

**MINUTES AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE PARKS AND OPEN SPACE ADVISORY  
COMMITTEE, March 23, 2006**

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 p.m. by Christine Quinlan in the Hearing Room of the Board of Commissioners, Third Floor, Boulder County Courthouse, Boulder, Colorado.

**POSAC Members in Attendance**

Present: David Batts, Lisa Dilling, Chris Meyer, Melanie Muckle, Dave Robertson, Christine Quinlan and Eric Vogelsberg

Excused: Barbara Hawke, Sean McCoy, Mary McQuiston and Ira New Breast

**Staff in Attendance**

Ron Stewart, Jan Burns, Therese Glowacki, Michael Bauer, Mark Brennan, Jim Daus, Dave Hoerath, Ellen Flannelly and Melissa Arnold

**Minutes of February 23, 2006 Meeting**

*Christine Quinlan, Melanie Muckle and Dave Robertson* remarked about the high quality of the minutes. *David Batts* moved to approve the February 23, 2006 minutes and *Melanie Muckle* seconded the motion. ***Motion carried unanimously.***

**Public Participation and Items not on the Agenda**

- *Christine Quinlan* introduced the new POSAC board member, Lisa Dilling, and members requested her bio.
- *Melanie Muckle* mentioned that she, Eric Vogelsberg, Barbara Hawke and Mark Brennan went on the field trip the new US Fish and Wildlife Service's black-footed ferret breeding facility on March 9<sup>th</sup> and it was an excellent experience. She brought back literature on the site and information on a private foundation that channels funds to the program.
- *Christine Quinlan* addressed Andrew Batson's public comment from last month's meeting where he mentioned that Xcel reapplied for a natural gas compressor facility on the Marshall Road Space. She is concerned about this issue since it is adjacent to open space and wants to know what the process entails. In an earlier conversation, Ron Stewart informed her that this topic has not come before POSAC in the past, but he would look into bringing it to them in the future. *David Batts* noted that as adjacent landowners, the department should have some voice in the process and considering potential net impacts, question whether they can still meet their objectives with the open space if the reapplication is approved.
- *Eric Vogelsberg* mentioned his opposition to the Forest Service proposal to liquidate Forest Service land, particularly land in Boulder County, in order to fund the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000. The County Commissioners wrote a long opinion letter on this issue in Sunday's Daily Camera. He suggested that POSAC submit a letter of opposition to the Forest Service by the March 30<sup>th</sup> deadline. Members agreed. Eric Vogelsberg stated that the letter would mention: (1) as a global policy it is a bad idea to sell permanent resources to solve a short-term financial requirement, and (2) the process used for selecting lands did not consider the greater context. In particular, the lands selected in Boulder County are inappropriate because the surrounding open space will be fragmented as a result. Members decided to submit this letter to the Forest Service in Washington. *Ron Stewart* agreed to receive maps from members describing the parcels proposed for

sale and will see that they are distributed to all. Answering the question as to whether the County could purchase these properties if they did go up for sale, he said the County may consider purchasing some of them, as District Forester Christine Walsh reported that the proposal would allow local governments and land trusts the first chance to purchase the properties.

**Motion**

*Chris Meyer* moved to approve sending a letter to the Forest Service stating that it is a bad global policy to meet a short term fiscal need with Forest Service land sales and that the properties were selected out of context with the land management policy that the County is trying to pursue. A copy will be sent to the Congressional delegation. *Melanie Muckle* seconded the motion. ***Motion carried unanimously.***

**Property Transactions:**

**A. Westphal, Stone & Buffalo Park Acquisitions**

**Staff Presenter: Jim Daus**

*See staff memo for detail.* These three adjacent, pristine properties lie southwest of Walker Ranch and total 128 acres. The County would have fee ownership, while the City of Boulder would hold a conservation easement over the property for 1/3 of the purchase price. As stand-alone acquisitions or as a group, this purchase would extinguish 3 development rights and would be included in the Walker Ranch Management Plan in the future.

Discussion/Questions by POSAC Members

Members expressed their appreciation for the land connectivity this purchase will create.

Public Comment - None

Motion

*Eric Vogelsberg* moved to accept staff recommendation to purchase these properties as stand-alone acquisitions or as a group. *Dave Robertson* seconded the motion. ***Motion carried unanimously.***

**B. Amendment to Warembourg Conservation Easement for Coal Creek Trail**

**Staff Presenter: Ellen Flannelly**

*See staff memo in for detail.* The City of Louisville is requesting an amendment to the Warembourg Conservation Easement that they jointly own with Boulder County, so that they may purchase the fee interest in a small portion of the easement property for the purpose of building the Coal Creek Trail. The trail would connect two existing segments of the trail and would not have a detrimental impact on the property’s conservation values. Staff supports the conveyance of the parcel to Louisville and construction of this regional trail.

