

Annual Prairie Dog Meeting 2023 Overview

Thursday, December 7, 5:30 p.m.

**Boulder County Parks &
Open Space**



Tonight's Agenda

Introduction/Policy Context

2023 Prairie Dog Management Activities

- Agricultural Focused Management
- Conservation Focused Actions
- Special Projects

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.

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

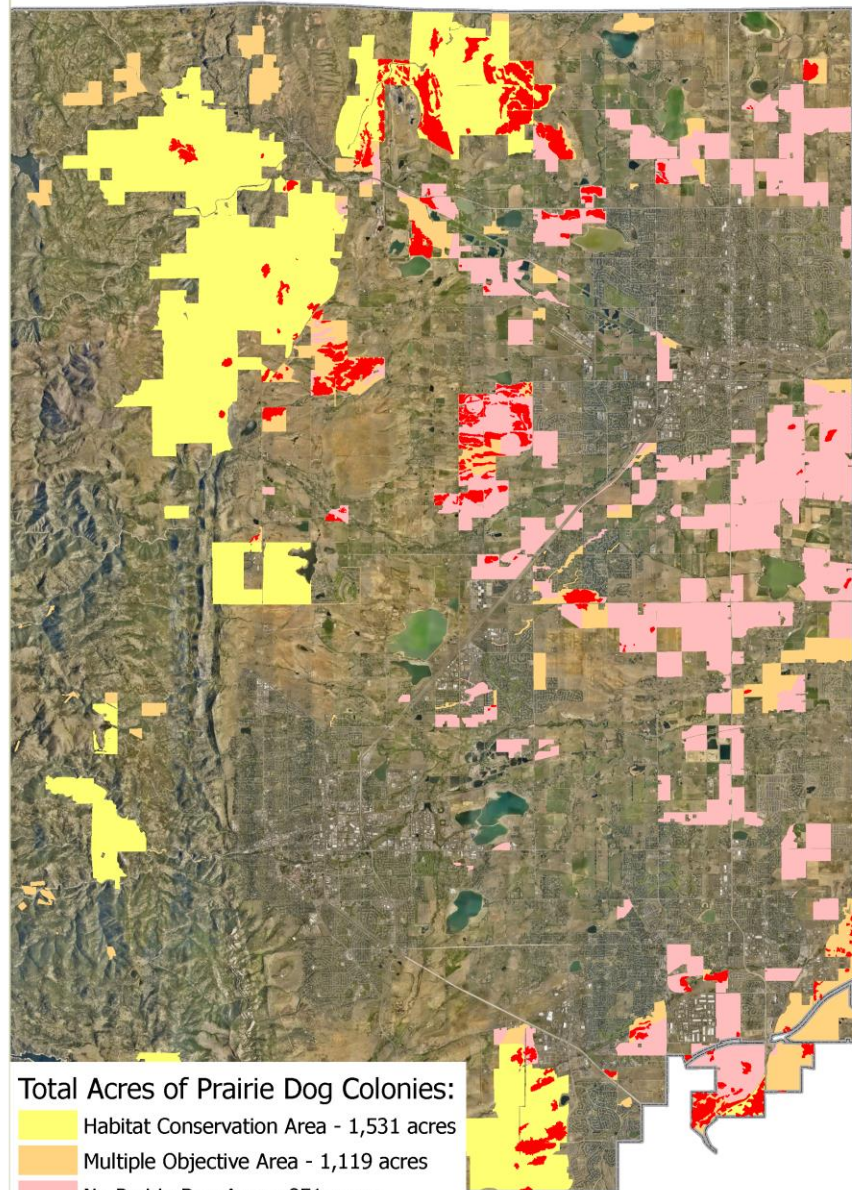
- To conserve natural, cultural, and agricultural resources and provide public uses that reflect sound resource management and community values.

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.

October 2018

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- **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?

