

Public comments received related to 2021 prairie dog management and the December 14, 2020, annual prairie dog meeting

Greetings, OSMP and OSBT

As a longtime neighbor of OSMP in the Northern Tier, I have participated actively in the entire process leading to the comprehensive proposal for managing prairie dogs on OSMP irrigated lands. I have extensive personal experience with managing prairie dogs on my own 80-acre farm, I have researched the issue extensively, and have had numerous conversations with OSMP and BCPOS staff. I was optimistic that the plan approved by the OSBT and Council allowing lethal control would finally enable OSMP to take immediate and aggressive action to begin treating the Bennett property -- the poster child of public land mismanagement -- where thousands of prairie dogs in the past decade have led to heartbreaking weeds, devastating erosion, the loss of an excellent OSMP tenant and neighbor, and the relentless expansion of ever-increasing hordes of your prairie dogs onto our own farms next door.

I am dismayed that the current plan which you will be considering this week specifically excludes Bennett (as well as Oasis and Steele). I confirmed this grievous omission with staff, who assured me that in fact there will be no treatment on these properties until "sometime in the future," the implication being not until many other properties have been treated first and not until 2024 at the earliest. I am concerned that "sometime in the future" sounds pretty indefinite and very far off; people's attention spans (and OSBT terms) are limited and other priorities have a way of intruding on long-range commitments. I understand that all management actions must balance a variety of priorities, but it will take years to get Bennett under control so the sooner you can get started on it the better.

This is an emergency. Please direct staff to raise treating the prairie dog infestation on Bennett to the highest priority -- starting in 2021 and allocating some resources here every year until the property is restored to productive agricultural land.

Thank you.

Agriculture and prairie dogs have been in conflict since the early 1900's when the government paid farmers and ranchers to exterminate prairie dogs, by 1910, we had exterminated over 95% of all prairie dogs.

Over the last 100 years, we have replaced native vegetation with nonnative plants resulting in undesirable consequences. As a result, we are dealing with unnatural grasslands, exotic weeds and expecting our wildlife to fit into this new dynamic. Today, we still make comments that prairie dogs damage vegetation, denude the landscape, cause water runoff, and exist in unnaturally high numbers; these are excuses that blame them instead of fixing the problem.

From an agricultural standpoint, we continue to add soil amendments, introduce nonnative plants, key-line and perform all these unnatural functions to force nonnative species to survive in our natural environment.

During this entire agricultural review process with the City, there has been little discussion about coexistence with wildlife, understanding prairie dog behaviors or reintroduction of native plants onto prairie dog colonies, or other areas, that function well with prairie dogs and native ungulates. Black-tailed prairie dogs have been here for over 75,000 years and in less than 150 years humans have reduced their range to less than 2%, this has significant impacts for many other species. According to Dr. John Hoogland, a prairie dog expert, prairie dogs do not migrate, they remain in one area for long periods of time altering vegetation from grasses to predominately forbs. They naturally increase bare ground and this supports other species that depend on an unobscured landscape. A typical prairie dog colony has 60 to 80 four-inch diameter holes on one-acre of land, when it rains or snows, moisture is captured deep underground. Burrow mounds built by prairie dogs captures air and moves this through the tunnel system providing oxygen to another Animalia kingdom below ground. With water, airflow and temperate underground climate, the ground beneath us is alive with life, how would this not make the soils richer?

This entire underground ecosystem at present, is not being further explored. Critical thinking requires evaluation of many factors and, understanding the ecosystem services of prairie dogs should be a part of this project. In summary the City should consider the following:

1. Revegetation of prairie dog colonies with native forbs resistant or resilient to prairie dog grazing.
2. Creating vegetation buffer zones (no graze, no haying) next to active prairie dog colonies to keep prairie dogs out of conflict areas.
3. Soils testing inside prairie dog tunnels at one-to-two foot depths, samples can be extracted by hand using a trowel.
4. A general education program about prairie dogs. Biology, impacts on the landscape, and the plight of this species.

And finally, consider the addition of native living windbreaks where practical - designed to protect crops, feed wildlife and exclude prairie dogs.

Thank you for your time.

— Thank you for the time you took to thoughtfully prepare these presentations. I toured these sites last week and I have the following comments.

1. There are legitimate concerns that the City is portraying prairie dogs as having negative impacts on soil health in general. Measuring soil health is a subjective matter. For example, growing certain crops requires different organic minerals than growing grass. The issue really is that prairie dogs and agricultural interests are in conflict, and this does not necessarily have anything to do with soil health. For example, prairie dog grazing on fields used for haying can cause problems because prairie dogs prefer short plant stature and this does not align with the goal to grow tall grasses for haying. In areas where agricultural crops are desired, prairie dog cannot remain on that landscape because they may consume the plants, again, this has nothing to do with soil health but a conflict with prairie dogs.

One could easily point to the fact that agricultural practices have probably been the most damaging event to many natural areas all across Colorado. Agriculture has diverted natural rivers and streams, introduced nonnative plants and weedy species, has a high use of pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers and then replaced wild animals with domesticated animals used for consumption.

