

Annual Prairie Dog Meeting 2021

Tuesday, Dec. 14, 5 p.m.

**Boulder County Parks &
Open Space**



Tonight's Agenda

1. Introduction/Policy Context - Jeff 15 minutes
2. 2021 Prairie Dog Management Activities
 - a. Removal/Control – Rob 15 minutes
 - b. Other Activities – Susan 15 minutes
 - c. Questions on 2021 Management—10 minutes
3. Consideration of Removing Lethal Control
Moratorium Time Period from Management Plan
 - Staff Presentation, 15 minutes
 - Public Comments and Discussions
4. Wrap Up/Questions/Comments

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 governs our prairie dog management?

Prairie Dog Management Plan

- Originally approved in 1999
- Modified and amended over time to address new properties and considerations
- Needs to address full range of issues across the full spectrum of properties

What are the goals of that management?



- **Reflects the multiple values of the county and its residents**
 - **The maintenance of croplands for agriculture**
 - **The stewardship of natural areas and systems**

BCPOS Mission Statement

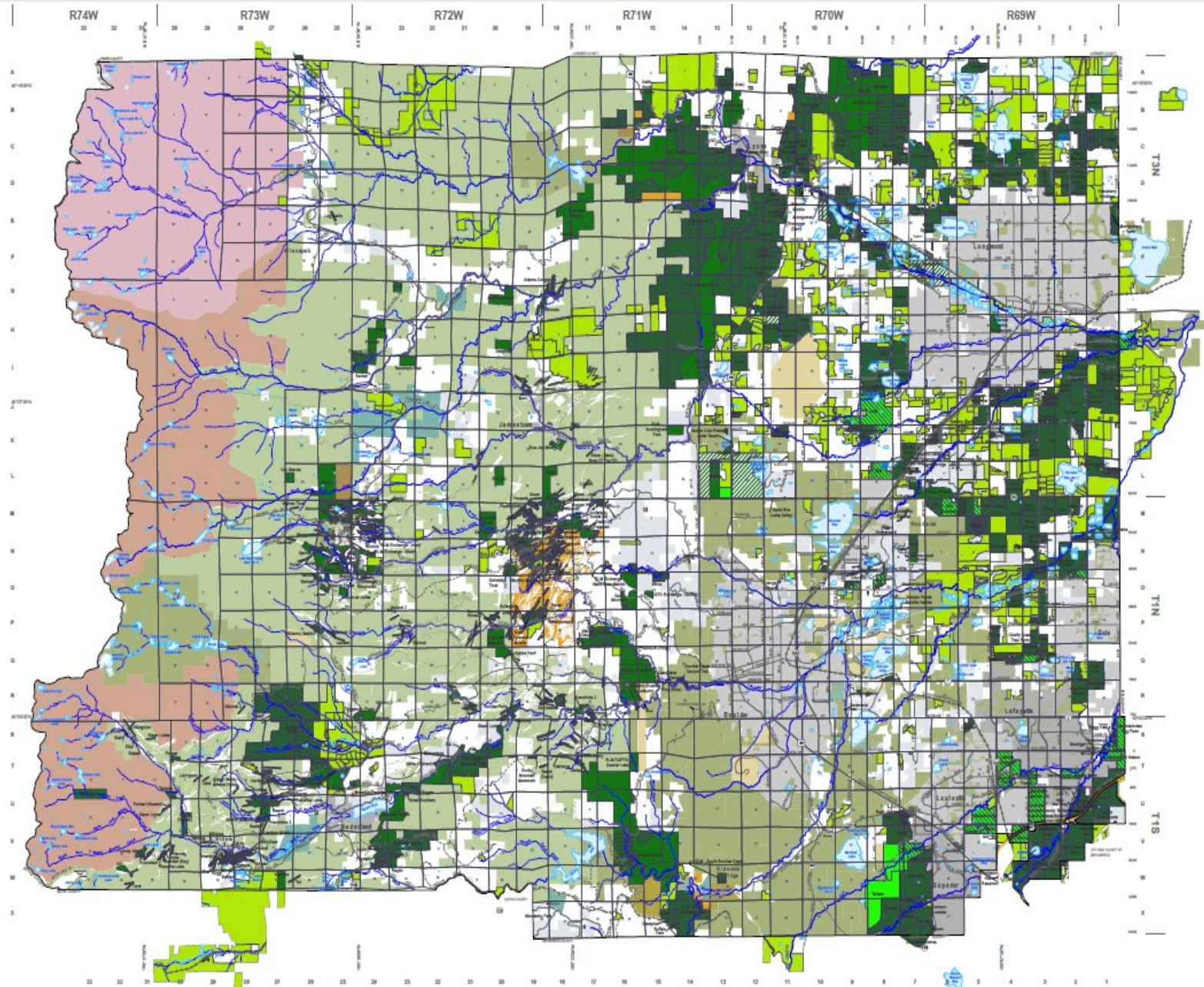
- To conserve natural, cultural, and agricultural resources and provide public uses that reflect sound resource management and community values.

Goals

1. To preserve rural lands and buffers
2. To preserve and restore natural resources for the benefit of the environment and the public.
3. To promote and provide for sustainable agriculture in Boulder County for the natural, cultural, and economic values it provides.

Open Space in Boulder County

October 2018



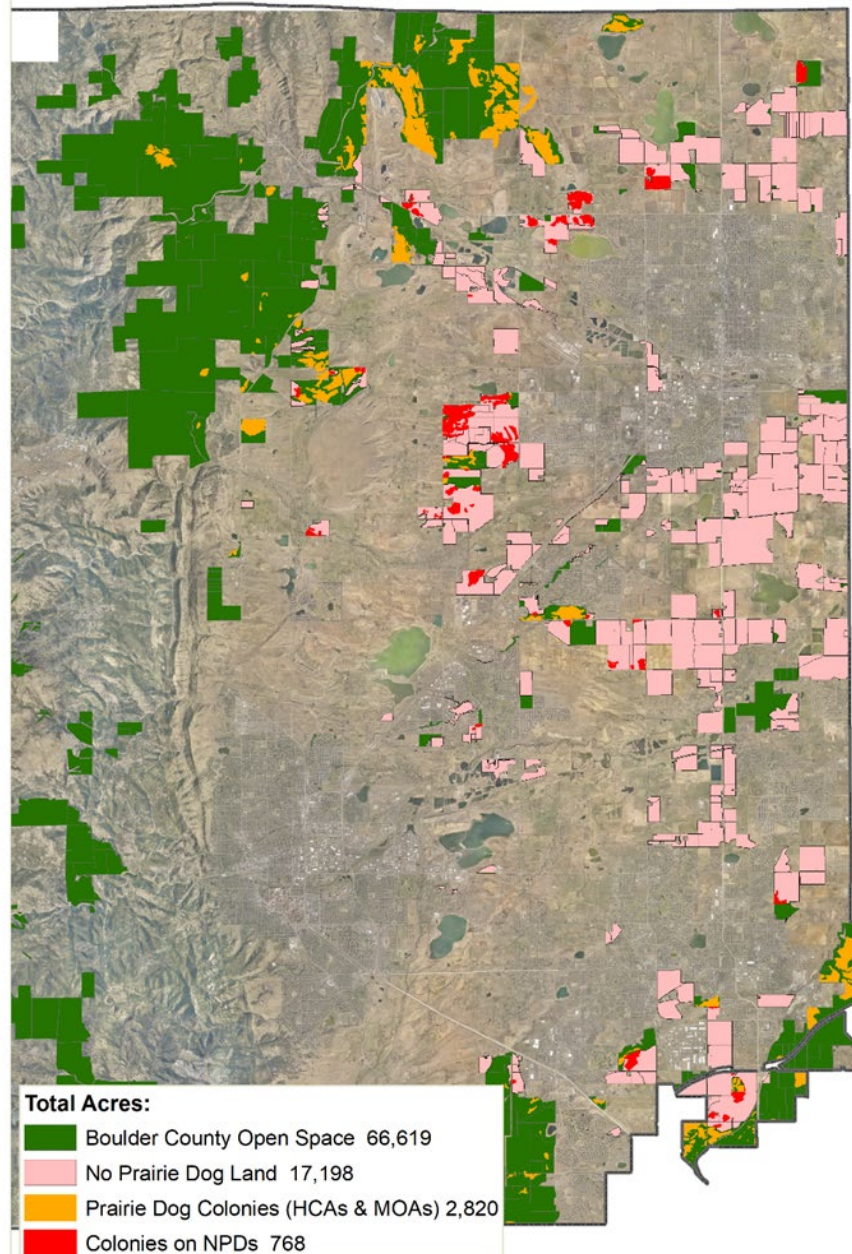
*For individual property access and use details contact Boulder County Parks and Open Space (303) 440-6000 or go to www.bouldercounty.gov/parksandopen.

