

# Boulder County Comprehensive Plan Update



## Environmental Resources Element



# General Philosophy of Element Updates

Comprehensive Plan Elements, including the Environmental Resources Element, will be updated using the following general criteria:

**Obsolete, Outdated Citations, No Longer Relevant** – Update or eliminate references to State law, names of agencies, etc. which have changed.

**Out-of-Date Information** – Facts, figures, and outdated references corrected.

**Redundancy** – Combine virtually identical or similar policies where possible.

**Programs vs. policies** – Elimination of programmatic items; focus on policy statements.

**Inappropriate location** – Policies which belong in a different Element or elsewhere within the current Element.

Adding goal to this Element of the Comp Plan to guide future planning and to support policies and programs already in place such as:

- The Sustainability Element of the Comp Plan
- The Sustainability Plan
- The Climate Change Preparedness Plan





# Boulder County Comprehensive Plan

## **Boulder County Comprehensive Plan Update**

### **Guiding Principles**

(Approved by Planning Commission 8 – 0 on January 18, 2012)

In shaping and navigating our future, Boulder County supports the following **Guiding Principles**:

1. Consider and weigh the interconnections among social, environmental, and economic areas in all decisions.
2. Encourage and promote the respectful stewardship and preservation of our natural systems and environment by pursuing goals and policies that achieve significant reductions in our environmental footprint.
3. Create policies and make decisions that are responsive to issues of social equity, fairness, and access to community resources for all county residents.
4. Encourage and support a dynamic, stable, and flexible local economy that distinguishes between urban and rural economies, and directs uses to appropriate locations.
5. Maintain the rural character and function of the unincorporated area of Boulder County by protecting environmental resources, agricultural uses, open spaces, vistas, and the distinction between urban and rural areas of the county.
6. Encourage and promote regional cooperation and coordination in working with other entities and jurisdictions.
7. Actively engage the public in the planning process.

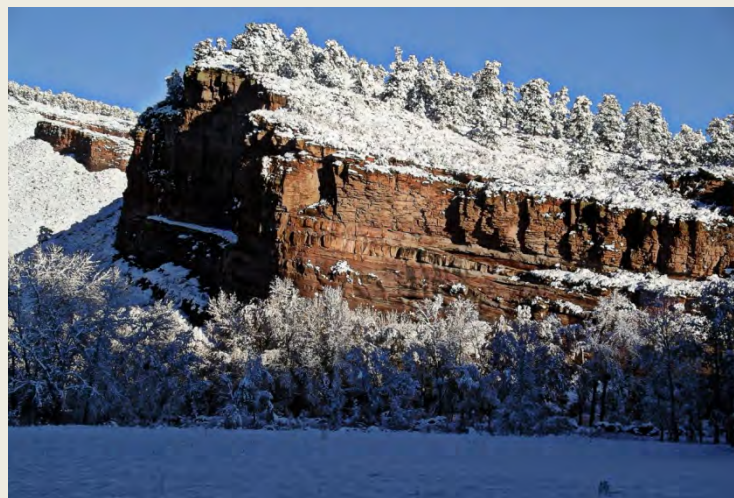
# WHAT DO WE MEAN BY ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES?



- Soil
- Water
- Air

-Habitats and ecosystems

-Plant and  
animal species



-Prominent Land  
Features



# Milestones Related to the Environmental Resources Element

## WHICH RESOURCES WOULD WE LIKE TO PRESERVE?

**1960:** “Preserving Open Space” cited as key tool for conserving locally important resources (Report to Boulder County Regional Planning Commission)

**1967:** Parks and Open Space Advisory Committee (POSAC) appointed to identify open space areas to preserve

**1972:** A new “parks planner” works with POSAC to inventory natural and cultural resources and to map “Open Space Study Areas”

**1975:** Dept. of Parks and Open Space established and tasked with creating an “Open Space Plan” for the county

**1978:** The Boulder County Comprehensive Plan (BCCP) adopted

**1983-1986:** Environmental Resources Element created to provide an in-depth analysis of the important natural and cultural resources in the county

