

LARIMER COUNTY | ENVIRONMENTAL AND SCIENCE ADVISORY BOARD

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The role of the Advisory Board is to advise the Board of County Commissioners and appropriate departments on environmental and science-related issues that affect Larimer County.

MINUTES

Date: February 11th, 2020

Time: 6:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Location: Larimer County Courthouse Office Building, Lake Estes Meeting Room, 200 West Oak St
Fort Collins, Colorado

Contact: Shelley Bayard de Volo, sbayard@larimer.org or 970.498.5738

MEMBERS		STAFF		GUESTS
Richard Alper	X	John Kefalas*		CSU Dept. of Fish, Wildlife, and Conservation Biology
Daniel Beveridge	X	Shelley Bayard de Volo [¥]	X	Kevin Crooks [‡]
Rich Conant	X	Shaun May [§]	X	Barry Noon [‡]
Jim Gerek - <i>Chair</i>	X			
Michael Jones	X			Rural Land Use Board
Evelyn King	X			Meghan Bright
David Lehman – <i>Vice-Chair</i>				Karen Stockley
Allyson Little				Neil Snyder
Kirk Longstein	X			CSU Extension
George Rinker				Karen Crumbaker
Katrina Winborn-Miller				Agricultural Advisory Board
Chris Wood	X			Zach Thode, <i>Chair</i>

X = present; * = Commissioner Liaison; ‡ = Speaker; ¥ = ESAB Liaison; § = Larimer County Department of Health and Environment

Call to Order: 6:10 p.m.

- 1. Amendments or additions to the agenda** – Commissioner Kefalas is not in attendance tonight, so there will be no Commissioner updates.
- 2. Introduction of members, staff and guests** – All present introduced themselves.
- 3. Public Comment** – Although there was a public attendance at the meeting, there were no general comments. Jim noted that comments and questions pertaining to tonight's topic can be made after the presentation.
- 4. Discussion Items**





- a. Wolf Ecology and Management in Colorado – Barry Noon and Kevin Crooks of CSU began their talk introducing who they are and what experience they each have in studying carnivore ecology and conservation. Kevin described his family’s background in wildlife management in Wyoming and Montana, and the fact that his grandfather was the Wyoming State Game Manager who was an ardent opponent of wolves. Kevin and Barry discussed the importance of science in wolf management and conservation; however, in reality public perceptions and sentiment can be major drivers.

The Colorado ballot measure requires the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission to create and carry out a management plan to restore gray wolves in Colorado using the best scientific data available. Barry discussed the implications of wolves naturally re-establishing in Colorado versus a formal reintroduction of experimental populations. Wolves are currently Federally protected in Colorado under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and State listed as endangered. The ESA stipulates that criteria for species’ recovery includes establishing “viable populations”. A viable population is one that is enough in number, over a sufficient geographic distribution, to be self-sustaining and resilient. Barry noted that a single pack is not a viable population because it can disappear from a single event. The criteria would be more like 100 animals, consistently persisting for 10 years.

The species was eradicated from Colorado by the 1940’s, so they have been absent from Colorado ecosystems for nearly 80 years. With 18 million acres of public land in western Colorado, there is ample habitat to support viable populations of the species. There is also ample game for both wolves and hunters, with annual post-harvest estimates of 280,000 elk and 400,000 mule deer. Despite ample habitat and game, it’s unlikely that wolves will recolonize Colorado from neighboring states, as they encounter many mortality hazards before reaching Colorado (highways, licensed trophy hunting in some areas or open predator hunting in others). The benefit of wolves being actively reintroduced is that a recovery plan would include tools for dealing with problems like livestock depredation and harassment, as well as negative impacts to game populations. Tools might include compensation and not just for a single animal. Paying property owners for simply allowing predators to coexist on their land has also been proposed.

Kevin then went through the potential impacts (harm to humans, reduced game populations, livestock depredation and harassment) and the likely outcomes based on scientific studies. The risk to humans is exceedingly low. Since 1900 no humans have been killed by wolves in the lower 48 states. People are more likely to be killed by livestock, bees, dogs and car collisions with deer, moose and elk. Game populations could be negatively impacted locally once wolves are established, if those game populations are already low in number because of poor habitat or disease or impacted by weather. Overabundant game populations, however, would likely benefit from wolf predation. Overall, livestock are also more likely to die from causes other than wolf predation, but that does not negate the impacts to a producer when wolves move in and take some of their livestock.



At the local scale, economic and emotional impacts to livestock producers are real and important to include in all considerations. Management plans should include the many non-lethal proactive management tools like using guardian dogs, human presence, scare devices, reducing attractants (carcasses) and variation in grazing strategies. Of course, lethal control is also a necessary tool, as is monetary compensation.

