



2024 Annual Report

Recreation & Facilities

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Urban Forestry

Cathy Thiltgen
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Volunteer Coordination

George Carter
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and our amazing
seasonal team

In 2024, the Recreation and Facilities division of Boulder County Parks & Open Space Recreation (BCPOS) advanced with care, resilience, and creativity, strengthening the lands, trails, and facilities that connect our community to the outdoors. Across the county, crews rebuilt washed-out trails, stabilized historic structures, refreshed beloved parks, and planted seeds of new growth — both literally and figuratively.

Trail improvements stretched from the canyons to the plains, with reroutes, boardwalks, and drainage upgrades, making trails more durable and accessible. Hundreds of volunteers fueled these efforts, restoring trails, controlling invasive species, and protecting wildlife habitat.

Historic structures received skilled attention, blending tradition with innovation. Using lumber milled onsite, crews preserved authenticity while saving resources. At the same time, upgrades to trailheads, picnic areas, and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) access helped ensure all visitors can enjoy these places safely and comfortably.

Innovation also shaped daily operations, from new shared vehicle pods and electric fleet additions to upgraded reservation systems. Facilities and fleet teams modernized tools and strategies, building a stronger foundation for the future.

Through every project, a clear thread connected it all: people coming together to strengthen Boulder County's public lands and inspire a future where nature, history, and community thrive.

-Jarret Roberts, Recreation and Facilities Division Manager



Staff come together at the all-staff workday to complete work at the Picture Rock Trailhead.

Trails



Monarch retaining wall being built

This season brought significant improvements across the trail system. In Boulder Canyon, a new retaining wall was built, vegetation was managed, and key repairs were made. This includes riprap for trail edge support, crusher fine patching, and rock slide cleanup. A new retaining wall was installed and another one was rebuilt on the Monarch Trail, and contractors resurfaced Legend Ridge Loop.

Trail reroutes and upgrades included the completion of the Wapiti Trail reroute, plus a realignment of the Imel Trail to move the path away from an eroding creek bank. The Nighthawk Trail saw improvements with new steps, drainage, tree trimming, and trail checks that were completed with the Youth Corps and trails staff. Walker Ranch repairs addressed extensive erosion by adding checks, while Twin Lakes got a new boardwalk and steps.

Bridge and structure updates included abutment and bank support at the Niwot Loop Trails, and boardwalk repairs at Mud Lake. Small but essential fixes were completed across the system, from culvert installation at AHI to patching at Somerset Trail, Monarch trails, and trail along 95th Street, and low water crossing work at Pella Crossing.

Tree clearing at sites like Marlatt Trail, Heatherwood trails, Niwot High School trails, and others ensured trail safety and accessibility. Snow removal along regional trails and sidewalks kept access open through winter, wrapping up a productive season of trail maintenance and infrastructure work.

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Boulder Canyon Trail wall repair



Bridge stabilization on Niwot Trails



Walker Ranch Loop Trail before (left) and after (right) repair work

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Nighthawk Trail before (left) and after steps installation (right)

Trails by the Numbers

- 11+ miles of snow removal every time it snowed
- 4.5 miles of trail maintenance on the Nighthawk Trail
- 1.5 miles of resurfaced trail using recycled asphalt at Legend Ridge
- 75 feet of rebuilt boardwalk at Twin Lakes.
- 900 feet of resurfaced asphalt trail/road at Heil Valley Ranch.
- 200 feet of resurfaced asphalt trail
- 150+ linear feet of built or repaired retaining walls



Resurfaced Sommerset Trail



Imel Trail after being rerouted to avoid closure from meandering creek.

Volunteers

In 2024, the Recreation and Facilities (RAF) volunteer engagement team coordinated 21 volunteer projects, with five additional events canceled because of hazardous weather and fire conditions. A total of 271 volunteers contributed 1,175 hours, focusing primarily on trail improvement projects and routine maintenance across multiple sites.

At Hall Ranch, volunteers completed significant work on the Nighthawk Trail to combat erosion and improve trail conditions. They installed 43 timber check steps to stabilize the trail and constructed 18 new drains to help the trail shed water and reduce muddy trail closures. More than four miles of trail corridor were pruned and cleared to improve visibility and safety, and 40 existing trail drains were cleared to ensure proper drainage.

