



2019

LARIMER COUNTY NATURAL RESOURCES

QUARTERLY BOARD REPORT
3RD QUARTER (JULY AUGUST SEPTEMBER)



DEPARTMENT REVENUES MAKING A DIFFERENCE



When visitors pay a fee to visit a Larimer County park or open space the money collected goes to support management of and improvements on the properties. In 2019, fee increases were implemented to make the department more financially sustainable and are already being used to provide better services to visitors including:

- Relocating and adding electrical service to the educational pavilion at South Bay of Horsetooth Reservoir to better support campground programs
- Repairing and resurfacing the Rotary Day Use parking lot at Horsetooth Reservoir (photo at left)
- Constructing new trash dumpster pads at Carter Lake to improve service and secure them from wildlife
- Installing bear boxes at Hermit Park Open Space aimed to help keep both visitors and wildlife safe

And there's more to come! A few examples of projects planned for 2020 include a new group campground at Carter Lake, additional boat trailer parking and an archery range at Horsetooth Reservoir, rebuilding the aging access road at Hermit Park Open Space, and removing hazardous trees at the River Bluffs Open Space trailhead.

PITTINGTON CONSERVATION EASEMENT

Larimer County Natural Resources closed on the 162-acre Pittington Conservation Easement located along County Road 18E just north of Flatiron Reservoir. This conservation easement protects an important viewshed and provides a buffer to adjacent conserved lands. To top it off, the owner, Jarene Pittington donated the entire \$320,000 value of the easement to the County and will pursue state tax credits for her donation. The County covered the closing costs of approximately \$50,000. Jarene has lived on the property her entire life and her reason for donating the conservation easement was to preserve her family's working ranch going forward.



GRANT PARTNERSHIPS

During this quarter, the department has received positive news on two large grant proposals. An application to the Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) requesting approximately \$7 million to fund improvements at Carter Lake and Horsetooth Reservoir has been shortlisted for funding. With a \$3 million match from the County, we will accomplish \$10 million of capital projects identified in the Reservoir Parks Master Plan. Secondly, a \$2 million request to Great Outdoors Colorado has been awarded to fund the completion of the department's highest priority regional trail. In partnership with the City of Fort Collins and towns of Timnath and Windsor, this grant will be used to construct the remaining gaps in the Poudre River Trail, providing a complete connection from Bellvue to Greeley. Moving forward, we're continually investigating new sources of funding for various department needs in order to responsibly leverage public dollars.



RESTORING THE POUDBRE RIVER

The Poudre River Restoration and Resiliency Project at River Bluffs Open Space wrapped up this quarter. The project restored an approximately 3/4-mile stretch of previously channelized, non-functioning river by re-connecting it to the floodplain, adding sinuosity, installing in-stream woody structures, creating wetlands and planting native vegetation. These changes will create a more resilient, naturally functioning system that provides improved habitat (including new side channels as shown in the photo) and flood protection. Funding for the project came from three separate grants with a nominal contribution from Larimer County Natural Resources. To watch videos created throughout the project visit:

<https://www.larimer.org/naturalresources/parks/river-bluffs>

HORSETOOTH ROCK TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS

This summer, trail management staff completed major reconstruction of the Horsetooth Rock Trail, the most visited trail in Horsetooth Mountain Open Space. By rerouting sections of trail, improving drainage features, better defining the trail corridor and installing steps on steep sections of the trail, the goal of improving the sustainability and safety of this popular trail was met.



Fun Fact

Larimer County Natural Resources has built and maintains 98 miles of trails!

98



LAND STEWARDSHIP

The weed control enterprise program staff have been very busy this year treating noxious weeds and maintaining various streamside restoration projects throughout Larimer County. The scale at which this program operates allows the department to influence and encourage best practices for vegetation management to landowners county-wide. In 2019, the enterprise program added projects with the Boxelder Stormwater Authority, City of Loveland, Estes Valley Watershed Coalition and the Natural Resource Conservation Service. In addition, the U.S. Forest Service signed a new agreement this year allocating \$122,000 for our staff to perform weed management on the Canyon Lakes District of the Roosevelt National Forest.

SHOW US YOUR MUSSELS

Aquatic Nuisance Species vessel inspections are tracking at similar levels to previous years and to date in 2019 our inspectors have intercepted three infested boats, two at Horsetooth Reservoir and one at Carter Lake. The vessel inspection program is a great funding partnership consisting of \$300,000 from Colorado Parks and Wildlife and \$60,000 from Northern Water to pay for field inspectors and supplies. The program supervisor and administrative costs are covered by reservoir park user fee revenue. Next year we will be installing new inspection stations in five locations thanks to \$200,000 in funding from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to match LCDNR's \$50,000. These semi-permanent buildings will provide improved working space for our ANS inspectors.



Did You Know?

Zebra mussels attach to shells of native mussels, smothering them.



CONNECTING WITH VISITORS

A goal this summer was to provide a campground program at Horsetooth Reservoir, Hermit Park Open Space and in the Carter Lake District every weekend. The goal was met excluding, weather cancellations, with 40 programs offered and an average attendance of 25 people at each.

Trailhead tables were a new and great tool to reach out to the community already visiting our parks and open spaces. We hosted 12 educational trailhead tables during the summer, directly interacting with over 900 people to provide timely information on wildlife, trail safety, weed prevention and management, and the Horsetooth Trail reconstruction. Looking to 2020, we hope to continue to expand the number and breadth of staffed tables with messaging focused on the stewardship of our natural resources.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Larimer County Natural Resources Department has five primary revenue sources including 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 the January 1st through June 30th revenue summaries, annual and daily permit sales, and camping reservation nights compared to the same period the

previous year. The overall number of permits sold and number of camping nights declined from 2018 to 2019 during this time period, primarily due to a cool, wet spring and an initial drop in visitation, which is not atypical following a fee rate increase. Despite lower permit sales, overall user fee revenues increased as a result of the fee rate increases instituted in 2019.

Year to Date Revenue (through June 30th)

	2018	2019	% Change
Lottery	\$354,815	\$456,272	+29%
Open Space Sales Tax	\$1,536,473	\$2,522,844	+64%
Open Space Generated User Fees*	\$427,188	\$519,877	+22%
Reservoir Park Generated User Fees*	\$1,874,206	\$2,126,029	+13%
Weed District Property Tax	\$604,250	\$614,143	+2%

*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)

	2018	2019	% Change
Open Spaces			
Annual Permits	500	601	+20%
Daily Permits	29,853	25,529	-14%
Reservoir Park			
Annual Permits	5,314	5,184	-2%
Daily Permits	58,845	49,459	-16%

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

	2018	2019	% Change
Open Spaces	2,838	2,444	-14%
Park Reservoirs	19,243	17,994	-6%



Larimer County Department of Natural Resources
 1800 S. County Road 31
 Loveland, CO 80537
 (970) 619-4570 larimer.org/naturalresources

