

# City of Boulder Reservoir Master Plan

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## SUMMARY OF FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS



**November 2009**



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## STUDY BACKGROUND

The city of Boulder is developing a master plan for the Boulder Reservoir. The purpose of the plan is to establish management goals and objectives for Parks and Recreation Department land and activities at the Boulder Reservoir (including Tom Watson Park and Coot Lake) that will guide long-term investment strategies and programs. As a part of this process, the city contracted with National Research Center, Inc. (NRC) to conduct a survey of users of the reservoir that was followed by a series of focus groups with specific user groups to gather more in-depth information.

### Developing the Scripts

In conjunction with the city, NRC developed two focus group scripts for the three target audiences:

- \* One script for people holding boating permits for the 2009 season (“boaters”) and those with gate passes, punch passes, those who participated in a program, purchased a permit for a picnic or held an event for the 2009 season (“pass holders and events”)
- \* One script for people who visit the north shore area including Coot Lake and the trailhead at 55<sup>th</sup> (“north shore”)

A few questions overlapped between the two scripts and, in general, the script for both focused on the look, feel and appearance of the specific area; rules and regulations; balancing needs of the different user groups and the natural environment; and resource allocation. The commonality among scripts enabled a deeper understanding of the needs and interests of the different user groups, while the customization allowed NRC to identify segmented needs and interests. The scripts can be found in *Appendix A: Focus Group Scripts*.

### Participant Recruitment

The city of Boulder Parks and Recreation Department supplied NRC with a list of contact information for pass and permit holders, those who held an event or picnic at the reservoir and those who had a child participate in a program at the reservoir during the 2009 season. A random sample from each of these groups was contacted either via email or telephone until the appropriate number from each group accepted the invitation to participate in the focus group. Contact names also were provided for the rowing clubs, kite board and sail board clubs and local nature organizations. These users were contacted via email and asked to send one or two representatives to the focus groups. In total, 18 users from these groups attended the focus groups.

A representative from NRC recruited participants at the north shore area (i.e., Coot Lake and the trailhead at 55<sup>th</sup>) two different days on consecutive weekends. On both occasions, the NRC representative was present for approximately two hours at the Coot Lake entrance and another two hours at the 55<sup>th</sup> trailhead. Flyers were handed out to visitors that provided information about the focus group and names, phone numbers and email addresses were collected from some visitors. A total of nine users of these recreational areas attended the focus group.

### Data Collection

NRC performed the following logistical tasks in cooperation with the city for each of the focus groups: securing rooms for group discussions; purchasing refreshments; placing reminder calls or sending reminder emails to focus group participants before the scheduled discussions; facilitating guided group discussions; providing refreshments; and providing thank you gifts to study participants.

The focus groups were held at a city conference room in Boulder for which no fee was required. Groups were led by an expert NRC facilitator and all groups were digitally audio-recorded for analysis purposes. Refreshments were provided for each group and a thank you gift was given to each participant.

Three focus groups were scheduled for approximately 90 minutes each and held on the following dates:

- \* Boaters: Tuesday, October 6<sup>th</sup>, 6:30-8:00pm, 10 participants
- \* Pass holders and events: Thursday, October 8<sup>th</sup>, 6:30-8:00pm, 8 participants
- \* North shore: Tuesday, October 13<sup>th</sup>, 6:30-8:00pm, 9 participants

In addition to these participants, some comments were received from two people (one small craft permit holder and one person who held an event at the reservoir) who were invited to participate in the focus groups but were not able to attend. Their comments were included in the analysis and are incorporated into the results, where applicable.

## Data Analysis

Comments from the focus groups were analyzed qualitatively. The NRC analyst first listened to and read through all responses to identify key statements and general themes and organized excerpts of each discussion so that recurrent themes could be coded and further analyzed.

## Study Limitations

As with all focus groups, the small sample size and purposeful selection of participants limit the generalization of these results. They do, however, suggest what other user groups might say, despite not being intended to be broadly representative. These focus groups lend insight into the opinions of the user groups with whom we spoke about their vision for the future of the reservoir.

## Using the Summary Report

Themes from the focus groups are summarized in the following pages. Similarities as well as any differences in responses between the groups are indicated throughout the report. Direct quotes from focus group participants are included to highlight perspectives. These quotes are indented and italicized. Words added to enhance reader understanding appear in square brackets. Each quote under a given topic is from a specific individual, unless otherwise specified. Sometimes larger portions of the conversation are excerpted to give the full flavor of the discussion, in which case each participant is numbered to suggest the sequence of comments in the conversation.

# SUMMARY OF STUDY RESULTS

## Boaters, Pass Holders and Events

### Recreational Activities

Participants were first asked to share their favorite recreation activities and the kinds of activities they enjoy at the Boulder Reservoir and surrounding areas. A majority from these two user groups enjoyed motorized boating and waterskiing. A number of participants said they used kayaks, canoes, sail boats, kite and sail boards and Hobie Cats at the reservoir. A few users also rowed, biked, fished, hiked, swam and held picnics and events at the reservoir.

People in these groups tended to use the reservoir mainly in the warmer months, although several said they used the reservoir year round. Weekends and week nights were popular times to visit the reservoir, with many participants using the reservoir at least once a week during the summer months. Rowers and some water-skiers enjoyed using the reservoir early in the morning while the water was still calm, while others frequented at various times throughout the day.

### Look, Feel and Appearance

When asked to envision the reservoir 10 years down the road and describe what would make it the best recreation area in the country, users had a number of suggestions.

- \* Organized small boat facilities with storage areas (e.g., for sails and other gear)
- \* Organized clubs (i.e., sailing, rowing, kayak racing)
- \* More on-the-water activities
- \* Better areas to launch small craft from the shoreline (i.e., sand beaches, grassy areas)
- \* Size limits on boat motors (to reduce noise levels)
- \* More proximal parking for Hobie trailers
- \* More water to boat in (i.e., fewer no wake days, move buoys so more room)
- \* Increased hours of operation (i.e., not shutting the gates at 6pm because some people like using the reservoir after work)
- \* More and better maintenance of the grounds and facilities (i.e., mowing weeds, cleaner restrooms)
- \* Better snack bar
- \* A lap swimming area
- \* More events like live music
- \* A redesigned entrance or more entrances (it is difficult to get boats and trailers in and out during events); maybe an entrance just for boaters with trailers
- \* More grassy areas and better landscaping
- \* More designated paths for running, walking and biking
- \* More communication about events and other happenings

*We have to do something with the entrances with events. It's great to have events there, however, when you spend that kind of money on a pass, you should be able to get your boat in and out without waiting a half an hour on either end.*

*Participant 1: I think there should be a limit on the size on the motors on some of the motorboats, because there are some wicked big ones cruising around. It just seems over-the-top.*

*Participant 2: It's also the hull shape, too. The ones that generate wakes versus the ones [that don't].*

*Participant 3: Or just the noise level.*

*For windsurfing, a nicer rigging area. For small boats, like kayaks and stuff, having a rack somewhere where you can leave them and lock them [because] most of my visits to the reservoir are after work and schlepping boats to work on your care and to the reservoir every day is kind of a hassle. I'd be willing to pay to have a slot on a rack where I could keep a kayak.*

*More grass for people to spread out. [Right now] if you wanted to hang out on a grassy area, you have to rent a spot.*

*An events board or central communications [board]. Whether it's to learn about BAM or crew events. Just kind of a calendar of events, and along the same lines, a for sale board like if you wanted to sell a water-ski or a crew boat.*

One participant said he did not want to see any changes to the reservoir. He believed some of the ideas others mentioned were fine but that he thought everything currently worked well.

