

Annual Prairie Dog Meeting 2020



Boulder County Parks & Open Space


Tonight's Agenda

1. Introduction/Policy Context - Jeff 10 minutes
2. 2020 Prairie Dog Management Activities
 - a. Removal/Control – Rob 15 minutes
 - b. Other Activities – Susan 20 minutes
3. Rock Creek Farm Management Plan Overview
4. Wrap Up/Questions

- Jeff Moline, Planning Division Manager
- Rob Alexander, Senior Agricultural Specialist
- Susan Spaulding, Senior Wildlife Biologist

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& RECREATION](#)[PROPERTY
& LAND](#)[ROADS
& TRANSPORTATION](#)[ENVIRONMENT
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& LAW](#)[LICENSES, PERMITS
& RECORDS](#)

PRAIRIE DOG MANAGEMENT

[Home](#) / [Open Space](#) / [Management](#) / [Prairie Dog Management](#)A close-up photograph of a prairie dog's head and shoulders. The prairie dog is light brown with darker brown patches on its face and neck. It is looking slightly to the right and has its mouth open, showing its teeth and tongue as it eats a small piece of food.

**What governs
our prairie dog
management?**

Prairie Dog Management

Boulder County manages prairie dogs in a comprehensive way so prairie dogs thrive where appropriate on open space properties.

Management Plan

The goal of Boulder County is to preserve, protect, and enhance viable prairie dog populations on suitable grassland habitat.

On October 15, 2012, the county adopted the [Prairie Dog Habitat Element of the Grassland and Shrubland Management Policy](#). The plan was updated on February 25, 2016.

What are the goals of that management?



A plan that reflects the multiple values of the county and its public.

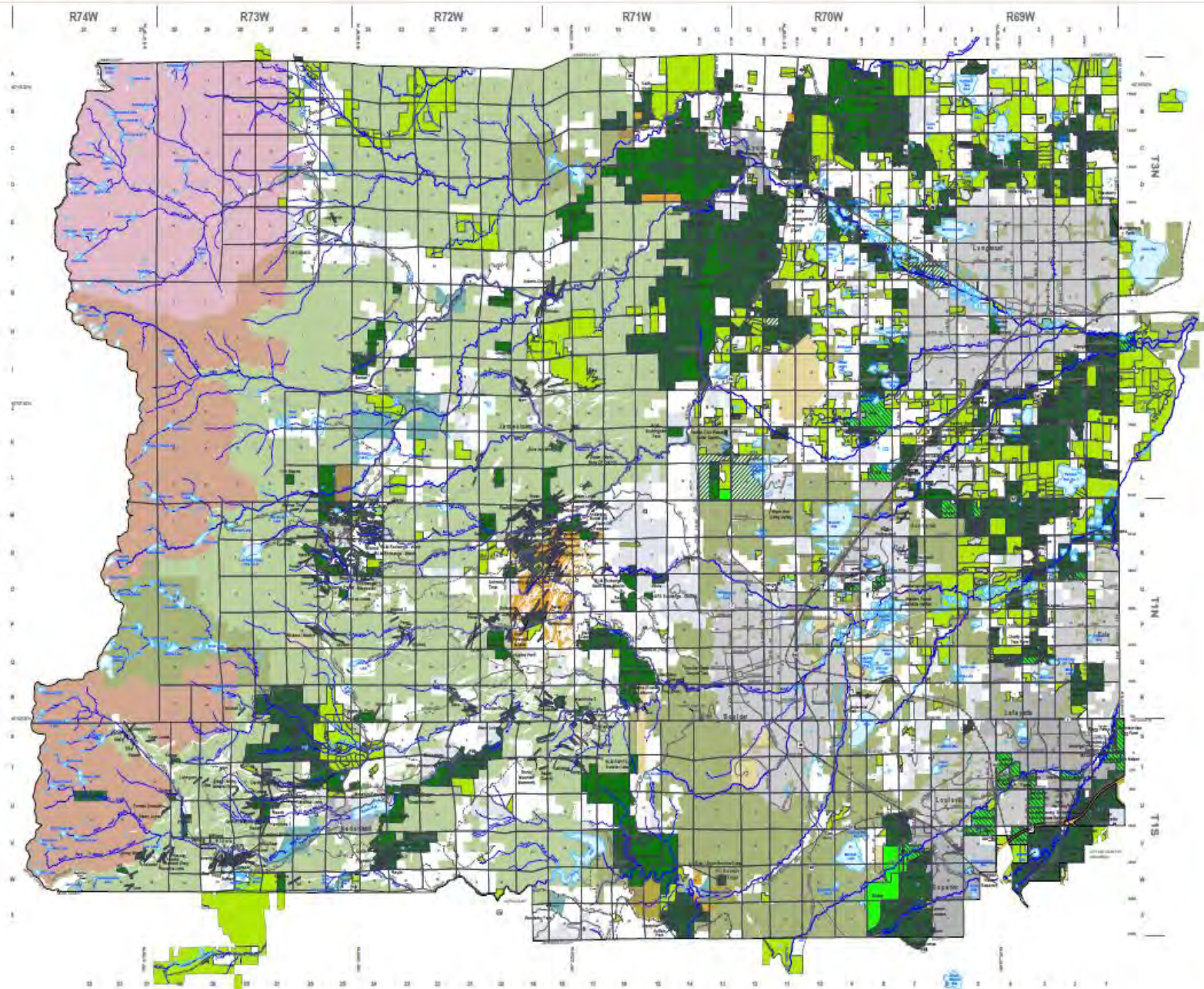
- The stewardship of natural areas and systems.

What are the goals of that management?

A plan that reflects the multiple values of the county and its public.

- Agricultural heritage and production.

Open Space in Boulder County



October 2018

- County Open Space
- County Conservation Easement
- Joint County/City Open Space
- County Option Parcels
- County Closed Areas
- County Seasonal Closure Areas *
- City Parks and Open Space
- State Land Board
- State Parks
- Indian Peaks Wilderness
- USFS Land
- BLM Land
- Rocky Mountain National Park
- Other Public Lands
- Non-County Conservation Easements
- Subdivisions or Platted Areas
- Incorporated Areas
- U.S. / State Highway
- Northwest Parkway
- Collector
- Local Access
- Jeep Trail
- Scenic Byways

* For technical property access, visit our website at: www.bouldercolorado.gov/open-space



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How do we manage our lands for that mix of purposes and uses?

- Assess our properties as a system
- Categorize properties/groups into designations
 - HCA (Habitat Conservation Areas)
 - MOA (Multiple Objective Areas)
 - NPD (No Prairie Dog Areas)

October 2018

County Open Space
County Conservation Easement
County Natural Resource
County Cultural Sites
County Wetland Conservation Area

City Parks and Open Space
State Land Road
State Park
Yellow Stone Wilderness
USFS Land
Bureau of Land Management
Bureau of Reclamation
Bureau of Indian Affairs
Bureau of Prisons
Bureau of the Census
Bureau of the Census
Bureau of the Census

US Forest Service
Bureau of Reclamation

US Forest Service
Bureau of Reclamation

US Forest Service
Bureau of Reclamation

US Forest Service
Bureau of Reclamation

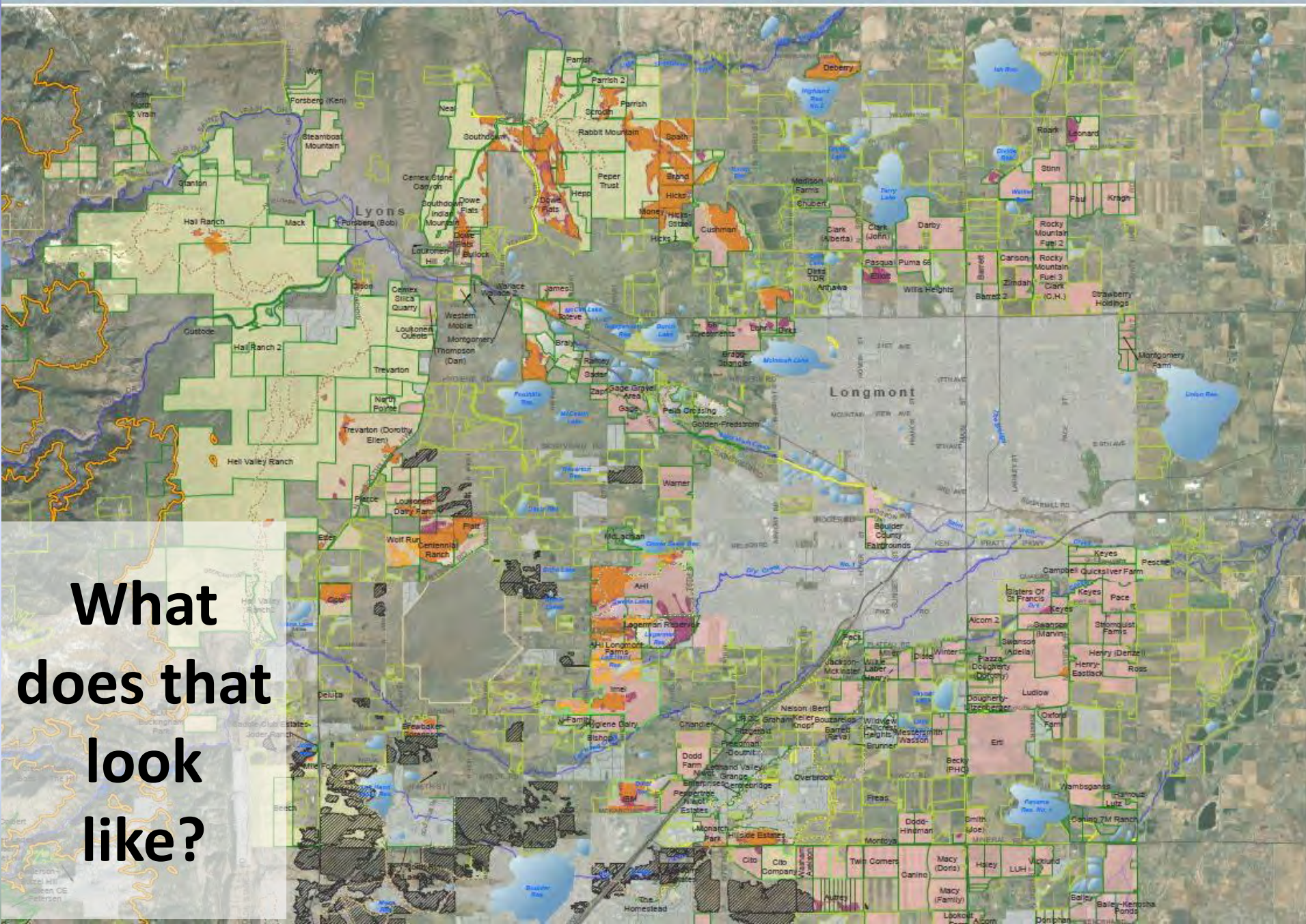
US Forest Service
Bureau of Reclamation

US Forest Service
Bureau of Reclamation

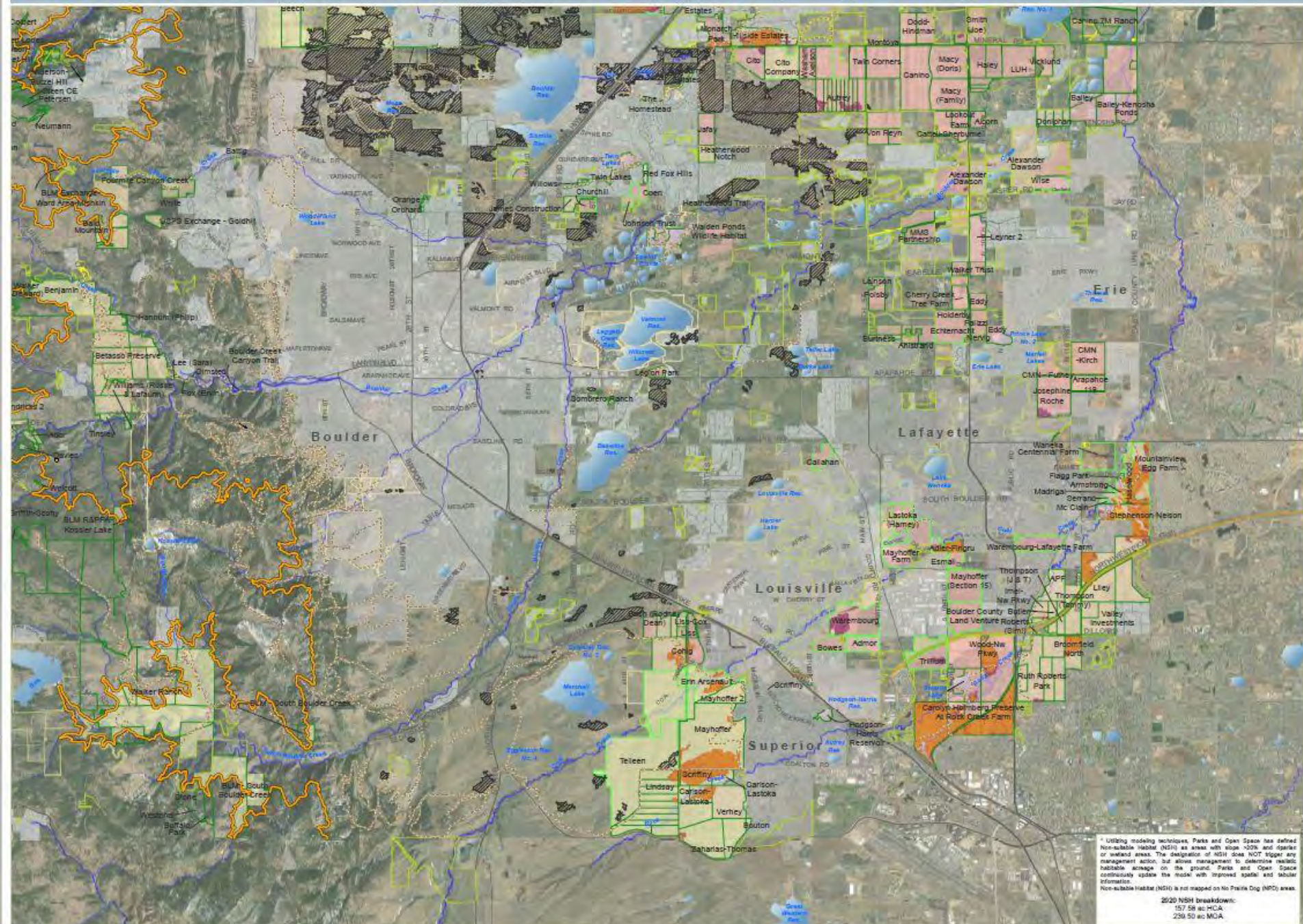
US Forest Service
Bureau of Reclamation

US Forest Service
Bureau of Reclamation

Prairie Dog Colony Extent on County Open Space: North



Prairie Dog Colony Extent on County Open Space: South



2020 Prairie Dog Removal Summary





Acquisitions since 2018 have added 534 Acres of NPD

- **Canino 7M**
- **Chandler**
- **Madison Farms**
- **Rainbow Nursery**
- **Ramey**
- **Zapf**
- **Hicks-Stitzel (partial)**

No Prairie Dog (NPD) Acreages and Percent Coverage by Prairie Dogs Per Year

Year	Total NPD Acres	Colonies Acres	Percent PDOG Coverage
2016	17,198	378	2.2%
2017	17,964	679	3.9%
2018	18,454	698	3.7%
2019	18,712	767	4.1%
2020	19,246	490	2.5%

2020 Trapping and Removals

Totals Trapped- 1,265

- **Birds of Prey Rehabilitation Center- 834**
- **Black Footed Ferret Recovery Facility- 431**

