

Update on City Prairie Dog Relocation Policies and Priorities



**City Council
Aug. 16, 2016**



Purpose

Provide council with an update on:

- **Prairie dog relocation policy in the context of limiting lethal control**
- **Assessment of relocation needs in a regional context**
- **Options for relocation**
- **Relocation priorities**

Urban Prairie Dog Management

History

1990s: Concern diminishing species

2000: Ordinance prohibiting
lethal control

2003: Conflicts with state law &
integrity and biodiversity of
grassland ecosystem

Prairie Dog Management

Current Policies

2005: **Wildlife Protection Ordinance**

2006: **Urban Wildlife Management Plan**

2010: **Grassland Ecosystem Management Plan**

Wildlife Protection Ordinance

6-1-11 Limitation on Lethal Means of Control for Prairie Dogs and Birds



6-1-36 Procedures for Obtaining Prairie Dog Lethal Control Permits

Ordinance Goals

- **Protect natural ecosystems**
- **Minimize inhumane treatment**
- **Balance wildlife protection with urban land uses**
- **Minimize use of pesticides**

Urban Prairie Dog Management

Current Policies

2005: Wildlife Protection Ordinance

2006: Urban Wildlife Management Plan

2010: Grassland Ecosystem Management Plan

Urban Wildlife Management Plan

Key Guiding Principles

- **Emphasize humane, non-lethal control when possible.**
- **Urban area is primarily for human land uses and services.**
- **Balance environmental, economic, and social goals.**
- **Compatible with ecosystem management.**

Urban Prairie Dog Management

Current Policies

2005: Wildlife Protection Ordinance

2006: Urban Wildlife Management Plan

2010: Grassland Ecosystem Management Plan

Grassland Ecosystem Management Plan

Provides a framework for conservation & management of natural ecosystems and agricultural landscapes within grassland habitats



Assessment of Relocation Needs



City current removal areas:

- **City owned land 750+ acres**
 - OSMP 685 ac.
 - Parks 65 ac. (Valmont Park included)
 - Fire 2 ac.
- **Private land 3 acres**

City depends heavily on relocation to remove prairie dogs from areas where they are in conflict with other land uses and conservation targets.

Policy Comparison of Prairie Dog Removal

BCPOS Grassland Management (25,000/HCA 3,326 ac.)

2015 1,503 acres in removal areas

- Lethal control occurred on 36 properties
 - 6 properties trapped and donated to animal recovery programs (approximately 1,500 animals)
 - 36 properties ground fumigant used



Policy Comparison of Prairie Dog Removal

OSMP Grassland Management (25,000/9,300 ac.)

2015 685 acres in removal areas

- Lethal control occurred on one property
 - Ground fumigant (carbon monoxide) for 3 prairie dogs



Assessment of Relocation Needs



City current removal areas:

- **City owned land 750+ acres**
 - OSMP 685 ac.
 - Parks 65 ac.
 - Fire 2 ac.
- **Private land 3 acres**

“Potential” future needs:

- **Private land 64 ac.**
- **Planning Reserve 152 ac. (Parks)**
- **CDOT 4 ac.**

Options for prairie dog relocation sites



City property (16 acres)
Private property
Purchase land

2016 Relocation Priorities



- **OSMP removal areas**
 - 8-12 acres of 685
 - (2-3 colonies out of 36)
- **Small- high leverage for restoration of entire property**
- **Conflict:**
 - Irrigated agriculture
 - Rare plant communities
 - Recolonization

Open Space Impacts of Limiting Lethal Control



- Relocations to open space prior to Grassland Plan → increased extent of conflicts today
- Relocation site availability not sufficient to accommodate needs
- Open Space relocation not always top city priority

Impacts to City P.dog Management if Private Land Prairie Dogs Moved to OSMP

- Conflict continues
 - impacts to agricultural production
 - weed issues
 - neighbor issues
- Restoration delayed or precluded
- Colonies grow- less feasible to relocate in future

Questions for staff?



City prairie dog colonies without long term protection

a. Public Land Urban Service Area

(217 ac. Parks, 2 ac. CDOT, 2 ac. Fire)

- Valmont Park Development (54 acres)
- Stazio Field development (4 acres)
- East Boulder Park (.2 acres)
- Planning Reserve (P&R 152 acres)
- Tom Watson (4 acres)
- Foothills Parkway and Kalmia (2 acres)
- Foothills and Pearl Parkway (2 acres)
- Gunbarrel Fire Station (2 acres)

a. Private Land Urban Service Area

(64 ac.)