Prairie Dog Control on Agricultural Properties

Barrier Fencing

Trapping and Removal

Lethal control



Prairie Dog Barrier Fencing 2023

Prairie Dog Visual Barrier 2023



**952 feet installed
by staff**



Prairie Dog Barrier Fencing 2023

**12,418 feet installed on 10 properties
by staff, youth corps, and volunteers**



Prairie Dog Barrier Fencing 2023



Prairie Dog Barrier Fencing 2023



Trapping and Removal

- 12 properties
- 1490 animals
 - 649 to Black Footed Ferret Recovery
 - 841 to Raptor Rehab



6.1 Prairie Dog Habitat Conservation Areas (HCA)

Habitat Conservation Areas form the foundation of the prairie dog conservation strategy. HCAs will ideally allow prairie dogs to function with minimal human intervention without causing or experiencing impacts to or from adjacent land uses. HCAs will be managed so that prairie dogs may undergo natural processes of expansion and decline. These areas ideally will have appropriate soils, vegetation, slope, natural or man-made barriers and sufficiently large acreage to support prairie dog colonies and associated species over time. Prairie dogs will exist essentially undisturbed in an HCA to the extent it is ecologically or reasonably possible. Effects of prairie dog occupation will be monitored and evaluated annually. Non-lethal and lethal control may be implemented on HCAs if deemed necessary. Factors that may prompt control methods may include encroachment onto adjacent properties, or grassland restoration.

9 Prairie Dog Removal and Control

BCPOS staff will establish priorities for prairie dog removal on an annual basis. Notification will be made of any prairie dog management activities planned for colonies near trails on BCPOS properties. Signs will be posted at trailheads one week ahead of any action.

Trapping and Removal

Timing

- dates for trapping are set by CPW

Number of traps

- 5 – 15 % trap rate

Black Footed Ferret Recovery (USFWS)

- Most animals are euthanized
- Small number keep the burrows viable

Raptor Recovery

- All animals are euthanized prior to delivery



Lethal Control

- 19,633 burrows on 32 properties
- 328 acres treated
- 2 tenants treated on 2 properties

