



**Minutes of the
Colorado Natural Areas Council**
Jefferson County Government Center, Denver, Colorado
December 1, 2006



Council Present: John Masson (Chair), Kathy Yates (Vice-Chair), Dennis Brinker, Dr. Lee Shropshire, Tom Burke (via phone), Dr. Tom Ready (via phone)

Council Absent: Tyler Nifong

DNR staff: Rob Billerbeck, Brian Kurzel, Chris Wootten, Marcia Rickey

Guests: Dave Anderson (CNHP), Steve Kettler (USFWS), Joe Temple (Dinosaur Ridge), Ed Schmal (DOW Wildlife Biologist), Gretchen Holschuh (DOW District Wildlife Manager), Randy Frank (Jeffco Open Space) Larry Kramer (Parks), Barbara Hawke (TNC), Carrie Castor (Parks), Brad Buckner (Parks)

Chair John Masson called the meeting to order at 12:20 pm

Agenda Item 1. Presentation of Certificates. 12:30 pm

Presentation of Certificates to Randy Frank (Jefferson County) and Joe Temple (Dinosaur Ridge)

Joe – We need \$7500 for stabilization of ridge. We have hired a contractor for \$5000 to design cover/conceptual design to provide proper and year round protection from the elements, but this final project will cost around \$2 million. And we need about \$5500 to stabilize the masonry wedge on Jurassic side, but that has already been paid for. We have been engaged in several fundraising activities, but are about \$6000 short to stabilize tracks

John – How would you recognize the donor?

Joe- We're open to that, if you have logo, plaque we could put it up. That's something we can discuss

Rob – We can design something similar to what we've done in the past

John – And you have 100,000 visitors per year?

Joe – Yes and we expect increase in visitation as road project goes through and as we complete the cover to all for year round visitation. We anticipate about a doubling in visitation.

Discussion tabled until Kathy Yates arrived (12:40 pm)

Agenda Item 2. Update on CNAP activities from past year. 12:45 pm

Wacker Ranch – 12:45 pm

Brian – Thrilled about protection of Wacker ranch

- registered in 1992, unique partnership of TNC and CNAP
- Designated because of Clay loving wild buckwheat, a federally endangered species
- Habitat threatened, mostly on private property, potential for high ATV use
- w/TNC and others removed property from open market
- This parcel is keystone to saving species, \$210,000 to buy property
- Received ~\$160,000 from Fish and Wildlife federal grant.
- Still working to get money in hand and raise the required match
- Once bought we will hand over to TNC with an easement
- Thank you to Barbara for her work on this
- The area is mostly Mancos shale

- Also found interesting lichens and northern leopard frogs
- Proximity to Montrose (fastest growing micropolis) cause for urgency

Ed - Are mineral rights apart of ownership?

Barbara - Its half, we can secure more in the future

Dennis - Is other half owned by Wacker?

Barbara - Its not, it's a little complicated, not quite sure what chain of ownership is at this time, but TNC doesn't regard this as a concern. The chance of mineral development is thought to be very low.

East Sand Dunes - 12:58 pm

- Brian - Owned by SLB, parks has management rights (along with CSFS).
- Designated because of cold weather dunes, go through freeze thaw every year.
 - In great condition, in its native state.

Dave -- I was there this summer looking for the boat shaped bugseed

- North Sand Dunes only location known in whole world
- recently there has been an effort to study more about it
- One of most imperiled and least understood species, has less than 5 occurrences in the world. A G1 species no doubt
- North sand dunes has intensive ORV, East sand hills still undisturbed.
- Up to 5000 people drive on these north hills
- Bugseed on North hills, but ORV clearly impacting the North Sand Dunes
- Next day went to the East Dunes, found it there as well.
- Plants decrease in size as you move down dune
- Think we may have multiple species of *Corispermum*, perhaps are hybridizing
- Tell apart mainly by seeds, rare plant has larger seeds.
- East covered in grass and vegetation, north has very little vegetation, ORV use clearly impacting the north sand dunes
- Still aren't sure what we have or how much we have.

Steve -- Did any find any rare butterflies out there?

Rob -- Believe they found sphinx moth, not sure though?