Burrows Treated- 37,217

Removals occurred on 34 properties

Tenant Control Program

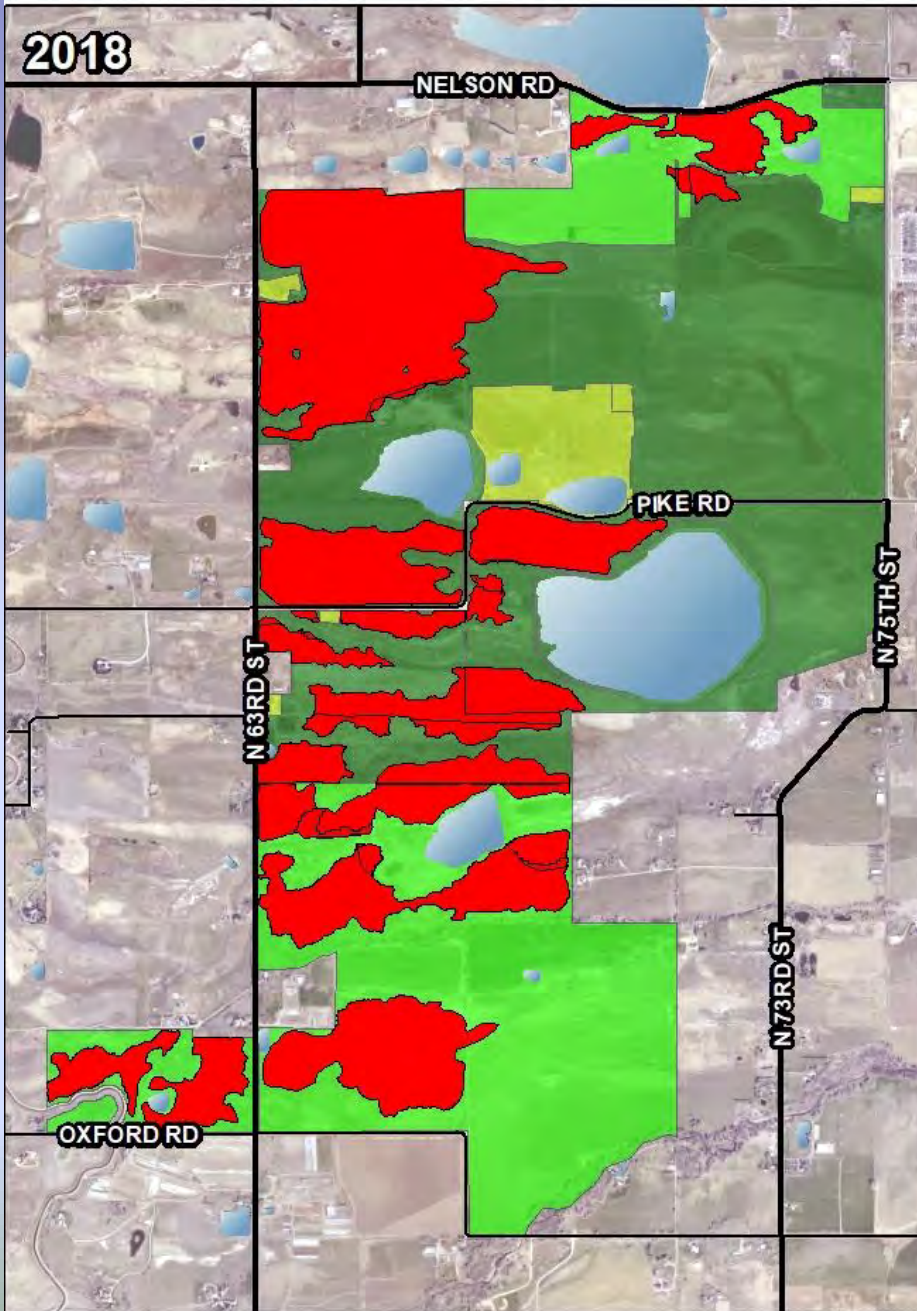
- **11 Tenants had permits in 2020**
- **10 Tenants treated 6,987 burrows.**

