

**Minutes of the Colorado Natural Areas Council  
- Colorado River State Park at Fruita -**

**October 14, 2005**

**Council Present:** Kathy Yates, Dr. Tom Ready, Dave Anderson, Lee Shropshire, Tom Burke (in place of Phil James)

**Council Absent:** John Masson, Dennis Brinker

**DNR staff:** Rob Billerbeck, Brian Kurzel, Lyle Laverty, Larry Kramer, Nori Pearce

**Others:** Eric Rechel (Rabbit Valley Volunteer Steward)

Council and staff met at the Visitors Center of the Colorado River State Park at Fruita

Council Vice-Chair Kathy Yates called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m.

**Introductions:** Rob thanked Lyle, Larry, Nori and Eric for being present.

## *Reports from Staff*

**Meeting agenda items –Review of 2005 Field Season, CNAP Future and Outreach Plan, Winter Schedule & 2006 Field Season Planning, CNAP Research & Protection Small Grants Program**

### **Agenda Item #1: Review of 2005 Field Season**

Brian and Rob reviewed how the 2005 field season was spent since the last Council meeting in July. Brian reviewed the field season summary table provided to the Council, with additional comments as seen below:

- Staff re-visited Blue Mountain/Little Thompson site which was originally designated for its high-angle fault. CNAP staff is pursuing an amendment to the AOD to include an additional occurrence of *Physaria bellii* (Bell's Twinpod), which is a rare plant tracked by CNHP. It is a plant that primarily grows on Mancos or Pierre shale soils, primarily in Larimer and Boulder Counties. Private landowner, Roger Drotar, is also interested in weed control that CNAP will assist with next year.
- With Lynn Riedel of Boulder City Open Space and Mountain Parks, staff investigated Jewel Mountain as a potential identified site. It may be, along with Rocky Flats, the largest xeric tallgrass prairie in the world.
- Geneva Basin Iron Fen was described and management issues were elucidated. Fencing for OHV use is moving forward with the help of both Clear Creek County, who will erect a large gate next year, and the USFS, who may fell logs on social trails. The coordination of the visit went very smoothly, and CNAP signed up a new volunteer steward, Dave Bathke.
- Rob forced Brian to visit the Crested Butte sites while he stayed in the office to do budget reports.
- CNAP staff met with Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory Director, Ian Billick, to discuss our Research Small Grants program. CNAP could have a closer relationship with RMBL scientists: figuring out how CNAP could support RMBL research, as well as how RMBL researchers could do research on lands outside of those that are owned by or immediately adjacent to RMBL. RMBL was very amenable to this discussion. Rob's primary research advisor for his Master's is a researcher at RMBL = an 'in' for the program.
- Mexican Cut was the first designated Natural Area, and Volunteer Steward and former Council member, Scottie Willey, was the main force behind it's designation.

- At High Mesa Grassland, staff worked closely with BLM staff to ‘build fences’, both literally and figuratively, in an effort to re-establish the vegetation monitoring program originally started by Janet Coles in 1999. Half of the exclosures were built and, along with a contracted vegetation survey, will be finished next year. BLM has asked CNAP to comment on the proposed grazing lease, and, after consulting with the NRCS and Alan Carpenter, will provide a comment shortly.
- Rob: As he has discussed with Lyle, staff is trying to visit sites with agency personnel to build relationships and improve the protection of Natural Areas. This approach may allow us to have greater impact on protection, but most likely at fewer sites.
- No CNAP staff has visited Wheeler Geologic Natural Area in 10-12 years, so staff visited this year.
- At Slumgullion Natural Area, CNAP staff and Volunteer Steward Janet Potter worked with BLM people to get 3 concrete barriers placed at OHV access points.
- Rob attended the Colorado Native Plant Society meeting. He observed the Pagosa skyrocket population, the research of which was partially supported by the CNAP/CNHP Section 6 grants.
- Williams Creek will be ready to be designated soon. Rob is planning on participating in the San Juan National Forest Plan Revision Process to try to designate this winter. The head of the Ohio Natural Areas Program, Dick Moseley, led a hike to Williams Creek.
- We visited North St. Vrain from the east end, which is a different access point than the overlook where the Council went in previously. Values of the site: best old growth Ponderosa pine population in Front Range, best roadless, non-flooded canyon left on Front Range, bighorn sheep population, two rare plants. Kathy asked about the coordination with the USFS in designating this site. Rob believes that Kathy Carsey (ex-CNAP employee and botanist for the Arapahoe/Roosevelt NF) wants to make sure that CNAP staff can hold up our end of a potential agreement, and getting out with USFS personnel and other interested parties may have addressed that concern. We are interested in pursuing designation this winter.
- Staff wants to see sites in person before pursuing designation to make a more convincing case.
- CNAP staff is focusing on making personal contacts and building allies (see graphs). We primarily met with owners and managers in 2005. We plan on visiting sites more with CNHP staff, and, especially, State Parks staff in 2006. Rob expects us to double all of our contact numbers next year.

