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2021

Larimer County Natural Resources

QUARTERLY BOARD REPORT 1ST QUARTER (JANUARY FEBRUARY MARCH)



Never Forgotten

Larimer County Department of Natural Resources (LCDNR) has memorialized the life and ultimate sacrifice of Ranger Brendan Unitt with a cast bronze ranger hat and memorial plaque. The memorial was dedicated by Larimer County staff and Ranger Unitt's family on Wednesday, March 10. The memorial is located near the main entrance at Horsetooth Area Information Center (HAIC). Representing the unwavering service of park rangers everywhere, the ranger hat is a meaningful symbol of the passion, dedication, and ultimate sacrifice Ranger Brendan Unitt gave in service to our community.



Staff and family members participate in a ceremony to honor Brendan Unitt on March 10, 2021. Photo courtesy Charlie Johnson.

Red Mountain Open Space trail realignments



Trail staff realign the Salt Lick trail at Red Mountain Open Space. Photo credit Joel Schwab.

Beginning March 1, visitors to Red Mountain Open Space were treated to the realignment of the Salt Lick and Big Hole trails - now out of the wash. In the fall of 2020, trails staff realigned portions of these two trails to improve visitor experience by bringing the trails up out of washes, better aligning trail junctions, and adding wayfinding signs. These realignments will also result in ecological benefits by helping clarify routes so users stay on designated trails and help eliminate social trail development.



Know Before You Go

The parking webcams at Horsetooth Mountain Open Space and Devil's Backbone Open Space were replaced. The cameras are back in operation and feature new data capabilities to report parking capacities, busiest hour of the day, and other info to equip visitors with important information to "Know Before You Go." The webcams connect to the website at:

larimer.org/naturalresources/parks/webcams#acc1.

Partnership secures new conservation easement

In March, Larimer County Natural Resources Department (LCDNR) partnered with Colorado Open Lands, a non-profit land trust, to conserve the 73-acre Dixon Station property, north of Wellington. Located within the Buckeye Priority Area of LCDNR's Open Lands Master Plan, this conservation easement conserves prime farmland (and associated water rights) and scenic values. The landowner, Poudre Valley Community Farms, is a co-operative with a business model to purchase or lease land to provide long-term leases to ranchers and farmers. A key part of the model involves working with local land conservation entities to protect the land they own and purchase with conservation easements. Larimer County provided \$150,000 towards purchase of the conservation easement, with the landowner donating 75 percent of the value.



Dixon Station Conservation Easement. Photo Credit Leslie Volkar.

Fire recovery underway



Cameron Peak Fire as seen from Devil's Backbone Open Space in October 2020. Photo credit Aliy Louie.

To help residents affected by the Cameron Peak Fire, the Land Stewardship Program will be conducting free weed management site visits this summer. Weeds are often invigorated by fire leading to a slower native plant community recovery, if left unchecked. Staff will help assess the plant community condition and create a site-specific weed management plan that will both benefit the environment and save landowners time and money. LCDNR is also partnering with the Colorado Water Conservation Board and the Cameron Peak Recovery Collaborative to create native seed mixes that can restore ecosystem function, discourage weed invasion and stabilize soils with a diversity of grasses and wildflowers. These seed mix specifications are specific to different elevations and available for purchase from local seed distributors.

Leveraging grants to deliver results for community

Between 2018 and 2020, \$16.1 million was brought into LCDNR through grants, donations, and partnerships. These funds were secured to support capital improvements, land acquisitions, habitat restoration, weed management, and forestry projects. Collectively, between eight projects, 63 cents out of every \$1 was leveraged through grants, donations, and partnerships.

The funders and partners for these projects, listed below, included CDOT, Central Federal Lands Highway Administration, the City of Fort Collins, Colorado Department of Agriculture, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Colorado State Forest Service, Department of Local Affairs, Friends of Larimer County, Great Outdoors Colorado, Northern Water, and two private landowners.

Projects receiving funding support, 2018-2020:

1. County-wide weed management, Early Detection Rapid Response Program
2. Forest management on county-owned open spaces
3. Red Mountain Open Space inholding acquisition
4. Land acquisitions as part of the Laramie Foothills Mountains to Plains 2020 Expansion Project
5. Poudre River restoration at River Bluffs Open Space
6. Horsetooth and Carter Lake reservoirs road and parking improvements
7. Sky View Campground at Carter Lake Reservoir
8. Poudre River Regional Trail Construction



Poudre River Regional Trail Construction



County-wide weed management, Early Detection Rapid Response Program



Land acquisitions, part of Laramie Foothills Mountains to Plains 2020 Expansion Project



Sky View Campground Pavilion Design at Carter Lake Reservoir



Horsetooth and Carter Lake reservoirs road and parking improvements

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 and operating expense. Below are the Jan 1 through March 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 March 31st 2021)

	2020	2021	% Change
Colorado Lottery	\$161,563	\$183,563	14%
Open Spaces Sales Tax	\$611,890	\$675,136	10%
Open Spaces Generated User Fees*	\$192,494	\$294,454	53%
Reservoir Parks Generated User Fees*	\$1,031,263	\$1,252,958	21%
Weed District Property Tax	\$326,172	\$347,107	6%

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

Year to Date Operating Expenses (through March 31st 2021)

	2020	2021	% Change
Personnel	\$636,639	\$583,201	-8%
Operating	\$448,095	\$488,972	9%

Year to Date Number of Permit Sales (through March 31st 2021)

	2020	2021	% Change
Open Spaces			
Annual Permits	342	284	-17%
Daily Permits	6,390	6,478	1%
Reservoir Parks			
Annual Permits	930	1,003	8%
Daily Permits	5,911	6,652	13%

Year to Date Camping Reservation Nights (through March 31st 2021)

	2020	2021	% Change
Open Spaces	5	16	220%
Reservoir Parks	1,426	1,349	-5%



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