AHI Complex

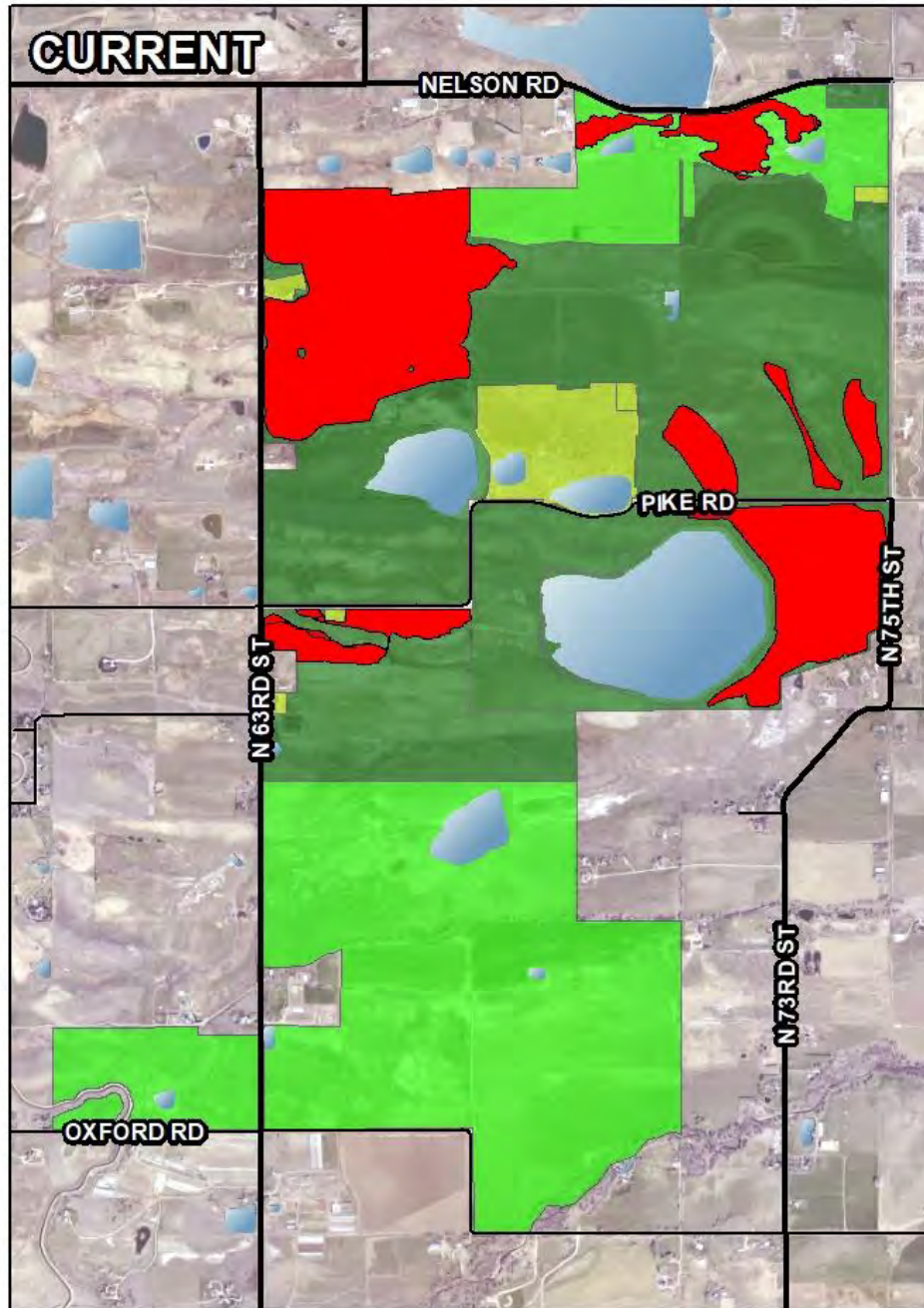


Parks &
Open Space

2018



CURRENT

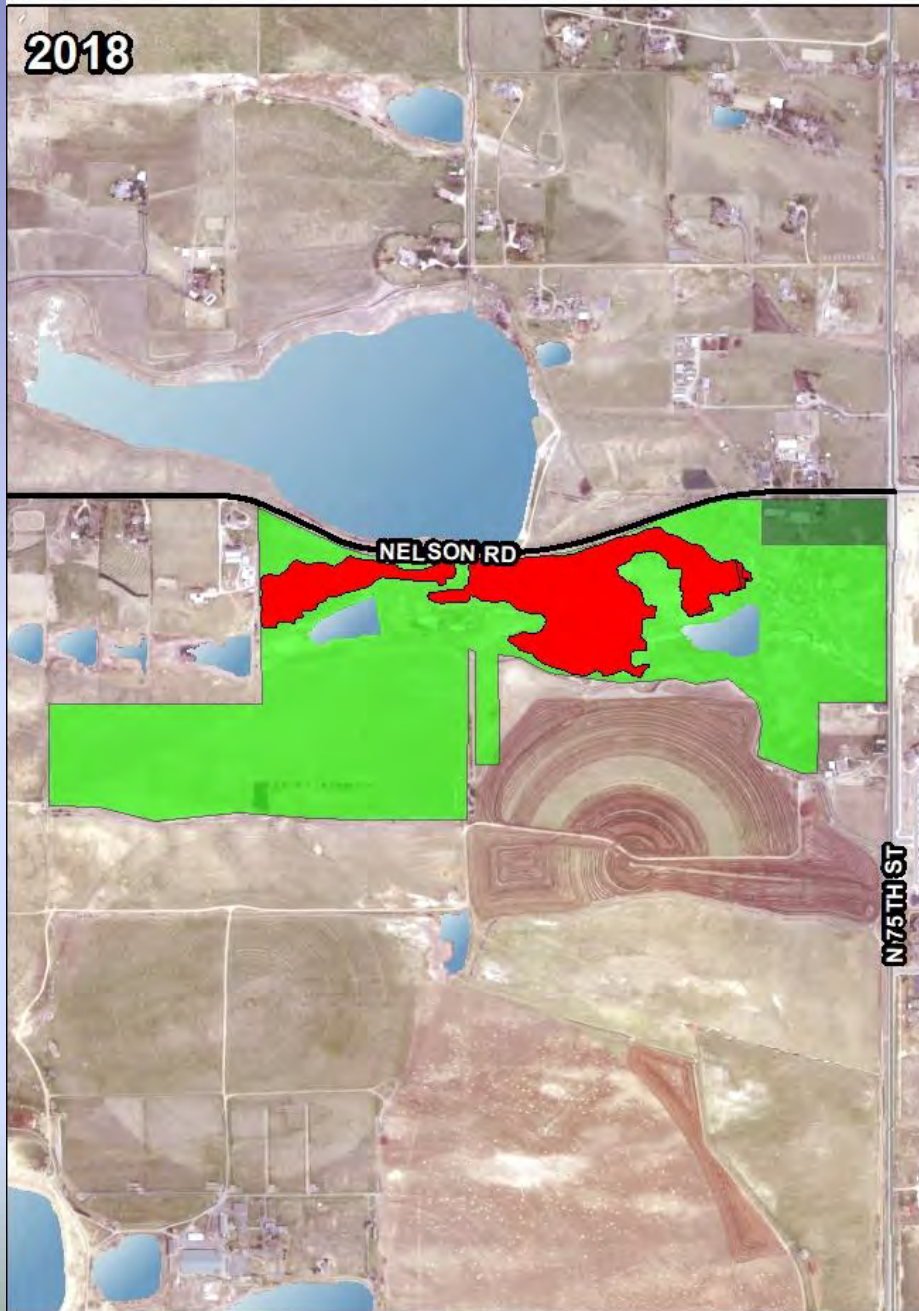


AHI Complex: Suitts

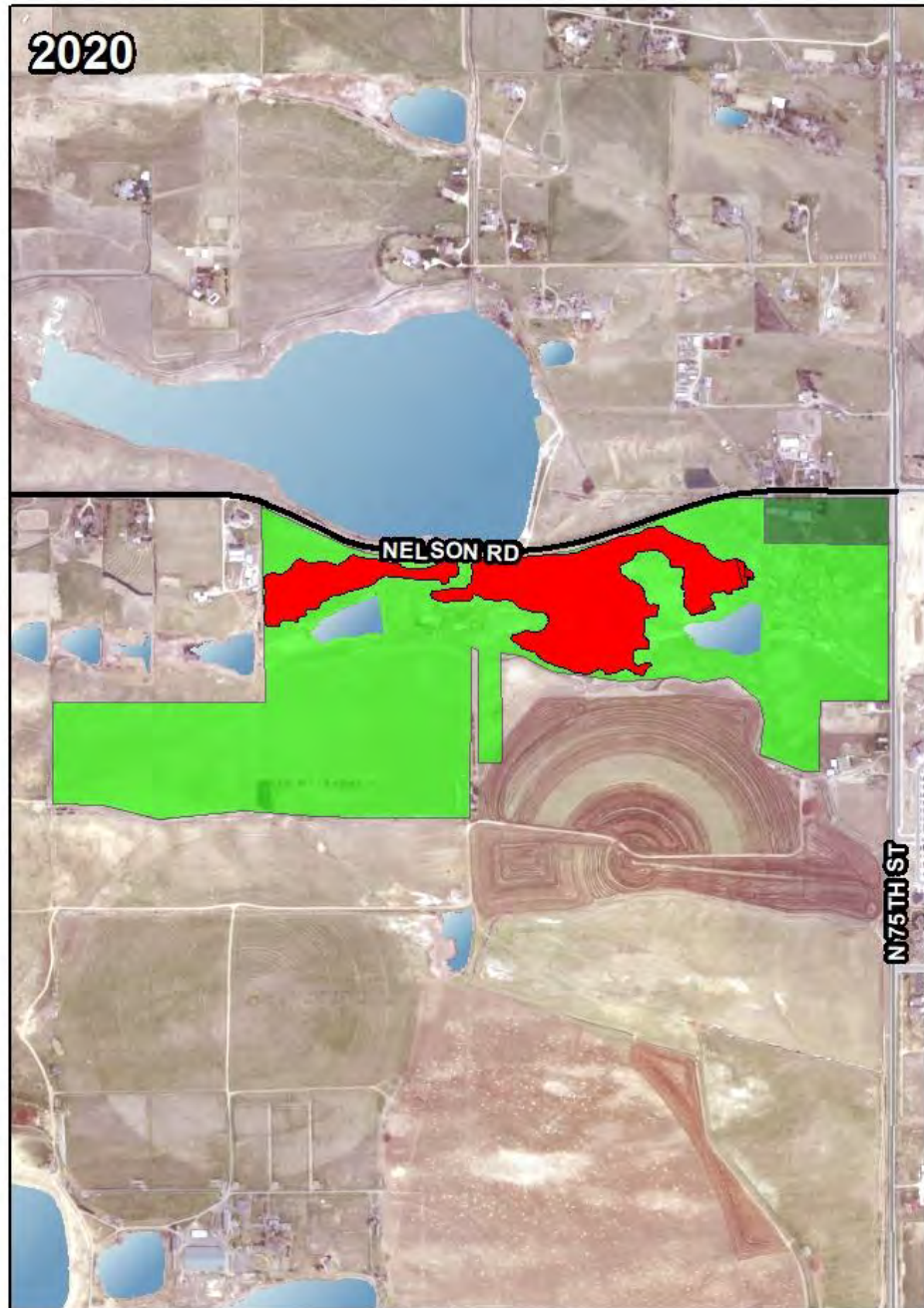


Parks &
Open Space

2018



2020

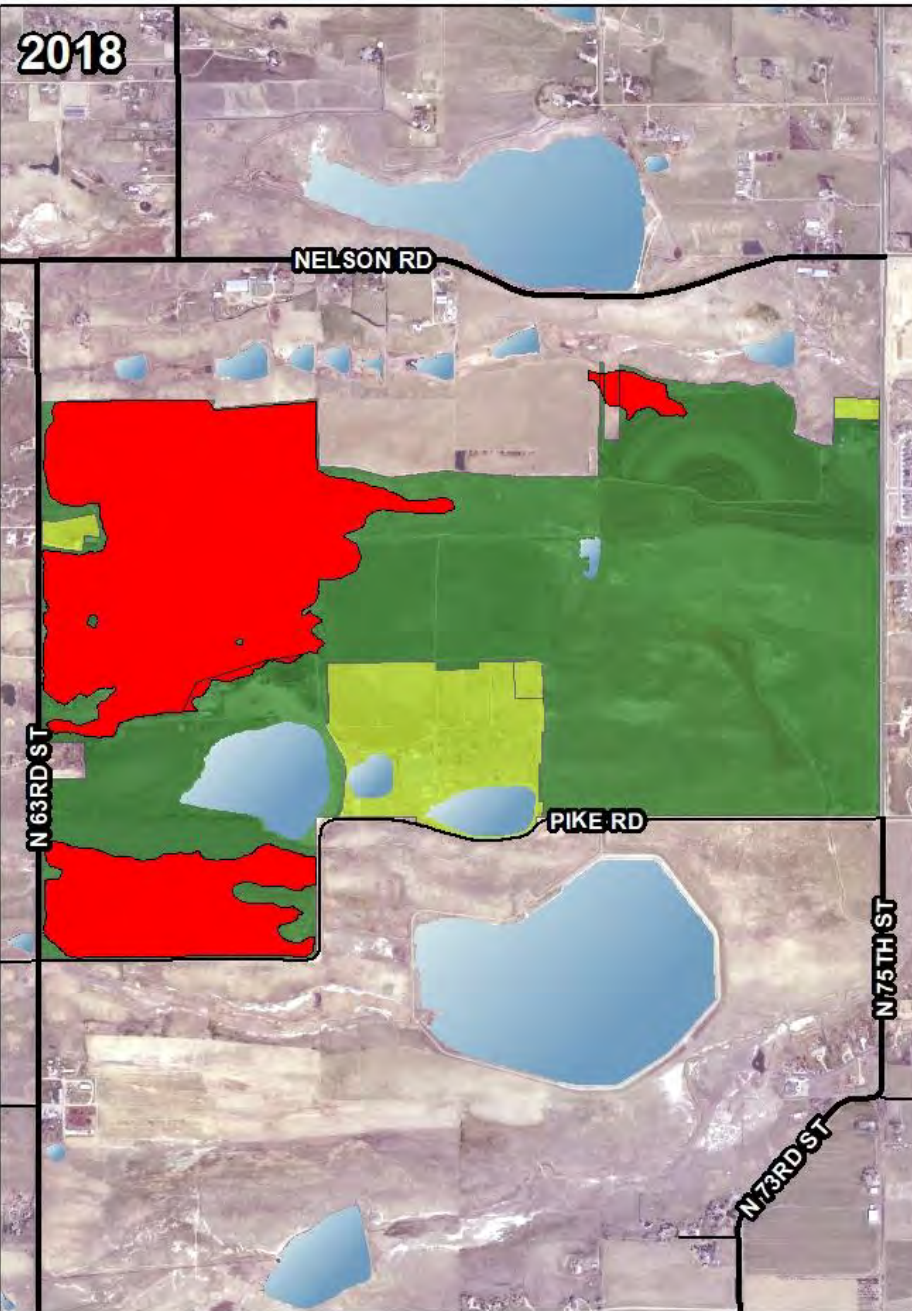


AHI Complex: AHI

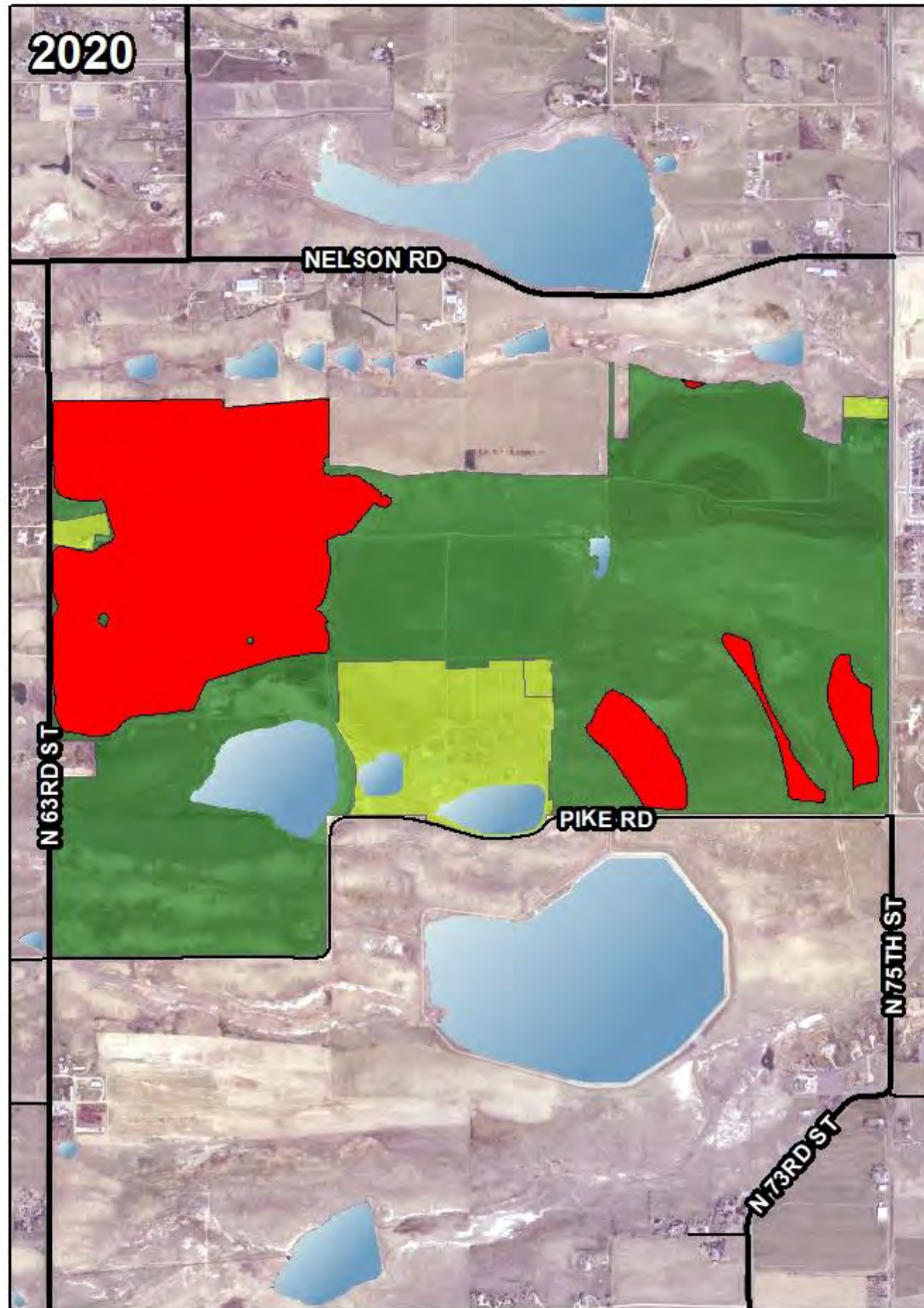


Parks &
Open Space

2018



2020

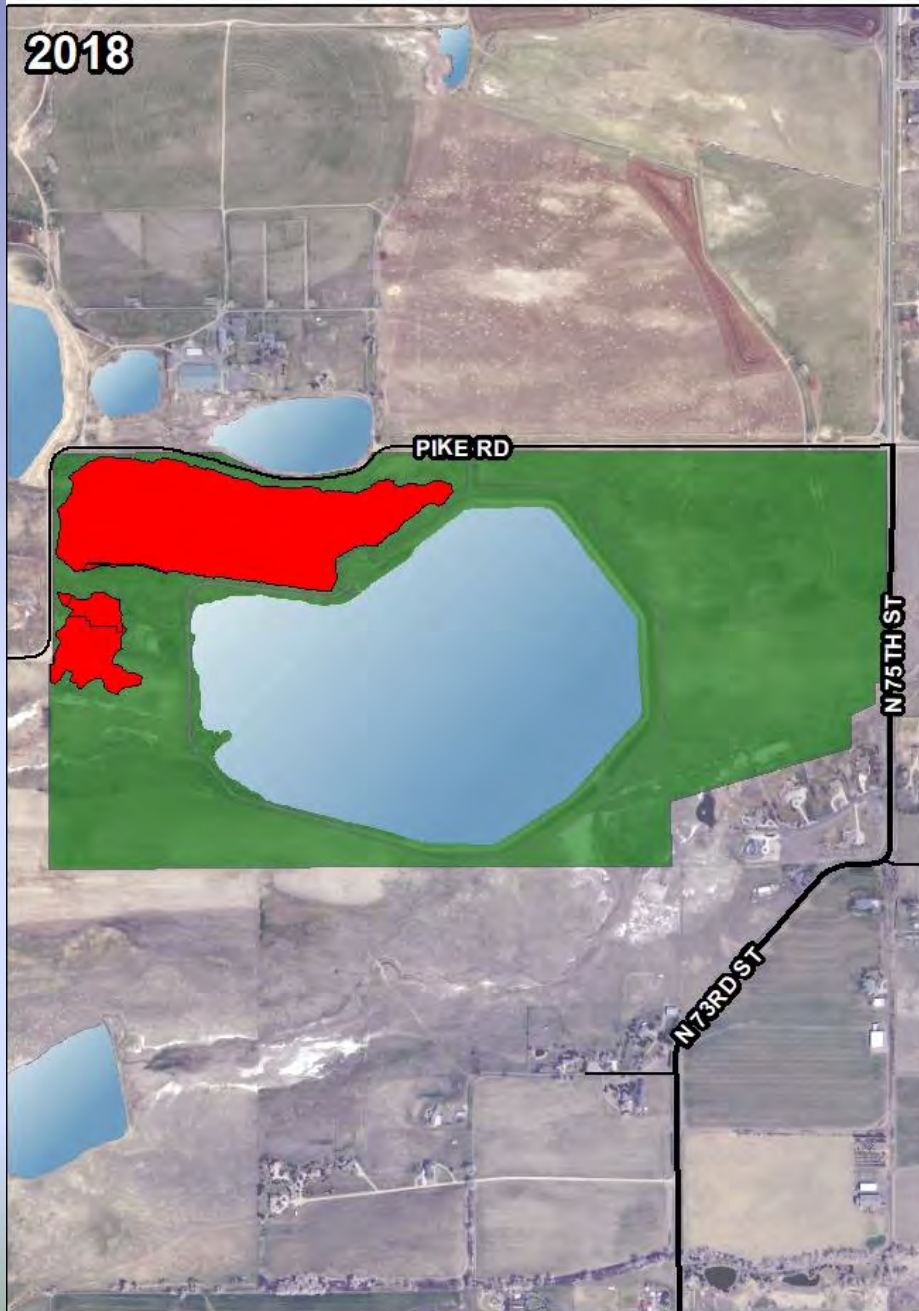


AHI Complex: Lagerman Reservoir

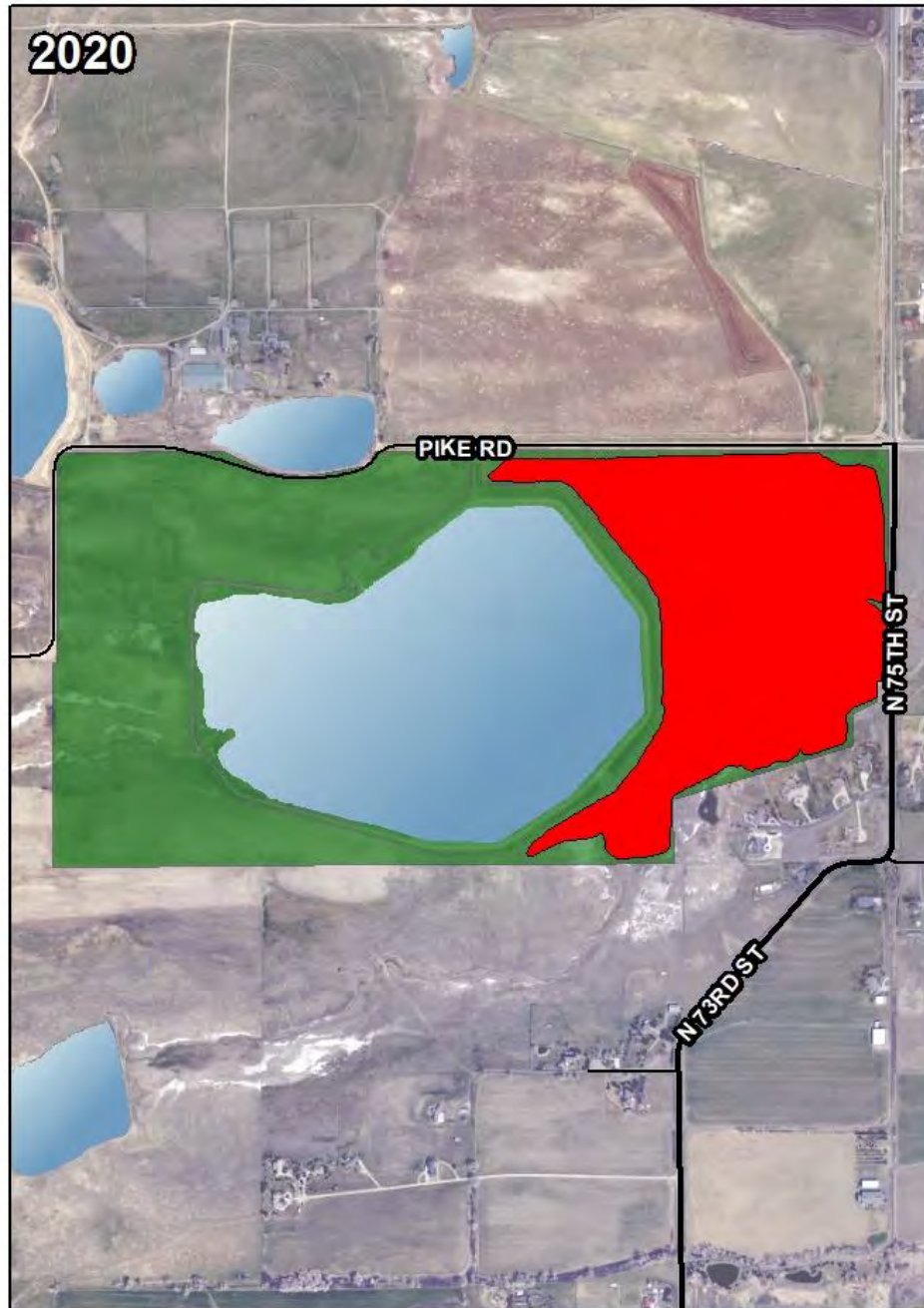


Parks &
Open Space

2018



2020

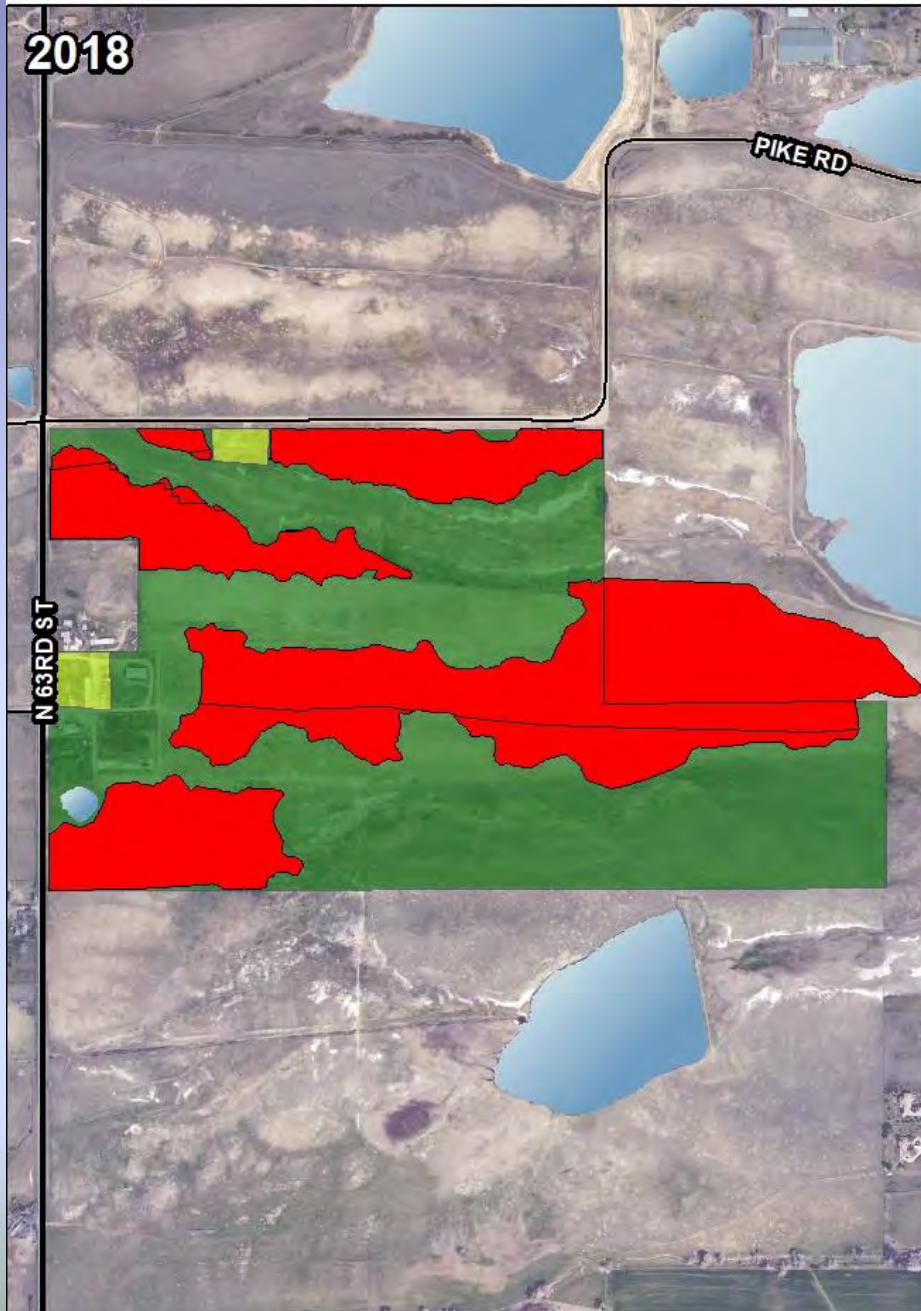


AHI Complex: AHI Longmont Farms

