



## COLORADO NATURAL AREAS COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday September 21, 2022  
Castlewood Canyon State Park

**CNAC Attendees:** Lynn Riedel (Chair), Phyllis Pineda Bovin (Vice Chair), Jessica Pierce, Denise Culver, Taishya Adams (CPW Commissioner), Josie Heath (SLB Commissioner)

**CPW Staff:** David Klute (SCON supervisor), Raquel Wertsbaugh (Program Coordinator), Lucy Haggard (CNAP Outreach and Stewardship Specialist)

**Other:** Savanna Smith (CNHP Botanist)

### **Meeting called to order at 9:18 am**

**Introductions:** Introduction from Brent Lounsbury, Castlewood Canyon State Park Manager, welcomed CNAC to the Park, gave a brief Castlewood Canyon background, and an overview of the new Keep Colorado Wild pass.

### **Presentations from Commissions and Appointees**

**Commissioner Josie Heath:** State Land Board (SLB) commission recently met in Colorado Springs and toured several SLB properties that are of interest to the military to protect from development in order to preserve needed airspace for training, etc. SLB-owned Bohart Ranch is located near the “bullseye” air strip and is being proposed for disposal using REPE funding through a partnership with The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Trust for Public Lands, and military. If the property is disposed of, a significant amount of acreage would come out of the Stewardship Trust. CNAC/CNAP could potentially help suggest replacement properties for Stewardship Trust. Deb Froeb with TNC was recently appointed as a new SLB commissioner. SLB recently acquired Bear Creek Ranch in Huerfano County.

**Commissioner Taishya Adams:** Highlighted the most recent Parks and Wildlife Commission (PWC) meeting wolf update including mapping effort. The mapping effort combined modeled wolf habitat and modeled conflict risk to help inform management considerations and where CPW may initially release wolves. Also highlighted the wolf technical working group final summary report and stakeholder advisory group outcomes. Shared 2023 calendar so that CNAP may proactively align a field tour with a future PWC meeting.

**Phyllis Pineda Bovin:** Highlighted bi-partisan Infrastructure bill and associated National Park Service goals. Phyllis is tasked with helping with three of the nine goals including seed banking, invasive species, and abandoned mine lands. Key takeaways include: agencies need to talk to each other, and any project proposals should take place on a large ecological scale, be restorative, and benefit underserved communities.

**Lynn Riedel:** Highlighted recent Colorado Rare Plant Symposium and Colorado Native Plant Society (CoNPS) annual conference. CNAP staff gave a beneficial presentation at the Rare Plant Symposium. Lynn led multiple field trips for the CoNPS conference at both White Rocks State Natural Area and Coal Creek Tallgrass Prairie Registered Natural Area.

**Jessica Pierce:** No report

**Denise Culver:** Been keeping tabs on Northern Integrated Supply Project (NISP), which includes building new reservoirs, diverting water from the Poudre River, and a potential new dam in Larimer County. Project still moving forward at this time.

#### **CPW Updates (SCON Supervisor David Klute):**

- Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA) legislation is still looking optimistic and hopeful it will go to the Senate floor before the midterms. Questions still remain on continuing resolution and pay-for (how will the bill be funded annually with no federal debt). Colorado was recently approved to receive an additional 5% of funding for Plants of Greatest Conservation Need, if the bill is passed. This would amount to about \$1.2 billion annually. Only 18 states initially qualified for additional plant funding. CPW has developed a RAWA taskforce and David has sent out a survey to CPW leadership and terrestrial section staff to gauge values as they relate to RAWA.
- The Colorado State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) will need to be revised by Sept. 30 2025. CPW plans to begin the revision process next July 2023, with a final draft planned for January 2025.
- CPW has a new habitat unit, nested within the Terrestrial Section. The habitat unit will be led by Casey Cooley and will soon be hiring four field habitat biologists. New habitat unit will be tasked with developing a statewide habitat and connectivity plan.
- Recent state legislation passed for Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to complete a CO pollinator health study. A request for proposals for a contractor to conduct the study is underway. There is opportunity to align the results of the study with the invertebrate portion of the SWAP.
- CPW wolf reintroduction efforts continue. Currently evaluating the initial release site, which will have a 60 mile buffer from the state line due to high likelihood of dispersal. May release on private lands or state lands. Working with the US Fish & Wildlife Service to establish a 10j rule. Concern with potential overlap with Mexican gray wolves. CPW currently reviewing restoration and management plan. Next steps include Jan/Feb 2023 PWC meetings for public comment, with a May 2023 plan completion date.