- Naropa (3 acres)
- Lookout EJ LLC (2 acres)
- Valley Labs/Celestial Seasonings (22 acres)
- IBM (37 acres)

OSMP GMAP Vegetation Criteria

- Used to evaluate relocation sites (Grassland preserve only)
- Bare ground, species diversity, grass cover
- Safeguard long-term plant community health
 - Conserve viability of diverse habitats
- Resiliency of community to p.dog occupation
- If indicated, modification following further evaluation in GMAP update

OSMP Grassland Management

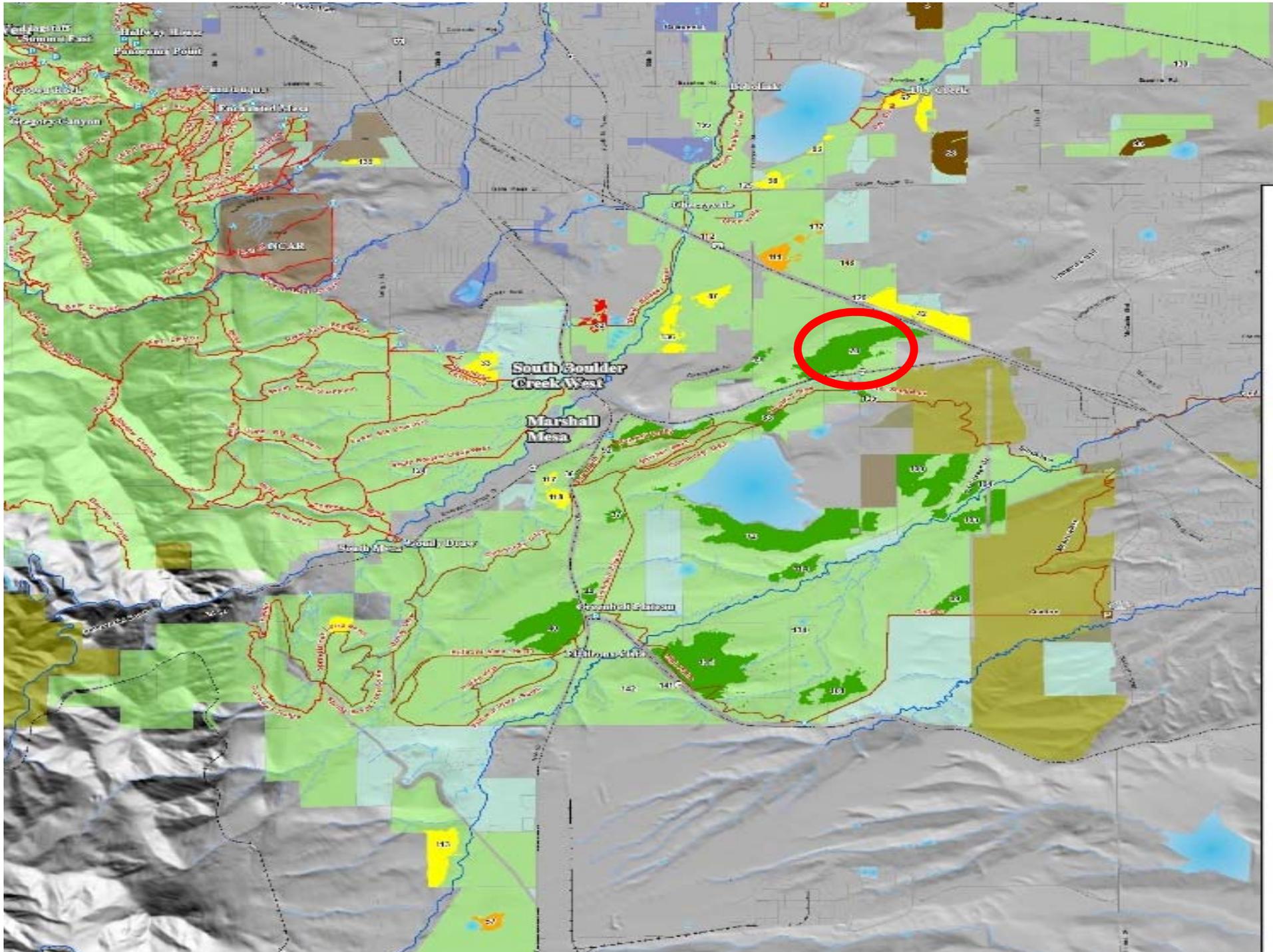
- Good Suitability p.dog habitat 6,603 /25,000
 - Total acreage of occupation (96-2015) = 6,237
 - Grassland Preserve 8,000 acres (3,436 acres have had p.dogs*)
 - Desired occupancy = 10-26%
 - Prairie Dog Conservation Area = 583*
 - Multiple Objective Area = 755