Accomplishments

Timber check steps installed: 43

New trail drains constructed: 23

Trail drains cleared: 55

Trail corridor cleared: 4 miles

Land cleared of invasive weeds: 5 acres

Trail braiding restored and reseeded: 45 feet

Barbed wire fence removed: 280 feet

Worm fencing constructed: 250 feet

Trail modified to be made accessible: 300 feet



Volunteers construct check steps on the Nighthawk Trail.

At Heil Valley Ranch, efforts focused on invasive species management and trail maintenance. Volunteers removed mullein from 5 acres of land, helping to restore native plant habitats. They also cleared 15 trail drains to improve water flow and prevent trail degradation.

At the Ron Steward Preserve at Rabbit Mountain, volunteers worked on trail restoration and wildlife safety improvements. They restored and reseeded 45 feet of trail braiding to prevent further erosion and removed 280 feet of barbed wire fencing, which posed a risk to deer and elk. Additional work included digging 45 feet of drainage ditch, constructing five new trail drains, and applying five tons of road base to stabilize muddy sections of the trail.

At Mud Lake, volunteers constructed 250 feet of worm fencing to block access to sensitive wildlife habitat and prevent trail widening. In partnership with the TeamWorks youth program, RAF staff built a 300-foot stone retaining wall designed to improve trail accessibility for wheelchair users. The project followed the Forest Service Trail Accessibility Guidelines, ensuring trail usability while preserving the natural character of the trail.

The RAF volunteer engagement team's work in 2024 significantly improved trail sustainability, accessibility, and safety. Volunteers played a crucial role in maintaining Boulder County's open spaces, ensuring that trails remain accessible and environmentally resilient for future generations.



Eroded section of Night Hawk Trail



Wall built by volunteers at Mud Lake

Buildings & Historic Preservation

Over the past three years, the buildings and historic preservation team has transitioned from a reactive maintenance approach to a completely proactive strategy. Our focus has been on prioritizing BCPOS historic structures that provide the most value to both our staff and the public. The team is keeping pace with projections for their priority historic preservation work and maintenance is taking marginally less time on our most valuable structures each year and leaving time to bring structures into increasingly better condition annually. In 2024, the team completed work on 27 different structures located on 13 separate BCPOS properties.

Priority Preservation Projects for 2024:

- o Rock Creek Farm maintenance
- o Meyers Gulch barn maintenance
- o Agricultural Heritage Center maintenance
- o Nederland Mining Museum maintenance
- o Walker Ranch fencing/gate maintenance (in partnership with Boulder County Youth Corps)
- o Harney-Lastoka garage reroof
- o Delonde Homestead house painting
- o Walker Ranch house painting
- o Peck Barn painting and maintenance
- o Hall Ranch cabin and chicken house maintenance
- o Nelson House reroof/siding
- o Assay Museum Office maintenance
- o Puzzler House window build/installation
- o Saint Vrain Forestry Yard outbuilding maintenance



Reroofing project at the Nelson House
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Mobile Lumber Mill Operations: Our team milled more than 20,000 board feet of rough sawn lumber—more than 90% of the total lumber needed for historic preservation in 2024 — using our mobile lumber mill. This operation continues to be a vital resource for maintaining the authenticity of historic structures while saving the department approximately \$10,000 annually.

Artist in Residence Structure Upgrades: We also made significant improvements to the Artist in Residence structure, including:

- o Installation of a new, more efficient inverter for the solar chariot (which powers the residence).
- o New custom-built counter tops and screens.
- o Plumbing repairs.
- o Addition of a new solar panel to support the water pump for the shower.
- o Construction of a new fence to conceal the solar chariot.



Maintenance at Agricultural Heritage Center



Sawmill in action milling lumber



Aidan Mills and Brian Bartel at the Hall Cabin



Maintenance at the Nederland Mining Museum

Trailhead Maintenance



All-staff work day at Picture Rock Trailhead

In 2024, the trailhead maintenance team (THM) worked diligently to stay on top of the ever-growing routine maintenance route schedule. The team continuously takes on sanitation and repair efforts at our trailheads, including restroom cleaning, trash and recycling removal, and supplies restocking. With the addition of a few new permanent restrooms in the past 5 years and the reopening of already established trailheads that were closed from the 2020 fires, the THM team is working endlessly to maintain a high standard of care while also dealing with pop-up cases of immediate needs.

