



LARIMER COUNTY OPEN LANDS ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

MINUTES

Thursday, March 22

5:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Loveland Council Chambers, 500 E. Third St., 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:

Peter Kast	At-large	Nancy Wallace	Planning Commission
Suzan Fritchel	At-large	Mary Banken	At-large
Patricia Brennan	At-large	John Ericson	Town of Estes Park
Gerry Horak	City of Fort Collins	Hugh McKean	City of Loveland

Staff Present:

Gary Buffington	Director	Charlie Johnson	Land Agent
Kerri Rollins	Open Lands Manager	Travis Rollins	Open Lands Operations Manager
Meegan Flenniken	Resource Program Manager	Casey Cisneros	Weed Specialist
Lori Smith	Senior Accountant	Bob Loomis	Ranger
CJ Cullins	Volunteer Coordinator	Cole Kramer	Visitor Services Intern
Jake Ficca	Natural Resources Intern	Heather Young	Education Coordinator

Absent:

Jeff Hindman	Town of Berthoud	Trudy Haines	At-large
Steve Vessey	At-large		

Peter called the meeting to order at 5:12 p.m.

REGULAR MEETING

- Approval of the meeting minutes for 2/23/2012: Suzan motioned, Nancy seconded and the motion was approved unanimously.
- Review Agenda and enclosures

INTRODUCTION:

Cole Kramer, a CSU student, is completing a 400-hour internship with the visitor services staff. He is interested in a future career as a ranger. He is moving on from his internship to a seasonal ranger position at Horsetooth Reservoir.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Items not on the agenda.

INFORMATION:

- The Poudre River Corridor and Regional Trail partnership grant application was submitted to GOCO on 3/16/2012 with lots of help from Jeffrey, Jake, and our city/town partners. GOCO site visits is scheduled for 3/31 and presentation for 4/9.



LARIMER COUNTY OPEN LANDS ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

- The Plug in to Nature GOCO project study made its debut on 3/7. About 70 community members attended. OLAB is scheduled to receive this presentation in April. Rob managed this project and did a fabulous job.
- Peter, Gerry, Patricia and Steve are at the end of their first term at the end of June. A letter should have been received regarding interest in reappointment.
- Kerri was nominated and elected as the President of the Colorado Coalition of Land Trusts (CCLT) Board.
- Staff attended the annual CCLT conference on March 12-13. Kerri presented on the Center of Excellence recommendations.
- The Regional Study RFP will be posted within the next week and interested applicants will have 1 month to apply. Peter and Suzan are your liaisons to this process.
- Staff visited with the Agricultural Advisory Board to discuss the Regional Study and the subsequent update to the Open Lands Master Plan.
- The Colorado Open Space Alliance (COSA) annual conference will be in Steamboat on September 17-19. Board members are encouraged to attend.
- The Visual Artist of the Year for 2012, photographer David Clack of Illustrated Light Gallery in Fort Collins, was selected.
- Staff met with representatives at Northern Water to discuss mitigation possibilities at Chimney Hollow Open Space.
- Small grants for community partnering are currently being announced – see the website.
- There is an amendment anticipated to be proposed this April to create a new scratch game within the Colorado Lottery to benefit veterans. The existing draft would expand the state lottery to deliver more funding to veterans programs. Proponents say it will create \$2M of new money from new players of lottery to go to veterans. Opponents say based on a similar scratch game in Kansas it will not create new players and will instead take dollars away from currently lottery proceeds. Also, the start up of a new lottery is projected to cost \$20-30M coming from existing lottery funds. While everyone supports veterans the hope is to keep current lottery recipients whole.
- Report from the Open Lands Operations Manager - See handout
- 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
- Natural Resource Events for September. See website <http://www.larimer.org/naturalresources>

PRESENTATIONS:

- Resource Program – 2011 Land Stewardship/Weeds Report – Casey Cisneros, Weed Specialist
Casey presented a summary of the current publication of a native thistle guide as part of the Land Stewardship Program's education/outreach efforts. Not all thistles are non-native, in fact in Colorado there are 15 native species of thistle that serve an ecological niche and many of them look similar to the non-native thistle species at first blush. There are a number of native species of thistle on Larimer County park and open space properties. There is no other inclusive list of thistles of Colorado. Future publications being updated or developed by the program include the "Weed Management Reference Guide" and "Knapweeds and Their Look Alikes".

Peter asked how weed management on our open spaces is going. We are keeping up with weed control of the priority weed species as well as non-listed non-native weeds. Working with researchers from CSU we have been able to tap into the most current management methods.

- Outreach, Education & Volunteer Program 2011 Accomplishments– Heather Young, Education Coordinator & CJ Cullins, Volunteer Coordinator



LARIMER COUNTY OPEN LANDS ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

Volunteer Program: In 2011, the department worked with 20 volunteer groups, 340 individuals and in total received over 42,000 hours of volunteer service. For 2012, the focus of the volunteer program will be engaging the faith-based community, re-energizing the park ranger assistant position, increasing offering projects on conservation easement lands, and working with the Land Stewardship Program weed and forestry staff to engage HOA's in volunteer projects.