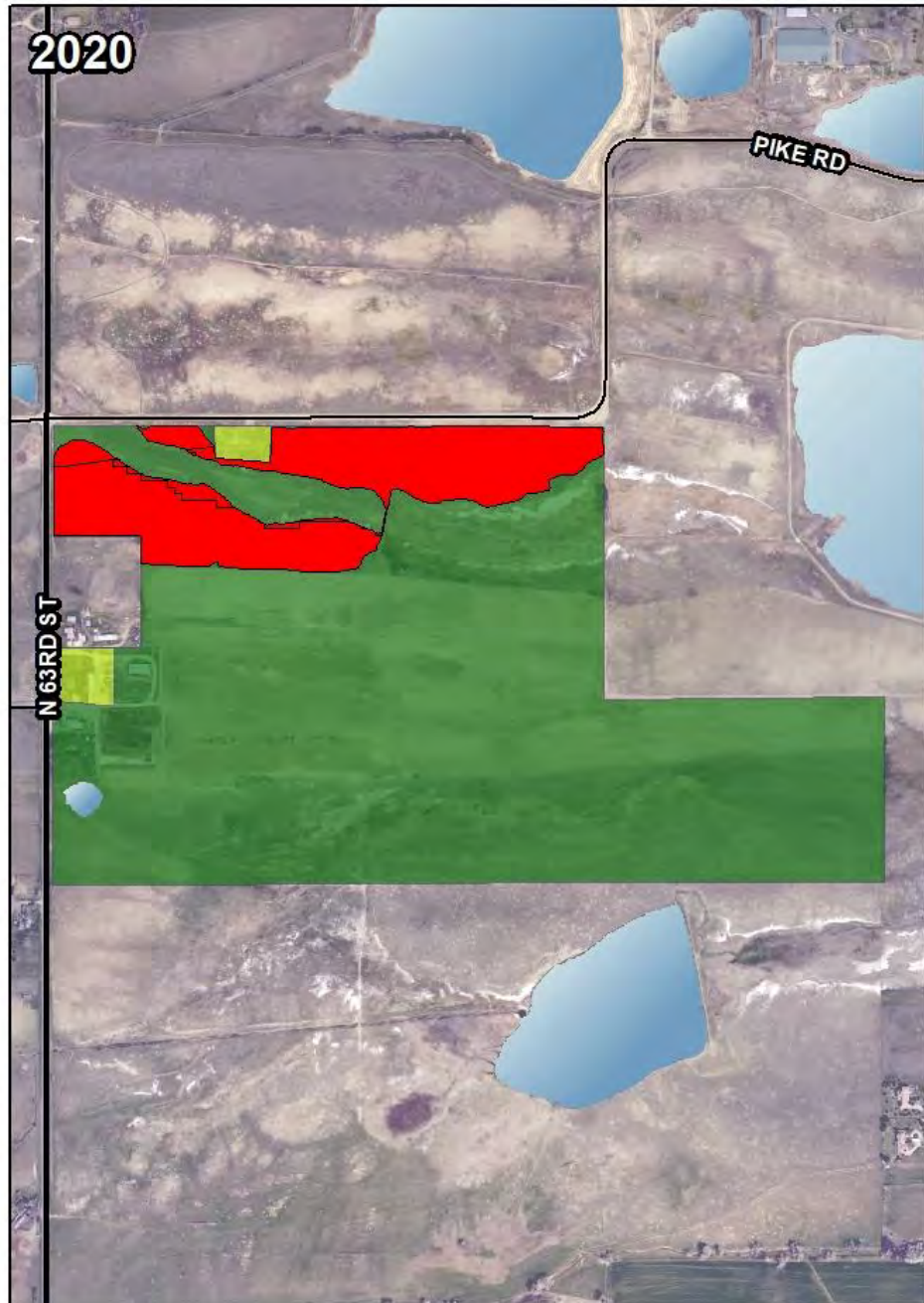


Parks &
Open Space

2018



2020

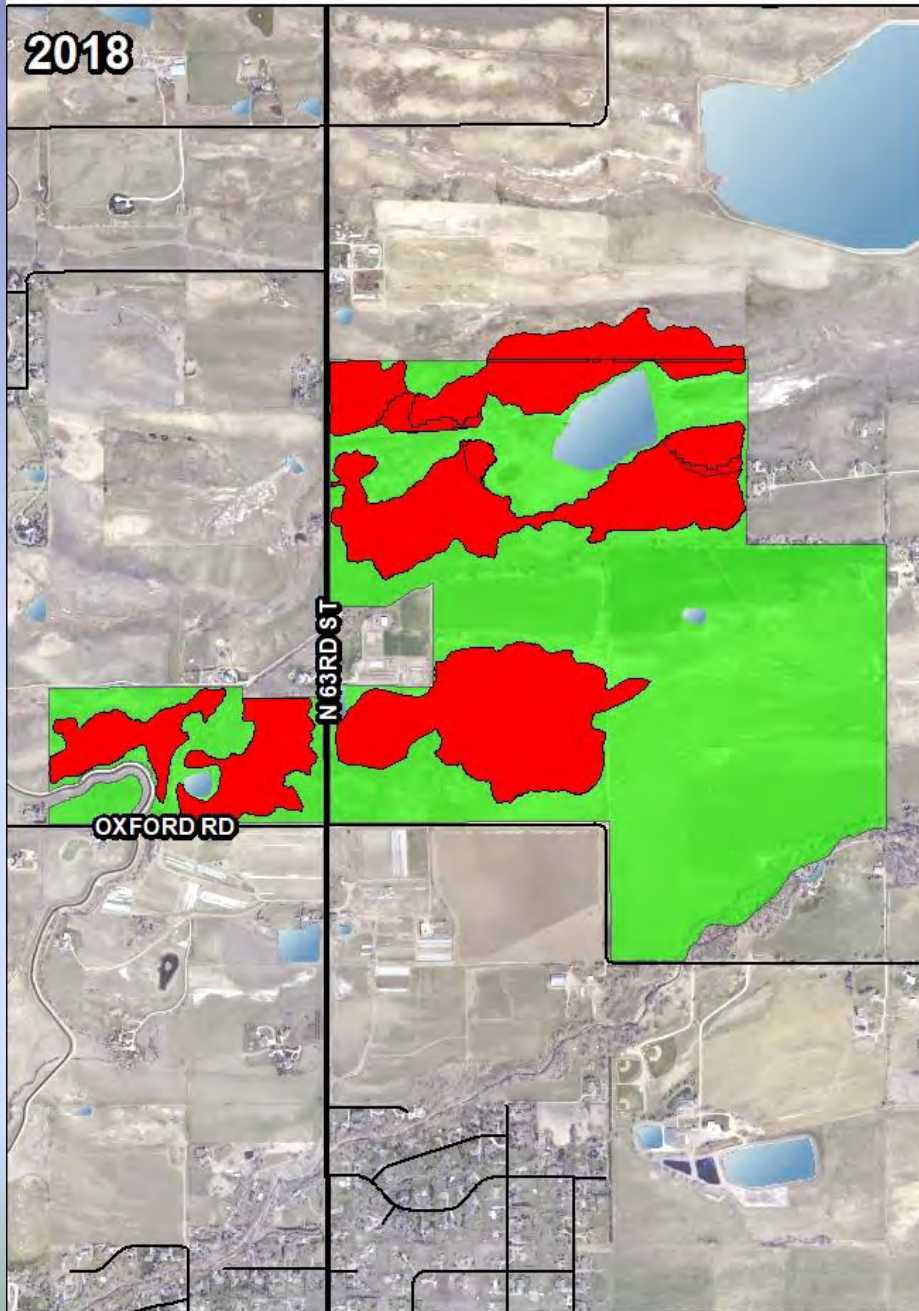


AHI Complex: Imel

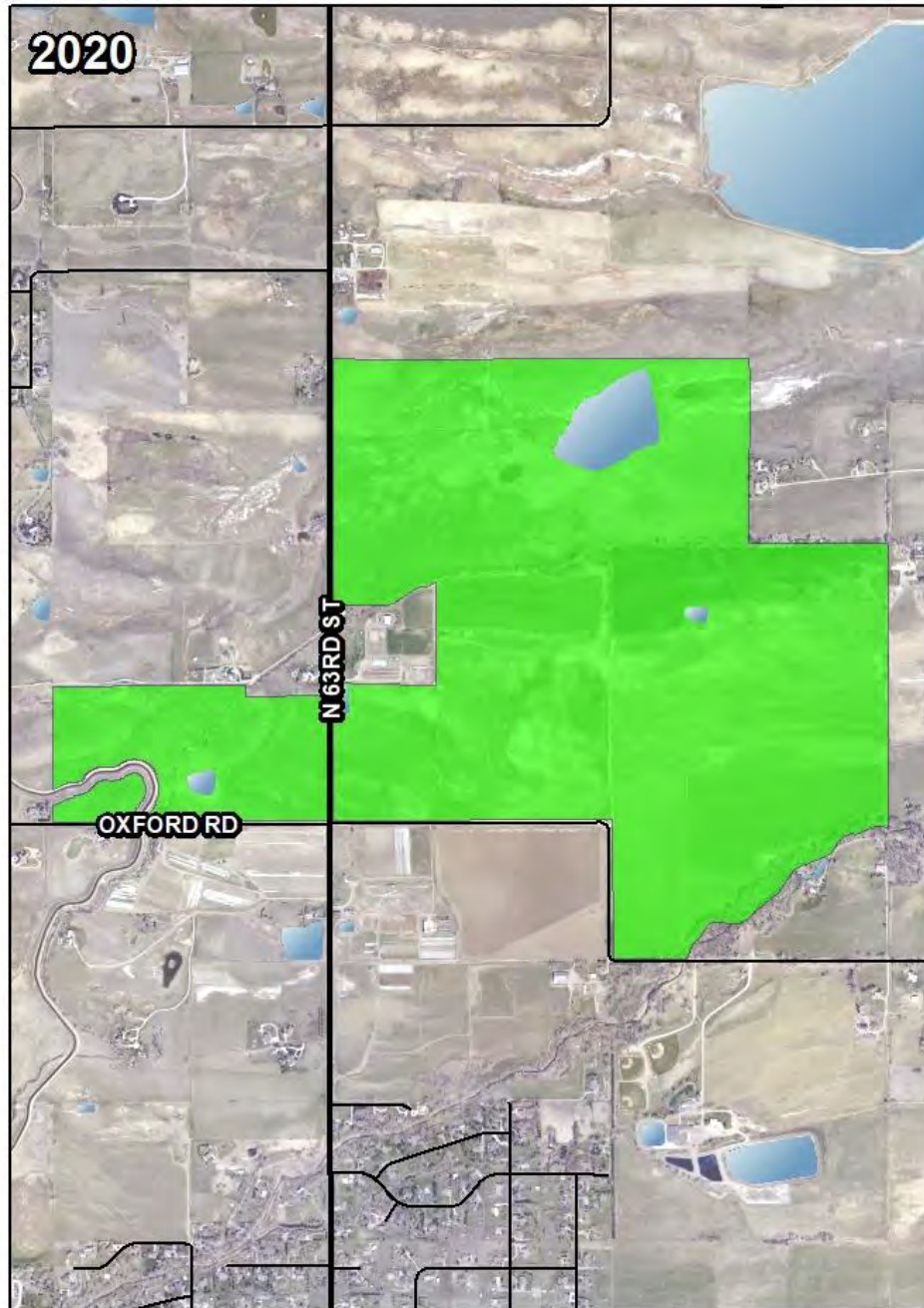


Parks &
Open Space

2018



2020

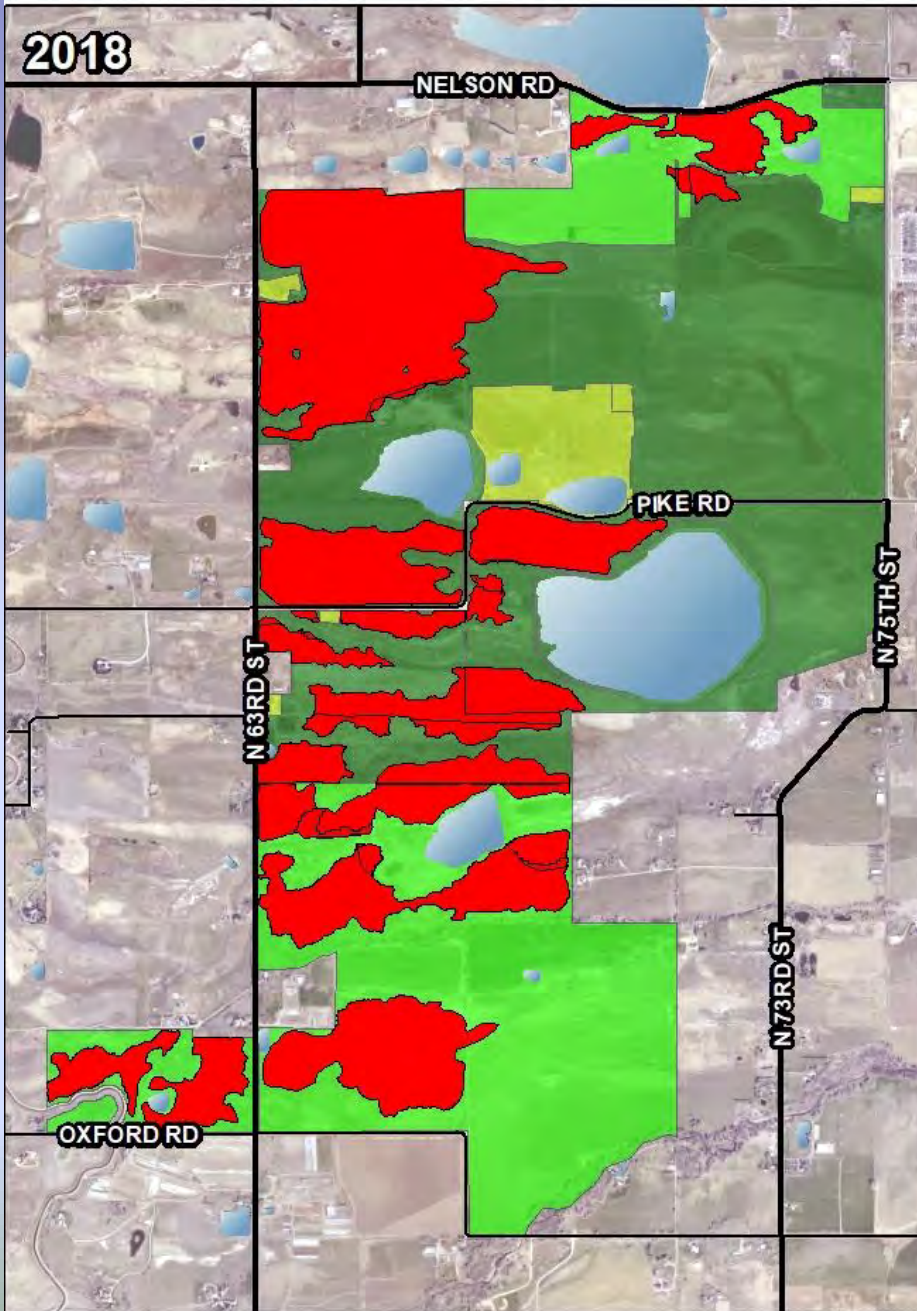


AHI Complex

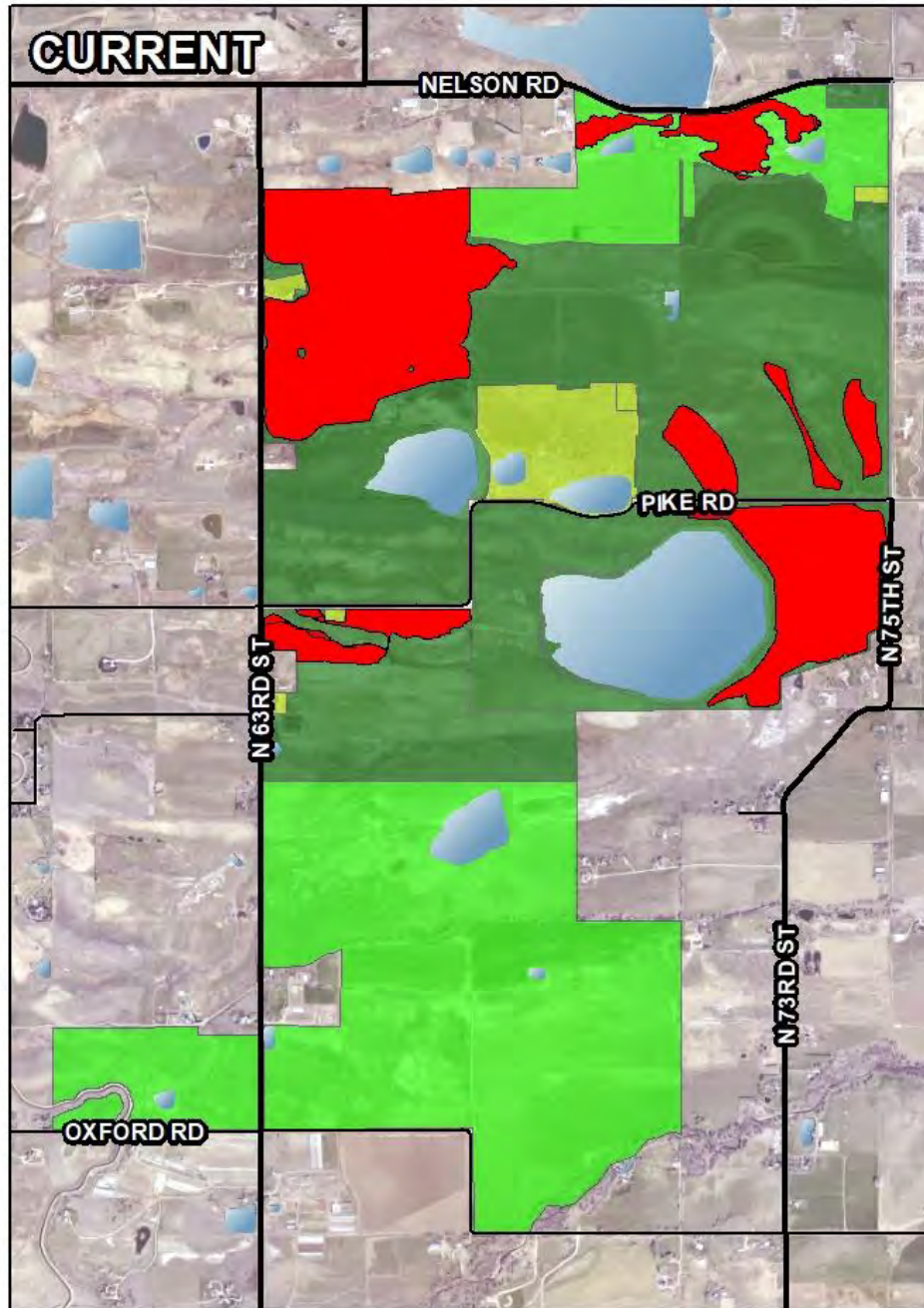


Parks &
Open Space

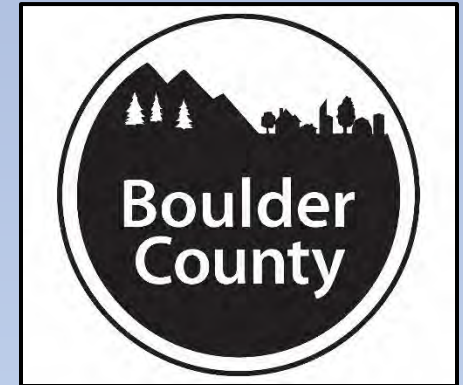
2018



CURRENT



Prairie Dog Stakeholders' Meeting- 2020 Update



Stakeholders' Meeting- 2020 Overview

- Colonized Acres of
Prairie Dogs
-MOA and HCA
- Barrier Fencing
- Burrowing Owls
- Black-Footed Ferret
Reintroduction



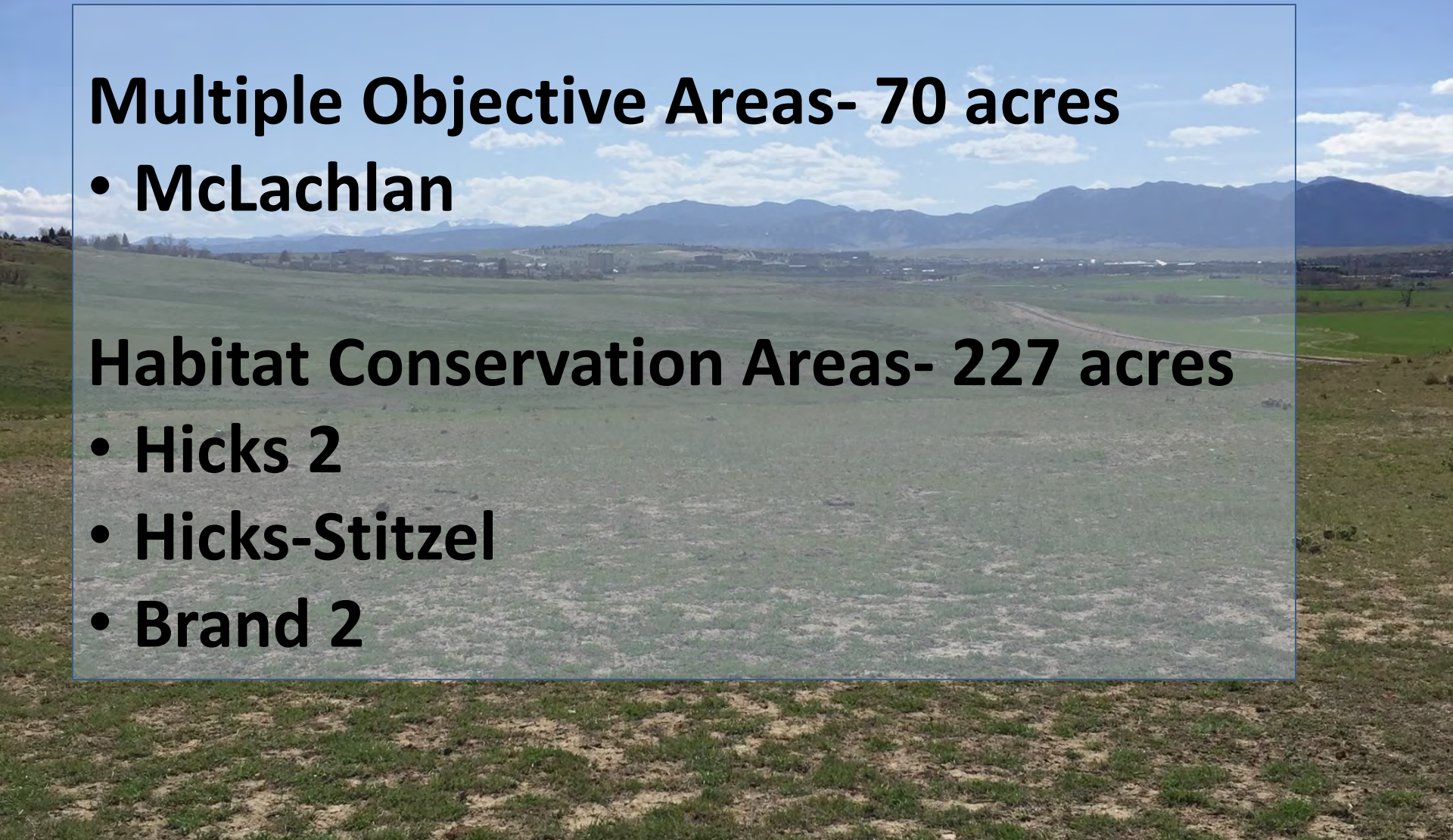