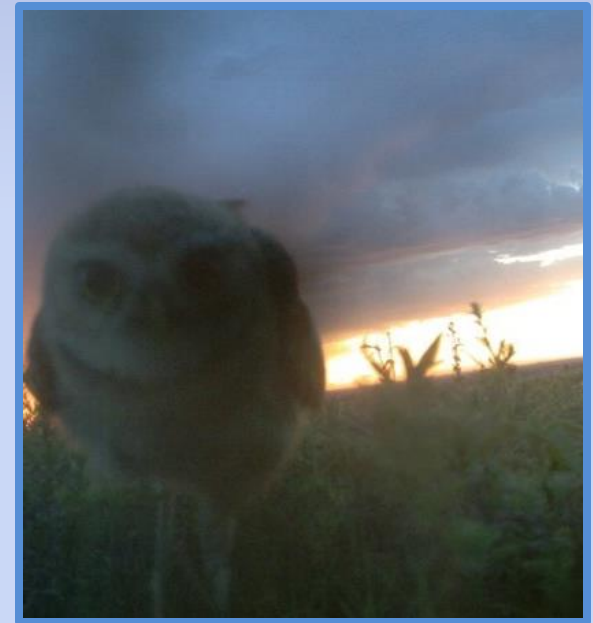


Prairie Dog Stakeholders' Meeting 2023 Update



Conservation Focused Management 2023 Overview

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



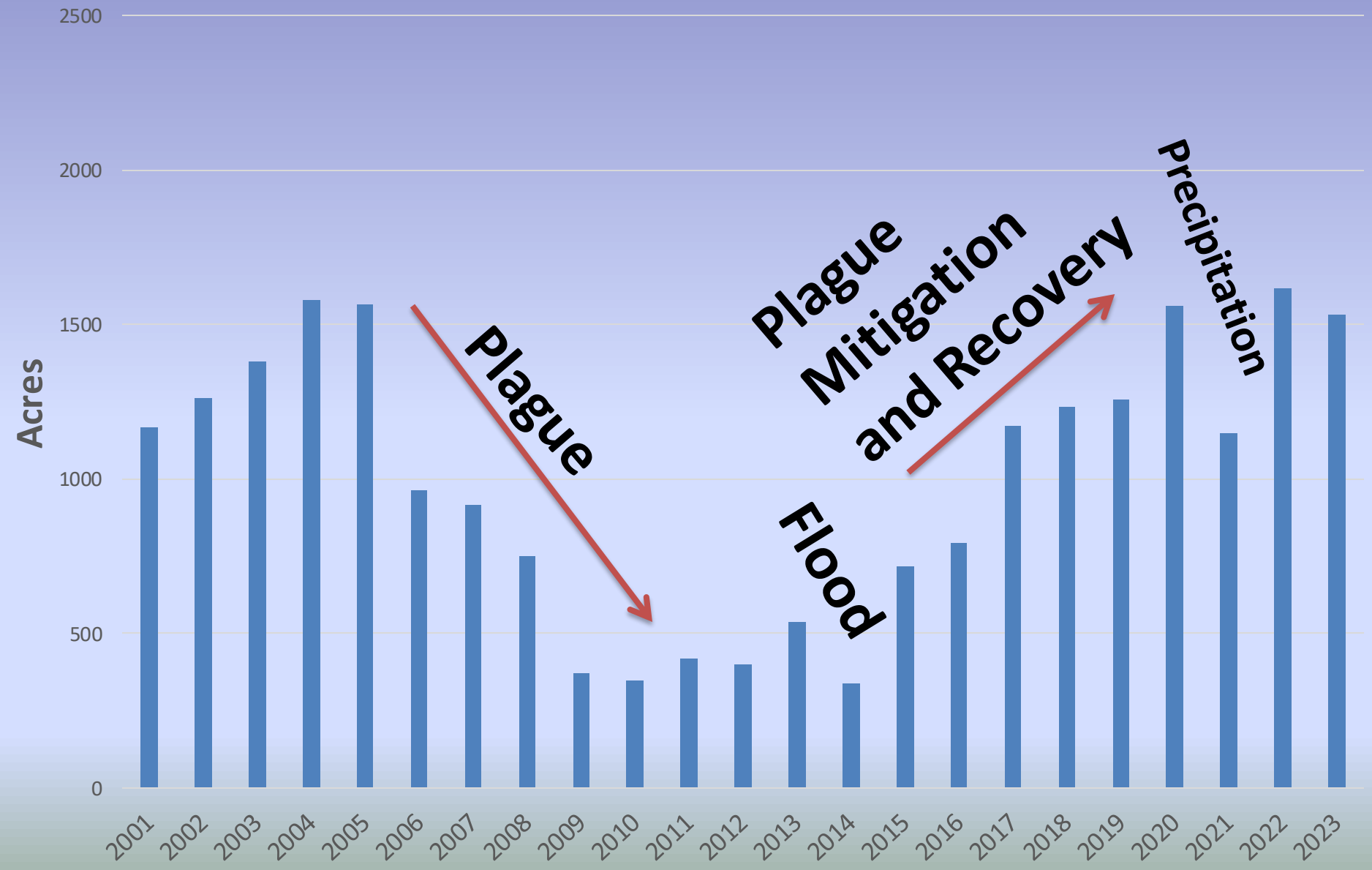
Occupied Prairie Dog Colony Size

Per Property Designation Type: 2017 - 2023

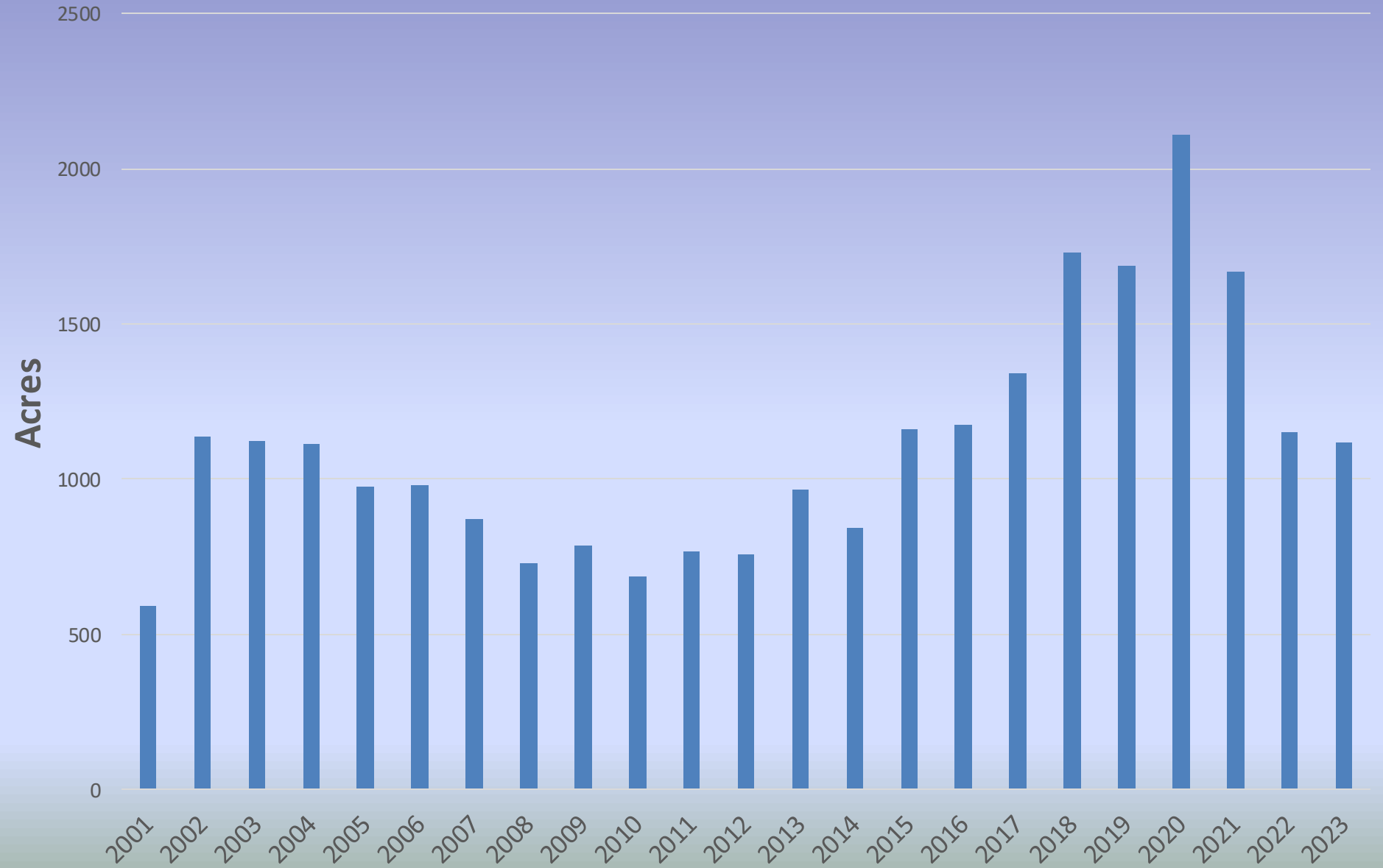
Property Type - Suitable Acres		2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
HCA	3,700	1,171	1,236	1,256	1,560	1,150	1,616	1,531
MOA	4,520	1,341	1,733	1,688	2,111	1,670	1,153*	1,119
Total	8,220	2,453	2,970	2,944	3,671	2,820	2,769	2,650

*113 acres of irrigated agricultural NPD are currently considered as MOA due to sensitive species.

HCA Colonized Acres 2001-2023



MOA Colonized Acres 2001-2023



Burrowing Owls 2023



Photo by Chandni Rajesh

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 2016-2023*



2023 Sylvatic Plague Vaccine (SPV)



- **South County Grasslands**
 - **229 Acres treated**
 - **11 staff**
 - **44 hours**
- **Rabbit Mountain**
 - **1378 Acres treated**
 - **21 staff**
 - **131 hours**