*I just think that I wouldn't like to see too many changes unless there's a really good reason for them because things are working well now, and I think there's a little bit of worry about an agenda out there and people wanting to change things radically.*

The current services most important to users varied. Lake patrol was thought of as an important service by several participants, with a couple mentioning needing to be towed off the reservoir. A couple people who had held events or picnics at the reservoir thought the event setup and packages were an important and valuable service. They felt the service worked well and that the reservoir should do more to market these services.

*I was thinking as far as revenue goes, that's a service they should push and market more for companies and orientations around town. This would be a good source of revenue for them.*

However, one person noted that with the change in management in the last year or two, the level of customer service decreased dramatically. There was a lack of or miscommunication with reservoir staff and the service provided were considerably less than in years past, especially considering the increase in costs to hold similar events. This participant said:

*Due to pricing and terrible customer service, I have no desire to book the Boulder Res again. It's very disappointing because our group enjoys going out there.*

Maintenance was seen as an important service and an issue for a number of people from mowing grass and weeds to adjusting the docks to match the water level. Some powerboat owners thought the fuel system needed to be addressed as it was an important service. Having an adequate fuel supply available for the weekend demand, the cost of fuel and the availability of staff to fuel boats were listed

as problems for several participants. Many people agreed that the fueling station should be self service. Others mentioned they would like to see a place to clean the inside and outside of their boats.

Many participants noted the decline in the quality services provided since new management took over at the reservoir a few years ago. A few residents mentioned things like policies regarding parking and permits for the boats and trailers have changed for the worse and that there is a lack of communication with users and between departments at the reservoir. Some do not feel that the new management has reservoir users' interests at heart.

*Participant 1: It's a higher cost with more restrictions and less service.*

*Participant 2: I think the city is now starting to consider the reservoir as a revenue source.*

*There has been a host of rules and restrictions, and just a very tight girding in the past 2 years that has rarely resulted in a better experience.*

*My observation is that they're underfunded, they're understaffed and they're not experienced. And it's one of those problems that, the people out there are doing the best they can. They can't hire more staff because they don't have the money, it hasn't been allocated, [and] they don't have the experience of running the reservoir.*

Focus group participants were posed with the question of having the reservoir, which is currently open year round, open for only nine months of the year and closed the other three months (e.g., December to February) to potentially reallocate funds or wondering if people used the reservoir all year. While a few users said they would be okay with that plan as long as runners, walkers and bikers could still use the facility, most did not support a change in the months of operation. Many people said they or others still used the reservoir during the winter months and it would be difficult to keep people out unless it was staffed because visitors could enter on foot. If finding funding to keep it open year round was the issue, one participant suggested charging year round for use of the reservoir but maybe a smaller fee during the months where rates of visitation declines. Others were skeptical of the reasons behind asking this question and limiting use of the reservoir:

*I've never seen anyone provide more by cutting. The first proposal shouldn't be, "Oh, we'll cut down to 9 months and that will give you more stuff."*

*Frankly, I'm a little nervous about that because I see a different agenda. I see people wanting to restrict the use of the reservoir. I think 9 months goes to 8 months goes to 6 months then all of a sudden you can't put your boat in. I think they want to close it down.*

The majority of participants felt safe on and around the reservoir from other patrons, boats and wildlife. A few people who use non-motorized boats were worried about motorized boats coming to close to them, but they noted that their worry was in a limited number of instances and that most motorized boaters were respectful and obeyed the right-of-ways. A couple participants who used non-motorized boats thought that the buoys could be moved to create more space between the outside perimeter and the inside to make it safer for them. A few participants mentioned that they felt safer on the water this year than previous years because the cost of a single-day boat pass was prohibitive for most, which helped to keep the number of boats on the water to a minimum.

Many thought that there needed to be better enforcement of the reservoir rules and regulations on the water; however, they noted that Lake Patrol does not have the authority or ability to enforce the rules. Boaters knowing the rules and right-of-ways seemed to be an issue with several participants. Many felt that more education and better enforcement was important to improving safety for all users. Others believed that the current pattern for motorized boats was somewhat unclear and too congested. One participant suggested that all boats – motorized and non-motorized – be required to follow some kind of pattern on the reservoir.

## Boating

Several questions on the focus group script were devoted to issues surrounding the boating community - both motorized and non-motorized. Participants were first asked to think about the different user groups on the reservoir and to list ideas of ways to share time and space. Many agreed this was a problem and a challenge and voiced concerns or issues they had about user groups other than their own. They admitted that one group will always dislike another group. However, when it came down to it, no one wanted to see any group prohibited from the reservoir or even really limit their usage of the reservoir.

*Participant 1: I'm a sailor. I think it would be nice to be quiet out there, but I would never say that I didn't want powerboats, because I think you shouldn't disallow access to people. And also I think the powerboats probably support the reservoir with their revenue.*

*Participant 2: I have zero issue with the powerboats being out there, it's just how close they are to me.*

*Our motorized boating community subsidizes almost the entire expense of the res, so I would submit that, although there may be some agendas floating here and there, I think that the voice of reason will come through. And the real challenge, as I see it, is a balancing act between all the different user groups.*

*I can tell you that I'd never advocate to get rid of any [other] user group.*

While a number of participants were satisfied with the current schedules and sharing of the water, the number of no wake days was a point of contention. A few motorized boaters who liked to water ski early in the morning wanted to see fewer no wake days, while others who used the calm water on no wake days felt like there was not enough enforcement of the times for no wakes.

Only some people felt that certain types of boats should be prohibited on the reservoir. A few participants mentioned boats with large, noisy motors should be prohibited and one participant said he could do without the wakeboard boats that throw large wakes and rough up the waters.

*Participant 1: We were out there a week or two ago and there was some guy out there where he has the big engine hanging out of it and it makes all the noise.*

*Participant 2: I've never gotten those – they just bomb around the lake, they don't tow anything and it's really noisy.*

*Participant 3: Yeah, the noise on that one, it's almost kind of embarrassing as another boat owner because the people that are trying to get the motorboats off the lake are going to use that as an example.*

When asked to think about the quality of the water in Boulder Reservoir and how the city should maintain it, most residents did not feel there was a problem and a few noted that there had been improvements in the water quality over the last few years. Some said that the water was murky or that on windier days there were more “floaties” in the water, but, overall, they did not feel water quality was an issue. Even so, participants did have a few suggestions about how to keep the water clean such as controlling the geese population, whose feces contaminates the water, by setting up decoy predators such as coyotes and owls or using coyote scent to scare them off. A few mentioned that runoff from the surrounding farms and ranches contaminated the reservoir but did not have ideas about ways to lessen that problem.

