



Photo by Zach Moran



Parks &
Open Space

Agricultural & Water Resources Division

Annual Report

2022 Edition

2022 End of Year Summary

2022 AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES AND WATER RESOURCES STAFF

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Introduction

We are pleased to present the Parks & Open Space Agricultural Division's 2022 Annual Report. Our annual report demonstrates the diversity of operations on the 25,000 acres of Boulder County Parks & Open Space (BCPOS) agricultural properties, highlights our key accomplishments, and gives you a glimpse into the efforts required to steward these lands.

The pride our staff take in their work and in the opportunity to support the continuing legacy of agriculture in Boulder County is apparent in these pages. This region has a rich history of farming and ranching, and it is an honor to partner with our tenant producers so that we all can benefit from thriving agricultural lands for generations to come.

Thank you for celebrating with me the achievements of the last year and for taking the time to get to know our staff and their responsibilities through this report.

Mike Foster

Division Manager



Agriculture on Open Space By the Numbers

Leases

- 129 leases
- 62 tenant producers
- 22 leases renewed
- 1 lease out to bid
- 8 Agriculture operating plans completed

Water

- 87 miles of major ditches on county properties
- 61 incorporated ditches
- 13 reservoirs
- 57 directly held water rights
- 17 irrigation companies with BCPOS staff serving on the board of directors

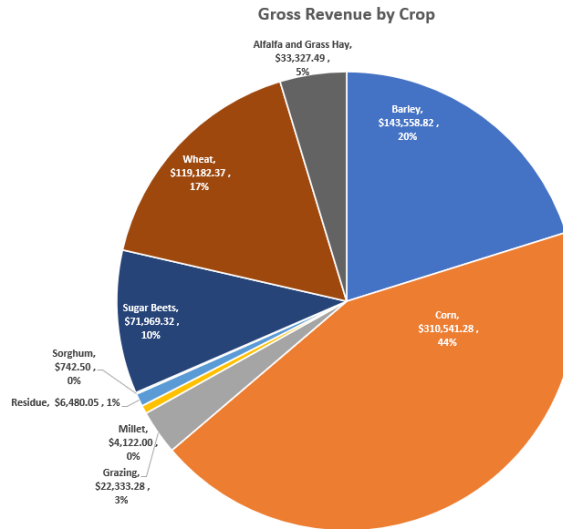
Lease Type (by net revenue)

- 67% cash rent
- 33% crop share + grazing

Boulder County Sustainable Food and Agriculture Funding Grants

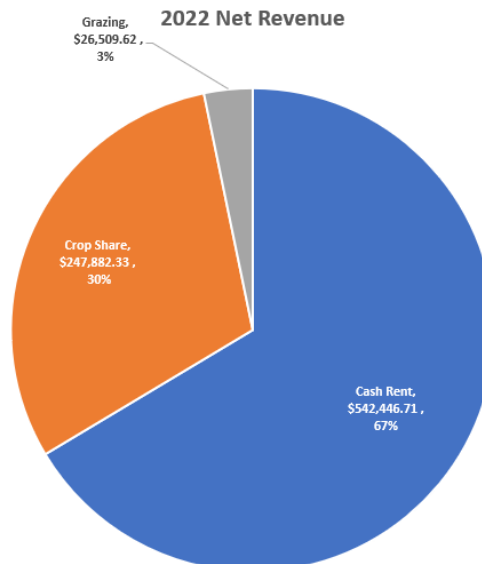
- \$90,000 to Ollin Farms in Longmont to expand carbon farming and regenerative practices

2022 Revenue



The Agricultural Resources Division partners with 62 tenants on 129 leases to manage public land, maintain and improve infrastructure, increase water efficiency through improved water measuring and delivery systems, engage the community in agriculture, and explore opportunities for our producers to meet local demands for food, fiber, forage, and fuel.

Multiple factors influence revenue; most notably weather, input costs, and commodity prices. In 2022 we experienced a hotter and drier than normal growing season. Irrigation water supply for 2022 was a challenge. While snowpack was near average, the extremely dry summer and fall of 2021 and winter of 21/22 left us with a deficit of soil moisture going into the 2022 growing season. Reservoir levels were about half of normal. The runoff from snowpack was late, came quickly in a more compressed amount of time than normal, going out a little earlier than normal. Junior water rights were particularly impacted. Late summer rains helped bring relief to an otherwise rather marginal irrigation water year.



