



LARIMER COUNTY OPEN LANDS ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

MINUTES

Thursday, June 28

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
Trudy Haines	At-large	Paul Alaback	Town of Berthoud
Steve Vessey	At-large	Gerry Horak	City of Fort Collins

Staff Present:

Gary Buffington	Director	Charlie Johnson	Land Agent
Kerri Rollins	Open Lands Program Manager	Travis Rollins	Open Lands Operations Manager
Meegan Flenniken	Resource Program Manager	Meghan Oren	Department Specialist
Christine Fleming	NR Manager Visitor Services	Zac Wiebe	Fund Development & Special Projects
Jeffrey Boring	Resource Specialist II	Dan Rieves	Program Manager Visitor Services
Lori Smith	Senior Accountant	Nikki Bronnee	Open Lands Intern

Absent:

John Phipps	Town of Estes Park	Hugh McKean	City of Loveland
Patricia Brennan	At-large	Commissioner Tom Donnelly	BCC

Peter called the meeting to order at 5:13 p.m.

REGULAR MEETING

- Approval of the meeting minutes for May 24, 2012.

Peter motioned to approve the May minutes, Suzan seconded and the motion was approved unanimously.

- Review Agenda and enclosures - No additions.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Items not on the agenda. No public comments.

INTRODUCTIONS: Kerri introduced Ladonna Lee (Bellvue), Carl Sorrentino (Windsor), Paul Alaback (Berthoud) and John Phipps (Estes Park) as new members to OLAB. She also introduced Nikki Bronnee, a CSU Natural Resources student in her senior year, who will be completing a 400 hour internship with the Open Lands Program this summer. Everyone gave a brief introduction of themselves to the group.

INFORMATION:

- Orientation activities are being scheduled for the four new members of OLAB. The two new “at-large” Board members are Ladonna Lee of Bellvue and Carl Sorrentino of Windsor. They will be officially joining OLAB as of July 1st. The newly appointed Town of Berthoud representative is Paul Alaback. John Phipps is the recently appointed representative for the Town of Estes Park. The Board will be notified when the



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orientation dates are set as well as be invited to participate in the orientation activities. A luncheon has been planned for outgoing Board members Patricia Brennan, Don Griffith, John Ericson, and Jeff Hindman for July 12th in appreciation for their time spent and dedication to the Board. All board members are invited to attend the luncheon.

- Kerri invited the Board members to attend the Colorado Open Space Alliance (COSA) annual conference on September 17-19 in Steamboat Springs, CO. COSA is a statewide organization of publicly funded local and regional open space programs, working cooperatively to share information, create public awareness and foster partnerships needed to protect and preserve the special places of Colorado. She encouraged them to view the conference agenda and session descriptions online at www.coloradoopenspace.org. If any of the Board members is interested in attending, please contact Kerri or Zac for more information.
- Kerri announced Colorado's Inaugural Land Conservation Appreciation Week, August 23-26, 2012, "*Land is life. Land is livelihood. Land is recreation. Land is wildlife. Land is Colorado.*" Implemented by the Center of Excellence (COE), a program funded by Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) and the Colorado Coalition of Land Trusts (CCLT). The week long celebration will include local events across the state focusing on "Colorado's invaluable land conservation community and increasing awareness of and understanding by our communities of our missions and goals." Kerri invited and encouraged the Board members to be involved and to mark the dates on their calendar in anticipation of the events. For more information: <http://landiscolorado.cclt.org/>
- OLAB members were ecstatic to hear about the Poudre River and Regional Trail Corridor GOCO grant partnership award. The project ranked #1 in the state and was funded at nearly \$5.1 million. Gary, Kerri and other staff members attended a press conference hosted by Gov. Hickenlooper at Confluence Park to announce the results on 6/19. The project is already being initiated with agreements among the participating parties. A celebratory media event will be held at River Bluffs in mid-July.
- Kerri updated the Board that AECOM, formerly known as EDAW, was awarded the Regional Land Conservation, Stewardship and Recreation Study RFP and a subcontract was awarded to Trust for Public Lands for the mapping and economic portions of the study. The informational study will cover topics such as public surveys, financial stewardship, conservation funding, and gap analyses. A partnership has been formed in order to fund the study to include Larimer County and the cities of Fort Collins & Loveland, and the towns of Estes Park, Berthoud, Wellington, Windsor, Johnstown and Timnath. Kickoff for the study is scheduled for July 12.
- Meegan reported a major re-route and redevelopment of the Foothills Trail at Horsetooth Reservoir associated with the State Trails/Overland Bike Grant was completed by the Natural Resources Trail Crew. The trail spans from the Rotary Park to the Sunrise Day Use Areas. Meegan and Travis visited the trail today and it was very busy with mountain bikers.
- Meegan also updated the board that Tim D'Amato, Land Stewardship Manager, led a State Weed Network tour with 50+ people in attendance. The tour highlighted numerous weed management sites in the county including the successful outcome of the most recent Rx Burn/herbicide treatment for restoration on the west side of the Indian Creek Valley (off Mildred Lane). The turnout for the tour was great and really demonstrated our efforts in controlling leafy spurge. Meegan invited the Board members to attend any of the tours if they were interested.