(this was verified after the meeting -- there is a 1995 record of the Gallium Sphinx moth)

Kathy Yates arrives at the meeting 1:05 pm

John Fielder Book - 1:08 pm

- Rob - Existing project is book with John Fielder
- Celebrate Colorado natural areas and state parks.
 - Will work with John Fielder and Frank Weston as photographers.
 - Coffee table book, will work out royalties and pricing.
 - Sent list of sites to be included in book.
 - John is going through roles of photos to see what he already has.
 - Weston will shoot whatever Fielder doesn't have
 - Completed draft of visitation sensitivity matrix for all sites.
 - We will leave out some sights completely, will gloss over others.

- Hope to include all parks and as many sites as possible
- We will present at next meeting our full plan, still need to speak with some of the landowners about possible inclusion of their lands in this book.
- Roadblocks are contracting questions
- Guess maybe 10% chance John may just say no
- More interested in exposure than royalties, makes contracting easier
- Also offer amateur photo contests, calendars to commemorate the 50th and 30th year anniversaries and advertise CNAP

Brian - Also want to mention Lynn Reidel, who is working with our friends group.
 - We have had discussions about 501c3 status to transfer money we raise to friends group, are working with Kathy to achieve this

Kathy - Strength of the friends group is passion and technical knowledge, but no real infrastructure for fundraising and further outreach.
 - Main thing is how can friends help with fundraising in the future

Tabled Dinosaur Ridge Discussion reopened - 1:30 pm

Lee -- Motion, Colorado Natural Areas Council should find a way to help out with expense of protecting the site, including stabilization

Dennis -- 'We need some recognition there for parks and natural areas' and seconds the motion

Unanimous Vote passes - 1:34 pm. Work with Dino Ridge to help with funding shortages

Agenda Item 3. Potential Designations. 1:55 pm

Green Mountain

Brian - Green mountain registered in 1992.
 - Boulder flat irons, three 8000 ft peaks, canyon system with intermittent streams
 - Relic ecosystems from last ice age. All owned by city of Boulder
 - Rare species include white adder mouth orchid. However may be gone (Dave Anderson is uncertain of the current status of occurrence... CNHP will be surveying Boulder County and will have updated info in 2007)
 - Highly traveled and visited location, great opportunity for interpretation
 - Most address what visitor master plan involves for Boulder County
 - Hasn't been at forefront of staff, just not big priority, got stuck in registration.

John -- Why the non-contiguous tracks to west of the boundary?

Rob - The disjunct parcels to the west are owned by Boulder OS, just some private or federal land in between. We are planning to visit this area in person to evaluate and make sure their disjunct nature is not a problem
 - The disjunct parcels in the east picked because of tall grass prairie,
 - The questions of where we draw the lines needs to be determined this summer.
 - We need to think large now, as the actual location of the unique features are dynamic and always changing.

Lee -- The expansion also now includes some interesting geology, such as the flat irons.

John -- The multiuse issues are important. Boulder may use this as leverage to curtail certain activities that could degrade the resources.

Rob -- Designation of natural area will help promote some changes that Boulder City would like to address. We're working closely with the Boulder staff, and many of them worked for CNAP in the past, so it should be relatively easy to work the communication well.

Council Votes to pursue Designation. 2:10 pm

Wacker Ranch -- 2:10 pm

Rob -- Think this will be a very easy designation once we get through the grant process

Brian -- Designation would be a great stride for rare plant conservation, especially with the rapid development of Montrose.

Lee -- To me personally, Green Mountain is more interesting, closer to a major population center with great geology, but if wacker is almost done, get it done.

Dennis -- I think we're committed to Wacker

John -- Keep on moving at your normal pace with wacker to get it designated.

Council Votes to continue pursuing designation of Wacker Ranch. 2:15 pm

Tom Ready joins via telecom 2:20 pm

John Denver 2:20 pm

Tom -- John Denver site is pretty simple. It's a free contribution from a private landowner, 28 acres. We can put a trail and parking lot on the property. Its pretty easy, owner wants to keep part for himself.

