

Agriculture & Water

Boulder County | 2025 Annual Report

Vision

Thriving agricultural lands for generations to come

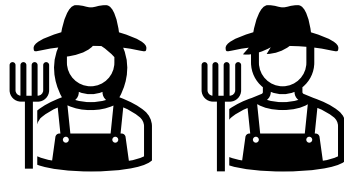
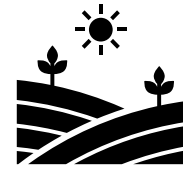
Mission Statement

Through collaboration and stewardship, we will enhance the agricultural resources of Boulder County.

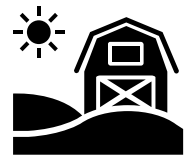


Overview

122 properties



56 leaseholders

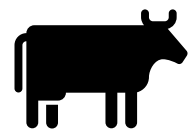


2 newly leased properties

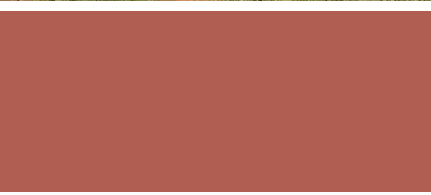


14 soil health grants

12,900 acres of managed grazing



- STAFF**
Parker Arnold
Darren Beck
Nevin Fetzer
Mike Foster
George Frampton
Ben Gager
David Garcia
Stephen Kirk
Erin Maier
Jimmy McAllan
Jeff Moline
Zach Moran
Levi Priest
Kurt Roy
Jason Sauer
Cassandra Schnarr
Amy Schwartz



Soil Health

As food production demands rise amid a growing world population and a changing climate, it's paramount to keep our soils productive, resilient, and healthy. The maintenance and improvement of soil health can increase soil organic matter, reduce soil compaction, improve soil nutrient storage and cycling, increase soil water retention, and enhance soil microbial communities. An outcome of these benefits includes but is not limited to improved wildlife and pollinator habitat, decreased soil erosion, decreased soil water loss, and increased yields for farmers.

Soil Health Program

How soil health principles are applied to the land will vary by size and type of operation, existing soil conditions, operational constraints, and irrigation, among other factors.

2025 saw a continuation of the soil health grant program for agricultural leaseholders. The program began in 2023 to reduce economic barriers producers encounter when trying new soil health practices. Boulder County Parks and Open Space awards up to \$25,000 per grant.

Number of applications: 15

Number of projects funded: 14

Total award amount: \$318,725

Total acres affected: 1,837

Funded projects include incorporating compost, soil testing, planting diverse cover crops, applying biochar and manure, mycelium inoculation, planting perennial crops, reducing tillage, spreading mulch, and implementing precision irrigation.

Principles of Soil Health

- Continual growing plants
- Soil surface cover
 - Minimize soil disturbance
- Plant diversity
- Integration of livestock





2025 Water Summary

2025 proved to be one of the warmest years in the historical record, creating very dry conditions in the county. Nevertheless, despite some water supply challenges, the water team worked to deliver the county's water to our agricultural tenants and to maintain and repair our reservoirs and ditch sections. The team has also deployed technology to measure soil moisture and irrigation flow as a means of giving tenants the information to most effectively utilize and to conserve water resources.

Boulder County's ditch mitigation program focuses on reducing wildfire risk along irrigation ditches and associated corridors, which have the potential for fire spread across the landscape. By strategically balancing the management of vegetation around ditches through targeted clearing and removal of excess debris, the program aims to lower fuel continuity while maintaining the ecological and operational function of these water systems for both wildlife and farmers alike. In its inaugural year, we were able to complete 17 projects, clearing more than 360 tons of slash from the ditch corridors.

Water Accomplishments

Data Collection

- Continued developing a water database to effectively manage the county's irrigation water supplies. This tool will help improve the tracking of water use by property.
- Installed 33 soil moisture probes, giving leaseholders real-time access to moisture levels in the soil.
- Used 36 flow meters on center pivots to better manage water use.
- Verified historical data, such as wells and diversions, and streamlined staff gauge readings and soil moisture data in asset management software.

Ditch Maintenance

- Cleaned 7.2 miles of ditches.
- Treated ditch vegetation on agricultural properties, including Gaynor Lake, and CMN Futhy/Marfell Lakes to improve water delivery.
- Removed 150 cubic yards of woody material vegetation, including Russian olive trees from New Table Mountain Ditch lateral on Allen Holdings Inc (AHI) property, with the help of the Boulder County Sheriff's office jail crew.