Soils in Colorado in general are considered low in organic matter and this is why humans add composts, fertilizers, and additional water when growing nonnative plants. But in the natural world, the conditions of soil health on prairie dog colonies is a completely different situation.

2. Before the City prematurely confers that prairie dogs are bad for soil health, it should be clear that prairie dog occupancy on producing agricultural properties may not be compatible, but this does not necessarily mean that prairie dogs are damaging to the soils. Otherwise, the City may be fueling a precedent to remove prairie dogs based upon soils sampling for agricultural uses, not necessarily wild land uses. Because Boulder is a leader, this is an even more sensitive issue and may yield the way (internally and externally) for justification of continual removal of this native, small mammal from the grassland landscape. How will OSMP defend this soils argument as land and wildlife stewards of our public lands?

3. The presentations continually point to only prairie dogs as part of poor soil conditions. We urge this research to have a solid understanding of the responsibility that comes along with these findings, analysis and rhetoric. Black-tailed prairie dogs have declined by 98% throughout their range. Studies show unequivocally that prairie dogs are a keystone species of the Great Plains, that is, their presence -- including their colonies, burrows structure and grazing habits-- is central to the survival of a multitude of other wildlife (Outwater 1996, Day and Detling 1994, Miller et al. 1996; Miller and Ceballos 1994, Ellison and Aldous, 1952, Kotliar et al, 1999, Uresk, 1990, Hoogland, 1974-present, Davidson et al 2012, Davidson and Lightfoot 2006, Ecog.; 2007, Ecog.; 2008, JAE; and Davidson et al. 2008, JAE, etc.)

4. Please stop saying we are going to 'defend' the land from the prairie dogs. Using negative terms for prairie dogs only exacerbates myths and misperceptions leading to increased conflicts for all of us. Using other terminology such as 'maintain areas to be unoccupied by prairie dogs' is a more productive statement and is less demonizing of prairie dogs in general.

5. How much hay is needed from the proposed properties in 2021 & 2022? In other grasslands, organizations have raised funds for supplemental livestock feeding to offset productivity losses through lease subsidies. Has the City evaluated the costs for lethal control versus subsidizing hay?

6. The 2021 colonies proposed for lethal control are part of a metapopulation of prairie dogs mostly among and around the Boulder Reservoir. Overall, two huge pockets of prairie dog ecosystem on either side of the Reservoir are proposed for lethal removal. So, as you are coming into the Boulder Reservoir on 51st, most of the prairie dog colonies will now be removed. As you leave the Reservoir area, animals on the north side of these public lands are also proposed for extermination. Such an ambitious removal of so many prairie dogs could signal a population crash for prairie dogs and their associates, thus substantially driving up territorial disputes and increasing stress among predators as they hunt for food in other areas. It may be more prudent to stagger removal in these areas rather than remove all the prairie dogs at once. This may also buy time to humanely relocate prairie dogs as the year's progress.

6. Overall, colonies should be trapped and relocated to the best extent possible. Lousberg has such a small number of prairie dogs that these animals could easily be trapped and integrated into periphery burrows of existing OSMP colonies; this saves the additional expense of modifying receiving areas for these animals. Sections of the Ditzel colony are very visible to the public and we recommend those be trapped and relocated at a minimum simultaneous with NuWest & Gallagher proposed relocations. Hester appears a straightforward colony to trap geographically.

Driving past these on the way to recreate to these public lands for work or recreation and knowing the colonies are being killed for hayfields creates public angst and negatively impacts me, my family, and many other community member's quality of life.

1. Soils sample for prairie dogs should be taken within the tunnel systems of prairie dogs. This is very simple to do. To conclude that prairie dogs do nothing for the soils is a serious oversight that would not be supported by most biologists that work extensively with this animal.

2. Keep in mind that although we see bare soils above ground in prairie dog towns, this does not mean it is dead underground. On average there are 60 to 80 4-inch diameter burrows per one acre of occupied prairie dog habitat. When it rains or snows, these open holes feed an underground web of life. This is very important to understand and should be further explored.

1. Lousberg

This property is adjacent to an existing, healthy colony on private land. How does the City propose to keep prairie dogs from migrating in from there as they naturally do? It appears the City would have to install barriers among 1-3 private land borders.

Unless the 6 acres includes the actual colony viewed, the younger prairie dogs on the edge expanding out appear to be the only animals on OSMP land. Based on our ground truthing, the occupied area appears smaller than 6 ac.

A northern harrier hawk was spotted hunting the prairie dog burrows on arrival.

What will the City do to ensure no non-prairie dog animals using the burrows are secondarily gassed? Not sure this is what you want to spend your time on here.

We appreciate OSMP addressing this in a timely manner. These few prairie dogs could easily be incorporated into the OSMP system with little preparation at the receiving site, for example, could use natural periphery burrows instead of installing artificial chambers. Staff should be aware of how these prairie dogs came onto the property. As such, we recommend these prairie dogs be non-lethally removed. There's just no reason for lethal here, it can be easily avoided with the release method mentioned above as it's a quite small number of animals.