DISCLAIMER: This map is for informational purposes only and is not intended to be used as a legal document. It is not a warranty, representation, or guarantee of any kind. The map is provided as a service to the public and is not intended to be used as a legal document. The map is provided as a service to the public and is not intended to be used as a legal document.

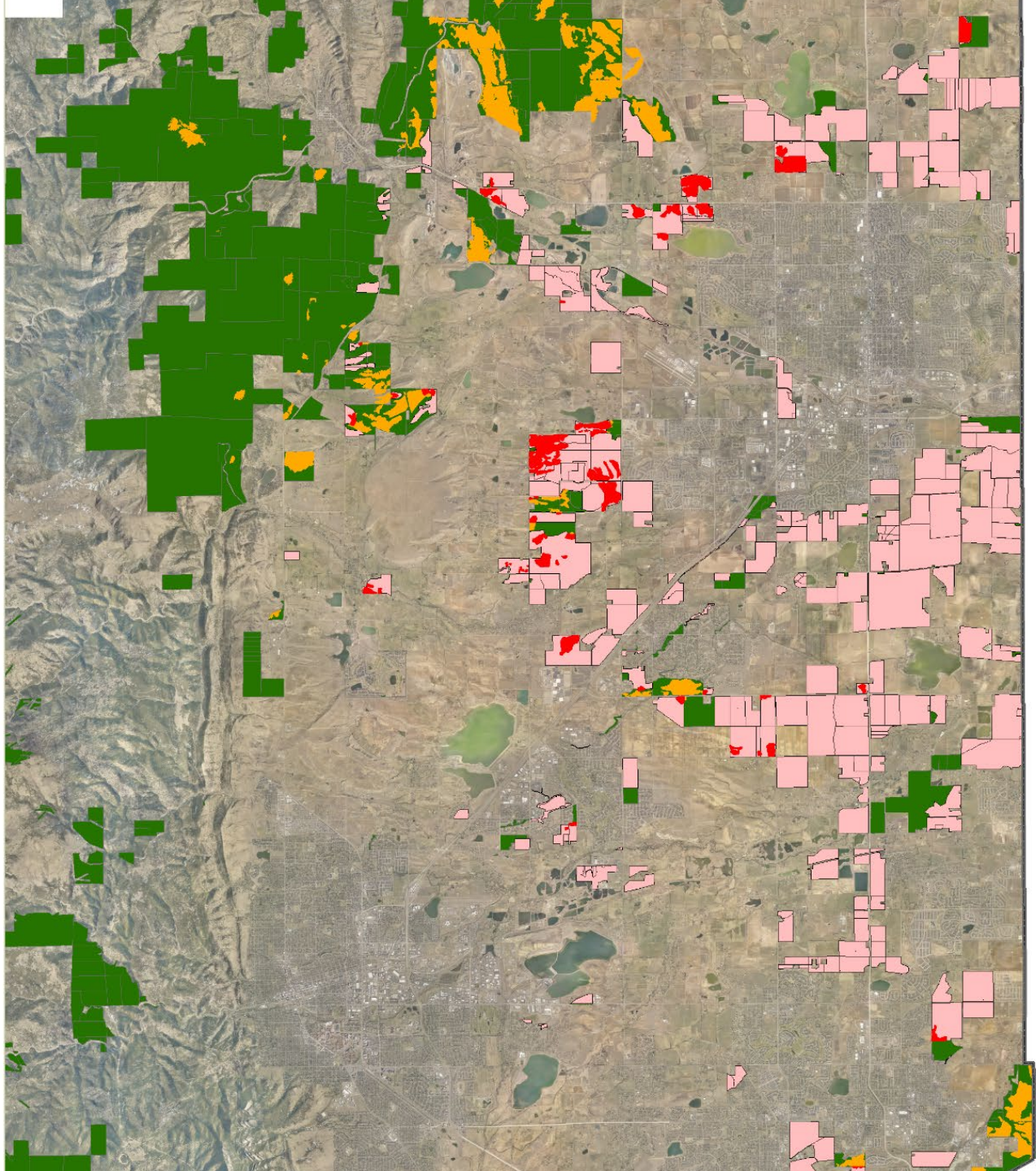
How do we manage our lands for that mix of purposes and uses?

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





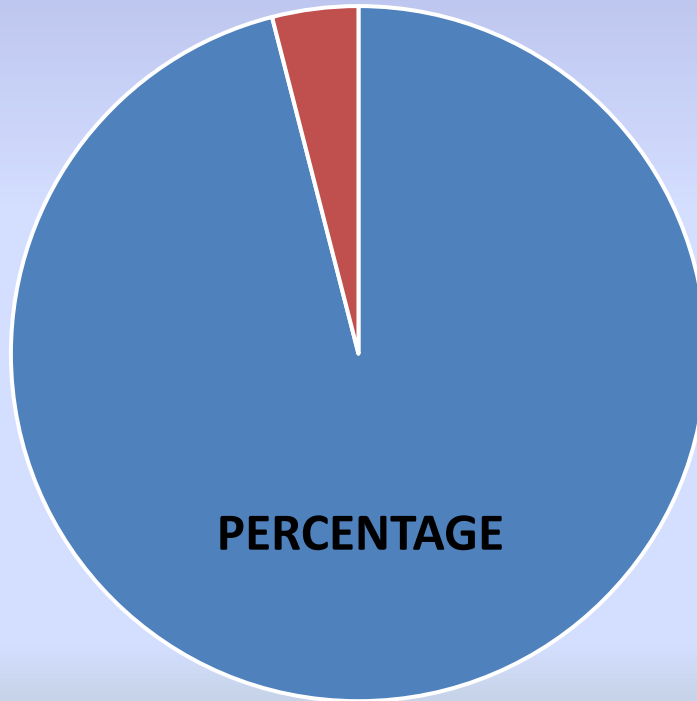
What
does that
look like?



