



2023

# Larimer County Natural Resources

## QUARTERLY BOARD REPORT

4TH QUARTER (OCTOBER NOVEMBER DECEMBER)



## Improvements deliver positive impacts at Horsetooth Mountain Open Space



During the recent management plan update at Horsetooth Mountain Open Space, a leading concern expressed by the community was congestion at the main trailhead. In response, Larimer County Department of Natural Resources (LCDNR) expanded and re-graded the main trailhead area and installed a second restroom. Simultaneously, to improve accessibility at the main trailhead, LCDNR revamped the nearby accessible parking stalls and the route connecting accessible parking to the restrooms and picnic facilities. In addition to trailhead improvements, the community also expressed desire for a close-in, easy loop trail and a moderate level trail connecting from the Soderberg Trailhead to mid-elevation. To address these desires sustainably, LCDNR extended the Nomad Trail to complete a short, easy level loop trail and constructed the moderate-level Stout Connector Trail between Nomad and Stout trails. The improvements were positively received by the community, provided improved visitor experiences, and ensured responsible stewardship of financial and ecological resources.



Bicyclists enjoyed the new Stout Connector Trail last fall.  
Photo credit Jeanie Sumrall-Ajero

## Carpenter Ranch conserved in the heart of Laramie Foothills



Carpenter Ranch  
Photo credit Brendan Boepple



In December 2023, the 682-acre Carpenter Ranch was placed under a conservation easement with the Colorado Cattleman's Agricultural Land Trust, with funding support from Larimer County through Help Preserve Open Space Sales Tax funds. Situated in the heart of the Laramie Foothills Mountains to Plains land conservation priority area, the newly conserved Carpenter Ranch adds to a larger network of conserved lands in northern Larimer County. At the mouth of Phantom Canyon, the property includes a three-quarter mile stretch of the North Fork of the Cache La Poudre River and water rights from the North Poudre Canal, protecting agricultural values and critical riparian habitat.

# All open spaces have NR-Natural Resources land use zone designation



A key component of the 2021 Larimer County Land Use Code update included creating new land use zoning designations to guide land use patterns in a more compatible, coordinated, and cohesive manner. One of the new zoning designations, "NR-Natural Resources", is intended to be applied to both public and privately owned lands that have high conservation values. The key benefit to designating land into the NR zone is to ensure land uses adjacent to, and in the region of, already conserved lands remain compatible with protection of the ecologic, scenic and wildlife habitat values of these properties. In late 2023, Larimer County completed a rezoning of all county-owned open space properties into the NR zoning designation, thereby furthering the sustainability of public investment to conserve these lands. In coming years, the county will reach out to other public land managers and private conservation easement landowners to work with them on rezoning options as well.



Golden hour at Devil's Backbone Open Space.  
Photo credit Aliy Louie

## Trailhead kiosks unveil updated look



After



Before

Before – Flatiron Reservoir kiosk info was a worn wooden structure with limited information.

After – The new kiosk is a steel structure with updated map, stewardship and ecological information, and seasonal flyers.



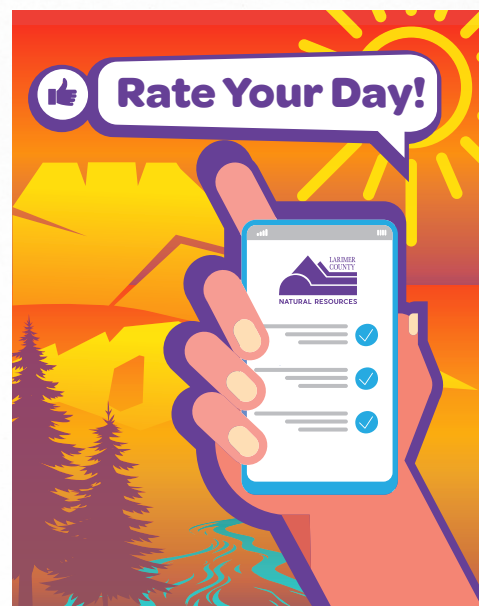
Providing accurate, engaging, and timely information to visitors is a significant step in the ongoing effort to encourage responsible recreation at Larimer County parks and open spaces. Trailhead kiosks are one method LCDNR utilizes to communicate important property information including maps, ecological and stewardship tips, and regulations. Many of LCDNR's kiosks have not been renovated for decades, resulting in deteriorating structures and sun washed panels. At the close of 2023, kiosks at Ramsay Shockey and Devil's Backbone open spaces and Flatiron and Pinewood reservoirs received a complete overhaul with new steel structures, weather resistant sign panels, updated maps and illustrations, and comprehensive English/Spanish language translations. In 2024, Horsetooth Mountain Open Space trailheads and selected areas around Horsetooth Reservoir will be the focus of kiosk updates.

## 'Rate Your Day' yields a 4.5-star visitor satisfaction rating



The inaugural visitor satisfaction feedback campaign, Rate Your Day, was deployed throughout the entire LCDNR system in 2023.