2. Ditzel

The Ditzel colony is a large open colony that is probably used by many local wildlife species and is highly visible to many people in Boulder. The landowner has already installed a metal barrier around their immediate residence (south) and fortified an existing post and dowel fence with chicken wire on the north, there are no prairie dogs on this large residential property. Since this property is already leased, we believe it should be a priority site for relocation over other conflicting properties that are not currently leased. We also recommend that after removal, the tenants consider better pasture management by allowing periphery vegetation to grow tall making prairie dogs uncomfortable with re-entering the property.

3.&4. Cowles & Axelson east

This is a healthy prairie dog colony likely supporting associated species. Prairie dogs are migrating in and have established from the southern property boundary. What will the City do to maintain this area as unoccupied by prairie dogs post removal?

4. Hester

We could not view the proposed 13 acres of prairie dogs and their associates on the Hester allotment. The area is home to much healthy grassland and cropland.

They are pests and the efforts to "save" them are ludicrous. Just exterminate all of them.

I know you've heard it all before. I'm so sickened by these actions. Please stop the killing of prairie dogs. Focus on improving conditions for wildlife, not destroying it. Thank you

Good morning, I recognize that prairie dog overpopulation has produced damaging consequences to both local ecosystems and agricultural practices, and I fully support limited lethal control. However, I am just curious as to whether birth control or fertility reduction measures have been considered, or why those options have been ruled out.

I am sure your office receives hundreds of opinions and inquiries regarding this matter, and I understand if an individual response is not possible, but I'd appreciate any information on this, if available. Thanks

I do not possess all of the pertinent data needed to form an opinion regarding how best to live in harmony with prairie dogs. Hence, I will not be offering any sort of suggestion or recommendation here. I will, however, share a personal prairie dog story with you. My hope is that this story can be added to all the other information you have and aide you in reaching a prairie dog management decision.

I live in Fort Collins and own a townhome in Boulder where my sons have lived while attending CU. My husband and/or I make weekly trips to Boulder to visit our sons. On one such trip, I was driving along Lookout Road at the speed limit. I topped a hill and slammed on my brakes in hopes of avoiding hitting a prairie dog that was crossing the road. I didn't hear any sort of a thud, but I also did not see anything run out from under my car. All day long, I felt terrible. I was convinced that I had killed a prairie dog. As a biologist, I had intentionally euthanized animals before in the name of science. I understood that prairie dogs are in no way endangered. Still, I just felt crummy about having taken a life, even if it was a plague carrying rodent.

When the time neared for me to return to Fort Collins, I dreaded having to drive past the place where I had encountered the prairie dog earlier that day. I even considered driving a different route home in order to avoid having to see the remains of the poor prairie dog I had likely killed that morning. Deciding it was foolish of me to avoid a stretch of road forever because I had killed a prairie dog, I turned onto Lookout Road. I felt a bit nervous as I topped the hill where I had tried to avoid hitting the prairie dog, expecting to see the body of the poor, dead rodent I had killed. Once over the hill, I did indeed see the body of a dead prairie dog, and another dead prairie dog and another and another and another. There were more than a dozen prairie dog carcasses littering the road in various states of decay. Did I kill a prairie dog that morning? We will never know. That area is a death trap for prairie dogs. Visibility for drivers is limited due to the hills on that stretch of road. The prairie dogs that inhabit the fields that road bisects do not appear to understand the risks involved in crossing that road. The results are lots of dead prairie dogs.

I understand that prairie dogs are part of the ecosystem. I understand that it is unfortunate to kill animals. I understand that farmers struggle to control threats to their livelihoods. My experience here is simply an attempt to share with you the reality that even when one does not have any sort of issue with the existence of prairie dogs, she may still be responsible for the death of prairie dogs. Humans are part of the ecosystem too. We cannot avoid interacting with the critters that share our space. The number of deaths might not be the same, but even if the prairie dogs are not exterminated in the areas planned, some will inevitably die due to human interaction. Perhaps one consideration is whether it is better to

die by peacefully drifting off to sleep and never waking up or being squished under the wheels of an SUV.

Hello I am a very concerned citizen and I'd like to see our state of Colorado save our wildlife especially our native keystone species our black tailed prairie dogs which are a key component in our ecosystem providing homes for so many species of wildlife also prey for our raptures, swift fox bobcats , mountain lions, coyotes , the list goes on at least 200 species of wildlife depend on the prairie dog species for their survival, not only will you be killing the prairie dogs but also thousands of other species of wildlife. I have attended many council meetings in boulder when this first began , and interesting that many of the welfare ranchers and farmers could not come up with one single shred of evidence that cattle or horses break their legs in prairie dog colonies or I feel that prairie dogs do not compete for grasses actually it's better that cattle graze in prairie dog colonies because prairie dogs create other nutritious grasses for other wildlife even more nutritious because their complex burrow systems creates a ground water charge and the dung of prairie dogs puts nitrogen back into the soil it's all a natural process vs what we do to the soil tilling it to much and adding pesticides which kills the soil depleting all the microorganisms and what happens ? The prairie dogs are the scapegoat of what we truly do to the soil . Please consider our wildlife we have already destroyed 68% of our wildlife worldwide doesn't this alarm everyone?! Also prairie dogs are very intelligent and have such a sophisticated language and are amazing engineers who save our soil also they are very family oriented and highly social animals they are sentient beings , they do not carry the plague infected fleas carry the plague and can host all on their own on humans or pets ,prairie dogs do not have an immunity to the plague and if a prairie dog were to contract the plague from an infected flea it would wipe out an entire colony within 72-78 hours . If anyone were to contract the plague from and infected flea a simple antibiotic can cure it . I am asking to reconsider your decision you will be destroying so much of our wildlife and their habitat, there is more advance science available that we can look into today that would benefit both our wildlife and farmers and ranchers we need to update incorrect science . Thankyou