2015

- 685 acres in removal/transition areas
- Lethal control- 3 individuals- Foothills Park

Damyonovich Receiving Site

- 16.5 acre site in Southern Grassland Preserve
 - Meets vegetation criteria
 - Meets occupancy criteria
- Permitting in Aug-Sept
- Relocation Sept-Oct

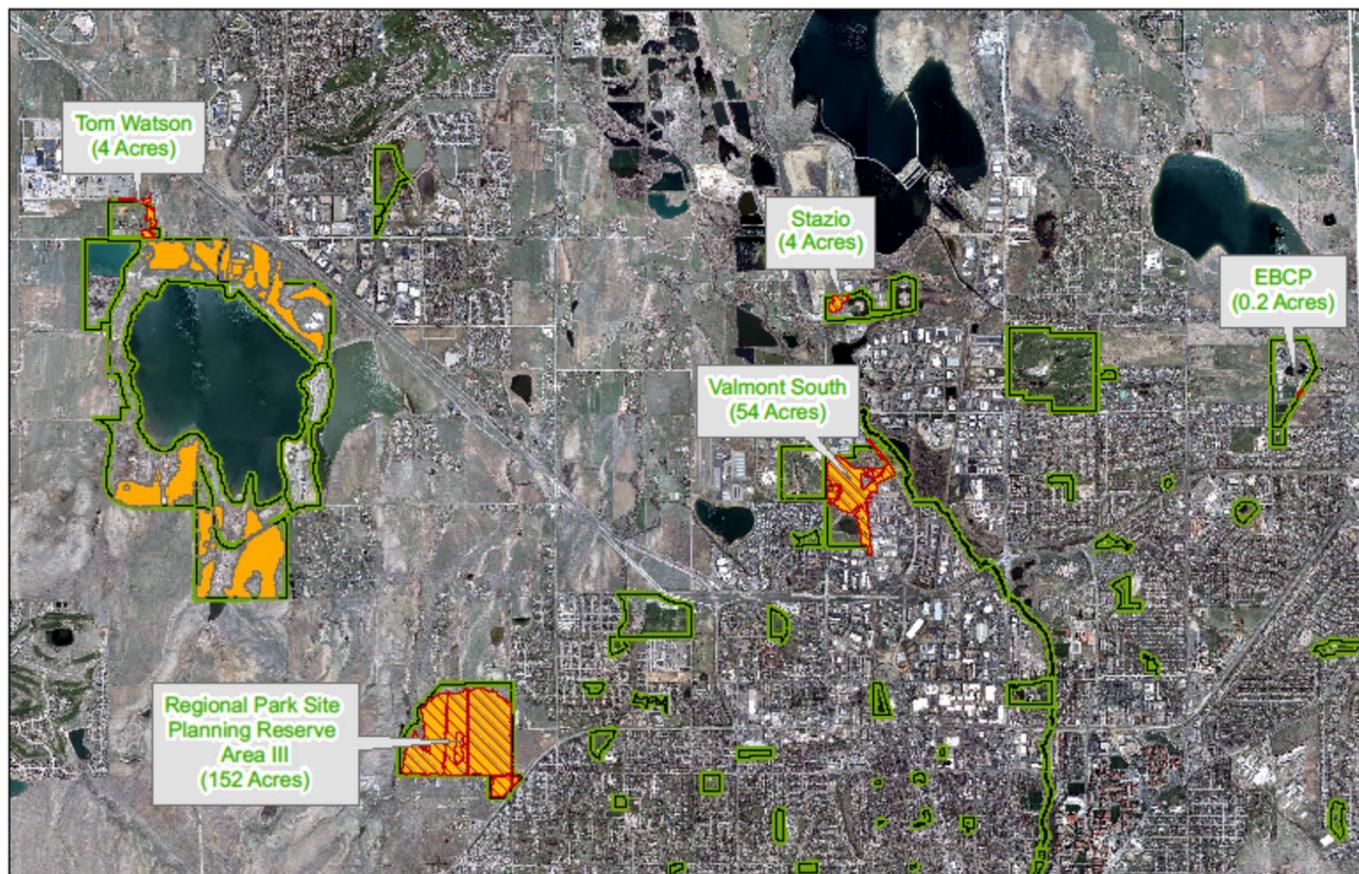


6-Step Process:

1. Minimize conflicts
2. Remove portion of animals
3. Relocation
4. Animal recovery programs
5. Trap and individual lethal
6. Pesticides + mitigation fund

Assessment of Relocation Needs

Parks & Recreation Prairie Dog Areas
2015



Legend



Park Boundary



Colonies in Non-Removal Areas
(236 Acres)



Removal Areas
(214 Acres)

