



APPENDIX F

Button Rock Code Enforcement Data, 2017-2022

Watershed Ranger Program

The City of Longmont employs a small team of watershed rangers to patrol, protect, and manage the municipal watershed. Rangers are stationed at Button Rock Preserve year-round, enforce Longmont Municipal Code, respond to emergencies, and assist the Water Resources working group in operating Button Rock Dam.

Watershed rangers represent an evolution of the City's caretaker position assigned to the North St. Vrain Creek watershed for over 100 years beginning with a single employee housed near Longmont Dam at the turn of the twentieth century. Following the development of Ralph Price Reservoir in the 1960s, the City officially opened the watershed above Longmont Dam to limited public recreation. In the 1980s, Longmont formally converted the caretaker to a ranger position with code enforcement authority in order to protect the Preserve from increasing recreation pressure.

Ranger Data Collection

The frequency and quality of ranger data collection at Button Rock Preserve has varied over time due to staffing levels, employee turnover, enforcement priorities, and available technology. Until late 2020, rangers maintained handwritten paper patrol logs. In 2021, data collection transitioned to digital format using a basic Excel spreadsheet and ultimately a Citywide GIS-based "Ranger Patrol Log."

From 2017 until late 2019, ranger staffing consisted of one FTE ranger assisted by two seasonal rangers. In 2019, the full-time Watershed Ranger left City employment and turnover in seasonal staffing reduced coverage to a single seasonal ranger for the spring and summer season of 2020. This coincided with unprecedented levels of visitation to the Preserve due to trends in outdoor recreation related to the COVID-19 pandemic. This surge in visitation resulted in a shift of ranger focus to parking enforcement and visitor safety issues reducing overall patrol time in areas beyond the trailhead. In fall 2020, the division increased staffing to two FTE rangers, including a Watershed Ranger and Senior Watershed Ranger. Staffing continued to increase over time in response to growing visitation and workload with one seasonal ranger position added in 2021 and another added in 2022. The increase in staffing has allowed for greater program focus on code enforcement and more consistent data collection practices.

Since fall 2020, rangers have collected data on all enforcement contacts with members of the public including actions taken (e.g., verbal or written warning, parking ticket, ordinance ticket, etc.), location of violation, and which Longmont Municipal Code a visitor violated. Rangers have also tracked emergency medical incidents, citizen assists, and other notable observations. The ranger program continued to improve data management by adopting a digital patrol log on a GIS-based application in 2022 adding precise geolocation as a data point to all contacts and incidents. This information now allows Longmont to better track and analyze trends in resource protection at the Preserve and across its public lands system.

Resource Protection Trends 2017-2022

Rangers are responsible for enforcement of parking regulations and public lands regulations in Chapter 13.20 of Longmont Municipal Code. Rangers generally take an educational approach to interacting with the public while strictly enforcing regulations pertaining to visitor safety, fire danger, and protection of natural resources and water utility security. Rangers coordinate with Longmont Public Safety, Boulder County Sheriff's Office, Boulder County Parks and Open Space, and Colorado Parks and Wildlife to address cross-boundary and criminal offenses on public lands beyond the scope of municipal code.

Rangers make hundreds of enforcement contacts each year for a wide range of code violations; however, the majority of enforcement contacts typically pertain to dog-related regulations. In 2019, City Council formalized a leash requirement throughout the Preserve and instituted a temporary one dog per visitor regulation in response to concerns about the impacts of dog waste on water quality. From 2019-2022, the top violations at the Preserve have been off-leash dogs and violations of the temporary one dog per visitor policy.

In 2022, rangers made approximately 400 enforcement contacts at Button Rock Preserve. As in past years, over 40% of violations pertained to the leash law (96) or one dog per visitor policy (57). Other prominent violations included entering areas posted as closed (16), fishing violations (13), and bicycles on trails or roadways (12), and wading or swimming in the reservoirs (9). Rangers also contacted visitors for more serious violations including possession of firearms, investigated a poaching incident, and addressed several instances of vandalism.