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- Estes Valley Land Trust hosted a breakfast meeting at Hermit Park on 8/15. Kerri provided a keynote address while Rob, Zac, Heather and Meg organized and led activities for the estimated 100-110 attendees. The breakfast meeting included events coordinated to showcase the Hermit Park renovations, wildflowers and wildlife, a hike to Kruger Rock and activities for kids. The events were very successful and Mary commented that there were a lot of positive reviews. Many of the participants were very excited and pleased to hear Kerri's view on the county. Kerri thanked Chris for allowing free access for the morning for participants.
- Kerri invited the Board to join her and Commissioner Donnelly on public hikes at the Devil's Backbone OS on 7/20 and 8/24 from 8:30-10:30 as community outreach efforts. Gerry asked why the hikes are not scheduled on Friday mornings because it could be better for attendance since people may be more likely to take off time from work. Kerri said it is a possibility and they would ask the public during the hike for feedback on increased participation opportunities.
- The July OLAB meeting has been cancelled in order to allow the Board members to have a break and enjoy the summer. The August 23rd OLAB meeting will take place at the usual time and place.
- Report from the Open Lands Operations Manager - See handout

Travis attended the Agricultural Advisory Board and Habitat Protection Program meetings. He gave the board an update on Horsetooth Mountain and Eagle's Nest Open Space. The two open spaces have been closed due to the proximity of the High Park fire and they are both open now to the public. A few of the board members were curious if any damage had occurred on county property and Travis conveyed that the fire did not burn into either of the properties. Meegan noted that a conservation easement was burned in the Poudre canyon. Travis also met with the Indian Creek Estates HOA board to discuss the ongoing road issues on our easement as well as met with a neighbor at Redtail Ridge to discuss a possible sharing of road maintenance.

A high gain antenna was added to the automated pay station at Horsetooth Mountain to improve wireless connectivity. Travis mentioned it has been working great since the initial installation and noted the automated pay station has sold 3,668 daily passes since February 1st. Since the area has just recently reopened to visitors, he is expecting to give an updated day pass count soon.

The Rangers hosted the Horsetooth Mountain trail race at Soderberg trail head. There were 125 participants. Historically the race was out of Horsetooth Mountain Open Space trailhead and it was moved to Soderberg trailhead this year.

Rangers assisted an open space visitor at the Blue Sky trailhead with a collapsed horse. After a vet arrived on scene, it was determined that the horse had a form of colic and was euthanized. "Greener Pastures" arrived on scene and transported the horse.

Rangers also contacted two different groups attempting to pan for gold at Glade Park.

Congratulations to Zach Cook on his graduation from the Adam's County LE Academy on June 8th!

Travis informed the Board that repairs were completed on the McGraw house roof and barn roof at Red Mountain. The crew also fabricated and installed new brochure boxes at open space kiosks, which allows us to display and provide the recreation maps, area brochures for the properties, handouts listing our regulations, mountain bike safety tips and other informational guides to the public. They also assisted the Horsetooth District maintenance crew with dirt work, concrete and installation of self-service kiosks at



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North Inlet Bay and Satanka. Indian Creek Valley road improvements were also completed with assistance from WAPA.

Open Lands Operations hosted a tour of River Bluffs as part of an agricultural lease competitive bid process. The application deadline was June 14th.

