2012 Natural Resources
Visitor Services / Open Lands / Weed Management & Forestry
Excellence in conservation and recreation since 1954
A message from the Director

The Path to the Future

Dear Larimer County visitors and citizens,

Can you really change the future by planning and being innovative? Yes, you can! The Department of Natural Resources embraces this philosophy and continues to plan for success by making collaborative, informed decisions that actually shape our future.

The cornerstone of our planning revolves around forward-looking master planning developed through a rigorous public process that directs our pathway into the future. We are so fortunate to have three citizen advisory boards keeping us on that path to success with innovative ideas and strategic decision making.

We recognize that we must be change agents, constantly aware of the needs of our visitors, conserving our natural resources, and improving and maintaining our facilities. We certainly cannot predict the future, but we can be prepared through collaboration, innovation, and strategic thinking.

I would like to invite all of you to experience my three favorite outdoor recreation venues this year by hiking to Horsetooth Rock, the most recognized icon in Northern Colorado; fishing for Walleye at Carter Lake; and cabin camping at Hermit Park Open Space.

As always, a big thank you to the citizens of Larimer County, our professional staff, our outstanding citizen boards, and especially to our Board of County Commissioners who continue to support parks, open spaces, and land stewardship programs in your Larimer County.

Get Outdoors!

Gary K. Buffington
Director, Department of Natural Resources

A Special Thanks to our Citizen Advisory Board Members

Parks Advisory Board
Back, left to right: Deb Wykoff*, David Hattis; Gary Buffington*; Forrest Orselli; Dan Rieves*; John Tipton; Steve Johnson, Commissioner; Steve Ambrose; Ron Kainer. Front, left to right: Robert Harris; Mark Cauglan*; Russell Fruts (chair); Frank Cada; Linda Knowlton; Frank Gillespie; Chris Fleming*; Charlie Johnson*. Not pictured: Mark DeGregorio. "* = Staff

Open Lands Advisory Board
Back, left to right: Hugh McKeon; Gary Buffington*; Travis Rollins*. Middle, left to right: Mary Banken; Paul Alaback; Tom Donnelly, Commissioner; Kerri Rollins*; Ladonna Lee; Carl Sorrentinos; John Phipps. Front, left to right: Charlie Johnson*; Meg Oren*; Nancy Wallace; Meegan Flenniken*; Suzan Fritchel; Chris Fleming*. Not pictured: Gerry Horak; Trudy Haines; Peter Kast (chair); Steve Vesey. "* = Staff

Land Stewardship Advisory Board
Left to right: Gary Buffington*; Dave Lentz*; Tim D’Amato*; Ernie Marx; Carmen Weston; Meegan Flenniken*; Ken Mathias; Lew Gaiter, Commissioner. Not pictured: Vic Day; Matt Parker; Chuck Miller; Bob Zimbahl. "* = Staff

“I’m continually impressed with the forethought and dedication the DNR staff brings to Larimer County. The citizens of Larimer County not only have a treasure in its natural resources but in the staff that manages those treasures. My family and I appreciate all the hard work that goes into creating and preserving a safe and vibrant natural landscape.” Russell Fruits, Parks Advisory Board
Our Lands - Our Future

A continual major priority for the Department of Natural Resources is providing citizens with great opportunities for the quality outdoor experiences they desire. To achieve this goal the Department initiated a study to gather information for an update of the Open Lands Master Plan (2001).

In 2012 Larimer County and all of its municipalities joined together, in an unprecedented partnership, to evaluate the opportunities, preferences, and possible gaps in the region's land conservation and nature-based recreation. Dubbed Our Lands-Our Future, this grassroots study will investigate our community's vision for the critical landscapes and outdoor recreational opportunities in Northern Colorado.

Public needs and preferences are being assessed through multiple public events and meetings, two citizen surveys, focus groups, stakeholder meetings, and an online interactive mapping tool. Additionally, a comprehensive financial analysis is being conducted, pairing needs and preferences with possible future funding scenarios that could support them. A separate economic analysis will provide information about how land conservation and recreation affect property values, recreation, tourism, agriculture, and overall economic development of Northern Colorado.

