



Department of Natural Resources

ANNUAL REPORT | 2021



Welcome

A Note from the Director



Photo: Brendan Bombaci

Three words – Invest, Adapt, Connect - epitomize how Larimer County Department of Natural Resources (LCDNR) focused its efforts in 2021. The team adapted to pandemic challenges and the impact of a historic wildfire with great fortitude and commitment. We worked together to build greater access to the outdoors, provided efficient services to meet community members where they are, and invested in conserving additional land, restoring wildlife habitat, and partnering on recovery efforts for the Cameron Peak fire. We invested back into reservoir parks and open spaces through infrastructure, including a new campground at Carter Lake and upgraded cabins at Horsetooth Reservoir. More people than ever before interacted directly with the Department through a new engagement platform. I am reminded each day that this collective work is an important bridge to bringing you closer to valued natural resources. Thank you for your support and continued engagement.

Daylan Figgs, Director

Our Mission

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.



Photo: Jeanie Sumrall-Ajero

Advisory Boards

Land Stewardship Advisory Board

Tasha Carr (Chair)
Ronald Harris (Vice Chair)
Brian Kraft
Kraig Peel
Ed Redente
Joshua Wenz

Open Lands Advisory Board

Gale Bernhardt
Rick Brent
Jason Brothers
K-Lynn Cameron (Vice Chair)
Mark DeGregorio
Bob Hewson
Peter Kelly
Dave Marvin (Chair)
Tom Shoemaker
Linda Stanley
Sherri Valentine
Steve VanderMeer
Nancy Wallace

Parks Advisory Board

Pete Blume
Spencer Clark
Robert Harris
Kristina Kachur
Kathy Maher
Scott Murray
Mandy Peters
Bill Prater
Ruthie Rollins (Vice Chair)
Deborah Shulman (Chair)
Jill Wuertz
Steve Ambrose

Larimer County Officials:

Board of County Commissioners

John Kefalas, Jody Shaddock-McNally,
Kristin Stephens

County Manager: Linda Hoffmann

Community Planning, Infrastructure
and Resources Director: Laurie Kadrich



Cover Photo:
Brendan Bombaci

Highlights from 2021

Investing Back



Aerial view of Sky View Campground during construction.

Proactive infrastructure improvements, conservation efforts, and balancing financial resources to meet growth and demand were significant efforts in 2021. When visitors pay a fee to visit a Larimer County park or open space, the money collected goes to support management of and future improvements on the properties. Each of these following projects provide direct benefit to the community.

Construction of Sky View Campground was completed at Carter Lake. In partnership with Great Outdoors Colorado, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, and Friends of Larimer County, this campground, a first of its kind, caters to large groups, RVs, and tent campers alike.

Five camper cabins at Horsetooth Reservoir were also built from the ground up, to a new 50-year life standard.



Five new camper cabins were built at Horsetooth Reservoir in 2021.



The 272-acre “Rockin’ K Diamond” Ranch.

Modern accommodations and other amenities now await visitors. In addition, construction of five new Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) inspection stations were completed. The new ANS structures add necessary protection out of the elements for staff and inspection efficiency for visitors, both welcomed improvements.

Land conservation and acquisition efforts also gained momentum in 2021. LCDNR partnered with Colorado Open Lands to conserve the 73-acre Dixon Station property, north of Wellington. In addition, the Department contributed funding to support the City of Loveland’s purchase of the 245-acre Dakota Ridge property.

Finally, the Department closed the year by conserving the 272-acre Rockin’ K Diamond Ranch via conservation easement in southern Larimer County. The acquisition was made possible due to a full donation from local landowners John and Kim Lankford Banker – a most generous gift that ensures the ranch will be protected into perpetuity.

Photo: Larimer County Natural Resources

Photo: John Banker

Photos: Larimer County

Connecting with Community

Following a year of isolation due to the pandemic, engagement with the community in the form of outreach, education, and public messaging took on new emphasis in 2021.

Meeting community members “where they are” expanded opportunities for all voices to have input and break barriers to access. In partnership with six library systems across Larimer County and the Board of County Commissioners, the Discover Pack was created and includes activities, information, and a free pass to LCDNR fee-based parks and open spaces. Within the first four months of its launch, over 250 packs were “checked out” by community members.



LCDNR also unveiled a virtual engagement platform for the community to give feedback on topics of interest from the comfort of their home. The virtual platform bolstered the public process to offer the community a chance to have input on management decisions, while offering the Department a timely link to the desires of the community.

Over 10,000 unique users accessed the platform providing valuable input ranging from mixed recreation use at Horsetooth Reservoir, fee adjustments, and the management plan update for Horsetooth Mountain Open Space.

Finally, with a growing number of visitors from Colorado and beyond accessing the outdoors, clear guidance about how to be a better steward of the land, water, and personal safety was paramount. In response, LCDNR developed a catalog of newly enhanced stewardship messaging to support outreach efforts at trailheads, boat ramps, and social media feeds.

Adapting Towards Greater Stability

The natural world is in a constant state of change, offering us a model on how to face adversity and adapt towards greater stability. This year, adaptation took on many forms given high visitation and associated impacts, the prolonged pandemic, and other challenges.

In 2021, LCDNR proactively adapted to address constraints experienced by growing visitation at county-managed reservoir parks and open spaces. Current annual visitation estimates are approximately 1.5 million people visit Horsetooth Reservoir and Carter Lake combined, while over 500,000 people visit Larimer County open spaces.