While not statistically valid, the goal of the effort was to get a "pulse check" on visitor satisfaction system-wide via a yelp-style feedback form. The campaign was activated from July through October and resulted in 761 responses with an average rating of 4.5 out of 5 stars; visitors self-measuring "Satisfied to Very Satisfied." Other measures of note include 94% reported feeling welcome and safe when visiting LCDNR parks and open spaces, eight out of ten responses were Colorado residents, and 32 of 50 states were represented. Staff will utilize the qualitative data in 2024 to inform opportunities to improve visitor services.



## Grants support trail management and conversion to electric equipment



Larimer County Conservation Corps will assist LCDNR staff to build the new Bay to Bay Trail at Horsetooth Reservoir.  
Photo credit Larimer County Conservation Corps



In late 2023, Larimer County Natural Resources (LCDNR) was awarded two grants to support trail and vegetation management. The first grant is from Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) to cover four weeks of the Larimer County Conservation Corps (LCCC) valued at \$34,400. The LCCC crew will work under the guidance of LCDNR's trails staff to help construct a portion of the new Bay to Bay Trail at Horsetooth Reservoir. The new trail, identified in the adopted Parks Master Plan, will connect the Blue Sky Trail to the South Bay swim beach along the southern shoreline of Inlet Bay. The trail is expected to open to the public in 2025.

The second grant is from the Colorado Regional Air Quality Council, which awarded \$23,749 towards the purchase of zero-emission commercial lawn equipment (chainsaws, mowers, trimmers, pruners) through its Mow Down Pollution program. The 19 newly acquired electric equipment purchased represents 40% of LCDNR's total lawn equipment inventory. Funding is critical to help bolster the transition from gas-powered to electric as we aim to transition to 100% electric by 2025. The anticipated Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions reductions based on the equipment that will be retired through this program is 86,171 GHGs.

# Financial Summary



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

and reservoir parks, and the weed district property tax. Below are the October 1 through December 31 revenue summaries and operating expenses as compared to the same period the previous year.

## Open Spaces

	2022	2023	
<b>Revenue</b>			
Intergovernment Revenue	\$259,226	\$331,680	
Miscellaneous Revenue	\$733,967	\$1,042,476	
Service Charges Revenue	\$202,236	\$168,592	
Specific Designated Taxes	\$12,073,562	\$10,488,378	
User Fees Revenue	\$1,525,152	\$1,593,987	
Total	\$14,794,143	\$13,625,113	-8%
<b>Significant Donation/Other Revenue</b>			
Quarter Circle Lazy H Ranch	\$450,000	-	
Heaven's Door	\$1,250,000	-	
<b>Expense</b>			
Personnel Expenses	\$1,734,833	\$2,302,465	
Operating Expenses	\$2,989,456	\$4,094,264	
Total	\$4,724,289	\$6,396,729	35%
<b>Countywide Indirects</b>	\$293,270	\$7,935	-97%
<b>Acquisition Capital Expenses</b>			
Quarter Circle Lazy H Ranch	\$532,250	-	
Heavens Door	\$7,608,565	-	
Chimney Hollow	\$800,000	-	
Land Stewardship Building	-	\$419,022	
Other	\$116,208	\$302,068	

## Conservation Trust - Lottery

	2022	2023	
<b>Revenue</b>			
Conservation Trust/Lottery	\$927,218	\$1,080,890	17%

## Reservoir Parks

	2022	2023	
<b>Revenue</b>			
General Fund	\$188,711	\$198,146	
Intergovernment Revenue	\$308,780	\$308,779	
Miscellaneous Revenue	\$62,658	\$64,476	
Service Charges Revenue	\$301,250	\$282,726	
User Fees Revenue	\$5,030,900	\$4,708,977	
Total	\$5,892,299	\$5,563,104	-6%
<b>Expense</b>			
Personnel Expenses	\$4,623,443	\$5,350,889	
Operating Expenses	\$513,462	\$194,574	
Total	\$5,136,904	\$5,545,463	8%
<b>Countywide Indirects</b>	\$631,948	\$247,468	-61%
<b>Capital Expenses</b>			
Land Stewardship Building	-	\$154,377	
Other	\$142,467	\$38,172	

## County Weed District & Enterprise

	2022	2023	
<b>Revenue</b>			
General Fund	\$106,471	\$111,795	
Intergovernment Revenue	\$192,953	\$119,714	
Service Charges Revenue	\$440,037	\$414,413	
Specific Designated Taxes	\$866,436	\$895,837	
Total	\$1,605,897	\$1,541,759	-4%
<b>Expense</b>			
Personnel Expenses	\$669,652	\$678,041	
Operating Expenses	\$687,871	\$769,694	
Total	\$1,357,523	\$1,447,735	7%
<b>Countywide Indirects</b>	\$33,320	\$34,386	3%
<b>Capital Expenses</b>			
Land Stewardship Building	-	\$1,631,980	



**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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