

LARIMER COUNTY OPEN LANDS 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: September 24, 2020

Time: 5:00 – 8:00 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	
Bob Hewson		Daylan Figgs			
David Marvin	x	Meegan Flenniken	x		
Gale Bernhardt	x	Ken Brink	x		
Jason Brothers	x	Zac Wiebe	x		
K-Lynn Cameron		Charlie Johnson	x		
Linda Stanley	x	Justin Core	x		
Mark DeGregorio	x	Angela Borland	x		
Nancy Wallace	x	Steve Gibson	x		
Peter Kelly	x	*Thomas Donnelly			
Rick Brent	x	Sidney Michl (minutes)	x		
Sherri Valentine	x				
Tom Shoemaker	x				

x = present

*commissioner

1. CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS – 5:02 p.m.
2. PUBLIC COMMENT – none
3. AGENDA REVIEW
4. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF LAST MEETING MINUTES
 - a. Dave moved to approve the minutes from last meeting, Tom seconded, motion passed unanimously.

5. INFORMATION & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- a. Natural Resources events for this month: larimer.org/naturalresources.
- b. To sign up for Open Lands Advisory Board updates, go to apps.larimer.org/subscriptions.cfm, enter your email, click "Subscribe," and check the "Open Lands Advisory Board" box.

6. UPDATES

- a. Education and Volunteer update – Meegan & Angela
 - i. Meegan introduced Angela Borland, DNR's Education and Volunteer Supervisor.
 - ii. Angela gave an overview of the Education and Volunteer Program and its goals to foster learning about outdoor recreation, promote stewardship, and engage local communities.
 - iii. COVID-19 adaptations:
 1. Trailhead tables at open spaces and roving programs at campgrounds provided in-person learning on stewardship and safety while still allowing social distancing.
 2. Education programs switched to online, creating virtual field trips for schools.
 3. Independent litter clean-up allowed volunteers to remain involved.
 - iv. Nancy asked about YTD volunteer hours compared to 2019. Angela noted that in 2019 there were 20,405 volunteer hours compared to 8,903 volunteer hours Jan. to Aug. 2020. COVID-19 greatly reduced volunteer hours because most are performed in groups. However, overall visitor contacts by education/volunteer staff increased from 2,987 to 5,030 visitors due to pivoting efforts to be at trailheads and campgrounds during busy periods to interact with visitors. This effort has been an intention shift to better connect with visitors during busier periods/days to reinforce leave no trace or other salient issue messaging.
 - v. Tom asked where the program might be in 2-3 years post-COVID. Angela said trailhead tables will remain and group programs will resume.
 - vi. Sherri mentioned a social media post investigating a one-wheeler and a dirt-biker on trails at Devil's Backbone Open Space. Steve said the footage was caught on trail cameras that were installed for the e-bike pilot study. It's difficult to gather information beyond photos but posting on social media has been effective in the past.
- b. Department Conservation Easements monitoring and status update – Zac & Charlie
 - i. Zac shared a map of all county-held conservation easements monitored annually by DNR. In 2020, DNR monitored 49 conservation easements totaling over 14,000 acres with 0 violations. Conservation easement lands make up about 40% of our overall land portfolio, with the majority of lands being those held in fee-simple and open to public access.
 - ii. COVID-19 adaptations:
 1. Utilized aerial imagery and started researching new technology for aerial monitoring.
 2. Conducted staff-only site visits when necessary.

3. Conducted phone interviews with landowners.
- iii. Dave asked for an example of a minor violation, Zac said violations we generally see are trash or debris stored on a property, fences that do not meet wildlife friendly standards, noxious vegetation, etc. Most of the easements in our program are first generation and the owners are invested in conserving the property.

7. DISCUSSION ITEMS

8. ACTION ITEMS

- a. Fonken Conservation Easement Donation Final Review – Justin
 - i. Justin explained we've accepted 5 conservation easements from the Fonken family over the years, totaling 245 acres. This easement would provide an additional 83 acres with scenic and buffer conservation values.
 - ii. Linda moved to recommend the BOCC accept the Fonken conservation easement and associated costs, Sherri seconded, motion passed unanimously.
- b. Three Bell Trail Easement Agreement of Non-use Final Review – Meegan/Charlie
 - i. Meegan gave an overview of the Poudre River regional trail priority project outlined in the Open Lands Master Plan and ramped-up efforts the past two years to complete our portion of the remaining trail segments. Grants from GOCO and CDOT will cover almost half of the costs to construct the remaining portions of the trail anticipated in 2022. Full trail completion is expected in 2023 by all partners including the I-25 underpass.
 - ii. Charlie explained that we have a preferred, improved alignment for a segment of the Poudre River Trail slightly east of the original Three Bell alignment, given the original alignment doesn't provide a viable connection and is therefore unusable. This prompted abandoning the original, un-needed trail alignment to enter into an agreement of non-use.
 - iii. Dave asked if the County will be reimbursed for the non-use agreement, Charlie clarified the conservation easement is held in perpetuity and that the new trail easement alignment was a donation.
 - iv. Gale asked if an agreement for the new trail alignment is complete, Charlie affirmed.
 - v. Gale moved to recommend the BOCC enter the Three Bell trail easement agreement of non-use, Rick seconded, motion passed unanimously.

9. OTHER BUSINESS

- a. Rick asked how assessed valuations of conservation easements affect their tax base. Charlie said when a conservation easement is granted, the underlying land value defaults to the lowest basis which is agricultural and most of the County's easements are taxed at agricultural value.

10. NEXT MEETING SCHEDULED: October 22, 2020 via Zoom Webinar

11. 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.
12. ADJOURN – 6:01 p.m.

