



2023

# Larimer County Natural Resources

## QUARTERLY BOARD REPORT

1ST QUARTER (JANUARY FEBRUARY MARCH)



## Updated Park-in-Lieu Development Fee Approved



Trail users overlooking urban/wilderness interface from Horsetooth Mountain Open Space.  
Photo Brendan Bombaci

The Larimer County Board of County Commissioners recently approved an update to a development fee that brings additional funding to the Department of Natural Resources. Through the County Land Use Code, a “park-in-lieu” fee is assessed to certain residential developments to offset the impact to available park or open space land. Should a developer elect to pay this fee instead of providing park land associated with the development, Larimer County can use it to conserve additional open space land or construct outdoor recreation facilities. The fee had not been evaluated since 1998. Staff reviewed similar fees assessed in other Front Range counties and various price indices to inform an appropriate increase. The updated fee will be a 100% increase phased over two years and is anticipated to generate approximately \$100,000 annually when fully implemented.

## Meeting Volunteers Where They Are

We all have many demands on our time. How does one find time to volunteer? The Public Engagement team explored this question recently; brainstorming ways to reduce required hours of training and accommodate various schedules. Having a full-time job shouldn’t limit your opportunity to give back to your community. We examined our education programs, realizing different programs had different time requirements. Instead of asking new education volunteers to learn how to facilitate all program types, we realized we could split up the training and match individuals to a role based on their availability and interests. Only available on weekends? Be a Stewardship Outreach Educator and facilitate a trailhead table! Like working with youth and available weekday mornings? Be a School Group Educator and facilitate field trips. Reducing the training requirement allowed us to broaden our recruitment and engage a variety of community members who are an integral part of supporting our mission.



Volunteer Naturalists training at Horsetooth Mountain Open Space. Photo Julie Enderby





Blue Sky Pasture. Photo Lexie Sorenson

## Cattle Work as Important Partners in Habitat Improvements

In January, Larimer County Department of Natural Resources (LCDNR) began the process to find a tenant to graze a 320-acre pasture of the Devil's Backbone Open Space that has grazing infrastructure in place. Cattle grazing is one tool used across many County open spaces to help achieve ecological benefits such as enhancing native vegetation communities and wildlife habitat, improving water quality, and restoring soil health. Applications were reviewed and evaluated in

part based on greatest ecological impact. The selected applicant has years of experience in cattle ranching with a heavy focus on regenerative agriculture and regularly partners with conservation experts to ensure that their responsible grazing practices strengthen local ecological communities. LCDNR has been hard at work preparing this pasture for the incoming livestock with grazing expected to begin in early May.

## Commitment to Staff Safety



Staff wear new pfds and pfds displayed on maintenance boat. Photo Brette Southworth

Early this spring, Visitor Services staff identified a gap in prior planning that allowed several pieces of vital safety equipment to fall into disrepair. Before the boating season began, LCDNR made an investment in its commitment to staff safety and purchased new personal flotation devices, rescue ropes, and throwable flotation devices for maintenance operations crews as soon as the need was discovered. In addition to the new equipment, extra training will be held early in the second quarter to ensure that staff are as safe as possible while working on the water.

This is what our values look like in practice: proactively addressing problems to promote staff well-being while learning from the situation to continuously improve.



# Changes Afoot in DNR

Quarter 1 of 2023 finds Larimer County Department of Natural Resources (LCDNR) realizing enhanced levels of service through new leadership and organizational restructuring. Lesli Ellis, Larimer County's former Director of Community Planning, was promoted as the Division Director of Community, Planning, Infrastructure and Resources (CPIR). She now leads the Division in which Natural Resources resides alongside Engineering, Community Development, The Ranch, Road & Bridge, and Solid Waste.

Internally, we have restructured the Visitor Services geographic districts into Horsetooth (North), Carter

Lake (South), and Big Thompson (Hwy. 34 corridor). By designating ranger and maintenance staff into geographic areas we simplify and improve response and customer service.

Additionally, volunteer coordination, education, and communications have been combined into a new Public Engagement team. Historically, these functions lived in separate areas of LCDNR, and now are combined to support greater efficiencies and engagement. The new Public Engagement team is composed of four full-time staff and one temporary technician.