Travis gave an update on grazing leases noting that there currently are no cattle at North property due to the fire earlier this year, the herd at Red Mountain had to be split due to the lack of forage and water, and at Eagle's Nest the property had to be under stocked due to lack of forage.

Travis worked with Northern Water on road improvements at Chimney Hollow Open Space to help with coordination of public tours and education outreach.

- Kerri handed out information on the Open Lands Small Grants program. The program will need a subcommittee of 1-2 people and to please contact Sue Burke for more information.
- 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 July. See website <http://www.larimer.org/naturalresources>

ACTION:

- Chris Fleming gave a presentation on the final proposal for limited hunting at Hermit Park Open Space (HPOS). Copies of Chris' presentation were handed out to Board members.

The proposal would begin this fall and she gave a quick review of the layout of HPOS by showing the areas suggested for hunting. Chris noted that the cabin loop would be off limits because of visitor attendance during the fall season. As part of the program, staff members are following the recommendations by biologists from the Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPAW) to harvest 5-7 cow elk as a management effort to try to prevent a refuge situation on the property. There are two potential partnerships that both offer mentored hunting experiences. One group encourages youth and the other for disabled hunters. Gerry wanted to know how the two groups were chosen. Dan said they were looking for groups that would do limited hunting and that this is only a starting point with the two groups. CPAW will act as a "parent umbrella" for the program and the groups help the program's overall effort to provide youth a spectrum of activities as stated in the Plug Into Nature study. Dan also mentioned that other groups may be partnered with in the future as the program becomes stronger and if other organizations/groups meet the criteria for the growth of the program.

Chris also listed visitor safety as the highest priority for the limited hunting program. There have been some concerns by neighbors regarding safety and Chris said they plan on posting signs dictating where it is appropriate to hunt and are taking steps to educate staff, rangers and volunteers on the logistics of the program, including boundaries of the hunting area. She stated the hunts will be escorted by people who are trained and knowledgeable of the hunting boundaries on the property. Chris said the program will be most successful when the elk are there and to therefore run the program October through December and on Sundays through Thursdays only.

As part of the proposal, Chris told the Board about the steps taken to inform and ask the opinion of the public. An open house was held on May 4, 2012 and included staff, the regional and local game wardens, an Estes Park board member and a representative from the organization Outdoor Buddies to answer any questions during the open house. 230 invitations were sent out and Chris worked with Mary Banken to make sure everyone within a one mile radius of HPOS was invited. Numerous press releases were also submitted. Only a handful of people came to the open house and Chris said she received seven total comments, including letters.



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She had copies of the letters with her if any of the Board members wanted to read them. A majority of the comments from the letters were in support of the program because of the program's focus on disabled and youth hunters. Any comments objecting to the program or that listed concerns were mainly from local neighbors with apprehensions in regards to safety.

Gerry wanted to know how the tags would be allocated for hunting. Dan answered that CPAW will manage the tags and that hopefully the program will begin this fall. Mary requested copies of the letters from citizens. Trudy asked what the impact would be to the properties surrounding HPOS. Mary added that the property is surrounded by National Forest and conservation easements. Hunting is currently occurring on the conservation easements and therefore may help to keep the elk moving rather than use HPOS as a refuge space. **Steve moved to approve the hunting proposal, Gerry seconded and all members approved unanimously.**

