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2022

Larimer County Natural Resources

QUARTERLY BOARD REPORT
1ST QUARTER (JANUARY FEBRUARY MARCH)



Conserving iconic views and habitats into perpetuity



Landscape views at Quarter Circle Lazy H Ranch.
Photo Chris Hansen.

In partnership with Fort Collins Natural Areas Department and Great Outdoors Colorado, Larimer County Department of Natural Resources (LCDNR) conserved 428 acres of the Quarter Circle Lazy H Ranch via conservation easement (CE). Located within the Livermore Land Conservation Priority Area as identified in the Larimer County Open Lands Master Plan, the CE provides a buffer to existing public lands including Cherokee Park State Wildlife Area and numerous conservation easements. In addition, the CE protects significant wildlife habitat, including portions of Lone Pine Creek and Rabbit Creek that provide key habitat for the federally threatened Preble’s meadow jumping mouse. The ranch has been in the Hansen family for decades and used primarily for cattle grazing and hay production. Anyone who’s travelled along County Road 74E to Red Feather Lakes would recognize the signature viewshed that the CE will now ensure remains intact, in perpetuity.

Monitoring birds as indicators of ecosystem health

LCDNR has recently begun participating in an effort led by the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies (BCR) to better coordinate grassland bird surveys in cooperation with a broad network of regional partners. This effort, called the Front Range Breeding Bird Monitoring Collaborative, seeks to improve communication, promote collaboration, and standardize monitoring protocols where feasible. By doing so, partner agencies like LCDNR can better track birds as good indicators of ecosystem health and consider management decisions on a more meaningful scale. Recent surveys have been completed on portions of Devil’s Backbone Open Space, with more planned at Eagle’s Nest, Devil’s Backbone and Red Mountain open spaces in the future. Staff are looking forward to using the survey data to assist with conservation and management actions.



Spotted towhee at Horsetooth Mountain Open Space.
Photo Andy Goris



Sunset view at Horsetooth Mountain Open Space. Photo Brendan Bombaci

Horsetooth Mountain Open Space Adaptive Management Plan approved

After over a year of public engagement, stakeholder input, and staff analysis, the Open Lands Advisory Board recommended adoption of the Horsetooth Mountain Open Space Adaptive Management Plan. Implementation of the plan will begin in 2022. The recommendations from the plan are intended to provide a quality outdoor recreation experience, protect and enhance natural resource conditions, and ensure operational sustainability.



To review the plan in entirety, visit the engagement website at lccconnects.mysocialpinpoint.com.

Plan Recommendations

Recreation improvements:

- Trail system additions and improvements
- Trailhead design improvements
- Additional rock-climbing area

Enhanced ecological condition:

- Forest & vegetation management
- Seasonal habitat closures
- Riparian restoration

Operational sustainability:

- Updated nighttime use regulations
- Continued volunteer engagement

Upgrading technology to drive efficiency

A system-wide goal to upgrade permit and parking citation management systems went live this February, after several years of planning. In coordination with Larimer County Information Technology Department, LCDNR launched "T2", a comprehensive parking citation and permit management solution. Ranger staff can now create and print parking citations using mobile devices, thus gaining efficiency over the former hand-written paper ticketing and processing model used for decades. The permit management side of the new system now offers an online purchasing portal, robust reporting, and ability to collect customer data.



Ranger Casey Horgen holds a new T2 device at Horsetooth Reservoir.
Photo Chris Gardner

Converting fences for safer wildlife passage



Staff in action converting electric fence at Devil's Backbone Open Space. Photo Travis Rollins.

Staff recently converted over 6,000 feet of five strand, high tensile electric fence to a wildlife-friendly design within Devil's Backbone Open Space. This effort is part of a system-wide resource improvement goal to convert existing fences on open spaces to a design that allows wildlife, including mule deer and their fawns as well as other animals, to more easily pass over or beneath. With these improvements, the more friendly fence will effectively contain grazing cattle within open spaces while allowing safe passage for resident and migrating wildlife.

