



LARIMER COUNTY OPEN LANDS ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, Sept. 23, 2010 – 5:00 p.m.- 8:00 p.m., Loveland Municipal Building, 500 E 3rd 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.

Present:

John Ericson	Town of Estes Park	Don Griffith	At-large
David Roy	City of Ft. Collins	Suzan Fritchel	At-large
Nancy Wallace	Planning Commission	Mary Banken	At-large
Patricia Brennan	At-large	Steve Vessey	At-large
		Peter Kast	At-large

Staff:

Gary Buffington	Director	Travis Rollins	Open Lands Operations Manager
Kerri Rollins	Open Lands Program Manager	Zac Wiebe	Natural Resource Technician
Meegan Flenniken	Resource Stewardship Manager		
Lori Smith	Senior Accountant		

Absent:

Jeff Hindman	Town of Berthoud	Trudy Haines	At-large
Hugh McKean	City of Loveland		

Peter called the meeting to order at 5:09 pm.

REGULAR MEETING

- Approval of the meeting minutes for August 26, 2010.

Nancy motioned to approve the minutes with changes, Steve seconded and the motion passed unanimously

- Review Agenda and enclosures

PUBLIC COMMENT: Items not on the agenda.

INFORMATION:

- COSA conference was a success – 250 in attendance, lots of great sessions.

Kerri mentioned that there was record attendance this year. Hunter Lovins and Patty Limerick were keynote speakers. The location for the next conference hasn't been decided but will likely be back in the mountains.

- Horsetooth Reservoir reconstruction project won a Colorado Lottery Starburst Award that will be presented to the Commissioners in November.
- Fire on the Manner Ridge OS parcel along Highway 287 between Loveland and Fort Collins. Approximately two weeks ago, 10-12 small fires were started by a sparking vehicle across from Longview Farms Open Space.
- The Reservoir Road fire occurred close to staff offices near Carter Lake. The Visitor Center was used by evacuees and aid workers. Many staff manned the Visitor Center to help, and rangers helped evacuate about 60% of citizens that live in the area. CJ, Linda & Zac were at the office and helped out.



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- The 6th Annual Northern Colorado Birding Fair will take place at Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space on 9/25 from 7am – 3pm. A multitude of agencies are hosting, and it promises to be the biggest year ever with new birding clinics, speakers and activities for all ages. Detailed information is on the website. Jerry White will do a raptor release to commemorate his years of service. Rangers have been preparing for the Northern Colorado Birding Fair (NCBF) at Fossil Creek Reservoir Regional Open Space (FCRROS). Attendance has fluctuated over the years starting with about 1200 and last year around 430. Travis hopes to have about 1000 visitors through better marketing.
- October welcomes the onset of school programs at our open spaces. So far, there are 8 schools participating in education programs this month at the Devil's Backbone and Horsetooth Mountain open spaces. There have been several requests this week, more transportation money was allocated and it has all been used.
- The Small Grants for Community Partnering grant applications have been posted and are due 9/24. Interested parties can view the criteria and download an application from the website.
- Updated Departmental Organization Chart – attached
- Report from the OLAB liaison to the Parks Advisory Board – Trudy

Trudy wasn't present. Kerri asked the board if they still value the Parks Advisory Board (PAB) liaison. PAB rarely sends a representative from that board. Patricia reads the PAB minutes. Nancy would like a report but it hasn't been consistent. Peter would be fine hearing the big issues which Gary can report. Gary gave an update of the Carter Lake Marina concession, it has gone to bid. He also updated the Board about the U.S. Forest Service campground situation. The USFS is looking for a concessionaire to manage 61 campgrounds and 1600 sites. The department is evaluating a potential bid on the USFS prospectus. Gary will report on PAB when Trudy is unable attend.

Kerri reminded the Board that GOCO solicited Department of Natural Resources (DNR) input to talk about children, families, and the outdoors as part of a new strategic plan. A small committee including Peter sat down with them for 2.5 hours. They're trying to figure out how to proceed, be it including children in the outdoors as part of existing grants or having entire cycles dedicated to it. One theme that GOCO has heard involves not funding programming, plenty of programming exists but ways to implement it are difficult.

