



2019

LARIMER COUNTY NATURAL RESOURCES

QUARTERLY BOARD REPORT

4TH QUARTER (OCTOBER NOVEMBER DECEMBER)



THE FUTURE OF FORKS PARK



Located in the Big Thompson Canyon, Forks Park was destroyed by the 2013 flood. Soon after, a recreation and conservation assessment of the canyon led by Larimer County outlined the need to restore the river and reopen Forks Park to the public. The assessment also identified the priority to protect additional riverfront parcels, including the 0.33-acre Weis parcel adjacent to Forks Park.

In October, the Weis parcel was purchased by Larimer County which adds to the conservation of the river corridor and public access for fishing and recreation. The restored and expanded Forks Park is scheduled to reopen in April 2020.

CONNECTING STUDENTS TO LARIMER COUNTY OPEN SPACES

In 2019, we partnered with the Poudre and Thompson Valley school districts to provide naturalist-led ecology and geology education programs at several open spaces. A total of 18 schools participated in these programs, reaching nearly 1,000 students and 200 adult chaperones. To help support and encourage low income Title 1 schools to participate in these programs, we offered transportation subsidies.

New this year, we provided a teacher training attended by 26 educators to showcase ecology curricula that meet current school standards that we have developed for school trips to Lions Open Space.





2019 VISITATION NUMBERS NEARLY BREAK RECORDS

After the busiest year in agency history in 2018, we are wrapping up 2019 with the second highest number of visitors ever recorded. The cold and wet spring weather may have dampened the spirits of a few, but we still sold 110,000 daily permits and 5,800 resident vehicle permits, hosted 52,000 nights of camping, and inspected over 55,000 boats for aquatic nuisance species.

According to Peggy Watson, the Horsetooth Area Information Center front desk staff member, "The pushback from the fee increases for entrance permits and camping was limited, because people felt that we are good stewards of the resource and the fees are needed to maintain the park." Even though we are serving and increasing number of visitors, resource protection, customer service, and visitor safety continue to be our top priorities.

NEW CABINS ON THE HORIZON AT HORSETOOTH

As the Horsetooth Reservoir camper cabins were starting to show their age, staff began making plans to replace the existing units with a more standardized design that would last for many years. And what better way to start the process than by becoming a camper yourself?

In 2018, staff stayed in camper cabins throughout Colorado to experience design options first-hand. Along the way, they asked managers and visitors for their opinions and preferences, and ultimately developed a list of cabin specifications. The goal was to create an insect resistant, durable design that could be adapted over time.

The Architects Studio was hired this year and worked with staff to develop the new cabin model, which is anticipated to open to the public at the Horsetooth Reservoir's South Bay Campground in 2021.





EMERALD ASH BORER: THE GREEN MENACE

Emerald Ash Borer (EAB), the most destructive invasive exotic tree pest in the United States, was confirmed in Larimer County in September. Now established in 35 states, EAB infects and kills ash trees which are very prominent in urban forests along the Front Range.

Natural Resources staff have been helping educate private landowners and proactively mitigating for this pest at campgrounds, around facilities, and along county roadways where ash trees have been planted. For more information on EAB in Larimer County contact the County Forester at (970) 498-5765.

CONSERVATION EASEMENT STEWARDSHIP

This quarter, staff completed the state-required annual monitoring of all conservation easements held by the Department of Natural Resources. To an overwhelming extent, landowners proved to be continuing responsible stewardship practices in accordance with conservation values.

A total of 44 easements were monitored for compliance, with only one violation observed. Additionally, new efforts to improve monitoring efficiency helped staff finish a full month sooner compared to the 2018 monitoring season.



HISTORIC BUILDINGS GET A FACELIFT



Earlier this fall, four historic structures from the Herrington and Soderberg homesteads were stabilized and preserved at Horsetooth Mountain Open Space. HistoriCorps, a non-profit organization dedicated to saving historic places, partnered with the County to lead the project and recruit community volunteers.

Over three weeks, Natural Resources staff, HistoriCorps staff, and 15 community volunteers stabilized log walls, updated rafters and roof decking, replaced windows, rebuilt and rehabilitated doors, and repointed mortar. This work was critical to ensuring that these important historic structures remain viable now and into the future.

Fun Fact

In 1896, Eliza Herrington, a widow with three children, decided to go into ranching and homesteaded in the location of the current Soderberg Trailhead.



FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Larimer County Department of Natural Resources has five primary revenue sources which include user fees on park properties, user fees on open space properties, the open spaces sales tax, Colorado lottery proceeds and the weed district property tax. Below are annual

revenue summaries, annual and daily permit sales, and camping reservation nights compared to the same period the previous year. Please note that counts represent the full year of 2018 and January 1st through December 19th of 2019.

Year to Date Revenue (through December 19th 2019)

	2018	2019	% Change
Lottery	\$711,103	\$814,499	+15%
Open Space Sales Tax	\$5,859,800	\$7,327,341	+25%
Open Space Generated User Fees*	\$864,758	\$1,088,094	+26%
Reservoir Park Generated User Fees*	\$3,438,083	\$4,225,276	+23%
Weed District Property Tax	\$619,896	\$631,770	+2%

*user fees include those for entrance, camping, special events, group use areas, and penalty assessments

Year to Date Number of Permit Sales (through December 19th 2019)

	2018	2019	% Change
Open Spaces			
Annual Permits	974	964	-1%
Daily Permits	26,318	21,713	-17%
Reservoir Park			
Annual Permits	9,882	9,956	+1%
Daily Permits	87,784	86,936	-1%

Year to Date Camping Reservation Nights (through December 19th 2019)

	2018	2019	% Change
Open Spaces	8,891	8,049	-9%
Reservoir Parks	45,904	43,928	-4%



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