Rangers demonstrated an educational approach to enforcement in 2022 issuing warnings in 72% of enforcement contacts. Rangers reported good compliance with parking and fishing regulations. Rangers checked nearly 100 fishing licenses with only 11 violations. In contrast with past seasons, rangers observed few parking issues at the trailhead managing traffic with pop up signage and few tickets.

Dog Leash Compliance

Despite increased ranger presence, higher visitation, and a greater number of annual enforcement contacts, recorded dog off-leash violations at the Preserve decreased from 2017 to 2022 (2019 data set is missing). This suggests leash law compliance has gradually improved over time through education and enforcement. Comparing annual ranger enforcement contacts to annual hiker visits suggests a relatively high level of visitor compliance with the dog leash regulation.

Table 1. Dog Leash Code Compliance, 2017-2022.

Code Violations	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Dog Off-leash Prohibited	293	259	N/A	42	159	96
More Than One Dog Per Visitor Prohibited	N/A	N/A	N/A	23	51	55

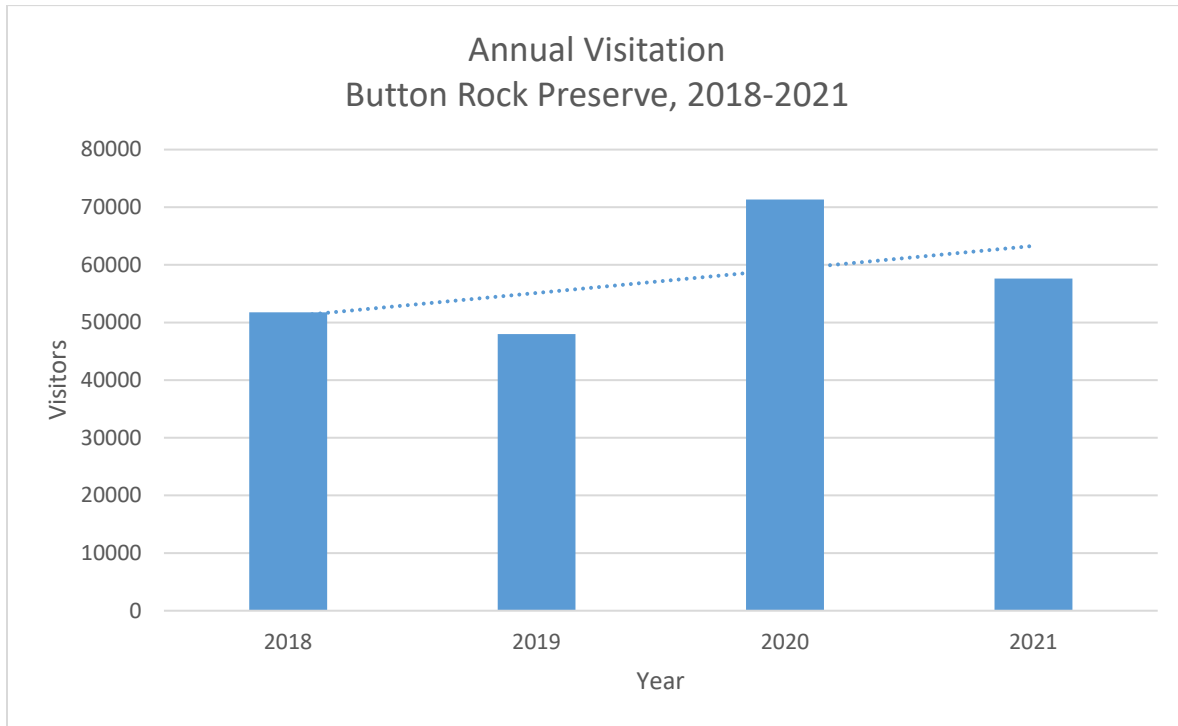


Figure 1. Graph shows annual hiker visits to Button Rock Preserve as recorded by a TRAFx infrared counter.

