

**Prairie Dog Working Group
 Tuesday, June 5, 2018
 OSMP Annex (7315 Red Deer Drive, Boulder CO)
 Meeting Summary – FINAL**

ATTENDANCE

Participants: Dan Brandemuehl, Pat Comer, Elle Cushman, Keri Konold, Lindsey Sterling Krank, Amber Largent, Val Matheson, Joy Master, Andy Pelster, Carse Pustmueller, Heather Swanson, Eric Sims, John Vickery

Additional Staff: Rella Abernathy

Facilitation: Heather Bergman, Sam Haas

Peak Facilitation Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update the final goals document and the cover page. • Create the final report. • Send the PDWG the dates of the OSBT and City Council meetings on the subject of prairie dogs.
Keri Konold	Send out details regarding the PDWG celebration on June 20.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The first ten minutes of the meeting were dedicated to written and verbal public comment. Below is a summary of verbal comments provided during the meeting.

Elizabeth Black

- Black displayed photos of the Dust Bowl in comparison to current soil conditions in Boulder and argued that the Dust Bowl is happening again due to prairie dog occupation.
- Over 1,000 acres of Open Space and Mountain Parks (OSMP) land is no longer leasable, and prairie dogs occupy almost 200 acres of OSMP irrigated land (approximately 10% of OSMP land). Boulder cannot collect lease payments on this land, and the soil health has suffered. Most parts of Boulder only have one foot of topsoil, and once that is gone the land will be destroyed.
- It is time that the City of Boulder admit that its prairie dog management policies have been a failure. Lethal control of prairie dogs must be reinstated to prevent further soil erosion.

INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT (IPM) POLICY UPDATE

Rella Abernathy, City of Boulder’s Integrated Pest Management Program (IPM) Coordinator, provided an update about the City’s IPM policy. Below are the key points from her presentation.

- IPM has several definitions. Boulder follows the original philosophy of IPM, which includes guiding principles of biodiversity protection, ecosystem services, and adaptation/resilience. Boulder is currently updating its IPM policy because it includes obsolete language that needs to be replaced, and the City needs to integrate council-directed changes into the policy. The new language will have an emphasis on ecosystem health and services.
- Terrestrial species have declined by 39% between 1970 and 2010. There has also been a massive decline in invertebrate abundance. These species provide functioning soils, pollination services, food fiber, clean water, etc. Biodiversity is important because ecosystems are interconnected. Ecosystems are being degraded but are also the source of the solution.

- During the 1950's four professors responded to the overuse of DDT by outlining the founding principles of IPM, which focused on the comprehensive ecosystem and recognized that a focus on top systems often impacts soil, water, plants, and non-target species. The professors advocated for the use of natural controls within an ecosystem and for adopting a holistic and environmentally-sound approach. In the IPM hierarchy, prevention is vital, and chemical controls should be reduced and eliminated when possible.
- For the City of Boulder, the IPM policy is the guiding document for prairie dog management. The IPM Operations Manual provides procedural guidelines for staff workgroups to use when managing prairie dogs. The City of Boulder is revising the IPM policy in coordination with its ecosystem protection strategy.

Clarifying Questions

Members of the PDWG asked clarifying questions about the IPM policy. Questions are indicated in italics, followed by the response.

What is the timeline for the update to the IPM policy?

Staff is currently consolidating several documents and will be seeking Open Space Board of Trustees (OSBT) feedback soon.

There seems to be a lack of data about the impact that the use of pesticides on prairie dog colonies would have on non-target species. Without this data, is it possible to use pesticides on prairie dog colonies?

The IPM policy does not prohibit the use of pesticides. The City considers the use of pesticides on a site-by-site basis. The City collects as much information as possible, determines costs, balances tradeoffs, and reaches the best possible solution. In this process, the City looks at the "big picture" impacts. For example, the City recently decided to use systemic pesticides on 10% of the City's emerald ash borers after a city-wide discussion of the environmental, economic, and social tradeoffs of doing so. The IPM policy is a guiding document that provides a variety of tools to make decisions.

Have there been any City of Boulder studies about the impact of Delta Dust in the burrow holes?

