

City of Boulder Coyote Management Plan to reduce the likelihood of future human-coyote conflicts in the area of Boulder Creek Path in central Boulder*

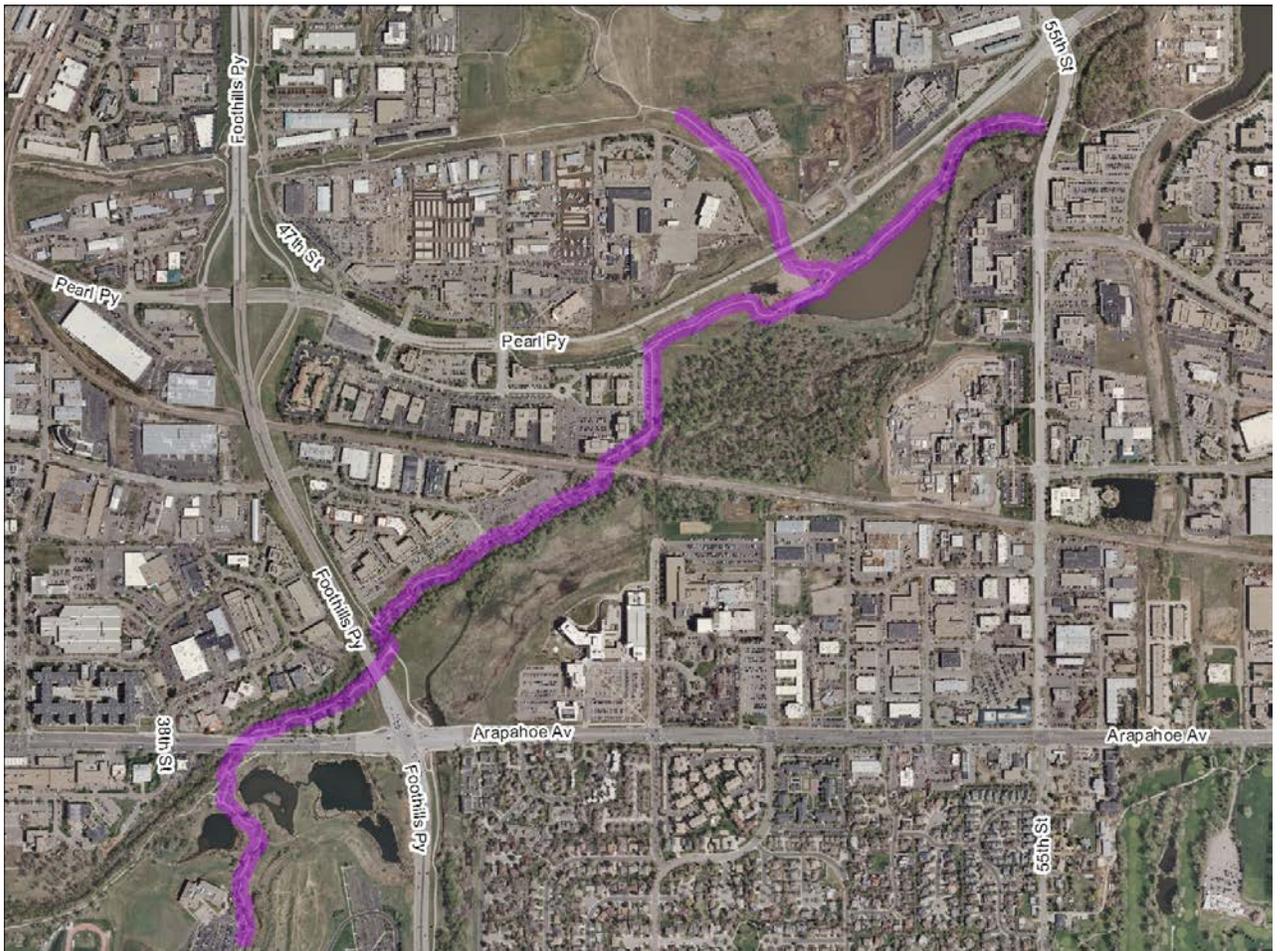
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*Focus area highlighted in pink, includes approximately two miles of trail.

I. Coyote Management Plan Overview

Purpose: The purpose of this proposal is to outline a near-term response to the reports of coyote-human conflicts in the area of Boulder Creek Path in central Boulder.

Definitions: *Hazing* is a technique of using deterrents (i.e. yelling and waving arms; use of noise makers such as whistles, air horns, or shaking soda cans filled with pennies; and use of a projectiles such as throwing a tennis ball), to move an animal out of an area or discourage an undesirable behavior or activity.

Habituation occurs when a coyote has repeated innocuous interactions with people, resulting in the eventual loss of fear and avoidance of people.

Management Strategy: Increased staff presence in conflict area; increased education and public outreach; and opportunistic hazing of habituated coyotes.

Goals:

- Establish coyote management practices that provide for public safety, proactively reduce human/wildlife conflicts, reflect overall community values, and sustain ecological integrity;
- Integrate urban wildlife management across city departments and coordinate management with other public jurisdictions and agencies; and
- Outline strategies for providing education and keeping the public informed about current practices.