Camera Study

Rangers conducted a camera study from mid-September to early-November in 2019 with the intent of surveying visitor compliance with the leash law on Sleepy Lion Trail. Researchers have previously used similar methods to study leash law compliance on Boulder County and City of Boulder open space properties (Keller et al., 2017). The Longmont study showed 83% compliance at the survey point near the Hall Ranch Open Space-Button Rock Preserve boundary. Rangers conducted a second study at the same site from late-June to early-July 2020 during record levels of visitation amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. This study showed 88% compliance with the leash law. Both studies showed single digit violations of the multi-dog restriction implemented in 2019.

Rangers implemented a third camera study in late-May 2022 with the intent of supplementing data for the Button Rock Management Plan (2023). Rangers placed one camera at the same survey point on Sleepy Lion Trail used in the 2019 and 2020 studies and placed a second camera at Mile 0.5 on Longmont Dam Rd. near the City's drinking water intake on the North St. Vrain Creek.

Rangers recorded frequency of dog rules violations as a proportion of total dogs photographed. From mid-May through November 2022, visitor compliance with the leash law and one dog per visitor policy on Longmont Dam Rd. was very high with an average of 96% compliance. Compliance was lower on Sleepy Lion Trail with an average of 79%.

The camera study suggests leash law compliance at Button Rock Preserve is similar to other park systems located in Boulder County. For example, a peer-reviewed study in 2017 found City of Boulder Open Space & Mountain Parks experiences a 78-84% compliance rate with seasonal and permanent leash laws (Keller et al., 2017). City of Boulder rangers regularly patrol their system and strictly ticket for

violations including enforcing zero tolerance policies on specific trails. Given the largely educational approach to enforcing dog policies at Button Rock Preserve, it appears ranger presence has been effective at gaining compliance from the majority of visitors.

Resource Protection Efforts at Button Rock Preserve

As visitation to the Preserve gradually increases, rangers are evaluating strategies for improving compliance, more effectively educating visitors, and addressing a backlog of resource protection projects.

The ranger program grew substantially from 2020-2022. Rangers now cover the majority of Longmont's public lands system with teams based out of ranger stations at Union Reservoir Nature Area and Button Rock Preserve. The program is supporting cross-training efforts to prepare rangers assigned to urban properties for shifts at the Preserve to supplement coverage on holidays and during emergencies such as park evacuations. This strategy should help sustain consistent coverage at the preserve and maintain high ranger visibility at popular recreation sites year-round.

Rangers are emphasizing an inclusive approach to visitor outreach and education at the Preserve. Since 2020, multiple regulatory, visitor safety, and wayfinding signs have been replaced with signs featuring universal symbols and/or bilingual English-Spanish messaging. Staff developed a Spanish-language visitor brochure in 2021 and distributed approximately 1,000 copies at the trailhead kiosk in the first twelve months. Rangers now carry Spanish-language copies of the brochure and Colorado Parks & Wildlife fishing regulations to distribute to visitors while on patrol. Rangers plan to work with City staff to design and install bilingual interpretive panels as recommended in the Button Rock Management Plan.

As the ranger program has continued to grow in staffing and capacity, rangers have begun focusing on new resource protection projects throughout the preserve. In 2020-2021, rangers, closed several social trails, including one route that had resulted in search and rescue missions for stranded hikers, and gated an illegal OHV access onto City property. Rangers also began addressing unauthorized installation of fixed anchors at rock climbing areas in 2022. Rangers have mapped known climbing areas, identified over 70 sport, traditional and bouldering climbing routes on or accessed through the Preserve, and posted temporary signage to educate climbers on Leave No Trace ethics and restrictions on bolting new routes in the Preserve. Rangers are planning to network with local climbing advocacy groups in the near future to improve outreach to this user group.