

LARIMER COUNTY PARKS 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: May 5, 2020

Time: 5:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Location: Zoom Webinar

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

Members		Staff		Guests
Daniela Lawler	x	Ken Brink	x	Jeff Stahla (Northern Water)
Deborah Shulman	x	Daylan Figgs	x	Brad Wind (Northern Water)
Kathy Maher	x	Dan Rieves	x	Brian Abrams (Farnsworth Group)
Mandy Peters	x	Mark Caughlan	x	
Michael Robinson	x	*Stephen Johnson		
Robert Harris	x	Paulina Bennett	x	
Russell Fruits	x	Sidney Michl (minutes)	x	
Ruthie Rollins	x			
Stephen Amundson	x			
Steve Ambrose	x			

x = present

***commissioner**

1. CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS – 5:35 p.m.
2. PUBLIC COMMENT
 - a. Jeff Stahla (Northern Water Public Information Officer) and Brad Wind (Northern Water General Manager) introduced themselves and said they are available to answer questions.
3. AGENDA REVIEW
4. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF LAST MEETING MINUTES
 - a. Kathy moved to approve the minutes from last meeting, Mike seconded, motion passed unanimously.

5. INFORMATION & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- a. Natural Resource events for this month: larimer.org/naturalresources.
- b. To sign up for Parks Advisory Board updates, go to apps.larimer.org/subscriptions.cfm, enter your email, click “Subscribe,” and check the “Parks Advisory Board” box.
- c. COVID-19 response in Larimer County Parks – Ken
 - i. Ken explained COVID has had a profound effect on DNR and shared a presentation on current park operations. Personal protective equipment (PPE) acquired for ranger and maintenance staff includes N95 masks, face shields, boots, Tyvek suits, cloth masks, gloves, and disinfectant spray. Staff created training videos for proper use of PPE, disinfecting vault toilets, and cleaning work vehicles. The department also contracted a commercial cleaner to disinfect our most frequently used public restrooms.
 - ii. Ken explained changes in recreational behavior and the influx of crowds during the stay-at-home order. Properties have experienced high capacity, including remote areas like Eagles Nest, Red Mountain, and River Bluffs Open Spaces. Day use area visitation continues to be very high 7 days a week. One boat ramp at Carter Lake and one ramp at Horsetooth Reservoir opened April 1st. While DNR has been successful at maintaining public access to our parks and open spaces, Ken noted staffing challenges from implementing social distancing and increased vegetation damage from trail widening.
 - iii. Deborah asked if DNR is providing hand sanitizer in restrooms, Ken said no because of vandalism. The public is encouraged to bring their own hand sanitizer and avoid using public restrooms. Deborah also asked about recommendations or signage for face masks, Ken said CDC guidelines are posted throughout our system. Governor Polis recommends a non-medical cloth face mask to be worn while in public and visitors are encouraged to follow state and CDC guidelines. Daylan said DNR recommends the use of face masks and has posted [messaging regarding their use and other social distancing practices](#) when recreating, the county health department also released a short video about safe outdoor recreation. Russell mentioned visitors at Eagles Nest were wearing masks around their neck and pulling them up when passing others on the trail. Deborah asked about state vs. county guidelines, Daylan said state guidelines take precedence, the county can be more stringent but not less. Mandy said thanks for allowing access to restrooms at trailheads, Daylan said Visitor Services staff have done a tremendous job keeping them open and sanitized.
- d. Campground reopening plans – Ken
 - i. The South Bay campground at Horsetooth Reservoir and Flatiron campground at Carter Lake opened to Larimer County residents with existing reservations on April 24th. DNR opened all campgrounds to existing reservations on May 1st. Public restrooms, shower houses, group picnic sites and pavilions, cabins, and tipis remain closed. Only hard sided units with self-contained restrooms are allowed until the county stay-at-home order is lifted. Deborah asked if a full opening of campgrounds is anticipated, Daylan said the next step is to open

reservations to soft sided units/tents and allow access to public restrooms but timing is TBD.