Another idea that several people had in both groups was to eliminate the use of two-stroke engines on the reservoir since they use a mixture of oil and gas that gets “spewed” back into the water. Some thought that jet skis also used similar engines and should be banned from the reservoir altogether, but stated that they did not see as many on the reservoir this year as in years past. Nonetheless, participants did not necessarily believe that many boaters were using those types of motors and felt that many of the boats were newer and therefore less likely to be polluters. However, one person voiced disgust that the city allows power boats in a body of water that is used as a source of drinking water.

Participants were also asked their opinions about the new inspections for aquatic nuisance species such as zebra mussels, although a couple residents wondered if zebra mussels were an actual problem at the reservoir. A number of boat permit holders believed that the inspections went well, although they admitted that, initially, it was a little cumbersome as both boat owners and inspectors were figuring out the process.

*I can't really complain. I thought they did an awesome job. It got off to a slow start, I was a little worried, but then they moved it over near the entrance...now I can be in and out in a minute. I bring my boat in all the time, and I have to say, I was pretty impressed with how they got on. If they had a boat in line, they'd get somebody over there... I rarely, if ever, had to wait.*

*My experience is that they've been fine, young men. They're just very courteous, good attitudes, so we have no complaint.*

Some boat owners had suggestions for improvements to the inspection process including inspecting boats while they were being moored for the winter and having a cleaning station. Several people said they would be willing to pay some additional fees to have access to a cleaning station.

*This spring was the first year that they enforced this zebra mussel thing. And last winter they had 100, 200 boats sitting out there all winter. They could have just clamped them all up and still charged us each \$25. But no, we had to wait until we got in line, pay our \$25 dollars and then go find someone to tag it up, wait the 7 days before you're allowed to put [your boat] in the water, and that was ridiculous. My suggestion is that they go around and do that for all the boats that are [moored] out there right now so that next spring nobody has to wait seven days.*

*Participant 1: I think they [need to] trust the inspection. I don't they do and that's why they're so much more restrictive than the states guidelines.*

*Participant 2: They won't trust the inspections from other reservoirs but what they said was, in the next year, they're going to have a cleaning station at the res and that was the plan. If they have the funds.*

## Rules and Regulations

The last set of questions in the focus group script asked about different rules and regulations at the reservoir surrounding issues such as alcohol, nudity and parking. Overall, most participants did not feel that alcohol was an issue. Many said they rarely see people that are overly intoxicated but at least one participant voiced that drinking alcohol was the greatest safety problem on the water. While some felt it was a valid concern, they were not in favor of prohibiting or limiting the type or amount of alcohol allowed at the reservoir. Again, a couple participants believed that better enforcement of reservoir rules would help curb any potential problem.

Those attending the gate passes/events focus group were asked their thoughts about nudity at the reservoir. While many have never seen any nudity at the reservoir, the majority were okay with it being allowed as long as people were discreet. They thought designating a specific area, maybe on the north shore where some believed nudity already occurred, would be a good solution. One participant noted:

*It would be a shame if that was the focus of law enforcement at the reservoir.*

When asked about traffic and parking, most did not feel it was a huge problem. They stated that traffic and parking were mainly issues during big events, which was to be expected. Many tended to avoid the reservoir on days when they new large events were happening and thought that it would be nice if the reservoir could communicate better about upcoming events. A number of participants were interested in the concept of using more busses or public transportation to and from the reservoir but wondered where funding for that would come from.

Residents were not supportive of making the parking lot on 51<sup>st</sup> just before the reservoir entrance a fee lot. They believed that, currently, that lot is used mainly by runners, walkers and bikers. Some felt that lot was an easy way for people to get into the reservoir without having to pay admission. A few participants suggested either removing the lot altogether or expanding the lot. While they did not feel there was a solution to getting people to not park in the nearby neighborhood, many wondered if that was an issue for the reservoir or for the city or county.

## The North Shore: Coot Lake and 55<sup>th</sup> Trailhead

### Recreational Activities

Users of Coot Lake and the 55<sup>th</sup> trailhead participated in a wide variety of recreational activities at the north shore and other areas including water- and snow-skiing, hiking, biking, horseback riding, dog walking, canoeing and bird watching. Many said they used the Coot Lake/north shore area more frequently than the 55<sup>th</sup> trailhead. A number of participants used these areas year round and on the weekends, while others said they avoided the weekends because of the volume of visitors.

### Look, Feel and Appearance

As with the participants in the boaters, pass holders and events focus groups, north shore user were asked to envision the area 10 years from now and to describe the things that would make it the best recreational and natural area in the U.S. Residents had countless suggestions including:

- \* Connector trail from 55<sup>th</sup> to Eagle Trail
- \* Completion of multi-use trail from 55<sup>th</sup> to Lyons
- \* Improved water quality at Coot Lake
- \* More trash cans around Coot Lake and the surrounding areas
- \* More dog waste bag cylinders throughout the area
- \* More staff for maintenance (i.e., trash pick-up, restroom maintenance)
- \* Bridle paths for horses
- \* Make the road (51<sup>st</sup> and 55<sup>th</sup>) more like a national park road to reduce interference with and safety for wildlife and other user groups
- \* Better protection of the wetlands and animal habitat (through leashing dogs, more/better signage, more/better fencing, fines for trespassers)

*Participant 1: I think the water conditions at Coot Lake, since it's such a small enclosed water space... it would be really lovely to see some way if they could aerate the water in both big lake and the little lake to mitigate that.*

*Participant 2: I agree with both of those, in both the res and Coot Lake, improve water quality.*

*It would be really nice, because it's so heavily used, if there were bridle paths specifically for horses that did not interfere with walkers, hikers and bikers.*

*A couple of people I've talked to have really like the idea, and this is getting close to the Eagle [Trail] as well, is to make [the road] more like a national park area where you would narrow the road a little bit, pave it and have a multi-use kind of trail running alongside it up to Monarch road. That way horses would have a nice thing to go along there and you wouldn't have the cars [to contend with]. It would be a one-way even, but horses would be fine going the other way, so you wouldn't have the gravel, you wouldn't have the speeding traffic, it would really bring the traffic down, create a park-like feeling and having a multi-use trail would be really nice for everybody versus the terrible competition with the trucks and everything that goes flying by.*

*Participant 1: The nature trail part of it... I would like to see that area around to the wetlands [on the west end], not around Coot Lake itself, [protected from dogs and humans] because that's a highly critical little wetland area.*

*Participant 2: With fencing, it'd have to be carefully done so you're not keeping animals from going in and out, migrating.*

Many participants were not in favor of leashing dogs at Coot Lake to protect the natural environment and thought there were better alternatives.

