



OPEN SPACE AND MOUNTAIN PARKS

2013 ANNUAL REPORT



PHOTO CREDIT: Jack Sasson

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

When I moved about the Open Space and Mountain Parks system on the morning of Sept. 12, 2013, it was hard to come to grips with the dramatic impact to our community and our public lands caused by the rain and floods. In the days following the flood, even as we all reeled from the devastation, our community immediately began to come together. There was a deep commitment to help mend damage all over the city and certainly including battered Open Space and Mountain Parks (OSMP) lands.

Indeed, as flooding continued and the City of Boulder was forced to close trails, I heard from many people that the loss of accessing the land was very difficult. They felt a need to get back into nature, to reconnect with the land, to recharge their spirits. So by the hundreds, they stepped forward to help rebuild our trails, remove debris and begin to restore our agricultural infrastructure. Forty projects and 777 volunteers assisted OSMP in making significant strides in reopening Boulder's 145-mile trail system, repairing damaged irrigation ditches that distribute water to local farmers and ranchers, and restoring ecosystems scoured by floodwater.

The September floods were a true test for the City of Boulder, for Open Space and so many other communities along Colorado's Front Range, and we should all feel good about our successes. Even so, our work in the wake of the flood should not be the only work we remember from 2013. Our department, with which I am so proud to work, marked numerous accomplishments before the September rains started falling. Those achievements, along with the lessons we learned from the flood, will help make the land we are entrusted to protect far more resilient and adaptive in the future.

When I look back on what Colorado communities, the City of Boulder and OSMP accomplished in 2013, there are so many things we can be proud of. But what meant most to me was watching the community come together in appreciation of our prized landscapes to restore them, and to make the connection we have with them even stronger.

Michael Patton, Director
Open Space and Mountain Parks

OUR DUTY TO BOULDER AND ITS LANDSCAPES

Walk on any trail along Boulder's mountain backdrop or spend a quiet moment on the city's rolling grasslands at daybreak, and you can understand why area residents have a unique kinship with the land around them. Today, OSMP works to grow that special bond through a charter, approved by Boulder voters, which requires the department to acquire, maintain, preserve, retain and use open space for the following purposes:

- (a) Preservation or restoration of natural areas characterized by or including terrain, geologic formations, flora, or fauna that are unusual, spectacular, historically important, scientifically valuable, or unique, or that represent outstanding or rare examples of native species;
- b) Preservation of water resources in their natural or traditional state, scenic areas or vistas, wildlife habitats, or fragile ecosystems;
- c) Preservation of land for passive recreational use, such as hiking, photography or nature studies, and, if specifically designated, bicycling, horseback riding, or fishing;
- d) Preservation of agricultural uses and land suitable for agricultural production;
- e) Utilization of land for shaping the development of the city, limiting urban sprawl, and disciplining growth;
- f) Utilization of non-urban land for spatial definition of urban areas;
- g) Utilization of land to prevent encroachment on floodplains; and
- h) Preservation of land for its aesthetic or passive recreational value and its contribution to the quality of life of the community.

OUR STORY IN NUMBERS

45,384

ACRES PRESERVED

5.3 MILLION

ESTIMATED VISITS IN 2013

145

MILES OF TRAILS

15,000

ACRES FOR AGRICULTURE

59

SPECIES OF MAMMALS

100+

SPECIES OF BIRDS

700

PLANT SPECIES

BOULDER'S LONG TRADITION OF PROTECTING THE LAND

Every minute of every day, about four acres of America's forests and farmlands are lost to development. Yet for more than a century, Boulder residents have recognized the beauty of the land around them, its special place in their lives and have worked tirelessly to safeguard it. OSMP is proud to be stewards of their innovative legacy and will continue to protect Boulder's landscapes for generations to come.

1898

The day after Chautauqua's grand opening, the city purchases the eastern slope of Flagstaff Mountain.

1912

The city purchases another 1,200 acres of land on Flagstaff Mountain from the U.S. for \$1.25 per acre.

1967

Boulder voters approve a perpetual 0.40-cent sales tax to acquire Open Space. It was the first time citizens in any U.S. city vote for an Open Space tax.

1973

Residents' activism leads to the creation of a separate Open Space Department to acquire and preserve land.

1989

Boulder voters approve a 0.33-cent sales tax to accelerate Open Space preservation.

2001

Open Space and Mountain Parks are merged to form the current Open Space and Mountain Parks Department.