- Rob
- Rapid development around site, about ½ mile north of Canon City.
 - Two globally rare endemics at the property.
 - Because it would be fee owned, we have to work with state parks.
 - Issues: we might need fencing, and definitely need a gate on the private road
 - Trash and litter concerns, but we would have an in-house steward since the landowner will live adjacent
 - Public road runs up to property, we could then gate private roads which would be agreeable to other land owners
 - Name of John Denver will attract visitors and potential for endowment.
 - Owner is cousin through marriage of John Denver

Tom -- Not a lot of traffic now or ATV use, but should eventually fence it with barbwire. Get boyscouts to pick up trash, local schools. It's donated so it's a good opportunity. Maybe could work out endowment

John -- This seems this is a little off track. There are a lot of areas with rare plants in the state. Is there something particularly unique or special about this site?

Rob -- This is not the best occurrence of these species in the state. But the potential for expansion of the NA boundary to include surrounding landowners could preserve a very viable and large population. This area does fit our mandate in having two endemic plants of statewide significance, but you are correct that this is a

little different in its not the best occurrence. Our mandate allows for areas to be designated to allow for interpretation/education purposes of elements of statewide significance, and this does our mandate under that clause in my opinion. If we create interpretive signs here, we can use the same interpretation materials at Pueblo State Wildlife and other areas of Arkansas Basin. With the development in this area, calling the public's attention to these endemic plants is important.

John -- I just don't want to dilute our areas if this site isn't a great site

Kathy -- Is it urgent?

Rob -- I think it is, he's 64, he's tried to give it away to others, and he may grow tired of waiting for the state and could sell the property.

John -- Concern is this may become more of a hassle than an asset with small area in highly growing area. And has anyone talked with neighbors about easement?

Rob -- not yet. We talked with the landowner about the easement option and he was not very excited about it ,but I can have further discussions with him and with local landtrusts. A lot of work needs to be done in that direction in terms of easements and future expansion.

Tom -- What are your concerns with taking care of it, there's not much to take care of.

Kathy -- We're saying two different things here. One we're going to attract a lot of attention when we advertise as the John Denver Memorial. But then we're saying there's not much to the site, but we're hoping to get a lot of attraction out of it. If there's not much there but people are attracted to it, is that good attention we're getting for ourselves? There are expenses with providing an interesting area accommodating a lot of visitors and an expectation for delivery if we call it a John Denver Memorial.

John -- How committed is the owner to John Denver Memorial as a name? And who would own it, would it be CNAP or state parks?

Rob -- very committed -- he wants that name. The land could be in either CNAP or Parks name.

Tom -- As to the parking area development and visitation, we're only talking about 10-15 cars at the most, no bathroom facilities, very simple.

Kathy -- How would you prioritize this site with the other three?

Rob -- Wacker is an easy 1. But I think this area offers an immediate and unique opportunity for us.

John -- Well lets make sure that if we want people to take the time to visit the site, and there is nothing there that's spectacular or interesting, we're not shooting ourselves in the foot bringing people to a boring location with nothing unique

Kathy -- What if we agreed to call it something other than JDME and accept this site.

John -- My biggest issue is calling it JDME and not providing it for the visitors

Lee -- Well part of the hope is this site might open up funds that would cover all the development.

Rob- We're at the early stages of development, if I could tell the council that funding was not a problem would that change the council's feelings about the risk here.

John – Maybe, but i'm just not sure this site is what CNAP was created for.

Rob – Ok – thanks for the input and concerns, I think I understand Council's concerns. I think we can move onto the next site.

Staunton State Park – 2:40 pm

- Rob
- Studies have documented a G1/S1 plant species, *Mimilus Gemmiparus* that grows on the cliffs
 - Other elements such as raptor nest, two somewhat rare wetland communities.
 - Potential exists for working for reintro projects and help the fate of this plant.
 - Incredible opportunity for reintroduction here, great interpretation.
 - We'd like to hire a couple of people who were Steingraeber's Ph.D. students who are also climbers to fully document where we could do this reintro and where climbing should be allowed
 - Can use some state park money for this project as well as it is necessary for park planning
 - Knowledge and exposure gained working on a highly successful reintro project of a globally rare Colorado endemic.

Tom – It's a gorgeous place, great potential.

