



2020

# Larimer County Natural Resources

**QUARTERLY BOARD REPORT**  
2ND QUARTER (APRIL MAY JUNE)



## Unprecedented Visitation Requires Agile Response

Record visitation was noted this quarter at all DNR reservoir parks and open spaces as hordes of visitors sought the benefits of being outdoors during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through June 30, daily permit sales at the reservoir parks were 51% higher over the same period last year. Aquatic Nuisance Species boat inspectors are experiencing the same increased customer demand. In May 2020, 8,000 boat inspections were completed, which is more than double increase over 2019 (3,500 inspections). DNR staff worked to meet increased sanitation and enforcement loads, to shift annual permit sales online, while simultaneously increasing site signage and public messaging to meet customer demand. Additionally, the Weed District office adopted a curbside delivery system for herbicide sales to lessen in-person contacts. This nimble approach has proven effective - as herbicide sales revenue continues to be strong, surpassing 2019 figures by 73%.



*Devil's Backbone Open Space parking lot and trailhead throughout this spring while residents looked to find reprieve from the stay at home order.*

## New Inspection Stations Coming to Reservoirs



*Inspectors check a boat for aquatic nuisance species last summer.*

Since 2008, the Department has been working in partnership with Colorado Parks and Wildlife and the Bureau of Reclamation to inspect trailered boats to safeguard reservoirs from Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS). This spring, increased demands for water-based recreation have increased ANS inspections. The Department is currently preparing to construct four small inspection stations at Horsetooth and Carter Lake reservoirs that will provide dedicated inspector workspace and equipment storage. The project is currently in design and is expected to be permitted for construction this fall.

# A Boost for Conservation in Laramie Foothills



Panoramic views reside throughout the Laramie Foothills region.

Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) recently awarded Larimer County and the City of Fort Collins an \$822,475 Special Opportunity Open Space grant to help fund conservation of four working ranches, totaling 2,893-acres in the Laramie Foothills. These ranches provide significant buffers to Red Mountain Open Space and over 50,000 acres of other locally conserved lands in this ecologically and culturally rich region. Since 1992, GOCO has been an important and unprecedented funding partner to Larimer County Natural Resources, having awarded the Department with 64 grants, totaling \$28.1 million dollars!

## Big Changes at River Bluffs Open Space Trailhead

The trailhead at River Bluffs Open Space has seen exciting changes. In early May, a new 1-mile, 10-foot concrete trail opened. DNR Planning staff worked with the Town of Windsor to design this connection to the Town of Windsor's Kyger Open Space, where Windsor has developed a trailhead and soft surface trail around Kyger Reservoir. Ultimately, this spur will connect to Windsor's regional trail system, providing incredible access to the regional Poudre River Trail. In coordination with the trail project, non-native Siberian elm trees were removed from the trailhead and replaced with native species. These improvements are already proving to be a valued asset to the communities they serve.



The Kyger Trail will connect to Windsor's regional trail system.

## Glade Park 2.0



The natural surface trail guides visitors to the river.

Once a mobile home community, Glade Park was transformed by catastrophic flooding of the Big Thompson River in 1976, and again in 2013. The 2013 floodwaters created a second, overflow channel where a parking lot and picnic area once stood. In spring of 2020, Glade Park reopened to the public following replacement of old barbwire fence with wildlife friendly fencing, creating nose-in parking spaces, and trails program staff formalizing a natural surface trail loop to the river. Following various assessments, a light approach to site restoration was recommended, primarily allowing natural processes to occur. This tactic has proved successful as both the instream and native riparian forest communities are now thriving, providing beneficial wildlife habitat.

# Habitat Restoration at Work



Restoration of an old roadbed at Homestead Meadows Trail is filling in nicely with native plants. The trail realignment is visible to the right/uphill.

This May, DNR completed capital improvement projects to restore approximately 2 miles of unneeded roads at Red Mountain, River Bluffs and Hermit Park open spaces with the goals to decrease fragmentation, eliminate erosion, and restore native plant communities. Specifically, at Hermit Park Open Space, the Homestead Meadows Trail had been located within an old roadbed that also provided access to two cabins. As identified in the property management plan, these cabins will be relocated to a common "cabin loop" on-site, and an improved, single-track alignment for the Homestead Meadows Trail was constructed concurrent with the road being restored.

## Accolade for Poudre River Restoration and Resilience Project

We are honored to receive a 2020 Starburst Award from the Colorado Lottery for the Poudre River Restoration and Resilience Project at River Bluffs Open Space. Earlier this spring, the ¾-mile reach of the Poudre River was transformed into a healthy and resilient ecosystem by using innovative techniques to re-connect the river to its floodplain, create wetland and riparian habitat, improve flood resiliency, and promote natural river function. As noted by Zac Wiebe, Planning and Resource Manager, "It's an honor to be recognized for this project's ingenuity, broad stakeholder input and diverse funding partners. Special thanks to the Colorado Department of Local Affairs, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and Great Outdoors Colorado for their financial partnerships."

BEFORE - January 2019



DURING/AFTER - Summer 2019



## Taking Back the Grasslands



Removal of an invasive exotic species, feral rye, at Devil's Backbone Open Space will allow more native species to thrive.

A grassland restoration project at the Devil's Backbone Open Space began this quarter. An invasive exotic species, feral rye (*Secale cereal*) has escaped cultivation and is outcompeting native species, thus altering the way the eco-system functions. In March, an aerial applicator was hired to treat 150 acres infested with feral rye with the goal of exhausting the seed bank and allowing native species to thrive. According to Amy Gilboy, Restoration and Stewardship Specialist, "Big changes are already noticeable! The absence of feral rye in the treatment area has led to more wildflowers, an abundance of insects, and more diverse species."

# Financial Summary

Larimer County Natural Resources Department has five primary revenue sources including Colorado lottery proceeds, open spaces sales tax revenues, user fees on open space properties, user fees on reservoir park

properties, and weed district property tax revenues. Below are the April 1 through June 30 revenue summaries, annual and daily permit sales, and camping reservation nights compared to the same period the previous year.

## Year to Date Revenue (through June 30th 2020)

|                                      | 2019        | 2020        | % Change |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|----------|
| Colorado Lottery                     | \$456,273   | \$335,927   | -26%     |
| Open Spaces Sales Tax                | \$2,522,844 | \$2,521,215 | 0%       |
| Open Spaces Generated User Fees*     | \$519,877   | \$489,418   | -6%      |
| Reservoir Parks Generated User Fees* | \$2,126,029 | \$2,585,231 | +22%     |
| Weed District Property Tax           | \$614,143   | \$717,633   | +17%     |

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

## Year to Date Number of Permit Sales (through June 30th 2020)

|                        | 2019   | 2020   | % Change |
|------------------------|--------|--------|----------|
| <b>Open Spaces</b>     |        |        |          |
| Annual Permits         | 659    | 565    | -14%     |
| Daily Permits          | 25,889 | 31,014 | +20%     |
| <b>Reservoir Parks</b> |        |        |          |
| Annual Permits         | 3,730  | 4,352  | +17%     |
| Daily Permits          | 50,497 | 76,181 | +51%     |

## Year to Date Camping Reservation Nights (through June 30th 2020)

|                 | 2019   | 2020   | % Change |
|-----------------|--------|--------|----------|
| Open Spaces     | 2,444  | 2,521  | +3%      |
| Reservoir Parks | 17,994 | 14,734 | -18%     |



Larimer County  
Department of Natural Resources  
Quarterly Board Report  
Published: July 2020

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