Acting as a lifeline in times of struggle



Spring blossoms at Horsetooth Mountain Open Space.
Photo Herb Saperstone

Being a lifeline to others takes on many forms for LCDNR's Visitor Services staff. With the effects of the pandemic still apparent throughout our region, the new "normal" has left many community members struggling. The outdoors is where many turn for support and help. Starting this year, Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training with a focus on mental health and wellbeing became an internal mandatory requirement for all LCDNR ranger staff. The training focuses on how to approach, de-escalate, and provide direct resources to those in need. All full-time rangers will complete training by year end, which better equips LCDNR to act as a safety net to community members in crisis. Also, in partnership with the Larimer County Sheriff's Office, two LCDNR rangers, Aubrey Hilte and Trevor Knight, have trained as Peer Support Team Members for employees to have someone to talk with and support them in times of challenge or crisis in either their personal or professional lives.

New Roles: New Faces

Several new staff and exciting internal promotions kicked off 2022. With a team of nearly 50 full-time staff members, opportunities for staff growth and meeting key department needs continues to be a top priority for LCDNR. Get a glimpse of the new roles and faces now headed along the trail with us:

With over twenty years of experience, primarily as a Ranger in the Department, **Cindy Claggett** was promoted to the Carter Lake Visitor Services Manager position. She is looking forward to building additional relationships with the community and staff in this role. "I hope to continue the leadership that my predecessors have modeled for me. Carter Lake is my home away from home, so much so, you might just catch me humming or singing a tune as I work."

Born and raised in the Loveland area and an avid outdoorsman, **Trevor Knight** was promoted to Senior Ranger within the Carter Lake visitor services district, following his five-year tenure as a Seasonal Ranger, EMT, and Ranger with LCDNR. "I have climbed, camped, fished, hiked, and paddled all over the state, yet nothing brings me more pride than getting to patrol and protect the properties that were so influential in my upbringing."

Jon Plybon joined the Department in January as a Project Manager in the Land Acquisition, Planning and Resource Division. With a focus on capital improvement projects, Jon brings over ten years of experience in restoration, wetland construction, and capital project management. "My love of nature has inspired me to engage in the future of the planet. I am interested in ecological restoration, conservation biology, biomimicry, citizen science, and eco-psychology."

Originally from Las Vegas, **Rebecca Lelles** joined the staff as a Department Specialist in January to support visitors and staff through the customer service desk at the LCDNR Administration Office. With degrees in Sociology and Criminal Justice, Rebecca has previously worked as a legal aid, early education teacher, and in various positions at non-profits. "I've worked seasonally at Snow Mountain Ranch in Granby, which is where I decided I wanted to live in Colorado full-time. I am happy to be here!"



Staff members (L to R) Jon Plybon, Cindy Claggett, Trevor Knight, and Rebecca Lelles gather together at the Administration Office porch.

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

	2020	2021	
Revenue			
Intergovernment Revenue	-	-	
Miscellaneous Revenue	\$1,078	\$4,132	
Service Charges Revenue	\$66,184	\$60,332	
Specific Designated Taxes	\$675,058	\$723,825	
User Fees Revenue	\$238,439	\$273,801	
Total	\$980,759	\$1,062,090	8%
Expense			
Personnel Expenses	\$304,072	\$250,573	
Operating Expenses	\$195,325	\$171,088	
Total	\$499,397	\$421,661	-16%
Capital Expenses	\$1,790	\$1,204,220	

Reservoir Parks

	2020	2021	
Revenue			
General Fund	\$45,582	\$67,965	
Intergovernment Revenue	-	-	
Miscellaneous Revenue	\$7,000	-	
Service Charges Revenue	\$63,636	\$45,652	
User Fees Revenue	\$788,548	\$948,256	
Total	\$904,766	\$1,061,873	17%
Expense			
Personnel Expenses	\$607,594	\$653,735	
Operating Expenses	\$595,668	\$659,847	
Total	\$1,203,262	\$1,313,582	9%
Capital Expenses	\$125,435	(\$31,782)	

County Weed District & Enterprise

	2020	2021	
Revenue			
General Fund	\$25,719	\$5,829	
Intergovernment Revenue	-	-	
Service Charges Revenue	\$2,945	\$3,624	
Specific Designated Taxes	\$362,006	\$377,103	
Total	\$390,670	\$386,556	-1%
Expense			
Personnel Expenses	\$79,908	\$94,736	
Operating Expenses	\$50,926	\$40,655	
Total	\$130,831	\$135,391	3%

Conservation Trust - Lottery

	2020	2021	
Revenue			
Conservation Trust/Lottery	\$183,563	\$221,203	21%



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Published: April 2022

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