Property Acquisitions Since 2018 and Designation Categories for HCA and MOA

Multiple Objective Areas- 70 acres

- **McLachlan**

Habitat Conservation Areas- 227 acres

- **Hicks 2**
- **Hicks-Stitzel**
- **Brand 2**

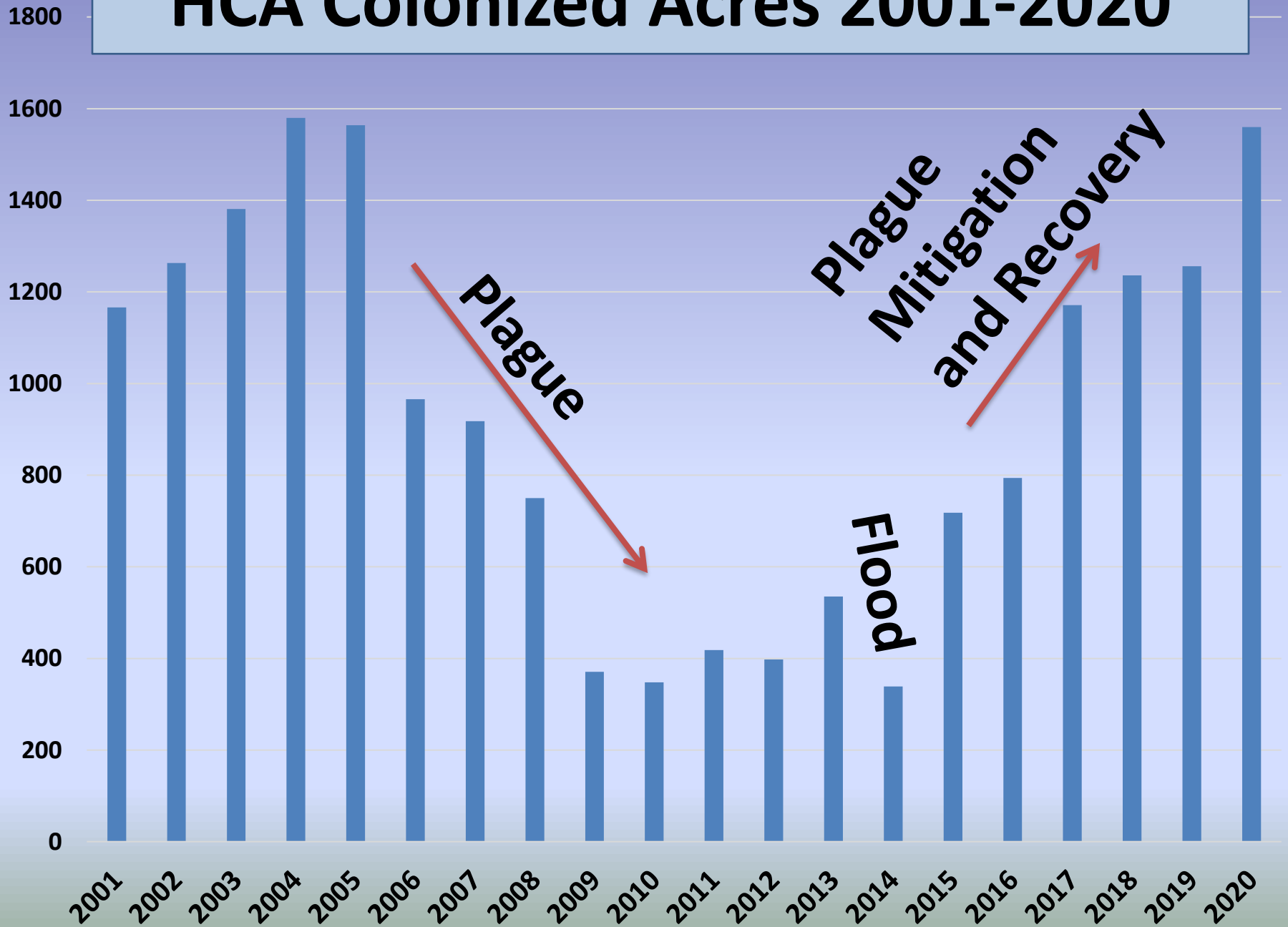


Occupied Prairie Dog Colony Size

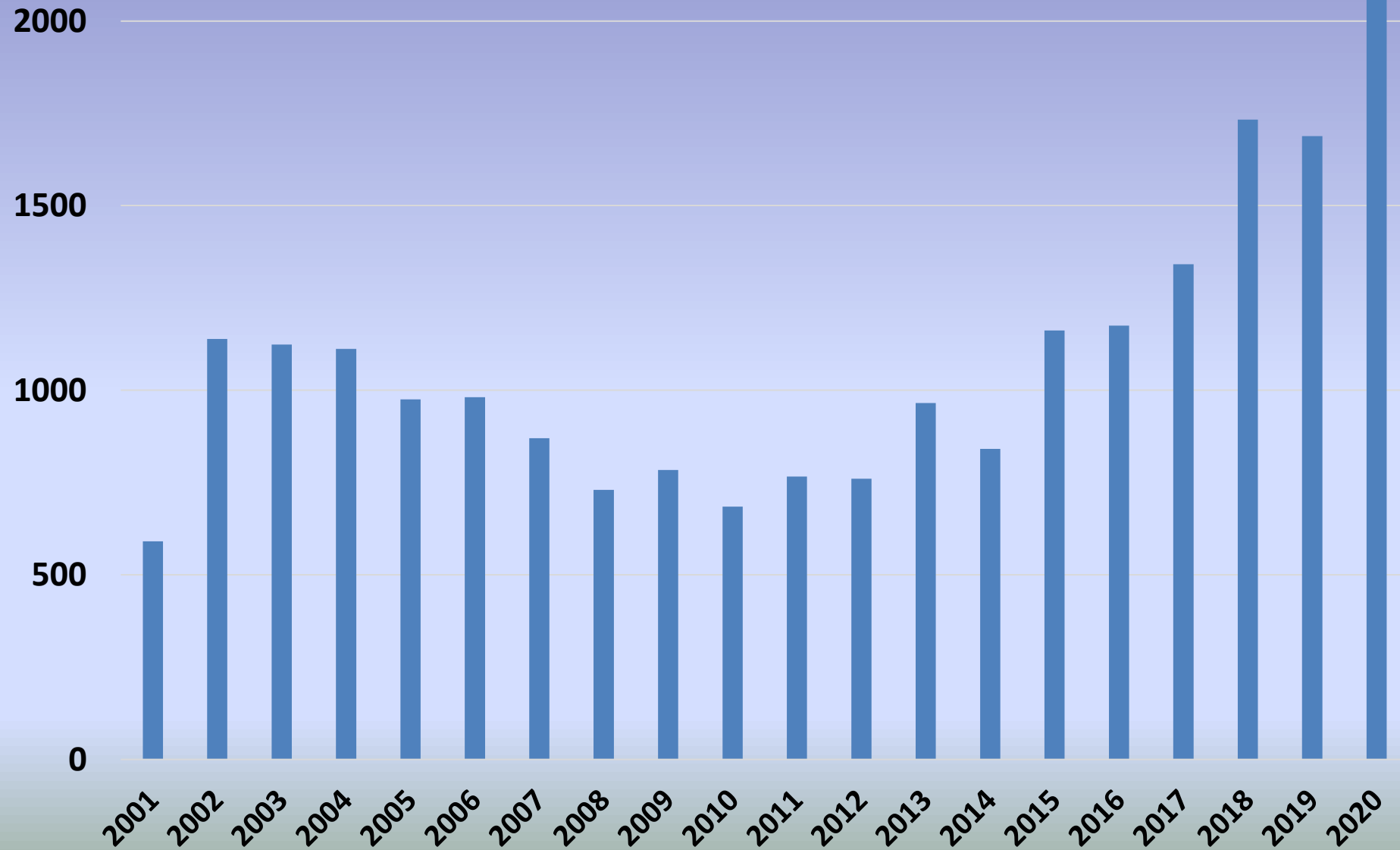
Per Property Designation Type- 2016 - 2020

Colony Acres	Property Type Suitable Acres	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
HCA	3,700	834	1,171	1,236	1,256	1,560
MOA	4,520	1,175	1,341	1,733	1,688	2,111
Totals	8,220	2,009	2,453	2,970	2,944	3,671

