

CITY OF LAFAYETTE OPEN SPACE  
PRAIRIE DOG MANAGEMENT CATEGORY DESIGNATIONS

BOULDER COUNTY, COLORADO

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# PRAIRIE DOG MANAGEMENT CATEGORY DESIGNATIONS

## CITY OF LAFAYETTE OPEN SPACE

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### Introduction

The *City of Lafayette Prairie Dog Management Policy* directs the City and the Lafayette Open Space Advisory Committee (LOSAC) to identify and designate potential prairie dog release sites and prairie dog management categories on City open space lands. In addition, the 2013 *Parks Recreation, Open Space and Trails Master Plan* directs the City to “Update the current prairie dog policy and management strategies to reflect current conditions and preferred methods.” (Strategy 2.3.2). At their November 7, 2013 meeting LOSAC approved minor updates to the prairie dog policy as well as the prairie dog management categories. This report presents the results of that approval, both the prairie dog relocation designations and the management designations for the City’s new open spaces. In addition, this report summarizes the results from previous reports so that all of the City’s current open space properties are designated with prairie dog management categories and relocation status.

ERO Resources provided a report in 2005 that designated prairie dog management categories for all of the City’s existing open space properties. Since that time the City has acquired 12 new open space properties that need prairie dog management categories. In addition, in 2008, City staff and LOSAC recommended removing two properties originally identified as relocation sites in the 2005 report. This report provides a brief rationale of the prairie dog management categorization for the 12 new properties. Instead of replacing the 2005 report, this report should be viewed as additional documentation in providing prairie dog management guidance to the City of Lafayette primarily for the 12 new properties and for capturing the changes to relocation sites made in 2008. Finally, this report includes a summary table providing a list of every existing City Open Space property and its current prairie dog management category.

### Background

#### City of Lafayette Prairie Dog Policy

The 2013 City of Lafayette Prairie Dog Management Policy establishes a specific framework for the humane management of prairie dogs on City-owned lands. The primary goal of the Policy is to ensure that prairie dogs remain a component of the landscape in suitable areas of the City. Minimizing mortality of prairie dogs is a secondary benefit but not the main goal. The Policy also directs LOSAC and the City Council to identify and designate potential prairie dog release sites on City open space. Finally, the policy stipulates that each open space property be designated with a prairie dog management category based on those presented in the *Boulder County Grassland Management Plan Prairie Dog Habitat Element* (Boulder County 2002).

With regards to release site suitability, the Policy (Section 2.2) directs the City to establish buffer zones that provide a minimum of 500 feet separation between the release site and the closest residential lot line. This stipulation was a consideration in identifying potential relocation sites on open space land.



### **Long-Term Management**

The City has developed recommendations on the long-term management of Open Space through its 2005 Open Space and Trails Master Plan and 2013 PROST Master Plan. The City anticipates developing site-specific management plans for each property open space over time. However, due to the preeminence of prairie dog management issues and the addition of a number of new, uncategorized open space properties, the City has moved forward with designating prairie dog management categories for every property. The initial work for these designations was performed by ERO in a 2005 Report and the majority of those recommendations remain unchanged. That report analyzed every existing open space property at the time and gave it a management designation based on the three categories in the *Boulder County Grassland Management Plan; Prairie Dog Habitat Element*. These three categories generally defined are:

- **Prairie Dog habitat Conservation Area (HCA)** – these areas are intended to ideally allow prairie dogs to function with minimal human intervention without causing or experiencing significant negative impacts to or from adjacent lands.
- **Multiple-Objective Areas (MOA)** – allow prairie dogs to coexist with other uses but they may not be the highest management priority of a given open space parcel.
- **No-Prairie Dog Areas (NPD)** – are unsuitable for prairie dogs because of ecological conditions or incompatible land uses.

The Policy directs the City to evaluate its open space properties and designate each as HCA, MOA, or NPD. Designation is based on habitat characteristics (soils, vegetation, slope, elevation, connectivity, and barriers) and land use characteristics (intent of purchase, history of use, current use, anticipated use, and adjacent ownership and uses). Generally HCAs are located in large open space properties that have extensive suitable habitat and little potential for off-site impacts. Currently, none of the City's open space properties meet these requirements and therefore there are no HCAs on the City's lands. By contrast, there are many open space parcels that are too small, have very high chances of off-site impacts, or are leased for agricultural uses and are therefore designated as NPD. Lastly, the City does have a number of properties with existing colonies on them or adjacent to them. Generally, these have MOA designations. These properties will be discussed in more detail below.