These products will guide future conservation and recreation master planning efforts by Larimer County and its municipalities and help determine how your Help Preserve Open Spaces tax dollars are spent both now and in the future. The study will be completed in June 2013. For more information please visit www.larimer.org/ourlands_ourfuture

This graph depicts one example of results from a citizen survey distributed to thousands of Larimer County residents. (Top ten selections by percentage of respondents)

For which activities would you like to see more land/facilities provided?

- Walking/hiking/running on natural surface trails: 33%
- Biking on paved trails: 32%
- Walking/hiking/running on pavement: 17%
- Camping: 17%
- Fishing: 15%
- Shooting/archery: 14%
- Recreating with dog(s): 14%
- Biking on roads: 12%
- Watching wildlife/birding: 11%
- Hunting: 9%

“Summer, winter, spring or fall - outdoors in Colorado is one of the biggest reasons we live here. Continuing to ensure our lakes, reservoirs, campgrounds, and other Open Space natural areas are available for our children and grandchildren is one of the most significant steps we can take to ensure Larimer County remains great for years to come.”

Lew Gaiter III, County Commissioner, District 1
Meeting the Future - Head On!

Grazing and Drought - a plan for the future:
Drought conditions threaten range health and water supplies requiring implementation of adaptive grazing strategies. Grazing lease agreements and annual grazing plans for county open space properties have provisions to protect natural resources by reducing the number of livestock and/or reducing the duration of grazing during drought. In 2012, grazing rotations were modified to meet drought conditions in various pastures.

Mountains to Plains Energy by Design - proactive planning: To protect the natural, cultural, and recreational resources at Red Mountain Open Space, Soapstone Prairie Natural Area, and Meadow Springs Ranch, a partnership between Larimer County Department of Natural Resources, the City of Fort Collins, the State Land Board, and The Nature Conservancy developed a cutting-edge, science-based plan to minimize and mitigate impacts from possible future oil and gas development.

Tiny Trekkers: Volunteer Naturalists teach the future generation of land stewards at Devil’s Backbone Open Space. Kids ages 2-5 hike and participate in lessons about wildlife, ecology, and more! In 2012, kids learned about bats, spiders, and how animals move. For a current schedule, visit www.larimer.org/NReducation

Using plastic instead of cash for daily entrance permits = customer convenience and less staff time.
Throughout 2012, 11 automated pay stations replaced the old paper and cash vaults. Of the over 11,000 transactions and $70,193 collected at these, nary a dime was physically touched, deposited, or processed by staff! Visitors and staff both love the updated technology.

Communicating across the ages! Rangers tweeted real-time field conditions and staff interacted with Facebook visitors to reach a broader audience.
The Ranger Excellence School: Hosted by Larimer County and sponsored by the Colorado Open Space Alliance, this training conference cultivates highly trained and professional rangers skilled in many disciplines. It also highlights the importance of serving the public and promotes a high level of customer service. In 2012, the second year of the conference, 85 rangers from 13 different agencies attended.

“Our Department of Natural Resources is about creating a future, one in which our kids and their kids can enjoy the beauty of Larimer County just as we have known it.”
 Steve Johnson, County Commissioner, District 2

Sylvan Dale Conservation Easement partnership with Telementor: Larimer County Department of Natural Resources’ staff partner with Preston Middle School to mentor students and future natural resource managers on how best to improve wildlife habitat. Sixth graders installed a guzzler to provide water for wildlife including elk, bears, and mountain lions, at Sylvan Dale Conservation Easement.

Restoring native riparian corridors along the Poudre River: Anglers and their quarry are better off due to the riverbank enhancement project at Lions Open Space. A new, more fish-friendly channel was formed, two new river access points created, and over 15,000 native trees and shrubs planted. Anglers are obviously happy; if only fish could smile!