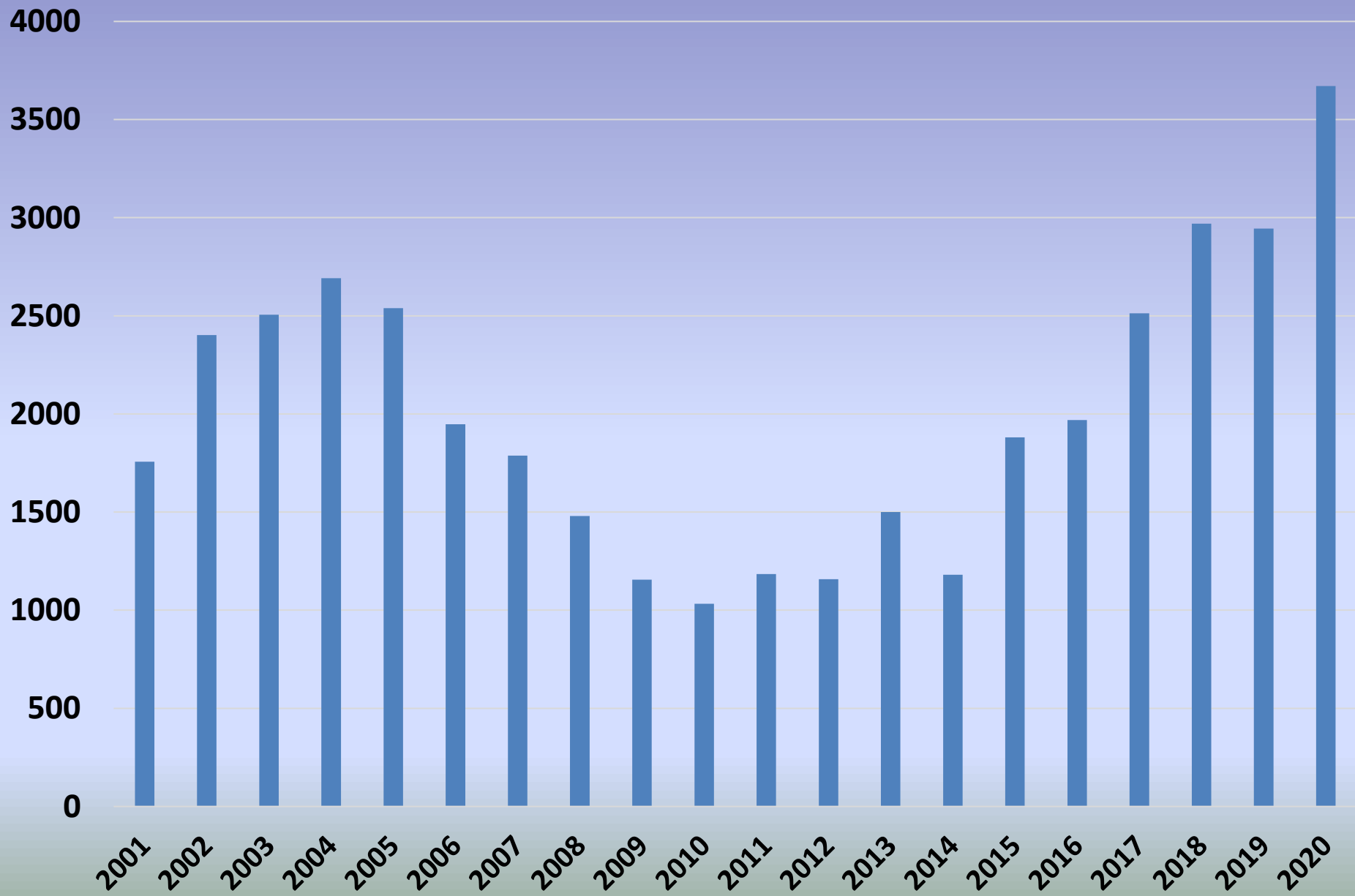
HCA Colonized Acres 2001-2020



MOA Colonized Acres 2001-2020



HCA + MOA Colonized Acres 2001-2020



Prairie Dog Barrier Fencing 2020

- .5 miles installed
 - Broomfield North, Turkey Farm, Suitts
- Volunteers, Neighbors, Staff

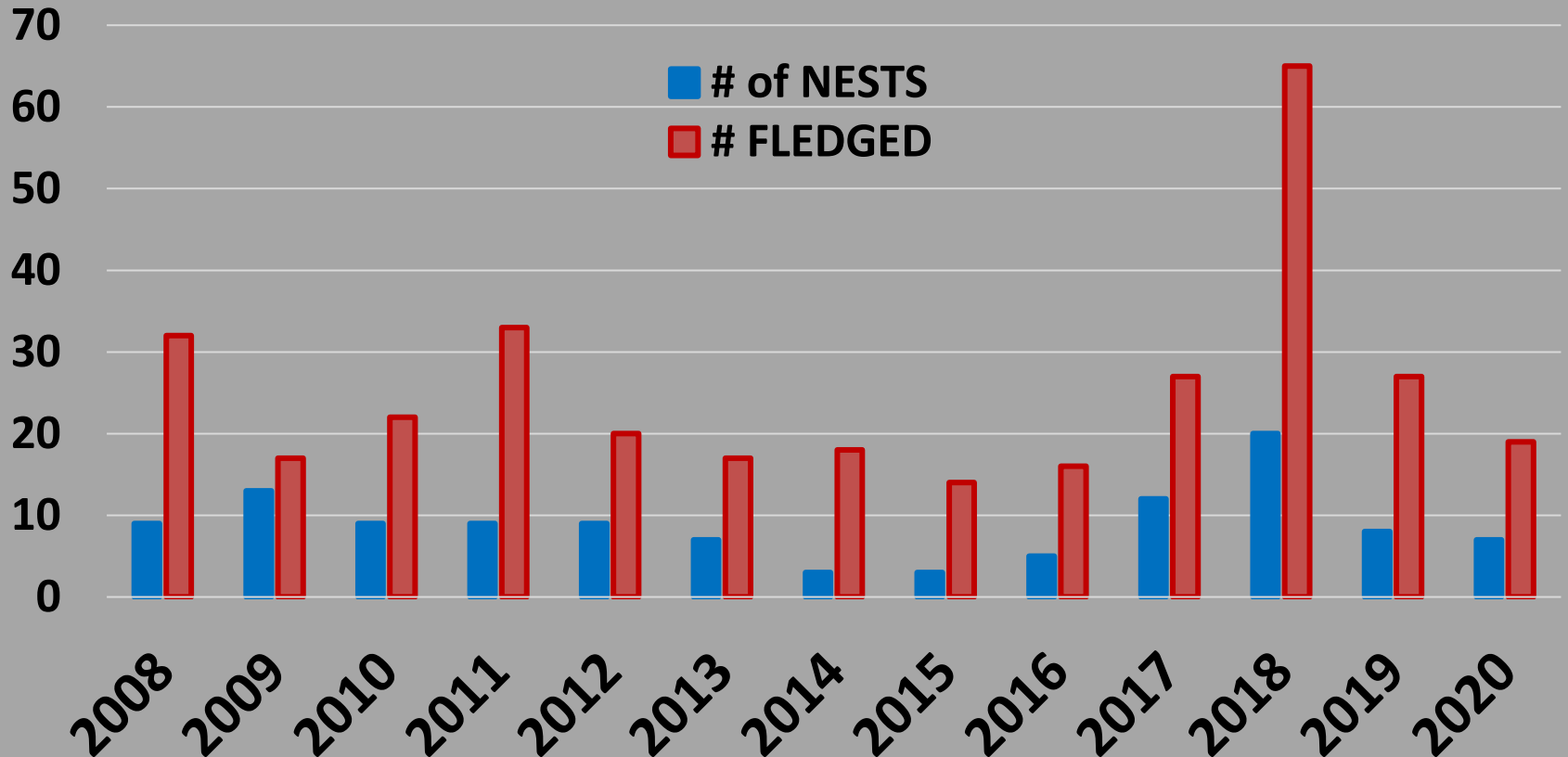


Burrowing Owls 2020

BCPOS and OSMP



Boulder County and City of Boulder Annual Burrowing Owl Nesting Totals 2008-2020



Burrowing Owls- Management 2020

- Volunteer Monitoring
- Owl Protection Plans



Boulder County Parks & Open Space Burrowing Owl Protection Plan for Autrey

About Burrowing Owls

Cowboys sometimes called these owls "howdy birds," because they seemed to nod in greeting from the entrances to their burrows in prairie-dog towns. These owls are small ground dwellers that typically nest in inactive prairie dog burrows. They show greater preference for inactive burrows within active prairie dog towns as compared to completely abandoned towns. Fledgling success is higher, and predation is lower, on active versus inactive towns. However, Burrowing Owl populations have been declining for many years, owing to prairie dog and ground squirrel control programs, and habitat loss. They are now designated a threatened species by the State of Colorado.

Burrowing owl habitat in Boulder County is protected in a similar manner to other land management agencies in Boulder County, with the intent to provide comprehensive protections across contiguous lands.

Why a Protection Plan?

The purpose of this Protection Plan is to clearly outline actions to be avoided which may result in the failure of a burrowing owl nest site. The protection of the site means preventing disturbances to the owls, their nesting activities and rearing their young. It also means maintaining a population of prairie dogs to provide burrows for the owls to nest in, and at the same time, minimizing the negative impacts of prairie dogs on farm and grazing operations. This nest site is located on leased agricultural land designated as No-Prairie Dog Area (NPDA).



26 Volunteers

312 Hours

Black-Footed Ferret Reintroduction Progress



Credit: M. Lockhart/USFWS



Credit: R. Reading

Plague Abatement Strategies

- **Delta Dust** used on all BCPOS colonies within the South County Grasslands and Rabbit Mountain 2016-2020*



2020 Sylvatic Plague Vaccine (SPV)



- **South Grasslands**
 - **~100 Acres**
- **Rabbit Mountain**
 - **1,180 Acres**

SPV and Dusting Annual Costs – Labor + Materials

2016- \$3,600

South Grasslands only
SPV donated by CPW

2017- \$19,100

South Grasslands and Rabbit
SPV and Dust

2018- \$22,375

South Grasslands and Rabbit
SPV and Dust

2019- \$15,100

South Grasslands and Rabbit
SPV only

2020- \$17,500

South Grassland and Rabbit
SPV and Dust

Current Annual Material Costs Only

SPV ~ \$12,000

Dust ~ \$2,500

**Total costs will increase as colonies grow*

TOTAL = \$77,675 to date



South Central Grasslands HCA

6,700 acres

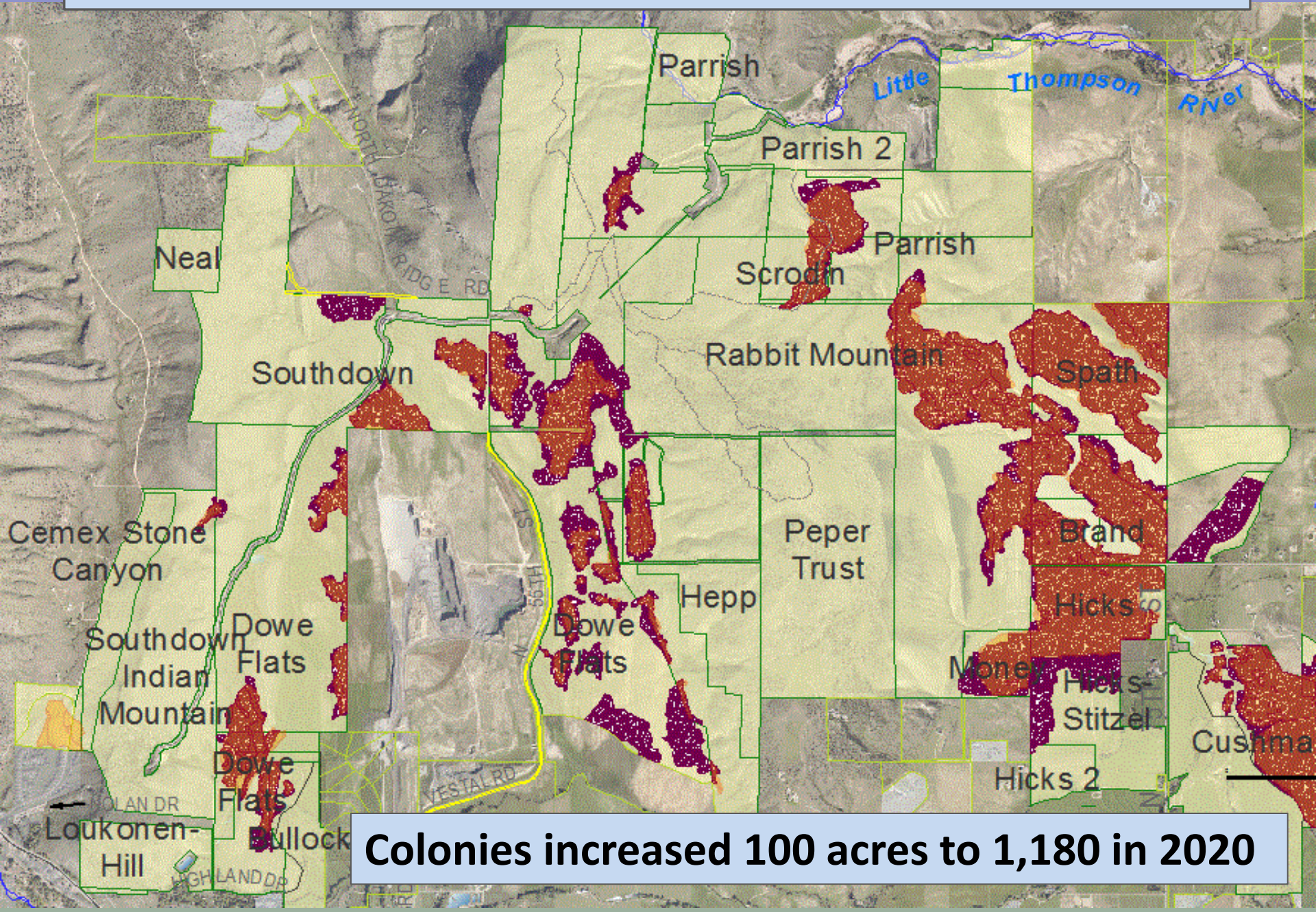
**City of Boulder
Open Space
and Mountain
Parks**

**Boulder
County Parks
and Open
Space**

Rocky Flats



2020 Ron Stewart Preserve at Rabbit Mountain

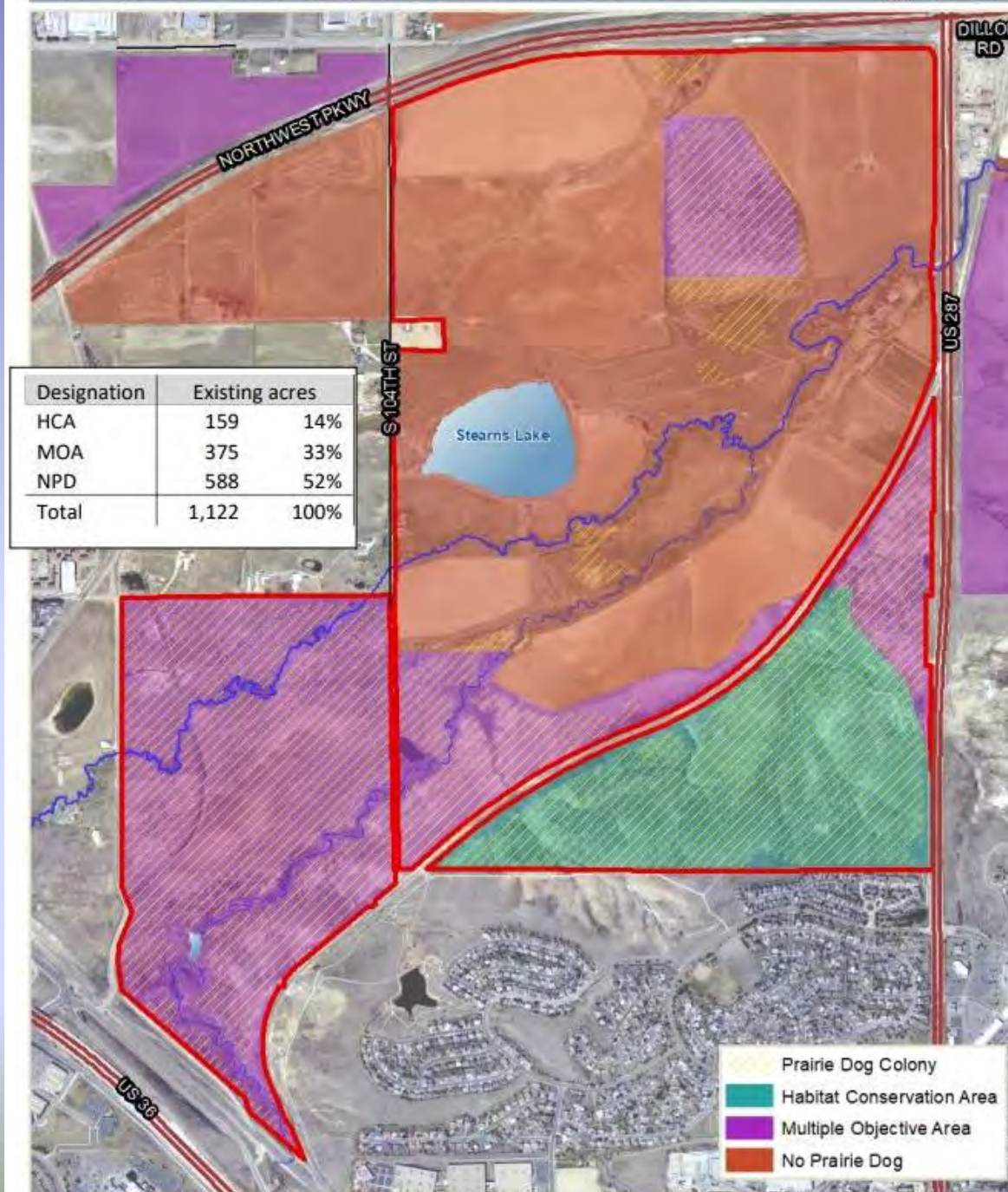


Carolyn Holmberg Preserve at Rock Creek Farm- Management Plan Update



Carolyn Holmberg Preserve at Rock Creek Farm Management Plan 2020 Update





Questions?