2021 No Prairie Dog (NPD) Acreages

- 17,198 Acres

- 4.4% Occupied by Prairie Dogs



■ CLEAR ■ OCCUPIED

Summary of Removal Activities

- Removal occurred on 41 NPD properties
 - Tenants treated on 19 properties
- 29,678 burrows treated
 - 6099 by cartridges
 - 23,579 by compressed CO
 - Removal occurred on 318 acres
- 1499 animals trapped
 - 601 animals to BFF recovery
 - 898 animals to Raptor Rehab

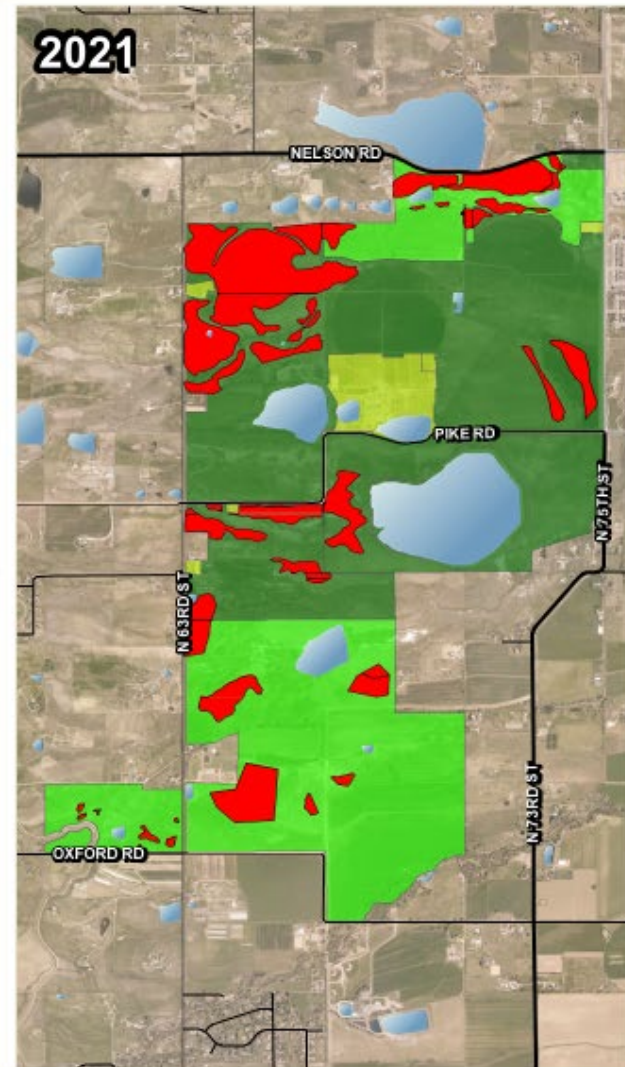
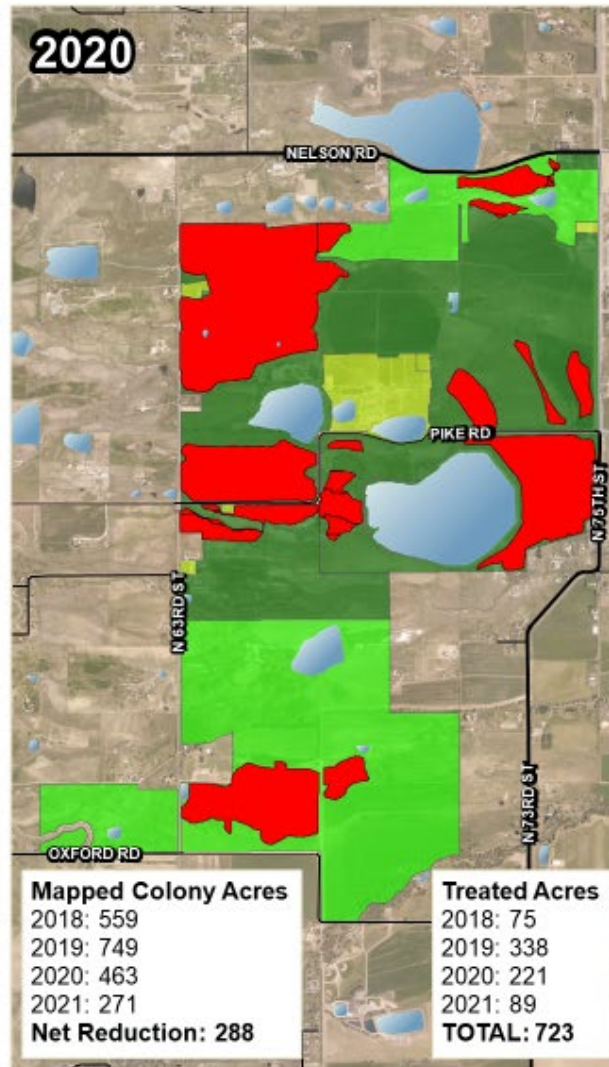
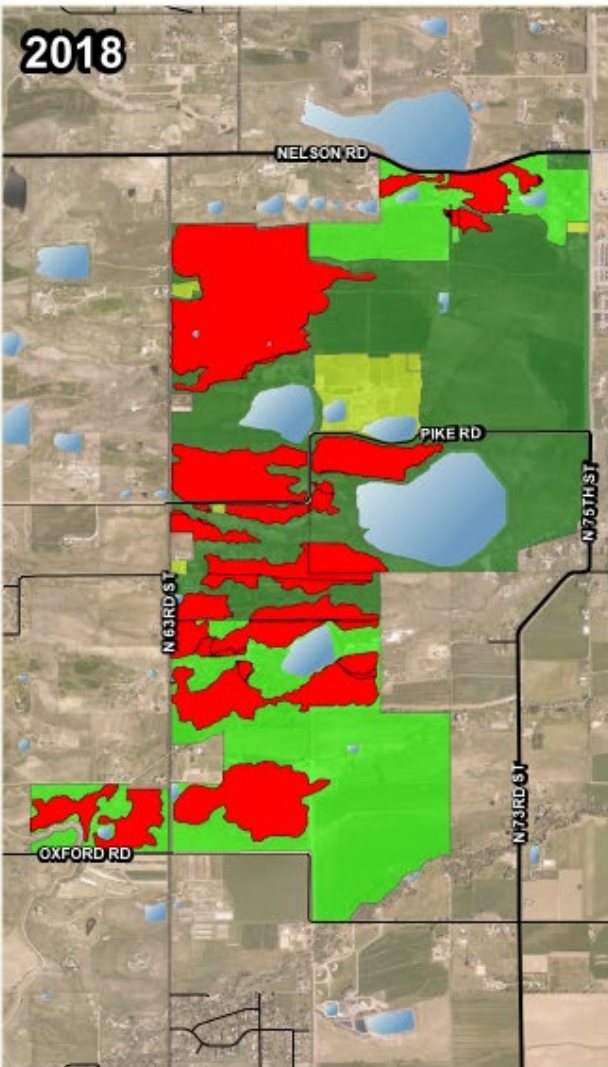
Example of Management through time: AHI

Prairie Dog Colonies: AHI Complex

2018

2020

2021



0 1/4 1
Miles

The map shows the AHI Complex and is not to be used for navigation. The map is for informational purposes only. The map is not to be used for navigation. The map is for informational purposes only.



