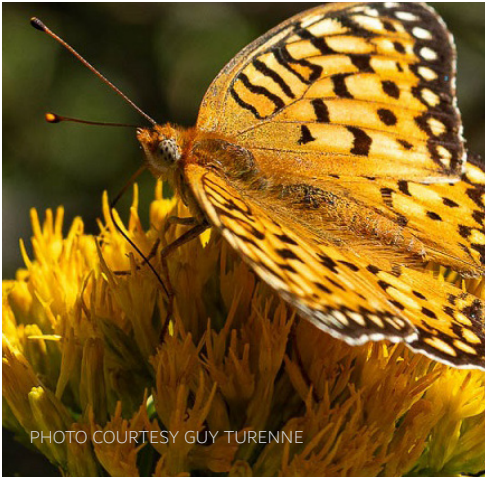




Larimer County Natural Resources



QUARTERLY BOARD REPORT

Q3 2026

JULY · AUGUST · SEPTEMBER

Federal transportation improvements conclude at Horsetooth and Carter Lake Reservoirs

In partnership with the Federal Highway Administration's Central Federal Lands Highway Division and the Bureau of Reclamation, the Larimer County Dept. of Natural Resources (LCDNR) successfully completed a \$15 million infrastructure project in July 2026. The project was completed fourteen months ahead of its schedule, which minimized impacts to the public as well as residents of Larimer County.

Project highlights include:

- \$11M from the Federal Lands Access Program, \$3M from LCDNR, and \$1M from the Bureau of Reclamation.
- Added 90 parking spaces (increasing total system capacity from 687 to 777) with improved circulation for RVs and trailers across eight project locations.
- Placed 24,500 tons of asphalt (equivalent to ~7.5 miles of two-lane road) to reduce ongoing maintenance.
- Reused and recycled extensive materials on-site—including 5,200 tons of aggregate, 5,180 tons of asphalt, and 11,000 cubic yards of excavation fill—generating an estimated \$350–\$700,000 in cost savings.
- Improved traffic safety, better access to high-use recreation areas, and overall infrastructure durability.



Moving forward, these newly upgraded assets will be integrated into LCDNR's ongoing capital asset management program to ensure long-term stewardship and maintenance.



As boating closures occur nearby, reservoir visitation increases in Larimer County

As several neighboring Colorado lakes closed due to low or no water this summer, Larimer County's reservoirs saw a notable rise in visitation. Horsetooth, Carter Lake, and Pinewood absorbed much of the shifted demand. Combined with limited parking capacity, this meant reservoirs reached capacity earlier and more often than in previous years.

In response, LCDNR launched a proactive communications effort encouraging visitors to plan

ahead. This included calling on local media to promote the parking alert text subscription service and highlight off-peak visiting windows. Staff also emphasized boat ramp courtesy and water safety essentials as crowd sizes grew.

Visitor Services Division Manager Chris Fleming noted that while water levels remained optimal for recreation, the influx required the community to adjust habits to keep the experience safe and enjoyable for everyone.

New Zealand mudsnails confirmed in Carter Lake



New Zealand mudsnails, photo courtesy Colorado Parks & Wildlife

On August 17, 2026, Colorado Parks and Wildlife confirmed the first detection of invasive New Zealand mudsnails in Carter Lake.

These tiny, dark brown snails reproduce through cloning, displace native aquatic species, and disrupt local ecosystems. Being voracious eaters that reproduce rapidly, they deplete aquatic habitats of food for native species.

To contain the spread, officials are enforcing strict watercraft inspections and potential decontaminations at surrounding waterways. In addition, warning signage has been posted at the reservoir.

Boaters and swimmers are strongly urged to clean, drain, and dry all gear before entering other bodies of water.

A win-win for conservation and management

This September, the county and a private landowner completed a land transfer at the southern end of Chimney Hollow Open Space, resulting in permanent protection of important habitats and viewsheds, while limiting management challenges.

Larimer County acquired the 1,847-acre Chimney Hollow Open Space in 2004 and placed a conservation easement (CE) on the property that is held by the City of Loveland.