LCDNR staff developed suggested one-way loop trail routes at Horsetooth Mountain and Devil’s Backbone open spaces. Offering the new suggested routes resulted in spreading visitors out, decreasing out/back and trail widening, and improved the visitor experience. Approximately 84% of surveyed visitors reported high satisfaction with the routes.

A long-time problem area at Horsetooth Reservoir was

addressed with construction of steps to create a safe, defined trail connection from Upper Sunrise parking area to the Foothills Trail. This trail adaptation provides a safer, more secure route to the shoreline for visitors.

As part of adaptive management planning, LCDNR launched a public process to update the Horsetooth Mountain Open Space management plan. Community and stakeholder feedback were integral to envisioning sustainable resource and visitor experience outcomes at this heavily visited open space.



Photo: Brendan Bombaci



2021 at a Glance

1 Million
(approximate)

Visitors at Horsetooth Reservoir.



68,679

Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) inspections at Horsetooth Reservoir & Carter Lake



20

Mussel-infected boats intercepted – a new record



590

Acres of land conserved – totaling 54,163 acres conserved in Larimer County



\$1,411,262

Grants, donations, and partnerships



2021

2021 Starburst Award from the Colorado Lottery for land conservation work in Laramie Foothills

10,039

Unique users reached via a new community engagement platform



251

Discover Packs checked out (August - December)

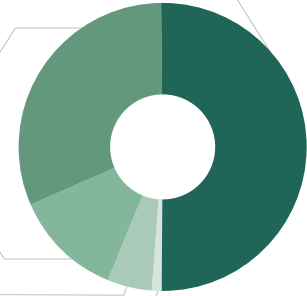


Financial Summary

Larimer County Natural Resources revenues are realized from several sources and totaled \$23,250,750 in 2021. Expenses for 2021 were \$15,659,661. Future land acquisition and capital improvement projects are funded through the difference between annual revenue and expenses.

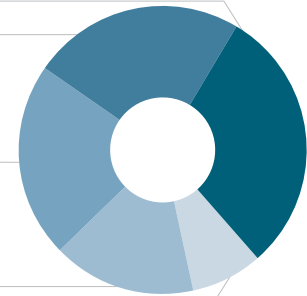
2021 Revenue \$23,250,750

Specific Designated Taxes	50%
User Fees & Service Charges	31%
Intergovernment	12%
Miscellaneous Revenue	5%
General Fund	1%



2021 Expenses \$15,659,661

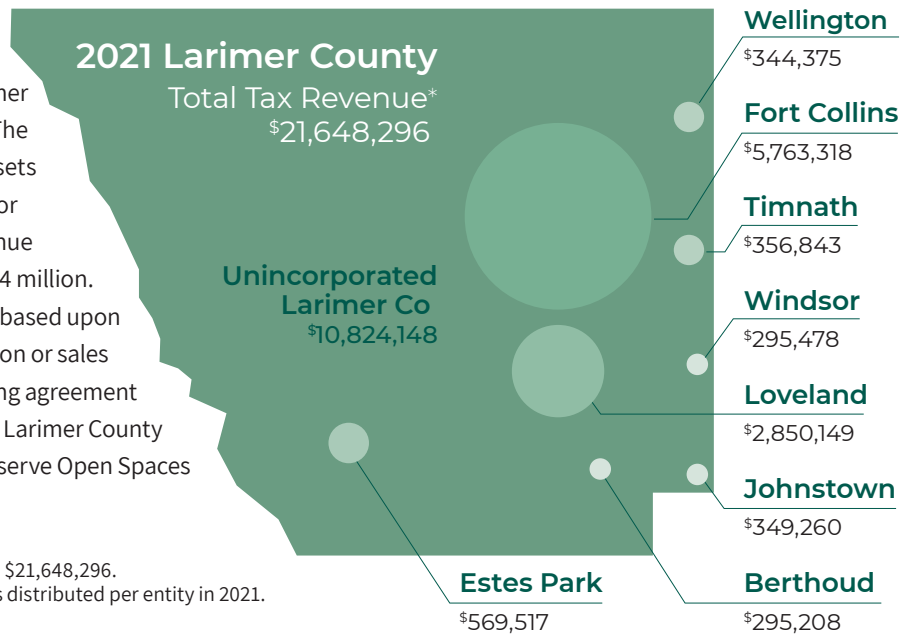
Reservoir Parks Operations	30%
Reservoir Parks Capital Projects	24%
Open Space Maintenance	22%
Open Space Acquisition / Development ...	16%
Weed District / Enterprise	8%
Forestry	0%



*These figures are not audited. Audit will be completed in mid-2022. Figures in this chart have been rounded where appropriate.

Help Preserve Open Spaces Tax Revenues*

Revenue from the 1/4-cent Help Preserve Open Spaces sales and use tax is shared among Larimer County and eight municipalities. The tax was extended in 2014 and sunsets in 2043. It is not imposed on food or prescription drugs. The total revenue collected to date is more than \$284 million. Distributions to municipalities are based upon the highest yield of either population or sales tax generation. This revenue sharing agreement ensures that residents throughout Larimer County receive benefits from the Help Preserve Open Spaces sales and use tax.



*Total tax revenue collected in 2021 was \$21,648,296. This graphic illustrates how the tax was distributed per entity in 2021.