Prairie Dog Stakeholders' Meeting 2021 Update



Stakeholders' Meeting- 2021 Overview

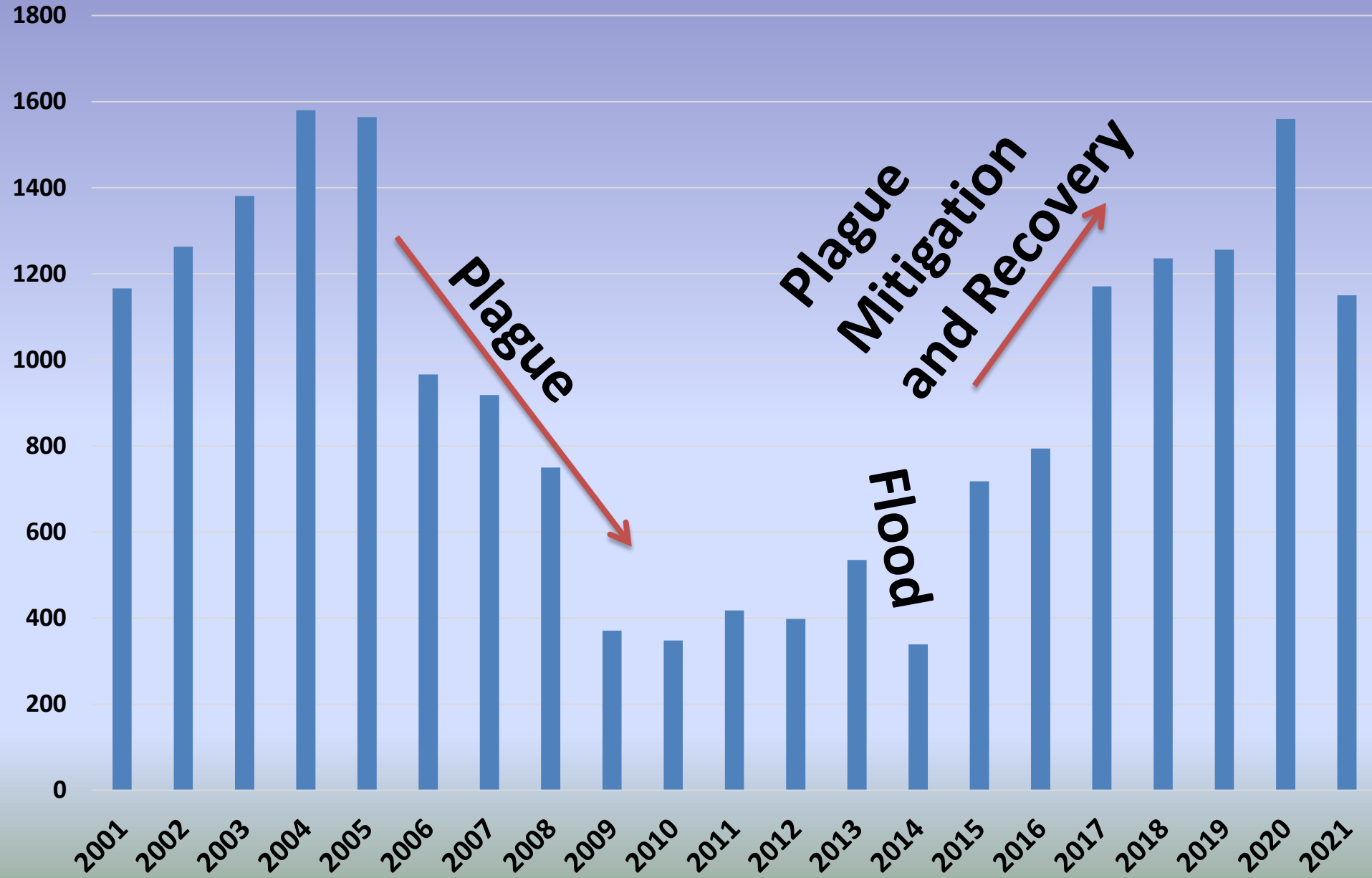
- **Colonized Acres of
Prairie Dogs
-MOA and HCA**
- **Barrier Fencing**
- **Burrowing Owls**
- **Black-Footed Ferret
Reintroduction**



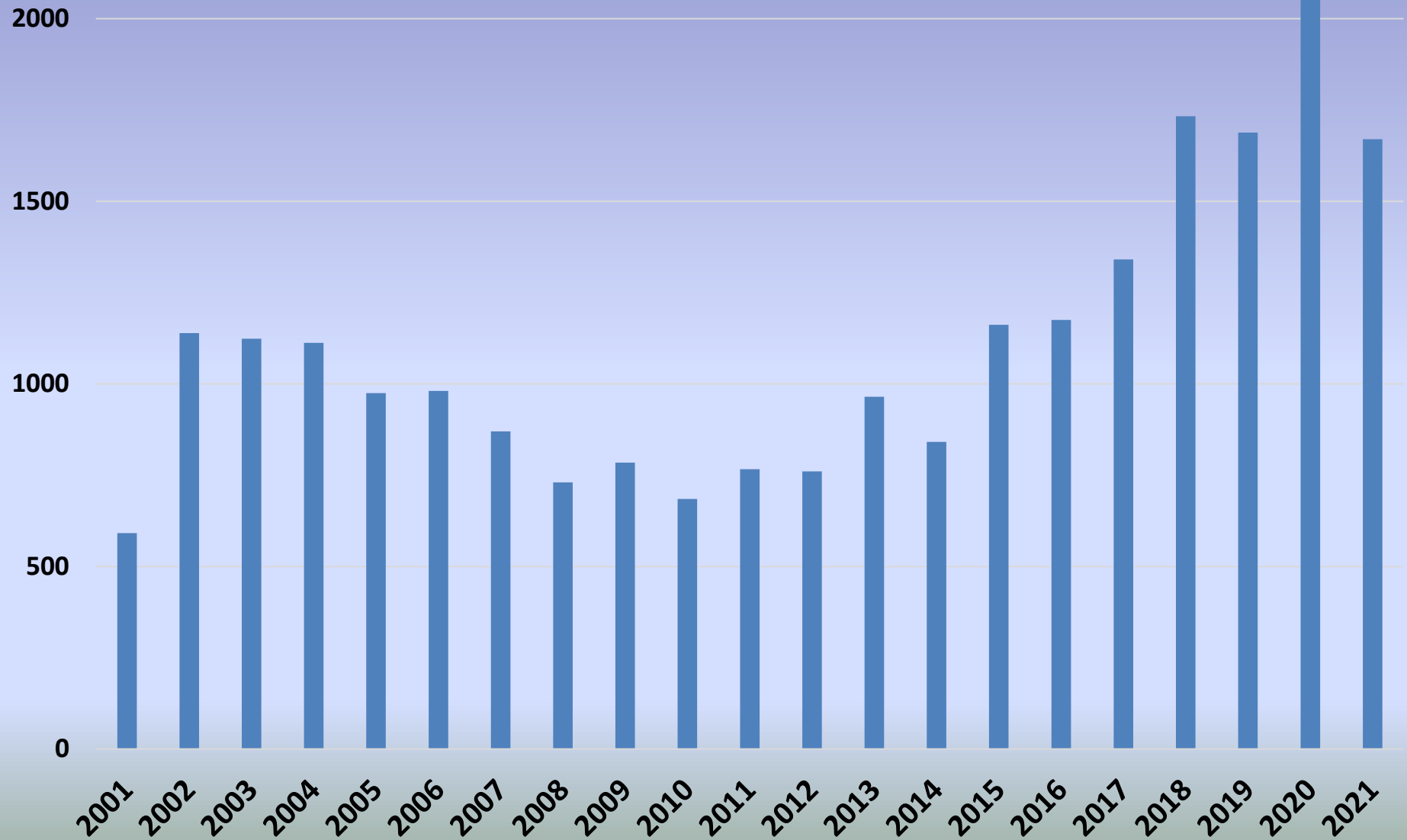
Occupied Prairie Dog Colony Size Per Property Designation Type- 2017 - 2021

Property Type Suitable Acres		2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
HCA	3,700	1,171	1,236	1,256	1,560	1,150
MOA	4,520	1,341	1,733	1,688	2,111	1,670
Totals	8,220	2,453	2,970	2,944	3,671	2,820

