



2024

Larimer County Natural Resources

QUARTERLY BOARD REPORT
4TH QUARTER (OCTOBER NOVEMBER DECEMBER)



Chimney Hollow Open Space Adaptive Management Plan moves forward



Chimney Hollow Open Space



After nearly a year-long public process, the adaptive management plan for Chimney Hollow Open Space is complete, and this plan will guide the initial capital development and ongoing management of this open space. Public access amenities will include parking and trailhead areas, a boat ramp, 10-12 miles of natural-surface trail, and accessible day-use facilities. Construction starts in 2025 and continues through an anticipated grand opening date in 2027. Ongoing ecological improvement activities will consist of vegetation management, restoration, and ongoing monitoring. Together, these

ecological practices and the addition of nature-based public access are intended to provide a quality outdoor experience for generations of visitors.

The public process included input from community stakeholders, citizen advisory board members, and the general public. The resulting plan supports DNR's objectives to maintain high natural resource values while providing appropriate public access.

To read the finalized plan, please visit larimer.gov/naturalresources/plans-reports-advisory-boards

On-time, under-budget capital projects improve visitor experience and much more



The new maintenance shop at Hermit Park Open Space



In 2024, the Department made large strides in creating safer experiences, visitor amenities, and financial sustainability through the completion of seven capital projects. These projects included building a new maintenance shop and installing a wastewater treatment system at Hermit Park Open Space; adding an Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) inspection building, an ANS decontamination station, and a flush toilet at Horsetooth Reservoir; installing shoreline protections for the Horsetooth Area Information Center; and upgrading four RV dump stations system-wide. These projects were all completed on time and under budget with high quality outcomes ensuring greater efficiencies and improvements for visitors.

Rate Your Day 2024: Results are in



The Department of Natural Resources is pleased to report that respondents to our 2024 Rate Your Day visitor satisfaction survey gave an average rating of 4 out of 5 stars (a "satisfied" rating). Key findings revealed:

- 52% of total respondents gave a 5-star rating.
- 79% of total respondents gave a "satisfied" or "very satisfied" rating (4 or 5-stars).
- 87% of total respondents reported feeling safe and welcome.
- 78% of total respondents provided comments about their visit.

A total of 1,112 respondents participated in the survey facilitated through a QR code on posters, flyers, social media, and signage at trailheads, campgrounds, visitor centers and email.

Launched in 2023, "Rate Your Day" is conducted to get a self-reported measure of visitor satisfaction and identify areas for continuous improvement. A third cycle of "Rate Your Day" will occur in 2025.



Text-2-Park pay system launches



A Text-2-Park sign at the entrance to Carter Lake.



Larimer County launched its new Text-2-Park parking payment system in late October and is progressively rolling out signage to all paid parking areas. This program offers visitors another option to purchase day passes for their vehicles via a unique QR or text code. Text-2-Park purchases of passes will link to the visitor's vehicle license plate, enabling staff to verify them in real-time using an enforcement application.

The program complements Larimer County's existing payment options, helping to decrease wait times at pay stations and fulfilling a crucial payment collection need when pay stations are down or gatehouses are closed. The initial implementation of the program cost Larimer County approximately \$2,000 and has so far brought in over \$15,000 in revenue.

Hello to same-day camping reservations



To gain further efficiencies and aid the public in securing campsites year-round, Larimer County Natural Resources moved to a same-day camping reservation window. Previously, same-day reservations were only available during the off season, or winter months, when staffing reductions made paying for walk-in camping difficult. Campers wanting to camp during the peak season could make reservations up to one day in advance, but had to either visit one of the county buildings during open hours or fill out a temporary card and pay an invoice sent at a later time for day-of campsite availability.

Campers can now use a QR code located at each individual campsite, or follow a link directly to the reservation page to reserve their campsite. This means more time to relax and enjoy all that Larimer County's campgrounds have to offer.



Campers can now use a QR code or follow a link to reserve their campsites.

A successful grant year brings in \$2.7 million in critical funds



Before



After

*Photos: Before/After photos of trail maintenance at Devil's Backbone Open Space.



