



COLORADO NATURAL AREAS COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday December 7, 2022
Colorado Parks & Wildlife
Denver Office, Bighorn Room

CNAC Attendees: Lynn Riedel (Chair), Jessica Pierce, Denise Culver, Courtney Krause, Taishya Adams (CPW Commissioner), Josie Heath (SLB Commissioner)

CPW Staff: Brian Dreher (Terrestrial Section Supervisor), David Klute (SCON supervisor), Raquel Wertsbaugh (Program Coordinator)

Other: Savanna Smith (CNHP Botanist), Lindsey Brandt (SLB Stewardship Trust Manager)

Council Chair Lynn Riedel called meeting to order at 9:37 am

Presentations from Commissions and Appointees

Lynn Riedel: Highlighted the importance of the upcoming Natural Area designation and amendments with the City Boulder OSMP. Thanked staff for September council and volunteer gathering at Castlewood Canyon State Park/ Natural Area.

Jessica Pierce: Highlighted recent research into urban ecology. Discussed how we can rethink the strict binaries between urban/natural, wild/domestic, invasive/native and better cooperate with nature in cities.

Commissioner Josie Heath: SLB recently held a workshop evaluating future opportunities for housing and potential impact on state land given the passing of the recent ballot measure on affordable housing. SLB owns a property in Capital Square that was developed for a low-income housing project, highlighting SLB's efforts to diversify its resource base. The SLB board is tasked with making a decision regarding transferring lands to the military to support their operations. The Department of Defense (DOD)'s Readiness and Environmental Protections Integration Program (REPI) is a federal funding mechanism to manage potential encroachment that can limit or restrict military training, testing, and operations at military installations. The REPI program protects these military missions by helping remove or avoid land-use conflicts near installations. If this REPI project moves forward in January, several large properties would be taken out of the Stewardship Trust, allowing space for the inclusion of new Stewardship Trust properties. SLB recently exchanged Bald Mountain with Boulder County. Highlighted the September CNAP volunteer event at Castlewood Canyon and commended the knowledge of CNAP volunteers.

Commissioner Taishya Adams: Discussed the resignation and investigation of former director Dan Prenzlou and the current opening for a new CPW director. CPW has an opportunity to heal relationships and co-create with diverse partners. Upcoming DNR DEI assessment will evaluate hiring, recruitment, and promotion opportunities. Recently visited an Outdoor Wilderness lab in Mesa County that teaches students about ecology and field research. CNAP could use outreach to students and educators using

lesson plans. CPW will be reviewing the State Parks portfolio in upcoming months; this is another opportunity to lift up the importance of Natural Areas on State Parks. Later discussion on the importance of private lands for conservation, brought up the idea of toolkits and resources for new landowners to help manage natural spaces.

Denise Culver: Highlighted the book “Ecosystems as a Model for Restoring Our Economies” by John Giordanengo. Regarding private landowner outreach, highlighted the existing role of the CSU Extension in every county.

Courtney Krause: Introduced herself and gave a brief background.

Lindsey Brandt: Regarding the potential SLB and DOD REPI project, clarified that the objective of the DOD is to have a minimum of use on the property, and conservation values would likely be maintained. Aiken Canyon is a Natural Area considered for transfer, though the current 100-year lease with TNC would remain.

CPW Updates (SCON Supervisor David Klute)

- Highlighted the current open application window for the next CPW director.
- CPW is beginning their budget planning cycle, including requests for new full time staff- new program assistant for SCON and potential data manager position. Additional operating budget to replace grant money is being considered for CNAP.
- CPW is evaluating Species Conservation Trust fund applications and recommending a proposal by CNAP to fund rare plant conservation on CPW lands.
- Recovering America’s Wildlife Act (RAWA) - Congress recently came up with a funding mechanism, leading to optimism for its passage.
- CPW’s wolf restoration and management plan will be shared with the public on Friday, December 8th with the goal of completion by May 2023.
- Lesser prairie chicken will be listed under ESA as threatened in Colorado- effective January 24th.
- CPW is working on developing the statewide habitat & connectivity plan, which will serve as a roadmap to guide CPW’s work. CPW recently added a habitat unit and will be hiring additional field biologists.

Matters from Staff

Staff and Program Updates:

- CNAP’s seasonal outreach and monitoring technician, Lucy Haggard, finished her term at the end of October. CNAP will hire a new person to serve as a field technician in early 2023.
- Staff shared updates on the completion of the 2022 field season, ongoing outreach and management at the Pagosa Skyrocket Natural Area, and the status of the volunteer program.
- Staff serve ongoing roles on technical teams with U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to advise in recovery and potential delisting.
- Staff held many discussions with CNHP staff regarding ongoing contracts, including updates to CNHP’s online rare plant guide, predicted climate models for selected rare plant species, and a potential project to create a rare plant info hub.

Matters from Council

- September 2022 minutes approval: Motion to approve by Commissioner Josie Heath, Jessica Pierce seconds. All in favor.

- CNAC discussed the calendar for 2023 meeting dates. 2023 meeting dates will be: March 30, June 6, September 28, December 5

Recommendation of White Rocks, Colorado Tallgrass Prairie, and Coal Creek Tallgrass Prairie Articles of Designation to the Parks & Wildlife Commission

- Staff discussed previous steps taken to draft articles of designation and upcoming steps to move forward with one new designation and two new amendments. Board of County Commissions will be notified and have the option of a public hearing. City of Boulder OSMP Board of Trustees will hear the issue in March. Tentatively planning to present the AODs to the Parks & Wildlife Commission for approval in spring/early summer.
- Motion to recommend the amended AODs for White Rocks and Colorado Tallgrass Prairie Natural Areas and the AOD for Coal Creek Tallgrass Prairie Natural Area to the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission for their approval by Commissioner Taishya Adams, seconded by Jessica Pierce. All in favor. Lynn Riedel abstained from the vote due to her position with City of Boulder OSMP.

Overview and Discussion of CNAP's Current Natural Areas System Portfolio

- Staff presented an overview of the existing Natural Areas System and the strategic planning that has gone into its development from 2015 to the present.
- Staff and council discussed objectives within CNAP's current strategic plan that have not yet been addressed, including goals related to evaluating and building climate resiliency into the Natural Areas System.
 - Natural Areas serve as an example of high quality intact sites that can serve as a genetic resource or research area.
 - Climate resiliency should be integrated into existing ranking system and evaluated for any future designations. The role of landscape context should play a large role in evaluating a site's importance.
 - The Natural Areas Program has a unique role due its embedded role working directly with various partner organizations. CNAP could prop up climate resiliency efforts by other organizations, share information, and facilitate adaptation strategies.
- Council discussed the role of public outreach and private landowners in designating and protecting Natural Areas.
 - Private landowners can play a role in advocating for Natural Areas and designations serve as an acknowledgement of their stewardship.
 - Staff and council discussed the unique strengths of the Natural Areas Program and the importance of communicating this to the public and stakeholders. Concise "taglines" or an "elevator pitch" could be a useful tool in articulating this.

Meeting Adjourned: Motion to adjourn by Jessica Pierce, second by Commissioner Taishya Adams, all in favor. Meeting adjourned at 2:08 pm.

Respectfully submitted:

Raquel Wertsbaugh
Raquel Wertsbaugh, Colorado Natural Areas Program Coordinator

Approved:

Lynn Riedel 3/30/23
Lynn Riedel, Colorado Natural Areas Council Chair