### **Boulder County Prairie Dog Management**

A number of Lafayette open space properties are jointly-owned with Boulder County. In these cases, the County manages the properties including the prairie dogs on them. In 2012, the Boulder County Commissioners adopted the *Prairie Dog Habitat Element of the Boulder County Grassland and Shrubland Management Policy* (Boulder County 2012). The purpose of the plan was to update the management priorities of certain areas and balance the sometimes conflicting goals of wildlife habitat protection and agricultural use in Boulder County.

### **Designations and Status of Prairie Dogs on Existing MOA Properties**

There are six existing MOA-designated open space properties owned solely by the City. Four of them have prairie dogs on them currently in a total of 32 acres of colonies. All of the City-only



MOA-designated properties were analyzed and approved for that management category in earlier reports. As of 2012 (the most recent year of County data) four of the eight jointly-owned MOA properties had prairie dogs on them with over 71 total colony acres. The eight jointly-owned properties contain 333 acres of MOA land available for prairie dog colonies. All other open space properties owned jointly with Boulder County are designated NPD due to their status as active agricultural leases. All of the properties owned jointly with the County were designated with management categories in 2012 or earlier.

### **New Prairie Dog Management Designations of Open Space Properties**

Since the 2005 study, the City has added 12 properties to its open space program. Three of these properties were purchased jointly with the County and are managed by them—Stephenson-Nelson, Echternacht, and Mountainview Egg Farm. The County and Lafayette have designated portions of Stephenson-Nelson and the Mountainview Egg Farm property as MOAs through the Two Creeks Open Space master planning process. The Echternacht property is leased for agricultural purposes and is therefore designated an NPD area. Of the remaining nine properties—all solely owned by the City, two (the Powerline Corridor and Bullhead South) were previously managed by the City but only recently transferred to open space management. The other seven properties were either acquired by subdivision dedication (Anna's Farm, Lowes-Waneka, 287 Commercial Center, West Ridge, and Coal Creek Village) or outright purchase (Coal Creek East—a.k.a Trails RV—and the Burlington RailTrail). At this time, prairie dogs only occur on one of the City's nine new properties—the Powerline Corridor. The other eight properties are relatively small or narrow and range in size from about one to ten acres. Given their size, shape, proximity to residences and development, and general lack of habitat staff feels they should all be designated as NPD properties. And, although prairie dogs are present on the Powerline Corridor, staff also recommends that this property be designated as NPD as well. For a brief recommendation on each property, see Table 1 for solely City-owned and Table 2 below for jointly-owned open space properties.

The Powerline Corridor is primarily a property managed for its trail, but it also serves as a buffer between neighborhoods and as a utility easement. Due to large, off-site prairie dog colonies on adjacent vacant land, prairie dogs have colonized the west section of the corridor. Neighbors have consistently and vociferously complained about prairie dogs getting into their properties adjacent to the open space. In addition, the corridor has become weedy and bare in spots. For the past two years, staff has performed management actions there to try and remove prairie dogs from the narrow corridor. A barrier fence has also been installed to slow movement from the large colony to the south into the City's land and adjacent neighbors' yards. By declaring the area as NPD, staff would have the means to more effectively manage the corridor.

Based on habitat suitability and consideration of other factors such as location, adjacent land uses and management, and proximity to residences, staff developed a specific management designation, a relocation potential, and a short management guideline for prairie dog populations on the ten new open space properties. Final recommendations for these properties are summarized in Table 1 and are discussed below.





