects, trails, operations, planning projects, acquisitions, and a quarterly financial summary. The first quarterly report can be found here: <https://www.larimer.org/naturalresources/plans-reports-advisory-boards>. Please let Daylan know if there is any additional information you’d like to see in the next report.
- b. Park District updates – Dan/Mark
  - i. Mark – September and October went well, weather is the biggest factor for daily revenue. Noticeable trend in larger motorhomes, they allow people to enjoy their recreation experience longer, expecting higher visitation through fall and spring. Marina contracts are up end of 2020, one or two board members will be involved in purchasing process at beginning of year. If awarded \$10M FLAP grant, \$7M will be spent towards paving campground roads, parking lots, and hardening facilities. Staffing is down as seasonal rangers finish their 6-month

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terms, hiring 2 new FTE positions for HTMOS and RMOS districts, some difficulty in hiring quality rangers. Toured the park with Luke and Mike to determine maintenance needs, met with BOR today to discuss annual maintenance plan. Fall is the best time to complete projects, staff will be busy through winter in preparation to reopen in spring. Met with Daylan, Ken, and the BOCC in Oct. to review HT Special Enforcement Zone Plan proposal, went well and received a lot of support, plan should be finalized in Jan.

- ii. Mike commented that visitation seems promising given the fee increase, Dan reiterated it is mostly affected by weather. It was noted that price sensitivity has been minimal and is expected to mature over time.
- iii. Dan – echo Mark on visitation trends and fall staffing model/losing volunteer resources for the season. Updated that Big Landia is officially named Sky View Campground, cost estimate for AVI design work was higher than anticipated due to parameters for dispersed group camping. Original deadline was early Oct. for GOCO grant, decided to postpone and apply for next year’s grant cycle, reconfiguring design plans and hope to open summer of 2022. Working on cost benefit analysis for new trash services, going out to bid and will make decision next month. Carter Lake Sail Club will sign a 3-year contract due to a contract renewal with BOR in 2022, opportunity for board to review during Dec. meeting before it goes to the BOCC. Cottonwood Siphon project with Northern Water will significantly impact water movement next summer, met with project contractor, NW, and BOR last Thursday. Concerns about impact to camping at Flatiron Reservoir were mostly mitigated, some excavator noise and backup alarms will be present during project construction, planning to do a site visit soon to assess noise levels. One campsite will be closed for a few days for restructuring.
- iv. Mike asked if the Cottonwood Siphon project will impact water levels at HT Reservoir, Mark affirmed but said South Bay ramps will still be operable. Plan is for Northern to fill HT Reservoir through July 2020, then gradually lower to 5,338 ft. to install a secondary outlet structure at Soldier Canyon Dam. Construction will take 2 weeks, then HT Reservoir will be filled again. Dan said Carter Lake will remain full throughout the summer.
- v. James introduced Northern Water Public Information Officer Jeff Stahla to take questions about the Cottonwood Siphon Rehabilitation Project. Jeff clarified the siphon will be constructed underneath County Road 18E just north of Flatiron Reservoir and will be 12 ft. in diameter. Northern also anticipates to announce the winning bid for Chimney Hollow Reservoir in December, hoping to begin construction next summer, will take 4 years to build dam. Fill is dependent on west slope hydrology and is limited to 1 foot per day per state law, will likely take more than one year to reach capacity.

## 7. DISCUSSION ITEMS

### a. Regional Trails Prioritization presentation – Zac

- i. The 2015 Open Lands Master Plan identified 18 regional trails where Larimer County Department of Natural Resources might focus its efforts, with regional trails matching regional and partner priority segments. LC's role in regional trail management is outside city GMAs and focused on connecting communities to other communities and out to recreation sites.
- ii. Key gaps where LC would lead to meet Master Plan goals:
  1. Dry Creek to connect Fort Collins to Wellington
  2. Box Elder area to connect Wellington to Timnath's existing GMA
- iii. Gaps where LC would provide support:
  1. Trail system in unincorporated Larimer County to connect Loveland to Berthoud
  2. Trail along the south boundary of Fossil Creek Reservoir to connect Windsor to Loveland
  3. Big Thompson River Trail to connect Town of Estes to Rocky Mountain National Park
  4. Underpass at I-25 in unincorporated Larimer County to connect Berthoud to Johnstown
- iv. Ruthie asked if the trails are outside of a road right-of-way, it was noted the trails are built through development, acquisitions owned by the County, trail easements on private land, or right-of-way easements. Zac clarified the standard for regional trails is a 10 ft. wide concrete trail with a detached soft surface trail, but they can vary. Typically, community connections utilize paved trails and open space or park connections utilize natural surface trails. The board asked about opportunities for a Rails to Trails, it was noted a trail of that nature is contemplated in the master plan as more of an interpretive trail where LC would help with educational efforts. An option might be along 287 to connect to Cheyenne and Laramie but it would be a big goal.
- v. Mike asked if an agreement on e-bikes was reached between City of Loveland, City of Fort Collins, Town of Estes, etc. Zac answered Larimer County defers to respective city regulations and that the County is engaged in regional conversations about shared regulations and signage. It was noted the County is in consistent communication with our partners and Zac regularly attends NoCo Bike and Ped Collaborative meetings to discuss non-motorized pedestrian trail issues across the region.
- vi. Mark asked about right-of-way options for connections particularly around HT Reservoir where bike traffic is heavy, Zac affirmed and said right-of-way easements will be necessary as development occurs and road improvements are made.

## 8. ACTION ITEMS

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9. US BUREAU OF RECLAMATION UPDATE

- a. New area manager, Jeff Reeker. Briefing on Sail and Saddle Club is scheduled next month, then he'll make a decision. New archaeologist will be hired next week. Deputy area manager position will also be filled soon.
- b. 3D map of C-BT project will be finished this summer and installed in HAIC lobby, intent is to contextualize HT Reservoir for visitors. Map is 6' x 4' large.
- c. In spring, the BOR projected low reservoir levels for HT but ended up with healthy levels due to snowpack, illustrates complexity of C-BT.
- d. Hoping to train rangers on dam/infrastructure issues, Mark said it would be beneficial to receive updates or credible info from BOR when issues are reported.
- e. BOR was contacted by a Washington Post reporter about their climate series, wanted to shoot footage of the C-BT, an article with photos of HT Reservoir will likely be published around Thanksgiving.

10. BOARD MEMBER REPORTS

- a. Deborah – attended Northern Water open house about NISP and Glade Reservoir, impressed by their recreation plans. More info can be found at [nisptalk.com](http://nisptalk.com).

11. DIRECTOR'S REPORT: Daylan Figgs

- a. Plan to summarize 2019 visitation numbers in Jan. or Feb. Budget is nearing completion for BOCC. Additional indirect costs and loss of General Fund for the department will be around \$837,000, already factored in our 25-year projections, DNR will adapt budget and adjust timing for CIP accordingly. Once CIP is redone it will be brought to PAB and OLAB for review. Still working on Northern Integrated Supply Project (NISP) and recreation opportunities at Glade, conversations are in negotiating phase and confidential. Public conversation will begin soon, update on IGA and recreation component in Jan., then BOCC will approve in March following a public process. Plan to start working on BOR contract soon, expires in 2022 but want to get it done asap, 25-year renewal. In process of filling capital project manager and communications specialist positions, settled on candidates and close to making offers.

12. NEXT MEETING SCHEDULED: 12/3/2019 at Natural Resources Administrative Offices (AO), 1800 S. County Road 31, Loveland, CO 80537

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

14. ADJOURN – 8:15 p.m.

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