2013

Boulder residents extend the 0.33-cent sales tax. On Jan. 1, 2019, two-thirds, or 0.22-cent, will go to acquire and maintain Open Space while the remaining 0.11-cent will fund other city services. In 2035, .10-cent of the .22-cent tax will permanently be dedicated to OSMP. The other .12-cent will go to the city's general fund.

1907

The federal government gives Boulder 1,600 acres of land on Flagstaff Mountain.

1959

Boulder voters approve a 'blue line' charter amendment to help preserve the city's mountain backdrop by restricting the provision of water above an elevation of 5,750 feet.

1971

Boulder voters pass a charter amendment allowing the city to issue bonds to buy, manage and maintain Open Space.

1986

Boulder voters pass a charter amendment providing additional protection for Open Space lands.

1997

Boulder residents vote to approve an extension of the .33-cent sales tax through 2018.

2003

Voters add 0.15-cent sales tax through 2019 to fund continued land acquisition and maintenance.



THE POWER OF NATURE: THE SEPTEMBER FLOODS

The Earth is a dynamic place. Over the eons, rainfall and flooding have helped to shape the land, including Boulder's unique lands. In September 2013, flooding once again reshaped the landscape around us. This time, however, historic flooding brought extensive damage across Colorado's Front Range and caused significant landscape changes across OSMP's system, battering almost every single part of the department's 145-mile trail system.

View a photo gallery documenting flood damage at osmp.org

OUR INSPIRING COMMUNITY

As rain continued to fall and water spilled across the landscape in mid-September, phone calls and emails from the Boulder community poured into OSMP every day. In nearly every email and call was a simple question: “What can I do to help you rebuild?”

Over the next several months, OSMP’s volunteer staff took those kind and generous offers of assistance, and used them to restore critical functions to flood-damaged ecosystems, drainages and ditches. Our community’s incredible efforts also helped OSMP to reopen 99 percent of its trail system - a significant achievement that has led thousands of visitors to reconnect with this landscape. Together with our community, we accomplished extraordinary things.



HOW OUR COMMUNITY HELPED OSMP



777 VOLUNTEERS
PITCHED IN TO ASSIST WITH
FLOOD-RECOVERY EFFORTS

40 PROJECTS
HELPED OSMP REBUILD IN
THE WAKE OF THE FLOOD

3,958 HOURS
WERE DONATED FOR
REBUILDING PROJECTS

8.3 MILES
OF AGRICULTURAL FENCING WERE
CLEARED OF FLOOD DEBRIS

SAFEGUARDING SENSITIVE HABITATS

Most days, you'll never see them. But every day, scores of creatures make their lives on OSMP's landscapes. For many species of birds, mammals, amphibians, fish and insects, Boulder's diverse ecosystems, from grasslands east of the city to cliffs along Boulder's mountain backdrop, provide especially good habitats. OSMP's experienced wildlife staff works to protect those habitats to ensure that species that depend on them continue to thrive.

