

LARIMER COUNTY LAND STEWARDSHIP ADVISORY BOARD

The mission of Larimer County Department of Natural Resources is to establish, protect and manage significant regional parks and open lands providing quality outdoor recreational opportunities and stewardship of natural resource values. We are committed to fostering a sense of community and appreciation for the natural and agricultural heritage of Larimer County for present and future generations.

MINUTES

Date: February 20, 2020

Time: 5:00 – 6:30 p.m.

Location: Larimer County Courthouse, 200 W. Oak St., Fort Collins, CO, 2nd Floor, Lake Loveland Room.

Contact: Please contact Sidney at smichl@larimer.org or 970-619-4462 if you are unable to attend.

Members		Staff		Guests
Ed Redente	x	Casey Cisneros	x	
Ernie Marx	x	Daylan Figgs	x	
Gordon Nuttall	x	Meegan Flenniken	x	
Laura Booth	x	Maxine Guill	x	
Renee Galeano-Popp	x	Amy Gilboy	x	
Richard (Hitch) McCulloch	x	John Kefalas*	x	
Ronald Harris	x	Sidney Michl (minutes)	x	

x = present

*commissioner

1. CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS – 5:02 p.m.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT
 - a. Renee commented her book, *Trees of Fort Collins – A Field Guide*, will be available in a few weeks. She is available for presentations and will be hosting book signings at local nurseries.

3. AGENDA REVIEW

4. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF LAST MEETING MINUTES
 - a. Ernie motioned to approve last meeting’s minutes, Ron seconded, motion passed unanimously.

5. INFORMATION & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- a. Natural Resources events for this month: larimer.org/naturalresources.
- b. To sign up for Land Stewardship Advisory Board updates, go to apps.larimer.org/subscriptions.cfm, enter your email, click “Subscribe,” and check the “Land Stewardship Advisory Board” box.
- c. 2019 Q4 Board Report
 - i. The 4th quarter report was sent out in the February meeting packet. Daylan explained DNR switched to a quarterly (vs. monthly) report over the summer with the intention of providing broader reporting on department-wide projects and activities including land stewardship, capital projects, trails, operations, planning projects, acquisitions, and a quarterly financial summary. Some highlights: emerald ash borer discovery, cabins at Horsetooth.
 - ii. Ernie asked why the sales tax went up, Daylan said the increase is due to a share change from the old tax to the new tax and reflects our increase in revenue. Ernie also asked why daily permits are down 17% when visitation remained the same, Daylan said it’s hard to say; visitation could have increased at properties that don’t have fees. The prior year was also a record year. The best way to count visitation is through permit sales but DNR utilizes traffic counters at properties that do not require permits.
 - iii. Gordon asked why 2018 was a record visitation year, Daylan said DNR properties might catch people more frequently because they are closer to town. Renee mentioned population growth, Daylan said that’s a factor as well and mentioned a collaborative effort Larimer County is partnering in to address Colorado’s growing population and its impact on public lands.
- d. 2020 Enterprise Rate Increase
 - i. Casey explained that the Weed Control Enterprise Program identified their expenses were exceeding revenue and asked County Commissioners for a 16% increase to fee structure in 2018. The commissioners also granted the DNR director the ability to increase rates based on local consumer price index. Daylan decided to increase Enterprise rates by nearly 2.7% in 2020. Casey showed a comparison of 2019 and 2020 cost rates. DNR’s approach to the Enterprise program and Enterprise contracts has been refocused to collaborate more with land management agencies and local coalitions.
 - ii. Ernie asked about the increase in number of contacts and enforcement actions over the last few years, Casey explained it’s partly due to a population influx as well as a more consistent monitoring and compliance process. Maxine created a database tool to track inspections.

6. UPDATES/DISCUSSION ITEMS

- a. 2019 Noxious Weed Compliance Summary – Maxine
 - i. Compliance procedures can be found in the [Noxious Weed Management Plan](#) on page 8. Casey clarified compliance is based on citizen reporting and mapping data and is viewed from a watershed perspective.

- ii. 2019 had 609 compliance cases with 1,297 inspections. Laura asked about management actions, Maxine said it can entail herbicide, pulling, or mowing. Laura asked if it's dependent on aggression and size of weed, Maxine affirmed and said it's also species dependent.
- iii. Maxine showed a map of inspections, most were performed within the Weed District. In 2019, the Weed District sent 308 courtesy letters and 147 grant letters with a focus on early detection rapid response (EDRR) species. One management decision driven by the budget was to not proactively go after cases outside of the Weed District unless a complaint was received or the species was EDRR. Maxine noted the Colorado Department of Agriculture (CDOA) updated the Noxious Weeds Act by adding rule changes to 14 species, including leafy spurge. The Weed District made a containment boundary as determined by the state with the goal of suppression across the county. Casey added leafy spurge is divided by the two watersheds – the Poudre and Big Thompson – and it is much more prevalent in the Poudre. The goal is to put more emphasis on Big Thompson so it does not spread.
- iv. Maxine gave an overview of other EDRR species:
 1. Perennial pepperweed – boundary already determined with CDOA. Actively treating for landowners, not as prevalent this year.
 2. Russian knapweed – just scouting for now.
 3. Absinth wormwood – currently eradicated countywide, a few outliers. Commissioner Kefalas asked whose responsibility it is to manage noxious weeds in community separators like Longview Farm. Casey clarified municipalities supersede county but if an area is in unincorporated Larimer County, then it's DNR's job to seek landowner compliance with noxious weed law. DNR manages all weeds in county parks and open spaces.
 4. Yellow toadflax – priority area around Estes Park.
 5. Oxeye daisy – mostly in flood areas.
 6. Common tansy – discovered while looking for oxeye daisy up the Poudre River near CDOT shopyard. Renee asked about its spread, Maxine said vegetative.
- v. Maxine noted that out of 450 courtesy letters, only 90 enforcement letters were sent as follow-up. Of those 90, only 16 right of entries and 3 enforcement actions followed (leafy spurge on Glade Road, myrtle spurge near Horsetooth Reservoir, and absinth wormwood near Horsetooth Reservoir). Gordon asked if the courtesy letter outlines the compliance process, Casey said it directs recipients to our website or to call DNR for more information. Gordon said we might consider adding more information about the process.
- b. 2020 Weed District Cost-share – Casey
 - i. Casey explained that in the last few years, 2-3 landowners have taken advantage of the cost-share program on an annual basis, so it was revamped this year to be less restrictive. To be eligible for the cost-share, a landowner

