

# LARIMER COUNTY PARKS ADVISORY BOARD

## MINUTES

Tuesday, February 11, 2014, 5:30 - 8:30 p.m.,  
Natural Resources Administrative Offices, 1800 S. County Road 31, Loveland, CO

*The mission of the Larimer County Parks and Open Lands Department 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.*

### **PRESENT:**

#### ***Parks Advisory Board members:***

Mark DeGregorio  
Russ Fruits  
John Gaffney  
Frank Gillespie  
Rob Harris  
David Hattis  
Chris Klaas  
Linda Knowlton  
Forrest Orswell  
Stephanie Sigler  
John Tipton

#### ***Absent:***

Steve Ambrose  
Ron Kainer  
Mark Caughlan

#### ***Staff:***

Shannon Barnes  
Gary Buffington  
Chris Fleming  
Steve Johnson, Commissioner  
Dan Rieves  
Heather Young

#### ***Public: None***

The February 11, 2014, meeting of the Parks Advisory Board was called to order at 5:31 p.m. Minutes of the last meeting were approved.

#### **BOARD MEMBER REPORTS – None**

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT: Items not on the agenda - None**

# LARIMER COUNTY PARKS ADVISORY BOARD

## GENERAL INFORMATION:

- 2014 Annual permits distributed as a thank you for your volunteerism.
- Board of Commissioners thank you letters, in lieu of the annual Boards & Commissions Reception that was cancelled because of the flood.
- Visual Artist for 2013, Linda Beach, will unveil her piece “Endless” at a reception on February 14<sup>th</sup> at 3 p.m. on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the County Courthouse Office Building.
- The GOCO application for improvement at Pinewood Reservoir was awarded \$155,000 to improve a boat ramp, provide a new restroom and day use area, renovate existing tent and RV sites and construct 8-10 new RV sites. A new mini-grant application will be submitted for playscape and educational components.
- VOC application to complete the trail along the north side of Pinewood reservoir was successful! Work will begin in the Spring.
- A GOCO flood recovery grant will be submitted in February to reconstruct roads at Hermit Park OS (which remains closed indefinitely until they can be fixed), and to potentially do an assessment of the Big Thompson Canyon parcels to ascertain future direction for conservation and recreation.
- Natural Resource Events for this month: See website <http://www.larimer.org/naturalresources>.
- 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

## PRESENTATIONS:

***Outreach, Education and Volunteer Programs 2013 End-of-Year Review – Heather Young, Education Program Coordinator: See attached report***

Heather gave an overview of the Outreach, Education, and Volunteer program for the year 2013. The report included: Land Stewardship and Resource Management Projects, Parks and Open Lands Projects, Education and Product Development, Volunteer Hours, Volunteer and Education Trainings, Programming and Outreach, 2013 Highs and Lows, 2014 Initiatives, etc.

- Volunteer Program included: 8 Adopt A Trail Projects, 15 Group Service Projects, 4 Special Events, Recruiting 26 Campground Hosts, 3 Resource Management Monitoring Projects, etc.
- Over 1400 volunteer hours were logged.
- 2013 volunteer groups include: In-Situ, Overland Mountain Bike Club, Poudre Learning Academy, Centennial Bass Club, Girl Scouts, Trailcology, ASU, Loveland Jr. ROTC, Front Range Forestry, etc.
- Land Stewardship and Resource Management monitoring included: Prairie dogs, Rattlesnakes at Devils Backbone monitoring and Raptors.
- Team Projects included: 3 Bells Russian Olive removal, River Bluffs Weeds and Restorations, Lions Open Space Buckthorn removal, Fire Scar Restoration at Hermit Park.
- 23 projects were done on our Parks and Open Lands with over 200 volunteers.
- Education Planning and Product Development: Completed school field trip brochure for teachers; In progress: Foothills Plant and Flower Guide, Horsetooth Mountain Open Space Curriculum.
- Trainings included: Volunteer Ranger Assistant, Park Aide, Campground Host and Naturalists.
- Total outreach impact for Education Program: 191 events for 6372 members of the public.
- Decrease in number of programs, but a 21% increase in participants/program.
- 62 guided hikes reaching 644 members of the public.
- 19 field trips reaching 811 students.
- 56 campground programs for 2527 members of the public; 25% increase in program participation.

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- Volunteer program highs included: Communication with field staff and volunteers, hands on trainings, developing the project team, cleaning up the database, web base recruitment.
- Volunteer program lows include: Campground host turnover, senior tax worker program, volunteers not entering hours.
- Volunteer program initiative for 2014 include: Supplemental insurance for volunteers, expansion of recruitment efforts, internship recruitment and placement, photo database management.
- Education Program highs: Increase in participants per program, collaboration for Junior Ranger guide, Foothills plant guide and Nature Notes club.
- Education program lows: Communication, relevant educational opportunities.
- Education Program Initiatives for 2014 include: New Volunteer Naturalist training format, technology interactions, Foothills Plant Guide implementation, Junior Ranger Guide implementation.

