



Colorado Natural Areas Program



1313 Sherman Street, Room 618 • Denver, Colorado 80203 • (303) 866-3203

Colorado Natural Areas Council Meeting Minutes Conference Call January 6, 2009

Council (Present on Phone): Kathy Yates, Lee Shropshire, Dennis Buechler, Jill Ozarski, Mike Bloom, Renee Rondeau (arrived later)

Council (Absent): none

CNAP FTE Staff: Rob Billerbeck, Brian Kurzel

CNAP Seasonals: Julia Ela

Others: none

2:00 p.m. – Call to Order

Updates from council members about other Boards

DB: There are concerns that the State Legislature may place more constraints on the wildlife rules that are part of the oil and gas rulemaking process.

MB: Is pleased by work done by State Land Board to coordinate with CNAP, CNHP and DOW to integrate rare species mapping in oil and gas lease reviews. It has been a really nice effort with GIS to check for rare species.

KY: Have you had any opportunities to mention that CNAP's helping?

MB: I spoke with the Governor about CNAP and the Rare Plant Conservation Initiative and he seemed interested.

RB: Parks and CNAP budget is waiting for the Parks Board to assemble in January, then we can ask to have a Parks Board member assigned to the Natural Areas Council. Within parks, there is still reaction from the audit. The relationship with GOCO is getting better every day and as of right now we are almost fully funded for resource projects. There are two new FTE's being hired for ANS and Resource Stewardship. However, we are expecting to have to make anywhere between 2.5 to 10% budget cuts across the board for the upcoming year, including a possible cut to the Species Conservation Trust Funds.

BK: Dennis, does DOW have concerns about the Species Conservation Trust Fund?

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DB: Yes, there are serious concerns about the budget. The Division depends on its share of the Conservation Species Trust Fund to help fund their management activities for non-game species and for meeting their requirements under the Endangered Species Act. If those funds are reduced, the Division may have to use more of its revenues for these purposes, and the current revenues come mainly from hunting and fishing licenses. Thus, sportsmen's dollars would need to be used. They are also concerned about the hiring freeze.

MB: The SLB Directorship position has been exempted from hiring freeze, and they are currently working on the next steps of the hiring process.

JO: Echoes concerns about budget cuts. Will work to protect state conservation easement tax. As of January 1st, there is a new process where organizations will have to get certified by the state to hold easements (including state organizations). CCLT is working on education and outreach on holding easements and how to manage everything. CCLT also just published a handbook called *Mineral Development and Land Conservation: A Handbook for Conservation Professionals*, which should provide answers to land managers about how to manage conservation lands when Oil and Gas development is involved. Also, Lise Aangeenbrug was named GOCO's Executive Director.

KY: So, Rob and Brian, in the face of these challenges, how can the council help?

RB: We are pretty much in survival mode right now. Parks isn't going to have a big presence in the legislature this year, but the Natural Areas Council could. It would be helpful to if council members talked to GOCO and the Legislature, perhaps by presenting the new book in person?

KY, JO, LS said they would be interested in helping with this.

RB: I'll talk with Gary to see how to coordinate this.

KY: On the March agenda, let's return to SWOT analysis to look at ways to bring in outside funding.

Triennial Report Draft Review:

MB: Well done! Likes it all, but has some small editorial suggestions.

KY: What is the Governor's familiarity with the Natural Areas Program?

RB: I would think not much, might know the name, but not a lot beyond that.



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KY: This should be taken into consideration when looking at the copy.

LS: Looks great. However, 95% of the text is on plants and it may give the wrong impression that CNAP is purely about plants and I think more representation of the other facets of the Program would be valuable.

KY: Yes, for example, include a picture of dinosaur tracks at Dakota Hogback. It will be important in this report to connect the dots. You will want to find common ground, but given the current budget issues, it needs to be more statistical to make the program more legitimate. It might be helpful to add some tourism statistics to show how this program is helping the Colorado economy. Check out the Department of Tourism top visited sites list.

BK: Good suggestions, but we want to be sure not to let it get too wordy.

LS: Yes, keep it succinct the way it is now.

KY: Agreed, and there is good use of text, would be nice to have larger photos, smaller line drawings, correct labeling of photos. Also, highlight partnerships and how CNAP is a benefit for other organizations through trainings, etc.

DB: Add in some specifics, for example, how many SWA's are in CNAP?

RB: We could highlight trainings and information given to the BLM and SLB about rare plants protection, and GIS training for the USFWS.

JO: Put funding in one place. Highlight the difference between general funds and how much is leveraged from those funds. Don't want the numbers to be misconstrued as not needing the money. Add some numbers about how much money is going to the sites.

