



LARIMER COUNTY OPEN LANDS ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, June 25, 2009 – 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., Bison Visitor Center, 1800 S CR 31, 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.

Present:

Nancy Wallace	Trudy Haines
Jeff Hindman	Bob Streeter
Ted Swanson	Don Griffith
Sue Sparling	Jean Carpenter
David Roy	Bill Newman

Staff:

Jeffrey Boring	Travis Rollins
Kerri Rollins	Lori Smith
Gary Buffington	Sue Burke
Justin Scharton	Zac Wiebe
Commissioner Tom Donnelly	

Absent:

John Ericson	Brian Hayes
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Chair, Nancy Wallace called the meeting to order at 5:18 pm.

Nancy asked for clarification of May’s minutes regarding a letter to Gary and Marc Engemoen about the board’s recommendations concerning filling the open lands manager position. The board agreed that the letter should be directed to the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC). Nancy distributed the proposed letter before signing it. She will deliver it to the BOCC.

Sue motioned to approve the May meeting minutes with the above clarification, Jean seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT - none

INFORMATION

- Report from the OLAB liaison to the Parks advisory Board (PAB). PAB liaison, Sue Sparling is leaving the Board and a replacement is needed. The Board will identify a new liaison at the August meeting.
- Report from the Open Lands Operations Manager, Travis Rollins - Travis commented on his responsibilities for operations. Several Rangers attended Carrie Martin elementary for a career day presentation. Travis passed around comments from kids and highlighted the diversity of Ranger responsibilities. Lots of preparation has taken place for the Red Mountain Open Space (RMOS) and it will open Saturday the 27th, rain or shine. A Navy Reserve group has volunteered to remove a fence at Devil’s Backbone. The Rangers have been doing lots of work with the Poudre Fire Authority, updating maps, and developing partnerships. They’ve also been working with Charlie Gindler on the design and layout of a well that will go in at RMOS after the opening. Grazing leases have been modified due to the exceptional spring forage. Storm and ice at Fossil Creek damaged the viewing pier. It is open but they are working with engineers to repair the damage.
- On May 28, a sneak preview of RMOS for staff and media was held. Colorado Getaways (Channel 4) filmed a spot for that program. See <http://cbs4denver.com/video/?id=58392@kcnc.dayport.com>. They



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intend to air it again on 7/18/09, 6:30 pm. Kerri reported that it is a good film, everyone liked it, and there are great quotes and video.

- The Lieutenant governor, Barbara O'Brien, visited Larimer County on her statewide tour to promote the Children in the Outdoors concept on June 11th at the Mountain View High School in Loveland. Seventy-five people attended. Kerri invited her to speak at the Colorado Open Space Alliance (COSA) conference but unfortunately she was not available.
- Natural Resource Events for June. See website <http://www.larimer.org/naturalresources>
- State Trails grant for new trail at Devil's Backbone Open Space - Jeffrey got a little over \$21,000 grant for a new interpretive geology loop trail at Devil's Backbone. Meegan will be the project lead and it should be underway in six months or so. Kerri mentioned that money from the Ann Dewey fund, held by the Friends group, will be used for signage.
- National Geographic Article about Red Mountain and Soapstone (handout)
- The July OLAB meeting is canceled.

INTRODUCTION

- Zac Wiebe, Larimer County's new Natural Resources Technician introduced himself to the board and the board took turns introducing themselves, their board status and area of residence.

BOARD COMMENT-Items not on the agenda

- Bob asked to share six mentoring thoughts as this is his final meeting.

1. Resource protection: He expressed concern that resource protection isn't happening, specifically erosion at Eagles Nest, and is worried about losing volunteers that are willing to help with these kinds of projects.

2. Open Space sales tax extension: He's talked to people about using volunteers to build trails. Trails are still a main priority and are important to the public. He encouraged and urged the Board to work on trail completion and construction, even if they are on roads. An example is Box Elder to Wellington.

3. State Parks audit report: Bob recommended that the Board ask Gary to give a report about results from the State Parks audit and how well our parks and open lands would comply under a similar audit. He urged the Board to continue to analyze open space dollars and how well they are being used. Trudy responded with a recommendation to ask each city to report on their open space programs, particularly concerning budgets. Kerri responded that Bill and K-Lynn worked with cities in 2005 to do just that. Bill reported that cities were very responsible, they didn't overspend, and that spending and objectives were well aligned. Discussion ensued about the best way to update this information. Tom suggested we include reports in the annual report. Kerri responded that it took too much room and wasn't required. The board decided that we should invite cities/towns to board meeting to give reports.