must complete a site visit with staff to develop a weed management plan. The management plan must be approved by staff before landowners can apply to the program.

- ii. 2020 cost-share changes:
 - 1. \$1,000 landowner cost-share carp per year (previously \$250)
 - 2. 25% contractor labor
 - 3. \$5,000 cost-share budget (previously \$750)
 - iii. Maxine noted because the Weed District sells herbicides, participants still receive 25% cost-share but it is allotted from a different budget. Ernie asked if participants could receive a refund if they bought herbicide from the coop, Casey affirmed if the purchase is pre-authorized. Meegan added this is a pilot program and can be revised if needed.
 - iv. Commissioner Kefalas confirmed there are no income guidelines for the cost-share program. The program is intended to reduce the cost of herbicides and mowing while promoting and encouraging proper weed management.
- c. Habitat Restoration Policy – Meegan/Casey
- i. Meegan explained this policy is meant to define the “why” of habitat restoration in accordance with the Help Preserve Open Space sales tax funds. Most of our properties are in excellent condition with relatively small-scale restoration needs.
 - ii. Casey added the ballot language indicates these funds are intended for “restoring and enhancing native plant and animal communities and other habitat related restoration,” and that DNR was tasked by Daylan to better define how the sales tax funds will meet our resource goals.
 - iii. Casey presented examples of restoration in Larimer County:
 - 1. Rip/re-seed two-track roads at Devil’s Backbone Open Space. Commissioner Kefalas asked which species were re-seeded, Meegan said they rely on ecological site references and utilize native species.
 - 2. Disaster recovery restoration in Big Thompson Canyon following 2013 floods (willow and riparian seeding, hazard tree removal, boulder replacement, upland seeding and trail installation).
 - 3. River Bluffs Open Space restoration (currently in adaptive management phase. Large-scale, outlier project). Meegan noted part of the habitat restoration policy is to develop a timescale for restoration.
 - iv. Renee asked about construction activities at an equipment yard outside of Livermore and how disturbance will be managed. Casey said we contract with the county Road and Bridge Department through the Enterprise fund to perform weed management. The roadside operator also identifies and treats noxious weeds on county roads.
- d. Dept. Restoration and Resource Standards – Casey/Meegan
- i. Casey explained the Resource and Protection Standards are intended to establish accountability and the appropriate level of communication for DNR’s existing guidelines. The purpose is to outline standards for construction

activities from department capital projects, utility easements, natural disaster recovery, or other disturbance on Larimer County managed parks and open spaces.

- ii. Meegan added the Restoration and Resource Standards will be added to the County Land Use Code (chapter 8).
- iii. Renee said a training video might be beneficial for appropriate projects.
- iv. Commissioner Kefalas asked if these standards would apply to large-scale special events that might impact land or reclamation as it relates to sand and gravel or oil and gas. Meegan said the standards will apply to any special review project. The standards would also apply to oil and gas but sand and gravel reclamation is overseen by the state so their standards supersede.
- v. Hitch asked if the standards are exclusively for county properties, Meegan affirmed but said they are looking at them for a suite of uses. The standards are triggered by a planning review process, still determining their application for special events.
- vi. Gordon suggested applying the tracking mechanisms presented by Maxine to the standards for accountability. Casey said Daylan and the Senior Leadership Team have streamlined this by hiring a project manager. Casey and Amy also document goals, metrics, timelines, etc. of projects. Amy said she tracks all her work using GIS.
- vii. Daylan encouraged board members to comment on the Land Use Code revisions. Meegan said chapter 8 will be released in June. Commissioner Kefalas said the assessment report is currently available online for comment: larimer.org/planning/luc2020.

7. ACTION ITEMS

- a. Online public notice of board and commission meetings
 - i. Ernie moved the Land Stewardship Advisory Board (LSAB) to designate www.larimer.org as the place for posting notice of public meetings, and if exigent or emergency circumstances prevent the online posting at such location, public notice shall be physically posted at the bulletin boards located at the north and south entrances to the Larimer County Courthouse Offices Building at 200 West Oak Street, Fort Collins, Colorado, in accordance with Colorado's open meeting laws. Hitch seconded, motion passed unanimously.
 - ii. It was noted that LSAB does not have a subscription capability, this has since been updated: apps.larimer.org/subscriptions.cfm
 - iii. Commissioner Kefalas suggested including a link to the subscription services page in the next Larimer County Connect Newsletter.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

- a. Casey distributed the 3rd edition of the *Thistles of Colorado Identification and Management Guide* and gave kudos to Ernie for taking the cover photo and to Amy,

Ernie, and Renee for being reviewers. Individual copies are distributed for free, bulk quantities are sold to pay for future printing costs.

9. NEXT MEETING SCHEDULED: 8/20/2020 via Zoom Webinar
10. EXECUTIVE SESSION: Pursuant to C.R.S. (24-6-402(4)(a)) for discussion pertaining to the purchase, acquisition, lease, transfer or sale of any real, personal or other property interest.
11. ADJOURN – 6:29 p.m.