The Walden Ponds property received a major maintenance overhaul to many of the trailhead structures, including both trailhead restrooms, the large picnic shelter, two small picnic shelters, and the information kiosk. The efforts included applying stain to the exterior wood elements of all structures and the underside of the large picnic shelter at the main trailhead. The restroom doors at the main trailhead were also resurfaced and repainted in house. The black metal posts of the large picnic shelter were repainted as well.

During an all-staff work day, the THM crew hosted a staining project at the Picture Rock



Julio Gutierrez-Lopez smoothing concrete at Marlatt property.

Trailhead where 10 BCPOS employees assisted in stain application to the wood exterior of the trailhead restroom and the information kiosk on the property. This application protects the structures' natural wood surface and improves aesthetics, making a noticeable difference aesthetically; making our trailhead amenities more welcoming to the public.

Other THM projects included: trash and recycling bin replacements to the upgraded BearSaver standard at the Marlatt and Pella Crossing properties and BearSaver recycling bin refinishing and repainting at Hall Ranch, the Heatherwood area, Heil Valley Ranch, and Little Gaynor trailheads.

Starting in 2023, the THM crew started the process of improving accessibility through ADA-compliant updates at the trailhead restrooms. This year, we started looking at the restroom door improper closing speeds and opening force requirements. We then worked to organize our work plan to address door realignment, door closer adjustments or replacements, and other ways to mitigate any door non-compliances. Having identified 39 doors requiring adjustments for compliance, we researched and purchased the necessary tools and hardware to incorporate in upcoming work plans.



Trailhead crew members pouring a concrete pad.



Waste receptacles and a door get a new coat of paint in the

Grounds



Park Enhancements: Extensive maintenance efforts were completed across key county properties to enhance trail access, safety, and infrastructure durability. Major trailhead grading and surface improvements took place at Lagerman Reservoir, Goodhue Farmhouse, Caribou Ranch, Mud Lake, and Walker Ranch, improving access and long-term resilience. More than 100 miles of regional, mountain, and prairie trails were mowed, with regular maintenance at all trailheads to support safety and appearance.

New gates were installed at Antelope, Beech, Picture Rock, and Hall Ranch trailheads, improving access control and infrastructure.

Light maintenance tasks spanned turf management, irrigation, and general trailhead upkeep. Turf areas were aerated, fertilized, and cleared around sprinkler heads for seasonal activation. Irrigation systems were charged in spring, maintained during the growing season, and winterized at sites like the Agricultural Heritage Center, Kerr Community Gardens, Goodhue House, Homestead property, and Lefthand Valley Grange.

Additional maintenance included cold patching, pothole repair, fencing and gate work, culvert and swale cleaning, and seasonal snow marker management at multiple locations. Staff also partnered with Youth Corps at the Barrett property to install a fire mitigation rock apron and completed improvements at Pella Crossing, including flagstone caps on culverts and post and dowel fencing. Graffiti removal was performed as needed on benches, bollards, and bridges.



Twin Gates at Hall Ranch

Hall Ranch Reconstruction for Climate Resilience and Sustainability

The Hall Ranch Trailhead has been reconstructed to better endure the effects of climate change and support heavier public use. This project emphasized a sustainable, low-maintenance design, using modern, eco-friendly methods and locally sourced materials, including native stone quarried locally.

Key Improvements:

- Large drainage structures were built to manage increased storm water and reduce erosion.
- 11 oversized culverts were installed to improve water flow and protect infrastructure.
- 351 native sandstone was placed to clearly delineate parking areas and maintain natural aesthetics.
- 600 tons of riprap base was added to reinforce surfaces and control runoff.
- 1,200 square feet of EcoRaster was installed to create a permeable, durable parking surface that reduces long-term maintenance needs.

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Hall Ranch parking lot reconstruction

In addition, ADA compliance issues were addressed at Hall Ranch by improving access and safety for all users. These enhancements will significantly reduce the need for future maintenance, improve site resilience during extreme weather events, and provide a more functional, user-friendly space. The use of environmentally responsible materials and thoughtful design ensures Hall Ranch will remain sustainable and accessible for years to come.

Stearns Lake Trailhead Reconstruction

In 2024, the Stearns Lake Trailhead underwent a major renovation to improve accessibility, increase capacity, and enhance overall safety and usability. This project addressed longstanding issues while preparing the site for long-term use and growth.

