Annual Prairie Dog Meeting
2021
Tuesday, Dec. 14, 5 p.m.
Boulder County Parks & Open Space
Tonight’s Agenda

1. Introduction/Policy Context - Jeff 15 minutes

2. 2021 Prairie Dog Management Activities
   a. Removal/Control – Rob 15 minutes
   b. Other Activities – Susan 15 minutes
   c. Questions on 2021 Management—10 minutes

3. Consideration of Removing Lethal Control Moratorium Time Period from Management Plan
   Staff Presentation, 15 minutes
   Public Comments and Discussions

4. Wrap Up/Questions/Comments
What governs our prairie dog management?

Prairie Dog Management

Boulder County manages prairie dogs in a comprehensive way so prairie dogs thrive where appropriate on open space properties.

Management Plan

The goal of Boulder County is to preserve, protect, and enhance viable prairie dog populations on suitable grassland habitat.

On October 15, 2012, the county adopted the Prairie Dog Habitat Element of the Grassland and Shrubland Management Policy. The plan was updated on February 25, 2016.
What governs our prairie dog management?

Prairie Dog Management Plan

• Originally approved in 1999
• Modified and amended over time to address new properties and considerations
• Needs to address full range of issues across the full spectrum of properties
What are the goals of that management?

• Reflects the multiple values of the county and its residents
  – The maintenance of croplands for agriculture
  – The stewardship of natural areas and systems
BCPOS Mission Statement

• To conserve natural, cultural, and agricultural resources and provide public uses that reflect sound resource management and community values.

Goals
1. To preserve rural lands and buffers
2. To preserve and restore natural resources for the benefit of the environment and the public.
3. To promote and provide for sustainable agriculture in Boulder County for the natural, cultural, and economic values it provides.
How do we manage our lands for that mix of purposes and uses?
How do we manage our lands for that mix of purposes and uses?

- Assess our properties as a system
- Categorize properties/groups into designations
  - HCA (Habitat Conservation Areas)
  - MOA (Multiple Objective Areas)
  - NPD (No Prairie Dog Areas)
What does that look like?
2021 No Prairie Dog (NPD) Acreages

- 17,198 Acres
- 4.4% Occupied by Prairie Dogs
Summary of Removal Activities

• Removal occurred on 41 NPD properties
  • Tenants treated on 19 properties

• 29,678 burrows treated
  • 6099 by cartridges
  • 23,579 by compressed CO
  • Removal occurred on 318 acres

• 1499 animals trapped
  • 601 animals to BFF recovery
  • 898 animals to Raptor Rehab
Example of Management through time: AHI

Prairie Dog Colonies: AHI Complex

2018

2020

2021

Mapped Colony Acres
2018: 559
2019: 749
2020: 463
2021: 271
Net Reduction: 288

Treated Acres
2018: 75
2019: 338
2020: 221
2021: 89
TOTAL: 723
Prairie Dog Stakeholders’ Meeting
2021 Update
Stakeholders’ Meeting - 2021 Overview

- Colonized Acres of Prairie Dogs - MOA and HCA
- Barrier Fencing
- Burrowing Owls
- Black-Footed Ferret Reintroduction
### Occupied Prairie Dog Colony Size
Per Property Designation Type- 2017 - 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property Type</th>
<th>Suitable Acres</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HCA</td>
<td>3,700</td>
<td>1,171</td>
<td>1,236</td>
<td>1,256</td>
<td>1,560</td>
<td>1,150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOA</td>
<td>4,520</td>
<td>1,341</td>
<td>1,733</td>
<td>1,688</td>
<td>2,111</td>
<td>1,670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>8,220</td>
<td>2,453</td>
<td>2,970</td>
<td>2,944</td>
<td>3,671</td>
<td>2,820</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Prairie Dog Barrier Fencing 2021

- Non-lethal Method to mitigate conflict.
- Installed by Volunteers, Neighbors and/or Staff
Neighbors:
• 650’ installed due to neighbor issues
Agricultural Conflicts
• Installed 6,475’
BCPOS and OSMP Annual Burrowing Owl Nesting Totals 2008-2021

# of NESTS  # FLEDGED
Burrowing Owls - Management 2021

- Volunteer Monitoring
- Owl Protection Plans

29 Volunteers
685 Hours Total
270 Hours Surveying
Boulder County Parks & Open Space Burrowing Owl Protection Plan for Autrey