Project Management



Accomplishments

New Center Pivots Installed

Property Name	Number of Center Pivot Irrigation Systems Installed	Number of Acres Covered by the Pivot
Madison	1	52
Laber (Alex)	1	114
Carlson	1	120
Henry/Ross	3	304
TOTAL	6	590

Other Irrigation and Maintenance Projects

- 8,000 feet of pipeline and culverts installed (longer than 22 football fields laid end to end).
- 5 irrigation structures fixed.
- 150 acres of property mowed.
- 1,000 feet of fence repaired.
- 1 irrigation pond planted with native grasses to reduce erosion.



Livestock on Ag Land

Thirty-six producers were involved in raising a variety of livestock in 2022, including cattle, horses, sheep, pigs, yaks, alpacas, goats, ducks, and chickens.

Achievements

- Over 12,200 acres of managed grazing, minus land that was unusable resulting from the impact of the Marshall Fire.
- Delivered free wood chips from Wildlife Partners and the county sort yard to local agriculture producers to sequester carbon, accomplish soil health principles, benefit local agriculture, and reduce trucking and disposal fees.

The Marshall Fire destroyed a large portion of the Superior and Louisville area on the last day of 2021. Boulder County staff responded and initiated recovery efforts on five of our leases encompassing around **1,500 acres**. Primary damage to open space properties included approximately **14 miles of fencing**. The rebuilt fence lines are designed to be more fire-tolerant with steel pipe corners, h-braces, and pipeline posts where wood posts were used in the past.



Despite the intense heat, wind, and sand-blasted landscape, the growth response across the pastures was impressive in 2022. Forage productivity, plant diversity, and corresponding nutritional value for cattle are looking very promising for the future.

Wildlife on Ag Land

The wildlife on Boulder County open space is one of the most beloved attractions for visitors. These creatures are a sight to behold in their natural habitats. However, when they venture into agricultural lands, conflicts can arise.

We are working to control the prairie dog population in accordance with our Prairie Dog Management Plan. We have a dedicated team that are constructing barrier fences, trapping and relocating animals, and utilizing lethal control as a last resort.

Summary of Prairie Dog Actions

- 4,137 acres were mapped on 102 properties.
- 62 cleared properties.
- 10 tenants on 6 properties participated in the tenant-control program.
- 32,242 burrows were treated with lethal control on 40 properties designated as No Prairie Dog Areas.
- 9 properties used trapping.
 - 1,932 prairie dogs were trapped.
 - 922 donated to the Black Footed Ferret facility.
 - 1,010 donated to the Birds of Prey Foundation.
 - 258 prairie dogs were trapped from Carolyn Holmberg Preserve at Rock Creek Farm and relocated to the Carlson-Lastoka property.
 - Plague mitigation performed at the South County Grasslands and Ron Stewart Preserve at Rabbit Mountain.
 - 6,800 feet of barrier fencing was erected on 6 properties.



Photo by Zach Moran



Water Resources

Highlights

- Replaced 265 acre feet of evaporation from Kenosha Pond back to Coal Creek.
- Repaired the Verhey property's groundwater well for domestic water supply.
- Delivered Lake 4 water to irrigate new plants at the Niwot Ditch Reconstruction and Restoration project.



Soil Health & Sustainable Agriculture



Boulder County Parks & Open Space's vision is to be a national leader in sustainable agriculture.

The program aims to reduce soil erosion, sequester carbon, improve air and water quality, and promote sustainable farming practices.

Steps to achieve these goals include:

- Encourage the preservation and sustainable use of agricultural lands as a current and renewable source of food and feed, and for their contribution to cultural, environmental, and economic diversity.
- Promote sustainable agricultural practices on publicly owned lands. Sustainable practices include production methods that have low environmental impact, are respectful to workers, are humane to animals, provide profitable agriculture opportunities to farmers, and support farming communities.
- Promote a principles-based approach to soil health. Soil Health principles include limiting disturbance, keeping the soil surface covered, plant diversity, year-round living roots, and integrated livestock into operations.



Boulder County Parks & Open Space was once again a proud sponsor of the 2022 Soil Revolution Conference that was held on Dec. 6 at the Boulder JCC. Three guest speakers covered topics from no-till organic table food production, exploring new markets in agriculture by using soil health practices, and integration of soil health principals and livestock operations. All of the recorded sessions can be viewed at SoilRev.org.