4. Letter to the BOCC: He talked about the letter to the BOCC again regarding K-Lynn's position.

5. Retreat: He suggested an annual retreat to review Board processes, unresolved issues, and work plans.

6. Farmland Protection: He stated that we haven't protected farmland enough and suggested pursuing this type of land for acquisition. Nancy responded that this is an opportunity to refocus the duties of the open lands manager. Trudy agreed and suggested stepping back to look at our vision for open lands. Kerri mentioned a priority exercise that showed trails to be the board's top priority. Tom mentioned that we got



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\$600,000 for the Poudre River trail through the North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization, and agreed that we should pursue resource protection issues and trails.

- Bill mentioned the campground name conflict with Hermit Park and Rocky Mountain National Park and suggested renaming it. Staff will look into the logistics of changing the name. Kerri will e-mail new choices to the subcommittee.

ACTION ITEMS

- **Small grants for community partnering, Sue Burke** - Sue reviewed highlights of changes on the small grants draft recommendations handout. Sue would like to move the deadline for small grant applications to the end of September to avoid bad weather during site visits. Nancy pointed out that we're expanding the small grants focus and looking for Board volunteers to serve on a small grants subcommittee. The Board will select the subcommittee at the August meeting.

Ted asked questions about how the expansion will help reach new audiences and connect people to the land. Kerri responded with an example of funding a vegetable garden in Loveland tended by at-risk youth that we were unable to fund before because we could only fund native plants. The vegetables won prizes at the County Fair and were then donated to the House of Neighborly Service.

Working on preserving more farmland was discussed. Charlie said that he has put together an agriculture report about Larimer County's agricultural conservation easements. Ted was thinking about it for the entire county. Jeffrey mentioned CSU has such a service called COMaP, a GOCO funded project. Nancy mentioned that George Wallace did a similar project for the county.

A question was asked about "increased access", did it mean that we would pay transportation dollars for groups to travel anywhere in Larimer County? Sue responded with clarification that it would only be to our open spaces.

Sue talked about the small grants program being about real people and that it is very gratifying and rewarding. It also supports expansion. Bob mentioned that there are three osprey chicks in a nest that was built in his neighborhood with a small grant. Jean mentioned the success of the xeriscape gardens at the Waverly school for at-risk youth, also funded with a small grant.

Bill motioned to approve recommendations regarding expansion of the small grants for community partnering program. Sue seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

- **Red Mountain Open Space (RMOS) Grand Opening – 6/27/09**

Kerri said that there will be guided hikes, horseback rides, and the Friends group will have a table for the celebration flag art project. The Friends Group will also be giving away snacks, water, and magnets with an Open Space message. Kerri asked the board to decorate a flag for the RMOS.

The Board discussed the K-Lynn Cameron trail name replacing the Stone Circle trail name. David expressed concern about the name change. Kerri read K-Lynn's e-mail message (see attached). Discussion ensued about the specifics of the trail and the cultural resources. Travis mentioned a recent cultural sensitivity training. Gary wondered if we can "have our cake and eat it too" by somehow utilizing both names. Trudy suggested naming the trail after K-Lynn but still interpreting the stone circles. Travis expressed his opinion



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that we should keep the original name. Nancy suggested meeting with K-Lynn and other interested parties to discuss a compromise. Bob agreed with Travis. Jeff suggested involving Rob for another perspective on the cultural sensitivity. Travis and Nancy agreed. Gary would like to talk to Meegan and Rob to see if we could somehow make it all work out. He said that we do have some time since the trail is not scheduled to be constructed until 2010.

Kerri discussed the success of the RMOS dedication on 6/6/09, despite the weather. Nancy and Bob concurred.

- **Natural resource capital development and acquisition summary, Lori Smith**

Lori explained the new format of the capitol development and acquisition summary 2009-2011 spreadsheet. It is designed to highlight ongoing things that the Board and staff utilize, and to focus on simplifying and highlighting things that are current and more subject to change. Lori walked through each column and what they each indicate. She showed that it is a cleaner, simpler design that is easier to work with. Lori explained the negative \$45000. Jeffrey asked about a line item for a trail grant. Jean and Jeff asked about matches for grant projects and how we account for them. Lori explained that this form only refers to sales tax budget. Jeffrey and Kerri discussed matching funds. Nancy suggested adding dedicated matching funds as a placeholder. Lori will put it back on the report. Charlie requested a change in language about trail development at Duck Lake. Lori will amend. Bob asked about \$200,000 for an office building. Gary responded that there is no time frame. Nancy asked about the sales tax projections. Lori said that they are down 12% and we still may not get what is projected. Gary said that there are safety nets in place. The board requested to see the full capital development and acquisition spreadsheets every September and requested nothing be deleted from this summary spreadsheet until the end of the year.