*Participant 1: Personally, I would not like to have the dogs on leash because that's a very popular loop for people and to suddenly having to put your dog on [leash] would take a lot away, but doing better fencing, I would totally agree with. And on that issue, before they even put the split-rail fence that they have up now, there were way more dogs and people going down there.*

*Participant 2: So, you saw it less?*

*Participant 1: There was a marked improvement with just a split-rail fence.*

Still, some participants said they did not want to see any changes to the area 10 years down the road.

*For me, in 10 years is a hard one because I would like to see it not more manicured. You know, where there's signage everywhere or one of those urban parks where there's signage every ten feet that tells you what you're looking at. I'd like to have it retain some of its wetlands appeal without it becoming even more manicured and I don't know how you do that with even more increased fencing.*

When asked to think specifically about the 55<sup>th</sup> trailhead and any changes or developments they would like to see in that area, a few residents believed that an expanded parking lot would be a nice addition to the trailhead, as long as the addition was away from the wetlands that are nearby. While some worried that adding more parking would encroach on the land and habitat they were trying to protect, others believed it would help because people would have more parking available.

*Participant 1: More parking. It fills up quite often and there are "no parking" signs all along the road there.*

*Participant 2: I think more parking encourages more people to drive their cars.*

*Participant 1: But it would be better to have them ride bikes or something.*

*Participant 3: I disagree. I think people are going to use it anyways and the less parking means that they're going to try to park in places they shouldn't park.*

Only a few residents had opinions about whether or not the social trails at 55<sup>th</sup> should become designated trails, and they had split views. While some thought having designated trails would help with the mud and keeping people out of where they should not go, others believed that having designated trails meant that the city would have more control over where those trails went.

## Balancing Users

Coot Lake and north shore users were asked to think about what the city could do to accommodate the different user groups of the area. Many did not feel that there was conflict between user groups but offered some suggestions that might ensure everyone's recreational needs were being met. One suggestion was having designated areas that are "dog-friendly" that would have signs posted so all users knew that dogs would be in that specific area.

*I'd like to see some areas that are designated for specific activities, and maybe Coot Lake, maybe not, [such as having] a dog-friendly area. That doesn't change what you can and can't do, doesn't change the rules and regulations about your dog, but just have a few areas that are not just multi-use for everybody to do whatever they want. There also would be [areas] where dogs can't go in addition to some areas [that are] dog friendly areas.*

*I go there practically every day and I have never seen a really bad confrontation between a dog and a human. I have seen runners, for instance, who don't like having dogs in their pathway because it interrupts their "flow," but I have never seen a dog being obnoxious to another human being and I've never seen a dog being obnoxious to another dog.*

One participant, who was a dog owner, noted that one problem area at Coot Lake and the north shore was other dog owners not picking up their dog's feces. She noted that she was "one of the ones who picks up more poop than I put there."

*I don't mind picking up after a few more dogs. I find the people who mostly disobey the rules are out-of-towners who come there or dog walkers and men.*

Other users offered ideas for ways to resolve this issue such as having more visible staff who could issue fines or tickets to people who do not pick up their dog's feces. They believed that if dog owners knew that people were watching and enforcing the rule, then they would be more likely to pick up after their dogs. A few were willing to pay an annual fee if it meant that an extra staff person could be there to enforce the rules. Another participant suggested having people volunteer to patrol the area:

*Have a volunteer patrol... with your dog. Have two things, one is to have two people always together because you're less likely to have any real conflict if there are two people. [And two] have your dogs. If you're going to approach another person with a dog and you have your dog with you, they're going to be a lot more open to your suggestions. My approach is kind of "oh I just saw your dog poop here would you like a bag."*

Someone else proposed including information about approaching other dog owners about picking up after their dog in the training video that is used to get the dog Voice and Sight tags.

When asked if the city should require dogs to be on-leash at all times at Coot Lake, all but one said they were strongly against. Many were concerned because Coot Lake was one of the few places in the area where dogs could be off-leash. The one person in favor of the city taking this action said it was only because it would protect the wildlife and the wetlands.

Because most nudity occurs on the north shore near Coot Lake, participants in this focus group were asked to give their thoughts on subject. While more users of this area than the reservoir said they had seen nudity, most said it did not bother them and that it should be allowed.

Most residents felt the city has done a good job of balancing the recreational opportunities and access for users while maintaining the health of the natural lands and wildlife. A couple people said that the city could pay a little more attention to the wetlands and areas where birds nest on the ground.

Coot Lake and north shore users were asked to think about ways to control invasive species that are threatening and invading the area. Several respondents wanted to see more information about studies that have been done showing that invasive species are actually a problem and what is causing the

problem. They felt more education could be done with residents and users of the area about what the invasive species are and how they spread to help curtail the problem. One participant suggested getting a group of volunteers together to help pull weeds, which would save the city money, and others agreed this was a good idea. Another user was supportive of the city closing certain areas seasonally to stop the spread of invasive species.

*I would like to see more information. Some more effort put into education, and in other words, I don't know half the invasive species out there that nobody wants and I would love to be part of a group that went out and picked them, hand-picked them, and counted. And if we all, as users of the lake, anybody who has to get a license for a boat or anything else, could [get an] email and would be alerted when there were going to be outings led by a ranger, I would do it. I would love to.*

*I really like the education idea. I love the idea of volunteers helping out. I think those are two great, especially in an area like this. Good signage. I feel...if people [are] sympathetic and they know the reasons, people want to do the right thing. I do think these invasive weeds are just you know they can just wipe out everything else and it's a helpless landscape so I really would like to see strong protections against them. I'm fine with closing off areas at seasonal times I just think there's so many of us and there's just such delicate landscape and it's so it's just increasingly under pressure so whatever would be helpful for it I would that's what I'd really like to see.*

*I would have an area closed off so that I could never see a rare bird again if it would protect the bird. And what I really want to see is the creatures protected because it's not my recreation, really, it's the creatures [that I want to protect].*

One participant also noted that he would like more than 24 hour notice when the city applies herbicide.

## Resource Allocation

The current budget, resources and staff duties for the north shore were explained to residents. They were asked to provide different actions they think the city could pursue to fund new developments and protect the wildlife and natural lands in the area. Residents came up with a number of potential solutions including fees for specific user groups and all users; however one person mentioned not making the fees so high that they are restrictive to low-income residents.