These goals are consistent with:

- the Vision, Guiding Principles and Goals described in the City of Boulder Urban Wildlife management Plan (see **Attachment A**); and
- section 3.09 of the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan:

Management of Wildlife-Human Conflicts

The city recognizes the intrinsic value of wildlife in both the urban and rural setting. The city will promote wildlife and land use management practices to minimize conflicts with residents and urban land uses while identifying, preserving and restoring appropriate habitat for wildlife species in the urban area. When a wildlife species is determined to be a nuisance or a public health hazard, a full range of alternative wildlife and land use management techniques will be considered by the city and county in order to mitigate the problem in a manner that is humane, effective, economical and ecologically responsible.

Limits: This proposal is a site-specific strategy and not intended to act as an overarching coyote management plan for the City of Boulder.

II. Introduction

Coyotes provide an important part of our native ecosystem - even in developed areas. As a top predator in eastern Boulder, coyotes regulate and balance prey populations including: skunks, prairie dogs, raccoons, rabbits, mice, rats, geese, pigeons, insects and snakes. Coyotes are usually wary of people, but can become habituated when they have repeated, innocuous encounters with them. Habituated coyotes often become a nuisance in urban areas, and as they lose fear of humans, they may become bolder and more aggressive. (Geist 2007)

Hazing and Behavioral Change

Coyotes that have become habituated and too comfortable in the close proximity of people have learned that people are not something to fear. To safely coexist, it's important to modify this behavior and attitude in resident coyote populations. The purpose of hazing is to reshape coyote comfort with humans and to encourage coyotes to avoid contact with humans. This approach to behavior change has been implemented in Denver, CO and is considered successful (**Attachment B**).

Hazing and Lethal Control

Hazing is not intended to replace lethal control of individual animals involved in serious aggressive interactions with humans. In the absence of having access to the individual coyote involved in a human bite incident on 12/29/12, it is considered more appropriate to attempt to haze all coyotes that show signs of habituation, than to remove, or lethally control all coyotes in the area. This plan does not change how lethal control is currently being applied to coyote-human aggression. If an individual aggressive coyote is identified, lethal control remains an option to remove that coyote.

III. Management Strategy

Reducing the likelihood of future human-coyote conflicts requires addressing both the human behaviors and animal behaviors that contribute to conflicts. Human behaviors will be addressed through increase education and outreach. Coyote behavior will be addressed through hazing.

Objective: Improve public safety by maintaining a daily presence in the area for four weeks to both educate trail users and haze coyotes that show signs of habituation.

Training and Composition of the Coyote Outreach and Hazing Team

A team of staff and volunteers dedicated to increasing public awareness of how to better coexist with wild coyotes will consist of:

- **Open Space and Mountain Parks** – Rangers, Outreach and Wildlife Staffs, and Bear Care Volunteers¹
- **Boulder PD-** Animal Control Officers

GEIST, V. 2007. How close is too close? Wildlife professionals grapple with habituating wildlife. The Wildlife Professional 1:34-37.

- **Colorado University-** Facilities Management Integrated Pest Management Crew

All non-officer and volunteer staff will be required to attend 1.5 hour training on coyote behavior and biology; “light” hazing techniques (i.e. shouting, waving arms, air horn, shaking an aluminum can filled with pennies, throwing a tennis ball... etc.) and personal safety. Training will be organized by the City of Boulder Urban Wildlife Coordinator.

Hazing Team

Preliminary inquiries into the numbers and availability of non-officer staff and volunteers indicated there will be staffing levels to allow for a non-officer member of the team to spend two hours a day in the area for four weeks between Jan. 18 and Feb. 15, 2013. Officers are intended to supplement non-officer staff when in the area but will not be assigned daily shifts. Team members will:

- patrol the bike path during daylight hours (on foot or bike);
- provide information (printed and verbally) to trail users on coyote behavior, reducing attractants and the role people play in mitigating negative encounters with coyotes;
- haze coyotes in appropriate situations;
- document hazing activity

Education and Outreach

Education is the key to coexistence. Education efforts should be directed at decreasing wildlife attractants, increasing pet safety, having reasonable expectations of normal coyote behavior, and teaching residents how to respond appropriately to coyotes and all urban wildlife. Education and outreach will include:

- Understanding human safety, pet safety, coyote attractants, and coyote deterrents, including appropriate fencing, exclusion techniques, “what to do” tips, and hazing techniques;
- Developing a common language and awareness of normal versus abnormal behavior when discussing encounters with coyotes;
- Dissemination of information through the city’s website, media, and printed material; and
- Signage in the conflict area.

Evaluation and Next Steps

Program efforts will be continually evaluated and the need and feasibility to continue efforts will be considered in mid February. Though this document only addresses efforts in a specific area for a limited duration, more long-term solutions are a critical component of successful human-coyote coexistence in urban areas, including the development of a coyote management chapter of the city’s Urban Wildlife Management Plan.