

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.

Date: 2/18/2021

Time: 5:00 – 6:30 p.m.

Location: Zoom Webinar. Public registration:

https://larimer-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_eKidudBSSnKgd71yZ8TDrw

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

AGENDA

Scheduled times are subject to change.

1. CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS
 - a. Welcome Commissioner Jody Shadduck-McNally and new board members, Joshua Wenz, Robert Kraft, and Kraig Peel.
2. PUBLIC COMMENT
3. AGENDA REVIEW
4. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF LAST MEETING MINUTES
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. No increase in 2021 Enterprise Rates – Casey Cisneros

6. UPDATES/DISCUSSION ITEMS

- a. 2020 Quarter 4 Board Report – Daylan Figgs
- b. LSP Annual Executive Summary – Casey Cisneros
- c. Compliance and EDRR Data Discussion – Maxine Guill

7. ACTION ITEMS

8. OTHER BUSINESS

9. NEXT MEETING SCHEDULED: 5/20/2021 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

Included in PDF:

- Agenda
- 2020 Q4 Board Report
- LSP 2020 Executive Summary

Attached Separately:

- Minutes of last meeting

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>





2020

Larimer County Natural Resources

QUARTERLY BOARD REPORT

4TH QUARTER (OCTOBER NOVEMBER DECEMBER)



Unprecedented wildfire season demands unified support

During the Cameron Peak and East Troublesome fires in western Larimer County in September and October, LCDNR staff responded expediently to protect its public areas and to assist the Sheriff's Office to protect mountain communities and neighboring residents impacted by the fires. Activities included staffing and refueling generators at roadblocks, assisting with traffic, evacuating campgrounds and assisting campers to find alternative places to stay, providing reservoir access for helicopter water fills, and clearing fuels around the towers atop Horsetooth Mountain. Thankfully, areas the Department manages were spared from the fire impacts experienced across the region. Looking into 2021, LCDNR staff are actively supporting fire recovery and forest restoration by participating in regional efforts that are examining weed management, assisting landowners with reseeding efforts, flood mitigation, and public information among others.



Looking west from Devil's Backbone Open Space on October 17, 2020.
Photo Aliy Louie.

Sky View Campground granted \$475K in state funding



Sky View Campground pavilion rendering.

In November, LCDNR received a \$475,334 grant from Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) to bolster Department funds to construct the Sky View Campground on the east side of Carter Lake. A first of its kind in Larimer County, this project will provide the community a campground catering to large groups. The grant was part of GOCO's Resilient Communities Program, which helps grantees advance outdoor recreation, stewardship, and land protection work in addition to supporting immediate opportunities that have emerged in direct response to the COVID-19 pandemic.



Views from the conservation easement area donated by the Steputis family. Photo Charlie Johnson.

Local family partners to conserve 884-acre ranch

In partnership with local landowners Mark and Candee Steputis, LCDNR finalized a conservation easement in December to protect an 884-acre ranch in northern Larimer County. The conservation easement acquisition is made possible due to a generous donation from the Steputis family as well as being a component of the Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) 2020 Laramie Foothills Expansion Grant, which bolsters the efforts of Larimer County and City of Fort Collins to conserve lands in this priority area.

Stopping the spread on Kruger Rock Trail

Due to Rocky Mountain National Park limiting their visitor access in 2020, Hermit Park Open Space experienced significant increases in trail use last fall. According to Trails Program Manager Joel Schwab, "Given this higher use in 2020, Kruger Rock Trail saw significant widening, up to eight feet in some areas and was sloughing downhill. Our team built up the downhill side with a rock wall to help keep the trail where it is and reduce erosion and widening in the future."



BEFORE



AFTER

Desirable shade trees take up residence at River Bluffs Open Space



Hackberry



New shade trees line the parking area at River Bluffs Open Space trailhead. Photo Casey Cisneros.



Buckeye

LCDNR has taken another big step towards eliminating Siberian elm at River Bluffs Open Space. As an invasive exotic species, Siberian elm have historically crowded out native plants and wildlife within the Poudre River corridor at River Bluffs Open Space. Several years ago, these large weedy trees were removed along the riverbanks prior to a larger restoration project, and recently, were removed from the trailhead and replaced with a diversity of desirable shade trees including juniper, buckeye, coffee tree and hackberry. Volunteers are pitching in by watering the new trees on a weekly basis during the growing season.

Herrington/Soderberg homestead building restoration complete

In 2019 and 2020, local and visiting volunteers joined HistoriCorps' preservation experts to restore three Herrington/Soderberg homestead buildings within Horsetooth Mountain Open Space. In October 2020, restoration activities included removing and repointing failing mortar and repairing wood elements, including decorative gables and siding on the stone bunkhouse. This critical restoration work will allow the historic structure to remain intact and stabilized as an iconic element of the site for generations to come.



Financial Summary

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

weed district property tax. Below are the Oct 1 through December 31 revenue summaries, annual and daily permit sales, and camping reservation nights compared to the same period the previous year.