*Environmental Resources map from 1986 Plan*



# Key Milestones of the Environmental Resources Element

## HOW WILL WE PRESERVE AND MANAGE THESE RESOURCES?

**1993:** Voters approved Open Space sales tax

**1994:** Cultural Resources Element adopted

**1995:** Environmental Resources Element, maps, goals, and policies amended

**1999:** Second Edition of the BCCP released (the edition used today)

**2007:** Sustainability Element adopted

**2012:** Guiding Principals adopted; updates to Environmental Resources Element begun



# Overview of the Environmental Resource Element Update

## SO, WHAT ARE WE UPDATING?

- Carrying existing goals forward (many from 1978 plan)
- Sharpening focus of element on natural features and ecosystems
- Moving Agricultural and Cultural Resources goals/policies completely
- Addressing resource preservation goals more directly, including climate change

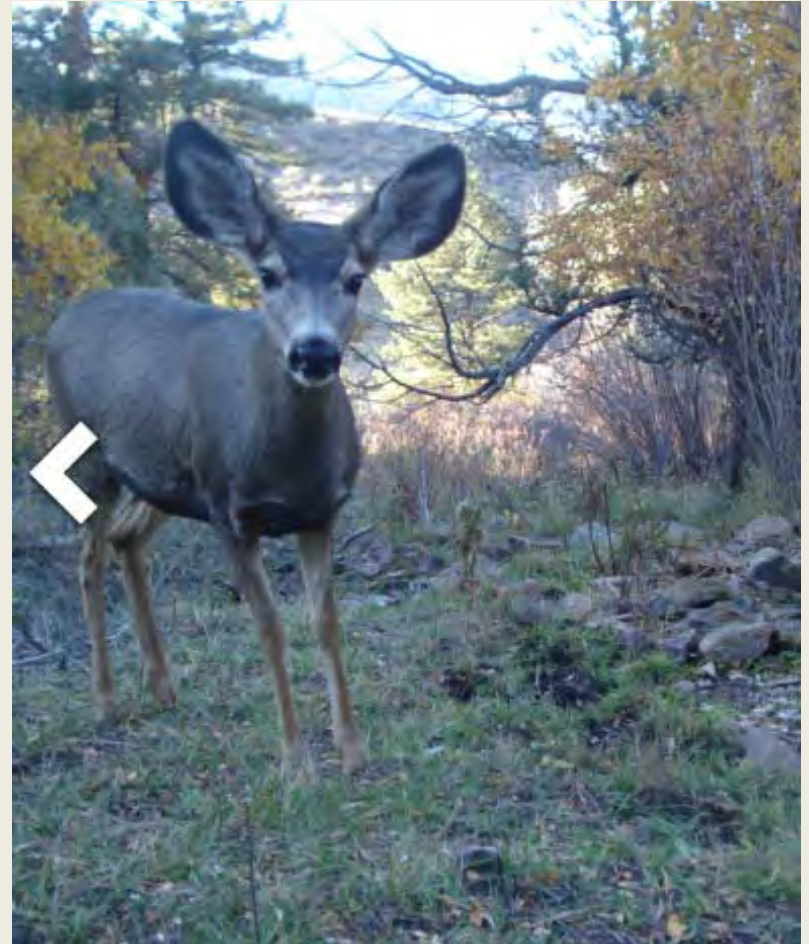




# Overview of the Environmental Resource Element Update

## SO, WHAT ARE WE UPDATING?

- Revisiting resource types/habitats that the county seeks to preserve, conserve, and restore
- Emphasizing importance of partnerships with private landowners, non-government organizations, and other agencies
- Program-related statements and policies removed
- Language modernized





# Environmental Resource Element

## What are the “Environmental Resource” designations?

- **Species of Special Concern:** plants and animals that are declining or rare in Boulder County
- **Environmental Conservation Areas:** landscape-scale habitat areas and connections
- **High Biodiversity Areas (new):** areas with concentrations of rare resources; based on 2009 CNHP report
- **Natural Landmarks:** scenic or visually prominent landscape features (identified in the existing plan)
- **State and County Natural Areas:** areas that are unique and important to the natural heritage of Boulder County and/or the state (identified in existing plan)