## **Agenda Item # 2: CNAP Future and Outreach Plan**

CNAP is turning their eyes toward making an Outreach Plan, which has been a topic of conversation on the Council for years. CNAP hopes to develop a formal Outreach Plan this winter and to dive into it. The need for this has been evident from the 2000 Strategic Plan as well as from notes from past Council meetings. There has been a shift in the Natural Areas Program from having staff that are primarily scientists, to having staff that is primarily coordinators. As mentioned previously, CNAP staff will not be able to spend as much time monitoring or inventorying directly, but, through an Outreach Plan, we may be able to garner enough public support and money to have more scientists down the road. The priorities in the Outreach Plan are outlined in the “CNAP Future and Outreach Plan” agenda item. Specific comments on the Outreach Plan that are not in the agenda item are found below:

- *State Parks Connection:*
  - CNAP staff will be presenting at all State Parks Regional meetings this winter. We want to strengthen the relationship with State Parks staff by selling Park Managers on why they would want to visit at least one Natural Area in their Park’s vicinity. We aim to do this by highlighting the commonalities in vegetation, geology, management and common stakeholders.
  - Brian, Jeff Tiemann and Elizabeth Gillespie all spend some of their time on projects in both Natural Areas and State Parks.

- CNAP wants to create a museum-style display to show at the State Parks Office. This display will show features found on Natural Areas, and we are beginning to collect specimens such as stromatolites from Ducey Identified Site, which the CGS will prepare for us.
- *Strengthen Past Allies:*
  - In particular, staff would like to meet with Chris Pague of TNC
  - CNAP will help host the Colorado Native Plant Society meetings next year. Dave Anderson sits on the Board of this Society, and will help coordinate CNAP's involvement.
  - Lee asked if CNAP was recently working with the Colorado Geologic Society. Rob mentioned that we have been working with Vince Matthews through Jeff Tiemann, and we may go in the field with CGS Geologists next year.
  - Rob made clear that we would be working with as many agency scientists as possible; Rob and Brian just need to renew these relationships.
- *Develop new partnerships for coordinated protection*
  - CNAP has certificates signed by the governor for the last few Designated Natural Areas; Rob would like to have signing ceremonies at the next few Council Meetings, and invite local press and County Council members. Rob asked if the Council had any memory of how these ceremonies were done in the past. Dr. Tom said there were no ceremonies to speak of in the recent past, he would just ask the Governor if he would sign certificates and he did. Rob mentioned that there were ceremonies in the early 1990s, and this tradition could be renewed.
- *Funding Support*
  - We have money in the Friends of CNAP account, but we need to figure out what to do with it. Rob plans to meet with Lynn Riedel concerning this endeavor. CNAP needs to research what donations can go directly to our program directly, and what needs to go to the Friends Group. We would like to hand out donation forms as we make presentations this winter.
    - Friends is a 4013C organization.
  - Brian mentioned the DOW Habitat Stamp, and Tom Burke described it. Anyone who purchases a license through CDOW or who uses a State Wildlife Area will be required to buy a \$10 Habitat Stamp. This may result in \$6 million in revenue. Tom said the intent is to use at least some of the money for non-game species because there is a large amount of users who are not hunters or fishers. DOW has not yet sold a habitat stamp because it won't go into affect until 2006. The governor has not yet appointed the Habitat Stamp Committee, but Bruce McCloskey (director of DOW) has selected 2 members that he would like to see on the committee.
  - Linda Mahoney, a friend of CNAP, notified the program of the Habitat Stamp. We provided her with information on our Program, and she believes that there is potential for CNAP to get some of the non-game funding (e.g. for Natural Areas with non-game species protection issues). Rob and Brian asked Tom how CNAP should proceed on this issue. Tom said that the committee will recommend funding for various projects and the Wildlife Commission will make the final decision. The whole purpose of the Habitat Stamp is to alleviate some of the funds that sportsmen provide through licensing. It also must be clear that 60% of this funding will go toward multiple-use habitat acquisitions, such as big-game winter range, sage grouse habitat, etc. Tom would be happy to make sure that we have the appropriate information once the governor makes his selections. Then, CNAP can figure out our course of action.
- *Targeting Interest Groups*
  - Rob wants to contact various groups to make sure they know who CNAP is (Land Trusts, conservation organizations, etc.). Through these contacts, we may recruit volunteers, receive free promotion, and accept nominations of Natural Areas. We will re-do CNAP brochures to include space for signing up as a volunteer, donating money and nominating sites.
- *Volunteers*

