

2011 Annual Report

Natural Resources

Visitor Services / Open Lands / Weed Management & Forestry

Excellence in conservation and recreation since 1954



A message from the Director

t's in Your Backyard!

Dear Larimer County visitors and citizens,
Can you believe how many outdoor opportunities are available to us just a few minutes away from where we live in Larimer County? Many of us have moved to Northern Colorado for that reason, and to enjoy the mountains and live in thriving cities and towns where we can enjoy the outdoors with our family and friends.

I want to encourage you to "Discover Your Backyard Getaway"! Whether it's taking your family to the new swim beach at Horsetooth Reservoir on a warm summer day, bike riding on the Blue Sky Trail between Fort Collins and Loveland, or hiking the Kruger Rock Trail at Hermit Park Open Space overlooking

the magnificent Estes Valley, Larimer County has that outdoor experience meant for you.

A special thank you to our professional staff and volunteers who continue to ensure your outdoor experience is safe and enjoyable, to your citizen boards that make sure you have a voice and a choice, and to your elected Board of County Commissioners who continue to support your parks, open spaces, and land stewardship programs.

Get away! Discover your backyard!

Gary K. Buffington
Director, Dept. of Natural Resources



© Julie Patton

Special Thanks to our Citizen Advisory Board Members



© Charlie Johnson

Parks Advisory Board

Back, left to right: Russ Fruits, Rob Harris, Glen Doughty, Linda Knowlton, Gary Buffington*, Forrest Orswell, Barry Lewis, Frank Cada, Ron Kainer. Front, left to right: Mark Caughlan*, Dan Rieves*, Chris Fleming*, Frank Gillespie, Charlie Johnson*. Not pictured: Mark DeGregorio. * = Staff



© Charlie Johnson

Open Lands Advisory Board

Back, left to right: John Ericson, Suzan Fritchel, Peter Kast (chair), Kerri Rollins*, Gary Buffington*, Zac Wiebe*, Travis Rollins*. Front, left to right: Lori Smith*, Nancy Wallace, Jeff Hindman, Trudy Haines, Mary Banken, Patricia Brennan, Charlie Johnson*. Not pictured: Steve Vessey, Don Griffith, Gerry Horak, Hugh McKean. * = Staff



© Tim D'Amato

Land Stewardship Advisory Board

Back, left to right: Ken Mathias, Bob Zimdahl, Matt Parker. Front, left to right: Chuck Miller, Ernie Marx, Carmen Weston, Duane Pond

“As the Open Lands Program continues to mature, the focus is moving from acquisition to utilization. We, as a board, are moving to get more of the public out in our various properties. A proposed equestrian campground at Hermit Park, a “Wild Zone” kid’s natural play area at River Bluffs, and the “Plug in to Nature” study will help facilitate this goal.” Peter Kast, Open Lands Advisory Board

Larimer County government officials

2011-2012 Board of County Commissioners:
Tom Donnelly, Lew Gaiter III, Steve Johnson

County Manager: Frank Lancaster

Public Works Director: Marc Engemoen

NIMBY—Now In My Back Yard!

Conservation does not mean "hands off" at Sylvan Dale Guest Ranch. Located just west of Loveland, Sylvan Dale is right in our backyard. Privately owned by the Jessup family since 1946, much of this 3,200-acre working ranch is forever conserved using public open space tax dollars, state conservation tax credits, lottery dollars via Great Outdoors Colorado, and generous landowner donations. And, though still private, the public reaps many benefits from this land, including but not limited to:

- Wildlife habitat, including lambing grounds for bighorn sheep
- Wildlife research projects, ranging from work by local middle school kids mentored by local professionals, to student and faculty research projects from CSU, UNC, and CU-Boulder
- Conservation beef, where the community can support conservation through the purchase of locally raised beef
- Research on run-off water quality, with state and federal agencies partnering with local nonprofits, the City of Loveland, and Sylvan Dale Ranch to conduct a pilot program using natural vegetation to buffer agricultural run-off
- The permanent viewshed of the natural foothills at the mouth of the Big Thompson Canyon, the "hinge-point" of North America

"While we certainly enjoy the many recreational benefits of our public lands, it is also nice to appreciate what privately conserved lands can offer."



Siblings, David and Susan Jessup, oversee all ranch activities at Sylvan Dale. © Charlie Johnson



© Gregory Mayse



© Harry Strbarsky

“ *The Sylvan Dale Ranch is a working family ranch which the Jessup family has proudly operated for generations. It is part of Larimer County's vital agricultural heritage and provides excellent wildlife habitat. Here in Larimer County, we will always work hard to help farmers and ranchers find ways to pass on their traditions to future generations.* **”**

*Tom Donnelly,
County Commissioner, District 3*

What Happened in Your Backyard?