To whom it may concern, I am fully aware of how complex this issue is for all involved. However I would ask that you keep in mind that these creatures are intelligent, living, feeling animals with families, put on this earth just like us humans and on that basis, I would encourage you to carefully explore and consider every possible means of relocation as opposed to cruel extermination.

Hello, Really not sure why I'm bothering to comment here about your plan to kill thousands of prairie dogs and associated species because it is ABUNDANTLY clear that you are allowing AG interests to run roughshod over the environment. What's new!! We have all commented until we are blue in the face and you ignore the majority over special interest welfare ranching. Boulder should be ashamed!!

As a 33 year resident of the City of Boulder, I support lethal termination of prairie dogs. It is too costly to move them. I support the farmers and agricultural interests having been raised in a farming community. Farmers are needed to tend to our land so to prevent it from becoming developed. We have enough prairie dogs, it is not worthwhile to sustain them. Agricultural land is valued during this climate crisis.

Hi!! Thanks for reaching out for input on the prairie dogs! I don't have any ideas - but I would like to understand why they are a problem. I see this issue in the news and I was a bit shocked and saddened to

see the prairie dog family destroyed on the open sky trail by lagerman reservoir. Seeing the prairie dogs was the motivation we used to get our son out biking in that area - and now they're gone.

I'll admit I don't know why they are an issue - is there some way to summarize it in a few sentences from you or direct me to a web site?

OSMP

Thank you for your continuing efforts to manage the growing prairie dog population.

Might it be possible to establish an agreed upon equilibrium estimate for prairie dog management and eliminate the rest through half lethal and half non-lethal management?

Elimination and elimination methods could be rotated and scheduled among the colonies within budget constraints.

This to me seems to be an equitable solution to an issue that not only needs to be addressed, but also will never have full consensus. Good luck- and thanks again!

As a long time Boulder resident, I was beyond saddened to hear that my tax dollars are to be spent to kill native wildlife. I don't vote for open space so that the council can decide what naïve wildlife is pretty and cuddly enough not to be killed. You should be ashamed. My open space is for open space, not for your agriculture needs and not to help out rich peoples pets! Pretty soon, there won't be any reason to continue to vote for open space.

Please rethink this awful decision.

I was absolutely nowhere near Boulder Colorado but as someone who values many keystone species spread throughout the United States I would appreciate it if you could do everything within your power to minimize the number of prairie dogs affected by this decision.

I just finished watching the video from the presentation from Mon, 12/14 after seeing the suggestion to provide input I saw in the Daily Camera. Of course I had lots of questions as I watched so I perused the history of the project and some of the meeting notes back to 2016. First-I have lived in Boulder for 37 years, spend lots of time in the open space cycling and running and have been so disturbed by the invasion of these little critters. I have nearly run over them on my bike as they dart helter skelter across the bike paths. I have watched all the failed barriers and inexorable devouring of the earth. My knee jerk initial reaction was why are we all being held hostage by these guys as they not so slowly destroy every inch of open space even right up to roadways, paths and bikeways on a massive scale. The situation reminds me in so many ways of our out of control homeless situation-we fruitlessly just move them around and they keep coming back. Except I thought why can't we kill them and remove them? Then I think last year I read an article perhaps written by a local farmer who was irate at the loss of arable and pasture land. That kind of did it for me. I wanted to yell "What the hell is going on-STILL?!" I did see notes from your website going back to 2016! OK-Second-I sucked all my vitriol back in as I listened to the presentation and realized that you all-and the city-have sunk hundreds of thousands of dollars into this problem, have done an incredible amount of research into all aspects of the problem from soils to controls to barriers to population analysis, etc. I'm aghast at how much money and resources have gone into chipping away at the prairie dog problem for so many years. Did it really have to take so long to deal with an invasive animal species? If I discover rats, mice, etc in my own yard lets just say it's all out war and they don't last long. Regardless, seems like you are all over it. I better understand now the

economic drivers of controlling the critters as the open space has become unfeasible. I now better understand the complexity of reclaiming the damaged farmland and open space. My worry is how much supervision will be needed going forward to keep them at optimal levels and to be sure they don't keep spreading into new zones. Anyway I'm SO appreciative of all your hard work and research. I would also like to volunteer to help in some way if the need for volunteers arises-I am already an enrolled volunteer in Count Me In.