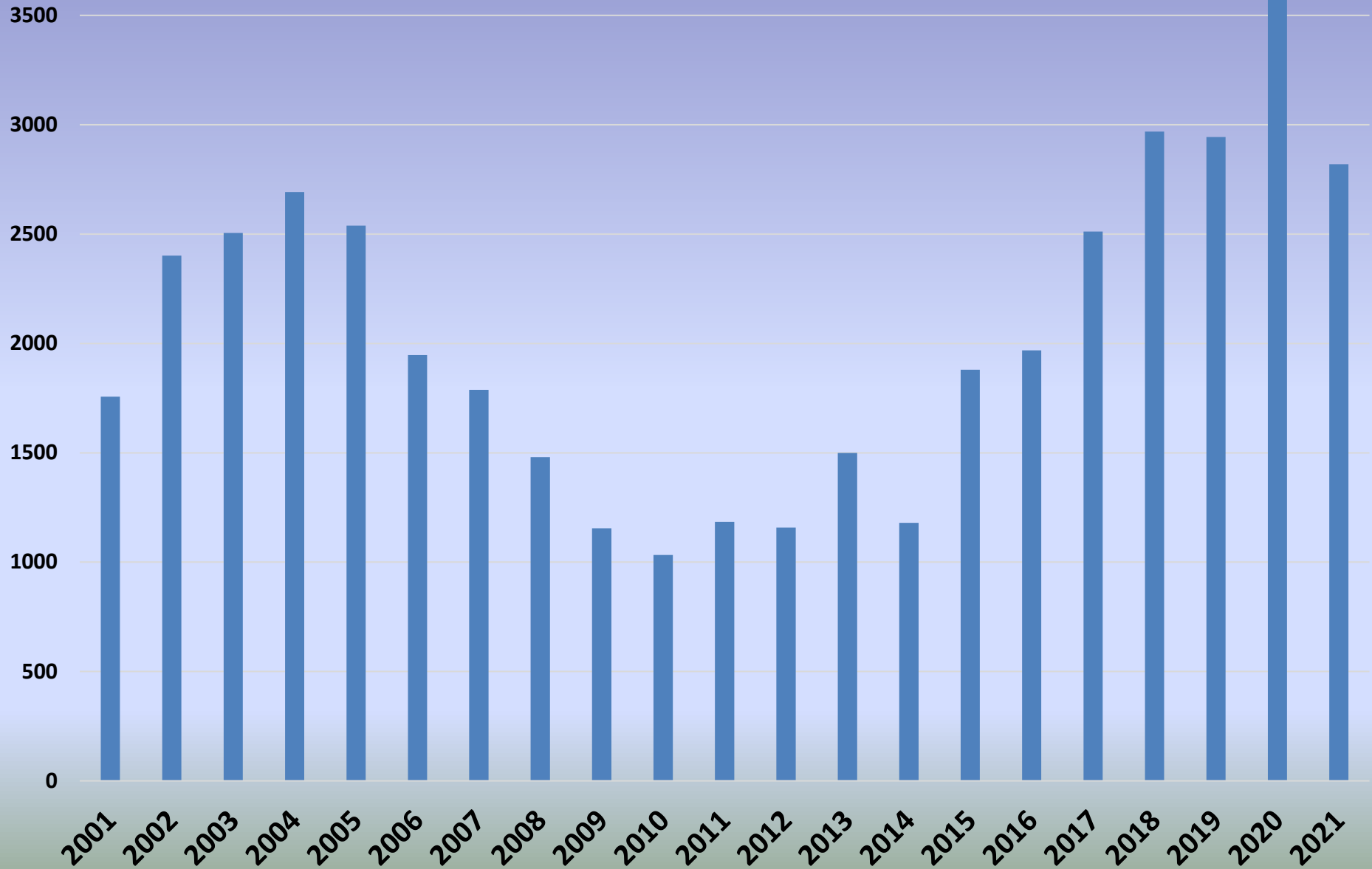
HCA Colonized Acres 2001-2021



MOA Colonized Acres 2001-2021



HCA + MOA Colonized Acres 2001-2021



Prairie Dog Barrier Fencing 2021



- Non-lethal Method to mitigate conflict.
- Installed by Volunteers, Neighbors and/or Staff



Prairie Dog Barrier Fencing 2021

Neighbors:

- 650' installed due to neighbor issues



Prairie Dog Barrier Fencing 2021

Agricultural Conflicts

- Installed 6,475'

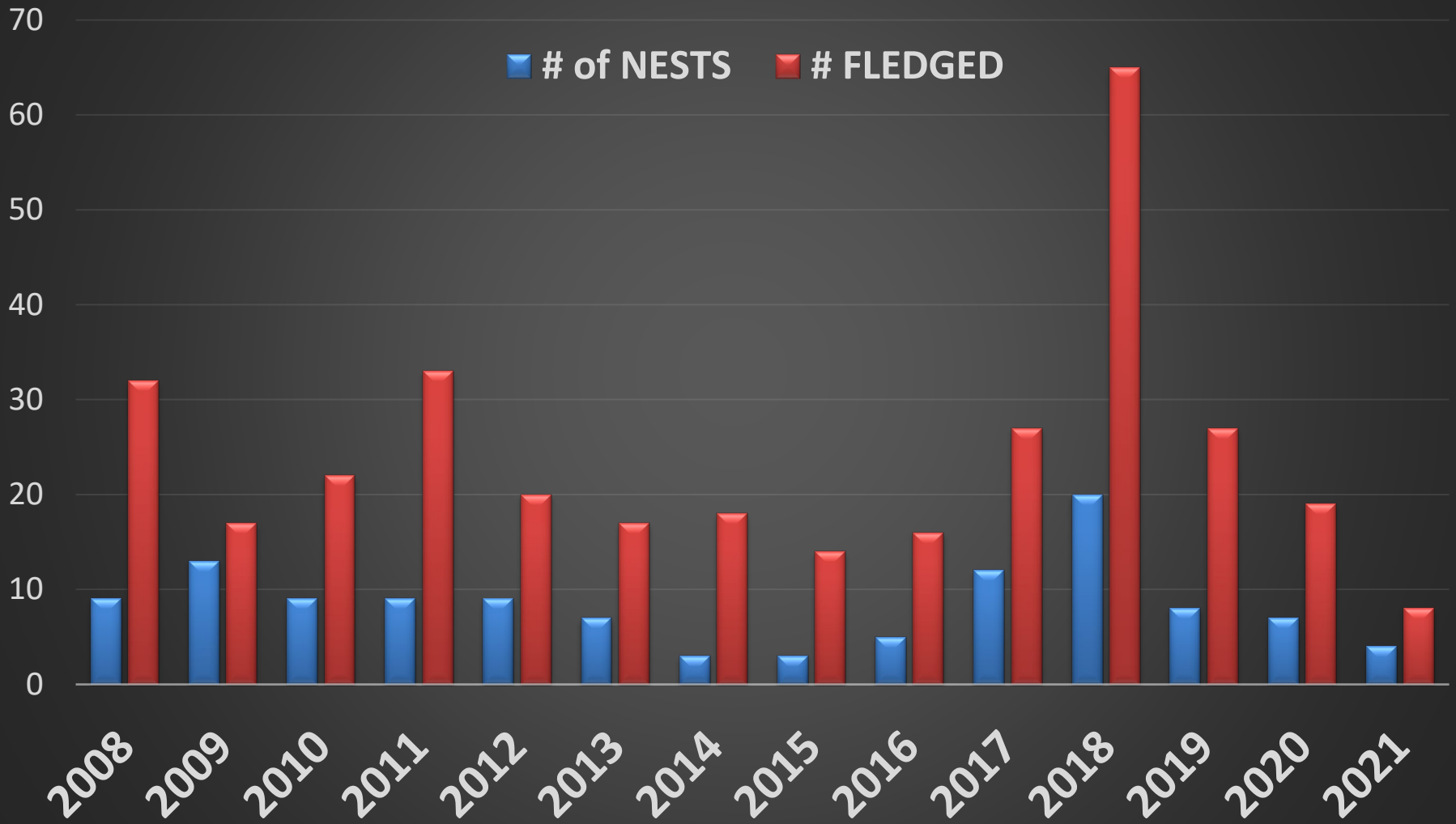


Burrowing Owls 2021

BCPOS and OSMP



BCPOS and OSMP Annual Burrowing Owl Nesting Totals 2008-2021



Burrowing Owls- Management 2021

- **Volunteer Monitoring**
- **Owl Protection Plans**

29 Volunteers
685 Hours Total
270 Hours
Surveying





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 (NPD).