Year to Date Revenue (through December 31st 2020)

	2019	2020	% Change
Colorado Lottery	\$819,553	\$700,941	-14%
Open Spaces Sales Tax	\$9,006,285	\$7,442,807	-17%
Open Spaces Generated User Fees*	\$1,087,738	\$1,388,683	28%
Reservoir Parks Generated User Fees*	\$4,216,322	\$4,982,526	18%
Weed District Property Tax	\$631,795	\$744,328	18%

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

Year to Date Operating Expenses (through December 31st 2020)

	2019	2020	% Change
Personnel	6,097,907	6,708,376	10%
Operating	4,976,393	4,663,716	-6%

Year to Date Number of Permit Sales (through December 31st 2020)

	2019	2020	% Change
Open Spaces			
Annual Permits	1,667	2,151	29%
Daily Permits	57,814	72,337	25%
Reservoir Parks			
Annual Permits	9,615	12,131	26%
Daily Permits	144,765	191,956	33%

Year to Date Camping Reservation Nights (through December 31st 2020)

	2019	2020	% Change
Open Spaces	8,049	10,320	28%
Reservoir Parks	44,046	43,778	-1%

These reported figures are preliminary and not audited at press time. Audit will be completed in mid-2021.



Larimer County
Department of Natural Resources
Quarterly Board Report
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Larimer County Natural Resources Department
Land Stewardship Program - 2020 Executive Summary

Land Stewardship Program Strategic Goals:

- ❖ Early detection and monitoring populations of invasive species
- ❖ Foster responsible land stewardship through education and outreach that promotes best management practices
- ❖ Assist private and public land managers to minimize invasive species and promote resilient vegetation resources
- ❖ Compel responsible parties to comply with state law for the management of invasive species

Summary:

In 2020, the Land Stewardship Program (LSP) met several challenges including the COVID-19 pandemic and severe wildfire season. These challenges changed the way in which the LSP conducted business and provided opportunity to pivot business operations that in many cases will continue to be practiced even after the COVID-19 pandemic wanes. For example, curbside herbicide pickup has streamlined checkout processes and enhanced workplace safety by limiting those allowed into the storefront on East Mulberry. The 2020 stress test did not hinder outcomes regarding land stewardship in Larimer County, rather, it has increased efficiencies and led to innovation and demonstrated high staff resiliency. Attached to this document is a spreadsheet comparison of annual achievements. The following is a bulleted list of highlights, accomplishments, and challenges from 2020.

2020 Outcomes:

General

- Dave Lentz, the County Forester, retired in June after 44 years working at Larimer County
- Revised County Forester position to reduce service redundancy and address other department business needs.
- Casey Cisneros became president-elect for the Colorado Weed Management Association
- Bill Pawleshyn was appointed to the state's Noxious Weed Advisory Committee
- The Department Restoration Policy was formally adopted
- The Climate Smart Larimer County Framework was drafted with input from staff
- Herbicide sales grossed \$33,452.11
- Cameron Peak Fire burns 208K acres becoming the largest in state history
- Severe Drought persisted along the norther Front Range



Detection and Monitoring

- Detected plumeless thistle, a new noxious weed to Larimer County
- Detected new black henbane infestation in Laramie River Valley
- Emerald ash borer verified north of Fort Collins
- Mapped 2,948 gross acres and treated 26 net acres of high priority noxious weeds
- Pulled 2,509 individual high priority noxious weeds

Education & Outreach

- Conducted 49 forestry site visits and 84 weed management site visits - **the forestry site visits decreased significantly because the County Forester retired in June and the position could not be backfilled until 2021.*
- Utilized 6 volunteers for 163 hours to water trees, survey for weeds and physically remove biennial weed species. - **This number is down due to COVID-19 restrictions prohibiting large volunteer groups from working on projects.*
- Sold 370 thistle guides and 125 knapweed guides

Weed Management/Resilient Vegetation

- Treated 929 acres of weeds along county road rights-of-way (ROW) - **increase of 254 ROW acres treated over previous years is because of chemical mowing application.*
- Treated 168 net acres of troublesome and state listed noxious weeds on county parks and open lands
- Restored 316 acres of mixed grass plant communities at Devil's Backbone OS by managing exotic cool season annual grasses.
- Treated 735 net acres of state listed noxious weeds on other public and private lands
- Seeded 50 acres of disturbed lands
- Weed Control Enterprise generated \$532,549 in gross revenue - **highest annual income to date*
- At River Bluffs Open Space Trailhead 15 trees planted and 9 large diameter hazard trees removed.
- Developed grazing plans for several newly acquired parcels to use this tool to assist in meeting vegetation mgmt. goals

Compliance

- Conducted 718 noxious weed inspections
- Sent 80 courtesy letters and 64 enforcement letters to landowners; Of these the majority (59) were handled through education and compliance by the landowner, however we did ultimately conduct 5 weed enforcement actions.
- The Weed District provided \$2,500 in cost-share with six landowners to manage noxious weeds on their respective properties.