Discussion/Questions by POSAC Members

Answering questions, *Ellen Flannelly* clarified that the original conservation easement did not mention the trail and it explicitly prohibited subdivision of the property. There would be no exchange of money between the involved parties for this conveyance. *Eric Vogelsberg* noted that this amendment would merely legalize the fact that people already utilize the side of Roosevelt Avenue as a means to connect the trail segments.

Public Comment – None

### Motion

*Melanie Muckle* moved to accept staff recommendation. *Eric Vogelsberg* seconded the motion.  
***Motion carried unanimously.***

### **Chronic Wasting Disease Update**

**Presenter: Fred Quartarone, Colorado Division of Wildlife**

*See Division of Wildlife letter for detail.* Fred Quartarone provided the biannual update on chronic wasting disease (CWD) on Boulder County Open Space properties following the CWD protocol between Boulder County and the Colorado Division of Wildlife (DOW). After the 2004-2005 field season, the DOW compared all the collected statewide culling data as far back as 2000 and could not determine that culling was having a beneficial impact compared to adjacent control areas. Rabbit Mountain was in one of the 16 treatment areas. As a result, DOW has decided to suspend culling and disease management hunts in the 2005-2006 field season, and suggest that future CWD management take place in a more structured experimental framework to provide significant measurable results over time. Boulder County's properties will be considered as potential sites for future research along with other Colorado sites.

### Discussion/Questions by POSAC Members

Answering questions, *Fred Quartarone* said that the theory behind culling deer to reduce the prevalence of CWD is focused on minimizing the chances for animals to become infected. They aim to reduce the density of deer population, and therefore, reduce the chance for deer to interact and contract the disease. Additionally, they aim to create a younger population limiting the time to possibly contract the disease. In terms of how the disease is passed, he answered that science is not definitive on this matter; however, some studies indicate that environmental contamination plays a role, although the actual mechanism of passage into animals in the wild has not been documented. Also, he answered that aside from culling, there is a live test that requires anesthetizing the animal and taking a tonsil biopsy for lab testing; however, this requires capturing free ranging animals, which is a difficult task, especially compared to capturing deer in Estes Park and in North Boulder. It has not yet been tested whether this testing method is applicable on a wide-ranging scale. As of now, DOW receives most of its test-animals from public hunters. Following a question about the inconclusive test results, he agreed that the interchange of deer between the control and test areas could be a factor, especially because male deer can move large distances during the rut. When questioned about the populations surveyed, he answered that the DOW manages animals by large-scale herds, called DAU's, which are comprised of many local populations (like Rabbit Mountain). Although the Boulder Deer Herd is far ranging and the DOW sets population objectives for this herd, they do work on a smaller scale to identify localized areas where infection rates are high. He also answered that researchers have not decided the location of future management areas. One of the challenges will be finding areas with high rates of infection where change is easier to perceive. It would be ideal to start with a clean slate in an area that has never been subject to culling.

Finally, when *Chris Meyer* asked for a recommendation on a continuing policy for Boulder County properties, *Fred Quartarone* stated that DOW has worked with the Department and the County Commissioners over the past 4 years to keep populations at a status quo level, and because this would no longer be an option, public hunting would accomplish this goal. Clarifying that he was not advocating for public hunting, he recommended that the County consider deer herd management as a long-term solution to curbing this slow-moving disease because of the high infection rate on open space properties. In the short-term, he suggested keeping tabs on the animals and continuing to test. He finished by thanking POSAC for the last 4 years. He said that DOW gained valuable information from this project and there is still an abundant deer population on the landscape.

## Public Comment

- *Marsha Barber, Sugarloaf*, commented that there is a genetic component in elk that shows they are immune to CWD and asked whether there are studies that show deer also have this genetic immunity. *Fred Quartarone* responded that he is not aware of elk being immune to CWD, although he is aware that they do not have the propensity to contract it. There has been a substantial amount of genetic work on deer. One genotype of deer appears to have the ability to delay the effects of CWD but this does not preclude them from contracting it. *Marsha Barber* said she is concerned DOW may be killing deer that are genetically immune, intensifying the problem. She suggested testing all deer with tonsil biopsies as is done in Estes Park because only unhealthy deer are removed. Secondly, she mentioned that wolves can detect animals with the disease and asked whether the abundant mountain lion population in Colorado would be useful in culling the sick animals, and whether any studies are being conducted on this topic. *Fred Quartarone* answered that a researcher is working on this type of study but the challenge is in capturing enough mountain lions to be able to show a preference. Finally, *Marsha Barber* asked how culling is helping the CWD situation considering that the prevalence rate north of Boulder County is more than 20%. Also, in the Game Management Area 191, where there had been an effort to reduce the rate 50% via culling, the prevalence has consistently increased. *Fred Quartarone* responded that with 191, there is a 7% infection rate. In Larimer County, there are localized areas with a 20-25% prevalence rate, but this is not representative of the larger area.
- *Charles Southwick*, retired professor of biology at CU who specializes in population dynamics, is delighted about the partnership between the DOW and the County in trying to understand CWD. He and his wife have been conducting census in the fall for the NCAR Deer Herd and are using this herd as a model study opportunity. They conduct 40 censuses per year to study fawn production, changes in sex ratios and other general herd changes. He has been an opponent of random culling because this method has not achieved clear-cut results. When asked whether random culling was used in controlled management areas, *Fred Quartarone* said as a rule they have targeted sick-looking animals in areas of high prevalence, but noted that it's difficult to find them and errors are often made because signs of the disease may not appear until the last few weeks of the animal's life. *Charles Southwick* described his results from the NCAR deer population where over the past 27 years, the population varied from 25-75 animals. He stated that there were so many deer in the late 80's that maximum counts in 2 square miles contained up to 85 deer and road kills in Boulder City were over 200/year. Since then, the population has done well considering 7 years of draught and the introduction of exotic wheat (*sic* cheat) grass, which has reduced the food supply. In the last 7 years, the deer population has stabilized at 60 despite the presence of CWD in the area since at least 1996. In particular, the North Boulder populations by Lee Hill Road seem to be doing remarkably well. Although he does not know what the long-term effect of CWD will be on the population, he offered that this adaptable species might be able to survive it along with suburbanization and draught. He hopes to continue his research for a few more years in order to publish a 30-year study. He looks forward to future communications with DOW and Boulder County.