*I think anybody who uses facilities on a regular basis, such as dog walkers, should probably pay an annual fee, not just a one-time fee, and I think that it ought to be based on the number of dogs that you anticipate. In other words, each dog should have an independent green tag and without a green tag you're subject to severe fines if you're caught with the dog off-leash. For those of us who appreciate the fact that there is an area for dogs to run in, I'm sure are more than willing to give extra money.*

*I would be in favor of a blanket fee; this is something that the city of Longmont is either doing or considering that's attached to the utility billing.*

Many participants were open to a parking fee to raise funds for the area. They thought that a drop box for fees was better than having a staffed booth because that would be an added cost. One participant suggested having the ability to purchase an annual pass for the area:

*What I would say for differentiation, would be to have an annual fee that you can buy or to have a day fee. So if you're a Boulder resident you know you can buy the annual fee, and if you're someone who's coming from Denver and going, [you can get the day fee].*

Most thought it would be challenging to enforce resident/non-resident fees without having a staff member administering fees, although it could be applied to those wanting to purchase an annual pass. The one stipulation that most users had was that the money they would pay through fees of any kind had to go to the north shore/Coot Lake area. They said they would want assurance that the money would be recycled back into the area.

They did not believe that eliminating access points would be helpful to free up funds, as they noted that, currently, there were not a lot of access points. Users also were not in favor of reducing staff hours for maintenance (i.e., trash pick-up, restroom clean-up) because they felt there was not enough maintenance to begin with. A number of participants wondered if people required to do community service could be used to help with maintenance and weed management at the north shore/Coot Lake area. Other suggestions included “adopt a place” and corporate sponsors such as IBM, boy scouts and Seagate.

## **APPENDIX A: FOCUS GROUP SCRIPTS**

The following pages contain copies of the scripts used for the three focus groups.

## Moderator Discussion Guide – Boaters

### Welcome and Ground Rules (5 minutes)

Hello. Thank you all for coming and participating in this focus group discussion. My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I work for an independent research group called National Research Center.

**You were invited to join this discussion** because you purchased a boating permit for the 2009 season at the Boulder Reservoir or you're a member of a group that that uses the reservoir for recreational boating. The City of Boulder Parks and Recreation Department is conducting a series of focus group discussions to **gather opinions about current and future services and use policies** at the Reservoir, which will be used in developing a master plan for the Reservoir.

**How many of you have participated in a focus group before?** In case you have not been in a focus group before, a focus group is a structured discussion where we'll ask you a series of questions to encourage sharing of ideas and opinions. We really want you to express yourself openly and honestly. There are no right or wrong answers. We just want to know what you think.

**We are going to tape record this session** to ensure our report accurately reflects your comments. However, your responses will not be linked with your name in any way. Everything you say will be kept strictly confidential. Because we are taping, I may need to remind you occasionally to speak up or talk one at a time so that we can hear you clearly when we review the session audio tapes.

**I am your guide, but I want the conversation to be among all of you.** Each time I ask a question, we don't need to go around the table to let everyone respond in turn. But every so often I may check in and make sure that we get a chance to hear from different people because it is important that we understand different perspectives. There are only \_\_\_\_\_ of you, so each one of your perspectives is important to hear. If you would like to add to an idea, or if you have an idea that is different from other people's ideas, that's the time to jump into the conversation. Bear in mind, we're not looking for consensus here; we're looking to hear a variety of opinions and experiences.

[Mention food protocol, gift at end of group, no bathroom break].

### Ice Breaker (10 minutes)

Let's begin by pronouncing your name for the group, telling us what city you live in and what your favorite recreation activity is.

1. What kinds of things you do when you go to the Boulder Reservoir and surrounding areas?

[PROBE: What kinds of things do you do when you visit (i.e., bike, hike, hike with dogs, dogs swim)? When do you usually do these activities? Weekday vs weekend? Seasonally? How frequently do you visit these areas in a month?]

Today, we're going to talk about changes you would like or would not like to see at the Boulder Reservoir and surrounding recreation areas. Let's first spend a little time talking about the look and feel of these areas.

### **Look and Feel/Appearance (40 minutes)**

2. So, imagine that you have left Boulder. After 10 years without contact, you've come back for a visit and you go to the reservoir, which you have heard has won the award as the best recreation area in the country, and you are walking around and observing the area. What is different? What has changed? What has stayed the same to make this area the best it can be and better than other places?

[PROBE: What kinds of people go there? What kinds of events are held there? What kinds of activities are allowed or not allowed there? What about the land? Is there more or less or different vegetation?]

3. Now, thinking about the reservoir currently, what services provided at the Reservoir are most important to you (i.e., gas service, lake patrol, rental boats, lifeguarded swimming area, concessions, bathrooms, picnic areas, maintained paths, roads)? Which are the least important?

4. What kinds of improvements/ additional facilities would you like to see on the south shore area? [i.e., Concessions, picnic shelters, boat house, restrooms, state park type items; Describe the south shore to be sure all know where we are talking about.]

[PROBE: What about a larger parking lot, restroom facilities, more/better beaches? How important is it to you that the City provides these types of amenities?]

5. Currently, the reservoir gates are open year round. Entry fees are only charged May – September. Would you prefer that the Boulder Reservoir facility be a year round facility (fees and services year round) or a 9 month facility (fees and services for those 9 months), where gates would be closed and locked for no vehicle access and boating would be suspended for those 3 months?

Would it still meet your recreational needs even if it was open 9 months of the year? [i.e., Maybe closed Dec-Feb to save money (boat inspector year round, maintenance, other staff, etc) or does it even really need to be year round?]

[PROBE: Currently, boating is allowed year round. Do you think boating should be seasonal or should be allowed year round? What makes you say that? What other changes would you like to see to the hours of operation?]

[INFO FOR FACILITATOR: Benefits water quality. Currently have staff there that have made rescues for boaters that go out in off season. Safety and budget issues.]

6. In what ways do events held at the reservoir impact your use of the reservoir? Do small events (50-100 people) compared to large events (500-3000) impact your use differently?

[PROBE: Do you stay away when events are happening? Do you still do the activities you typically would at the reservoir during events? Should the City close down the general traffic to the reservoir for major events?]

7. While visiting the reservoir, have you ever been concerned about your own safety or the safety of your family? What about the safety of property in the area? What concerns do you have?

[PROBE: Do different times of the day feel more or less safe? Is safety a concern during events or when it's particularly crowded? What about safety from wildlife or boats?]

### **Boating (20 minutes)**

8. A number of people use the reservoir for different recreational purposes, including swimming, motorized and non-motorized boating, fishing, etc. What ideas do you have for Parks and Recreation staff about ways to share the time and space at the reservoir with both power and non powered boats?

Designated days/parts of days? Prohibit certain kinds of boats? Which kinds?

[PROBE: Do you think there is conflict or contention between motorized and non-motorized boaters? What's the conflict? Is it a large conflict or small?]

9. What do you think about the water quality at the Reservoir? For swimming? For boating? For drinking?

[PROBE: How do you know about the water quality at the Reservoir? [Visual inspection, smell, read about it, people tell me.]

9a. What ideas do you have about ways the City can maintain water quality at the reservoir for swimmers and boaters? [Prohibit certain uses; increase filtration; limit number of users/time on water, doing emission testing on power boats, requiring boaters to get newer or electric motors?]