6. UPDATES & REPORTS

a. Park District updates – Dan/Mark

- i. Dan – Devil’s Backbone recently saw 6,000 visitors through the trailhead in one day. Visitation is about 2 weeks ahead of schedule and visitor use patterns are changing. The busiest boating day at Carter Lake was Thursday of last week. Flatiron had 8 campers the first weekend of reopening, Dan thanked Mark and his crew for help with signage and barricades. Because campgrounds were closed for a few weeks, crews were able to complete a handful of projects. Cabins, tipis, group use areas, and swim beaches remain closed. Major onboarding of seasonal staff this weekend, Ranger Excellence School was cancelled so training will be held via meetings and smaller seminars. Special events in mid-early June are also cancelled. So far compliance with social distancing orders has been high.
- ii. Mark – exceptionally busy for this time of year, staff has done a great job keeping employees and visitors safe. Gatehouses at Horsetooth Reservoir opened last weekend, campgrounds are open at Inlet Bay and South Bay but boating camping is not permitted. Cabins, group use areas, and swim beaches remain closed. Inlet Bay Marina opened last weekend; the stores remain closed. Only boat owners are allowed at the Marina with no more than 8 people per group. Permit compliance has been at ~30%. Wrote 125 windshield tickets last weekend, which prompted gatehouses reopening. Special events are cancelled through June. Commercial restroom cleaners have been very helpful.
- iii. Daylan said we were anticipating receiving some pushback after reopening campgrounds, but the reaction has been the opposite.

b. Glade Reservoir 1041 process update – Daylan

- i. Daylan provided an update on PAB’s role in Glade and explained that the process moved from an IGA into 1041 regulations. 1041 rules at both state and county levels do not include provisions for advisory boards to make a recommendation to the BOCC; the Planning Commission will hold hearings and provide recommendation. Board members can still review the application and provide comment as community members. Staff will discuss findings with PAB in June.
- ii. Deborah asked why the process changed from IGA and to 1041. Daylan said there was a legal question whether the commissioners and Northern Water could enter an IGA stage and 1041 was decided to be the appropriate route. The 1041 application is limited in focus to pipelines, the reservoir siding, and the recreation component. DNR staff are reviewing environmental documents and will make a recommendation to the Planning Commission. Steve asked if COVID has delayed the process, Daylan said it has and that 1041 is very time limited.

Northern agreed to push the timeline back, the Planning Commission meets June 24th followed by a public hearing with the commissioners on August 17th.

- c. Wastewater management study – Brian Abrams, Farnsworth Group (20 min)
 - i. Ken introduced Brian Abrams from Farnsworth Group. The study began in spring 2019 as a capital improvement project (CIP) to investigate replacing sewage pumping with permanent onsite wastewater treatment systems (OWTS). Brian explained wastewater pumping is an inconvenience and a large expense for the county. The study focuses on Hermit Park, Carter Lake, and Horsetooth Mountain.
 - ii. Hermit Park
 - 1. Goal is to dilute wastewater so it's less concentrated, below-grade system would be installed in open area adjacent to dumpsite/entrance. Annual pumping costs \$8,250, cost estimate of system would be \$115k-\$325k (11-24 return on investment). Least complex treatment system of the 3 parks, easiest wastewater system to dilute (dilute RV dump station with wastewater from ranger station, camp host sites, and maintenance garage). Most remote site for purpose of construction access.
 - iii. Carter Lake
 - 1. Goal is to move RV dump station to more central location up north side of lake. Annual pumping costs \$24,750, cost estimate of system \$340k-\$608k (16- to 24-year return on investment). Requires multiple stage treatment, dilute RV dump station with wastewater from Marina store. Drainage field would be located where Marina store currently drains.
 - iv. Horsetooth Mountain
 - 1. OWTS option – convert to flush toilet. Year-round use; no annual startup or shutdown costs. Project capital cost \$361k-\$508k (31- to 40-year return on investment). Would create sludge and require periodic maintenance.
 - 2. Sewer option – convert to flush toilet. Annual pumping cost \$10,800, project capital cost \$435-653k (38- to 46-year return on investment). Connect to Spring Canyon water and sanitation district, replaces pumping at the park.
 - v. Conclusions – OWTS are a low operating cost solution to the County's current pumping costs, but the time of return on investment of the projects is longer than the life cycle of many of the system components. Range in construction costs are due to location, unknown site conditions, project size, and labor shortages. Next steps are to acquire additional data to redefine the design and assess the long-term needs at each park to see if the treatment cost can be added to another CIP.
 - vi. Deborah commented that flush toilets at Horsetooth would waste water and asked about composting toilets. Ken said composting toilets work best in low volume applications because of challenges with odor and maintenance.

