

LARIMER COUNTY LAND STEWARDSHIP ADVISORY BOARD

The mission of Larimer County Department of Natural Resources is to establish, protect and manage significant regional parks and open lands providing quality outdoor recreational opportunities and stewardship of natural resource values. We are committed to fostering a sense of community and appreciation for the natural and agricultural heritage of Larimer County for present and future generations.

MINUTES

Date: August 20, 2020

Time: 5:00 – 6:30 p.m.

Location: Zoom Webinar

Contact: Please contact Sidney at smichl@larimer.org or 970-619-4462 if you are unable to attend.

Members		Staff		Guests
Ed Redente	x	Casey Cisneros	x	
Richard (Hitch) McCulloch		Daylan Figgs	x	
Ronald Harris	x	Meegan Flenniken	x	
Tasha Carr	x	John Kefalas*		
		Sidney Michl (minutes)	x	

x = present

*commissioner

1. CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS – 5:04 p.m.
 - a. Introduced new board member, Tasha Carr.
2. PUBLIC COMMENT – none
3. AGENDA REVIEW
4. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF LAST MEETING MINUTES
 - a. Ron moved to approve the minutes from last meeting, Tasha seconded, motion passed unanimously.
5. INFORMATION & ANNOUNCEMENTS
 - a. Natural Resources events for this month: larimer.org/naturalresources.

- b. To sign up for Land Stewardship Advisory Board updates, go to apps.larimer.org/subscriptions.cfm, enter your email, click “Subscribe,” and check the “Land Stewardship Advisory Board” box.
- c. 2019 Annual Report
 - i. Daylan mentioned the format is different this year and said Jake (Graphic Designer) and Korrie (Community Relations and Public Information Supervisor) did a great job. The report includes visitation data, info on restoration and land stewardship projects, and a financial summary (Weed District accounts for 6% of total department expenses).
- d. 2020 Q1 and Q2 Reports
 - i. Casey gave an update on the detection of common tansy in the upper Poudre Canyon. The infestation was mapped and treated. Another early detection this year was the discovery of black henbane in the Laramie River Valley.
 - ii. Daylan summarized environmental impacts from COVID and increased visitation in the Q2 report. The Land Stewardship team will help respond to trail damage/widening and develop long-term restoration strategies if trends continue. In addition, the Land Stewardship Program offered curbside herbicide sales to maintain business continuity, resulting in overall increased herbicide sales in 2020.
 - iii. As a department, financial impacts from COVID have not been substantial. Sales tax revenue is slightly up, day use has increased 20-30% YTD and boat launches increased 50-70% YTD. Camping revenue has caught up from the 6-week closure. Weed District property tax increased 20% 1st quarter and 17% 2nd quarter YTD. Budget requests for 2021 will be reviewed at the next meeting.
 - iv. Key highlights:
 - 1. Received 2020 Starburst Award for the Poudre River Restoration and Resilience Project at River Bluffs Open Space
 - 2. Habitat and road restoration at Hermit Park
 - 3. Grassland restoration project at Devil’s Backbone Open Space
 - v. Casey said Enterprise Weed Control revenue is strong this year, rates increased 2% in December and funding for management in the Canyon Lakes District was provided by USFS. Also working with Facilities on a planning project to house all Land Stewardship staff in one building, goal is to improve workspace and security by separating public services from offices. Hoping to wrap up in the next 2 years. Daylan said cash reserves are available for large capital projects like this one. Tasha asked if those funds are from the Help Preserve Open Space sales tax, Daylan said they are allocated from Casey’s Weed District and fee for work budget, but other funding sources can be discussed. It was noted there is not a carry-over limit.
 - vi. Ed congratulated the team on the River Bluffs recognition, Daylan said we’ll schedule a future field trip back to the site. Tasha asked about video publicity, Meegan said [DNR produced several videos](#) in 2019 about the restoration project.