The CE intentionally did not include a long, skinny 197-acre "tail", given its orientation and uncertainty if retaining the parcel as part of the open space would match long-term management goals. But during the 2024 development of the Chimney Hollow Open Space management plan, it was determined retention of the "tail" was not necessary to meet long-term management goals.

This September, the county transferred ownership of the 197-acre "tail" portion of Chimney Hollow Open Space to Oxbow Land, LLC, subject to a perpetual CE. At the same time, Larimer County acquired a 41-acre inholding from the same landowner within Chimney Hollow Open Space, conserving important wildlife habitat and preventing the development of a homesite in the open space viewshed.



Chimney Hollow Open Space (top, bottom)

Public Lands Day promotes stewardship of natural resources and care for the community



Litter clean up volunteers pose for a photo prior to heading out on Public Lands Day.

Held annually on the fourth Saturday of September, National Public Lands Day brought community volunteers together under this year's theme, "Caring for our Shared America." On September 26, the LCDNR Public Engagement and Trails teams hosted two local service projects.

25 volunteers, which included Commissioner Jody Shadduck-McNally, collected 14 large bags of litter at Carter Lake, while another twelve participants including Commissioner John Kefalas cleared vegetation and repaired erosion along the popular Blue Sky Trail in Fort Collins.

It was a beautiful day gathering together to care for our shared lands!

Financial Summary

The Department of Natural Resources has five primary revenue sources including Colorado Lottery proceeds, the Help Preserve Open Spaces sales tax, user fees at open spaces and reservoir parks, and the Weed District property tax.

This report is a financial comparison as of 9/30/25 vs 2026 as of 10/9/26 (preliminary & unaudited).

Conservation Trust/Lottery

	2025	2026	YOY
REVENUE			
	743,891	705,321	-5%
EXPENSE			
Prior year adjustment		(680)	

Open Spaces

	2025	2026	YOY
REVENUE			
General Fund	--	140,000	
Help Preserve Open Spaces Sales Tax	6,846,467	7,041,772	
User Fees	1,208,065	1,113,712	-8%
Service Charges	112,621	122,835	
Miscellaneous	903	3,957	
Grants/Partnerships	6,261,076	597,447	
Interest	782,984	937,255	
TOTAL	15,212,115	9,956,978	-35%
Chimney Hollow OS Land Sale		3,208,501	
EXPENSES			
Personnel	1,430,969	1,547,269	8%
Operating	2,434,559	2,693,391	
TOTAL	3,865,528	4,240,660	10%
Countywide Indirects	155,130	175,322	13%
Acquisitions/Projects	16,586,654	3,272,240	

Reservoir Parks

	2025	2026	YOY
REVENUE			
User Fees	4,253,720	4,433,735	4%
Service Charges	224,540	336,457	
Grants/Partnerships	237,253	163,730	
General Fund	67,000	--	
Miscellaneous	66,973	--	
TOTAL	4,849,485	4,933,922	2%
EXPENSES			
Personnel	4,321,592	4,342,629	
Operating	284,668	200,429	
TOTAL	4,606,260	4,543,058	-1%
Countywide Indirects	491,940	504,133	2%
Projects	276,894	1,445,592	

Weed District/Enterprise

	2025	2026	YOY
REVENUE			
Property Taxes	1,049,275	1,126,418	
Service Charges Revenue	247,355	353,121	
General Fund	108,000	111,000	
Miscellaneous Revenue	--	--	
TOTAL	1,404,630	1,590,538	13%
EXPENSES			
Personnel	550,237	478,364	
Operating	569,783	530,803	
TOTAL	1,120,020	1,009,166	-10%
Countywide Indirects	--	28,647	



2022-2027 STRATEGIC PLAN

MISSION: We connect people, nature and place.

VISION: Healthy Landscapes, Healthy People.



QUARTERLY
BOARD
REPORT

PUBLISHED OCTOBER 2026



PROACTIVE LAND
CONSERVATION
& MANAGEMENT



NATURE-BASED
OPPORTUNITIES



LIVING
OUR VALUES



SUSTAINABLE
OPERATIONS &
FINANCIAL STABILITY

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