## Results of Five-Year Visitor Demographics Study

**Staff Presenter: Michael Bauer**

*See staff memo for detail.* In an effort to gather a record of visitors' demographic information or opinions about relevant Boulder County Parks and Open Space department (BCPOS) management issues, BCPOS has conducted an extensive analysis on a five-year basis since 1990. These five-year studies are designed to investigate long-term trends in visitor demographics, preferences, attitudes and behaviors and to compliment regular annual studies. Refer to the Executive Summary in staff memo for results.

### Discussion/Questions by POSAC Members

*Michael Bauer* said the entire report, including appendices, would be posted on the public webpage tomorrow (Friday, March 24, 2006) and available to download in a pdf format.

*Melanie Muckle* suggested that historical reasons be added to the category asking visitors why they come to a particular property, as it seems a couple of veterans made comments to this point at Legion Park. *Michael Bauer* thanked her for this suggestion although he does have to balance the multitude of highlights from each park with the need for a succinct report. *David Batts* asked about comments from visitors regarding the resolution of conflicts at Betasso Preserve. *Michael Bauer* responded that some visitors commented that they support recent management decisions while others commented that they disapprove of bikes or would like to see things return to how they were. Because there were so many comments received from this study, he added that he did not have a complete answer at the moment, although specific comments could be easily referenced in appendix G.

*Chris Meyer* commented that the decline in wildlife viewing, picnicking and fishing might be a factor of adding new properties to the 2005 survey that are incompatible with these uses. He suggested disaggregating the 2005 data from earlier years' data to get a more realistic idea of downward trends. *Michael Bauer* responded that many of the added properties actually include picnicking facilities so he does not perceive a lack of opportunities as a factor in the results; instead, he believes a downward trend appears because of the change in methodology. Prior to 2005, visitors could choose more than one activity whereas in 2005, they could only choose one activity. For example, the significant drop in wildlife viewing most likely results from the fact that hiking was chosen as the primary activity even if wildlife viewing was a secondary activity. *Lisa Dilling* suggested that perhaps the numbers of wildlife viewers have remained stable but the number of bikers and hikers are increasing, creating the appearance of a downward trend in wildlife viewers. *Chris Meyer* suggested that in order to learn whether visitors are coming for multiple reasons, the survey could ask them to rank the top three reasons for their visit. *David Batts* suggested refining the survey in the future by considering the 'net benefit experience-based recreation' approach. This approach asks visitors about the experience they seek in the park, such as family bonding, adventure or solitude. In this way, staff could help frame the activities to achieve the experiences. *Michael Bauer* responded that it might be difficult to elicit a helpful response from this question. When the 2003 user-conflict study asked visitors why they engage in their primary activity, the common response was, "I am here to bike because I want to bike." He offered that he could work on the way the question is worded. *David Batts* added that because this method is being applied more frequently, perhaps there are models that could act as a guide.

### Director's Update

First, *Ron Stewart* said that the department just hired a Summer Adamietz, the new Planner who is filling Patrick Malone's position, and he believes she will be an exceptional employee. The department will also hire a second Planner to help address the number of management plans that need to be completed. This position will most likely be filled by the second person to make final round of interviews. Secondly, the caretakers at the Hall and Heil properties have just been through law enforcement training to be rangers. Following their field training, not only will they be able to attend to maintenance responsibilities, but also they will be able to ensure that the public is adhering to rules and regulations. This will strengthen these positions make them multi-functional. *Christine Quinlan* commented that the elevated walkway at the Twin Lakes wetlands was done well and gave her compliments to the staff. *Ron Stewart* commented that this low impact method of construction would also be used for the Mud Lake boardwalk.

### Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.