### Board & Staff Comments:

Rob Harris: I wanted to sign up for the volunteer ranger program for Larimer County. The website refers you to the City of Fort Collins. The application process and requirements seem way too complicated. I ended up quitting the application process.

Heather Young: I'll check with the City of Fort Collins about their application process. It does seem really extensive.

Linda Knowlton: Can you give us some more information about the Horsetooth Mountain Open Space curriculum?

Heather Young: It was a volunteer initiated project. We wanted to standardize our curriculum so it fits in with the State standards. It is used at Horsetooth for school field trips. It highlights the ecology and geology of Horsetooth while also fitting in with the State standard.

Gary Buffington: Heather joined our team seasonally a couple years ago. She is now a full time employee. All the work you have seen tonight was done with just two people. Heather does an outstanding job. Thank you Heather!

Heather Young: If you haven't gone to our Facebook page and "liked" us you should. We have a lot of fun stuff along with important updates etc.

### ***2013 Ranger Program Activity Reporting – Dan Rieves, Visitor Services Manager: See attached report***

Dan gave a summary of the 2013 ranger program activity reporting. Analyzing the numbers from these reports help us in accountability, tracking trends, staffing changes, and making regulation changes. Ranger programs in general draw scrutiny. The ranger program can really tell a lot about the ecology of a department. We put a lot of work, money, training and equipment into our ranger program. 2013 visitation was extremely high which typically means more violations. Rangers are responsible for keeping a patrol summary and submitting it monthly. This report was generated from the all of the patrol summaries from our rangers, both full-time and seasonal. 2013 was a crazy year, we actually made a t-shirt for it and gave it to our rangers. We are very proud of our seasonal and full-time staff and rangers!

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- 2013 patrol summaries include: 32989 contacts resulting in 83 reports.
- 4415 Verbal Warnings.
- 400 Citation/Summons.
- 26 Arrest with Charges.
- 8 Warrant Arrests.
- 94 Eviction from Premises.
- 2799 Windshield Citations with 242 voids.
- 126 Medical Transports.
- 7 Fatalities.
- 239 Motorist Assists.
- 164 Boater Assists.
- 571 Dog related issues.
- 1786 Boat Patrol Hours.
- On Trail Miles – foot 1321, bike 112, horse 10.
- Foot Patrol Hours (not on trail) 3881.
- Training hours – as student 2320.
- Training hours – as instructor 1484.
- Top 5 contact situations: Campground issues, traffic related violations, dog related issues, boating violation, Restricted /Closed area.
- Law enforcement breakdown: 15% of all contacts are law enforcement contacts, 9% of all law enforcement contacts are given a citation or summons, 0.7% of all law enforcement contacts are arrested.

### Board & Staff Comments:

Linda Knowlton: Can you tell us what PR and LE stand for?

Dan Rieves: PR stands for public relations, and LE stands for law enforcement.

Mark DeGregorio: What are the most common campground violations?

Dan Rieves: Noise, dogs, cars parked on the grass, stuff tied to trees, etc.

Russ Fruits: What is a windshield citation?

Dan Rieves: It is a citation that is left on a windshield when you can't contact the visitor. Usually no parking permit, parked on the grass etc. It is not a criminal citation, it is a civil citation. If it is a citation for no parking permit, we would prefer to have the visitor pay for the day pass and void the ticket.

Frank Gillespie: Arrests are less than 10%. Most of your rangers are just giving warnings.

Dan Rieves: It's actually less than 1%.

Frank Gillespie: Is this typical of other law enforcement agencies?

Dan Rieves: It depends, if I'm a state trooper on the highway, I don't stop you unless there is a violation. Most of our contacts are public relations: Answering questions, giving out information etc.

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Chris Fleming: In previous years, there were a lot of accusations that rangers were very law enforcement heavy. We knew it wasn't true, but we didn't have anything to back it up. Now with patrol summaries, we can show how many contacts we have and how many result in citations.

Dan Rieves: The patrol logs are audited information. The senior rangers pull patrol logs to check for inaccuracies and will send them back for corrections typically within a 3 day window. All tickets go through 2 or 3 different levels of supervisors before they leave the building.

Russ Fruits: Foot patrol hours not on trail, is that in a vehicle or is that literally on foot? That is a huge number. I don't see anything on the report that accounts for driving through campgrounds, issuing window citations etc.

Dan Rieves: That is on foot, walking through campgrounds, trails etc. We did not include miles in a vehicle. It is really easy to get those numbers because our Fleet program tracks the number of miles we put on vehicles. Not all miles on a vehicle will be patrol hours.

Chris Fleming: The rangers offer ride-a-longs if any of you are interested.

