



2020

Larimer County Natural Resources

QUARTERLY BOARD REPORT

4TH QUARTER (OCTOBER NOVEMBER DECEMBER)



Unprecedented wildfire season demands unified support

During the Cameron Peak and East Troublesome fires in western Larimer County in September and October, LCDNR staff responded expediently to protect its public areas and to assist the Sheriff's Office to protect mountain communities and neighboring residents impacted by the fires. Activities included staffing and refueling generators at roadblocks, assisting with traffic, evacuating campgrounds and assisting campers to find alternative places to stay, providing reservoir access for helicopter water fills, and clearing fuels around the towers atop Horsetooth Mountain. Thankfully, areas the Department manages were spared from the fire impacts experienced across the region. Looking into 2021, LCDNR staff are actively supporting fire recovery and forest restoration by participating in regional efforts that are examining weed management, assisting landowners with reseeding efforts, flood mitigation, and public information among others.



Looking west from Devil's Backbone Open Space on October 17, 2020.
Photo Aliy Louie.

Sky View Campground granted \$475K in state funding



Sky View Campground pavilion rendering.

In November, LCDNR received a \$475,334 grant from Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) to bolster Department funds to construct the Sky View Campground on the east side of Carter Lake. A first of its kind in Larimer County, this project will provide the community a campground catering to large groups. The grant was part of GOCO's Resilient Communities Program, which helps grantees advance outdoor recreation, stewardship, and land protection work in addition to supporting immediate opportunities that have emerged in direct response to the COVID-19 pandemic.



Views from the conservation easement area donated by the Steputis family. Photo Charlie Johnson.

Local family partners to conserve 884-acre ranch

In partnership with local landowners Mark and Candee Steputis, LCDNR finalized a conservation easement in December to protect an 884-acre ranch in northern Larimer County. The conservation easement acquisition is made possible due to a generous donation from the Steputis family as well as being a component of the Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) 2020 Laramie Foothills Expansion Grant, which bolsters the efforts of Larimer County and City of Fort Collins to conserve lands in this priority area.

Stopping the spread on Kruger Rock Trail

Due to Rocky Mountain National Park limiting their visitor access in 2020, Hermit Park Open Space experienced significant increases in trail use last fall. According to Trails Program Manager Joel Schwab, "Given this higher use in 2020, Kruger Rock Trail saw significant widening, up to eight feet in some areas and was sloughing downhill. Our team built up the downhill side with a rock wall to help keep the trail where it is and reduce erosion and widening in the future."



BEFORE



AFTER

Desirable shade trees take up residence at River Bluffs Open Space



Hackberry



New shade trees line the parking area at River Bluffs Open Space trailhead. Photo Casey Cisneros.



Buckeye

LCDNR has taken another big step towards eliminating Siberian elm at River Bluffs Open Space. As an invasive exotic species, Siberian elm have historically crowded out native plants and wildlife within the Poudre River corridor at River Bluffs Open Space. Several years ago, these large weedy trees were removed along the riverbanks prior to a larger restoration project, and recently, were removed from the trailhead and replaced with a diversity of desirable shade trees including juniper, buckeye, coffee tree and hackberry. Volunteers are pitching in by watering the new trees on a weekly basis during the growing season.

Herrington/Soderberg homestead building restoration complete

In 2019 and 2020, local and visiting volunteers joined HistoriCorps' preservation experts to restore three Herrington/Soderberg homestead buildings within Horsetooth Mountain Open Space. In October 2020, restoration activities included removing and repointing failing mortar and repairing wood elements, including decorative gables and siding on the stone bunkhouse. This critical restoration work will allow the historic structure to remain intact and stabilized as an iconic element of the site for generations to come.



Financial Summary

Larimer County Natural Resources Department has five primary revenue sources including Colorado lottery proceeds, the open spaces sales tax, user fees on open space properties, user fees on reservoir park properties, and the

weed district property tax. Below are the Oct 1 through December 31 revenue summaries, annual and daily permit sales, and camping reservation nights compared to the same period the previous year.

Year to Date Revenue (through December 31st 2020)

	2019	2020	% Change
Colorado Lottery	\$819,553	\$700,941	-14%
Open Spaces Sales Tax	\$9,006,285	\$7,442,807	-17%
Open Spaces Generated User Fees*	\$1,087,738	\$1,388,683	28%
Reservoir Parks Generated User Fees*	\$4,216,322	\$4,982,526	18%
Weed District Property Tax	\$631,795	\$744,328	18%

*User fees include those for entrance, camping, special events, group use areas, and penalty assessments

Year to Date Operating Expenses (through December 31st 2020)

	2019	2020	% Change
Personnel	6,097,907	6,708,376	10%
Operating	4,976,393	4,663,716	-6%

Year to Date Number of Permit Sales (through December 31st 2020)

	2019	2020	% Change
Open Spaces			
Annual Permits	1,667	2,151	29%
Daily Permits	57,814	72,337	25%
Reservoir Parks			
Annual Permits	9,615	12,131	26%
Daily Permits	144,765	191,956	33%

Year to Date Camping Reservation Nights (through December 31st 2020)

	2019	2020	% Change
Open Spaces	8,049	10,320	28%
Reservoir Parks	44,046	43,778	-1%

These reported figures are preliminary and not audited at press time. Audit will be completed in mid-2021.



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