



**COLORADO NATURAL AREAS COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES**

Thursday March 30, 2023
Denver CPW Office
6060 Broadway

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

CPW Staff: David Klute (SCON supervisor), Raquel Wertsbaugh (Program Coordinator), Victoria Oliu (CNAP Technician)

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

Council Chair Lynn Riedel called meeting to order at 9:35 am

Presentations from Commissions and Appointees

Commissioner Josie Heath: The SLB commission voted to remove Bohart Ranch and La Jara from the Stewardship Trust in anticipation of the upcoming disposal of these sites to conservation buyers. Several new properties were added to the Stewardship Trust to replace the lost acreage, including SLB land surrounding the Mini-Wheeler Natural Area. The Commission also discussed the Xcel Power Pathway Project, which is an ambitious project to install transmission lines connecting Eastern Colorado to the Front Range. Areas of the transmission line are proposed on SLB land. This would work towards goals to increase renewable energy development but careful site placement is needed to avoid impacts to species and habitats, especially Lesser Prairie Chickens.

Phyllis Pineda Bovin: The monarch butterfly is currently considered for listing under the Endangered Species Act, with a decision expected later this year.

Lindsey Brandt: Provided follow up on several of Commissioner Heath's points and notified the Council of fossil excavations at the Chalk Bluffs Natural Area.

Denise Culver: No report.

Jessica Pierce: No report.

Lynn Riedel: The City of Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks Board of Trustees unanimously approved the language in the draft AODs for Coal Creek Tallgrass Prairie, White Rocks, and Colorado Tallgrass Prairie. Boulder City Council will also have an item on an upcoming consent agenda regarding the pending new Natural Area and boundary expansions. Lynn will be presenting a poster on Boulder County Natural Areas at the City of Boulder OSMP public open house on April 23.

CPW Updates (SCON Supervisor David Klute)

- CPW is expecting a new director to start on May 12. The position is recommended to be filled by Jeff Davis, current director of conservation policy at the Washington State Department of Fish & Wildlife.
- A new budget was approved by CPW leadership that includes funding for several SCON-related items and three new full time staff within the Species Conservation Unit. More full time positions are expected in the coming years.
- The Recovering America's Wildlife Act was recently reintroduced into the U.S. Senate.
- CPW is planning for the revision of the State Wildlife Action Plan (expected in Oct. 2025).
- Several statewide plans are in the works including the Statewide Habitat and Connectivity Plan, Conservation, Recreation & Climate plan, Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. CPW will work to ensure alignment among the various plans' goals.
- There are several bills proposed in the current Colorado legislative session that have relevance to CPW, including three related to the wolf reintroduction.
- The DNR Native Pollinating Insect Study is underway and CNAP staff (Raquel) is working with the principal investigators by serving on the study team as a DNR/CPW representative. The study aims to better understand the status of pollinators in Colorado as well as opportunities for cooperative conservation efforts among state government agencies.

Matters from Staff

- Highlighted our new CNAP field technician, Victoria Oliu.
- Staff and volunteer steward 2022 monitoring reports were sent out to over 110 partners in January.
- CNAP recently onboarded five new volunteers, with most new applicants coming to us from the CPW volunteer platform CPW Connect.
- The 2023 CNAP newsletter will be distributed to the council, partners, volunteers, and CPW staff in the coming weeks.
- CNAP staff continue to work with the USFWS on technical teams for listed plant species including Dudley Bluffs bladderpod and North Park phacelia.
- Staff provided an update on the pending Coal Creek Tallgrass Prairie designation and White Rocks and Colorado Tallgrass Prairie amendments. The respective county commissioners have been notified and Jefferson County has requested a public hearing. CNAP plans to present the AODs to the CPW Commission for final approval at the June commission meeting.

Matters from Council

- December 2022 minutes approval: Motion to approve by Denise Culver, Jessica Pierce seconds. All in favor.
- The Council and CNAP staff discussed upcoming CNAC vacancies after the June meeting. Interested applicants can apply here: <https://www.colorado.gov/governor/boards-commissions>

Overview of 2023 CNAP Strategic plan accomplishments

- Raquel highlighted 2022 progress towards the CNAP strategic plan goals. Accomplishments include steps towards evaluating climate resiliency on Natural Areas, proposed insect monitoring efforts, and increased collaboration with external working groups. Limitations include lack of full-time permanent staff resources.

Climate resiliency analysis of CNAP's Natural Area System

- Savanna gave a presentation discussing climate resiliency of State Natural Areas. All designated Natural Areas were evaluated using The Nature Conservancy's Resilient & Connected Landscapes Tool. The staff and Council discussed the meaning of climate resiliency in relation to CNAP, the importance of Natural Areas for climate action, limitations of the TNC tool, and next steps for continuing to incorporate climate change into CNAP designations and monitoring. Discussion revolved around the intrinsic value of natural features, microclimates at different scales, CNAP's role in regards to climate change, and the importance of Natural Areas as climate refugia.

Meeting Adjourned: Motion to adjourn by Jessica Pierce, second by Denise Culver, all in favor. Meeting adjourned at 2:04 pm.

Respectfully submitted:



Raquel Wertsbaugh, Colorado Natural Areas Program Coordinator

Approved:



Lynn Riedel, Colorado Natural Areas Council Chair