Rob – Can bring in a lot of visitors who will recognize the great work we can do.

Council votes to pursue designation and possible reintro of *M. Gemmiparus*. 2:50 pm

Agenda Item 4 – Steve Kettler Presentation/Dave Anderson Certificate. 3:00 pm

Tom Burke joins meeting via telecom, Certificate presented to Dave Anderson in recognition of his great service to the Colorado Natural Areas Council and Program

Steve Kettler

- Been working on short grass prairie planning.
- My funding comes from ft Carson, work for fish and wildlife
- Only place in world these plants are located, Pueblo Goldenweed, Blazing Star, Feverfew, Evening Primrose, Four O'clock.
- There is a lot of overlap in occurrence, a lot near and around ft Carson and Canon City. Conservation has to happen here, its only place it grows
- Department of Defense has buffer with easement that prevents development of up to fence
- Buffer has opened up many possibilities with conservation easements.
- Couple of plants occur only on chalk barrens, which is only exposed at a few places. No one really understands why this soil selection.
- Lot of threats to these plants
- Dollars are hard to come by for conservation for plants.
- Understand JD problem of being stuck with parcel surrounded by incompatible development

Rob – To sum up, there are about 4-6 rare endemic plants in the area of interest between Pueblo and Canyon City but the large majority of occurrences are on private land, and development is threatening many of these. The best public population is on Pueblo SWA and Park.

Agenda Item 5 – Potential Registrations. 3:20

Pueblo State Wildlife Area

Brian - 6 plants of highest concern for conservation occur in pueblo, very high concentration to west of pueblo State Park.

- Most are ranked G2/S2. Most on private land as Steve showed
- PWA is highest concentration of plants on public land in the world.
- Toured area to map for plants, have expanded the area of where the plants may be. It's a 2,000 acre parcel. Spoken to Al, Gretchen and Ed about pursuing designation. Potential designation would be based on current management plans, the plans are a bit outdated, and need to revisit what they are currently doing in the area. BOR owns all of SWA, and are currently revising their strategy.

Ed – It was a 25 year agreement with BOR when it began

Brian - Plants found on shale barrens.

- SWA does not allow grazing, weed work is done, and ORV use is not allowed. Management prescriptions are very agreeable with our ideas for a potential agreement.
- Why we would be involved?. We have plant expertise, offer stewardship help. Don't want to be obstructionist but want to assist and compliment the skills already on your staff.

Tom Burke – General comment on paperwork, Gretchen would have to start by generating an issue paper for Al Trujillo, which would make its way up to management. Make sure designation would not affect current or foreseen future use of that land.

Brian – We do not want to place any extra layers of restriction with what you do with the land, we want to work with your current land management practice to come up with a plan.

Tom Burke – Can't just worry about what you can do today, but what you can do tomorrow. Don't know where the program will be in 10 years, what its capacity will be down the road.

Rob – Our DOW agreements can always be terminated if one party can no longer meet its requirements. The agreements is voluntary and can be broken in a worst case scenario.

Brian – Tamarack Ranch and Dome rock are on DOW, and we can model off those agreements. They are based off existing management plans of those properties and have clause that stipulates changing AOD or its termination.

Tom – Just always be cognizant of hunting, fishing issues, things like that. If you need help addressing those I can help you there.

Brian – Current management, hunting fishing, these recreation values don't impact the plants so we don't expect any conflict there

Tom – Find out relationship with DOW and BOR, don't know if or when lease expires or what.

Rob – I think in this situation, we'd have to sign the Natural Areas agreement with both BOR and DOW

Brian – So Tom, if we move forward with this, do you support potential registration?

Tom – Certainly support opening discussion. Then it falls in lap of DOW and seeing how it interacts with their intended uses. I certainly have no issue with broaching the subject.

Council agrees that Pueblo SWA is worthy of registration 3:40 pm

Two Buttes. 3:42 pm

Rob – Easy to explain, proposed for national geological designation in 1970s. Amazing geology, some occurrences of a rare plant, some historic value, interesting small mammal story. Turn it over to Lee and let him explain the geology.

