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2021

Larimer County Natural Resources

QUARTERLY BOARD REPORT
3RD QUARTER (JULY AUGUST SEPTEMBER)



User fee adjustments confirmed



Bikers snake through Devil's Backbone Open Space in late 2020. Photo credit: Brendan Bombaci.

After six weeks of public input this summer, the Larimer County Board of County Commissioners unanimously approved recommended adjustments to user fees for Larimer County Department of Natural Resources (LCDNR) parks and open spaces. The adjustments will go into effect Jan. 1, 2022. Fees will rise for daily permits, annual permits, and all types of camping to ensure operational sustainability in the face of increasing visitation and population growth. Disabled individuals and low-income (bison) permits will incur no increase. In addition, the installation of a fee at the southern trailhead of Devil's Backbone Open Space was approved.

All in a day's work

Larimer County Board of County Commissioners recognized two LCDNR rangers with a life-saving commendation for their response to a motor vehicle accident with injuries near Carter Lake this June. Rangers Lane Fahrenbruch and Colton Ackerly quickly responded to the scene on June 30th and took necessary actions to save the life of the motorcyclist, who was later found to have fractured his C2 vertebrae. A paramedic on scene said that their actions at the very least prevented possible paralysis for the individual, but he believes that what they did saved his life.



Commissioner John Kefalas, Ranger Colton Ackerly, Ranger Lane Fahrenbruch, Commissioner Jody Shadduck-McNally, and Visitor Services Manager and Captain Chris Fleming (L to R) gather for a photo following recognition of the rangers' life-saving actions.

Red Mountain Open Space schoolhouse preserved

This summer, local and visiting volunteers joined LCDNR and HistoriCorps' preservation experts to protect and restore an 1870's one-story pioneer cabin/schoolhouse at Red Mountain Open Space (RMOS). The restoration work was greatly needed to ensure the cabin/schoolhouse remained intact, stabilized, and sealed from water intrusion. This July, the critical restoration activities included reconstructing and restacking the dry sandstone foundation, replacing several sill and wall logs, stabilizing the floor system, and weatherizing the structure to prevent future deterioration. Thanks to the HistoriCorps staff and over twenty community volunteers, the cabin/schoolhouse at RMOS will continue to be an important physical remnant of the area's heritage.



Historic Pioneer Cabin/Schoolhouse at Red Mountain Open Space. Photo credit: HistoriCorps

Community feedback guiding Horsetooth Mountain Open Space Plan Update

An update to the Horsetooth Mountain Open Space (HTMOS) management plan is moving along with the conclusion of the first phase of public feedback this September. Through the project webpage, there have been over 710 surveys completed, almost 150 comments on an interactive map, and nearly 360 open-ended comments. We have also hosted four virtual public meetings, board presentations, and targeted public outreach at trailhead tables. Collectively, this valuable public input has honed the objectives of the plan and informed preliminary concepts for management actions that strive to meet these objectives. Concepts include adjustments to the trail system and parking areas, habitat improvements, and operational management changes. The second phase of public feedback is open now through mid-November before the final plan is developed later this year.



Hikers and bikers share the resource at Horsetooth Mountain Open Space. Photo credit: Brendan Bombaci.

Breaking down fences to improve wildlife passage



Volunteers helping with fence removal. Photo credit: Amy Gilboy.

Across Larimer County's parks and open space system, there are miles of fence that are no longer needed or require wildlife-friendly modifications. This summer, staff and volunteers made significant strides towards the goal to remove unnecessary fencing at LCDNR properties to improve wildlife passage, connect habitat, and recycle the unsightly material. For example, at Little Thompson Farm Open Space, 28 volunteers removed 3,143 feet of fence in just three days. Staff will continue to inventory fences that can be decommissioned, prioritize future projects, and engage our dedicated volunteers towards this important goal.

Discover Pack launched to bolster accessibility for community

In partnership with six library systems across Larimer County, the Discover Pack, a new Natural Resource community outreach tool, was launched this August to remove barriers to accessing Larimer County parks and open spaces for all members of the community. Contents in the pack include a parking pass, recreation map, safety tips (in English & Spanish), activity and regulation guides, and more. Currently more than fifty packs are circulating throughout Larimer County at Poudre River Public Library District, Loveland Public Library, Estes Valley Library, Red Feather Lakes Library, CSU Morgan Library, and Wellington Public Library.



Discover Pack pouches. Photo credit: Erica Giesenhausen

Riparian restoration in the Big Thompson Canyon



Revegetation at Forks Park. Photo credit: Casey Cisneros

Following the 2013 flood of the Big Thompson River, LCDNR sought to enhance key river and streamside habitats and recreation sites within the Big Thompson Canyon. Forks Park, near Drake, is one site where the hydrology and native riparian plant community has been restored, and a new day-use parking area was built. In late 2020, LCDNR acquired an adjacent parcel to expand the park, which included several buildings. These buildings were removed, and the site was reclaimed with native vegetation this spring. Boosted by beneficial spring moisture, the establishment of native grasses and forbs has been extraordinary and today, the site blends in with the park's natural river surroundings.

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 year-to-date revenue

summaries and operating expenses as compared to the same period the previous year. Please note due to a 2021 Larimer County-wide financial processing system change, the LCDNR quarterly financial summary has been adjusted to include the following components as offered in this report.

Open Spaces

	2020	2021	
Revenue			
Sales Tax & Interest	\$4,905,729	\$5,948,406	
User Fees	\$1,174,135	\$1,390,077	
Grants/Partnerships	\$1,222,345	\$491,194	
Other	\$79,521	\$72,866	
Open Lands Revenue	\$7,381,729	\$7,902,543	7%
Expense			
Personnel	\$1,383,580	\$1,159,475	
Operating	\$2,115,506	\$2,265,916	
Open Lands Expense	\$3,499,086	\$3,425,391	-2%
Capital & Other	\$99,657	\$27,241	

Reservoir Parks

	2020	2021	
Revenue			
User Fees	\$4,611,631	\$4,564,367	
Grants/Partnerships	\$193,960	-	
Other	\$83,051	\$74,235	
General Fund	\$17,739	\$17,910	
Parks Revenue	\$4,906,382	\$4,656,512	-5%
Expense			
Personnel	\$1,546,478	\$1,208,957	
Operating	\$1,873,080	\$2,183,906	
Parks Expense	\$3,419,558	\$3,392,863	-1%
Capital & Other	-	\$2,027,066	

County Weed District & Enterprise

	2020	2021	
Revenue			
Property Taxes	\$736,581	\$765,522	
Weed Chemical Sales/Spraying	\$253,892	\$322,122	
Specific Ownership Tax	\$42,936	\$46,112	
General Fund	\$16,731	\$60,255	
Other	\$3,410	\$24,521	
Pest Control Revenue	\$1,053,550	\$1,218,532	16%
Expense			
Personnel	\$513,170	\$391,642	
Operating	\$243,298	\$397,200	
Pest Control Expense	\$756,468	\$788,842	4%

Community/Regional Development

	2020	2021	
Revenue			
Park Development Fees/Interest	\$39,654	\$27,385	-31%

Conservation Trust - Lottery

	2020	2021	
Revenue			
Lottery	\$519,957	\$594,145	14%



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