Photo: Howard Witkin- BCPOS Volunteer

Black-Footed Ferret Reintroduction Progress



Credit: M. Lockhart/USFWS



Credit: R. Reading

Plague Abatement Strategies

- **Delta Dust** used on BCPOS colonies within the South County Grasslands and Rabbit Mountain 2016-2021*



2021 Sylvatic Plague Vaccine (SPV)



- **South Grasslands**
 - **~52 Acres**
- **Rabbit Mountain**
 - **1,096 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

2021- \$21,286

South Grassland and Rabbit
SPV, bait matrix and Dust

Current Annual Material Costs Only

SPV ~ \$20,000

Dust ~ \$2,500

**Total costs will increase as colonies grow*

TOTAL = \$103,361 to date

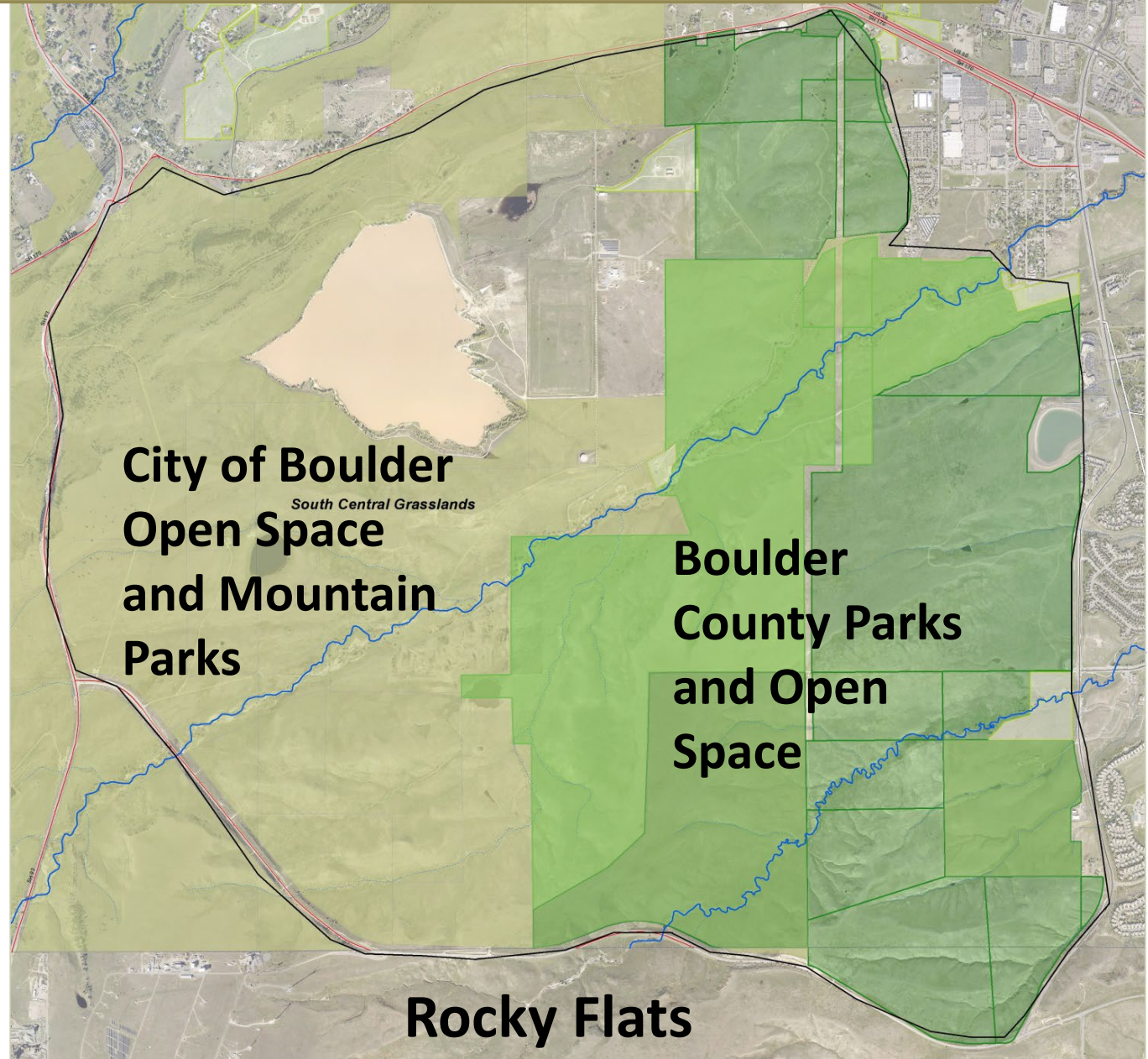


Photo: Steve Jones

South Central Grasslands HCA

**6,700
Total
Acres**

**~1,800
Suitable
Acres**

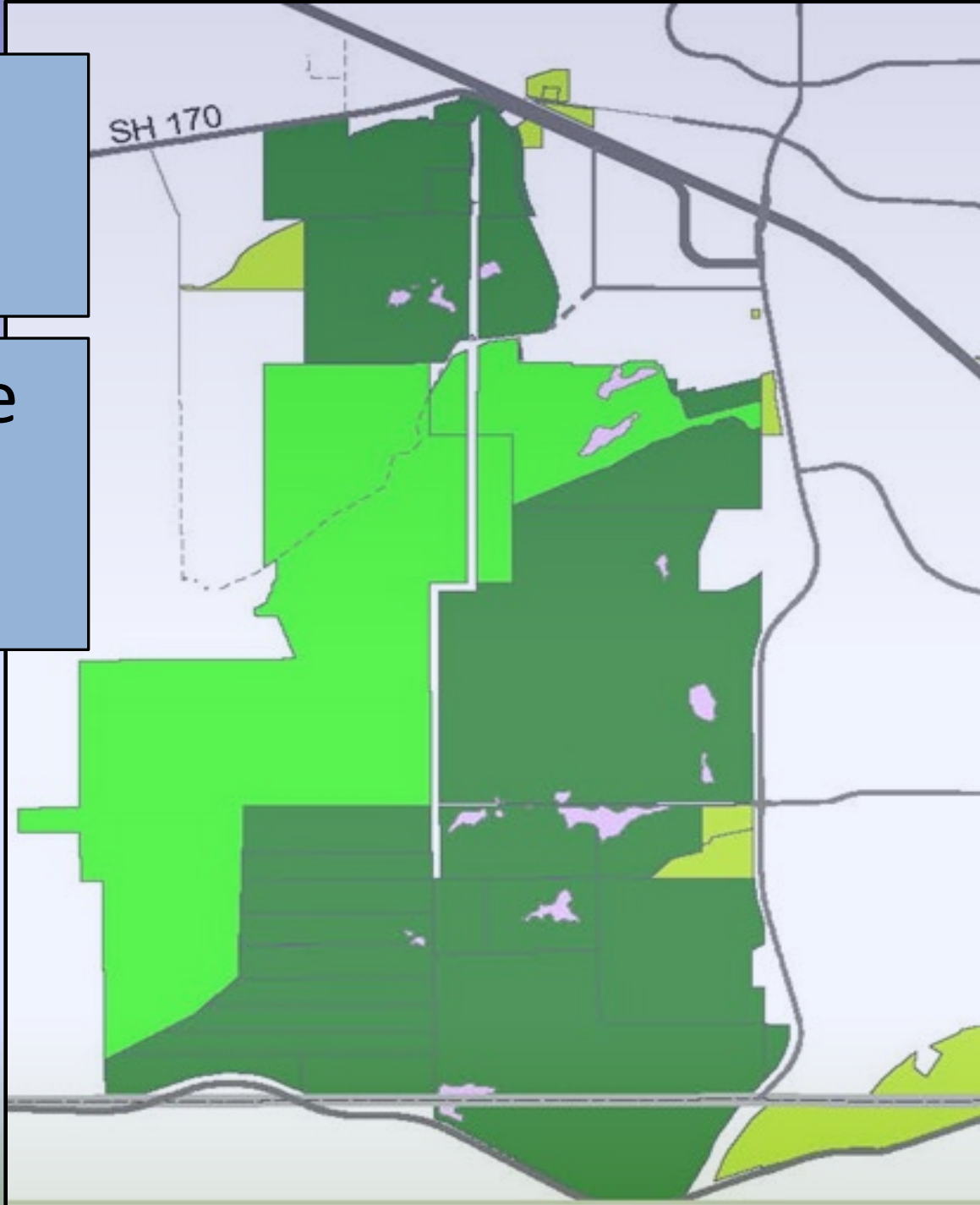


- **City of Boulder Open Space (OSMP)**
- **Boulder County Open Space**
- **Rocky Flats**
~14,000 Acres