## Growing from Within

The last year has been a significant time of renewal for LCDNR as we hired or promoted fourteen full-time employees (FTE) between April 2022 and April 2023. That's over 23% of our staff! New FTEs were added or backfilled in every division, increasing our total FTE allotment to 60 positions.

These new employees came from a mix of previously temporary staff, staff employed at a lower grade or

different full time role, and external candidates, enhancing the depth of backgrounds and experiences we can collectively draw on while retaining and building upon critical institutional knowledge.

With fresh energy comes a renewed vigor across the Department as we begin to realize action towards our mission to connect people, nature, and place.

## Navigating the future with COMPASS



Launched in 2022, COMPASS is the Department of Natural Resources' internal strategic plan, guiding our collective efforts over the next five years. Developed with staff feedback and internal focus group interviews, COMPASS is buoyed by a new Department mission, vision, and values. The plan reflects the alignment of six broad priorities, targeted goals, and actions to help meet our mission to connect people, nature, and place. Implementation of goals and actions began this quarter focusing within areas of proactive land conservation and management, positive work culture, nature opportunities for all, financial sustainability, regional leadership, and assessment of levels of service that meet current capacities, budget, and projected growth. To learn more, visit COMPASS at [larimer-dnr-compass.org](http://larimer-dnr-compass.org).



# 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 January 1 through March 31 revenue summaries and operating expenses as compared to the same period the previous year. Increases in County Internal Services reflect changes to Larimer County billing, not services requested.

## Open Spaces

	2022	2023	
<b>Revenue</b>			
Intergovernment Revenue	-	-	
Miscellaneous Revenue	\$4,132	\$25,715	
Service Charges Revenue	\$60,332	\$61,364	
Specific Designated Taxes	\$723,825	\$717,190	
User Fees Revenue	\$273,801	\$415,084	
Total	\$1,062,090	\$1,219,354	15%
<b>Significant Donation/Other Revenue</b>			
Quarter Circle Lazy H Ranch	\$1,121,971	-	
<b>Expense</b>			
Personnel Expenses	\$250,573	\$371,380	
Operating Expenses	\$131,819	\$151,551	
Total	\$382,392	\$522,931	37%
<b>County Internal Services</b>	\$39,269	\$85,354	117%
<b>Acquisition Capital Expenses</b>			
Quarter Circle Lazy H Ranch	\$1,204,220	-	
Other	-	\$8,395	

## Reservoir Parks

	2022	2023	
<b>Revenue</b>			
General Fund	\$67,965	\$49,536	
Intergovernment Revenue	-	-	
Miscellaneous Revenue	-	-	
Service Charges Revenue	\$45,652	\$22,141	
User Fees Revenue	\$1,429,320	\$1,638,873	
Total	\$1,542,937	\$1,710,551	11%
<b>Expense</b>			
Personnel Expenses	\$653,735	\$962,481	
Operating Expenses	\$563,016	\$720,978	
Total	\$1,216,752	\$1,683,459	38%
<b>County Internal Services</b>	\$103,205	\$166,466	61%
<b>Capital Expenses</b>			
Other	-	-	

## Conservation Trust - Lottery

	2022	2023	
<b>Revenue</b>			
Conservation Trust/Lottery	\$221,203	\$263,451	19%

## County Weed District & Enterprise

	2022	2023	
<b>Revenue</b>			
General Fund	\$5,829	\$27,949	
Intergovernment Revenue	-	-	
Service Charges Revenue	\$3,624	\$2,275	
Specific Designated Taxes	\$377,103	\$370,527	
Total	\$386,556	\$400,751	4%
<b>Expense</b>			
Personnel Expenses	\$94,736	\$135,053	
Operating Expenses	\$36,345	\$93,771	
Total	\$131,080	\$228,823	75%
<b>County Internal Services</b>	\$4,310	\$7,438	73%



Larimer County  
Department of Natural Resources  
Quarterly Board Report  
Published: April 2023

Connect With Us:  
Larimer County Department of Natural Resources  
1800 S. County Road 31  
Loveland, CO 80537  
(970) 619-4570  
[larimer.org/naturalresources](https://larimer.org/naturalresources)

