



Stand With Our Saint Vrain Creek

standwithourstvraincreek.com

Longmont, Colorado

April 1, 2018

Longmont City Council
350 Kimbark Street
Longmont, Colorado 80501

RE: Enact Stronger Riparian Protection Laws

Mayor Bagley and Council Members:

As the City of Longmont shifts its focus from development opportunities on the city margins to infill or redevelopment, the intrusion of urban development into riparian (relating to or situated on the banks of a river or other body of water) areas will intensify. Riparian areas serve a number of important functions such as filtering runoff, slowing down flood waters, and preventing erosion. In addition, while riparian areas are estimated to make up less than 2% of the area of Colorado, over 70% of species in the state depend on riparian areas at some point in their lives.

The current update of Longmont's Land Development Code provides a timely opportunity for City Council to enact significant improvements to its regulations concerning the protection of Longmont's rivers, streams, wetlands, and riparian areas (section 15.05.020) as well as wildlife and wildlife habitat within the city (section 15.05.030).

Stand with Our St. Vrain Creek and the signatories of this letter respectfully request the following be included in the Land Development Code in order to protect our creeks, streams, lakes, and reservoirs, such as St. Vrain Creek and Union Reservoir:

1. The criteria for granting a variance for a reduced riparian setback are vague, ambiguous, and set a low bar for developers to obtain City approval to build within the 150-foot riparian conservation buffer. The criteria, as currently written, require a variance request to be consistent with a developer's proposal, but do not require that it be consistent with City plans to restore habitat for wildlife, aquatic species, and pollinators on St. Vrain Creek after flood mitigation efforts are completed. The criteria should be re-written to eliminate loopholes and provide more stringent requirements that will **effectively** protect riparian habitat and movement corridors;
2. Artificial lighting should be prohibited along Longmont's greenways, open space properties, and riparian corridors in order to protect nocturnal wildlife and maintain the ecological integrity of wildlife movement corridors;
3. Light fixture shielding and vegetation buffer requirements should be established to minimize the impacts of light and noise pollution from nearby development on greenways, open spaces, and

riparian corridors. This is especially important along the St. Vrain where the removal of vegetation has eliminated an important natural screen and sound dampener;

4. Building heights should be restricted for structures built adjacent to riparian areas in order to keep the scale and profile of buildings from overpowering the natural setting of stream corridors;
5. The amount of impervious materials (e.g. concrete sidewalks and parking lots) used in a development adjacent to rivers, streams, and other bodies of water should be kept to a small percentage of the overall area of the development. Impervious surfaces prevent infiltration of rain and snowmelt into the ground resulting in polluted stormwater runoff draining into waterways;
6. The planning and development services director (not the development applicant) should retain a consultant with demonstrated expertise in the field to prepare the required habitat/species conservation report for a development proposal. The applicant will reimburse the City for the cost of preparing the plan; and
7. The City should acquire wildlife habitat adjacent to the riparian conservation buffer as open space or as a wildlife habitat dedication in an annexation agreement to protect important wildlife habitat, including prairie dog habitat, located outside the 150-foot buffer but contiguous with habitat within the buffer zone.

Riparian areas are highly valued habitat in terms of species richness and the high number of endangered, threatened, and special concern species present there. It is imperative that City Council be proactive and take immediate action to ensure the protection of these areas now and for future habitat restoration efforts by implementing stronger regulations and honoring the intent of the current 150-foot riparian setback requirement.

Thank you for your time and the consideration you will give to this matter.

Respectfully yours,

Stand With Our Saint Vrain Creek

Boulder Rights of Nature

Prairie Protection Colorado

Boulder County Audubon Society

Save Our St. Vrain Valley

Colorado River Rights of Nature

Save Union Reservoir

Dark Sky Association, Colorado Section

Sierra Club, Colorado Chapter

Endangered Species Coalition

Tindakan

Foothills Audubon Club

WildEarth Guardians

Front Range Nesting Bald Eagle Studies