- Having 2 stewards per site may give us more coverage of our Natural Areas, and it brings more people into the CNAP umbrella.
- Eric Rechel has volunteered to lead a group of people on an interpretive walk of Rabbit Valley. CNAP staff encourages this type of activity, and we will be happy to provide support for this role. This will further the reach of our agency.
- We would like to plan a restoration project for 2007 in the model of WRV (Wilderness Restoration Volunteers)
- The overlap between Native Plant Society members and CNAP Volunteer Stewards is extensive, so Dave mentioned that we should advance this connection.
- *Signage*
  - Signs are at a few of the Natural Areas, but many could have signs with only a couple of hundred dollars. Staff will pursue signage in cooperation with various agencies. Tom Burke mentioned that CNAP could find an applique that could be put on existing signs where there is room.
- *Newletters*
  - Make the newsletters more dynamic for wider audiences and distribute by e-mail. They could be more marketing-oriented to get people out to select sites.
- CNAP staff has been developing the sensitivity matrix, and this winter we will follow through with phone calls to finalize the matrix and get to a point where we can put out brochures of all visitable Natural Areas. We can distribute this at State Parks and on our website.
- Lee mentioned that the Friends group was originally created, in part, to provide scientific expertise to CNAP. Rob said our plan was to get as many scientific experts as possible out with our staff next summer.
- CNAP staff will notify the Council of our trips next year, in case they want to come along.
- Kathy asked why someone would choose to be a friend as opposed to a steward. Rob explained that some people might not be able to get around well enough to be a steward but still want to play a role with CNAP. Lee explained that the Friends have often been scientists, while volunteer stewards are more likely to be 'laymen'/ non-scientists.
- Larry asked if CNAP has a slide presentation with Natural Areas pictures. If so, CNAP could sell a CD screensaver with visitable Natural Areas listed and shown. This will familiarize people with CNAP and make some money for the program. Larry also suggested showing this at Parks Board or Wildlife Commission meetings would attract interest. Additionally, during the CNAP field season, staff could present a 'campfire program' on a weekend night at one of the State Parks.
- Tom Burke asked if CNAP has a representative on the CDOW Environmental Roundtable. It meets monthly in Denver, and they will be pressing hard for funds from the Habitat Staff (call Melody Wallace).
- Because of the time spent on the Outreach Plan, CNAP staff will have to work on accomplishing many goals with less time. Rob mentioned that we need to focus our energy on promoting CNAP to get other people assisting with some of our work. The number of Natural Areas we have may be limited by the number of staff we have.
  - *Evaluation:* Lee and Rob agreed that contracting out or getting volunteers to do some inventories and evaluations is necessary. CNAP has some volunteer funding to encourage this. Rob mentioned that we would be trying to put together a list of experts around the state and use this to facilitate inventories of Natural Areas. We could even try to create a geodatabase that will tie this to a map.
  - *Designation:* Kathy asked if there has ever been a discussion of the optimal number of Designated Natural Areas. Rob replied that we should implement our Outreach Plan and then produce a report with our staff needs. This was touched upon in the 2000 Strategic Plan, but it should be reformulated with a new perspective on what the future program should look like.

Rob envisions us eventually tackling another Gap Analysis to see what the ideal system looks like and what our staff should aim to accomplish.

### **Agenda Item #3: Winter Schedule and 2006 Field Season Planning**

The details of the Winter Schedule are outlined in the agenda item. Specific comments on the Winter Schedule and 2006 Field Season that are not in the agenda item are found below:

- Tom Burke suggests visiting CDOW Commission Meetings in lieu of Regional Meetings. The Commission meeting is in Greeley in November, and it often involves a community component that we would be welcome to attend. Rob agreed to attend that meeting, and asked if any other Council members could attend. Dr. Tom mentioned that we should try to garner support from the DOW to oppose the construction of a highway through St. Vrain State Park. Tom Burke mentioned that in order for the Commission to comment on this issue, it must get on the agenda well in advance.
  - The Wildlife Commission has meetings once every month.
- Discussion of Owl Canyon Pinyon Grove Natural Area: CNAP has got word that the Roberts parcel will be a conservation easement .