Caribou Ranch

# Environmental Resource Element

## What are the “Environmental Resource” designations?

- **Significant Natural Areas:** areas of critical plant associations that are limited in distribution and/or occurrence in the county
- **Critical Wildlife Habitats:** areas of unique habitat that have a crucial role in sustain populations of native wildlife species
- **Wetlands and Riparian Areas:** areas important for their unique and critical role in ecosystems
- **Rare Plant Areas:** sites known to have or have a high likelihood of having occurrences of Plant Species of Special Concern

Elk Calf and Bull at Rabbit Mountain

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# Goals of the Environmental Resource Element

## EXISTING GOAL B.1

Unique or distinctive natural features and ecosystems, and cultural features and sites should be conserved and preserved in recognition of the irreplaceable character of such resources and their importance to the quality of life in Boulder County.

Natural resources should be managed in a manner which is consistent with sound conservation practices and ecological principles.



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## PROPOSED GOAL B.1

Boulder County's unique or distinctive natural features and ecosystems shall be conserved and preserved through **protection and restoration** in recognition of the irreplaceable character of such resources and their importance to the quality of life in Boulder County.

## UPDATES

- Separated this broad and fundamental goal of the Comp Plan into two goals
- Added aspirational statement for restoration
- Removed “cultural features and sites” – now covered in own element



# Goals of the Environmental Resource Element

## EXISTING GOAL B.1

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**Natural resources should be managed in a manner which is consistent with sound conservation practices and ecological principles.**

## PROPOSED GOAL B.2

**Boulder County seeks to manage natural resources in a manner that is consistent with current ecological principles and sustainable conservation practices.** To that end, in the management of these unique resources, Boulder County shall encourage the following:

- Allowance of natural processes to occur
- Reintroduction of natural disturbances (e.g., fire and grazing)
- Maintenance or reintroduction of native species
- Restoration of degraded resources
- Elimination of undesirable non-native species
- Efforts to minimize human impacts; and
- Development of long-term ecological monitoring programs

## UPDATES

- Updated language of first statement
- Elaborated on broad resource management approach
- Elevated aspects of existing policies (ER 6.05 and ER 9.05) to this goal statement

# Goals of the Environmental Resource Element

## PROPOSED GOAL B.3

Boulder County recognizes that climate change is having significant impacts on our environmental resources. As the body of climate science knowledge grows and potential effects (e.g., increasingly severe weather and increased fire and flood frequency) are better understood, Boulder County shall modify plans and policies to adapt to environmental changes and to reduce potential adverse impacts on environmental resources.

Cow Elk at Caribou Ranch



## UPDATES

**Adding goal** to this Element of the Comp Plan to guide future planning and to support policies and programs already in place such as:

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# Policies of the Environmental Resource Element

## OVERVIEW OF UPDATES TO THE POLICIES

- General policies address the Environmental Resources that the county seeks to protect
- Allows for duplicative and programmatic language to be removed
- The Overview section defines the important Environmental Resources
- Designation criteria are being reviewed/updated
- Resulting maps will continue to inform land use decision-making
- Also brought forward policies about specific resources where additional clarity is needed. These are:
  - Air, Water, Soil and Noise
  - Environmental Conservation Areas
  - Natural Landmarks and Natural Areas



Bobcat at Heil Valley Ranch

# Environmental Resource Element

## NEXT STEPS

- Now accepting Public Comment on Update (comment cards, web site)
- Parks and Open Space Advisory Committee Hearing  
Feb. 28, 6:30 p.m. (recommendation to Planning Commission)
- Planning Commission hearing in March (approval not adoption)
- Presenting to BOCC, when appropriate, for their approval
- Parks and Open Space staff developing designation criteria and maps of important Environmental Resources (draft will go out for public review and comment later this year)
- Updates of other elements in various stages of development





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## Environmental Resources Element

# QUESTIONS?