- Annual Christmas Party. All of the boards will be combined and the meeting will be held at Peter Kast's house. Dec. 2nd is the "penciled in" date. It will likely be from 6-9 and the board all contributes for alcohol.
- Report from the Open Lands Operations Manager – Travis
- The Red Mountain Open Space (RMOS) boundary project is completed. It designated the boundary between Colorado and Wyoming. The project was driven somewhat by the upcoming hunting season. Peter wondered how close to the rim it was, it is very close to the developed spring to the north. The Larimer County surveying department did the survey.
- Travis met with the seven successful hunting applicants to go over rules and regulations. Charlie clarified that there were 330 applicants. This year RMOS will be included in the Division of Wildlife hunting catalog. Mary clarified that hunter selection was random. Applicants were charged a \$10 application fee.
- The FCRROS pier reconstruction has been started. Peter asked who was paying for the reconstruction. Travis answered that, since it was not covered by insurance, DNR will pick up the bill.
- There was a mountain bike injury in a remote area of HTMOS, the biker sustained a broken pelvis and had to be carried out.



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- At Eagle's Nest Open Space (ENOS), flash grazing in the river corridor is being utilized to help with weed management. The Horsetooth Mountain Open Space (HTMOS) firewood program is continuing for five more weekends. 400 pickup loads will have been removed by the end of the season. Patricia asked why five more, bad weather or no more wood? Travis answered that they decided to start early and end early to avoid bad weather but there is plenty of wood. David asked if the wood was beetle kill. Meegan answered that it's mostly wood removed through thinning but mostly not pine beetle. Most of the pine beetle trees were taken care of already. Travis mentioned that wildlife habitat perspective seems to have improved. Gary asked how many more years DNR would do forest management. Meegan answered that the state just updated the DNR forest management plan and there are 240 acre areas left to treat. However, DNR cannot apply for more money. Travis also noted that Front Range Community College forestry students volunteered to bring much of the wood to an accessible area. John asked if the firewood program is open only to individuals, not commercial loggers. Travis answered yes and mentioned that approximately 90% of the individuals are from Larimer County.
- A 70 year old female fainted from heat exhaustion at ENOS.
- 50 of the COSA conference attendees were rangers and Travis hopes to create a ranger network.

John inquired about the alabaster situation at RMOS. Travis reminded the board about the alabaster mine and that three large pieces were removed last year. The miner has been active in the area but has only been coring the three pieces already extracted. He hasn't done any excavation since the original activity.

Gary added that there has been a request from a volunteer fire department who wanted payment in lieu of taxes for taking RMOS off of the tax role. He was worried about a precedent, the commissioners agreed and the payment was not approved. Don clarified that the fire department was from Wellington.

- Natural Resource Events for October. See website <http://www.larimer.org/naturalresources>
- Jerry White is retiring this year. His last day is December 15th.

FINANCIAL REPORT:

- Update: Natural Resources Capital Development and Acquisition Summary 2009 - 2011. Lori pointed out the \$59k increase since last month and explained that it is from the River Bluffs Open Space (RBOS) project. The DNR has been sharing GOCO dollars with the Road and Bridge Department and when they came in under budget, they let the DNR use the remainder. On the handout, tax is up \$700k but \$400k of that are vendor fees.
- Projected effects of Amendments 60, 61 and Proposition 101 on the Help Preserve Open Spaces Sales Tax. Kerri handed out an explanation of the amendments from the Colorado Municipal League. The County Board of Commissioners (BOCC), while they oppose all three, has opted to not take a resolution against them. They have empowered citizen boards to approve such resolutions. Nancy asked how the decision would be constructed. Lori mentioned that DNR debt was voter approved and won't be affected. The County finance office estimates sales tax and has estimated two versions of the budget, one projecting tax if the amendments pass and one if not. If Proposition 101 passes, a \$246k (7%) decrease is projected. Lori handed out a sheet and went through some of the line items. See handout. Kerri mentioned a criticism that she has heard is that DNR needs to go back to the voters due to its mismanagement of money. Actually, it was managed well as the budget has been reduced by \$16 million since 2007. When projections went down, DNR was able to adapt without any furloughs or layoffs and doing all of our priority projects. Also, the projected 7% decrease only factors in language of the amendments and doesn't account for unpredictable impacts. Between now and 2018 about 2 million will be cut,



