

City of Aurora
OPEN SPACE ADVISORY BOARD
Pronghorn Natural Area
June 21st, 2023

MEMBERS PRESENT: Wayne Gallagher, Bob Hunchberger, Brad Stratton, Jason Amaya, Mark Christopher, Vicky Samuel, Joy DeMots, Dennis Roy.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Bob Gemmill.

STAFF PRESENT: Brian Green, Acting OSNR Division Manager; Lauren Morales, Management Assistant.

VISITORS PRESENT: Steve Kennedy

- I. CALL TO ORDER: Brad Stratton called the meeting to order at 5:45 PM.
- II. WELCOME: Brad Stratton welcomed everyone to the June OSB meeting.
- III. ADOPTION OF AGENDA: Mark Christopher moved to approve the agenda. Bob Hunchberger seconded the motion. Motion carried.
- IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: The May OSB minutes were completed late. Brad proposed the board members could vote to approve the minutes via email after the meeting. The OSB members agreed. The minutes were later approved via email, with 6 votes to approve the minutes as written.
- V. MANAGEMENT REMARKS: Brian Green gave an overview of the Pronghorn Natural Area site. The land was formerly owned by the city of Denver. Sewage sludge from wastewater treatment was hauled to the site and eventually degraded the land. The soil is very high in nitrogen and does not grow native grasses properly as a result. Many efforts have been made to restore the area, but nothing has worked well. For a long time, the Pronghorn Natural Area was kept closed as staff tried to figure out what to do with the site. Currently staff treat weeds and infestations as they happen. More native species are slowly starting to grow in the area. Unfortunately, there is no magic bullet and positive change will take a long time. It will probably take hundreds of years for the site to naturalize. At some point, staff decided to put in a trail for citizens to enjoy the site in its current state. Brian detailed some of the various restoration efforts throughout the years, and informed the OSB that the parking lot would be closed June 28th and 29th for a quick project.
- VI. NEW BUSINESS: Brad reminded the OSB that two outreach presentations would be coming up in July. The OSB was invited to present on July 13th at the Ward IV meeting and on July 20th at the Ward II meeting. Brad asked for volunteers to present, and Bob H., Brad, and Wayne shared that they would be available to present at both meetings. Steve Kennedy complimented the OSB on the upcoming presentations. Brad thanked Steve for his hard work on the Outreach Education Presentation during his time on the OSB.
- VII. REPORTS: Brad reminded the OSB members that the third quarter for conservation easement monitoring would begin in July. Wayne commented that he recently went out to complete his monitoring. Some areas were inaccessible, and others could not be found due to recent flooding. Dennis commented that he went out the Sunday after the last OSB meeting and had an enjoyable time. The foliage was much shorter then but is much taller now. Brad added that the site has four very different areas and that they saw lots of Pronghorn while completing the monitoring. Brad reminded the board that Eric Watts heads up the monitoring project. Brad usually sends a follow-up email after every visit. This is not required but Eric reads them and finds them interesting.
- VIII. CHAIR REMARKS: Brad shared information on the Art on the Prairie display event through the

Denver Botanic Gardens. Brad, Tom Isaacson, and 2-3 others will be creating chalk art outside the center. The event is on July 7th starting at 5pm but the art will remain on display for a full week. Brad also shared that 5280 magazine has shown interest in covering the PCC Restoration Project. Fendi Despres, Brad, and Bob G. were interviewed. The magazine would like to follow the entirety of the project and receive regular updates.

IX. MEMBER COMMENTS & DISCUSSION:

- Jason- Went out for the easement monitoring after recent rain and had a good time. It was very pleasant even though they could not find some of the posts.
- Wayne- Participated in a bird count at Star K Ranch. It was a little busy and they didn't see tons of diversity this time, but it was good. Wayne also went to Mt. Evans with friends last weekend and loved it. He encouraged everyone to get up there.
- Joy- Will be completing the quarter 2 conservation easement monitoring this week.
- Mark- Asked about the construction at Red-Tailed Hawk Park. Some water is being drained, possibly on private property. It's making a large mess. Someone released a lot of goldfish into the pond, which will probably be eaten very quickly by birds. Mark also recently lost his phone.
- Vicky- Did a photography session at Morrison and shared her work last Saturday. Vicky also observed a Great Gray Owl nest for a week in Montana. She plans to do more photography sessions soon. Brad and Wayne attended and commented that Vicky did a great job. The session was short but very informative and Vicky shared great personal stories.
- Dennis- Has been watching everything behind his house with the recent rain. There was some creek flooding, and the thistle is terrible over there. It has been a hectic month at work, but he will be going on vacation soon, including a trip to Crested Butte to see the wildflowers.
- Bob H- Now that Joy is back in town, they will head out to Coal Senac this coming weekend for conservation easement monitoring.

X. BULLET POINTS:

- Acting Open Space Manager Brian Green presented a short history of the Pronghorn Natural Area to the board, beginning when Denver Wastewater used the area for sludge disposal until the present.
- Guest Speaker Steve Kennedy discussed the ongoing research project he has been leading on the flora and fauna found in Pronghorn Natural Area, and then led the board on a tour of the site.
- Brad Stratton discussed the Art on the Prairie Show, which will begin with an artist reception on July 7 and continue through July 14 at Plains Conservation Center. Several board members will have art pieces, and/or be producing chalk art pieces for the show.
- Brad Stratton also discussed that 5280 Magazine is interested in following and the progress of the prairie restoration project at Plains Conservation Center. Naturalist Fendi Despres, Bob Gemmill, and Brad have been interviewed by the magazine.
- The board made final plans for their Open Space Outreach Presentations that will occur on July 13 with Council Member Juan Marcano in Ward IV, and on July 20 with Council Member Steve Sundberg in Ward II.

XI. ADJOURN: Vicky Samuel moved to adjourn. Bob Hunchberger seconded the motion. Motion carried and the business portion of the meeting adjourned at 6:17pm. The business portion of the meeting was followed by a tour of the Pronghorn Natural Area.

The next meeting will be on July 19th at 5:30 PM at the ACRE site.


Brad Stratton, Chair

Lauren R Morales
Lauren Morales, Recording Secretary