About Burrowing Owls
Cowboys sometimes called these owls “howdy birds,” because they seemed to nod in greeting from the entrances to their burrows in prairie-dog towns. These owls are small ground dwellers that typically nest in inactive prairie dog burrows. They show greater preference for inactive burrows within active prairie dog towns as compared to completely abandoned towns. Fledgling success is higher, and predation is lower, on active verses inactive towns. However, Burrowing Owl populations have been declining for many years, owing to prairie dog and ground squirrel control programs, and habitat loss. They are now designated a threatened species by the State of Colorado.
Burrowing owl habitat in Boulder County is protected in a similar manner to other land management agencies in Boulder County, with the intent to provide comprehensive protections across contiguous lands.

Why a Protection Plan?
The purpose of this Protection Plan is to clearly outline actions to be avoided which may result in the failure of a burrowing owl nest site. The protection of the site means preventing disturbances to the owls, their nesting activities and rearing their young. It also means maintaining a population of prairie dogs to provide burrows for the owls to nest in, and at the same time, minimizing the negative impacts of prairie dogs on farm and grazing operations. This nest site is located on leased agricultural land designated as No Prairie Dog Area (NPDA).

Photo: Howard Witkin- BCPOS Volunteer
Black-Footed Ferret Reintroduction Progress

Credit: M. Lockhart/USFWS

Credit: R. Reading
Plague Abatement Strategies

• **Delta Dust** used on BCPOS colonies within the South County Grasslands and Rabbit Mountain 2016-2021*
2021 Sylvatic Plague Vaccine (SPV)

- South Grasslands
  - ~52 Acres

- Rabbit Mountain
  - 1,096 Acres
## SPV and Dusting Annual Costs – Labor + Materials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Material Costs Only</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>$3,600</td>
<td>South Grasslands only</td>
<td>SPV donated by CPW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>$19,100</td>
<td>South Grasslands and Rabbit</td>
<td>SPV ~ $20,000</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SPV and Dust</td>
<td>Dust ~ $2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>$22,375</td>
<td>South Grasslands and Rabbit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SPV and Dust</td>
<td><em>Total costs will increase as colonies grow</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>$15,100</td>
<td>South Grasslands and Rabbit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SPV only</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>$17,500</td>
<td>South Grassland and Rabbit</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SPV and Dust</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2021</td>
<td>$21,286</td>
<td>South Grassland and Rabbit</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SPV, bait matrix and Dust</td>
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**TOTAL = $103,361 to date**

*Photo: Steve Jones*
South Central Grasslands HCA

6,700 Total Acres

~1,800 Suitable Acres

City of Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks

Boulder County Parks and Open Space

Rocky Flats
• City of Boulder Open Space (OSMP)

• Boulder County Open Space

• Rocky Flats
  ~14,000 Acres
South County Grasslands - 2021

52 Acres of Active Prairie Dog Colonies
1,096 acres of active colonies in 2021
Carolyn Holmberg Preserve at Rock Creek Farm - Management Plan Update

https://www.bouldercounty.org/open-space/management/plans-and-policies/
Questions about 2021 management?
Consideration of Removing Lethal Control Moratorium Time Period from Management Plan
Lethal Control Moratorium
Section 8.3.3. Extermination

Exterminations will not occur during the pup-rearing time period of March 1- May 31 annually. This timeframe was selected to capture the peak rearing season to limit the potential of young being left unattended in the burrows. The exception will be in cases where dispersing individuals attempt to colonize an NPD without prairie dogs. If these areas are free of prairie dogs as of March 1 of each year, direct lethal control may be used to prevent recolonization during this time period.
Removal of the moratorium would:
1. Result in fewer prairie dog deaths due to better overall control
2. Reduce on-going impacts to ag properties and tenants
Lethal Control Moratorium

Given current staffing and resources, staff has not been able to successfully clear NPD areas with the moratorium

Staff request will be to lift the moratorium
The public process for this proposed change will begin Wednesday, Dec. 15, with a public comment form on https://www.bouldercounty.org/open-space/management/prairie-dogs/

This item is scheduled to be presented to the Parks & Open Space Advisory Committee on Thursday, Jan. 27, followed by a presentation to the Board of County Commissioners at a date to be determined.
Questions?