#### **Matters from Staff**

##### **Staff and Program Updates:**

- Field season and volunteer program updates (Savanna Smith):
  - Sixteen State Natural Areas were monitored by staff since the June CNAC meeting. Staff conducted quantitative rare plant monitoring at Pagosa Skyrocket State Natural Area, which was completed with the help of CNHP staff and interns. CNAP also monitored Parachute penstemon at Logan Wash Mine State Natural Area with CNHP and USFWS staff. Staff joined contractor Mark Beardsley to monitor the budding monkeyflower populations at Staunton State Natural Area in July. Savanna joined BLM staff to quantitatively monitor clay-loving wild buckwheat at Wacker Ranch and Fairview State Natural Areas in early September.
  - Volunteer program updates: Savanna highlighted staff monitoring visits with several volunteer stewards this season. The program is seeing several volunteer retirements;

however, there are still more new volunteer applications than openings. Staff will be evaluating applicants, conducting interviews, and making new site placements with volunteers this fall/winter. Staff have been working on several new volunteer steward resources including a position description, updating our info in CPW Connect, creating CPW Connect user guides specifically for CNAP volunteers, and Avenza mapping tutorials.

- Outreach updates (Lucy Haggard):
  - CNAP staff worked on multiple submissions for the latest Colorado Native Plant Society publication, *Aquilegia*, including a highlight on the budding monkeyflower and a short article on Recovering America's Wildlife Act. Staff also highlighted CNAP's work with Pagosa skyrocket and Parachute penstemon in a CPW branch update. Staff is currently working with the CPW social media coordinator to increase CNAP-related posts on CPW's social media platforms.
  - Lucy gave a preliminary overview presentation on the CNAP oral history project in the works this season. The oral history project includes interviews (video and/or audio) with past and current staff, Council members, volunteers, and partners. The purpose is to achieve a qualitative understanding of CNAP's history and legacy, to complement and add to existing program history that we currently have in digital and paper files. The oral history results help us better understand where our program has been and where we need to go, especially with potential influx of funding through RAWA and other initiatives.

#### **Matters from Council**

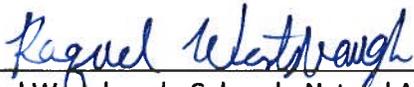
- June 2022 minutes approval: Motion to approve by Jessica Pierce, Denise Culver seconds. All in favor.
- December 2022 CNAC meeting: We will hold an in-person quarterly meeting at the CPW headquarters office on December 7<sup>th</sup>. A hybrid option will be available for those that need/want to meet remotely.

#### **45 Years of CNAP presentation & discussion**

- Raquel gave a presentation highlighting the past 45 years of CNAP including a timeline, correlation with trends from the preliminary oral history project, and how CNAP fits into the larger Colorado conservation community.
- The group discussed what CNAP's future could look like if RAWA would become a reality, what we can glean from CNAP's past to plan for our future, and how we can continue to best fulfill the program's mission. Discussion suggestions and ideas included:
  - Involvement by the CNAC to advocate for CNAP, the need for additional resources, and the need for additional visioning and planning opportunities (i.e. CNAC retreat)
  - Utilize potential future funding to help design our future by being proactive, not reactive
  - Think about our use of terminology and current portfolio (i.e. what does the term "natural" mean to most people? Are we missing opportunities in more urban areas?)
  - Continue to use triennial report as a benchmark and outreach tool

**Meeting Adjourned:** motion to adjourn by Denise Culver, second by Jessica Pierce, all in favor. Meeting adjourned at 11:52 am.

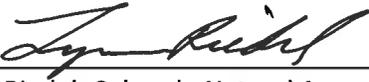
Respectfully submitted:



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Raquel Wertsbaugh, Colorado Natural Areas Program Coordinator

Approved:



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Lynn Riedel, Colorado Natural Areas Council Chair