

# LTE: Stand takes a stand against Martin's comments

Jamie Simo, guest opinion

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*A waterfall at at Golden Ponds Nature Area. (Photo by Matt Maenpaa)*

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Description: In her recent letter to the editor, Longmont Councilor Marcia Martin urged voters to approve the city's bond measure funding flood mitigation work in the Hover stretch of St. Vrain Creek. As a Member of Stand with Our St. Vrain Creek, I'd like to correct several statements she made regarding our group in that letter.

Firstly, Stand never "asked voters to reject the bond" if the city didn't guarantee that the bank swallow colony at Roger's Grove would be left untouched by flood mitigation. We have stated that we don't want our money going toward destroying bank swallow habitat, but we never campaigned against the bond (which passed the council unanimously and will advance to the ballot in November).

Martin is correct that nature alters riparian habitat and that bank swallows may adapt to these changes, but that is without human interference. Over the last 50 years, bank swallow populations in North America have declined 89%. Contributing factors include loss of habitat due to development and flood mitigation projects that destroy the specific conditions these birds require for nesting.

Thankfully, at the last city council meeting, the city publicly committed to replicating the bank swallow habitat at Roger's Grove. Crucially, the city also committed to researching and consulting with other municipalities regarding their habitat replication/restoration efforts and to experimenting with the best methods before commencing work in the Hover reach. This is important to ensure that funds go toward restoration methods that will provide the greatest likelihood of the bank swallows using the new nesting site. Councilor Martin should be happy to support this as it adheres to the "return on investment" she cites under the "Profit" piece of the "Triple Bottom Line."

Lastly, Stand did not advocate for "extra wide" setbacks for development along St. Vrain Creek. The 150-foot setback along certain streams and bodies of water within Longmont went into effect in 2007 under former Mayor Pirnack. Prior to this change, the setback was only 100 feet. When the relevant portions of the Longmont Land Development Code were revised in 2020, Stand advocated for keeping the 150-foot

setback as well as for removing loophole language that would have allowed nearly any requested variance for development to be deemed "justified."

Retaining the 150-foot setback benefits the "Planet" piece of the "Triple Bottom Line" as well as the "People" of Longmont. As Stand has repeatedly emphasized, natural riparian vegetation provides flood control by holding onto soils and slowing runoff, something that concrete and lawns do not. Considering the devastation wrought by the 2013 flood on homes and businesses, the likelihood of future flooding due to climate change, and the amount of money the city has invested in mitigating the effects of those floods, maintaining the 150-foot minimum setback is a no-brainer.

As Longmont moves forward with flood mitigation and as development becomes possible in previously undevelopable areas, Stand will continue to advocate for our riparian areas and wildlife, including our bank swallows. We look forward to working with the city in this endeavor.

Jamie Simo