If the ballot measure passes, and wolves are reintroduced to Colorado, a collaborative approach to living with carnivores will be required for coexistence to be successful. Kevin highlighted what his lab is doing to studies of human-carnivore coexistence at the Center for Carnivore Coexistence:

<https://sites.warnercnr.colostate.edu/centerforhumancarnivorecoexistence/projects/>

5. Approval of Minutes –Deferred to March.

6. Updates and Round Table

- a. Oil and Gas Taskforce Update – Richard Alper and sub-committee provided written comments on the 2nd draft to Matt and Lesli Jan. 24th. At their February 19th meeting, the Planning Commission will review the 3rd draft of the regulations, which incorporates changes made by staff in response to Task Force and public comments. Richard requested direction from the Board on whether he and his sub-committee should review the 3rd draft after the Planning Commission does its review and decision.

Kirk asked whether the ESAB will provide a decision statement to the BCC. Evelyn asked whether Richard felt he had enough impact. Shelley noted that the ESAB had a voting seat on the Task Force and was the only advisory board to have that opportunity. Jim noted that at present there is not a request for the Board to provide a position statement. He then asked whether there are key issues that have not been appropriately addressed. Perhaps there would be a need to give comment if there are substantive changes after the Planning Commission meeting.

Shaun May then provided some staff perspective, which includes a desire to not be duplicative with the COGCC regulations and being practical in terms of realities and costs. Public and environmental health are taken seriously, but the County must also consider costs and their ability to implement a regulatory program. Shaun noted they are looking at how Broomfield is being impacted administering their programs.

Jim asked Richard whether the County regulations would impact the Unicorn Pad if they were in place. Richard and Chris noted the Pad's proximity to a water way (irrigation ditch) and indicated that should trigger a setback. There are 100's of comments on the COGCC permit webpage for this project, likely from residents in nearby neighborhoods. There is also another permit application currently open for public comment on the COGCC permits webpage. The Folley North 3 project location is in an agricultural area and there is already an oil and gas storage tank and extraction facility on site.



Discussion then turned to decreased values for properties near oil and gas wells. Alternatively, some property owners receive compensation, so they earn desired income. Questions were then raised concerning regional air quality and the impacts of oil and gas development. Shaun noted that it was the responsibility of the State to study regional impacts. Evelyn noted that the NFRMPO (North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization) monitors air quality impacts as they relate to transportation planning.

- b. Climate Smart Larimer County – Kirk noted that the staff team is working toward an April presentation to the BoCC. He indicated the action plan has morphed into a framework that will describe anticipated and observed impacts, make recommendations on how to adapt to those impacts, and what Larimer County currently does in terms of sustainability, climate action and greenhouse gas (GHG) mitigation. The document covers all County planning areas and impacts specific for those areas.

The commissioners will want to see community engagement, so the team will look to get a resolution to move forward with that piece. Perhaps a community survey, community conversations with the commissioner, and other engagements.

With the framework and community feedback, a plan can then be developed that would include budget allocation.

Greenhouse gas inventory – In Larimer County the major contributor is transportation, with buildings second. Landfill is a minor contributor and agriculture is estimated to be a minor contributor. Data for agriculture has been difficult to find. Kirk recommends setting an attainment goal on an identified time horizon. The County will seriously need to consider hiring a position to manage the GHG inventory and focus on the programs to help meet improvement goals.

The Board requested to see a draft of the final document at their March 10th meeting, but the document will not be ready at that time.

- c. Halligan Reservoir Expansion project – Jim provided background on the process of submitting comments to the BoCC for approval to pass onto the US Army Corps of Engineers. He noted that he and Michael prepared the comment summary and presented it to the BoCC at worksession January 15th, along with the Larimer County Dept. of Natural Resources, who provided comments on the wildlife mitigation plan. The BoCC agreed to pass on both sets of comments along with a transmittal letter to the COE, and that was completed following approval of the consent agenda of the BoCC Administrative Matters meeting January 21st.

The ESAB worked very hard to finish their work on this matter by the close of public comments, Jan. 26th. But upon finishing their task, the ESAB learned that the COE extended the comment period another 30 days. Jim noted that the formal work of the Board is done on the Halligan DEIS, but reviewers could submit individual comments before the new due date.

- d. Environmental Stewardship Awards – Shelley provided informational posters to any board members that wanted them and noted that the nomination period



would be open until March 22. Jim encouraged members to consider good candidates in the community and indicated that the ESAB nomination review subcommittee would be appointed at the March meeting.

7. **Issue Index** – The updates from tonight’s meeting will be incorporated.
8. **Agenda Topics for Future Meetings** – tentative topic for the March meeting is PFAS, State rule making and water quality in Larimer County
9. **Adjourn** – Kirk moved to adjourn the meeting with Daniel seconding. All were in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 9:10 PM.