Key Improvements:

- **Expanded and Redesigned Layout:** The parking lot was reconfigured to accommodate more vehicles and improve traffic flow, addressing frequent congestion during peak usage.
- **ADA Accessibility Upgrades:** A new ADA-compliant sidewalk was installed to connect the restroom, kiosk, and shelter, ensuring safe and accessible movement throughout the site. Two van-accessible ADA parking spaces were also added to better serve visitors with disabilities.
- **Surface and Drainage Enhancements:** We resolved drainage problems that had caused standing water and erosion. The entire lot was resurfaced using 250 tons of recycled asphalt, providing a smoother, more durable surface while promoting sustainability.
- **Fencing and Entry/Exit Improvements:** Existing fencing was upgraded to improve site functionality, guiding movement and helping define lot boundaries. Clearly marked and reinforced entrances and exits were created to enhance traffic flow and safety for both drivers and pedestrians.

These improvements support increased use of the area, meet current accessibility standards, and ensure the space is functional year-round. The project reflects our commitment to creating welcoming, inclusive, and well-maintained public facilities.



Stearns Lake Trailhead gets a major update



More work to improve Stearns Lake

Urban Forestry

2024 was a year of transition for the urban forestry (UF) team. The year started like usual: watering as needed, pruning dormant trailhead trees, and fertilizing maples and oaks with chelated iron to reduce chlorosis. When spring came, the UF team planted flowers at the Agricultural Heritage Center and Nederland Mining Museum, planted 18 trees in six locations, and hired a seasonal tech to help manage our 352 trailhead trees by:

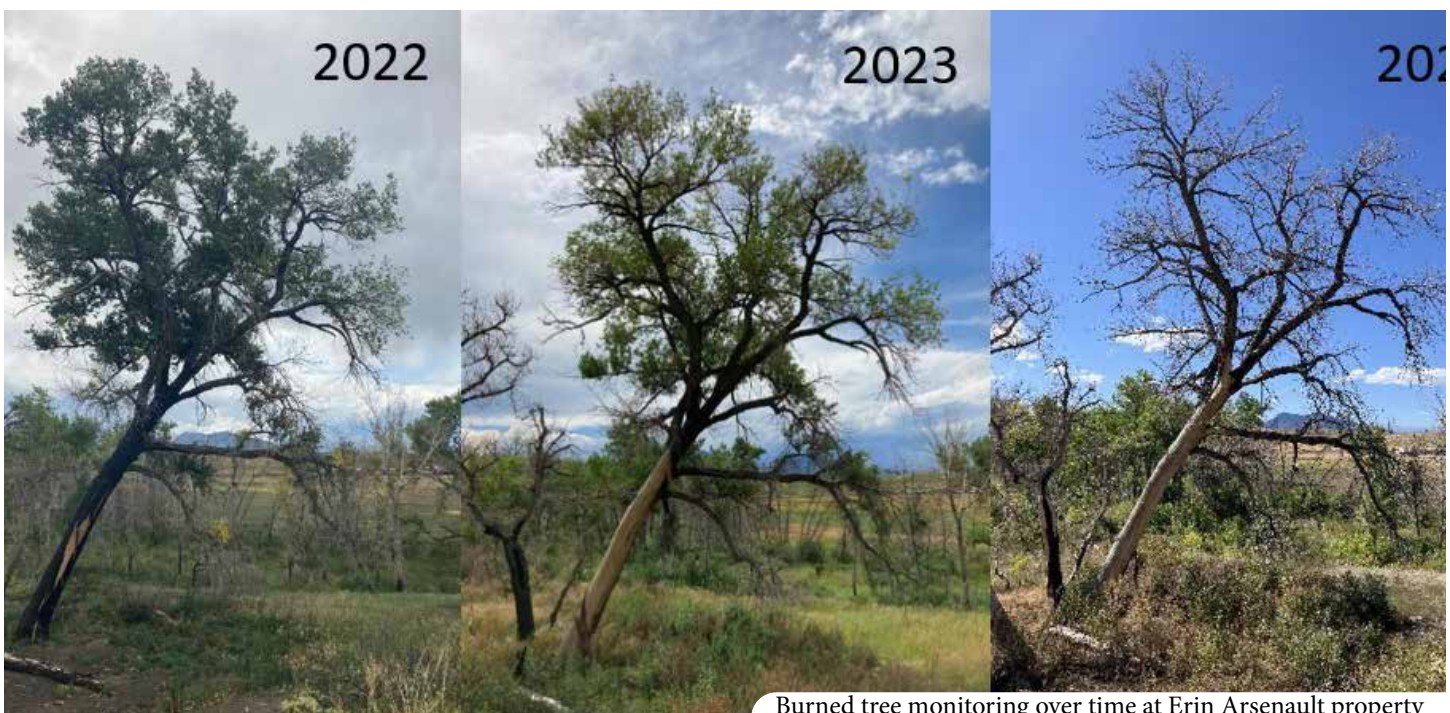
- Watering 166 trees using about 177,500 gallons of water.
- Mulching 238 trees using about 950 cubic feet of mulch.
- Wrapping 93 smooth-barked trees with tree wrap to protect them from sun scald.
- Spraying 85 evergreens with anti-desiccant to reduce water loss from dry winter conditions.

