

Update on 2016 City of Boulder Prairie Dog Relocation Sites and Priorities

V. Matheson

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The City of Boulder evaluates potential prairie dog relocation receiving site availability on an annual basis. This year there are approximately 260 acres of city property that meet the Open Space and Mountain Parks Grassland Ecosystem Management Plan's criteria for relocation and have not been suspected of plague within the past year. The properties include the following Grassland Preserve (GP) and Prairie Dog Conservation Areas (PCAs):

Damyanovich (GP)	(116) acre colony (~ 109 acres unoccupied, of which 16 acres meet GMAP criteria for 2016);
Aweida II (PCA)	76 acre colony (~ 69 acres unoccupied);
Marshall (PCA)	60 acre colony (~59 acres unoccupied);
Ute (PCA)	74 acre colony (~70 acres unoccupied); and
Culver (PCA)	(85) acre colony (48 acres unoccupied).

Phased approach for obtaining state relocation permits for prairie dog receiving sites

The described properties meet the city's criteria for prairie dog relocation receiving sites, but they may not meet the relocation criteria of the State of Colorado, Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) department.

Most of the PCAs listed have adjacent neighbors that have previously expressed concern with prairie dogs in some form. It is possible that CPW would deny the city's relocation permit request for these properties, particularly for the PCAs, due to similar obstacles as those experienced with the Richardson property in 2011. In 2011 the State denied the city a relocation permit on the grounds that the city did not provide assurances that the prairie dogs would not migrate to adjacent property.

Due to the sensitive nature of effecting prairie dog relocations in areas where adjacent landowners may not be receptive to, or supportive of the relocation, staff is proposing a phased approach to applying for state relocation permits. The phased approach would include applying for the Grassland Preserve site (Damyanovich 16 acres) in 2016, and potentially applying for PCA permits in 2017 dependent on evaluation outcomes in 2016. This phased approach would allow staff time to explore the likelihood of permitting being successful in PCA colonies by doing outreach to neighbors, discussing sites with CPW, and investigating the best way to address concerns.

Prairie dog colony removal priorities for 2016 and 2017

The City has numerous prairie dog colonies (approximately 55 acres on Parks and Recreation properties and 697 on OSMP) that are identified for removal because they conflict with management objectives, human land uses or development.

The city will pursue a relocation permit from the state in 2016 to relocate several small colonies on OSMP, including Rolling Rock, Straty Cline, Axelson NE and Abbott if sufficient space exists on the receiving site, to Damyanovich OSMP Grassland Preserve. These colonies are identified for removal in the Grassland Ecosystem Management Plan. All of them are situated within irrigated agricultural fields

and conflict with agricultural management of the area. In addition, Rolling Rock conflicts with rare plant communities and wetland mitigation sites, and Axelson NE has been identified as a best opportunity area for conversion to organic vegetable production, a council identified priority for OSMP agricultural lands.

In 2017 the city will relocate prairie dog colonies from city properties based on the acreage permitted by the state. The city relocation sending sites will be chosen from these priority areas:

<u>Department</u>	<u>Colony</u>	<u>Colony Size</u> <u>(2015)</u>	<u>Reason for removal</u>
OSMP	Hartnagle	17 acres	Irrigated agriculture, identified as best opportunity area for organic vegetable farming- a city council identified priority
OSMP	McKenzie North	38 acres	Irrigated agriculture, directly adjacent to current organic vegetable farm and identified as area for future expansion of vegetable operation
OSMP	IBM	56 acres	Irrigated agriculture
OSMP	Brewbaker	69 acres	Irrigated agriculture
OSMP	Oasis	61 acres	Irrigated agriculture
Parks and Rec	Valmont Park	55 acres	Future development site
OSMP	25 additional colonies	441 acres	Irrigated agriculture, some best opportunity areas for organic vegetable production

Prairie dog removal on private property

The city has received two requests from private landowners to take prairie dogs from areas where land development is planned. These requests include 10 acres for approximately 100 prairie dogs on the Naropa East Campus, and six acres for approximately 60 prairie dogs at the Armory site on Lee Hill road. The city will not be accommodating these requests as part of the 2016-2017 phased relocation plan due to the numerous acres of prairie dog colonies in removal areas on city property.