Relocations

2012 - 45 Prairie Dogs Relocated (by staff and volunteers) **\$29,000**

2015 - 131 Prairie Dogs Relocated (contracted) **\$13,000**

2016 - 216 Prairie Dogs Relocated (contracted) **\$36,000**

Nest Boxes Installed (by staff)

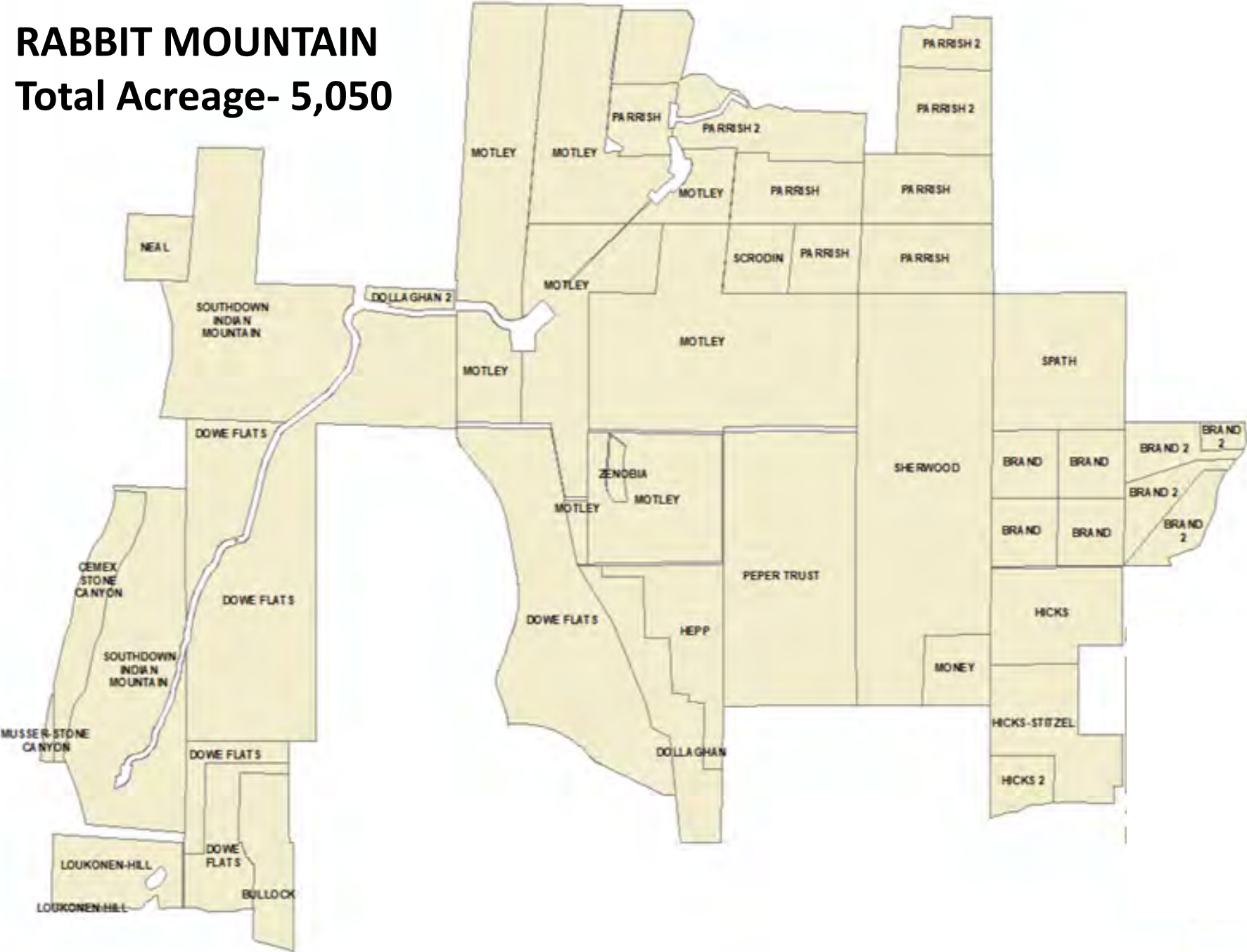
2017 - 86 Prairie Dogs relocated to Nest Boxes (by staff) **\$13,500**

**478 Prairie Dogs Relocated
\$91,500**



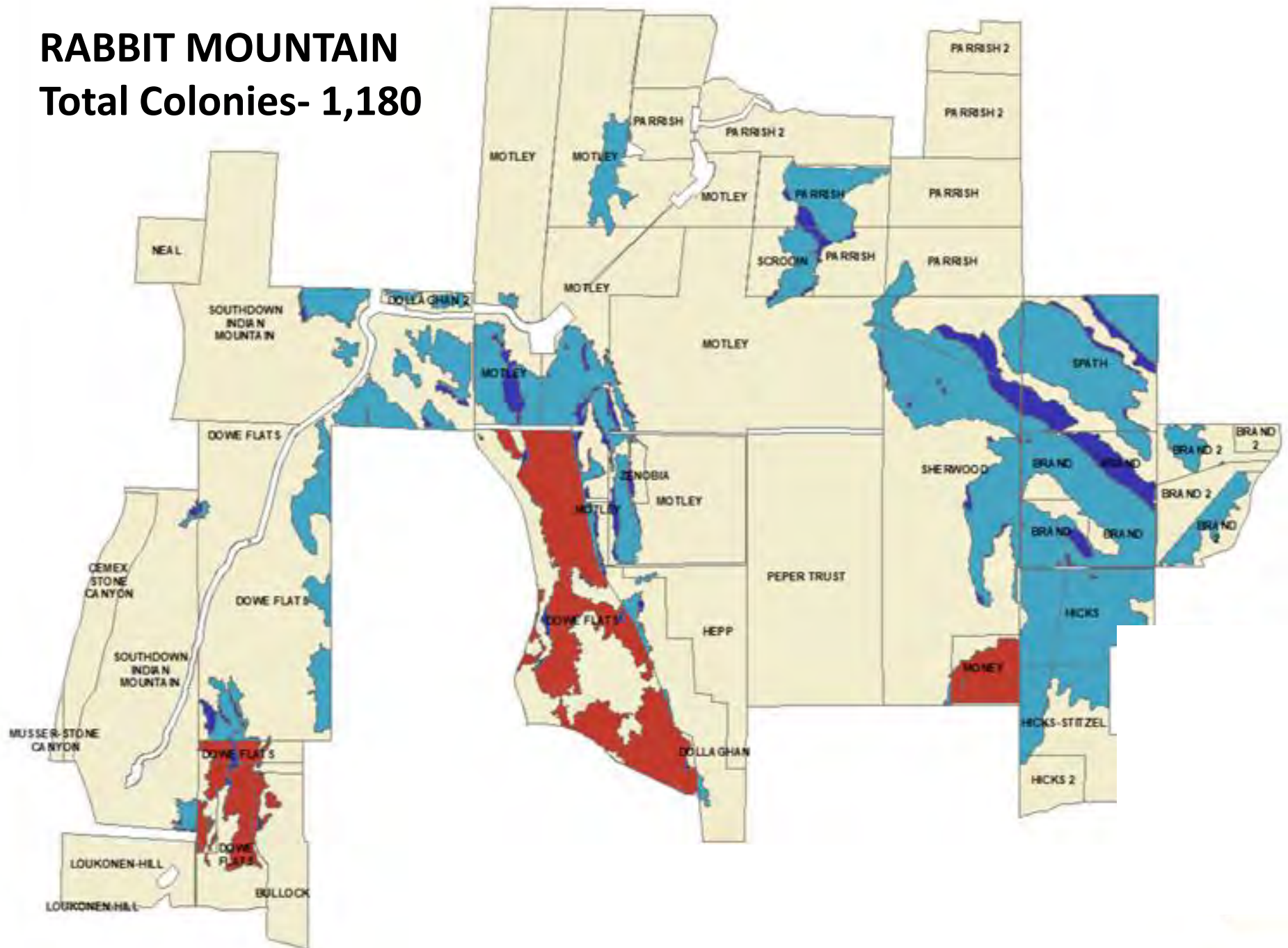
RABBIT MOUNTAIN

Total Acreage- 5,050



RABBIT MOUNTAIN

Total Colonies- 1,180

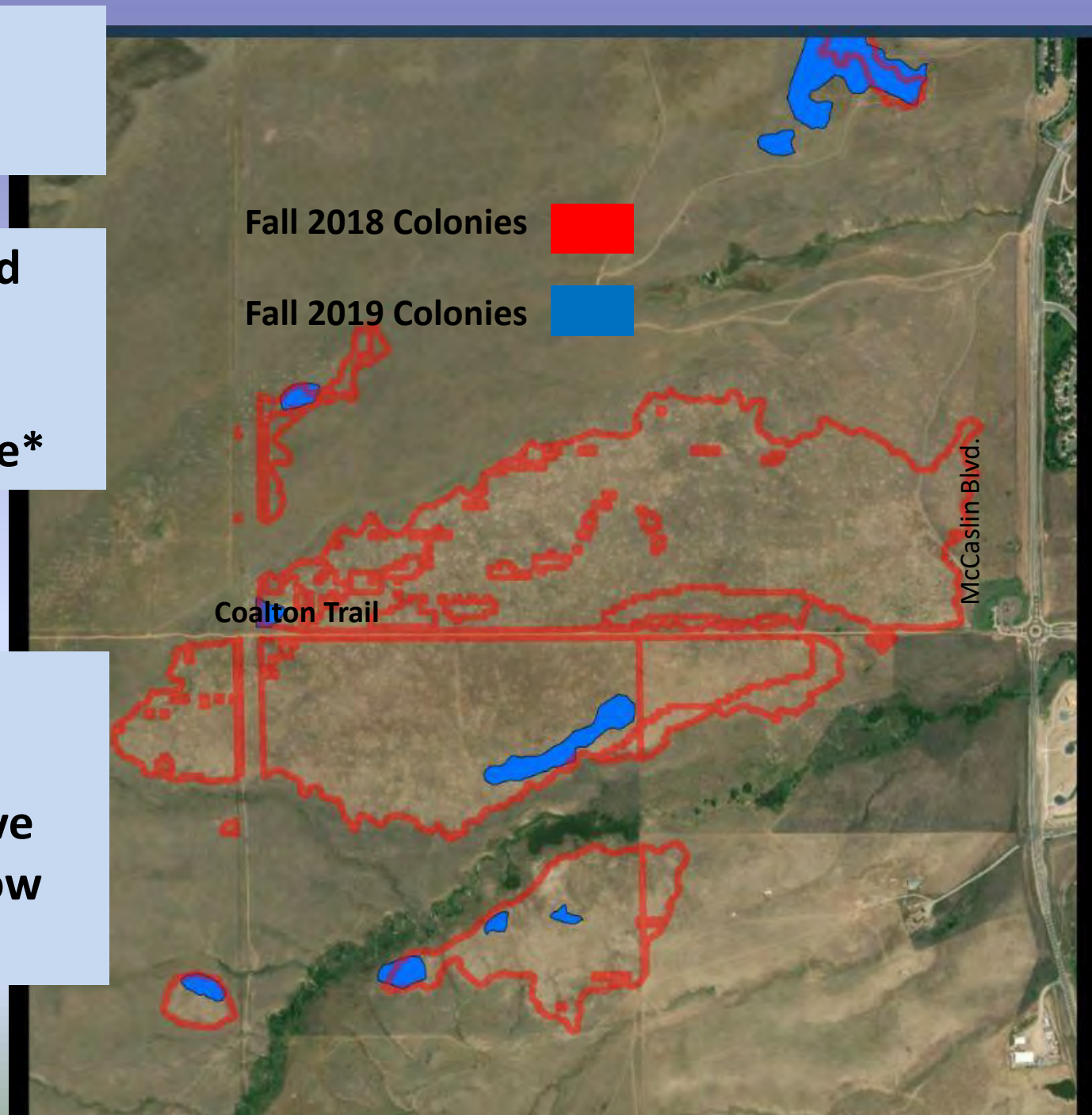


Fall 2019- Die-Off Event

Colorado Parks and
Wildlife collected
fleas- returned
negative for plague*

2020 Status

~100 acres of active
colonies but burrow
density is sparse.

