



2022

# Larimer County Natural Resources

## QUARTERLY BOARD REPORT

2ND QUARTER (APRIL MAY JUNE)



## Turning weeds to wildflowers



Restoration underway on the west side of the Keyhole at Devil's Backbone Open Space. Photo credit Casey Cisneros

The ground on the west side of the iconic Keyhole feature at Devil's Backbone Open Space has changed a lot over the last hundred years. Originally prairie, it was transformed to a makeshift dirt bike track, then to a residential homesite, and most recently, to a field of invasive exotic annual grasses. In 2022, Larimer County Department of Natural Resources (LCDNR) staff began the process of restoring the site by regrading, controlling invasive weeds, and planting a diverse cover crop seed mix. These are the initial steps in reestablishing a quality prairie habitat with native grasses and wildflowers. Although the process may take years in this dryland setting, the desired ecological outcome will be apparent to the tens of thousands of visitors who gaze west through the Keyhole each year.

## Hiring challenges cause summer scramble

The Department was not immune to the hiring challenges faced across the nation this year. Seasonal positions fill important roles across the department, and while staff began the hiring process early in the year, interviewing and hiring continued well into summer. Challenges included a limited applicant pool followed by frequent job offer refusals, with pay identified as one contributing factor. Impacts from inadequate staffing resulted in reduced hours for boat ramps and entrance stations, reduced patrol coverage, longer intervals between mowing operations, and the need to explore other operational efficiencies. The seasonal staff who were hired this year are exceptional and have contributed to making visitor experiences and land management outcomes positive despite the hiring challenges faced.



Challenges in hiring enough seasonal boat inspectors resulted in limited boat ramp hours through June. Photo credit Hannah Brooks

# New campground and cabins welcome visitors this spring

In May, LCDNR completed two long-awaited capital improvement projects at Carter Lake and Horsetooth Reservoir. First, the opening of the new group-use Sky View Campground at Carter Lake Reservoir was celebrated on May 12. In addition, five newly constructed reservable cabins at Horsetooth Reservoir opened this spring. The new cabins replaced the original cabins that had reached their life expectancy. Constructed with a 50-year life standard, the new cabins offer many modern amenities to provide a quality experience for our visitors.



Exterior view of new camper cabin at Horsetooth Reservoir. Photo credit Larimer County



Panoramic view of Sky View Campground. Photo credit Larimer County

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## Rebuilding Kruger Rock Trail after wildfire

For three weeks this spring, LCDNR staff worked to rebuild approximately 1,000 feet of the Kruger Rock Trail that was impacted by the 2021 Kruger Rock Fire. The fire burned many logs on the downhill edge of the trail, which were used to hold the trail in place on steep slopes. These burned-out logs were replaced with rock retaining walls to hold the trail tread in place and prevent erosion downhill. Many large, burned trees that fell across the trail were removed to re-establish the trail corridor. The trail to the top of Kruger Rock is now open and allows users to experience the changing forest ecosystem post-fire.



LCDNR staff work together to move a rock on Kruger Rock Trail to prevent erosion. Photo credit Joel Schwab

# Expanding our reach through Ranger Excellence School

Since 2010, LCDNR has organized and led the Ranger Excellence School (RES), a weeklong training conference to provide ranger staff and natural resource professionals classroom and field-based basic skill training. Topics include crisis intervention, First Aid/CPR, self-defense basics, outdoor survival, and more. This May, LCDNR hosted RES in Estes Park with over 90 students drawing from 20 agencies from across the United States. Well-known for its "Friday Scenario Day," RES has built a reputation of quality hands-on training for professionals at all levels.



Ranger scenario training in action at RES 2022. Photo credit Charles Broshous.

# Fort Collins and Larimer County conserve key link



Landscape view of the Bobcat Ridge Natural Area addition. Photo credit LCDNR staff

Larimer County and the City of Fort Collins are partnering to conserve a 675-acre addition to Bobcat Ridge Natural Area that is also adjacent to Roosevelt National Forest and various conservation easements. The acquisition fills an important gap in a well-established wildlife movement corridor and includes an ~1/4-mile stretch of Buckhorn Creek, a key recovery reach for the federally threatened Preble's meadow jumping mouse. The purchase protects the viewshed along Buckhorn Canyon Road and the foothills backdrop and will provide expanded future public access opportunities.

# Funds secured to close final gaps of Poudre River Trail

LCDNR was awarded \$250,000 from Colorado Parks and Wildlife through the State Trails Program to help fund the completion of the Poudre River Trail between Timnath and Windsor. This most recent grant award adds to two other previous grants from Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) and Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT). All three grants total over \$1.2 million to help construct one of the final gaps to complete the trail extending from northwest Fort Collins to Greeley, helping to greatly leverage Larimer County's financial resources. Such strong support from funders highlights the community value of the Poudre River Trail and the partnerships that are working together for full completion.



Views from the Poudre River Trail near River Bluffs Open Space. Photo credit Jeanie Sumrall-Ajero

# Financial Summary

Larimer County Natural Resources Department has five primary revenue sources including Colorado Lottery proceeds, the Help Preserve Open Spaces Sales Tax, user fees on open spaces, user fees on

reservoir parks, 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.

## Open Spaces

	2021	2022	
<b>Revenue</b>			
Intergovernment Revenue	\$491,194	\$489,894	
Miscellaneous Revenue	\$1,371	\$113,607	
Service Charges Revenue	\$104,589	\$106,333	
Specific Designated Taxes	\$3,016,364	\$3,413,954	
User Fees Revenue	\$765,215	\$716,520	
Total	\$4,378,732	\$4,840,308	11%
<b>Expense</b>			
Personnel Expenses	\$777,419	\$676,807	
Operating Expenses	\$1,244,000	\$1,461,730	
Total	\$2,021,419	\$2,138,537	6%
Capital Expenses	\$33,153	\$1,303,230	

## Reservoir Parks

	2021	2022	
<b>Revenue</b>			
General Fund	\$101,164	\$94,356	
Intergovernment Revenue	-	-	
Miscellaneous Revenue	\$60,715	\$2,250	
Service Charges Revenue	\$169,577	\$127,859	
User Fees Revenue	\$2,491,733	\$3,045,138	
Total	\$2,823,189	\$3,269,603	16%
<b>Expense</b>			
Personnel Expenses	\$1,741,533	\$1,935,884	
Operating Expenses	\$1,090,589	\$1,439,464	
Total	\$2,832,120	\$3,375,347	19%
Capital Expenses	\$820,961	(\$30,797)	

## County Weed District & Enterprise

	2021	2022	
<b>Revenue</b>			
General Fund	\$51,438	\$53,232	
Intergovernment Revenue	-	-	
Service Charges Revenue	\$91,241	\$89,944	
Specific Designated Taxes	\$774,895	\$813,327	
Total	\$917,574	\$956,503	4%
<b>Expense</b>			
Personnel Expenses	\$242,566	\$282,217	
Operating Expenses	\$233,061	\$167,516	
Total	\$475,628	\$449,733	-5%

## Conservation Trust - Lottery

	2021	2022	
<b>Revenue</b>			
Conservation Trust/Lottery	\$415,109	\$424,509	2%



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