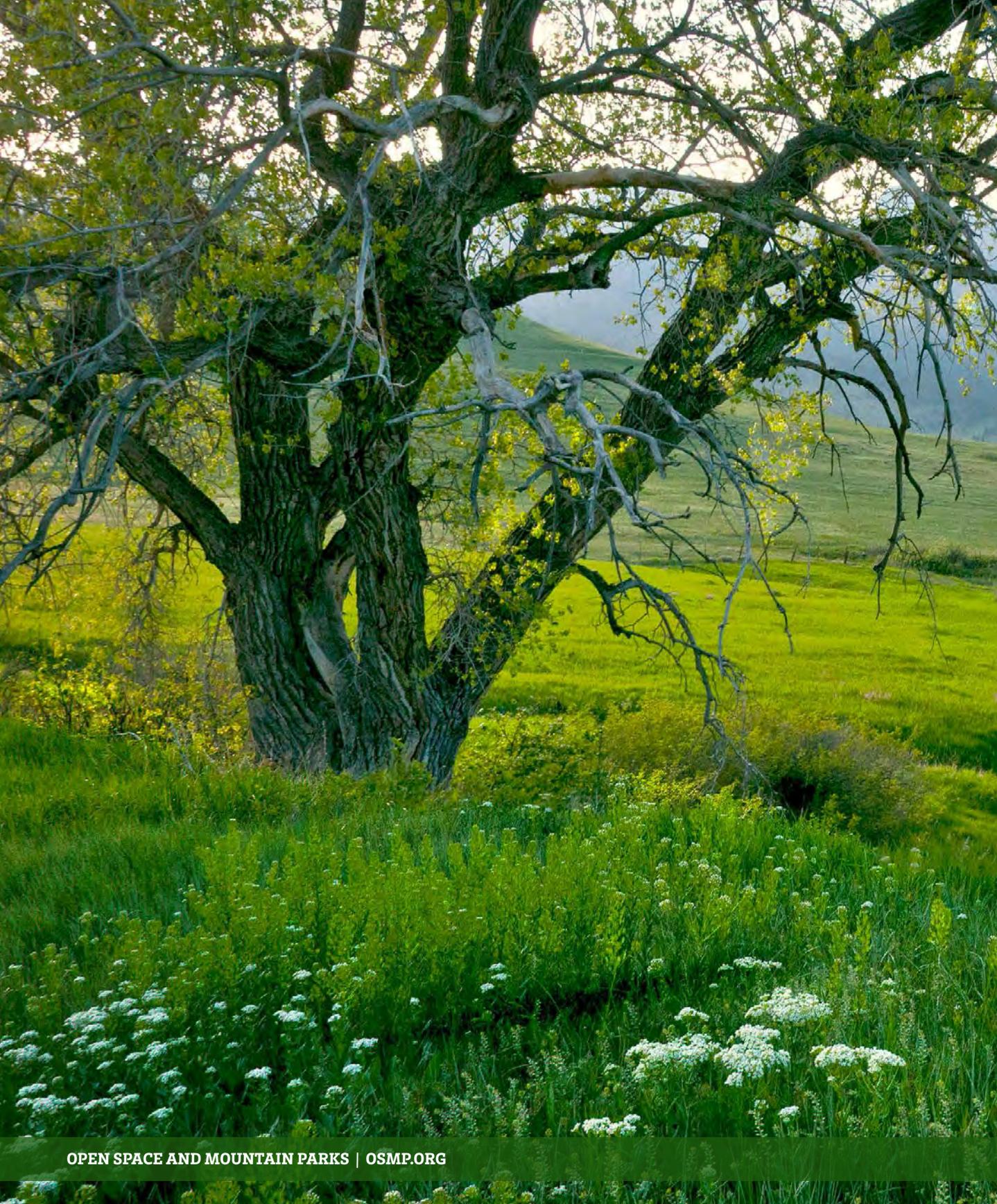
2013 HIGHLIGHTS

- Fitted radio transmitters on six rattlesnakes, in collaboration with a herpetologist, to learn more about their ecology and habitats.
- Studied adult northern leopard frogs' movements with a University of Colorado-Boulder doctoral student.
- Sponsored 14 studies of mountain lions, butterflies, bumblebees and grasshoppers and other local critters.
- Confirmed 100 species of birds during annual surveys of forest and grassland bird communities.
- Collected 3,914 wildlife photos of 35 species from 22 cameras placed on Boulder landscapes.

WHAT'S NEXT ...

- Conduct post-flood bird, amphibian and bat surveys.
- Restore and improve wildlife habitats for several species.
- Assess how bats use burned and unburned forests.
- Use motion-detecting cameras to monitor local wildlife.





PRESERVING NATIVE ECOSYSTEMS

From north to south and east to west, OSMP's landscapes have a rich and complex mix of ecological communities. In fact, OSMP lands are among the most biologically diverse areas in the entire United States. With varied natural systems that include foothills, forests, grasslands, wetlands and riparian areas, OSMP's team of ecologists seek to preserve and restore native ecosystems that help area residents connect with nature, and provide habitat for local flora and fauna.

2013 HIGHLIGHTS

- Developed ecological restoration projects to address damage caused by the September floods.
- Thinned 140 acres of overgrown forest to reduce wildfire risk and enhance natural ecological processes.
- Applied sustainable methods, including goat grazing, to improve ecosystems impacted by invasive weed species.
- Implemented grassland restoration projects identified in OSMP's Grassland Ecosystem Management Plan.
- Mitigated impacts to sensitive habitats caused by U.S. Highway 36 expansion.

WHAT'S NEXT ...

- Improve OSMP forest health and reduce wildfire risk.
- Control invasive weeds, especially in flood-affected areas.
- Restore riparian areas affected by the flood.
- Continue implementing OSMP's grassland management plan.

LINKING TRAILS ACROSS LANDSCAPES

In quiet solitude, we travel across lush lands covered with flowers and grasses. Then, after a slight climb toward the Flatirons, we enter a thick grove of trees. Taking us from one landscape to the other is a winding trail that connects us through OSMP's 145-mile trail system. Every day, thousands of visitors share this experience, entering nature through one of 35 trailheads, to travel across Boulder's varied landscapes. These wonderful gateways are maintained by OSMP trail crews and volunteers who diligently work to improve our encounter with nature.