The Natural Resources Department hosted many special events on Larimer County's parks and open spaces. Citizens could participate in a trail marathon, mountain bike race, sailing regatta, or a fishing tournament just minutes from home!



© Harry Strbarsky



© Walt Hubis



© Christa Ahrens



The Department completed an analysis of the connections of youth and families to the outdoors. This pilot study, "Plug in to Nature," was funded by Great Outdoors Colorado. The results will influence changes to outreach programming, land acquisition, and management to reduce the barriers families face to getting outside.



© Sue Burke

Access to Larimer County's parks and open spaces was made easier with a new recreation map. This free map, designed with input from recreation user groups, is available year-round at county trail-heads, gatehouses, and select outdoor retailers.



© Charlie Johnson

The new Yoga on the Swim Beach classes at the South Bay swim beach at Horsetooth Reservoir were the perfect setting to build inner strength and unwind. Join us this summer!



© Jeffrey Boring

In the fall, Larimer County partnered with The Nature Conservancy and other agencies to bring fire back to Horsetooth Mountain Open Space where it had been suppressed for decades. Prescribed fire improves forest health by maintaining an open forest canopy and increasing light and nutrient availability.



© Steve Sailer

In the second year of the Red Mountain Open Space hunting program, 384 applicants applied for nine special access hunting permits.



© Harry Strbarsky

The annual C.A.S.T. event (Catch A Special Thrill), hosted by the Larimer County Natural Resources Department and the Bureau of Reclamation at Horsetooth Reservoir, allows physically challenged kids to go out on the water for a day of fun.

/// Hiking in the parks, boating on the reservoirs and fishing with the kids are just a few of the ways we took advantage of some of the great resources in our own backyard. ///

*Lew Gaiter III,
County Commissioner, District 1*

Open Space Tax Revenues Benefit All of Larimer County

The 1/4-cent *Help Preserve Open Spaces* (HPOS) sales and use tax revenue is shared with the County's eight municipalities. The tax continues through 2018, and is not imposed on food or prescription drugs. The total revenue collected to date is over \$114 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 the county receive benefits from the Open Space sales tax.

Annual Revenue Receipt of Open Space Tax Dollars*

	Larimer CO	Berthoud	Estes Park	Fort Collins	Johnstown	Loveland	Timnath	Wellington	Windsor
1996	2,259,975	71,154	161,905	2,107,473	–	847,210	4,221	29,848	–
1997	2,485,421	80,969	178,198	2,319,562	–	932,139	4,646	32,520	–
1998	2,707,553	87,574	193,453	2,487,606	–	1,003,872	5,025	40,557	–
1999	3,067,810	101,539	224,779	2,850,066	–	1,146,823	5,732	47,494	–
2000	3,294,869	110,862	222,608	3,109,001	–	1,234,060	5,742	53,444	–
2001	3,565,146	122,889	229,886	3,323,372	–	1,321,205	5,887	64,589	–
2002	3,527,084	124,139	218,802	3,235,748	–	1,304,378	5,599	67,642	–
2003	3,532,580	123,913	218,445	3,205,119	–	1,314,655	7,083	66,730	–
2004	3,750,211	126,810	234,908	3,374,671	9,457	1,405,098	11,480	75,185	17,416
2005	3,811,306	127,480	239,502	3,417,517	8,932	1,432,898	11,684	79,698	20,115
2006	4,033,795	136,930	250,110	3,599,786	11,965	1,506,477	13,196	77,782	13,379
2007	4,152,187	129,513	252,524	3,529,570	34,285	1,554,153	10,563	122,196	54,760
2008	3,956,426	120,359	240,167	3,189,107	38,772	1,470,884	9,121	122,125	55,744
2009	3,614,183	109,178	224,318	2,824,574	45,847	1,410,859	7,103	114,630	49,847
2010	3,920,058	118,288	244,384	3,058,106	55,501	1,558,011	6,746	123,466	59,200
2011	3,734,616	109,266	240,910	2,929,532	56,894	1,445,545	43,851	117,820	64,807
Total	55,413,221	1,800,864	3,574,898	48,560,809	261,653	20,888,266	157,680	1,235,726	335,267

* These figures are unaudited. Audit to be completed in mid 2012. Figures in this chart have been rounded when appropriate.