Larimer County - 1, Aliens - 0  Yellow starthistle (Centaurea solstitialis), a noxious weed, was first discovered west of Berthoud in 2003. The infestation had already spread across 500 acres in Larimer County before being reported. Due to ongoing, diligent eradication efforts of monitoring, spraying, and pulling, as of the end of 2012, this plant was virtually extinct in Larimer County.
Open Space Tax Revenues Benefit All of Larimer County

The 1/4-cent Help Preserve Open Spaces sales and use tax revenue is shared with the County’s eight municipalities. The tax continues through 2018 and is not imposed on food or prescription drugs. The total revenue collected to date is over $142 million.

Distributions to municipalities are based upon the highest yield of either population or sales tax generation. This revenue sharing agreement ensures that residents throughout the county receive benefits from the Help Preserve Open Spaces sales tax.

Department of Natural Resources
Summary of Finances

The Larimer County Department of Natural Resources includes the Parks Program, the Open Lands Program, and the Weed & Forestry Program.

Revenues are realized from a number of sources and totaled $10.1 million in 2012. Expenses for 2012 were $8.9 million including a number of one-time capital development projects for both Parks and Open Lands.

Major capital projects in 2012 included continued developments at Hermit Park Open Space, improvements at South Bay Campground at Horsetooth Reservoir, and the purchase of automated pay stations.

2012 Revenues

2012 Expenses

These figures are unaudited. Audit to be completed in mid 2013.
2012 Improvements - Investing Now for the Future

Hermit Park Open Space

Hermit’s Hollow Campground Redevelopment

Addition of 13 new campsites, 4 vault toilets, renovation of 29 campsites, and road and drainage repairs (Reported at project end.)

2011 & 2012 Project Cost: $ 728,745

Partners:
- Great Outdoors Colorado $ 200,000
- Gates Family Foundation $ 59,000
- Larimer County Open Lands: $ 469,745
  (1/4-cent sales tax)

Flatiron Reservoir County Park

Improved Fishing Access

Bank improvements, steps, and railings on south end and Cheyenne Day Use

2012 Project Cost: $ 21,000

Partners:
- Colorado Parks & Wildlife $ 17,700
- Loveland Fishing Club (plus labor) $ 1,000
- Larimer County Dept. of Natural Resources $ 2,300

Kruger Equestrian Campground Redevelopment

Campground renovation with horse trailer parking, 5 campsites each with corral(s), and access to Homestead Meadows trails

2012 Project Cost: $ 165,870

Partners:
- Roundup Riders of the Rockies $ 10,000
- Friends of Larimer County Parks and Open Lands $ 1,200
- Regional Park Fees $ 62,861
- Larimer County Open Lands: $ 91,809
  (1/4-cent sales tax)

Horsetooth Reservoir County Park

South Bay Campground Full Hookup Campsites

Addition of 17 new full hookup campsites

2012 Project Cost: $ 386,300

Partners:
- Bureau of Reclamation $ 160,900
- Conservation Trust Fund/Lottery $ 70,200
- Larimer County Dept. of Natural Resources $ 155,200
From the first donation in 1997 from Stephanie Steppel-White to the 2012 donation from Roundup Riders of the Rockies, citizens have invested in the future of Larimer County's open lands.

"Our citizens show such tremendous support for our open spaces, not only in their use of and care for these protected lands, but also in the donations and support for future protection and development of these important community resources."
Tom Donnelly, County Commissioner, District 3

Major Private Donors of the Open Lands Program

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<th>Donation</th>
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<td>Stephanie Steppel-White (1997) Coyote Ridge Natural Area</td>
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**Bold 2012 Donations**

**CE Conservation Easement**

*Donation to Friends of Larimer County Parks and Open Lands toward a specific project*

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**Department of Natural Resources**

1800 S. County Road 31
Loveland, Colorado, 80537
970-679-5470
larimer.org/naturalresources

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**Public Works Division**

Engineering - Fleet
Natural Resources - Road and Bridge
Solid Waste - The Ranch