2013 HIGHLIGHTS

- Developed an action plan to repair and reopen 99 percent of OSMP's flood-damaged trail system.
- Made significant progress on construction of the new Wittemyer Trail west of Boulder.
- Began the bidding process for a contractor to assess feasibility of mountain biking from Eldorado State Park to Walker Ranch.
- Co-operated with state and Boulder County officials to build an underpass for visitors to safely cross Highway 93.
- Partnered with Boulder County to connect OSMP's Cottonwood Trail near Niwot to trails at the Boulder Reservoir.

WHAT'S NEXT ...

- Rebuild numerous flood-damaged trails.
- Reopen the Royal Arch Trail.
- Reconstruct Gregory Canyon Road and Chapman Drive.
- Repair the Sanitas Valley Trail.
- Complete the new Anemone and Wittemyer trails.





IMPROVING LAND WITH VOLUNTEERS

The roar of chainsaws echoes across the land. Shovels bang against wheelbarrows and laughter rolls across the land as you and dozens of other people work together to improve a drainage damaged by the September floods. You and the others around you are now part of a long tradition of land stewardship that Boulder-area residents have demonstrated for more than a century. Today, OSMP depends on your and thousands of others' generosity to build trails, monitor wildlife, greet visitors on trails, lead hikes, restore habitats and much more.

2013 HIGHLIGHTS

- Tapped more than 1,700 volunteers who gave more than 28,000 hours before and after the September floods.
- Supervised 420 volunteers who donated 11,459 hours as part of long-term or year-round OSMP volunteer programs.
- Coordinated 40 volunteer projects that helped to restore infrastructure and ecosystems affected by the floods.
- Organized three organic vegetable planting and harvesting projects, and two agricultural cleanups before the floods.
- Directed two AmeriCorps teams that worked on flood and non-flood related projects.

WHAT'S NEXT ...

- Organize more flood-restoration projects.
- Host additional AmeriCorps teams.
- Recruit more volunteers for OSMP's long-term programs.
- Recruit volunteers for flood recovery work at www.osmp.org.



CONNECTING PEOPLE WITH NATURE

As you stand at the foot of the Flatirons and look up at the unique geological formation, you may wonder how it formed. Like people, the unique landscapes around Boulder have stories to tell. Crafted by water, wind and fire over millions of years, the telling of the land's tales have helped to form a deep connection between Boulder residents and this breathtakingly beautiful area. OSMP's Community Outreach team shares the stories of our land with thousands of Boulder-area residents every year, helping to make the bond we have with the land even stronger.

2013 HIGHLIGHTS

- Offered 481 hikes on many topics, including flood impacts, wildlife, geology, stargazing and art in nature, for 16,736 people.
- Provided 17 programs to people with disabilities from Ireland, Tajikistan, local universities and elderly communities.
- Presented 27 programs and events for Spanish-speaking audiences as part of OSMP's growing Latino outreach program.
- Made 142,100 face-to-face contacts at OSMP's Chautauqua Ranger Cottage, OSMP trailheads, and area festivals and farmers' markets.
- Organized the "Art Inspired by the Land" exhibit, which showcased 100 community members' OSMP-inspired artwork.
- Received 850,000 page views on osmp.org - an average of more than 70,000 views per month.

WHAT'S NEXT ...

- Increase the number of guided hikes offered.
- Educate residents about off-leash dog regulations.
- Distribute more editions of "Field Notes," our e-newsletter.
- Integrate biomimicry into resiliency planning.

PRESERVING AGRICULTURE, WATER

Traveling through Boulder, we see distant streams flowing past historic farmsteads and meadows as agricultural producers proudly raise natural beef and harvest fresh vegetables to be sold at our local markets. It's an important tradition in Boulder, and OSMP is committed to helping local producers maintain viable agricultural operations. In fact, OSMP leases more than 15,000 acres, or about one-third of OSMP's lands, to farmers and ranchers. Today, roughly 5,000 acres of Boulder's public lands, where farmers grow crops and annual forage, are irrigated with water flowing from 30 OSMP ditches.

2013 HIGHLIGHTS

- Repaired flood-damaged irrigation ditches in Boulder and surrounding communities.
- Leased two properties northeast of Boulder to help increase local market crop production.
- Began prescriptive grazing program to remove invasive weeds in partnership with OSMP tenants without the use of herbicides.
- Worked with volunteers to clear debris along 44,000 feet of fencing damaged during the September floods.
- Applied for a major grant from the Colorado Water Conservation Board to rebuild the flood-damaged Green Ditch inlet.