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mostly from the long term management budgets. Lori commented that with the 70/30 required distribution DNR will have to consider staff cuts. She commented that staff salary is the only place that much lost revenue can come from. Kerri mentioned that poll trends indicate that 60 and 61 weren't looking favorable to pass but 101 is borderline. David commented that if they do pass, it will also restrict the ability of governments to bond or borrow; there are huge implications for local governments. John asked if the projected numbers were total or after distributed. Lori answered that the projections are after administrative costs and distribution to the cities and they assume only 40% but the county usually gets 42%. Lori mentioned that DNR is fine until 2018 if the amendments don't pass

John thinks it's important for all boards to adopt resolutions. In Estes Park they are trying to consider the "other side of the coin". Peter asked David about the City of Ft. Collins. David answered that it will cost the city millions of dollars and could even be a health and safety issue for some. Ft. Collins has adopted a resolution against all three. Nancy mentioned that the most insidious part of this process is distasteful because the whole state can vote on issues that affect local, voter approved initiatives. David asked that even though the BOCC isn't formally against it could OLAB pass one. Nancy wondered if an OLAB resolution would tie a position to the BOCC. Kerri mentioned that if a resolution is passed a press release could be sent on behalf of DNR. David mentioned that opposition needs to be "shouted from the rooftops". Mary asked if this is good timing. Nancy mentioned it must be now or it could be too late by the next meeting.

Nancy motions to resolve that the OLAB is opposed to the passage of amendments 60, 61 and prop 101, Peter seconded and the motion passed with one dissenting vote from Patricia.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

- Lions Park, kayak proposal update – Meegan

Meegan reminded the board about the kayak park proposal and the process that has taken place so far. The DOW, who owns the property, is not interested in a kayak park. Their main issues are fish habitat, fishing and hunting and a kayak park isn't what they want to do. The DOW also looked into other factors, including the city proposed park further downstream. Hydrology studies have to be done to examine the floodplain at Lions Park and could cost up to \$50k. The city estimates that the total project cost at the downriver site would be \$250k and only \$70k has been raised so far. Also, the proposed Glade Reservoir could affect the flow and limit the season at Lions Park. The park might not make sense even if the CDOW was on board. Meegan has met with Mandy to discuss these updates. Mandy is very passionate and will pursue the project through the CDOW. DNR has encouraged Mandy to work with a group on the proposed kayak park on the lower part of the Poudre River. Mary asked about the management plan. Given these updates, the plan will be updated the natural time.

- Departmental outreach – what is our story and who are we telling it to?

Sue Burke is on our division communication team along with representatives from each division department. Mark Engemoen, the division director has asked for a report on the outreach that each department does. Sue has put together an extensive list for DNR. See handout.

- Departmental and Open Lands Master Plan discussion continued. Please visit <http://larimer.org/naturalresources/plans.htm> to see the plan.

Kerri reminded the board about the proposed subcommittee to consider options for any future Open Lands sales tax. The last OLAB meeting resulted in consideration of a new master plan in lieu of a new funding structure at this time. The first master plan was adopted in 2001 and identifies resource areas for protection that includes open space, agriculture and trails. Meegan commented on the process; a consultant was hired and a public



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survey was completed, both for about \$80k. There were seven public meetings in Ft. Collins and Loveland plus about 35 other meetings in public settings. The second public meeting tested some of the assumptions about public wants, the third meeting was draft plan, and the fourth was final comments. The western part of the county was cut off due to existing land plans good partners taking the lead. There was also a public process to determine the proportion of land to be protected and/or accessed between fee simple vs. conservation easements (CE). Results were 55% fee simple and 45% CE without access. Nancy asked if this proportion is by acres. Kerri answered that, at the time there were about 13,000 acres, now it's about 44,000 acres with about 36% in easement. About half of that new acreage was RMOS. Peter asked since DNR is considering a new master plan, what is the status of the old one. Kerri distributed a list of all the property protected since 2001. The Laramie foothills priority area has been covered well. Has the plan been accomplished? Kerri thinks that is hasn't been accomplished in the areas of farmland, river corridors and regional trails.

Kerri mentioned discussions about different options for master plan updates. Also, she met with Mark Sears from Ft. Collins and Brian Hayes from Loveland and they considered updating all plans in a coordinated effort. An example of an idea that was discussed is that perhaps the County, with its infrastructure and staff, become the "rural" open space managers and the cities focus more of the "whole communities" efforts that are better located in the urban areas. In the end, each would have own master plan but a coordinated effort could help everyone. Peter clarified that the last plan took 15 months, then asked about the 507 acres on the handout with no public access. They are the Culver Open Space, a buffer adjacent to HTMOS and Hidden Valley, a buffer to Devil's Backbone Open space that is mostly owned by Loveland.