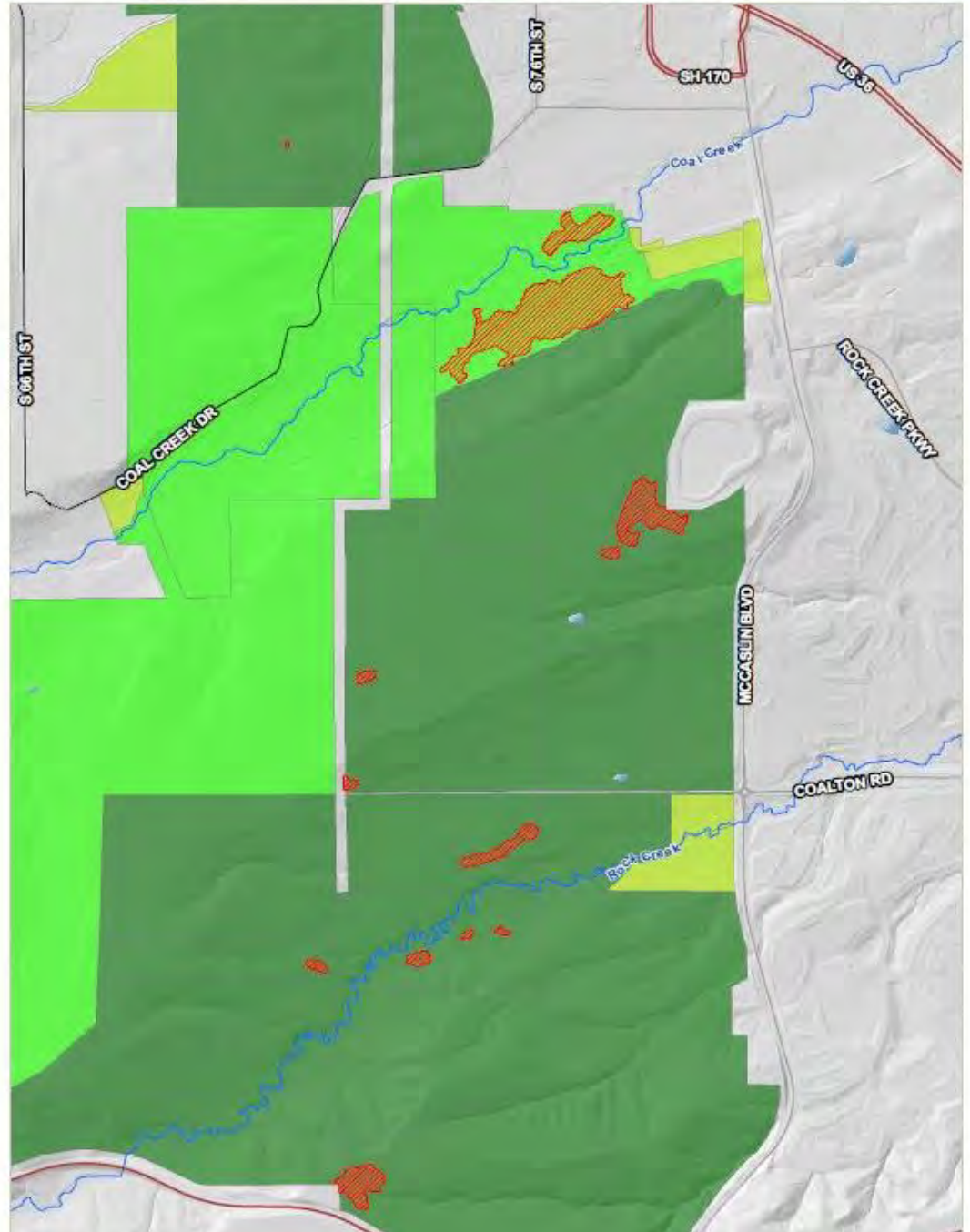


Fall 2019- Die-Off Event

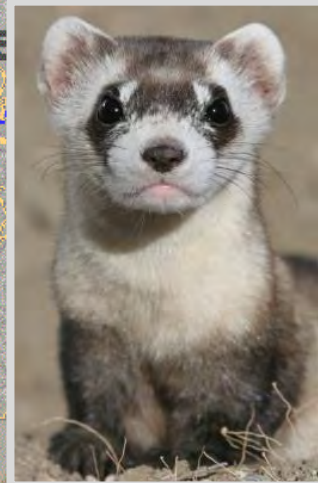
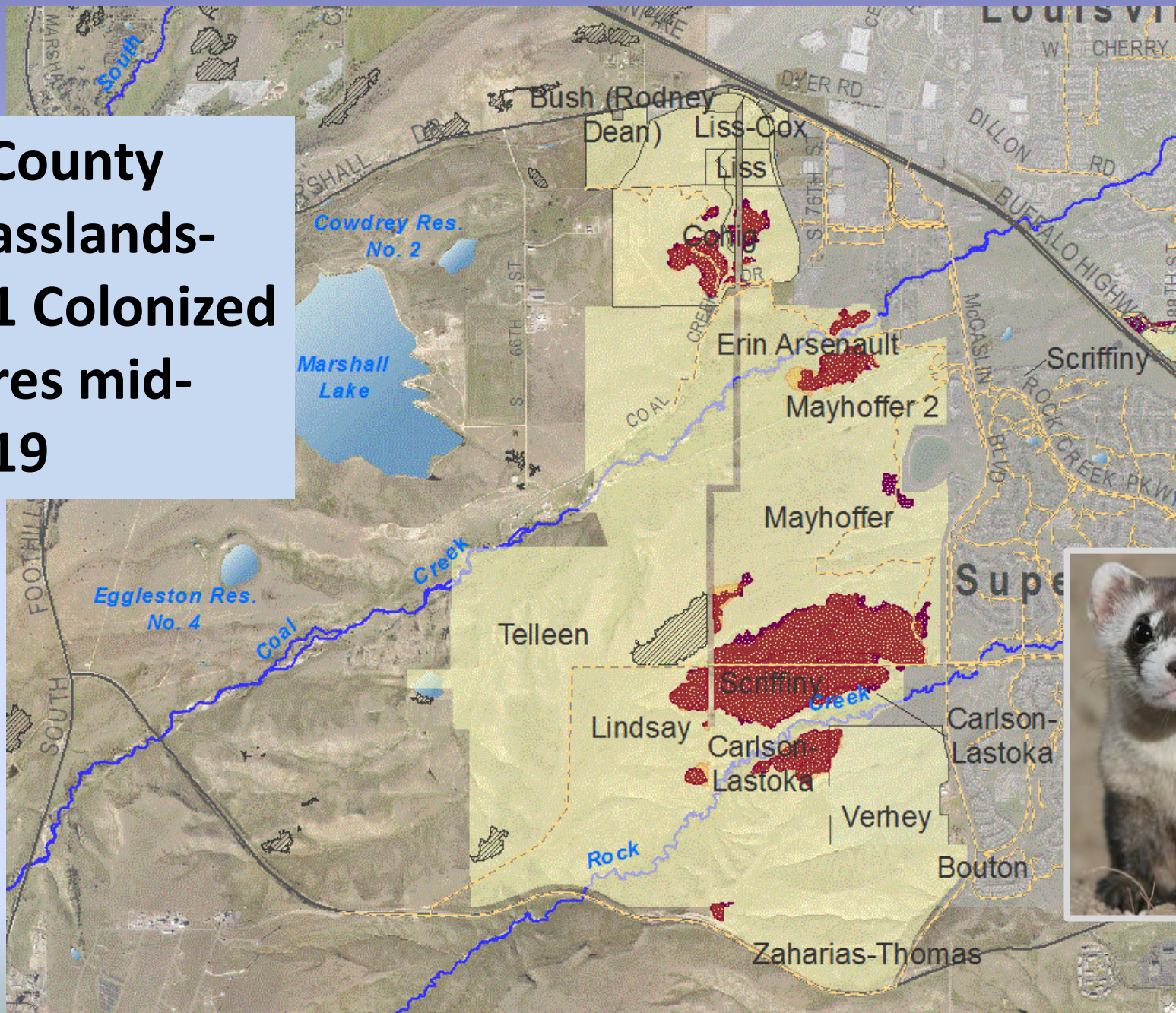
58 acres of active
colonies remain

Prairie Dog Acreage: South County Grassland Complex - 58ac

Part 1 &
Open Space



**S. County
Grasslands-
331 Colonized
Acres mid-
2019**



Occupied Prairie Dog Colony Size Per Property Designation Type- 2016, 2017

TYPE	Property	2016	% Occupied	2017	% Occupied
Designation	Acres	Colonized Acres	%	Colonized Acres	%
HCA	3,326	834	24.8%	1,171	35.0%
MOA	4,419	1,175	26.5%	1,341	30.3%
NPD	17,198	392	2.2%	679	3.9%



CRS 33-2-105.6 - Repealed due to 5 year sunset clause

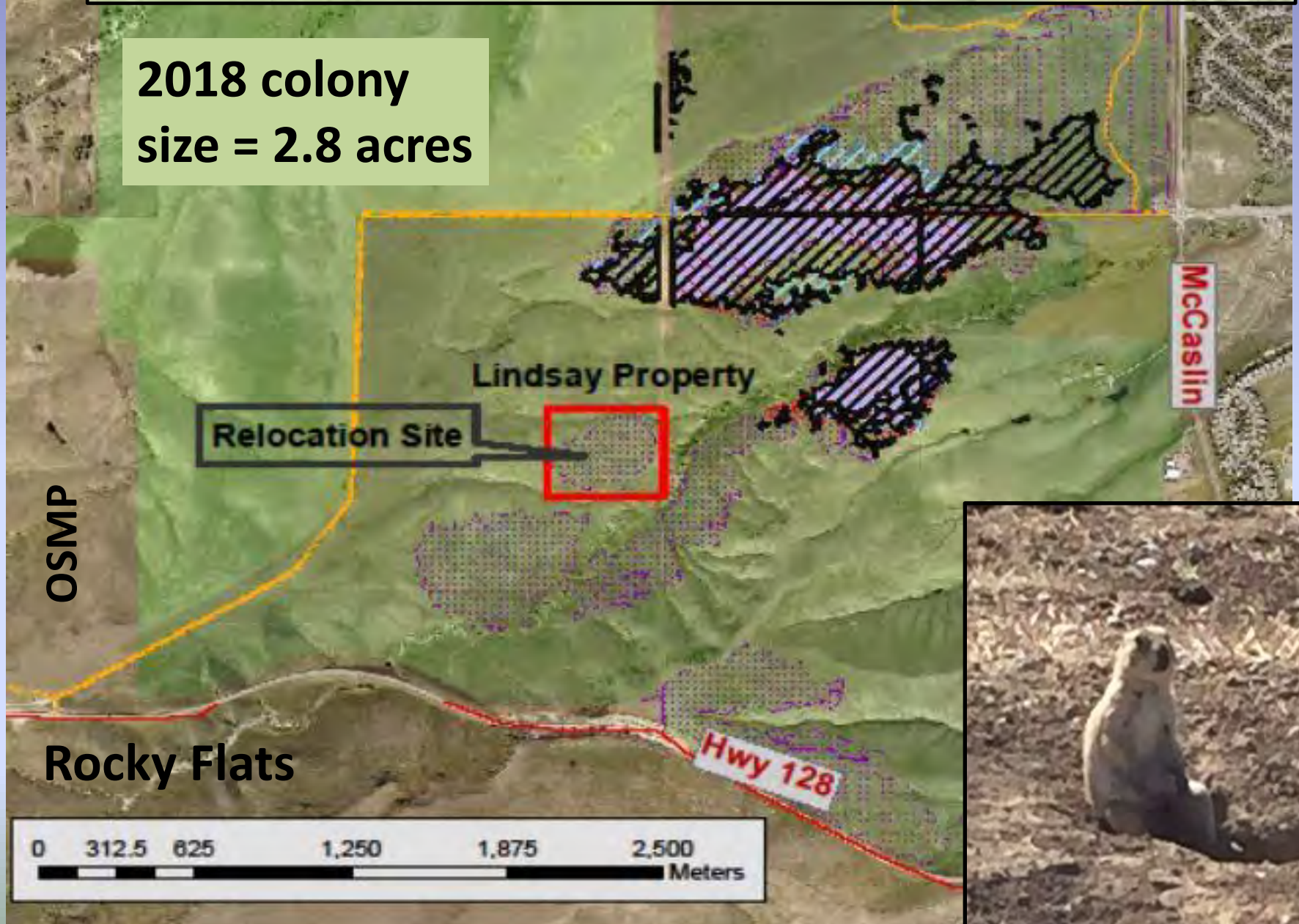
Allowed for only 3 non-federal entities to receive ferrets in Colorado.

Unclear of next steps, but is in County's interest to keep apprised.

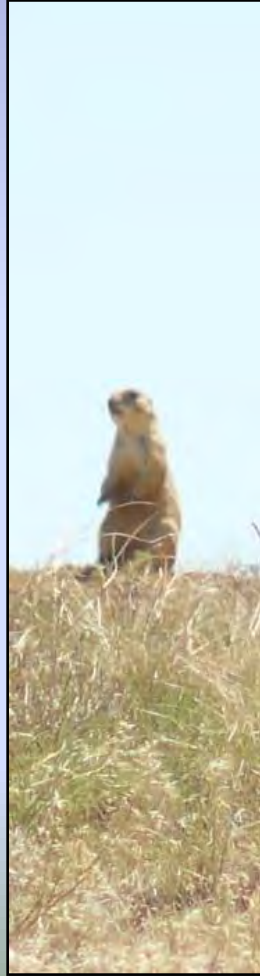


Relocation Site- Lindsay Property 2017

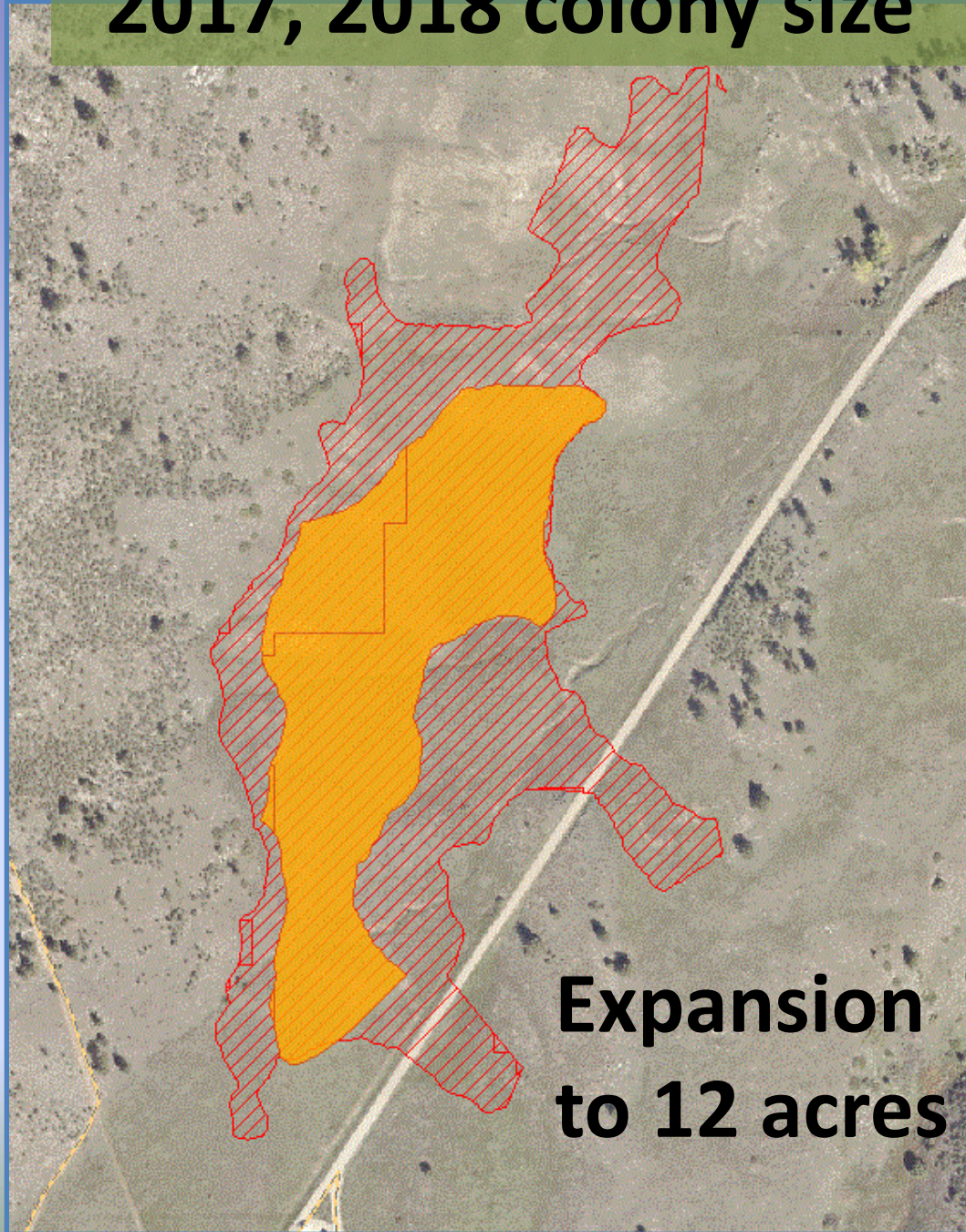
2018 colony
size = 2.8 acres



Update on 2012 Rabbit Mtn. Relocation



2017, 2018 colony size





Boulder County Parks & Open Space Burrowing Owl Protection Plan for AHI Complex

About Burrowing Owls

Cowboys sometimes called these owls "howdy birds" because they seemed to nod in greeting from the entrances to their burrows in prairie dog burrows. These owls are small ground dwellers that typically nest in inactive prairie dog burrows. They show greater preference for inactive burrows within active prairie dog towns as compared to completely abandoned towns. Fledgling success is higher, and predation is lower, on active versus inactive towns. However, burrowing owl populations have been declining for many years, owing to prairie dog and ground squirrel control programs, habitat loss, and accidental mortality (many are killed by cars). They're now designated a threatened species by the State of Colorado.

Why a Protection Plan?

The County's policy on burrowing owls is described in the *Prairie Dog Habitat Element of the Grassland and Shrubland Management Policy*. This plan is derived from the guidance in that policy. Protection of the site means preventing disturbances to the owls, their nesting activities and rearing their young, and at the same time, minimizing the negative impacts of prairie dogs on farm and grazing operations. No disturbances are allowed during the burrowing owl nest season which runs from March 15th to October 31st.

This site is located in a Multiple-Objective Area (MOA). Prairie dog colonies with active burrowing owl nests will not be removed until at least three nesting seasons have passed without recurrent nesting. This period of inactivity reflects the strong nest-site fidelity exhibited by burrowing owls, as most territories are re-used within three years of previous occupation. Burrowing owl habitat in Boulder County is protected in a similar manner by other land management agencies in Boulder County, with the intent to provide comprehensive protections across contiguous lands.

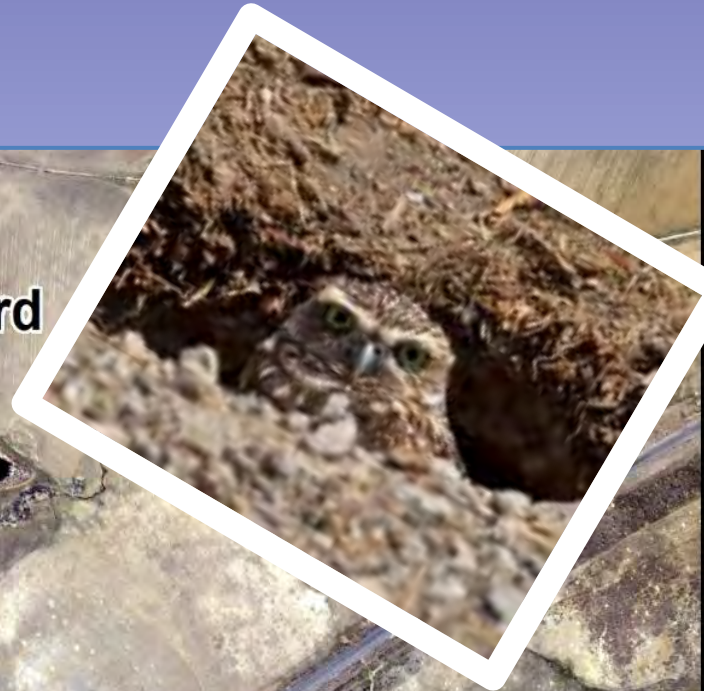
This plan clearly describes the restrictions to agricultural activities and where and when those restrictions apply. The map identifies the nest site. A buffer of 150 feet should be observed for restricted activities.

Cradleboard
Trail

Lac Amora
Link

Wildlife
Closure

Burrowing Owls-
Management 2019



- Trail Detour
- Trail Closed
- Trail Open
- Local Connector
- Roadway