To finish this up-I am all for lethal control! The sooner the better. We need to recover and preserve as much arable land as possible. We need to support our endangered farming community. We need to recover and preserve our open space. I also grudgingly understand the value of the prairie dogs as part of the local ecosystem.

Thank you again for all your hard work on this issue!

Dear OSMP: Each and every prairie dog is a sentient being --- a living, feeling individual, experiencing life in his or her own unique way, just as we are.

To consider intentionally killing even one is unconscionable.

Please reconsider, and eliminate any use of "lethal control" from your plan.

Live and let live!

"As ye sow, so shall ye reap."

Thank You.

Blessings Peace Love and Liberation Unto All Beings,

In Faith and Gratitude,

All God's Grace

Good day, I just came across an article about plans to destroy a prairie dogs colonies for agriculture. I wanted to voice my concern and point out that prairie dogs play a crucial role in preserving a healthy eco system, and it is very important to preserve as many safe habitats as possible since they are slowly being exterminated for new developments. It is so wonderful to be able to see there are at least a few safe places for them where they can thrive and it would be great to know that Boulder could stay one of those safe places for such a great animal as prairie dog. Please consider this in making a decision. We really need to preserve wildlife any way we can.

Hello,

I am not going to reiterate all the science and ecological information that has been presented to the Boulder City council.

I am simply writing to express my disgust at the council for your shortsighted and horrible decision to eradicate these creatures. I am absolutely opposed to any "mitigation" of the prairie dogs, anywhere in the City of Boulder or in Boulder County.

Just stop.

Hello,

I am writing to urge you to please find alternatives to the lethal control of prairie dogs on Boulder City properties.

Please protect Colorado's wildlife and don't kill them.
Thank you for reading my comments.

I was one of many who commented at the City Council meeting a few months ago. You remember? The meeting ran beyond midnight, with a large majority in favor of relocating the 30,000 prairie dogs rather than slaughtering them.

Yet here you are still largely leaning to inhumanely gassing most of these animals because a handful of landowners demand it. This despite the Humane Society immediately stepping in to relocate. This despite an offer of \$10,000 to relocate the prairie dogs to land in southeast Colorado. And this despite First Gentleman Marlon Reis's offer to speed up the permitting process, help find the necessary equipment to build new burrows, and recruit as many volunteers as may be needed to get the job done.

What is wrong with you? You are continuing to ignore or even attempt to understand the impact of your behavior on the future of the environment and on the ecology for which we and many other species depend. I know of no way to say that kindly because you seem to have an excuse for every nonlethal option that is put on the table. Is killing 30,000 prairie dogs the legacy for which you want to be remembered? Because, right now, that's exactly where you're headed. And expecting another term on the Council is quickly becoming nothing more than an unattainable dream for each of you.

If I sound angry, it's because I am. I demand that you consider only HUMANE options and allow for the relocation of these animals.

Good evening, I very much appreciate your willingness to listen to the public again regarding the prairie dogs just north of the city of Boulder. It was disappointing to hear the council almost unanimously sided with killing the native prairie dogs. This, after an overwhelming majority of the well over 100 speakers, including the First Gentleman and children, waited for hours into the night to spare the prairie dogs' life. It was terrible to feel our local voice disenfranchised and essentially ignored while the hearing of the public eventually amounted to effectively lip service.

I spoke (I was number 68) during the prairie dog public hearing on August 11th and am submitting you my speech for your reconsideration on the matter. My speech is as follows:

"Good evening, my name is Aaron Michael and I am a Boulder resident and owner of my company, Earth Love Gardens, making garden beds and greenhouses. Even though to change this land may be in my business's best interest, the love for the Earth is a bit more important than the love of gardens.

The mission of OSMP is to preserve and protect the natural environment and land resources that characterize Boulder. They foster appreciation and uses that sustain the natural values of the land for current and future generations.

According to OSMP's website, the significant decline of prairie dog populations is related to several factors, including:

- Habitat fragmentation
- Conversion of habitat to agricultural uses
- and Systematic poisoning

All of which are being proposed today. Notwithstanding OSMP's budget, there is no shortage of irrigable agricultural land elsewhere and not where prairie dogs are already home to. OSMP otherwise provides the rare protections for prairie dogs, which also according to them, are so limited outside of Boulder County. If it is OSMP's mission to sustain the natural values of the land, there need to be non-natural ways to provide for agriculture that would require killing a native species to support these practices. Taking a walk yesterday by the Boulder Valley Ranch Trailhead, nearby one of the potential removal areas, I felt the peace and noticed the rolling ocean of prairie, a land unique that I always thought Open Space was supposed to protect. The sounds of prairie dogs communicating were a part of this natural, sacred peace, something available right outside our city. The thought of "let them be", let the prairie dogs be, was the only thing that came to me.

How did natives work with the land before settlers decided they were not able to co-exist with prairie dogs? Why is it that we are the generation to ask the question: "should we preserve what was here before us or should we kill a species because we are unable to realize how we can co-exist with the land we live and love and appreciate it as it is?"

