



2021

Larimer County Natural Resources

QUARTERLY BOARD REPORT
2ND QUARTER (APRIL MAY JUNE)



Sky View Campground construction kicks off



County Commissioner Jody Shadduck-McNally, staff, and sponsors of the project gather for a group photo at the ground breaking of Sky View Campground in late May. Photo Charlie Johnson.

In May, Larimer County Department of Natural Resources (LCDNR) broke ground at Sky View Campground, the soon to be newest camping destination at Carter Lake. The groundbreaking was attended by Larimer County staff and sponsors of the project: Great Outdoors Colorado, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, and Friends of Larimer County. Identified in the 2017 Reservoir Parks Master Plan, this campground will enhance the group camping experience at Carter Lake. Catering to RV and tent campers alike, visitors will be able to enjoy amenities such as areas to camp together, a large group pavilion, and areas to view the night sky. Construction of the campground is expected through fall with opening slated in 2022.

Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) stations complete

LCDNR recently completed the construction of five new ANS inspection stations at Carter and Horsetooth reservoirs, which will provide dedicated workspace for inspector staff. The project was completed in partnership with U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, who provided some of the necessary funding. At press time, a record nine infected boats have been intercepted this year and decontaminated at Horsetooth Reservoir and Carter Lake.



A newly completed ANS station offers shade and a protected place for staff to shelter out of the elements, if needed.

Protecting prominent viewsheds and access



Dakota Ridge. Photo Charlie Johnson.

LCDNR recently contributed to an important land conservation project in the foothills west of Loveland. Along with an \$850,000 grant from Great Outdoors Colorado and a private donation, Larimer County contributed \$316,000 to the partnership to help the City of Loveland purchase and protect the 245-acre Dakota Ridge property. As rapid development continues in the area, conservation of the property is valuable because it is one of the last of its size in the foothills and protects a prominent viewshed directly west of the city. It is also adjacent to existing conserved land, contains important wildlife habitat, and will offer public access in the future. Loveland will complete a management plan for Dakota Ridge in 2022 to determine appropriate public use, opportunities include a trailhead and trail system, a community park, and a trail connection north to Prairie Ridge Natural Area.

Take the Loop Less Traveled

Three new suggested trail loop routes were launched in May at Horsetooth Mountain Open Space and Devil's Backbone Open Space. The new loop routes include the destinations of Horsetooth Rock, Horsetooth Falls, and the Keyhole at Devil's Backbone. The goal of loop trail routes is to lessen resource and trail damage and improve overall visitor experience. Colorful inviting signage was added along each route, and a visitor survey is collecting feedback.



Horsetooth Reservoir Community Forum launches



Horsetooth Reservoir. Photo Jim Janicki.

A summer-long community conversation kicked off May 20 with a virtual presentation forum hosted by Natural Resources staff. The community was invited to share their feedback via a new web engagement platform regarding potential visitor management strategies at Horsetooth Reservoir. The discussion covered separation of use on the water, public safety concerns, parking challenges, and potential timed entry/reservation systems. Over 120 citizens attended the virtual forum providing feedback, questions, and ideas. A visitor experience survey and idea board are open on the website with over 400 survey responses and 75 submitted comments/ideas.

Getting to know our visitors at Devil's Backbone

In partnership with Colorado State University last fall, LCDNR completed a statistically valid Visitor Use Study at Devil's Backbone Open Space. The study measured general satisfaction, primary activities, perceptions of crowding, and general demographics. Results showed a high amount of general satisfaction at the open space with a 99% overall satisfaction rating of "Good" or "Excellent." The results shed light on perceptions of crowding with 50% of respondents feeling crowded at the main trailhead. This valuable visitor information will be utilized in future planning efforts at the open space. The full Visitor Use Study results and a summary of key findings are now available online.



Devil's Backbone Open Space. Photo Brendan Bombaci



A welcoming volunteer invites visitors to come learn more at a stationed SEEK table at Devil's Backbone Open Space. Photo Angela Borland.

SEEK and you shall learn

After a year of more limited offerings, 2021 is ramping up to be a vibrant year of education events and activities open to the public. Programs including tiny trekkers, wildflower and raven walks, and sky gazing are available throughout the summer. Stop in at one of the Department SEEK (Safety, Education, and Eco Knowledge) Stations located at various trailheads on the weekends to learn more about topics ranging from trail etiquette to water safety to being bear aware. A new addition to our educational programming has been to provide some programs and open space area brochures in Spanish.

Volunteers make positive impact this summer

LCDNR volunteer opportunities abound this year! Independent litter cleanup days following weekend and holiday rushes of visitors into the parks and open spaces have significantly leveraged staff time. In addition, project crew volunteers have been working on a variety of maintenance projects such as fence removal, trail maintenance and tree mulching. We were excited to have volunteers help at the annual CAST (Catch a Special Thrill) event in May that pairs special needs kids and adults with anglers for a morning of fishing at Horsetooth Reservoir. Special thanks to all of our volunteers for their efforts this summer in making a positive impact on our community!



CAST event participants had a great time together at Horsetooth Reservoir. Photo credit Jessica Johnson/Jessica Johnson Photography

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 April 1 through May 31, 2021 revenue summaries, operating expenses, annual and daily permit sales, and camping reservation nights compared to the same period the previous year.

Year to Date Revenue (through June 30th 2021)

	2020	2021	% Change
Colorado Lottery	\$335,927	\$415,109	24%
Open Spaces Sales Tax	\$2,521,215	\$3,016,684	20%
Open Spaces Generated User Fees*	\$489,793	\$788,257	61%
Reservoir Parks Generated User Fees*	\$2,587,021	\$2,649,627	2%
Weed District Property Tax	\$717,633	\$745,250	4%

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

Year to Date Operating Expenses (through June 30th 2021)

	2020	2021	% Change
Personnel	\$1,901,230	\$1,661,418	-13%
Operating	\$2,084,273	\$1,787,674	-14%

Year to Date Number of Permit Sales (through June 30th 2021)

	2020	2021	% Change
Open Spaces			
Annual Permits	1,289	1,261	-2%
Daily Permits	30,374	30,125	-1%
Reservoir Parks			
Annual Permits	6,873	6,626	-4%
Daily Permits	73,563	61,627	-16%

Year to Date Camping Reservation Nights (through June 30th 2021)

	2020	2021	% Change
Open Spaces	2,521	4,109	63%
Reservoir Parks	14,734	20,640	40%



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