KY: You need to highlight all of your accomplishments with few staff. The point is not money, the point is how much CNAP can turn money around and accomplish a lot. Also would be good to mention other contributors (GOCO, USFWS), and perhaps have a quote from a land owner about how CNAP is beneficial.

RB: We can highlight our past accomplishments; also we can include the full quote from Gov. Ritter about being "stubborn stewards" to put it into context.

RR: We can mention the action CNAP is taking to protect plants and prevent their listing. One of the few organizations that is taking a proactive approach, and the Governor's office would



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like to see that, and is generally supportive of organizations that can do that. Also, are there some numbers about the number of acres with rare plants that CNAP has protected?

KY: Don't use the word "watchdog". CNAP is a much more proactive organization. And remember this is a sales piece and you want to sell the program to the readers. So, these are all good comments, but in the interest of time let's submit all further comments to Brain via e-mail, and he can send out a second draft after the changes are made.

BK: Yes, that will be good. And, in response to how the council can help, it might be nice to have council members bring the report *and* book to the governor for more of a presentation. It might also be nice to incorporate these into having a signing ceremony by the Governor for all of the new Natural Areas that will be designated in 2009.

RB: Will talk about setting up a meeting with Harris and Doug and the Governor's staff for a presentation of the report and will float the idea of a signing ceremony.

Discussion and Voting on Site Designations:

Blacks Gulch:

BK: Background on site, all in narrative for site

Questions:

KY: What is the relationship of the site to oil and gas development?

BK: There is a well pad about ¼ mile away from the site, but it is generally not an area of high well concentration. The main threats to the site are OHV's due to the fragile condition of the soil.

LS: Editorial suggestions.

BK: Clarification: This vote is whether the council wants to recommend designation of the site to the State Parks Board, so that CNAP can move ahead with the designation by submitting the AODs to the county and then to the Parks Board.

LS: I move for CNAP to continue with the designation process and to recommend designation to the Parks Board.

MB: Second

All in Favor, none opposed.

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Duck Creek

BK: Gave background on site, in narrative

LS: Editorial suggestions. Is rare plant related to 13 mile tongue of Green River Formation?

BK: The plant only occurs on this formation, but there is no hard research to explain why.

LS: I move for CNAP to continue with the designation process and to recommend designation to the Parks Board.

All in favor, none opposed.

Ryan Gulch

BK: Gave background on site, details in site narrative

KY: Suggestions on narrative, some re-wording to demonstrate effectiveness.

DB: I move for CNAP to continue with the designation process and to recommend designation to the Parks Board.

All in favor, none opposed.

Two Buttes

BK: Gave background on site, details in site narrative. There are two AODs, one for each county, to avoid confusion and make the process smoother.

LS: Explained geologic features, will make some edits on the Natural Area description.

BK: All geology language will have full approval from Lee, and we will start adding in a Threats and Accessibility heading for each narrative.

MB: This area also is a designated Audubon 'Important Bird Area' with a lot of activity.

KY: Question: What is the enforceability on a site like this?

RB: For this site, like most others, enforceability depends on maintaining contact and a positive relationship with the landowner. The agreements have a notification clause, but its really maintaining a relations that makes or breaks that. Brian has done a great job re-establishing old relationships and forging new ones.

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JO: Because this property already has a conservation easement on it, CNAP should contact easement holders and get annual report for site.

LS: This site was under consideration for designation as a National Natural Landmark in the 70's, but not sure what happened to that designation.

RB: The national Landmark program is back up and is designating sites again. I talked to them at the Dinosaur Ridge ceremony. We can have more conversations with them about this site along with discussions about the Picketwire dinosaur tracks.

DB: Some editorial corrections.

DB: I move for CNAP to continue with the designation process and to recommend designation to the Parks Board.

LS: Second

All approve, none opposed.

RB: One more update, Boulder Mountain has made it through the county and we are working to put this on the Parks Board agenda for final approval.

Dates for Council Meetings 2009:

Spring: March 4th in the morning

Summer: June 25th and 26th Perhaps at Mount Callahan

Fall: September 2nd and 3rd perhaps paired with a volunteer steward gathering or private landowner

Winter: December 3rd

Replacements for Council:

RB: With Kathy going off the council next June, I've been having conversations with several different people, and looking at others for an appropriate fit. Some potentials to replace Kathy:

- Boyce Drummond, rare plants & pollinators

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- David Armstrong, wildlife (DB: Great to work with)
- Kirk Johnson and another geologist
- GOCO board members
- Bruce Schumacher (paleontology)

Potentials for replacing Dr. Tom (Parks)

- New Board Members

Rob will have conversations with Laurie and Gary to see how they feel about it.

KY: Thank you everyone, meeting adjourned 4:00 pm

Respectfully submitted:

Julia Ela

Approved:

Kathy Yates