Using the park program funding 2009-2013 spreadsheet, Lori explained how parks funding works (see handout).

Lori then handed out the 2008 lottery summary and park operations budget to give the board a better understanding of financial decision being considered by the Parks Advisory Board. She pointed out the revenue increase projections in 2011 are due to proposed fee increases. The Board asked to see this spreadsheet every six months.

Gary pointed out that Parks will be in the red in 2012 or 2013 unless something changes. Nancy asked about the status of taking over Estes Valley Recreation and Parks District campgrounds in Estes Park. Gary said that it is in the contract stage, not yet approved by the Board of County Commissioners. The projected revenue for the campgrounds is around \$600,000 and it will cost around \$300,000 to manage. A lot of private campgrounds in Estes Park are being sold off for condominiums and we're seeing shrinkage of RV campground availability. People will pay \$35-\$40 a night. Nancy asked how many spaces there are and if the projected budget include management. Gary responded that there are around 320 and the projected budget did include maintenance. They are RV parks, and the Parks Board will have to decide if they desire to participate in this style of revenue generation or do we upgrade these sites to match our existing standards. Nancy asked about county requirements. Gary said that he and Stan Gengler met with the Planning department and the Water and Sanitation District and were assured that there would be no required upgrades until we started to improve the sites using the new Master Plan. The county can go into the campgrounds as a contractor and will generate revenue immediately. We are asking for a 20 year contract. Government taking over private business is usually a concern but the District Board is okay with it. They need to support their master plan with funding for improvements. Bill asked if we could we put these new campgrounds on the county reservation system. Gary said that they would be on our reservation system.



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Jean asked how much it would cost us. Gary responded that it costs campers eight dollars per reservation but doesn't cost us anything. Trudy asked if we charge more for out-of-county or out-of-state people? Gary responded that we need to figure out how to do that without costing too much time or money. We would need to figure out how to distinguish out of county vs. in-county and must be careful because 50% of our visitors are out-of-county residents. We don't want to price ourselves out of business. Nancy pointed out that they are also paying sales tax while visiting. Trudy recommended that we look into the elasticity of fees. Gary said that we would investigate that and that we need to constantly look for revenue opportunities. The weather hasn't been good for visitation but reservoir levels are full. Bob asked if we could we have these reports out ahead of time and Lori answered that it takes a lot of time every month to reconcile reports. Kerri responded that we can make our best effort to include the simplified version in the packet when it goes out a week ahead of the meeting. Nancy asked if we could we do reports every six months. Gary agreed and will talk to Deb.

- **Natural Resources projects - Jeffrey**

Jeffrey talked about the process for prioritizing and utilizing resources. He highlighted how management plans look towards protecting, restoring, and managing what we already have. Meegan and Jeffrey will be more vocal about resource planning projects. They have identified 3 kinds of resource projects:

1. Restoration: What can be done to restore disturbed areas?
2. Mitigation: What can we do to stave off catastrophic events?
3. Research: We would like to learn more. Jeffrey mentioned hiring the Colorado Natural Heritage Program to do some monitoring.

Jeffrey and Meegan went through management plans to outline projects that need to be done. There were a lot (6 double sided pages). They tallied the projects, prioritized them, and came up with \$16,000 worth of projects which were added to the 2010 budget. Prioritization focused on "bang for the buck", how much ecological benefit can be obtained at the least cost. They looked at it from an ecological and timing sense. They also considered urgency. The River Bluffs project is an example of how we can make open lands look good. There are three projects that were prioritized.

1. RMOS pine beetle mitigation, NW area, neighbors mentioned pine beetle and we'll work with forestry to remove affected trees in a 50 acre area.
2. River Bluffs Open Space: We've identified conservation targets. The river corridor is in bad shape, particularly one channel that has lots of weeds, eroded banks, etc. It's an eyesore and doesn't look natural. The project will cost \$6000 in 2010 and \$2000 in 2011. The project will restore banks, re-vegetate, and we'll request another \$2500 to plant trees later. Jeffrey highlighted the habitat improvement plan.
3. Eagles Nest: An abandoned road needs to be restored to a native state, old corral sites are in need of restoration and a meadow full of weeds needs to be controlled. The Weed District has \$2500 for this project. Trudy asked if CSU ever works with us on this type of project. Jeffrey responded that it isn't usual. They usually do research projects. We had one recently and are looking for a volunteer to study at the Hermit Park wetlands. Trudy wondered if we have asked and suggested that it would be helpful at least to have a plan. Jeffrey agreed and added that we need to find a Master's or PhD student who knows what to do. Kerri asked if this could be an opportunity to explore with the new small grants program. Jeffrey responded that it is doubtful because there is too little money to attract a student. Jean mentioned a beaver field trip that focused on problem solving at MacGregor Ranch in Estes Park and suggested utilizing CSU's freshman seminar. Jeffrey said that the easiest volunteer project to sell is a planting project. Several board members suggested