WHAT'S NEXT ...

- Complete OSMP's Agricultural Management Plan.
- Repair flood-damaged agricultural infrastructure.
- Continue efforts to increase organic food production.
- Restore two historic farmhouses on OSMP land.



PROTECTING OUR CULTURAL HISTORY

Stand atop the summit of Mount Sanitas and look out across the expansive view before you, and you can understand why Boulder's breathtaking and picturesque landscapes have brought people here for generations. While many families have stayed in the area, just as many have moved on, leaving their historical legacies behind. OSMP works to honor the history they've left us by preserving their structures and their stories across the department's 45,384-acre system.

2013 HIGHLIGHTS

- Worked to have the National Register of Historic Places put the Weiser Home, east of Boulder, on its prestigious list.
- Coordinated significant work to improve the Viele House, a Victorian-era structure east of Boulder.
- Prepared a nomination to put 1,600 acres of the Cherryvale Ranching District on the National Register of Historic Places.
- Received a grant from the Colorado State Historic Fund to conduct a repair assessment of the Hartnagle home northeast of Boulder.
- Completed a structural assessment of Chapman Drive west of Boulder.

WHAT'S NEXT ...

- Work to improve local farmstead buildings.
- Repair the Viele House foundation.
- Repair flood damage at the Hedgecock milkhouse.
- Survey cultural resources in the North Trail Study Area.

PROTECTING VISITORS AND NATURE

Even the most experienced adventurer can find himself or herself in a precarious situation. Each year, OSMP Ranger Naturalists assist lost or injured hikers and provide information to curious visitors. They are certified police officers and provide critical support to Boulder Police and the Boulder County Sheriff's Office. They are also trained firefighters and are almost always the first to respond to wildfires on OSMP lands. As more and more visitors access Boulder's 45,384 acres of land every year, the need for highly-trained rangers to protect people and Boulder's rich landscapes grows as well.

2013 HIGHLIGHTS

- Implemented closures, conducted assessments and helped OSMP crews rebuild trails in the months following the floods.
- Responded to 91 search, rescue and medical calls, and nine wildland fire calls.
- Identified and placed 15 people with warrants into custody and responded to seven firearms calls on OSMP land.
- Assisted in training fellow officers in firearms, driving and self defense to maintain state standards.
- Delivered more than 40 educational and public safety programs to community residents.

WHAT'S NEXT ...

- Train four new rangers in a seven-month training program.
- Maintain readiness to help fight wildland fires.
- Maintain EMT, wildland fire and police officer certifications.
- Train two rangers to become victim advocates.



DEVELOPING STRATEGIES FOR THE LAND

The next time you drive along Highway 36 north of Boulder, look to the west and see the expansive Joder Ranch running along the foot of the Rocky Mountains. Last year, OSMP real estate agents, environmental planners, resource information analysts, and financial services professionals worked together to acquire that land and will soon begin to develop a conservation plan for the prized area. These professionals help ensure Boulder's open spaces remain a special place for people to connect with nature for generations to come.

2013 HIGHLIGHTS

- Developed the City Council-approved Acquisition Plan that will guide the department's land purchases for the next five years.
- Worked with Federal Emergency Management Agency officials to help restore flood-damaged infrastructure.
- Acquired 685 acres of land east of Boulder that have some of the most diverse ecosystems in Boulder County.
- Purchased 336 acres north of Boulder to protect local wildlife and to create trail connections north of the city.
- Geo-located thousands of images to assess flood-damage and created maps to direct flood-rebuilding efforts.

WHAT'S NEXT ...

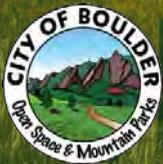
- Negotiate and acquire four properties and mineral estates.
- Develop resource assessments for newly acquired land.
- Coordinate and manage OSMP's flood-recovery work.
- Analyze topographic data to assess flood damage.

THANK YOU

Without a doubt, 2013 was a difficult year for OSMP and the City of Boulder. Despite the challenges, our community has been able to accomplish some amazing things that will help leave the lands we all love stronger and more resilient for future generations.

We couldn't have done it without you. We are truly fortunate to work for a community that is deeply connected to the land we're proud to protect, sustain and restore.





**CITY OF BOULDER
OPEN SPACE AND
MOUNTAIN PARKS**

Mailing Address

P.O. Box 791
Boulder, CO 80306
303-441-3440
bouldercolorado.gov

Office

66 S. Cherryvale
Boulder, CO 80303
Monday through Friday
8 a.m. to 5 p.m.