Everything changed when summer arrived and senior county arborist Cathy Thiltgen retired. The position wasn't refilled, reducing the team from two full-time employees to one. This shift moved tree care operations from mostly in-house work, which often requires two people for safety, to mostly volunteer-driven projects and contract work. The team kept the UF program focused by prioritizing safety and hazard tree mitigation. They held two volunteer projects at Pella Crossing/Marlatt Trails: expanding caging after the beavers caused the loss of three large cottonwoods, and

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Flowering Catalpa at Monarch Trailhead



Burned tree monitoring over time at Erin Arsenault property

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removing overgrown willows blocking the view of the crosswalk on 75th street. Then contractors handled additional tree work:

- Five dead trees removed at Bald Mountain to protect the historic corral.
- One tree pruned in Niwot to remove a heavy limb over the trail after a large crown failure.
- One tree pruned at Marlatt property to remove a widow-maker over the picnic table at Poplar Pond.
- Two dead trees removed at Stearns Lake to protect nearby infrastructure.
- Five fire-damaged trees removed at Suitts property to make the area safe for construction.



Mary Tiernan, Aly Rozek and Jo Daloisio planting at Hall Ranch.

In the fall, in addition to applying tree wrap and anti-desiccant, the UF team planted four trees in-house at the Hall Ranch upper lot and 23 trees via contractor at Walden Ponds as part of the City of Boulder water project.

Throughout the year, the UF team supported other work groups by using the bucket truck to improve barn swallow and osprey nests for wildlife and project access for trails staff, running a contract on the Zapf property for the agriculture staff, and facilitating chipper trainings for agriculture and weeds staff. Finally, the team began planning to repurpose part of the orchard at Kerr Community Gardens into a walking path with xeric plantings and monitored trees at Erin Arsenault to observe the long-term effects of the Marshall Fire.



Pruning in bucket truck at Monarch Trail



Caging trees after beaver damage at Pella Crossing

Signs

In the first days of 2024, the BCPOS sign shop moved into a larger space on the second floor.

This allowed for the hiring of a full-time sign shop assistant. Bruno has been a great help and is continuing his introductory period in 2025 to include equipment training and leadership of a soon-to-hire seasonal. He has been approved as an interpreter for the department, and this has become very useful as we develop signage messaging.

The following Sign Standards and Messing Manual (SSMM) implementation that was completed:

- 171 signs replaced or added at Hall Ranch Open Space Trailhead, Antelope Trailhead, and corresponding trails
- 38 signs replaced or added at Carolyn Holmberg Preserve at Rock Creek Farm
- 12 signs added for 104th street project
- Reinstallation of 19 signs at Walden Ponds following completion of sanitation line construction
- Boundary signs for resource protection staff, as part of all-staff workday at Picture Rock Trailhead