The City's process is to consider the goal for the site and the current condition of the prairie dog colony to determine whether Delta Dust, the vaccine, or a combination of treatments are appropriate. This process of considering pros and cons may be different depending on the site location (i.e., southern grasslands versus northern grasslands).

How does the City determine when or when not to use Delta Dust at the sending-site?

Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) requires the City to treat the sending site for fleas. The US Geological Survey (USGS) has tested alternatives to Delta Dust, so it is important not to get attached to the use of one product because the City is open to considering a variety of tools.

What are the application instructions for Delta Dust?

Some PDWG members emphasized that the instruction label specifies that Delta Dust should be applied "in and around" the burrow, while other PDWG members who work with Delta Dust stated that it is not necessary to treat "around" the burrow because applying the dust only inside the burrow provides effective plague management. Given Boulder's IPM goals of minimizing exposure to pesticides, Parks and Recreation only applies Delta Dust inside burrows.

Is there anything in the IPM policy that would prevent the implementation of a plague management plan?

No, not in the IPM policy. Any plague management plan should consider the whole ecosystem.

CITY PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Keri Konold provided a brief update on the City of Boulder's plan for implementation of the PDWG's recommendations

- If the PDWG's recommendations get approved by City Council, OSMP leadership has agreed that it would be beneficial to have a point-person tasked with overseeing implementation over time.
- Ideally, there would be a person who would "orchestrate" implementation and would be funded by a variety of different departments. Staff will recommend this in their memo to the City Manager.

REVIEW OF ONLINE SURVEY RESULTS

PDWG members reviewed the results of the online survey, which asked participants to place the ecological, social, and economic objectives in the order in which they should be implemented.

- The survey results indicate that the PDWG sees a need to address and reduce conflict related to prairie dog management. While addressing conflict is a near-term solution, it is a necessary step toward achieving the broader vision.
- The PDWG would like to emphasize that the survey was intended to indicate the order in which the objectives should be implemented; multiple objectives can be pursued and implemented simultaneously.
- Many strategies within the objectives should be started immediately, but there are some that can wait.
- The cover page should specify that the goals, objectives, and strategies complement each other. During implementation, there should be an awareness of a logical timeline regarding which objectives, strategies, and milestones must be accomplished first and which items should be address concurrently. This goals document should guide the implementation overseer's work plan.

FINAL AGREEMENT ON RECOMMENDED GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The subgroups for each goal (ecological, social, and economic) presented their revised documents, and the PDWG reached final agreement about the goals. Agreed-upon changes to the goals document are indicated in italics. The agreed-upon changes will be integrated into the final goals document and included in the report to the City Manager.

Ecological Goal

- The PDWG discussed whether to remove, keep, or change objective 1, strategy 3, milestone 3, which states: "By 2019, work with IPM coordinator to create and implement an acceptable policy that may limit the use of insecticides but allows such use on large prairie dog occupied ecosystem colonies as necessary." The group agreed to change the wording to: *"By 2019, work with IPM to ensure implementation of an acceptable policy that may limit the use of insecticides but allows such use on large prairie dog ecosystem colonies as necessary."*
- Objective 1, strategy 2, milestone 2 is to "...update GMAP goals relevant to prairie dogs along with receiving site location...". The PDWG agreed to change this milestone to: *"Update and implement GMAP goals relevant to prairie dogs along with receiving site location..."*
- PDWG members discussed whether the ecological objective of securing and implementing non-lethal removal methods on lands with conflicting urban and agricultural uses should be part of the ecological or social goal. Some PDWG members worried that having a similar objective in both the ecological and social goals would detract from the implementation of

the other ecological objectives. Other members of the PDWG were worried that moving the objective to the social goal would minimize the ecological component of the objective. For example, strategy 3 of this objective refers to oral contraception agents, which would not fit under the social goal. This objective pertains to the management of prairie dog populations concerning biology and ecology; the social goal pertains to the management of prairie dog conflicts with people. *The PDWG agreed to leave the objective in the ecological goal, and specify that implementation of this objective should not detract from the other important and urgent ecological objectives.*