Nancy mentioned that the next master plan needs to include management of open spaces as part of the process. The farmland issue needs to also be addressed with more focus. David wondered if figuring out how to make a tax successful or updating a master plan should come first. Peter commented that it's hard to have a funding objective without a plan. A planning process could improve public awareness and education before presenting a funding package. Nancy isn't sure that the DNR is through with acquisition but it needs to focus a little more on management.

Nancy mentioned that there is a thought in the community that there has been a mismanagement of funds because the DNR is out of money. That's a fallacy, DNR never intended to have money left, the money was managed well. She commented that it's challenging because DNR has some ideas about what things would cost and that should be a base to go to the public. Peter mentioned that it'll be important to have a baseline, here is what DNR needs to keep, what DNR has, and what DNR could do with more. Kerri commented that a benchmark could be a public survey that guides where to start the master plan process. Kerri mentioned a study by the Trust for Public Land (TPL) that evaluated the economic benefits of parks and protected areas in the Denver area. It showed just shy of \$600 million in tangible benefits. Everyone has there own personal value but there is actual tangible benefits as well. A survey to find out what people want and an analysis of the worth of what DNR has could be helpful. Suzan thinks the public needs to be educated on what DNR has done with public money and what it's worth, a comparison of what's been proposed and what's been completed. Kerri would like to do an economic analysis of what has been done. She thinks it behooves the DNR to partner with all the agencies in the county, it benefits everyone. Nancy mentioned that a study like this could be very expensive.

Kerri mentioned the discussion with Mark and Brian about doing a joint board meeting with all three boards to talk about it some more. Does it behoove all of us? DNR could invite someone from TPL, maybe GOCO, to have statewide, higher level information. Don thinks it is important to get everyone involved even though it will be complicated. It will better serve the public. Peter: it's important to have a presentation DNR can give people



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even before the process starts. John asked who would attend the meeting, councils or staff. It would be OLAB, Ft. Collins Natural Areas Board and the Board for Loveland Open Space. Also, representatives from other municipalities would be invited. John mentioned that these meetings are fascinating but complicated. John also mentioned the focus on the division; the first 15 years are dedicated to acquisition, the next 15 about management, enhancement, etc. Kerri commented that the level of discussion should be high, not about what DNR should do, that should come from the public. This meeting will be about the process. The November board meeting will be on the 10th. Kerri will inform OLAB about the time and place. Nancy: in order to not waste time, there should some specific ideas of goals; it should be treated like a public meeting. Staff should sit down ahead of time to discuss planning meetings, there needs to be structure. Peter agrees that there should be a very clear agenda. Kerri: there are already two planning meetings scheduled and there may even be a facilitator. John asked if the consulting company does facilitating. Kerri answered that a free county facilitator is available if needed.

BOARD COMMENT: Items not on the agenda

DIRECTOR'S REPORT: Items not on the agenda

Gary handed out a revenue report. He highlighted HTMOS and Hermit Park Open Space (HPOS). HPOS is being discovered, particularly the day use opportunities. HTMOS revenue, the biggest revenue source, is up. The Estes Park campgrounds were a little short due to several challenges. The Estes Valley Recreation district is about at a break even point. DNR is up about \$400k, much of which is increased revenue from the Mary's Lake campground. A lot of "staycationers" are still spending money on outdoor experiences in this down economy. He thinks that HPOS won't be self sufficient. In order to do so, the visitor experience would be inadequate. In a typical parks system, few parks support the many. It's not typical to have a park be sufficient. Mary asked about the Boy Scout weekend and the revenue generated. Gary answered that, while they were subsidized a little, about \$10k was generated.

Steve motioned to move to executive session, David seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: (24-6-402(4)(a) C.R.S. Purchase, acquisition, lease, transfer or sale of any real or personal property interest.

Nancy motioned to adjourn, Steve seconded and the motions passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 7:47 pm.

Next regular meeting: Wednesday November 10, 2010; Larimer County Courthouse, 200 W. Oak, Ft. Collins