Stamp graphics for 50th BCPOS anniversary

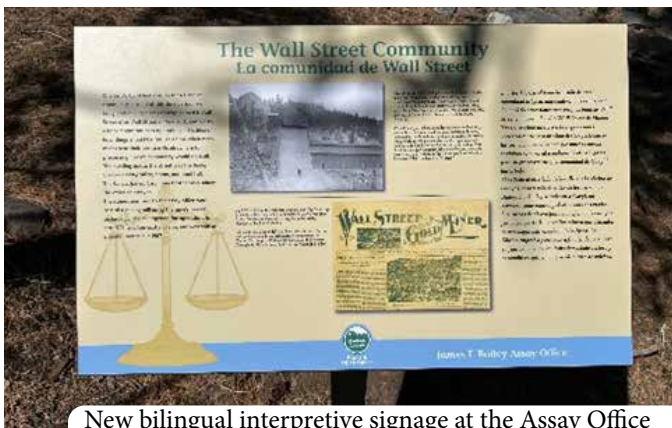
As for graphic design projects for the education and outreach work group, the top priority was four new bilingual interpretation signs for the Assay Office. Two signs for the Two Creeks Open Space were updated with bilingual layouts, and the Agricultural Heritage Center started working on new facilities signage for their buildings and interpretive walkway.

The signs team worked with the BCPOS 50th anniversary committee to create a commemorative logo and landed on six stamps for 2025.

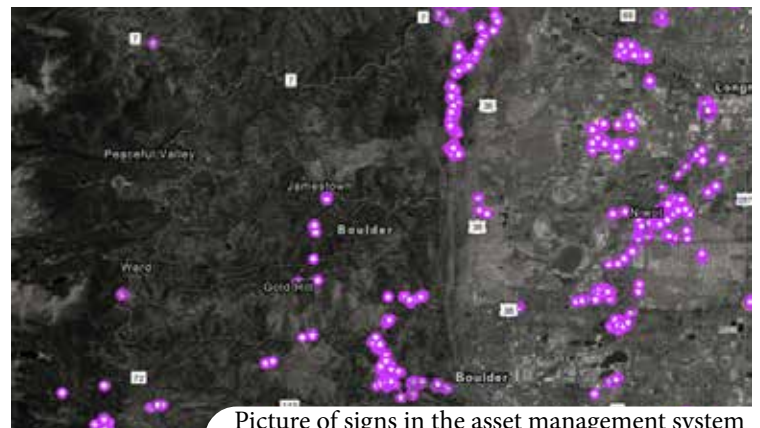
More than 200 sign requests were completed for design and installation of permanent and temporary signs. Request were for a breadth of activities: trail construction, wildlife closures, all-staff events Nederland and Meeker sort yards, and various volunteer events were also completed.

At the Colorado Open Space Alliance (COSA) conference in Grand Junction Mary Rolf showed off the efforts of the SSMM and the BCPOS sign shop. The presentation was well received and many other agencies reaching out for copies of the manual and to questions about signs and signage.

Finally, the BCPOS sign shop was a pioneer work group in learning and implementing the Asset Management System/Open Gov/Cartegraph. We continue to test, use, and champion this very powerful tool.



New bilingual interpretive signage at the Assay Office



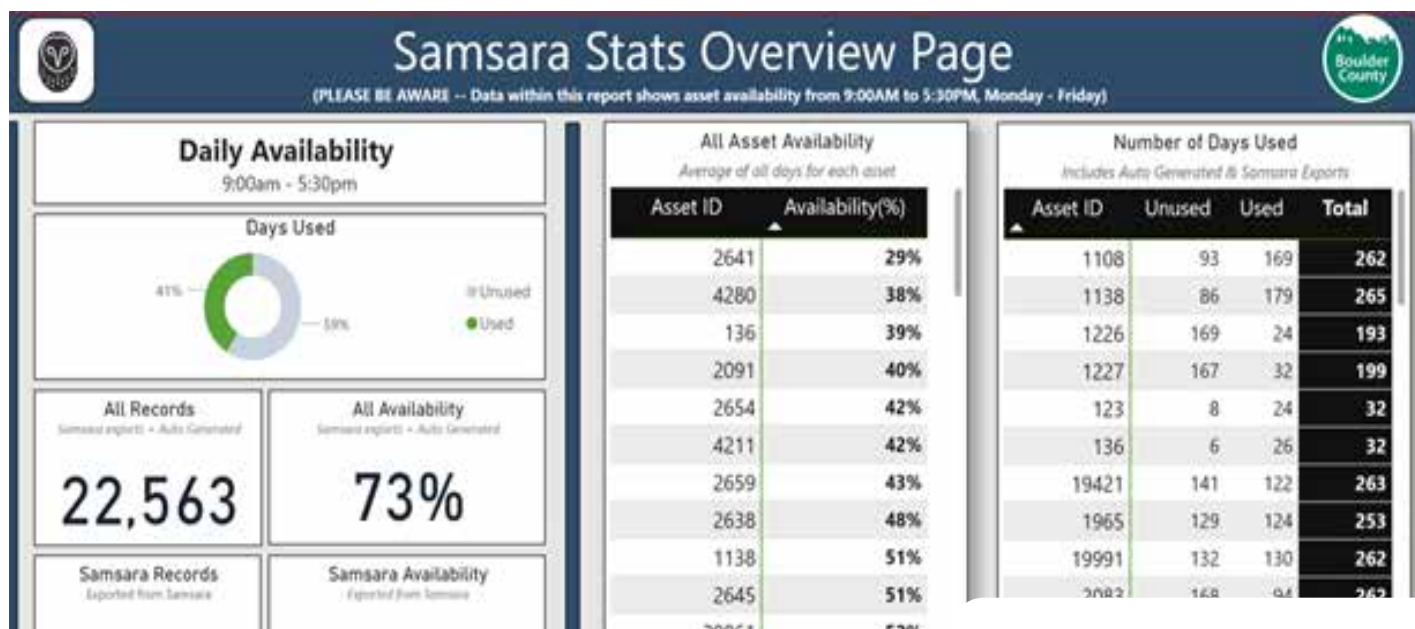
Picture of signs in the asset management system

