



Plague Management Plan Draft Outline & Feedback Questions

June 14, 2021

I. Problem Statement, Purpose, Goal, Objectives, Criteria, & Decision Making

Problem Statement: The topic of plague management in prairie dog colonies has been controversial in the Boulder community. Prairie dog colonies are subject to periodic, unpredictable, substantial decline in numbers due to plague. When these declines occur, there are questions about the city's ability to meet prairie dog conservation goals and manage plague. Similarly, prior city efforts to mitigate plague have been perceived as exasperating current colony conflicts and compromising environmental health through using pesticides. Having more plague resistant colonies in areas where prairie dogs and their associated species are conservation targets in a way that supports high quality grassland habitat and wildlife is beneficial to managing grassland systems. Similarly, being transparent and clear about where and how plague mitigation takes place as to not exasperate current land use conflicts and protect ecosystem health is equally beneficial.

The **Purpose** of this plan is to clarify why plague management occurs on City of Boulder property and where, when and how plague management will be implemented to support the city's multiple goals for grassland habitats.

Goal: Manage plague as needed to support grassland ecosystems and meet citywide prairie dog conservation and management goals.

Objectives:

- Identify what criteria or management designations (OSMP) are appropriate targets for plague management and under what circumstances.
- Review of techniques and strategies for plague management, identify appropriate plague management techniques, tools and applications to be used to meet city goals for prairie dog occupancy levels and protection of high-integrity grassland habitat on city owned properties designated for prairie dog conservation.
- Identify a process for evaluating new tools for plague mitigation.
- Identify costs for plan implementation.

Criteria: The Plague Management Plan will reflect the context and guidance of existing plans and policy documents.

- Build an environmentally sustainable community that protects and enhances the biodiversity and productivity of ecological systems (COB Sustainability and Resilience Framework).
- Land management practices will protect and enhance native ecosystems, biological diversity, and habitat (Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan Protecting Native Ecosystems & Biodiversity Policy 3.03).
- The City will implement the most environmentally sound approaches for landscape & natural area management and to reduce and eliminate, where possible, the volume and toxicity of chemical pest control treatments (IPM Policy 2019).

Within the city organization there are also departmental or specialized plans that offer additional guidance in certain areas. The Plague Management Plan will support prairie dog conservation/occupancy goals and conflict removal areas included in these documents:

- City of Boulder Urban Wildlife Management Plan Prairie Dog Component
- OSMP Master Plan, Grassland Ecosystem Management Plan, & Agricultural Management Plan
- Parks and Recreation Department Boulder Reservoir Master Plan & Site Management Plan

Colonies that have been identified for removal due to conflicts with other land uses will not be considered for plague management except for the context of removal by relocation and as required by the state or local health officials to minimize the possibility of transferring disease to other locations.

Decision-making: City Manager approval for the final draft.

II. Plague Management Background and Current Practices

- i. Why mitigate plague?
- ii. Current plague management activities
- iii. Assessment of plague management tools
- iv. What are other municipalities, or government landowners doing?
- v. How city works with BC Public Health in our response to plague for public health

III. Description of plague mitigation areas.

- vi. Summary of current guiding plans and documents
- vii. Criteria for mitigating plague
- viii. Goals and objectives for mitigating plague
- x. Tools that will be employed

Feedback Questions

On June 21, 2021, at the Plague Management Plan Community Meeting this draft plan outline will be shared and the following four questions will be asked of meeting participants:

1. Do you have ideas about Plague Management Plan (PMP) goals or objectives that are not included, or do you feel that there is something that should be removed?
2. Do you have suggested changes to the outline/overall framework of the plan?
3. Do you have any specific concerns related to plague management that you want to be sure staff consider as they put together the draft plan?
4. Are there experts in a relevant field or sources of information you want to be sure staff reaches out to or has access to as they put together the draft plan?