- PDWG members should consider whether it is appropriate to set a milestone for increasing the number of translocations successfully implemented in the Boulder region (objective 2, strategy 1, milestone 1). The ecological subgroup emphasized that the milestone was only for 2019 and did not extend beyond that; the aim was simply to “move the needle.” The group discussed whether it would be helpful to state the current limiting factors (i.e., staff resources, the presence of plague, etc.), but agreed that the details about budgeting and capacity in the economic goal were sufficient. *The PDWG agreed to change the language to: “In the near term, due to high occupancy of conflict areas, increase the number of translocations across the Boulder region.”*
- One member of the PDWG did not agree with objective 1, strategy 4 because they did not think that 1,500 of contiguous acreages is suitable for prairie dog habitat. They also emphasized that working with Boulder County and adjacent counties could require adherence to their prairie dog management practices, which may include lethal control.
- Since the list of prairie dog plans and policies may extend beyond the listed items, the PDWG agreed to change objective 3 to: *“Amend as necessary and keep all existing prairie dog plans and policies (including but not limited to Admin Rule, IPM, UWMP, GMAP, Wildlife Protection Ordinance) current as needed to ensure they are mutually compatible with goal 1 and its objectives and strategies.”*

Social Goal

- The subgroup revised the goal statement to include a pilot program and suggested that the Stratton and Brewbaker property be considered as a site to acknowledge the time and effort the property owners have put into submitting comments and attending PDWG meetings. Some PDWG members expressed discomfort with explicitly mentioning the Stratton and Brewbaker property, as there are many other similar conflict areas owned by people who did not attend the meetings or submit public comment. There should be criteria to determine which properties the City considers for the pilot project, but City staff should not list specific properties in the goals document.
- The group agreed to change the bullet in objective 1 to: *“conflict categories such as.”*
- The group agreed to change objective 2 to: *“Identify and implement innovative, proactive, and non-lethal strategies...”*
- The group agreed to change the bullet under objective 2 (on relocation demands exceeding receiving sites) to: *“Work towards the reintroduction of the black-footed ferret using connecting parcels from the public/private sector to achieve this goal as a non-lethal strategy in prairie dog management.”*
- PDWG members had questions about what the review of mechanisms for communication (objective 3) would entail. The social goal aims to provide sequential objectives. The first step is to identify and map conflict areas; the second step is to determine what strategies to use to improve them; the third step is implementation; and the fourth step is to review and provide feedback mechanisms for future scenarios.

- Some of the proactive, non-lethal strategies listed under the “relocation demands exceed receiving site” section in objective 2 are related to ecology and population management and may fit better under the ecological goal. Objective 2 could specify the education components that play into black-footed ferret reintroduction (e.g., “expand appreciation for prairie dogs and associated species”). The group agreed to amend the second bullet under the “relocation demands exceed receiving site” section of objective 2 to: *“Work towards the reintroduction of the black-footed ferret (as stated in goal 1) by using connecting parcels...”*
- Some PDWG members did not agree with the concept of “stockpiling” prairie dogs to qualify for black-footed ferret reintroduction.
- *The group agreed to clarify what the term “adjoining” means in objective 2, milestone 1.*

Economic Goal

- The PDWG discussed objective 2, strategy 2, which pertains to the establishment of bi-annual meetings of the PDWG for “reporting out the status of the goals and objectives as well as the review of, and advisement on, inflows and outflows of the grasslands conservation fund.” Some PDWG members would like to informally discuss progress on all goals and objectives during these meetings, and others expressed concern about the staff time and capacity needed to gather information bi-annually. The group discussed the possibility of creating a separate goal of sharing progress on the implementation of the ecological, social, and economic goals to promote ongoing transparency and accountability. The group discussed the level of formality and format for this sharing-out process (e.g., an annual report, informal presentation by staff, formal meeting, etc.). *The group agreed to revise strategy 2 in a way that addresses all three goals: “No less than once but no more than twice a year, there will be a publicly-noticed meeting that includes invitations to members of the PDWG with an opportunity for the members to discuss progress on the ecological, social, and economic goals and strategies and contribute to the adaptive management process.”*
- There were questions about how the current version of the economic goal preserved the idea expressed in previous drafts about investigating the possibility of using private landowner agricultural lease fees to help resolve prairie dog related conflicts. Subgroup members stated that they had incorporated this idea in objective 2, strategy 1, milestone 3. The subgroup changed the original idea of “agricultural lease fees” to “conservation leases” during the last round of revisions. The idea of using agricultural lease fees was changed because some members of the PDWG expressed concern about the possibility that the milestone could be perceived as an opening to create competition between stakeholder groups (agricultural lessees and conservation groups). Some PDWG members would like to add a milestone about exploring the possibility of using a portion of agricultural lease money to mitigate prairie dog conflict on agricultural land (through barriers, etc.). Other PDWG members stated that there is no surplus available in the agricultural lease pot of money; the lease revenues do not cover the cost of the current program. *The group agreed to add “work with conservation entities to identify conservation practices and other programs/funding mechanisms that could support grassland restoration and the mitigation of conflicts on agricultural land” to objective 2, strategy 1, milestone 3.*