**Table 1. Summary Findings and Recommendations for New Open Space**

Property	Relocation Suitability	Management Designation	Management	Notes
Anna's Farm	Not Suitable	NPD	Discourage dispersal and colonization	Narrow, urban property unsuited to prairie dogs
Bullhead Gulch South	Not Suitable	NPD	Discourage dispersal and colonization	Narrow, urban property unsuited to prairie dogs
Burlington RailTrail	Not Suitable	NPD	Discourage dispersal and colonization	Narrow, urban trail property unsuited to prairie dogs
Coal Creek East (Trails RV)	Not Suitable	NPD	Discourage dispersal and colonization	Unsuitable habitat, small property
Coal Creek Village	Not Suitable	NPD	Discourage dispersal and colonization	Narrow property between private land and Warembourg (NPD)
Lowes-Waneka	Not Suitable	NPD	Discourage dispersal and colonization	Newly reseeded with native grasses
Powerline Corridor	Not Suitable	NPD	Discourage dispersal and colonization	Narrow, urban, trail property unsuited to prairie dogs
287 Commercial Center	Not Suitable	NPD	Discourage dispersal and colonization	Narrow, urban trail property unsuited to prairie dogs
West Ridge	Not Suitable	NPD	Discourage dispersal and colonization	Narrow, urban trail property unsuited to prairie dogs

### NPD Designation of Trail Corridors

At times on MOA properties, prairie dogs damage trails with burrowing and digging activity. On properties with prairie dogs, staff has been constructing trails with an underlayment of chicken wire as a method of reducing damage and conflict with prairie dogs. However, there are times when prairie dogs are still able to damage the trail or the two-foot clearance zone adjacent to either side of the trail. Due to the safety hazard these holes pose to trail users, all formal trail corridors on City Open Space and Parks are designated as NPD areas. This would include holes and burrow mounds that are within the trail and trail clearance zone. By declaring these areas as NPD, staff has the means to more effectively and safely manage trail corridors.

**Table 2. Jointly-Owned Open Space Properties Prairie Dog Management Designation**

Property	Management Designation	Rationale
Echternacht	NPD	Existing Boulder County designation
Esmail	NPD	Existing Boulder County designation



Harney/Lastoka	NPD	Existing Boulder County designation
Mayhoffer	NPD	Existing Boulder County designation
Warembourg	NPD	Existing Boulder County designation
Adler-Fingru	MOA	Existing Boulder County designation
Armstrong	MOA	Existing Boulder County designation
Haselwood	MOA	Existing Boulder County designation
Madrigal	MOA	Existing Boulder County designation
McClain	MOA	Existing Boulder County designation
Mountainview Egg Farm	MOA	Existing Boulder County designation
Serrano	MOA	Existing Boulder County designation
Stephenson-Nelson	MOA	Existing Boulder County designation

Boulder County designations based on GIS data and management plans for jointly owned properties (Boulder County 2004a, Boulder County 2004b, and Boulder County 2012).

### **Prairie Dog Relocation Designation Categories**

In their 2005 report, ERO analyzed and assessed the relocation potential of every open space property at the time. That report concluded that two properties Coal Creek Corridor West and Rock Creek West had areas that would be suitable as relocation sites and that a third property, Kneebone, was potentially suitable. The Rock Creek West site was used as a relocation site with limited success. The first relocation effort appeared to fail and the colony lost all the animals, perhaps due to a plague outbreak. Prairie dogs currently occupy both Rock Creek West and the Coal Creek Corridor but migrated to both areas and were not part of relocation efforts. Another property, Rothman, had previously been used as a relocation site but the prairie dogs had expanded to the point that relocations were no longer possible.

In 2008, City staff determined that the vegetation, site conditions, and property configuration of Rock Creek West would pose a limitation on future relocation efforts. Staff also re-analyzed the potential release site at Kneebone and determined that a 500-foot buffer of all residential development (include Erie residents north of Arapaho Road) so severely limited the site that it too would not be suitable as a release site. LOSAC approved eliminating both properties as potential release sites. Since none of the new solely-owned City open space is appropriate for prairie dogs, the City certainly does not recommend that relocations be allowed at any of these new properties. In sum, the City has one solely-owned property, Coal Creek Corridor West at which relocations are allowed. However, at this time, the site is already occupied by prairie dogs.

Presently, the County could allow relocations on their MOA lands—all of which are located in the Two Creeks Open Space complex—but existing, inhabited colonies and recent reseeding efforts are keeping these areas from accepting any relocated prairie dogs.