- d. Habitat Restoration Policy – Daylan
 - i. Daylan explained this policy is meant to define the “why” and “when” of habitat restoration in accordance with the Help Preserve Open Space sales tax funds. It also defines what constitutes habitat restoration and is eligible for use of these funds. Specifically, the policy outlines that habitat restoration projects must be fiscally responsible, evaluated relative to desired outcomes (with a focus on improving ecological function), and designed to be self-sustaining once established. Most of our properties are in excellent condition with relatively small-scale restoration needs (examples include ripping/re-seeding two-track roads, riparian plantings, hazard tree removal, etc.). The Habitat Restoration Policy will be adopted by the BOCC because of its tie to the sales tax, likely with recommendation from OLAB.
- e. Dept. Restoration and Resource Standards – Daylan
 - i. Daylan explained the standards are meant to be the “who” and “how” of restoration and are intended to establish accountability and the appropriate level of communication for DNR’s existing guidelines. The purpose is to outline restoration standards for any vegetation disturbance activity on open space/park properties including construction activities from department capital projects, utility easements, natural disaster recovery, etc. They are based on best restoration practices and intended to be used by DNR employees or contractors/outside entities performing work on DNR properties.
 - ii. Deborah asked how we identify areas where restoration will occur, Daylan said DNR has a committee that makes the determination and this information is typically included in our management plans. Mike asked how a restoration project is deemed complete, Daylan said decisions are made under contractual agreement with the county and standards are developed for each project by the Land Stewardship team.
- f. Sky View group campground – Dan
 - i. Dan shared design plans from AVI and said the remainder of the project is being managed by Shayna. He reminded the board that Sky View is intended for group camping with 3 pods of 5 sites reservable as 5, 10, or 15 sites. If not reserved in the group context within a 2-week period, inventory will default to individual sites (up to 45). Features will be hardened for up to 35-50 years of use. USBR and Northern submitted their design comments and AVI is making final changes based on their review. Currently waiting for ADA review of the design from USBR. Permitting is on the Planning Commission’s agenda on May 20th, then site planning review will begin. Production timeline is dependent on GOCO grant, DNR is asking for the full amount of \$350k.
 - ii. Deborah asked about the 12’x12’ tent pads and if they’ve considered making them larger. Dan said he will pass the comment along. Russell asked about fire pits, Dan clarified there are 19 fire pits (1 per campsite, 3 communal, 1 in the pavilion).

- g. 2019 Quarter 4 Board Report – Daylan
 - i. The 4th quarter report was sent out in the May meeting packet. Some highlights: Forks Park reopening, new cabins at Horsetooth, and final visitation numbers from 2019. The quarterly format will be continued in 2020 and the annual report will be finalized in the next month.
 - ii. Steve asked about future department funding, Daylan said our Help Preserve Open Spaces sales tax is expecting reductions of 17-20%. Parks revenue are expecting less of a reduction.

7. DISCUSSION ITEMS

8. ACTION ITEMS

9. US BUREAU OF RECLAMATION UPDATE

- a. Jeff Stahla responded to Deborah’s question about swim races later in the season and said the goal is to reach an elevation of 5,388’ at Horsetooth Reservoir by October in order to repair the Soldier Canyon outlet. This elevation is not outside the realm of normal operations even though it might look low. USBR will keep the reservoir full until July 1st, at which point natural use will allow the elevation to naturally lower. Jeff said the natural draw down should not impact the swim races. Deborah asked if USBR will implement social distancing guidelines, Mark said so far USBR has deferred to local agencies.

10. BOARD MEMBER REPORTS

11. DIRECTOR’S REPORT: Daylan Figgs

- a. The June meeting will likely be held via Zoom, hope to discuss the Glade submittal. It’s fortunate DNR and outdoor recreation have been considered an essential service during this time. Daylan mentioned the challenges of COVID and expressed gratitude for our staff’s problem-solving and response. DNR continues to hire seasonal personnel and move forward in planning and stewardship. There will be some budget challenges ahead but our cash reserves are in good shape and CIP can be adjusted. We are aggressively pursuing grants and are optimistic we’ll be awarded FLAP.

12. NEXT MEETING SCHEDULED: 6/2/2020 via Zoom Webinar.

13. 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.

14. ADJOURN – 7:19 p.m.