6. UPDATES/DISCUSSION ITEMS

- a. Restoration and Enhancement Policy Approved by BOCC

This meeting will be recorded and archived according to law. Votes require a quorum.
 Public can view agenda and minutes at:
<https://www.larimer.org/boards/land-stewardship-advisory-board/minutes>



- i. Casey explained DNR has been developing a policy over the last year and a half to define habitat restoration in accordance with the Help Preserve Open Space sales tax funds. After receiving feedback from LSAB and OLAB, the BOCC formally adopted the policy.
 - ii. Ron asked about Hermit Park Open Space restoration, Casey said a mile of two-track road was removed and revegetated. Ron said trails are widening with increased use and expressed concern for future weed issues. Casey said the trail crew performs annual trail maintenance and trails and land stewardship staff work together to address management issues including reseeding and/or weed control.
- b. COVID Operations Update
 - i. Daylan summarized DNR's operational changes in response to increased visitation. Next step is to fine tune our messaging to be more proactive for spring. Meegan added a pause in some public uses allowed the department to complete additional projects such as hazard tree removals and other maintenance projects. Casey said their curbside and delivery model has increased efficiency and will hopefully continue in the future.
- c. Devil's Backbone OS Feral Rye Treatment Review
 - i. DNR collaborated with CSU's weed scientists to set up and monitor test plots and develop a restoration plan for Devil's Backbone. In March, an aerial applicator was hired to treat 150 acres infested with feral rye and downy brome with the goal of exhausting the seed bank and encouraging native plant communities to re-establish. Following treatments, staff have observed correlation between plant/insect diversity and soil moisture availability.
 - ii. Ed asked how long feral rye and downy brome seedbanks survive, Casey said 5-6 years and the herbicide treatment holds for 2 years. The plan is to treat areas a total of 3 times (every 2 years) to exhaust the seedbank.
 - iii. Ron asked about community response to herbicide application. It was noted that the Department sends letters and/or a press release in advance of major management activities. Casey said neighbors have either been quiet or inquired about piggybacking onto herbicide applications. Meegan added we are hoping Devil's Backbone Open Space will be viewed as a local demonstration site to spur broader management to the west.
- d. River Bluffs Restoration Project Update
 - i. The restoration and resilience project used innovative techniques to re-connect the river channel with the floodplain and riparian habitat, provide space for natural processes to occur, and enhance conservation values. LSAB visited River Bluffs a few months after planting was completed in August 2019, then adaptive management and soil remediation was performed in 2020. The site is experiencing increased plant, animal, and habitat diversity as well as cottonwood regeneration. Bare ground and high occurrence of kochia is being monitored.

- ii. Ron asked if the water is stagnant/attracting mosquitos, Casey said mosquitos have increased but standing water is seasonal.
- e. Forester Position Update; Budget Service Request
 - i. Meegan explained the County Forester is housed within the Land Stewardship Program and the person in this position recently retired, prompting DNR to reassess forest management and outreach needs countywide. The position is currently funded with 75% General funds to provide forest services in unincorporated Larimer County and 25% Weed District funds to perform noxious weed compliance inspections within the Weed District boundary. DNR is requesting 50% general fund dollars towards this position to realign to meet a Colorado Noxious Weed Act mandate for noxious weed outreach and compliance outside of the Weed District, 25% Weed District dollars for in-district compliance and outreach services, and 25% park revenue and Help Preserve Open Space dollars to provide green infrastructure services within County parks and open spaces. Daylan said the budget request has been submitted, the County Manager and County Budget Director will review in September and we expect to receive approval in December.

7. ACTION ITEMS

8. OTHER BUSINESS

9. NEXT MEETING SCHEDULED: 11/19/2020 via Zoom Webinar

10. EXECUTIVE SESSION: Pursuant to C.R.S. (24-6-402(4)(a)) for discussion pertaining to the purchase, acquisition, lease, transfer or sale of any real, personal or other property interest.

11. ADJOURN – 6:27 p.m.