9b. This year, the City implemented some procedures to protect the reservoir from aquatic nuisance species, including boat inspections. What your thoughts about how to make inspections go smoothly and not be too burdensome on boaters in the future?

[PROBE: Would you be willing to pay in additional fees to offset costs for the infrastructure and staffing to make that happen to protect water quality? If so, how much?]

### **Rules and Regulations (15 minutes)**

**Let's take the last few minutes to talk a little about different rules and regulations at the reservoir.**

10. Do you think all types of alcohol should be allowed at the reservoir? What kinds should be prohibited? Should there be limits to the amount people can bring into the reservoir?

[PROBE: Would you be in favor of restricting alcohol to 3:2 beer or no kegs, with exceptions for scheduled picnics? What would be the benefits to this practice? What would be the downside? Have you experienced any problems at the reservoir as it related to drunken or unruly behavior?]

10a. Where should alcohol be allowed? Everywhere? Only on the south shore? What about the north shore area?

11. Currently, nudity at the reservoir is not prohibited, but not necessarily allowed. What are your thoughts on nudity at the reservoir? [Should it be allowed or prohibited?]

[PROBE: Could a compromise be that there is a designated area where nudity could be allowed that's out of view from most other people recreating at the reservoir?]

12. What do you think about the number of cars coming into the reservoir? [too many, no problem] What are some of the ways the City could decrease car traffic coming into area?

[PROBE: Providing a bus or shuttle to the reservoir? Allowing people who walk or bike into the reservoir free admission or at a discounted rate?]

13. Think about the parking situation at the reservoir. [REFER TO MAP IF NECESSARY] Do you ever have trouble parking at the reservoir? Should the parking outside the front gate area off of 51st be fee based, removed all together or remain as is? [If the City removed that totally, how would that work, or not work, to solve parking in the neighborhood? Would you be more inclined to park in the neighborhood if that parking was eliminated? How would you feel about the City not charging a fee but, as a trade off, not providing the current services that support that lot like a port-a-potty and staff for emergencies?]

[INFO FOR FACILITATOR: There are 20-25 that exist outside the entry gate so people don't have to pay entry into the Reservoir. When that fills up, people park in surrounding neighborhoods.]

That concludes our discussion. Thank you so much for your time. \_\_\_\_\_ will give you your thank you gift on your way out.

**Next steps:**

**A public open house/administrative hearing is scheduled for October 21 at 5:00 p.m. A public hearing is also scheduled with PRAB on October 26 at 6:00 p.m. I'll confirm both locations today and get back to everyone.**

## Moderator Discussion Guide – Gate Passes and Events

### Welcome and Ground Rules (5 minutes)

Hello. Thank you all for coming and participating in this focus group discussion. My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I work for an independent research group called National Research Center.

**You were invited to join this discussion** because you purchased a gate pass, punch pass, participated in a program, purchased a permit for a picnic or held an event for the 2009 season at the Boulder Reservoir. The City of Boulder Parks and Recreation Department is conducting a series of focus group discussions to **gather opinions about current and future services and use policies** at the Reservoir, which will be used in developing a master plan for the Reservoir.

**How many of you have participated in a focus group before?** In case you have not been in a focus group before, a focus group is a structured discussion where we'll ask you a series of questions to encourage sharing of ideas and opinions. We really want you to express yourself openly and honestly. There are no right or wrong answers. We just want to know what you think.

**We are going to tape record this session** to ensure our report accurately reflects your comments. However, your responses will not be linked with your name in any way. Everything you say will be kept strictly confidential. Because we are taping, I may need to remind you occasionally to speak up or talk one at a time so that we can hear you clearly when we review the session audio tapes.

**I am your guide, but I want the conversation to be among all of you.** Each time I ask a question, we don't need to go around the table to let everyone respond in turn. But every so often I may check in and make sure that we get a chance to hear from different people because it is important that we understand different perspectives. There are only \_\_\_\_\_ of you, so each one of your perspectives is important to hear. If you would like to add to an idea, or if you have an idea that is different from other people's ideas, that's the time to jump into the conversation. Bear in mind, we're not looking for consensus here; we're looking to hear a variety of opinions and experiences.

[Mention food protocol, gift at end of group, no bathroom break].

### Ice Breaker (10 minutes)

Let's begin by pronouncing your name for the group, telling us what city you live in and what your favorite recreation activity is.

1. What kinds of things you do when you go to the Boulder Reservoir and surrounding areas?

[PROBE: What kinds of things do you do when you visit (i.e., bike, hike, hike with dogs, dogs swim)? When do you usually do these activities? Weekday vs weekend? Seasonally? How frequently do you visit these areas in a month?]

Today, we're going to talk about changes you would like or would not like to see at the Boulder Reservoir and surrounding recreation areas. Let's first spend a little time talking about the look and feel of these areas.

### **Look and Feel/Appearance (40 minutes)**

2. So, imagine that you have left Boulder. After 10 years without contact, you've come back for a visit and you go to the reservoir, which you have heard has won the award as the best recreation area in the country, and you are walking around and observing the area. What is different? What has changed? What has stayed the same to make this area the best it can be and better than other places?

[PROBE: What kinds of people go there? What kinds of events are held there? What kinds of activities are allowed or not allowed there? What about the land? Is there more or less or different vegetation?]

3. Now, thinking about the reservoir currently, what services provided at the Reservoir are most important to you (i.e., gas service, lake patrol, rental boats, lifeguarded swimming area, concessions, bathrooms, picnic areas, maintained paths, roads)? Which are the least important?

4. What kinds of improvements/ additional facilities would you like to see on the south shore area? [i.e., Concessions, picnic shelters, boat house, restrooms, state park type items; Describe the south shore to be sure all know where we are talking about.]

[PROBE: What about a larger parking lot, restroom facilities, more/better beaches? How important is it to you that the City provides these types of amenities?]

5. Currently, the reservoir gates are open year round. Entry fees are only charged May – September. Would you prefer that the Boulder Reservoir facility be a year round facility (fees and services year round) or a 9 month facility (fees and services for those 9 months), where gates would be closed and locked for no vehicle access and boating would be suspended for those 3 months?

Would it still meet your recreational needs even if it was open 9 months of the year? [i.e., Maybe closed Dec-Feb to save money (boat inspector year round, maintenance, other staff, etc) or does it even really need to be year round?]

[PROBE: Currently, boating is allowed year round. Do you think boating should be seasonal or should be allowed year round? What makes you say that? What other changes would you like to see to the hours of operation?]

[INFO FOR FACILITATOR: Benefits water quality. Currently have staff there that have made rescues for boaters that go out in off season. Safety and budget issues.]

6. In what ways do events held at the reservoir impact your use of the reservoir? Do small events (50-100 people) compared to large events (500-3000) impact your use differently?

[PROBE: Do you stay away when events are happening? Do you still do the activities you typically would at the reservoir during events? Should the City close down the general traffic to the reservoir for major events?]