The fate of tens of thousands of native prairie dogs rely on our answer.

Thank you"

I urge you to reconsider the matter, listen and acknowledge the voice of the people who care so much for the land that we are blessed to live and leave it beautifully and perfectly as it is.

Thank you

Dear OSMP, I am in reluctant agreement with the plans for prairie dog conservation and management combined with irrigated agricultural field restoration.

Thank you for all the hard work on this issue.

I'm writing to express my discontent with how the county is operating in regards to open space and prairie dogs. I moved to Boulder for many reasons but one compelling reason was that the country valued its open space and vowed to preserve it and the wildlife that live within. I am appalled that this plan is changing with the deaths of many helpless prairie dogs. What is the sense of this? Please reconsider your actions in this matter. Greatly appreciated.

Boulder City Council and Boulder County, Please please do not ignore the will of your people to stop the slaughter of thousands of these prairie dogs both in the city and county of Boulder.

Once gone, they are gone forever. Boulder already has been changing its landscape over the last dozen years. The reason we move here is for the open space and the wildlife that over the years Boulder has protected. To remove these is to de-value Boulder.

Thank you.

Dear OSMP,

I am a citizen of the City of Boulder, not aligned with any group. I am speaking purely from the point of logic – as I have been an NCAR scientist and CU faculty for over 22 years. OSMP has asked for public input and, as a scientist, my major concerns/comments for **such an expediated plan** are:

1. **SLOW DOWN!** I cannot emphasize this enough. Killing off, or even in combination with relocation, that many prairie dogs (~28K) on that much land (~1000ac.) over such a short period

(say several years), is an unprecedented action. We really have no idea what the ecological consequences are going to be; this is uncharted territory. What is the prairie dog-dependent wildlife going to do?? It could be devastating. So **PLEASE SLOW DOWN**.

2. The current OSBT plan does not address “How are you going to keep this current conflict from **REPEATING??**”. Just killing off this amount of prairie dogs is the easiest BUT most short-sighted path. Start with more pilot-based programs. We did not get into this mis-managed situation overnight and we should not expect to get out of it so quickly either. Suggestions:
 - a. Significantly decrease the amount of prairie dog occupied acreage being considered to **only areas of the greatest conflict**.
 - b. In those areas, as well as in the relocation areas, monitor what is happening ecologically to all species and have an **emergency stop** in place.
 - c. **REACH OUT TO BOULDER!** I had to find out about this by reading the Daily Camera article -12/14/2020 (which I am not sure I will subscribe to next year). *I would be more than happy to provide a level of financial support for prairie dog relocations.*
 - d. Prairie dogs are by far **NOT the only cause** of land degradation – invasive species, poor agricultural/ranching practices in combination with urban development, and climate change – **Look at the big picture to avoid repetition**.
 - e. The ultimate goal is **CO-EXISTANCE**. Bison did it for millennia. We should pilot a program to determine what practices have to change so that agriculture and prairie dogs can coexist on the same piece of irrigated land.

In Fall 2019, OSMP had a public meeting to discuss this issue and get public input. I attended, *not taking sides*, but to understand the issue. I was **APPALLED** when I heard one rancher bragging to other ranchers how he had already **SHOT 11 COYOTES THAT YEAR** on his land. This shows a basic lack of understanding on the importance of predators in controlling prairie dog populations. If these are the ranchers that Boulder’s Ag charter is supporting, then education, tolerance, and respect for predators is a primary for this situation not to repeat itself.

As far as I know the City of Boulder has not used lethal control before. Let us not begin and set a precedence where we might be going down “a dark burrow” that we cannot climb out of.

Hi, I just wanted to add my two cents to this issue. Prairie dogs are a keystone species, which means many other members of the ecosystem rely on them to survive. Their burrows are especially important to burrowing owls, black-footed ferrets and around 150 other species. They help aerate and fertilize the soil, and therefore are also a keystone species for plant life.

In this time of crisis for the environment, specifically in the crash of biodiversity we now know we are in, it seem ludicrous to trade vital habitat for agriculture. The agriculture may benefit a few humans, but keeping Boulder County as a biodiverse habitat will benefit all humans here, and around the world.

Boulder likes to fancy itself a leader in the environmental sphere, but clearly we have a long way to go. I urge you to please consider that the times we are now living in are far different than they were 10 or even 2 years ago. Because we now know the urgent environmental crises we face, it is our duty to change our thinking and act accordingly. Trading agriculture for prairie dogs seems like one of the most obvious, and important first steps.

Dear City Council members, I am writing to plead that it is time to stop and think what our future would hold. I was very disappointed at your decision to kill 32000 prairie dogs within and near the open space properties despite the fact that most of us attended the online meeting expressed our opposition. You were elected officials to represent your people. And you decided to represent money.

I walk in many open spaces with my dogs. I put my dogs on leash (they have Sight and Voice tags) when I see/hear prairie dogs. I walk near Boulder Reserver/Coot Lake with mini posts explaining about prairie dogs and the ecosystem that they support. I used to watch how they communicated to each other. They communicate much better than we do. Now some areas are surrounded by silence - eerie deathly silence.