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utilizing schools for our small grants program. Kerri remarked that volunteers like to be pseudo-scientists, ex. city frog monitoring program. Bob said that he didn't think that we should put sales tax money toward research that doesn't help us or gives us info that we won't use. Trudy pointed out that if kids have a project that gets them onto an open space, it will help the program in the long run. Jeffrey said that we turned down the frog project because there was no benefit but the small grants program may make it beneficial. Bob stated that we can accomplish both. How do you handle an organization that has adopted an area (ex. Eagle's Nest) and how does it tie into the management plan? We need to take advantage of volunteer groups, particularly the ones who bring resources. Nancy said that we'll go ahead with the 2009 resource project budget and discuss 2010 and 2011 as we go along.

River Bluffs discussion:

Jeffrey asked for feedback about moving the trailhead at River Bluffs Open Space and mentioned the finding of artifacts (bone beads, points, pottery shards). Gary Weinmeister found material back in the 1960s-1990s so we contracted SWCA to do a shovel test for archeological resources. They found no remains but lots of flakes and some larger items. Out of 32 holes dug, 16 had artifacts. Preliminary reports indicate that this is significant. This significance is furthered by its location at the confluence and the bluffs it. Jeffrey requested feedback because of an upcoming public meeting. Trudy asked if the public would have any objection. Jeffrey didn't think so but it will change the management plan. The funding is already covered. The current budget includes money for the underpass and bridge so it's not a new cost. Bob stated that it will help the southern trail. Kerri pointed out that we planned to cross the river anyway. Nancy said that this means we can't use the money elsewhere. Gary reiterated that we'll have to cross the river anyway. David asked if the shovel test was done at the other proposed trailhead area. Jeffrey explained that it wasn't because the archaeologists didn't think it was necessary after they did a visual inspection. David asked for further assurance that the new trailhead wasn't a burial site. Jeffrey explained that those sites are usually at confluences and Nancy mentioned that the site is higher. David remarked that it wouldn't cost that much to do the shovel test. Jeffrey said that the archeologists didn't expect to find much more. Kerri said that it is also a farm area that is disturbed. Jeffrey agreed and said that any artifacts would have been destroyed anyway. Nancy asked what the opinion of the landowner is. Jeffrey answered that he's excited about it. The archaeologists compared it to the Kaplan/Hoover site and it has lots of interpretation potential. Everyone is interested in moving the trailhead. **Bob motioned to move the trailhead as suggested by staff. Jeff seconded and the motion passed unanimously.**

- **Whole Measures exercise** - Kerri recapped Whole Measures. In June Kerri, K-Lynn, Gary and Nancy went to the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) with an action plan. The BOCC approved the plan. The Department leadership team, the Parks Advisory Board (PAB), the Open Land Advisory Board (OLAB) and the BOCC will participate in the exercises. Peter Forbes comes to the county on September 23rd. The goal is to get the boards through three of the exercises before then. Kerri did a dry run with staff previously. It is about making connections between land and people so when we go back to the voters we will have developed a stronger connection between the voters and the land. We will work with Peter Forbs and through these exercises see how we can adjust the use of sales tax revenue to better connect people to the land and how it can shape our future master plan.

Kerri walked the Board through the Whole Measures module and captured everyone's scores and comments. These comments will be summarized and distributed at the August meeting. Meanwhile, the Board will complete the Relationships Between People and Land and the Healthy Ecosystems modules as homework and send in their scores and comments at least one week before the August meeting.



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EXECUTIVE SESSION 8:10pm Pursuant to (24-6-402(4) (a) C.R.S. Purchase, acquisition, lease, transfer or sale of any real or personal property interest. **Bob motioned to enter into executive session. Sue seconded and the motion passed unanimously.**

Jean motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:30. Sue seconded and the motion passed unanimously.
The meeting was adjourned by Nancy Wallace at 8:31 pm.