In 2024, the Department of Natural Resources secured six grants totaling \$2.7 million, supporting land acquisition, capital construction, native wildlife habitat enhancement, and trail maintenance projects across the department. Grant funders include Great Outdoors Colorado, the Bureau of Reclamation, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and the Colorado Department of Agriculture. The grants provided critical funds to support the acquisition of Canyon Edge Open Space, parking area improvements at Horsetooth and Carter Lake reservoirs, the hiring of temporary trail management staff to address trail maintenance needs following severe rain events of 2023 and locating and monitoring List A and List B invasive weeds throughout the county.

Conservation easements play winning role in stewardship excellence



Conservation easements (CEs) are an invaluable tool in Larimer County Natural Resources efforts to conserve land and protect ecological, scenic, agricultural, and recreational values in Larimer County. By partnering with private landowners and agency partners to restrict development and promote these values, Larimer County has conserved over 21,000 acres in CEs that provide buffers to other protected lands. Since CEs protect land that is typically in private ownership, these ecological and community values can be protected at a relatively low ongoing cost to DNR when compared to land that the county owns in fee-title. Through a certification from the State of Colorado, DNR annually monitors and ensures that the conservation values on each of the over 50 easements we hold are maintained. In 2024, all CEs were monitored, and no new issues or violations were identified. Fortunately, this is a typical outcome from the monitoring season which is a testament to DNR's partnership with dedicated landowners and a commitment to excellent stewardship.



Little Ponderosa Ranch Conservation Easement

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 is the preliminary financial comparison* (2023 vs 2024), including revenue summaries and operating expenses.

* Note: Year-end financial information is currently under review and subject to final edits.

Open Spaces

	2023	2024	
Revenue			
Help Preserve Open Space Tax	\$11,650,660	\$10,653,033	
User Fees Revenue	\$1,597,697	\$1,498,332	
Service Charges Revenue	\$166,938	\$170,221	
Miscellaneous Revenue	\$53,050	\$12,440	
Grants/Partnerships	\$331,680	\$1,804,786	
Interest Revenue	\$1,093,848	\$1,398,010	
Total	\$14,893,873	\$15,536,823	4%
Expense			
Personnel Expenses	\$2,302,465	\$2,060,774	
Operating Expenses	\$4,036,972	\$3,378,332	
Total	\$6,339,437	\$5,439,107	-14%
Countywide Indirects	\$7,935	\$227,427	2766%
Acquisitions/Projects	\$359,793	\$1,069,088	
Land Stewardship Building	\$418,000		

Reservoir Parks

	2023	2024	
Revenue			
User Fees Revenue	\$4,715,656	\$4,549,643	
Service Charges Revenue	\$282,491	\$421,784	
Grants/Partnerships	\$334,287	\$373,749	
General Fund	\$198,146	\$134,081	
Miscellaneous Revenue	\$64,671		
Total	\$5,595,250	\$5,479,257	-2%
Expense			
Personnel Expenses	\$5,350,889	\$5,614,021	
Operating Expenses	\$146,644	\$35,885	
Total	\$5,497,533	\$5,649,906	3%
Countywide Indirects	\$247,468	\$621,496	151%
Projects	\$106,491	\$606,755	
Other	\$154,000		

Conservation Trust - Lottery

	2023	2024	
Revenue			
Conservation Trust/Lottery	\$1,117,989	\$1,045,412	-6%

County Weed District & Enterprise

	2023	2024	
Revenue			
Property Taxes	\$895,837	\$1,087,403	
Service Charges Revenue	\$414,298	\$470,655	
General Fund	\$111,795	\$105,149	
Miscellaneous Revenue	\$163,939	\$225,585	
Total	\$1,585,869	\$1,888,792	19%
Significant Donation/Other Revenue			
Sale of Mulberry Building	-	\$516,474	
Expense			
Personnel Expenses	\$678,041	\$697,790	
Operating Expenses	\$813,804	\$797,749	
Total	\$1,491,845	\$1,495,539	0%
Countywide Indirects	\$34,386	\$39,422	15%
Capital Expenses			
Land Stewardship Building	\$1,631,980	-	



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



Larimer County
Department of Natural Resources
Quarterly Board Report
Published: February 2025

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