I must add that I enjoy meeting with the Open Space people on the trails. They are always nice to talk to, and are willing to answer any questions we may have. In the previous meeting, however, one of the Open Space staff was talking about growing marijuana to yield some more money in Open Spaces. What a shock.

I have learned so much by attending the City Council meetings.

1) Boulder is not a progressive town jus like my Boulder friends warned me. Amazingly pro-development and pro-business, anti-environment, and anti-nature.

2) Some organic farmers are not really caring about preserving natural resources. That is what organic farming is all about in real sense. They call them organic to raise the price of their products and it is cool to be organic without knowing the true meaning of organic farming. They really do not care about environment and balance of nature.

3) I do not shop and support Boulder Farmers Market.

4) Solar panels built on Diagonal x 63, and 36 x Lee Hill are based on sacrifice of many wildlife. Solar panels are no longer the clean energy for me.

You represent residents of the City of Boulder. But your impact is far-reaching than you think. You have power and authority to change the future for next generations. I would suggest you to ask children in Boulder what they think - they are the ones that will have to reap what we have sown. If you think killing over 30,000 prairie dogs and destroying wildlife that is being supported by prairie dogs are for the city of Boulder and citizens of Boulder, please try to explain your logic to your children, grandchildren, sisters, brothers, nieces and nephews, and children in your neighbourhood.

You kill prairie dogs - other wild animals must find other food resources - they may take residents' small pets as many residents forget that they live next to the nature - then you will kill those predators. You know what happen when you kill predators.

In 2020, we had huge fires in Colorado, and we are having COVID-19. Overdevelopment and destroy the nature and wildlife will give us new diseases like COVID-19. Please do not bring out the uneducated argument that prairie dogs bring the plague. We the human carry COVID-19 now. So what do we do? We ask people to keep the social distance and wear a mask not to spread the virus. We do not tell people to kill people with COBID-19. We push and push wildlife into the corner and we blame them for disease.

Beside, I do not think people in Boulder (I use the term loosely) want to live in Lysol-smelling bubbles. We live here to enjoy the nature, even though some residents are naive enough to let their cats and small dogs out in their yards unsupervised. Prairie serves as natural fire break. Native plants store water in the root. Imagine all the developments that are on your desk while the fire threatening to cross 36. We do not appreciate the value of undeveloped lands enough. Where was the emergency fire operation (and we appreciated them so much!) situated? In the Boulder Reservoir area, not Pearl

Street mall or new developments because there was not enough open land to put all equipment to fight the fire.

Please stop development and stop killing wildlife in order to preserve Boulder. You will not kill prairie dogs with your own hands but by paying tax money to those who kill animals professionally. So you probably do not think much of killing this wonderful creature. Nature is not your own asset to play with. If you like a town full of same houses and no open spaces, and no wildlife, there are many places in the US for you to move to. I understand that you would provide affordable housing to those who work in Boulder. I appreciate that. But by over developing Boulder and raping the nature, people will stop moving to Boulder and more people will leave Boulder to seek what Boulder used to offer. Then businesses will be lost and people will lose jobs. Boulder is supposed to be a special place where you can enjoy nature and wildlife during the evening stroll.

I appreciate your sitting for a long time during the meetings on Zoom. All of us attending the meeting put important things aside - dinner with our family, taking our dogs out, pushing next day's work prep to midnight, etc. I wished you appreciated out time as well.

Thank you, and have a great and safe holiday season.

Dear OSMT, I have lived in Boulder for over 35 years. I have seen how the landscape has changed from having wide open spaces (including farms) to massive urban development. This alone has wiped out vast acres of prairie dog habitat, pushing these animals to fringe fragmented areas. Very very sad.

Although this conflict pertains to prairie dogs on OSMP irrigated agricultural lands, it is necessary to consider how the prairie dog populations have declined in Boulder City limits as a whole if a holistic successful plan is to be implemented.

I completely support the Keep Boulder Wild's 10 recommendations to be included in the OSMP Plan. Enough prairie dogs have been killed in our county. Let NOT the City of Boulder follow suit and add lethal control as a means to manage wildlife.

Dear Boulder OSMP, PLEASE find a way to back down from the plan to kill thousands of prairie dogs on city land north of Boulder.

Some of those properties were designated prairie dog preserves, and the prairie dogs on these parcels should be left undisturbed. If prairie dog populations are too high in these areas, set up nesting sites for raptors and let nature do the work.

I would urge the city to change direction and adopt the plan submitted by Keep Boulder Wild. This is a more reasonable and HUMANE approach.

I can't believe I live in a place that has so little heart for such an important member of our local wildlife. In short, I am opposed to spending my tax dollars on this inhumane plan. I am opposed to the inhumane plan adopted by the city, period.

Thank you for considering my views.