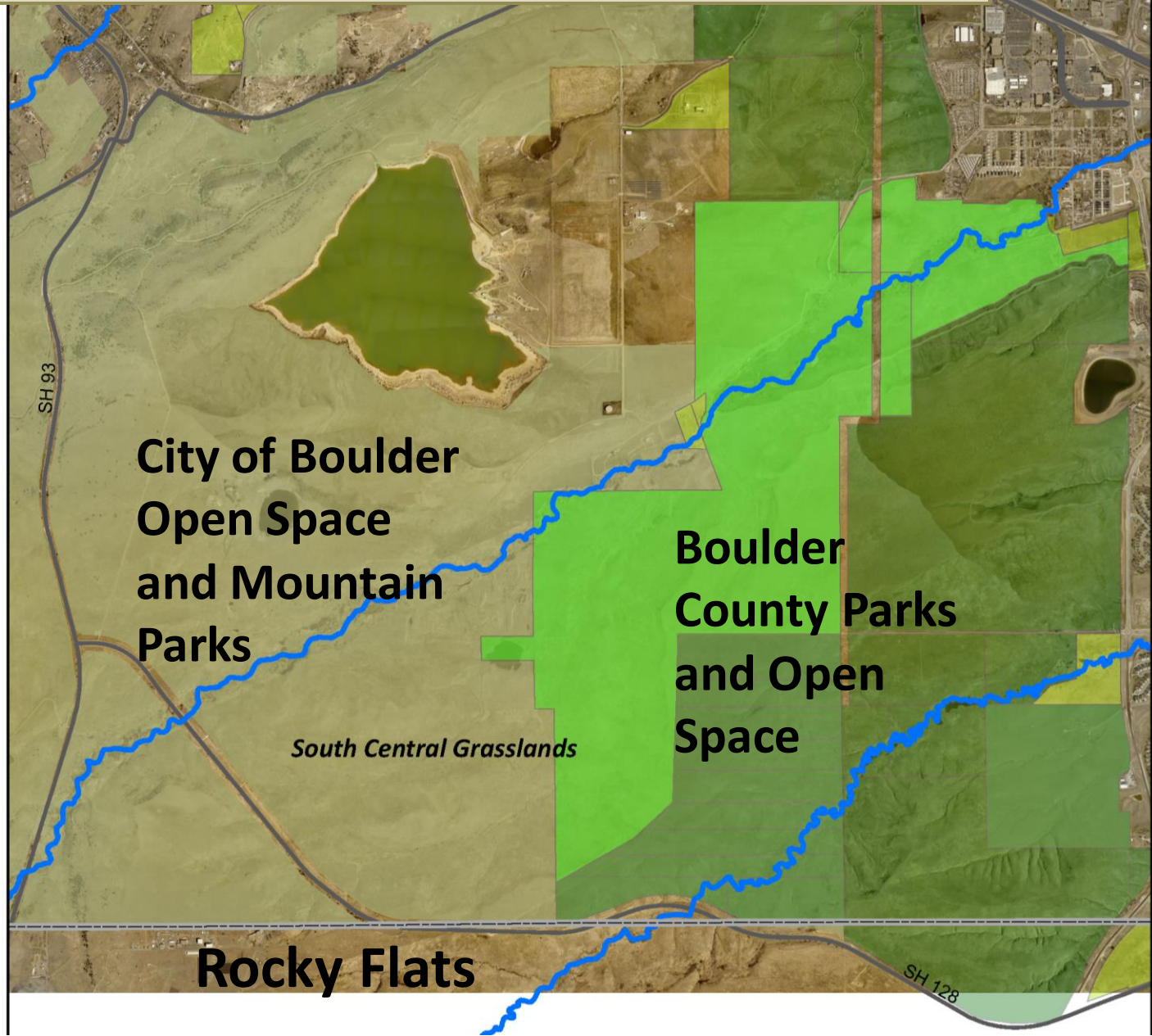
SPV and Dusting Annual Costs

Year	Property(s)	Cost	Note
2016	SE Grasslands only	\$3,600.00	SPV and Dust donated by CPW
2017	SE Grasslands and Rabbit Mtn	\$19,100.00	SPV and Dust
2018	" "	\$22,375.00	SPV and Dust
2019	" "	\$15,100.00	SPV Only
2020	" "	\$17,500.00	SPV and Dust
2021	" "	\$21,286.00	SPV, Bait Matrix, and Dust
2022	" "	\$26,120.00	SPV, Bait Matrix, and Dust
2023	" "	\$23,880.00	SPV and Bait Matrix (no dust)
		Total Cost = \$148,961	