COVER LETTER DISCUSSION

The PDWG discussed the content of the draft cover letter that will be attached to the final report and provided suggestions for revision.

- The PDWG agreed to add a bullet in the cover letter that summarizes the key themes from public comments received (both verbal and written) and specifies that the PDWG members stated that the goals and objectives meaningfully address the public comments.

- The PDWG agreed to change the language in the bullet on implications for existing plans and policies. The current language states that changes should be implemented through "swift" action by the City Manager and City Council or through amendments to existing plans and policies. Instead, the PDWG suggests including language about determining priorities and implementing a phased approach while acknowledging that the City cannot accomplish everything simultaneously.
- The PDWG agreed to remove the definition of the term "conservation" in the cover letter.
- The PDWG agreed to add a bullet that specifies the areas where there is not a consensus among group members (i.e., "the PDWG agrees to this document, except for one member who expressed specific concerns about X, Y, Z").
- The PDWG agreed to add a bullet about the use of Delta Dust during relocations. This language will be reviewed and finalized by Lindsey Sterling Krank and Val Matheson.

2018 RELOCATION AND PLAGUE MANAGEMENT DISCUSSION

One member of the PDWG raised concerns about the plan for the use of sylvatic plague vaccine (SPV) during prairie dog relocations. Below are the key themes from this discussion.

- During the 2018 relocations, prairie dogs will receive a dose of SPV before they are moved. The sending sites will be dusted and sprayed with insecticide. The prairie dogs will receive the second dose of SPV in the fall. Some PDWG members were not satisfied with this plan and felt that it does not provide adequate plague protection for the prairie dogs because there is research that indicates that the application of Delta Dust must also occur at the receiving site to provide effective plague management
- During Phase One of the PDWG, the group did not reach consensus about whether the receiving site would receive Delta Dust.
- 2018 relocations are starting now, and the plan is to move approximately 400 prairie dogs. The IPM policy does not preclude the use of Delta Dust, and the City makes decisions on the use of Delta Dust on a case-by-case basis. The City has and will continue to consider Delta Dust as part of the decision process for relocations, but there is no guarantee that it will or will not use it. Several PDWG members remain concerned that the City will not use Delta Dust at the receiving sites.
- The PDWG agreed to create a bullet in the cover page that says: "The PDWG discussed the use of Delta Dust and whether/how it should be applied on OSMP lands, both in the long term and specifically during 2018 relocations. Some in the group strongly stated that use of Delta Dust at both take-sites and receiving-sites is critical to the survival of prairie dogs and should be an integral part of relocations. Others expressed concerns about the potential impacts of Delta Dust on non-target species, particularly pollinators that are susceptible to insecticide. Due to the variety of perspectives on this issue, the PDWG did not agree to the use of Delta Dust on *receiving sites*; the City already anticipates using it on the *take sites*." Lindsey Sterling Krank and Val Matheson will review and approve the language of this bullet.

NEXT STEPS

- Peak Facilitation Group and Keri Konold will update the final goals document and the cover letter.
- Staff is creating a memo to send to the City Manager in July.
- Peak Facilitation Group will create the final report.
- OSBT will provide feedback on the report during its August 8 meeting and will send this feedback to the City Manager, who will decide what to carry forward to City Council. City

Council is tentatively scheduled to address prairie dog matters during the September 18 City Council meeting.

- Peak Facilitation Group will send the PDWG the dates of the meetings when OSBT and City Council will discuss prairie dog matters.
- The final celebration for the PDWG is scheduled for June 20. Keri Konold will provide further details.