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2024

Larimer County Natural Resources

QUARTERLY BOARD REPORT

2ND QUARTER (APRIL MAY JUNE)



Chimney Hollow Open Space Management planning process begins



More than 400 people have given public feedback for the Chimney Hollow Open Space Management Plan. Credit: Aliy Louie



This spring Larimer County Department of Natural Resources (LCDNR) kicked off its public engagement phase to inform management planning for the future Chimney Hollow Open Space. Using feedback from a diverse Technical Advisory Committee, citizen advisory boards, and over 400 surveys collected through the project’s web platform, staff will begin to develop a draft plan this summer. The plan will

conceptualize appropriate public access infrastructure that provides quality nature-based experiences, protects and enhances natural and cultural resources, and will be financially sustainable. Currently, concepts include parking to access the reservoir, a 10-12 mile trail system, and day-use amenities. After the draft plan is completed, another round of public review and feedback will take place early fall before finalizing the plan by the end of this year.

Public lands for all: Empowering nature access



LCDNR's Public Engagement team recently collaborated with two non-profit organizations focused on connecting underserved communities

with nature. The ISTAR Colorado State University's Indigenous Science Technology Arts and Resilience (ISTAR) Program offers a two-week summer camp for local Indigenous youth, fostering community, identity and connection with the land. We provided our newly acquired Blue Mountain property for one of their field trips, followed by lunch at Carter Lake. Prior to the field trip we engaged in discussions with Native CSU students, who led the program, about the challenges they face in accessing public lands.

The American Adventure Sports Club (AASC) serves underrepresented youth and adults from low-income households, offering outdoor experiences to explore the beauty of nature. At the end of June, we hosted them at Sky View Campground at Carter Lake for a camping and kayaking experience, which was a first for many participants. Everyone had a fantastic time and expressed a desire to return. We look forward to expanding our partnership and facilitating more outdoor adventures with AASC.



Education and Volunteer Specialist Ellen Harris leads a hike for AASC. Credit: Jeanie Sumrall-Ajero

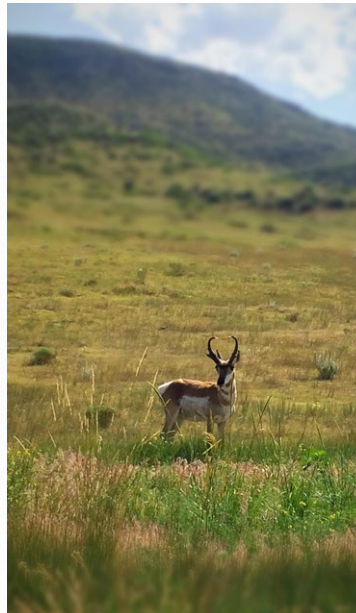


Kids from AASC get ready for kayaking on Carter Lake. Credit: Jeanie Sumrall-Ajero

Grant projects help native vegetation and reduce carbon emissions



This new water tank will encourage greater grazing distribution to improve native vegetation at Red Mountain Open Space.



A pronghorn antelope in Red Mountain Open Space. Credit: Lexie Sorenson



Earlier this year, the Department was awarded a \$7,500 grant from

Colorado Parks and Wildlife's Habitat Partnership Program to construct an additional water source at Red Mountain Open Space. The project constructed a new water tank in July that provides water for cattle and wildlife, such as elk, mule deer and pronghorn antelope. This will improve overall grazing distribution within three pastures and expand our management of native vegetation.

Partnership to conserve future natural area



LCDNR will hold the conservation easement for Rocky Ridge.



Larimer County Department of Natural Resources (LCDNR) recently partnered with the city of Fort Collins in acquiring 428 acres of land north of Fort Collins in Larimer County's Buckeye Conservation Priority Area. Located four miles north of Fort Collins along County Road 60, the Rocky Ridge property is characterized by undulating uplands, numerous ravines and rocky cliffs. The property boasts spectacular views of the foothills, Never Summer Range and the city skyline. The city intends to manage the natural area to enhance native plant and animal communities and provide nature-based outdoor access. LCDNR provided partnership funding and will hold the conservation easement.

Pardon our dust: South Bay upgrades



During the second quarter of 2024, Larimer County Department of Natural Resources kicked off a long-awaited visitor amenity improvement at Horsetooth Reservoir's South Bay parking area. A new flush toilet will replace a former vault toilet, and immediately adjacent will be an Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) decontamination station. Construction crews had to bring in specialized equipment to cut through the bedrock to allow for necessary utility connections, while limiting our construction footprint. The new restroom is set for delivery in mid-August and we anticipate both the restroom and the ANS decontamination station to be up and running by late summer.



Special equipment allows workers to break through bedrock obstacles.