Fleet, Shop & Safety



Fleet

In 2024, the fleet team made significant strides in improving how we manage and use department vehicles. A dedicated subcommittee was formed to analyze fleet usage data and uncover opportunities for smarter, more efficient operations.



One of the most impactful changes was the creation of smaller, shared vehicle “pods” assigned by workgroup. This approach has improved access, reduced redundancy, and allowed for better coordination across teams. The introduction of “Grab-n-Go” vehicles for short, unscheduled trips has added even more flexibility to support day-to-day needs.

To enhance the user experience, the fleet team also replaced the outdated Outlook-based reservation system with SuperSaas—a more intuitive and reliable platform. Early feedback shows increased satisfaction and fewer booking issues.

In support of the department’s sustainability goals, the team facilitated the addition of five new Ford F-150 Lightning electric vehicles to the fleet. This transition not only reduces emissions but also marks an important step in adopting cleaner, more energy-efficient transportation solutions.

These accomplishments reflect the fleet team’s commitment to innovation, collaboration, and environmental responsibility. Their work is helping the department move forward with greater efficiency and a stronger focus on the future.

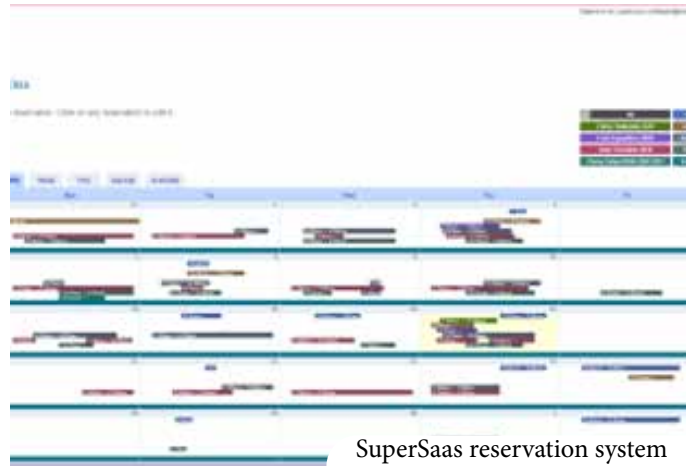


Grab-n-go keys

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New electric trucks



SuperSaas reservation system

Safety

Thank You, Joe Thiltgen!

In 2024, we bid farewell to a valued member of our safety team, Joe Thiltgen, who retired after 24 years of dedicated service. Joe's commitment to workplace safety, his deep knowledge, and his steady leadership made a lasting impact on the team and the department as a whole. Whether training new staff or responding to safety concerns with care and professionalism, Joe led by example every day. His presence will be greatly missed, but his contributions have laid a strong foundation for continued success. We wish Joe all the best in his well-earned retirement!



Joe Thiltgen accepting a rental truck.



Longs Peak from the shop