## **References**

- Boulder County. 2002. Boulder County Grassland Management Plan Prairie Dog Habitat Element. Prepared by Boulder County Parks and Open Space.
- Boulder County. 2004a. Jointly Owned Boulder County-Lafayette-Louisville Open Space Management Plan. Prepared by Boulder County Parks and Open Space.
- Boulder County. 2004b. Jointly Owned Boulder County-Lafayette Open Space Management Plan. Prepared by Boulder County Parks and Open Space.
- Boulder County. 2012. Boulder County Grassland Management Plan Prairie Dog Habitat Element. Prepared by Boulder County Parks and Open Space.
- Moline, Jeff. 2005. City of Louisville Open Space Coordinator. Personal communication with Bill Mangle, ERO Resources, September 9, 2005.



## Appendix A

### Summary Prairie Dog Management Designation Table

<b>Property</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Designation</b>	<b>Relocation</b>
<b>Anna's Farm, Outlots F, G, &amp; Q</b>	<b>1.50</b>	<b>NPD</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Bullhead Gulch</b>	<b>10.26</b>	<b>MOA</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Bullhead Gulch South</b>	<b>2.79</b>	<b>NPD</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Burlington RailTrail</b>	<b>8.2</b>	<b>NPD</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Coal Creek at Avalon</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>NPD</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Coal Creek Corridor</b>	<b>34.12</b>	<b>MOA</b>	<b>Possible</b>
<b>Coal Creek Corridor East</b>	<b>1.72</b>	<b>NPD</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Coal Creek Village</b>	<b>10.50</b>	<b>NPD</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Flagg Park</b>	<b>4.65</b>	<b>NPD</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Greenlee</b>	<b>13.18</b>	<b>NPD</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Heron Lake</b>	<b>10.73</b>	<b>NPD</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Kneebone</b>	<b>30.13</b>	<b>NPD</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Lowe's Waneka</b>	<b>4.35</b>	<b>NPD</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Nyland</b>	<b>14.57</b>	<b>NPD</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Outdoor Classroom</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>NPD</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Powerline Corridor</b>	<b>10.23</b>	<b>NPD</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Rock Creek East</b>	<b>18.72</b>	<b>MOA</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Rock Creek West</b>	<b>48.75</b>	<b>MOA</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Rothman</b>	<b>69.7</b>	<b>MOA</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>The Farm</b>	<b>8.34</b>	<b>NPD</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Thomas</b>	<b>14.53</b>	<b>NPD</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Trails RV</b>	<b>1.73</b>	<b>NPD</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Waneka Landing</b>	<b>9.28</b>	<b>NPD</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>West Ridge, outlots A &amp; B</b>	<b>2.13</b>	<b>NPD</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>287 Comm Cntr, Outlot A</b>	<b>0.93</b>	<b>NPD</b>	<b>No</b>

### THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

The history of the United States is a complex and multifaceted story that spans centuries. It begins with the early Native American civilizations, such as the Mayans, Aztecs, and Incas, who developed advanced societies in the Americas. The arrival of European explorers in the late 15th and early 16th centuries marked the beginning of a new era. Christopher Columbus's voyage in 1492 opened the way for European colonization, leading to the establishment of colonies in North America.

The early years of the United States were characterized by a struggle for independence from British rule. The American Revolution (1775-1783) was a pivotal moment in the nation's history, resulting in the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776. The new nation then faced the challenge of creating a stable government, which was achieved through the drafting of the U.S. Constitution in 1787.

The 19th century was a period of rapid expansion and growth. The westward movement, known as Manifest Destiny, led to the acquisition of vast territories, including the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 and the Texas Annexation in 1845. This period also saw the rise of the Industrial Revolution, which transformed the economy and society. However, the era was also marked by the struggle for civil rights, particularly the fight against slavery and the eventual passage of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863.

The American Civil War (1861-1865) was a defining moment in the nation's history, as it resolved the issue of slavery and preserved the Union. The war led to the Reconstruction era, during which the federal government sought to rebuild the South and integrate African Americans into society. This period was followed by a period of relative stability and economic growth, known as the Gilded Age.

The 20th century was a time of significant change and progress. The United States emerged as a global superpower after World War II, leading the world in the development of nuclear energy and space exploration. The civil rights movement, led by figures like Martin Luther King Jr., fought for equality and justice for all Americans. The Vietnam War and the Cold War were also major events of this era.

In the 21st century, the United States has continued to evolve, facing new challenges such as globalization, terrorism, and climate change. The nation remains a leader in technology, innovation, and culture, while also striving to address the social and economic issues of the modern world.