



2023

# Larimer County Natural Resources

## QUARTERLY BOARD REPORT

3RD QUARTER (JULY AUGUST SEPTEMBER)



## Stout Connector Trail wins award



The new Stout Connector Trail at Horsetooth Mountain Open Space (HTMOS) opened in early July to great community response and enjoyment. Identified in the HTMOS Adaptive Management Plan, the trail was designed to provide improved connectivity and an easy-to-moderate trail from the valley to Stout Trail. The trail was designed and built by Larimer County Natural Resources staff at a sustainable 5% average grade and includes ten switchbacks and 40 rock walls which required moving an estimated 416 tons of rocks by hand. At the 2023 Colorado Trail Symposium, this project won the Golden McLeod Award, recognizing the project's ingenuity in construction and maintenance.



LCDNR staff receiving the Golden McLeod Award.  
Credit: LCDNR

## Friendly fences protect wildlife at Eagle's Nest Open Space



Volunteers removing barbed wire fencing.  
Credit: Travis Rollins



Larimer County Department of Natural Resources (LCDNR) applies cattle grazing as a tool to invigorate native plant communities, aid nutrient cycling, and promote water percolation into the soil. However, some barbed wire fences that contain cattle can hurt wildlife as they can become entangled in the wires.

This summer, staff and volunteers removed and replaced ~1/3-mile of barbed wire fencing at Eagle's Nest Open Space with wildlife-friendly fencing. The removed fence material was recycled and diverted from the landfill.

Wildlife-friendly fence specifications call for a bottom wire 18 inches above the ground, a top wire no more than 42 inches above the ground, and adequate spacing between the middle wires. The wire spacing allows wildlife to move freely throughout the open space. LCDNR has a goal to remove ½-mile of remnant, unneeded fence and convert one mile of needed fence to wildlife friendly specifications annually.



# Historic preservation projects completed



Historic structures on Larimer County open spaces serve as important physical remnants of the area's cultural past. Structural assessments of these historic buildings by the county identified critical restoration needs to stabilize and protect the structures.

To complete this work, Larimer County Department of Natural Resources (LCDNR) partnered with HistoriCorps, a non-profit organization dedicated to engaging volunteers in rehabilitating historic structures on public lands. Through this partnership, LCDNR provides funding for materials and project management, HistoriCorps provides technical expertise, and local and visiting volunteers provide their time.

To date, six historic structures in Larimer County have been restored, including the Hermit's Cabin at Hermit Park Open Space, three Herrington/Soderberg homestead buildings at Horsetooth Mountain Open Space, and the Roberts-Goodwin schoolhouse and horse barn at Red Mountain Open Space.

The most recent and culminating project was the restoration of the 1915 historic horse barn at Red Mountain Open Space. The work included repairing/replacing deteriorated wood siding and trim and priming/repainting the barn.



After



Before

Historic Horse Barn at Red Mountain Open Space.  
Credit: Rod Cerkony

## A showy new weed detected in Larimer County



Meadow hawkweed infestation.  
Credit: Estes Valley Land Trust




This July, a volunteer with the Estes Valley Land Trust reported the first known infestation of meadow hawkweed (*Hieracium caespitosum*) in Larimer County, and the second ever found in Colorado.

After further scouting by Larimer County Department of Natural Resources (LCDNR) staff, 13 acres of meadow hawkweed were located along State Highway 7 near the Boulder County Line. LCDNR applied Early Detection and Rapid Response (EDRR) measures to locate, treat and eradicate the meadow hawkweed. If left unchecked, noxious weeds such as meadow hawkweed can displace native plant communities by taking away key resources such as nutrients, sunlight, and water.

As weed infestations grow so does the cost to control them, making EDRR a critical tool. As a state watch list species, meadow hawkweed must be mapped and monitored when an infestation is found. The species is identifiable as a one-to-three foot tall perennial with hairy leaves at the base of the plant and a cluster of yellow flowers. Because of the flower's showy aesthetics it has been known to be planted in landscape beds, and thus is likely an escaped ornamental.



# Innovative improvements for visitors and staff at Hermit Park Open Space

 This year, new automatic gates were planned for several locations within Hermit Park Open Space to replace old gates that had to be secured with padlocks. Larimer County Department of Natural Resources staff fabricated the gates, rather than using a slow and costly contracting process for the construction. This innovative improvement will enhance visitor experience at Hermit Park Open Space by allowing easier access. This is especially useful going into the winter season allowing staff to close the gates remotely during inclement weather and visitors to be able to exit automatically after a closure.



LCDNR staff present new gate at Hermit Park Open Space.  
Credit: Tammy Deters

## Residents recovering from Cameron Peak Fire assisted with targeted weed management



Noxious weeds successfully targeted in the Cameron Peak burn area.  
Credit: Jason Ott



In 2023, the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources helped distribute cost share funding for residents to conduct weed management on their lands impacted by the Cameron Peak Fire. The funds came from a state and federal disaster recovery grant and were used by landowners to pay for selective herbicides and a portion of contractor labor.