### ***Agenda Item #4: CNAP Research and Protection Small Grants Program***

Some details of the CNAP Research and Protection Small Grants Program are outlined in the agenda item. Questions that were discussed by the Council and associated comments are found below:

- State Parks may be allowed to apply for Small Grants in the future.
- Staff may be flexible in assigning money to Research vs. Protection grants, dependent on the number and quality of proposals in each category.
- Rob stated that we could have a grant system where CNAP could fund projects that are not applied for, if the landowner has interest in the project and CNAP sees the project as priority. This would give the program flexibility to get important projects done.
  - Kathy mentioned that we need to state that CNAP could use some of this funding for projects identified as priority, so it is clear that there is discretionary funding for use by CNAP.
- Lee believes Research funds should be targeted for Master's theses. However, since CNAP primarily needs inventory or monitoring work, this may make it more difficult to target Grad students.
- Kathy asked for clarification on the overall goal of the program. Rob replied that one of CNAP's original goals is to provide research on Natural Areas. It is unclear whether this research needs to be basic science, inventory/monitoring or conservation-oriented. Staff believes that conservation and applied science may serve the original Natural Areas Act more directly than basic science, however, most grad students would be looking for basic science projects.
- Brian clarified that in the past, research has been done throughout the state, not just on Natural Areas. Does CNAP want to meet larger goals or solely goals on the Natural Areas? Dave Anderson mentioned that the CNAP Small Grants Program is, dollar for dollar, a great value for research on important endemic species in Colorado. Therefore, there is a great opportunity to contribute to the broader scientific community with these grants. Autecological studies or surveys for rare plants result in a great baseline to determine management priorities.
  - Rob said that there should be some intersection between projects funded by CNAP and issues or species on Natural Areas. We can still fund larger conservation projects, but would likely prioritize projects on Natural Areas.

- Lee advocated promoting these small research grants at Universities such as UNC, where students can either do a Master's thesis or a research project, which often focuses on inventory and monitoring.
- Eric Rechel mentioned that we target projects that focus on pollinators to better understand the relationship between native pollinators and rare plants.
- Dave expressed concern over grad students being able to match CNAP funding. He advocated allowing a match to be administrative fees, travel costs and equipment. Kathy: if the student can demonstrate a positive outcome because we funded equipment, etc., than the funding is legitimate.
  - Rob summarized that CNAP should be less strict about what can serve as a match, and rate the proposals on the outcome that would result from the research.
- Rob believes that the measures of success for the grants program may be qualitative more than quantitative. Eric Rechel mentioned that a funded grant should be designed to produce an outcome that could be published in a refereed journal (but would not be required to be published). Floristic surveys can be published as notes in refereed journals. Posters or abstracts would also be seen as positive outcomes.
- Rob explained that the primary target for grant amounts would be \$4000 to \$5000, but may allow up to \$10,000. Kathy mentioned that CNAP should be transparent about the range of grants that would be funded.
- Advertising: Dave mentioned the CSU database having grant lists (SMARTS and SPIN) that would be appropriate for CNAP to advertise in, as well as in various Associations newsletters. Lee advocated working closely with faculty to help with recruiting grad students.
- Kathy recommended making previous years grants available to those applying so they can see what types or projects get funded. Brian mentioned that multi-year grants could be funded, which would especially help with the monitoring projects.
- Rob will look into how protection grant money was advertised in the past so there is no misunderstanding.

## *Spring CNAC Meeting*

Brian mentioned that the northern Front Range might be preferred. Wildlife Commission meetings are usually the first or second Thursday & Friday of every month. Staff will look into the location of March or April Wildlife Commission meetings. If it is near the Front Range, we may schedule the next CNAC meeting in the evening after the Commission meeting. If not, we will find a location on the Front Range

## *July Aiken Canyon CNAC Meeting Minutes*

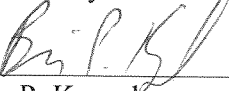
Tom motioned to approve the minutes with corrections for the last Council meeting. Kathy seconded the motion. The motion passed. Kathy asked staff to send the meeting minutes soon after the meetings took place so Council will be better able to comment on them. They can still be approved at subsequent meetings.

## *Comments from the Public/Discussions:*

Lyle shared that the Parks Board passed a resolution supporting the passage of Referendum C. If Referendum C fails, CNAP small grant funding would likely not be available. Lyle thanked staff and Council for their commitment to Natural Areas, an important part of Colorado's natural heritage.

Motion to adjourn at 4:00pm.  
The meeting adjourned on schedule.

Respectfully submitted:

  
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Brian P. Kurzel

Approved:

  
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John Masson, Chair