Dear Boulder City Council, I am again distraught at the proposed actions to commit genocide on Prairie Dogs in Boulder County. If climate change and the environment is legitimately a concert we need to stop destroying our wildlife now! There have been alternative plans proposed that would strike a better balance between the conflicts of interest. I urge you to consider these and other alternative plans that have been submitted. Thanks

Dear Boulder OSMP,

I oppose your new plan to kill prairie dogs on thousands of acres of city property on the north side of Boulder. PLEASE find a way to back down from this plan.

Some of those properties were designated prairie dog preserves, and the prairie dogs on these parcels should be left undisturbed. If prairie dog populations are too high in these areas, set up nesting sites for raptors and let nature do the work.

I can support the plan submitted by Keep Boulder Wild. This is a more reasonable and HUMANE approach.

In short, I am opposed to spending my tax dollars on this inhumane plan. I am opposed to the inhumane plan adopted by the city, period.

Thank you for considering my views.

To Boulder OSMP, PLEASE do not kill thousands of prairie dogs on city land north of Boulder. I can't believe I live in a place that has so little heart for such an important member of our local wildlife, a keystone species.

When I tell friends in other states what is happening here in Boulder, they can't believe it. "In Boulder-- how can they do that? I thought Boulder was a haven for protecting the environment and nature—all those natural food companies that got their start in Boulder. What's happened to Boulder?" I'm as shocked as they are.

This kind of inhumane act is reversing Boulder's legacy of being a place of with open space and a deep respect for nature and the environment.

Some of those properties were designated prairie dog preserves, and the prairie dogs on these parcels should be left undisturbed. If prairie dog populations are too high in these areas, set up nesting sites for raptors and let nature do the work. Raptors are very efficient in reducing the numbers of prairie dogs. I am opposed to the inhumane plan adopted by the city!

Please reconsider and stop this inhumane massacre of a native, keystone species in Colorado. Please change direction and adopt the plan submitted by Keep Boulder Wild. At least it is a more reasonable and HUMANE approach.

Boulder City Council, Of the 525 emails received by the City council regarding the lethal killing of thousands of prairie dogs, 403 were in favor of KEEP BOULDER WILD recommendations. Our City Council needs to hear what the majority of people of Boulder want. Not the developers.

As a taxpayer in Boulder County, my voice is important. I vote AGAINST any lethal force used against these adorable KEYSTONE animals!

Warm regards

Dear OSMP,

Attached are 1) my December 20,2020 comments, recommendations and concerns regarding OSMP's plan for managing prairie dogs on the city's irrigated agricultural lands, and 2) the re-submittal of my December 13, 2020 comments/questions for the December 14, 2020 public meeting.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments following the December 14 public meeting

Sorry Boulder but these photos and threads have reached thousands if not hundreds of thousands of people worldwide. As politicians you obviously want desperately to get re-elected, but as humans you are coming across as the worst most cruel of the species and as a tourist locale, the last place on earth anyone with a soul would come with their Amex card is Boulder.

Utterly inhumane slaughter so a handful of people can grow hay!

Wow.

Hello, I previously submitted comments on the implementation plan for irrigated ag lands occupied by pdogs for 2021 and would like to re-emphasize the following:

1. Relocate at least the acres of prairie dogs at Ditzel closest to the road.
2. Relocate the small number of pdogs at Lousberg into abandoned burrows or passively abandoned burrows into existing and protected pdog colonies on OSMP. There is an extra unused artificial burrow w/ an acclimation cap on it at Salastand that could maybe even be used.
3. Implement co-existence tactics where possible in the project area to reduce the amount of lethal needed.
4. Thank for using coexistence at IBM and reducing the number of animals removed from the landscape.
5. Thank you for helping the Shared Learning Collaborative get going.

Please let us know how we can continue to help provide non-lethal solutions for Boulder's prairie dog ecosystem.

There is a very good prairie dog relocation service in Pine that will work with you on cost. These are keystone species that over 100 of other species rely on. From borrowing owls to badgers to eagles and on. You cannot interrupt the ecosystem and expect to maintain the wildlife we love.

Standard Response (sent 29 Dec 2020):

Thank you for your comments on the Open Space and Mountain Parks (OSMP) annual meeting on prairie dogs and irrigated agriculture restoration. Comments are being considered, and final information on 2021 Implementation Plans will be sent to the Open Space Board of Trustees for their Jan 13, 2021 meeting, followed by an Information Item to City Council in February. More information is available on this [webpage](#), and answers to questions submitted before the December 14, 2020 meeting are provided [here](#).

Thank you for your comments on the Open Space and Mountain Parks (OSMP) annual meeting on prairie dogs and irrigated agriculture restoration. Comments are being considered, and final information on 2021 Implementation Plans will be sent to the Open Space Board of Trustees for their Jan 13, 2021 meeting, followed by an Information Item to City Council in February. More information is available on this webpage:

<https://bouldercolorado.gov/osmp/prairie-dog-management-and-conservation>

and answers to questions submitted before the December 14, 2020 meeting are provided here:

https://www-static.bouldercolorado.gov/docs/Prairie_Dog_and_Agriculture_Management_-_Questions_and_Answers_from_Dec._14_Meeting-1-202012161608.pdf?_ga=2.6369330.1639491913.1609167801-285132349.1599610792