The program was successful in assisting 24 landowners who treated a total of 175 acres of noxious weeds including baby's breath, bull thistle, Canada thistle, hoary cress, and houndstongue. Noxious weeds in burned areas take away critical resources such as sunlight, nutrients, and water from native plants, thus hindering recovery of ecological systems and wildlife habitat.



# Larimer County hosts Boat Rescue Refresher Training



Larimer County Visitor Services staff along with Poudre Fire Authority (PFA) participated in the 2023 Boat Rescue Refresher Training hosted at Horsetooth Reservoir. This immersive day of training tested the skills and teamwork of those aboard patrol boats, maintenance pontoons, and PFA rescue vessels. Students responded to six different scenario-based water related emergencies.

Not knowing what awaited them until they came on scene, and based upon actual emergency incidents, all found themselves involved in fast-paced, stressful scenarios with role players in the water in need of rescue. The results of the day were positive, with participants leaving better prepared to confidently respond to the emergency needs of those recreating and boating on Larimer County's lakes and reservoirs.



LCDNR and PFA boats responding to various rescue scenarios during training. Credit: Zach Cook

## Steps to a more inclusive outdoors



LCDNR staff connecting with the community at Nueva Vida mobile home neighborhood. Credit: City of Ft Collins



Larimer County Department of Natural Resources (LCDNR) public engagement efforts are gaining momentum to connect traditionally underserved audiences with the wonders of nature.

This summer, LCDNR participated in a resource fair coordinated by the City of Fort Collins at the Nueva Vida mobile home neighborhood - a predominantly Spanish-speaking community. We met people who love Larimer County properties who shared their stories as well as community members new and interested in the opportunities LCDNR has to offer.

LCDNR also hosted a booth at the Fort Collins' Pride Fest to demonstrate our allyship and shared stewardship messaging with community members who made us feel welcome at this event to celebrate diversity. Additionally, we've partnered with CHILL, a local organization that provides creative activities for adults with developmental disabilities, to provide monthly environmental education programs. LCDNR is committed to continuing to find new ways to connect with underserved members of our community and ensure that we are providing nature-based opportunities for all.



# 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 July 1 through September 30 revenue summaries and operating expenses as compared to the same period the previous year.

## Open Spaces

	2022	2023	
<b>Revenue</b>			
Intergovernment Revenue	\$137,041	\$117,160	
Miscellaneous Revenue	\$121,330	\$730,576	
Service Charges Revenue	\$148,809	\$123,782	
Specific Designated Taxes	\$6,814,264	\$6,447,454	
User Fees Revenue	\$1,196,948	\$1,278,488	
Total	\$8,418,392	\$8,697,460	3%
<b>Significant Donation/Other Revenue</b>			
Quarter Circle Lazy H Ranch	\$1,121,971	-	
<b>Expense</b>			
Personnel Expenses	\$1,200,863	\$1,391,272	
Operating Expenses	\$2,478,594	\$1,937,755	
Total	\$3,679,457	\$3,329,028	-10%
<b>Countywide Indirects</b>	\$214,524	\$157,011	-27%
<b>Acquisition Capital Expenses</b>			
Quarter Circle Lazy H Ranch	\$1,204,220	-	
Land Stewardship Building	-	\$418,000	
Other	\$100,247	\$227,051	

## Conservation Trust - Lottery

	2022	2023	
<b>Revenue</b>			
Conservation Trust/Lottery	\$611,838	\$765,674	25%

## Reservoir Parks

	2022	2023	
<b>Revenue</b>			
General Fund	\$188,711	\$148,609	
Intergovernment Revenue	\$123,763	(\$7,810)	
Miscellaneous Revenue	\$2,250	\$63,500	
Service Charges Revenue	\$230,575	\$222,620	
User Fees Revenue	\$4,907,136	\$4,585,383	
Total	\$5,452,435	\$5,012,303	-8%
<b>Expense</b>			
Personnel Expenses	\$3,513,988	\$4,042,535	
Operating Expenses	\$1,043,024	\$957,029	
Total	\$4,557,012	\$4,999,565	10%
<b>Countywide Indirects</b>	\$496,849	\$454,178	-9%
<b>Capital Expenses</b>			
Other	\$136,761	\$154,000	

## County Weed District & Enterprise

	2022	2023	
<b>Revenue</b>			
General Fund	\$106,471	\$83,846	
Intergovernment Revenue	-	-	
Service Charges Revenue	\$306,037	\$273,763	
Specific Designated Taxes	\$846,917	\$876,354	
Total	\$1,259,425	\$1,233,963	-2%
<b>Expense</b>			
Personnel Expenses	\$500,357	\$526,313	
Operating Expenses	\$445,415	\$518,640	
Total	\$945,772	\$1,044,952	10%
<b>Countywide Indirects</b>	\$26,178	\$28,687	10%
<b>Capital Expenses</b>			
Land Stewardship Building	-	\$1,128,000	



**MISSION:** We connect people, nature and place.  
**VISION:** Healthy Landscapes, Healthy People.



Nature-Based Opportunities  
Proactive Land Conservation  
Levels of Service



Regional Leadership  
Sustainable Funding Strategy  
Positive Work Culture



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