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2021

Larimer County Natural Resources

QUARTERLY BOARD REPORT

4TH QUARTER (OCTOBER NOVEMBER DECEMBER)



Improved trail eases access to Horsetooth Reservoir



A safer, more sustainable route now exists from Upper Sunrise parking area to Foothills Trail and Horsetooth Reservoir shoreline. Photo credit: Joel Schwab

In October, Larimer County Department of Natural Resources (LCDNR) trail staff built 108 steps from the Upper Sunrise parking area at Horsetooth Reservoir down to the Foothills Trail and shoreline. Over fifteen tons of material was moved by wheelbarrows and buckets to fill each step and today, a safer, more sustainable route is in place. In addition, the over 2,400 square feet of spider-webbing social trails that previously existed were restored back to native vegetation.

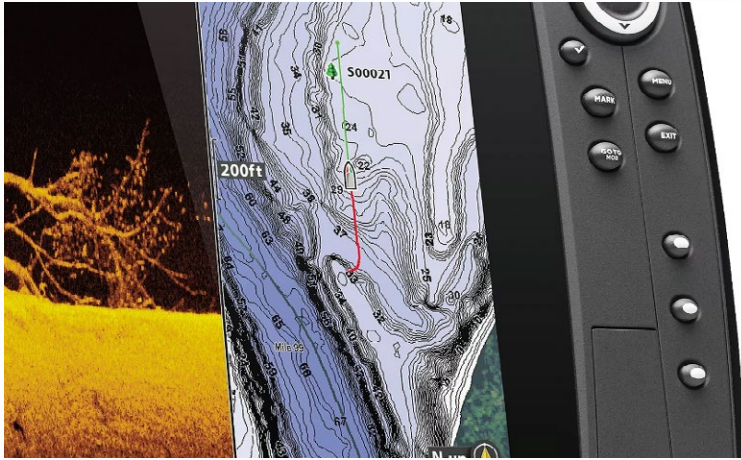
Kruger Rock Fire leaves minimal damage to Hermit Park Open Space

On the morning of November 16, numerous agencies responded to the Kruger Rock Fire, southeast of Estes Park. LCDNR ranger staff assisted with evacuations of nearby residents and supported partner agencies during the week of the fire. A veteran pilot responding to the fire for "slurry" drops died in a single engine air tanker crash within Hermit Park Open Space (HPOS). The plane was located, and the body of the pilot recovered. In total, the Kruger Rock Fire burned 147 acres on lands adjacent to HPOS. Currently, remediation efforts are underway at HPOS at the site of the airplane crash. Approximately 19 cubic yards of forest litter and duff were contaminated by spilled diesel fuel, and recovery crews plan to employ a bacteria to naturally breakdown the harmful hydrocarbons in the soil.



Kruger Rock Fire. Photo credit: Steve Gibson

Upgraded boat sonars advance search capabilities



Minutes can mean a life when a water emergency occurs at Larimer County-managed park reservoirs. At the close of 2021, LCDNR upgraded and installed four new boat sonars for use at the reservoir parks, and throughout Larimer County, when search and rescue emergencies arise. The new sonar technology has side scanning capability, which greatly increases search distance and depth, and thus can reduce search time and increase the potential of saving lives. In addition, the new sonars have large touch screens and are designed to be more intuitive for easier target identification.

Photo credit: Cabela's

Partnership bolsters stewardship impact

A partnership with the Big Thompson and Fort Collins Conservation Districts and LCDNR gained significant momentum in 2021. The Districts' Healthy Forest Initiative is a joint effort with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to bring the knowledge, technical experience, and funding to private landowners for restoration activities on forested lands. LCDNR's role in this effort is implementing post-forest treatment vegetation management including noxious weed control and native plant restoration. The properties currently being managed and monitored for the next 2-3 years are located broadly across the county, including sites in the Estes Valley, Laramie Foothills, and Red Feather Lakes areas, among others.



LCDNR staff, Ian Lae, pauses during recent field project work. Photo credit: Big Thompson Conservation District

272-acre ranch conserved in Blue Mountain Conservation Area



Rockin K Diamond Ranch CE. Photo credit: John Banker

In December, John and Kim Lankford Banker, completed the donation of a conservation easement on their 272-acre Rockin' K Diamond Ranch to Larimer County. Located in Larimer County's Blue Mountain Conservation Priority Area, the property provides a significant buffer to already conserved lands in the southern portion of the county and boasts excellent wildlife habitat and scenic vistas. "This has been our dream to return the Ranch back to its historical environment. We are thankful for this opportunity to contribute to the future of Larimer County, Colorado" noted John Banker.