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

- Jeffrey gave an update on the status of the Kechter development review process. He gave a brief review of the history of the development process up to this point. The development review was supposed to be voted on the week of June 18-22, however the applicant decided to extend the development further north in a design proposing higher density as opposed to south towards the wildlife habitat area. A new conceptual design will be presented next month and the hope is that all parties will come to an agreement. Trudy asked about a portion of the property being donated to the City of Fort Collins and then restored. The land, about 250 acres, would be restored to grassland by the city. Trudy was also concerned that the design was still encroaching on the land containing habitat and wanted to know if the Planning Commission could ask for the developer to meet more of the requirements of the original habitat protection plan. Jeffrey and Meegan both agreed that it will be a tough negotiation and that a compromise will be ideal. Kerri wanted to know the impact of the lands, currently used for corn production, on the wildlife if restored as a grassland because of the food impact. A few Board members suggested considering the need for a trail to be able to access the north and south sides of the property.
- Kerri gave a brief overview of the Center of Excellence (COE) and introduced the need for updates to easement templates and policies. The COE is a joint venture of the Colorado Conservation Trust (CCT) and the Colorado Coalition of Land Trusts (CCLT) and was created to help establish standards for conservation easements in Colorado by the land conservation community, to organize educational opportunities to help solve discrepancies and issues concerning easements, and to partner with businesses outside of the land conservation community to strengthen business practices and foster strategic collaborations. Kerri brought up the concern that Larimer County needs to update their policies and the COE is a great opportunity to help raise those standards. Both Charlie and Meegan will be assisting in the project and Kerri invited Board members to lend a hand by participating in a subcommittee. The COE is focused on statewide engagement, continuing education and a database project to help track programs. A core curriculum is being established and programming at the COSA conference is being approved to meet those principles. The "Land is Colorado" event in August is supported by the Center for Excellence as part of their statewide engagement. Larimer County Open Lands Program is hoping to be a part of the database pilot project. Mary, Suzan, and Nancy volunteered to participate on the subcommittee. Charlie is going to gather our existing policies in preparation for review.

FINANCIAL REPORT:

- Lori presented to the Board the Natural Resources Capital Development and Acquisition Summary 2011 – 2013 and suggested Gary and Kerri add comments to the funding changes.
 - Hermit Park Development: \$210,000 will be moved to 2013 for the construction of Campground 3/Equine campground and pavilion area. Kerri commented that the two grants originally submitted



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to provide funding were not awarded therefore we are proposing to move the match funding and are asking for \$51,000 to finish the recommendations from the management plan. She added that Kruger Rock trail needs internal trails in order to connect the property and additional picnic sites to promote visitors during the day. \$50,000 will be used from Open Space sales tax funding as opposed to Regional fees to finish the restrooms at Hermit Park Open Space. The \$50,000 from Regional fees will be used for road improvements on CR38E at South Bay at Horsetooth.

- Office Space replacement at Fossil Creek: Currently in the preliminary planning phase and therefore moved \$12,500 to 2013.
- Park Project – Pinewood/Ramsey-Shockey OS: Requesting \$100,000 from the Board in order to renovate the campgrounds, trails and day use areas at the Blue Mountain trailhead in order to connect to the Ramsey-Shockey OS.
- Regional Trails: Because of funding awarded by GOCO for the Poudre River and Regional Trail Corridor project, \$258,000 was moved from acquisition to development.
- Master Plan Update & Regional Study: \$40,500 will be moved to 2013 to complete the Master Plan out of the \$75,000 originally proposed to update both the Master Plan and carry out the Regional Study.
- School Initiatives: Via the Prioritization Exercise results, \$30,000 will be divided amongst rural schools applying for grant assistance. A few schools have hinted at proposals for the funding.

The decision to vote on the changes to the financial report due to the results of the Prioritization Exercise occurred after Executive Session. Gerry commented that he would like a written summary of the changes to the financial report be included in addition to the supplementary comments on the spreadsheet. Nancy believed a presentation on Pinewood should occur before officially approving the budget. Kerri explained that we are planning on applying for a grant in August, and added that Pinewood was a part of the Prioritization Exercise. **Nancy motioned to approve, Trudy seconded and the Financial Report changes were supported unanimously.**

BOARD COMMENT: Items not on the agenda - No additions.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

The new annual pass for 2013 was approved by the Board of County Commissioners. The new pass will be able to be physically transferable between multiple vehicles in a household and will cost \$75. A few board members had questions regarding people abusing the pass and taking advantage of the county, but Gary addressed this concern by assuring the Board that the county looks at this scenario as an investment in the people who buy an annual pass.

Gary gave a quick update on the status of the High Park fire. He said the full containment date had been moved up from July 30th to the 5th as of today which means we've finally reached a good place after all of the hard work and dedication to containment. Land stewardship, re-vegetation and water quality will be major concerns for at least the next 10 years.

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

- Prioritization Exercise results

Peter adjourned the meeting at 7:10 pm.

Next regular meeting: Thursday, August 23, 2012; Loveland Council Chambers, 500 E 3rd St., Loveland