7. While visiting the reservoir, have you ever been concerned about your own safety or the safety of your family? What about the safety of property in the area? What concerns do you have?

[PROBE: Do different times of the day feel more or less safe? Is safety a concern during events or when it's particularly crowded? What about safety from wildlife or boats?]

### **Boating (20 minutes)**

8. A number of people use the reservoir for different recreational purposes, including swimming, motorized and non-motorized boating, fishing, etc. What ideas do you have for Parks and Recreation staff about ways to share the time and space at the reservoir with both power and non powered boats?

Designated days/parts of days? Prohibit certain kinds of boats? Which kinds?

[PROBE: Do you think there is conflict or contention between motorized and non-motorized boaters? What's the conflict? Is it a large conflict or small?]

9. What do you think about the water quality at the Reservoir? For swimming? For boating? For drinking?

[PROBE: How do you know about the water quality at the Reservoir? [Visual inspection, smell, read about it, people tell me.]

9a. What ideas do you have about ways the City can maintain water quality at the reservoir for swimmers and boaters? [Prohibit certain uses; increase filtration; limit number of users/time on water, doing emission testing on power boats, requiring boaters to get newer or electric motors?]

9b. This year, the City implemented some procedures to protect the reservoir from aquatic nuisance species, including boat inspections. What your thoughts about how to make inspections go smoothly and not be too burdensome on boaters in the future?

[PROBE: Would you be willing to pay in additional fees to offset costs for the infrastructure and staffing to make that happen to protect water quality? If so, how much?]

### **Rules and Regulations (15 minutes)**

**Let's take the last few minutes to talk a little about different rules and regulations at the reservoir.**

10. Do you think all types of alcohol should be allowed at the reservoir? What kinds should be prohibited? Should there be limits to the amount people can bring into the reservoir?

[PROBE: Would you be in favor of restricting alcohol to 3:2 beer or no kegs, with exceptions for scheduled picnics? What would be the benefits to this practice? What would be the downside? Have you experienced any problems at the reservoir as it related to drunken or unruly behavior?]

10a. Where should alcohol be allowed? Everywhere? Only on the south shore? What about the north shore area?

11. Currently, nudity at the reservoir is not prohibited, but not necessarily allowed. What are your thoughts on nudity at the reservoir? [Should it be allowed or prohibited?]

[PROBE: Could a compromise be that there is a designated area where nudity could be allowed that's out of view from most other people recreating at the reservoir?

12. What do you think about the number of cars coming into the reservoir? [too many, no problem] What are some of the ways the City could decrease car traffic coming into area?

[PROBE: Providing a bus or shuttle to the reservoir? Allowing people who walk or bike into the reservoir free admission or at a discounted rate?]

13. Think about the parking situation at the reservoir. [REFER TO MAP IF NECESSARY] Do you ever have trouble parking at the reservoir? Should the parking outside the front gate area off of 51st be fee based, removed all together or remain as is? [If the City removed that totally, how would that work, or not work, to solve parking in the neighborhood? Would you be more inclined to park in the neighborhood if that parking was eliminated? How would you feel about the City not charging a fee but, as a trade off, not providing the current services that support that lot like a port-a-potty and staff for emergencies?]

[INFO FOR FACILITATOR: There are 20-25 that exist outside the entry gate so people don't have to pay entry into the Reservoir. When that fills up, people park in surrounding neighborhoods.]

That concludes our discussion. Thank you so much for your time. \_\_\_\_\_ will give you your thank you gift on your way out.

**Next steps:**

**A public open house/administrative hearing is scheduled for October 21 at 5:00 p.m. A public hearing is also scheduled with PRAB on October 26 at 6:00 p.m. I'll confirm both locations today and get back to everyone.**

## **Moderator Discussion Guide – Coot Lake/55<sup>th</sup> Trailhead**

### **Welcome and Ground Rules (5 minutes)**

Hello. Thank you all for coming and participating in this focus group discussion. My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I work for an independent research group called National Research Center.

**You were invited to join this discussion because** you hike or use the trailheads at Coot Lake and/or the 55<sup>th</sup> trailhead. The City of Boulder Parks and Recreation Department is conducting a series of focus group discussions to **gather opinions about current and future services and use policies at the Reservoir**. Your feedback will be used in developing a master plan for the Reservoir.

**How many of you have participated in a focus group before?** In case you have not been in a focus group before, a focus group is a structured discussion where we'll ask you a series of questions to encourage sharing of ideas and opinions. We really want you to express yourself openly and honestly. There are no right or wrong answers. We just want to know what you think.

**We are going to tape record this session** to ensure our report accurately reflects your comments. However, your responses will not be linked with your name in any way. Everything you say will be kept strictly confidential. Because we are taping, I may need to remind you occasionally to speak up or talk one at a time so that we can hear you clearly when we review the session audio tapes.

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[Mention food protocol, gift at end of group, no bathroom break].

### **Ice Breaker (10 minutes)**

Let's begin by pronouncing your name for the group, telling us what city you live in and what your favorite recreation activity is.

1. What kinds of activities you do when you go to the 55th trailhead and Coot Lake recreation areas?

[PROBE: What kinds of things do you do when you visit (i.e., bike, hike, hike with dogs, dogs swim)? When do you usually do these activities? Weekday vs weekend? Seasonally? How frequently do you visit these areas in a month?]

**Today, we're going to talk about changes you would like or would not like to see at the Boulder Reservoir and surrounding recreation areas. Let's first spend a little time talking about what you do when you recreate at these areas and the look and feel of them.**

### **Look and Feel/Appearance (15 minutes)**

2. So, imagine that you have left Boulder. After 10 years without contact, you've come back for a visit and you go to the north shore – Coot Lake or 55<sup>th</sup> trailhead, which you have heard has won an award as the best managed recreational natural area in the country, and you are walking around and observing the area. What is different? What has changed? What has stayed the same to make this area the best it can be and better than other places?

[PROBE: What kinds of people go there? What kinds of events are held there? What kinds of activities are allowed or not allowed there? What about the land? Is there more or less or different vegetation?]

3. How many of you use the 55<sup>th</sup> trailhead? Thinking specifically about the 55<sup>th</sup> trailhead area, what kinds of development would you like to see at the 55<sup>th</sup> trailhead?

[PROBE: What about designated trails (i.e., developed or constructed), a larger parking lot, restroom facilities? How important is it to you that the City provides these types of amenities at the 55<sup>th</sup> trailhead?]

4. While visiting the north shore of the reservoir, have you ever been concerned about your own safety or the safety of your family? [Could be safety from crime, from conflict, from wild animals, from pets, from traffic]

### **Potential Conflicting Uses (40 minutes)**

5. What are some of the reasons you like going to and recreating at Coot Lake and the 55<sup>th</sup> trailhead? (E.g., the scenery, dogs can be off-leash or leashed, it's relaxing, etc.)