South Central Grasslands HCA

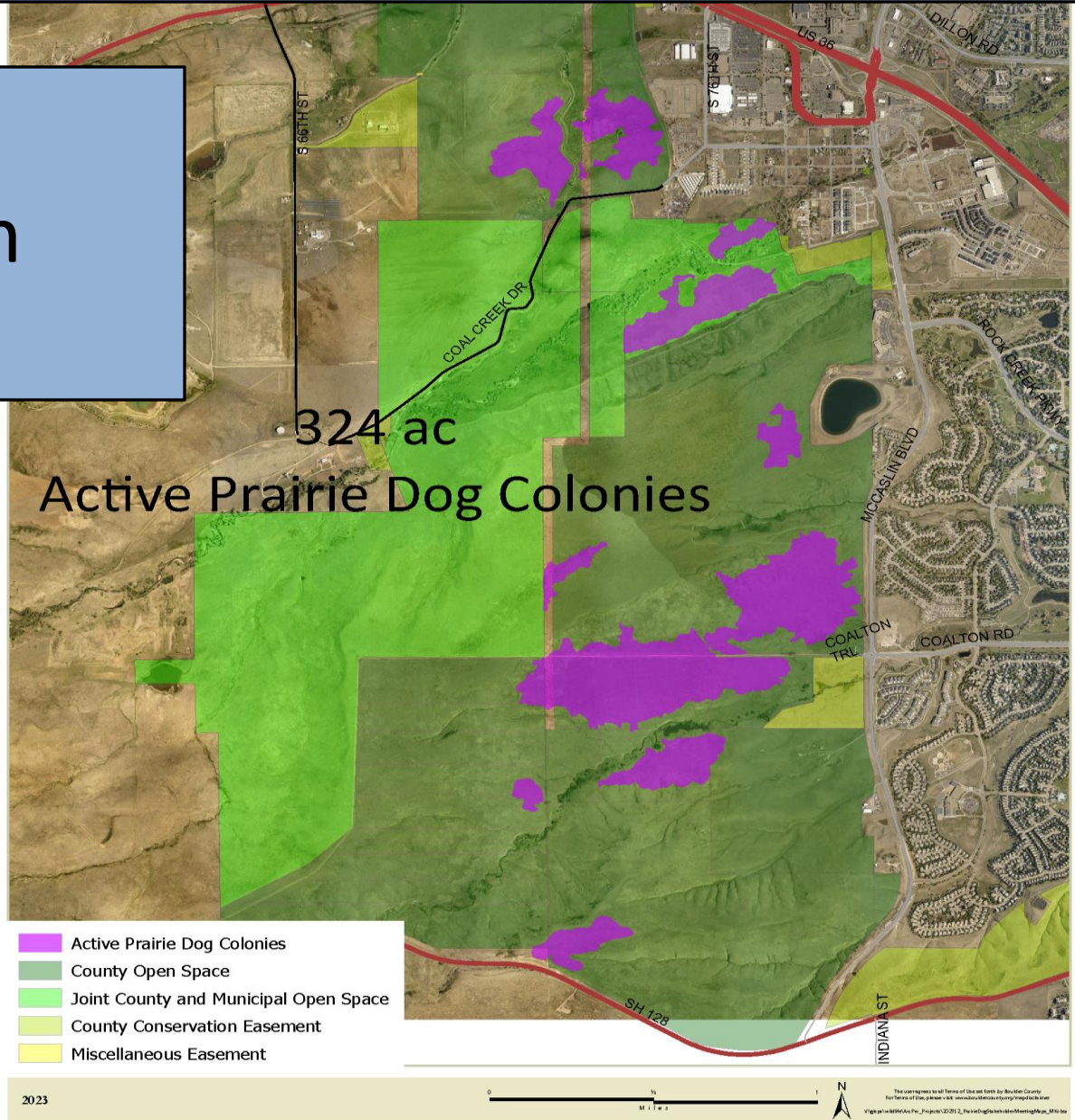
6,700
Total
Acres

~1,800
Suitable
Acres



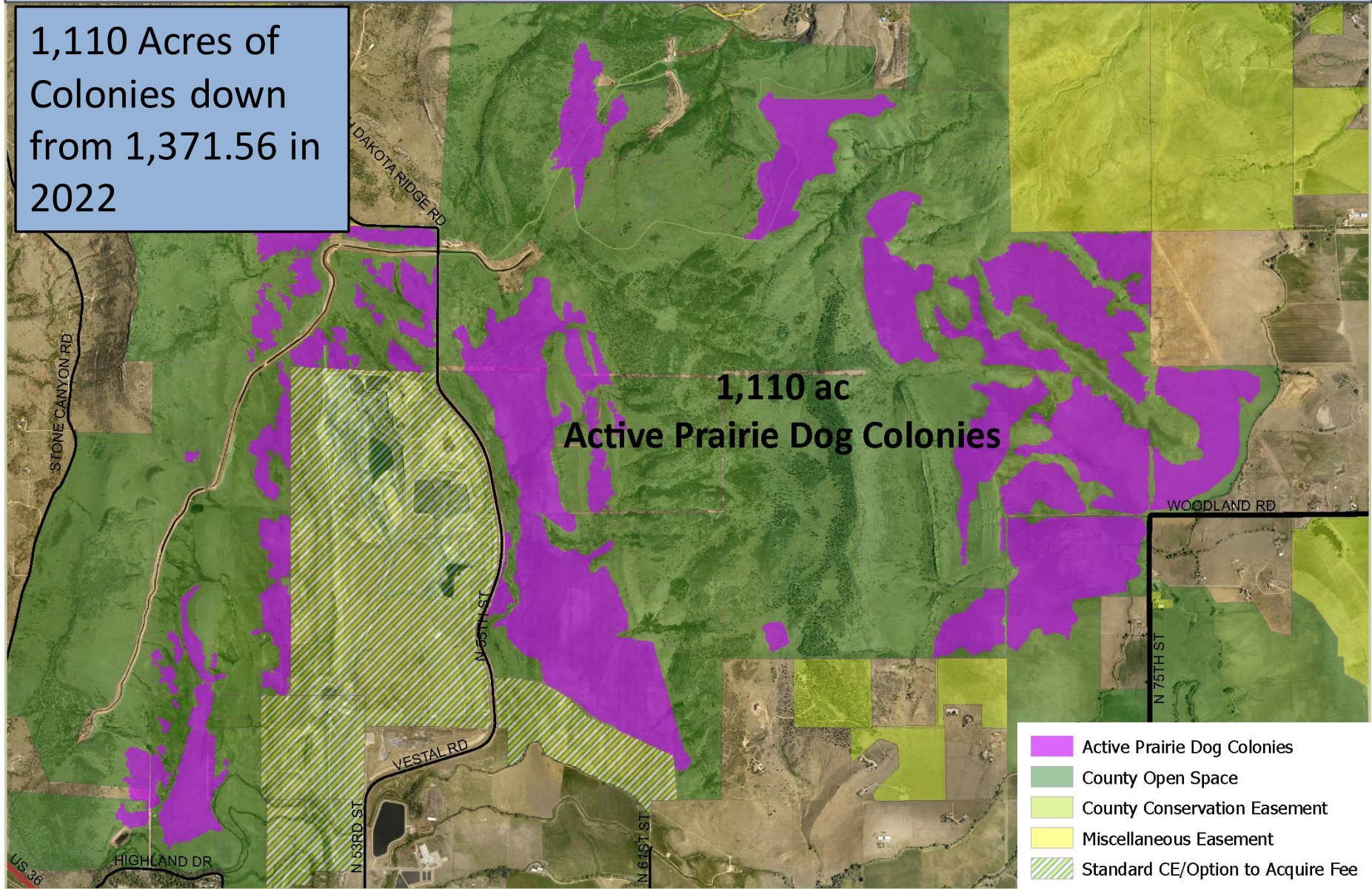
2023 South County Grasslands

324 Acres of Colonies up from 245 in 2022



2023 Ron Stewart Preserve at Rabbit Mountain

1,110 Acres of Colonies down from 1,371.56 in 2022



Questions?



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