Lee – Site is highest point around, 350 ft above surrounding plains area. It's unique to eastern Colorado. It's not a butte; it's a conical hill with two peaks. Butte is flat top hill. Stick up because of large mass of igneous rock. Molten rock pushed up from underneath, likely connected to volcanic flows to the south and west of area. Somehow the magma worked its way underground at least 50 miles from flows and bowed up sedimentary rock creating the butte, although its not really a true butte. It's a lacolith igneous intrusion. Visible sedimentary rocks range in year from 240 million to 70 million years old, show many different ages. After intrusion, erosion has striped most of cretaceous rocks that used to cover dome. Lacolith itself is about 100 sq miles, and all we see is upper portion exposed at the buttes. Very significant feature. Not the only occurrence in Colorado, but it's the only one in eastern Colorado. Upturned sedimentary rock layers are exposed at the creek south of the buttes, can see all layers in succession from Jurassic to cretaceous. Southeastern most point where you can see all those rock layers clearly exposed. In my opinion, this is extremely important area that we need to conserve.

Rob – We met with AWM and DOW guys, there were very excited. Part of area is private land, which has Cattleman's Land Trust (CCALT) easement already in place, provides opportunity for cooperation with CCALT. Has two other land owners and state land board. Since it's primarily geologic, the management issues should not be a major concern.

Steve – What is rare plant in the area?

Rob – Colorado Gentian, *Frasera coloradensis*. We need time and money to work on this site, how does the council feel. Not much urgency. It's a sleepy area, but the site is compelling area worthy of statewide designation.

Kathy – I think its very worthwhile, but with managing time, it may not be in your top three

Rob – I could agree with that

Kathy – An aside, I feel its good to have the map of all the natural areas at the meetings so we can see what areas have a lot, what areas have few.

Tom – The sooner you can get it done in this site, the better.

Lee – I think this is the number one place to try to get designated, it has tremendously unique geologic value.

North St Vrain 3:55 pm

Brian - Identified in 1992. Pristine examples of forests, very beautiful.
- Roadless canyon on front range, not many left.
- New staff seems very amenable to designation.

- Staff wants some help with toadflax; they have some youth and enthusiasm on staff now.

Council agrees that North St Vrain is worthy of designation 4:00

Brian – Now we can move on to prioritizing the 7 sites we've presented.

John - My top three are

1. Wacker
2. Two Buttes
3. Green Mountain

Rob – Might want to make sure we consider imminent threats, quality of site and opportunity

John – John Denver issue would be the least important

Rob – It does have those endemic plants though, and some urgency

Kathy – I think you have to manage your limited resources. If you only have time for some sites, this is not the one. We all agree I think that Wacker is the number 1 priority

John – Consider pursuing Pueblo State Wildlife and Two Buttes together, pull together the same contacts from the DOW.

Kathy – And you can't move too fast on Staunton designation.

Rob – I'm wed to Staunton through state parks, it's the plant reintro we want to pursue. So what I'm hearing is John Denver has highest potential for time commitment and risk, but all the others are a go.

Brian – So the council feels

1. Wacker
2. Two Buttes / Pueblo SWA
3. Green Mountain
4. North St Vrain
5. Staunton only because its less urgent, but pursue plant reintro
6. John Denver.

Decision Items for the Council 4:20 pm

Outreach Plan 4:20 pm

John – Motion to approve

Dennis - Second

CNAC approves outreach plan. 4:22 pm

Business Cards 4:25 pm

John – Want natural areas logo bigger

Rob – Send out contact list to council, have them double-check their information.

Council votes on Motto 3: Protecting Colorado's natural treasures. 4:28 pm

Dennis – Motion to approve minutes

Lee – Second the Motion

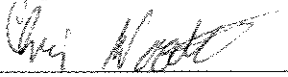
Council approves minutes from last meeting, with minor corrections. 4:30 pm

Kathy – move to adjourn

Lee - second

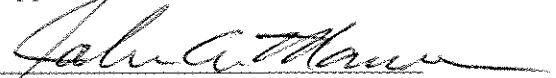
Motion to adjourn passes. 4:40 pm

Respectfully submitted:



Chris Wootten

Approved:



John Masson, Chair