Education Program: Hosted over 200 events engaging over 5200 individual citizens. A big focus of the program is the Volunteer Naturalists leading hikes and programs. Saw an 8% increase in school program participation. Over 50 campground programs and 35 special request programs were given. Long-term trends from 2002-2011 show an increase in number of programs and participants as the word gets out. For 2012 the focus will be on further engaging the "Nature Notes Club" who primarily do nature journaling; "Tiny Trekkers" – a program to engage a younger audience ages 2-6 meeting 2x/month at the Devil's Backbone Open Space; and, "How-To Programs" to teach various skills such as camping and orienteering.

Gerry asked what are the specific outputs of these two programs and how do we know we are successful? The overall goal is to get people engaged in the umbrella of our department and what we do and have to offer and we have performance measures for volunteers, education and outreach that Gary will share at a future meeting. Patricia asked if the Friends Group is still active – yes they are, primarily related to fundraising for specific projects.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

- Annual Reports from Cities and Towns – City of Loveland

Brian Hayes, City of Loveland Natural Areas Manager presented: In 2011, the Natural Areas Program purchased 121 acres of land from HP/Agilent as open space for future public access. There are 3 ponds and the Big Thompson River corridor on-site. Loveland also partnered to purchase 43 acres as the first phase of Heron Lakes Open Space, committing \$150,000 and co-holding the CE on the property. Applied for a \$3.7M GOCO grant as part of the River Corridors Initiative to develop the recreational amenities of the formerly HP/Agilent property, to acquire a trail connection on the west side of Loveland and to acquire 302 acres of land as part of 7 land acquisitions along the Big Thompson River.

- Prioritization Exercise - introduction to process and format

It has been about 5 years since we last went through a prioritization exercise and now we have \$1M available in the Acquisition/Development Fund. Next month we will review a spreadsheet filled out with various land acquisition or park/open space development/improvement projects, their urgency, potential partnerships, management implications, etc. We'll set up field trips to some of the projects and then at the May OLAB meeting will go through the prioritization process resulting in a ranking of the highest priority projects to work towards completing. It was requested that under the management implications column we estimate a dollar amount and that they projects be grouped by priority area. Will the board get to add projects to the list? We will make an "unforeseen opportunity" category like has been done during prioritization exercises in the past to capture these types of projects. Will the public have input into this process? No, because the master plan reflects priority areas developed working with citizens and OLAB is meant to represent citizen interests.



LARIMER COUNTY OPEN LANDS ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

FINANCIAL REPORT:

- Update: Natural Resources Capital Development and Acquisition Summary 2011 – 2014
Lori Smith, Senior Accountant, presented the spreadsheet: Notable changes she presented to the spreadsheet include a request to allocate dollars for development of Chimney Hollow Open Space; Dollars were saved in the construction management of the River Bluffs Open Space and Red Mountain Open Space; Dollars were allocated for the River Initiative Project on the Poudre River; With low interest rates, the county has saved money on the loan repayment; Dollars were released from our bond debt reserve that will go back into fund balance; Dollars were allocated towards funding the Open Lands Program reorganization. The balance available is \$1.497M. Staff is requesting to allocate \$500,000 to the development of Chimney Hollow Open Space which would then put the available balance at \$997,719. Mary moved to allocate \$500,000 to development of Chimney Hollow Open Space, seconded by Suzan. The question was asked why \$500,000 is being allocated – it is about half of the estimated cost to develop the infrastructure and we intend to leverage it with grant funding. John felt that the Chimney Hollow allocation should be put into the prioritization exercise to be distributed compared to other projects. It was noted that the completion date for the reservoir and hence the open space development is still unknown and may be beyond 2015. Vote - 2 in favor; 5 opposed. Dollars will be kept in the larger pot to be discussed as part of the prioritization exercise.

Discussion ensued whether we should earmark all the available \$1.497M considering that sales tax revenue is unknown. Peter noted that it was more of a general direction to staff rather than a hard fast dollar amount to be spent. Hugh asked that “save your money” be given as one of the options in the prioritization as a safety net in the event sales tax comes in low, etc.

Long-Term Management Spreadsheet: Lori presented notable changes to the spreadsheet include adjustments to projected staffing costs to manage Hermit Park Open Space; dollars to pay for the Open Lands Program reorganization – staff reclassifications, salary increases, and a new administrative position; The cost to transfer the full cost of the Big Thompson Parks, and those portions of trail maintenance and volunteer program on parklands. The spreadsheet currently shows the total cost to manage each of these programs in their entirety; however we will update the spreadsheet to reflect only the \$375,000 transfer to replace the loss of general fund dollars to the Parks Program. At the end of the life of the sales tax, \$884,000 is shown as available. Gary will provide an updated spreadsheet and explanation at the next meeting.

BOARD COMMENT: Items not on the agenda

DIRECTOR’S REPORT: Gary presented information on reduction in general fund dollars of \$125,000/year over 3 years (or a total of \$375,000) to the Parks Program within the department. We have been directed to internally take care of this shortfall without impact to the programs it funds which includes portions of the volunteer program and trails maintenance done on parklands and operations of the Big Thompson River public access areas. Dollars from the Help Preserve Open Space sales tax will be used to replace these general fund dollars to support these services.