[MORE INFO IF NEEDED: In a recent survey NRC did of Boulder Reservoir users for the City of Boulder, about 36% of Coot Lake/north shore users liked it for being dog friendly or that dogs are allowed off leash, and about 25% of users liked the scenery, found it relaxing or pretty.]

5a. Knowing that people enjoy these areas for different reasons, what suggestions do you have for the Parks and Recreation department about ways to accommodate everyone and their interests so that residents who fit into these different groups can all enjoy the area?

6. Thinking about dogs at the Boulder Reservoir/Coot Lake area, how would you feel about the City requiring dogs to be on-leash at all times, similar to current City requirements of all areas within the city limits?

[PROBE: What about designating an area as ‘voice and sight’ (such as one that has water access for dogs) in a limited area instead of all of Coot Lake and the north shore of the reservoir to better manage any potential conflicts among users and to protect the natural resources? Would that be a fair resolution?]

7. Currently, nudity at the reservoir is not prohibited, but not necessarily allowed. What are your thoughts on nudity at the reservoir? {Should it be allowed or prohibited?} Have you ever witnessed it?

[PROBE: Could a compromise be that there is a designated area where nudity could be allowed that’s out of view from most other people recreating at the reservoir?]

8. The City has to strike a balance between providing recreational opportunities and access to the north shore property with maintaining the health of the natural lands and wildlife species that inhabit it. In your opinion, do you think the City has the right balance now, or is it tilted too far one direction or another? In what ways do you think the City is doing a good job, or in what ways do you think improvements could be made?

8a. Some areas of the north shore and Coot Lake area are being threatened by invasive species (i.e., zebra/quagga mussels, purple loosestrife, etc.). Currently, the state has implemented certain regulations the City must follow to control these species. In addition, much of the natural areas around the Reservoir serve as valuable habitat for a wide variety of wildlife species year round.

There are some options the City has in deciding how to implement measures to control invasive species and protect wildlife, but many might impact the way in which people are able to use the area.

Some of these options for controlling invasive species include reducing or eliminating potential causes for infestation by:

- Closing off certain areas off seasonally
- Limiting access in heavily infested areas temporarily
- Limiting access in heavily infested areas long term?
- Putting fencing along trails so people/animals have to stick to the designated trail
- Education about the invasive species and how they spread?

To protect wildlife, the City could designate areas of “acceptable use” for certain recreational activities

8b. Which of these options, if any, do you think would work best to balance recreational needs and access to the area with protecting the natural resources and wildlife? How would you like the City to consider the balance between recreational uses and natural lands protection? (What would you like the City to consider in making decisions about what, if any, additional protective measures that should be implemented?)

[PROBE: Should the City focus on some of the natural areas more than others (i.e., open water, wetlands, shortgrass prairie, riparian corridors)?]

[INFO FOR FACILITATOR: Weed management association lists a,b,c species. All a must be irradiated (Only List A species required eradication – we do work on all List species though), which the City does. City has weed removal with seasonal staff but they don’t manage recreation in infested areas. So things like controlling access in heavy infested areas would help b/c people or dogs walking through spreads the weeds. Could be temp or long-term. Eliminate access points to control where people could/would go? DEFINITION: Riparian Corridors are defined as "natural lands" within a 100 meter corridor encompassing perennial stream and river features.]

### **Resource Allocation (20 minutes)**

For the last set of questions, we’ll be talking about things you think the City should or could do, as it relates to funding, to maintain or improve upon some of the things we’ve been discussing.

As I’m sure everyone knows, the current economic climate has had a large impact on local jurisdictions. Budgets are tight and cities and counties are having to make tough decisions to be able to manage the budget and allocate resources just to maintain the current level of services they’re providing, including increasing or implementing taxes and fees and reducing service levels. The level of use at the north shore/Coot Lake area has increased substantially over the last ten years (there are currently approximately 145,000 visits annually to this area). As a result, the City is trying to figure out how to do more with less.

The city has an annual budget of about \$80,000 for seasonal help of about 4 staff for the entire urban park system (about 32 other park sites with natural areas), including the reservoir, Coot Lake and 55<sup>th</sup> trailhead areas, where about half of the \$80,000 is spent. Staff do things like:

- building and maintaining trails, facilities/structures and parking lots
- mowing along trails
- fence repair
- installing signs
- trash removal
- cleaning restrooms
- weed management (i.e., pulling weeds)
- and pest/wildlife management (i.e., mosquito abatement, prairie dog monitoring/counts/mapping).

9. So, earlier we talked about the kinds of development you might like to see at the 55<sup>th</sup> trailhead, such as designated trails, restrooms and a larger parking lot and protecting/preserving the natural environment. Based on the information I just shared with you about budgets and resource allocation, what are some of the ways you think the city should fund these new developments?

9a. What about finding more funding or raising more money through user fees, new taxes or increased taxes? Would you be willing to pay more to use these recreation areas? What if it meant things like parking improvements or maintaining the facilities (i.e., restrooms and trash removal)?

[PROBE: What do you think about implementing parking fees at these sites? Is that a reasonable resolution? Fees v. parking improvements?]

9b. Lots of people, even those living outside the City of Boulder, enjoy and use the Coot Lake and north shore area. If the City were to implement fees to help support the upkeep and maintenance of the area, what do you think those fees should be and who should those fees be applied to?

[PROBE: Should the city continue the practice of separate fees for residents of Boulder versus non-residents or should there be one fee for all users? What would be the benefits of one fee versus a separate fee for residents vs non-residents? What do you think about only charge user fees to non-residents of the city? Do you think that would be a fair approach?]

9c. What about potentially reducing costs designated to Coot Lake/north shore like eliminating access points (parking), which would reduce the level of or need for maintenance at these areas? Or reducing fence repair, the frequency of trash removal/restroom maintenance (although pretty efficient and low budget right now), reducing the hours of manual labor?

10. Again, due to the current economic climate, staffing levels dedicated to support the various services at the north shore/Coot Lake area will likely decline after 2010 and with more and more people using this recreation area, the City is facing tough budget decisions. Given the use will like to continue to increase, where might the city best spend time or budget to manage current and future visitor use?

[INFO FOR FACILITATOR: 4-5 Seasonal crew maintenance staff – pest mgmt, wildlife and general maintenance of that area. Not a full time position. Trash removal, fence repair. This year only able to hire 3 and oversee natural areas within urban parks (32 parks). 80% weed mgmt when at res. Restrooms, trash, fence/trail repair, mowing for weed management (aesthetics), (purple loosestrife, puncture vine is big problem), vandalism repair, raptor/closure monitoring, prairie dog management (counts, mapping, plague occurrences), water quality with giardia and dogs. Dog mgmt when it comes to fishing.]

That concludes our discussion. Thank you so much for your time. \_\_\_\_\_ will give you your thank you gift on your way out.

**Next steps:**

**A public open house/administrative hearing is scheduled for October 21 at 5:00 p.m. A public hearing is also scheduled with PRAB on October 26 at 6:00 p.m. I'll confirm both locations today and get back to everyone.**