Russ Fruits: I was a boat ranger assistant one summer. It was really impressive to see the dichotomy between Horsetooth and Carter reservoirs. It's a totally different scale and feel. You get to see on a daily basis what the rangers do. It is very beneficial.

**DISCUSSION ITEMS: None**

**ACTION ITEMS - None**

**STANDING AGENDA ITEMS:**

***Park District updates and Parks Master Plan Implementation Progress report – Dan Rieves, Visitor Services Manager, Chris Fleming, Blue Mountain District Manager, and Mark Caughlan, Horsetooth District Manager***

Blue Mountain District:

- Dave Neff is the new full time ranger for Open Lands. He was one of our long term rangers at our Estes Park properties. We will have some big shoes to fill up there.
- Three of our rangers will to be on maternity or paternity leave at the same time in the Spring. Staffing will be difficult.
- Some of our rangers and maintenance staff participated at the CSU career fair. We do this every year and usually get 3 or 4 really good prospects from the event.
- All of our seasonal jobs have been posted: Trail workers, gate attendants, rangers etc.
- We have revamped some our classes for Ranger Excellence School. We are hoping to bring in some new outside agencies who haven't participated in a while or who have never participated.
- Mark and Chris just got back from Park Law Enforcement Association Conference in Florida. Good conference with great networking opportunity with other agencies across the nation.
- Pinewood reconstruction will be postponed until Fall of 2014.
- We are hoping to know in the next month when we will be able to open Hermit Park.
- The 2 cabins at Flatiron will be removed. We are looking at different options for those spaces.

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- We are in the last year of the contract for managing Mary's Lake & East Portal campgrounds. Estes Valley Rec District would like us to continue to manage those campgrounds. We will be having a lot of discussion and making decisions about the future.

### Horsetooth District:

- The Larimer County Fishing Expo is on March 8 & 9. It is a great event and totally free.
- The Polar Bear Plunge and the Sweaty Sweater 5K were last weekend. Over 400 people jumped in the frozen reservoir.
- Rotary Park entrance and exits will be redesigned.
- Luke Brough is the new full time ranger assigned to Horsetooth.
- Mike Rossi has filled the Maintenance III position after Steve Peck retired. Mike has a lot of experience and will be a great asset to the department.
- Spring is going to be really hard on our crews. Cold and snow has postponed a lot of work we typically do this time of year.
- The entrance work to South Bay has been postponed until next Fall.

### Board & Staff Comments:

Frank Gillespie: The cabins that are being removed are they at Hermit Park?

Chris Fleming: No, Flatiron.

Gary Buffington: The return on the investment has been good. The cabins are paid for. We have had them for 8 years and they were well used.

Frank Gillespie: How many years has it been since you have been managing Mary's Lake and East Portal Campgrounds?

Dan Rieves: We are going into the 5th year of a 5 year contract.

Gary Buffington: We are very proud of the work we have done to those properties.

### **DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

We are working on a conservation and recreation plan for the Big Thompson Canyon properties. We will be starting over in the canyon. We have some funding from FEMA for those parks. There is an opportunity for a lot of public lands to come together and make some good decisions for future conservation and recreation. We hope to have the plan completed by the middle of 2015. We are working closely with CDOT .

We have been hard at work with a sub-committee for the Sales Tax Renewal. Mark DeGregorio was appointed to represent this board on the sub-committee. He has done a great job attending and giving his input. The sales tax is for Open Space, wildlife habitat, trails and parks. Previously, only 2% of the tax is used for parks. Mark and I will be giving you updates.

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Mark DeGregorio: It is very important the sales tax is extended. It benefits both the Open Spaces and the Parks. You can keep acquiring lands, but over time, more money is going to be required to manage those lands. It is really critical the sales tax gets passed.

Rob Harris: When will the polling start?

Gary Buffington: March and April.

Dan Rieves: We had positive results from the Our Lands Our Future survey regarding the sales tax renewal.

Linda Knowlton: I would like to put in a plug for the cities as well. The city of Fort Collins and other municipalities are absolutely dependent on the dollars they get back from the county through this tax. The tax is important at every level.

Gary Buffington: We only get about 3% from the General Fund from the county. By the end of next year, the sales tax will pay for the entire Outreach, Education & Volunteer program for our parks and Open Spaces.

Rob Harris: It seems like one of the challenges will be the economic situation at that point in time and how many other things go up.

Gary Buffington: We are watching that really closely.

Linda Knowlton: I think the challenge is going to be explaining to the public and making them understand the amount of money that is needed for the management of these properties. The public needs to understand we have been buying properties, but now they have to be managed.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Shannon Barnes

APPROVED:

Russell Fruits, Chair

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*Next regular meeting: March 11, 2014, Larimer County Courthouse Office Building, Boyd Lake Room, 200 W. Oak Street, Ft. Collins, CO*

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Public can view agenda and minutes at [www.larimer.org/parks](http://www.larimer.org/parks)

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