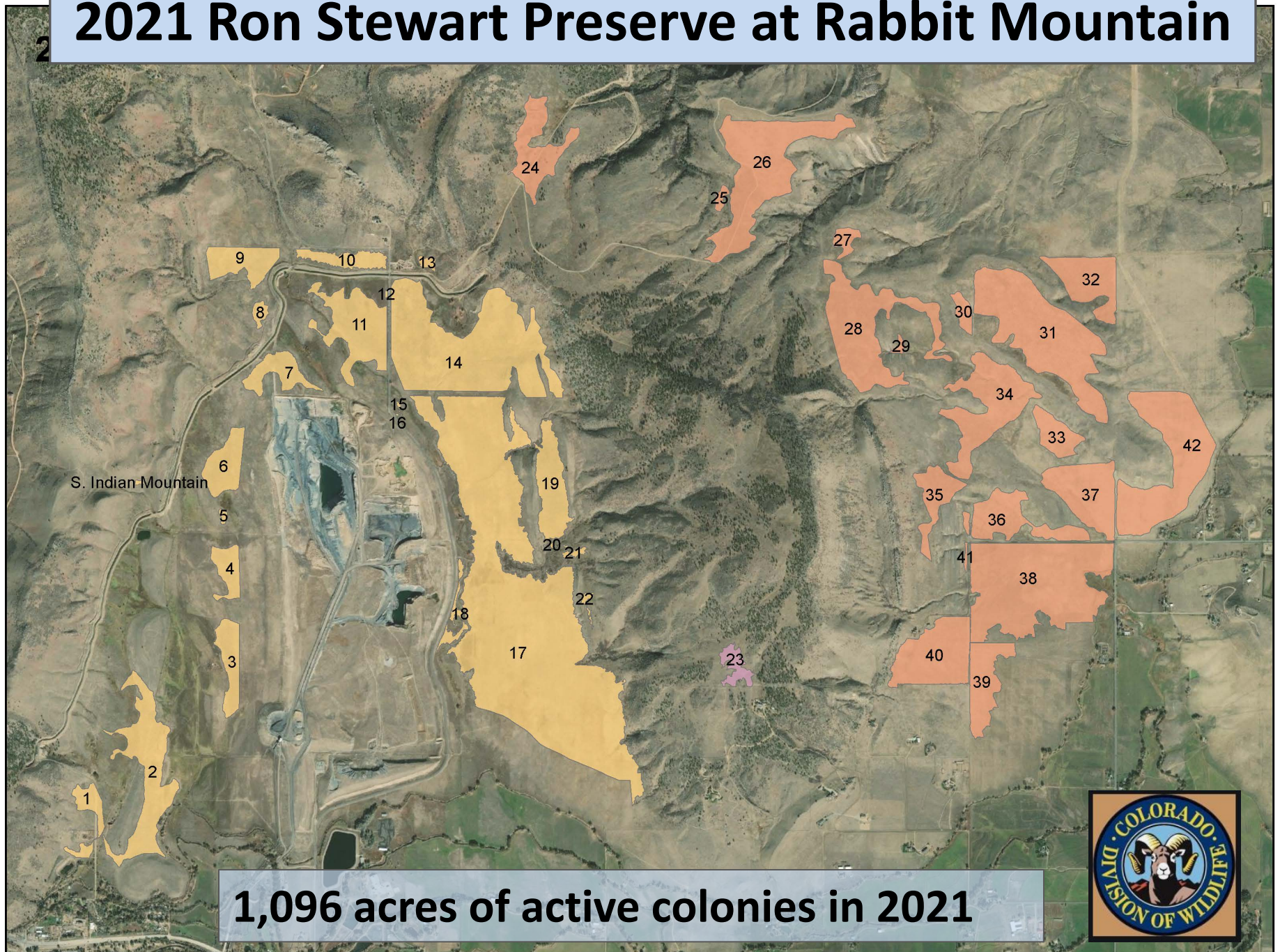


South County Grasslands- 2021

52 Acres of Active
Prairie Dog
Colonies



2021 Ron Stewart Preserve at Rabbit Mountain



1,096 acres of active colonies in 2021



Carolyn Holmberg Preserve at Rock Creek Farm- Management Plan Update



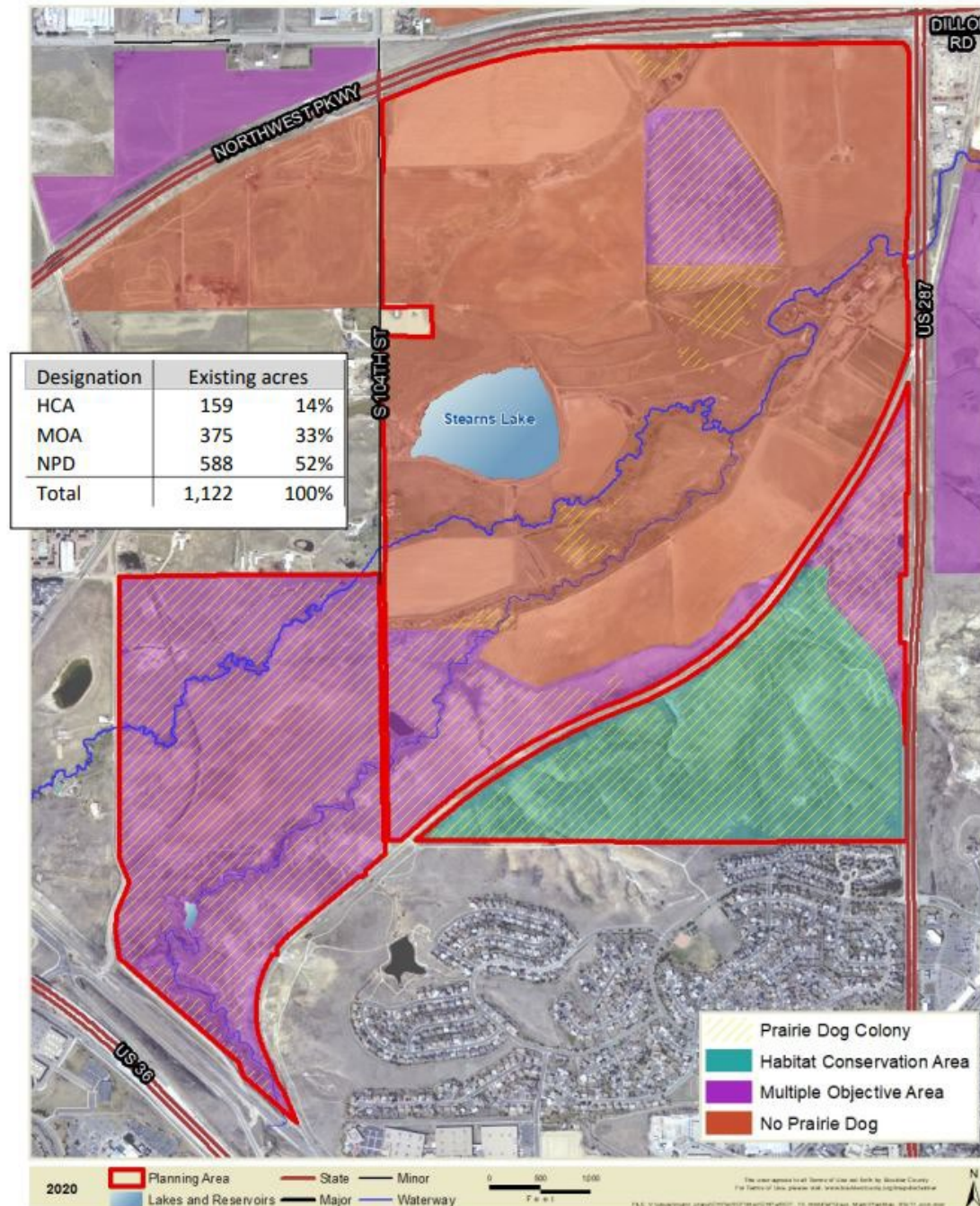
Carolyn Holmberg Preserve at Rock Creek Farm Management Plan 2020 Update

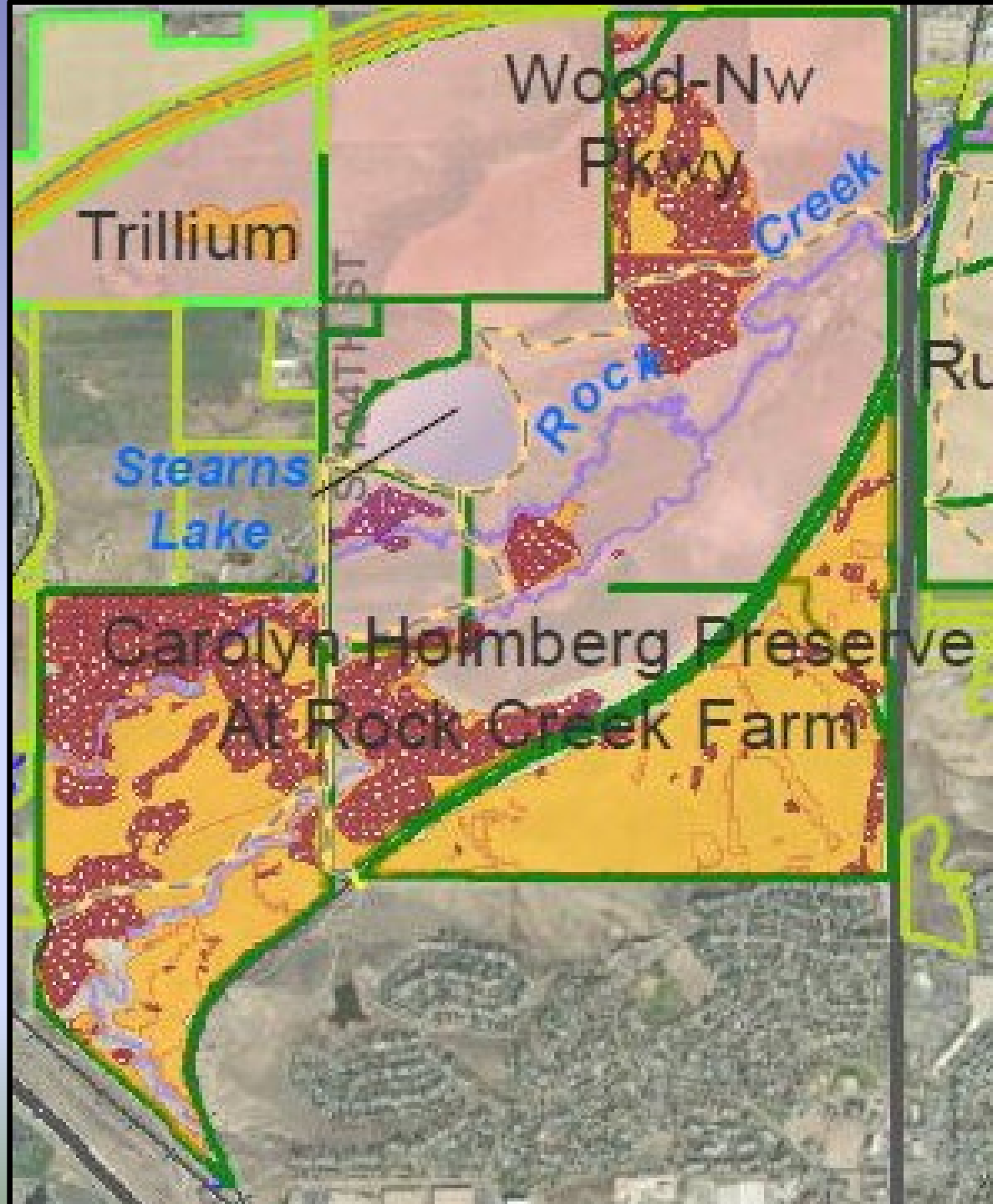


CHP @ RCF Management Plan: Prairie Dogs



Parks &
Open Space







Questions about 2021 management?



Consideration of Removing Lethal Control Moratorium Time Period from Management Plan

Lethal Control Moratorium

Lethal control moratorium language from current plan

Section 8.3.3. Extermination

Exterminations will not occur during the pup-rearing time period of March 1- May 31 annually. This timeframe was selected to capture the peak rearing season to limit the potential of young being left unattended in the burrows. The exception will be in cases where dispersing individuals attempt to colonize an NPD without prairie dogs. If these areas are free of prairie dogs as of March 1 of each year, direct lethal control may be used to prevent recolonization during this time period.

Lethal Control Moratorium

Removal of the moratorium would:

- 1. Result in fewer prairie dog deaths due to better overall control**
- 2. Reduce on-going impacts to ag properties and tenants**

Lethal Control Moratorium

Given current staffing and resources, staff has not been able to successfully clear NPD areas with the moratorium

Staff request will be to lift the moratorium

The public process for this proposed change will begin Wednesday, Dec. 15, with a public comment form on <https://www.bouldercounty.org/open-space/management/prairie-dogs/>

This item is scheduled to be presented to the Parks & Open Space Advisory Committee on Thursday, Jan. 27, followed by a presentation to the Board of County Commissioners at a date to be determined.

Questions?