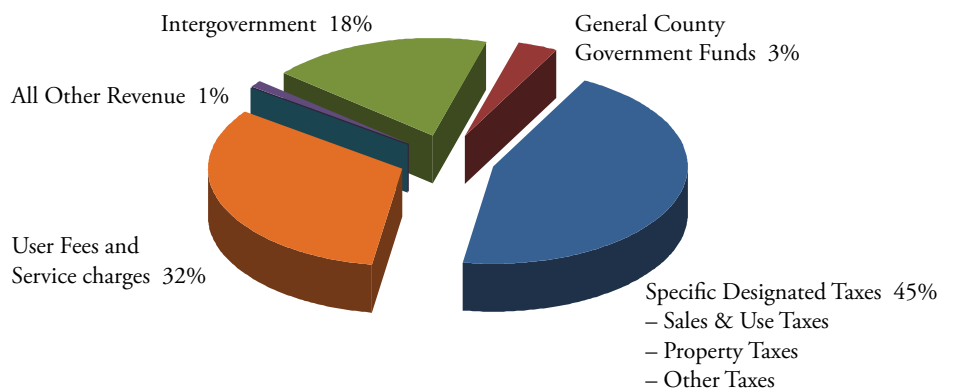
Natural Resources Department Summary of Finances

The Larimer County Department of Natural Resources includes the Parks Program, the Open Lands Program, and the Weed & Forestry Program.

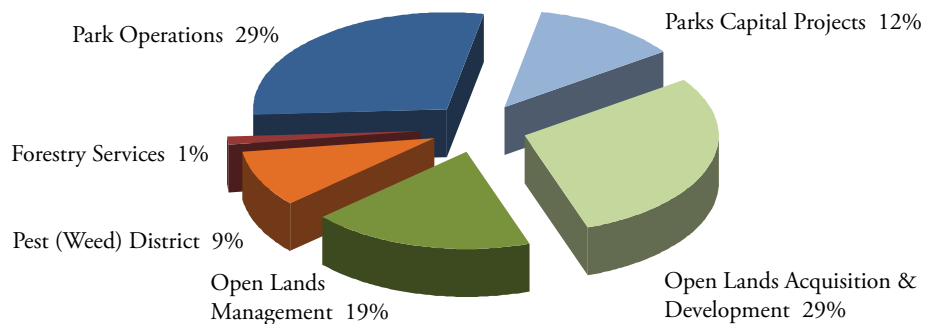
Revenues are realized from a number of sources and totaled \$10.3 million in 2011. Expenses for 2011 were \$8.4 million including a number of one-time capital development projects for both Parks and Open Lands.

Major capital projects in 2011 included a partnership acquisition of Heron Lakes Open Space. Work has continued for developments at Hermit Park Open Space, Pleasant Valley Trail, Poudre River Trail, Eagle Camper Services Building, and Carter Lake Marina.

2011 Revenues



2011 Expenses



These figures are unaudited. Audit to be completed in mid 2012.

2011 Acquisitions and Improvements

Acquisitions

Heron Lakes Open Space Partnership—Phase I

Just west of the Town of Berthoud, this 43-acre acquisition will provide diverse outdoor recreational opportunities and help protect an osprey nest, a large heron rookery, and valuable wildlife habitat.

<i>Appraised Value:</i>	\$ 1,400,000
<i>Partners:</i>	
<i>Town of Berthoud:</i>	\$ 300,000
<i>City of Loveland:</i>	\$ 50,000
<i>Great Outdoors Colorado:</i>	\$ 950,000
<i>Larimer County Open Lands:</i>	\$ 100,000



Heron Lakes © Charlie Johnson

Sylvan Dale Ranch Cedar Creek CE

This 560-acre donation continues a legacy of conservation and stewardship on Sylvan Dale Ranch.

<i>Appraised Value</i>	\$ 450,000
<i>Landowner donation:</i>	\$ 450,000
<i>Larimer County Open Lands:</i>	\$ 0



Sylvan Dale Ranch Conservation Easement © Zac Wiebe

Improvements

Carter Lake County Park

Visitor Services Building at Eagle Campground

<i>2011 Project Cost:</i>	\$ 476,500
<i>Partners:</i>	
<i>Bureau of Reclamation:</i>	\$ 127,700
<i>Great Outdoors Colorado:</i>	\$ 185,000
<i>Conservation Trust Fund/Lottery:</i>	\$ 163,800
<i>Larimer County Dept. of Natural Resources:</i>	\$ 0



Carter Lake construction © Zac Wiebe

Hermit Park Open Space

Hermit's Hollow Campground Redevelopment

This project will add 13 new campsites, improve 29 others, complete major road and drainage repairs, and add four vault toilets. Scheduled completion is Spring, 2012. Financials to be reported in 2012.



Hermit Park construction © Steve McCorkel