Community feedback helps set plans at Horsetooth Reservoir



Paddlers enjoy Satanka Cove on a sunny summer day at Horsetooth Reservoir.
Photo credit: Jim Janicki

At the close of 2021, LCDNR released a community feedback report and 2022 plans for managing high visitation and recreation use at Horsetooth Reservoir. Satanka Bay cove will remain open as a mixed recreation-use zone (allowing both motorized and non-motorized boating) during the low recreation season (September to May) and will convert to a non-motorized use zone (paddlecraft only) during the high recreation season (May to September). Additional monitoring of boat launches, visitor use, and parking will continue in 2022. Heightened education for paddlecraft boaters will occur with the help of volunteers to expand outreach on the water.

More growing than just grass

Who says that watching grass grow isn't fun? Often, it's watching the grass grow that can be the most rewarding and telling part of an ecological restoration project. In 2019, staff began restoration work at Hermit Park Open Space to reconnect critical upland and wetland habitats in a transitional area bisected by a two-track road. The road and two cabins were removed and revegetated, and now, two years later, there's more growing than just grass. Aspen groves are regenerating and native wildflowers, such as bee plant, are abundant.



Restoration work at HPOS. Photo credit: Amy Gilboy.

Award honors work to conserve Laramie Foothills

LCDNR was honored to receive the 2021 Starburst Award from the Colorado Lottery for the Laramie Foothills Mountains to Plains Expansion Project this past October. Larimer County and the City of Fort Collins conserved two large ranches in the Laramie Foothills, totaling 1,975 acres in 2020, bolstered with grant funds from Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO). The properties included the Little Ponderosa Ranch and the Hawk Canyon Ranch. These lands provide significant buffers to Red Mountain Open Space, serve as important wildlife migration corridors, and offer spectacular vistas.



Views at Little Ponderosa Ranch. Photo credit: Charlie Johnson.

Bill Wilson named recipient of Brendan Unitt Community Service Award



Bill Wilson pauses at the gatehouse window at Horsetooth Mountain Open Space. Photo credit: Trevor Knight

LCDNR staff member Bill Wilson was named the recipient of the 2021 Ranger Brendan Unitt Community Service Award. In honor of fallen Ranger Brendan Unitt, this annual award is given to a Larimer County employee who demonstrates a passion to serve their community through selfless acts of community service. Bill Wilson's life is a true demonstration of this passion to serve. Wilson volunteers to lead Larimer County's Catch a Special Thrill (CAST) event, a day at Horsetooth Reservoir that enriches the lives of special needs children through sport fishing. He also plans and organizes the Veteran's Day Breakfast at the Fort Collins Senior Center, a testament to his desire to honor those in military service. Congratulations Bill!

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 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, which limited efficient access to certain reporting features, the LCDNR quarterly financial summary will include the following components as offered in this report.

Open Spaces

	2020	2021	
Revenue			
Intergovernment Revenue	\$2,001,911	\$567,467	
Miscellaneous Revenue	\$173,568	\$1,104,971	
Service Charges Revenue	\$200,387	\$212,885	
Specific Designated Taxes	\$8,993,983	\$10,823,355	
User Fees Revenue	\$1,358,592	\$1,485,959	
Total	\$12,728,440	\$14,194,638	12%
Expense			
Personnel Expenses	\$1,978,321	\$1,660,090	
Operating Expenses	\$3,300,615	\$3,281,400	
Total	\$5,278,936	\$4,941,490	-6%
Capital Expenses	\$3,740,891	\$1,082,725	

Reservoir Parks

	2020	2021	
Revenue			
General Fund	\$182,528	\$192,329	
Intergovernment Revenue	\$365,410	\$1,375,586	
Miscellaneous Revenue	\$60,825	\$121,175	
Service Charges Revenue	\$343,874	\$342,469	
User Fees Revenue	\$4,660,196	\$4,659,490	
Total	\$5,612,833	\$6,691,048	19%
Expense			
Personnel Expenses	\$3,904,671	\$4,041,288	
Operating Expenses	\$1,121,595	\$1,797,137	
Total	\$5,026,266	\$5,838,425	16%
Capital Expenses	\$75,592	\$2,582,776	

County Weed District & Enterprise

	2020	2021	
Revenue			
General Fund	\$22,308	\$102,870	
Intergovernment Revenue	\$119,344	\$140,520	
Service Charges Revenue	\$413,944	\$488,333	
Specific Designated Taxes	\$802,223	\$830,298	
Total	\$1,357,819	\$1,562,021	15%
Expense			
Personnel Expenses	\$699,165	\$583,570	
Operating Expenses	\$303,912	\$630,675	
Total	\$1,003,077	\$1,214,245	21%

Conservation Trust - Lottery

	2020	2021	
Revenue			
Conservation Trust/Lottery	\$701,610	\$803,042	14%



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