Eradicating Leafy spurge



LCDNR's Land Stewardship program and the Colorado Department of Agriculture Insectary are working with landowners to release biocontrol agents on leafy spurge in the foothills west of Fort Collins. The flea beetle insects will attack leafy spurge, a noxious weed listed on the Colorado Noxious Weed List to reduce the large infestation over the next 3-5 years. Research has been done to ensure the insects will not harm native plants. Biocontrol releases are preferred in areas with large infestations that are difficult to access with other management techniques.



Credit: John Kaltenbach, CDA



Leafy spurge is listed on the Colorado Noxious Weed List

LCDNR treats forests for resilience and health



Forest treatments aim to enhance wildlife habitat, carbon storage and other values.



LCDNR is pleased to report that as of summer 2024, we have successfully treated three-quarters of our open space forests to meet adaptive management needs. About 20 percent (or 5,500 acres) of Larimer County's open spaces are forested, with the dominant tree species being native ponderosa pine and Douglas fir. Guided by forest management plans from Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS), our treatments aim to enhance wildlife habitat, restore historic tree densities, open meadows, and ultimately ensure carbon storage and broader watershed protection. Open space forests have been treated following CSFS recommended prescriptions.

The total treatment cost of \$3.4M has come largely through competitive grants and partnerships. Current forest management projects are underway in 2024 at Hermit Park Open Space and the county's most recent open space, currently called the Blue Mountain property, south of the Big Thompson Canyon.

Ranger Excellence School: Rising through the years



In May, we hosted the 14th annual Ranger Excellence School (RES) in Estes Park. With about 90 students attending, the training has grown tremendously to serve rangers and outdoor field staff from across the state and nation. Since the first RES in 2011, participation has grown from a couple dozen local rangers to include natural resource entities within Colorado and from across the United States and an average of 80-100 student registrations. Many more classes have been added to give attendees the freedom to customize the training they desire and need, whether ranger basics or specialized classes, such as swift water rescue and Spanish for Rangers. RES is now held at the Holiday Inn in Estes Park to accommodate the expanded number of classes and participants and to allow proximity to Hermit Park Open Space for hands-on field classes and "scenario day" in a natural setting.



Students respond to a mock vehicle accident at Ranger Excellence School.

Financial summary



Larimer County Department of Natural Resources has five primary revenue sources including Colorado Lottery proceeds, the Help Preserve Open Space Sales Tax, user fees

on open spaces, user fees on reservoir parks, and the weed district property tax. Below are the April 1 through June 30 revenue summaries and operating expenses as compared to the same period the previous year.

Open Spaces

	2023	2024	
Revenue			
Help Preserve Open Space Tax	\$3,373,249	\$3,470,638	
User Fees Revenue	\$825,157	\$801,796	
Service Charges Revenue	\$89,872	\$100,138	
Miscellaneous Revenue	\$40,700	\$3,500	
Interest Revenue	\$43,718	\$551,044	
Total	\$4,372,696	\$4,927,115	13%
Expense			
Personnel Expenses	\$884,184	\$877,538	
Operating Expenses	\$793,428	\$778,301	
Total	\$1,677,612	\$1,655,839	-1%
Countywide Indirects	\$182,635	\$108,056	-41%
Acquisitions/Projects	\$279,212	\$214,624	

Reservoir Parks

	2023	2024	
Revenue			
User Fees Revenue	\$3,072,903	\$3,070,365	
Service Charges Revenue	\$121,972	\$142,103	
Grants/Partnerships	-	\$23,749	
General Fund	\$99,073	\$67,041	
Miscellaneous Revenue	\$3,500	\$8,250	
Total	\$3,297,448	\$3,311,508	0%
Expense			
Personnel Expenses	\$2,311,058	\$2,339,139	
Operating Expenses	\$788,546	\$902,129	
Total	\$3,099,605	\$3,241,268	5%
Countywide Indirects	\$365,387	\$284,773	-22%
Projects	\$18,728	\$298,844	

Conservation Trust - Lottery

	2023	2024	
Revenue			
Conservation Trust/Lottery	\$470,235	\$531,255	13%

County Weed District & Enterprise

	2023	2024	
Revenue			
Property Taxes	\$844,164	\$1,025,653	
Service Charges Revenue	\$88,329	\$89,360	
General Fund	\$55,898	\$52,575	
Miscellaneous Revenue	\$6,788	-	
Total	\$995,178	\$1,167,588	17%
Significant Donation/Other Revenue			
Sale of Mulberry Building	-	\$516,386	
Expense			
Personnel Expenses	\$299,895	\$288,023	
Operating Expenses	\$392,989	\$252,985	
Total	\$692,883	\$541,008	-22%
Countywide Indirects	\$15,882	\$15,041	-5%



2022-2027 Strategic Plan

MISSION: We connect people, nature and place.
VISION: Healthy Landscapes, Healthy People.



Nature-Based Opportunities



Proactive Land Conservation & Management



Levels of Service



Regional Leadership



Sustainable Funding Strategy



Positive Work Culture



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