Dams

- Reconstructed the Prince Lake dam.
- Passed state dam safety inspections for Gaynor Lake Outlet Pipe, Steele #1 Reservoir, and Swede Lake.
- Delivered 233.98 acre-feet of water into Coal Creek as part of the Kenosha Pond augmentation program.
- Hosted Boulder County's first Agricultural water tour.
- Successfully treated sites of hairy willowherb (List A Weed Species) on four agricultural properties Suitts, Gage, Gaynor Lake, and Centennial Ranch.





Structures

Accomplishments

Cleanup

- AHI chip cleanup
- Ditch road cleanups from windstorms
- Ertl Drain tile cleaning
- Holmes Ditch cleanup and prep for new concrete cloth liner to prevent leakage onto neighboring properties.
- Cleaned up at Sky view property in preparation for the property going out to bid.

Installation

- Installed about 1,000 feet of gated pipe and a new diversion structure to increase the irrigation efficiency on a hay field on Holmes.
- Built a new access road on Labor for homeowners to access house lot.
- Installed about 10 miles of new boundary fence stretching over 16 properties and replacing fence that had been there since purchase.

Center Pivot

- Replaced 2 center pivots on AHI to save thousands of dollars per year in maintenance. New center pivots are more water efficient, more energy efficient, and move with GPS guidance.
- Refurbished center pivots on Swanson, Ludlow, and LUH. Refurbishing center pivots costs 1/3 of the price of a new system.



Prairie Dog Conservation & Management



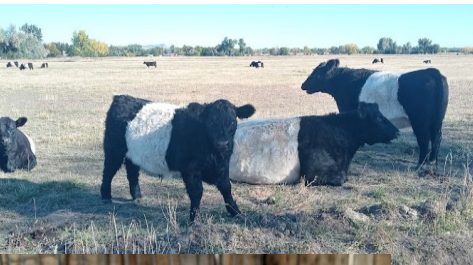
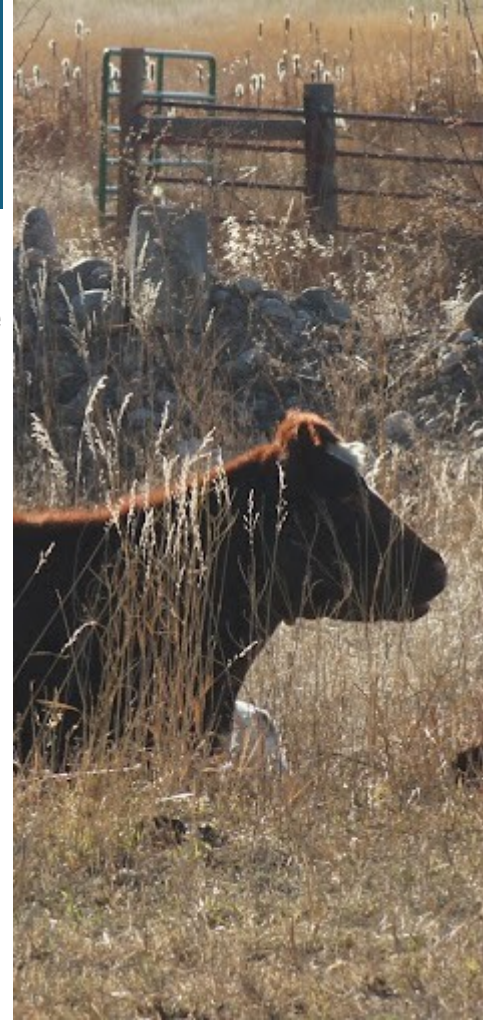
- 1,643 prairie dogs were trapped on nine properties and donated.
 - 772 prairie dogs were donated to the National Black-Footed Ferret Conservation Center.
 - 871 prairie dogs were donated to the Birds of Prey Foundation.
- 27,806 burrows were treated on 46 properties.
- Eight tenants participated in our tenant control program on 15 properties, treating 5,155 burrows.
- 16,064 feet of chicken wire barrier fencing was erected on 14 properties.
- A comprehensive mapping of colony extent was completed.
 - 5,302 were mapped on 93 properties.
 - 74 properties were cleared or stayed clear.
- Plague mitigation was done at the South County Grasslands and Rabbit Mountain.

Grazing Program Summary

The Agricultural Division manages livestock grazing on more than 12,900 acres of Parks and Open Space properties. In 2025, the grazing program included 29 tenants on 93 properties throughout Boulder County. Our tenants raise a variety of livestock, including domestic cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, horses, and more.

Moving forward in 2026 and beyond, our focus will be on working with our agricultural tenants to develop grazing plans that promote sustainable and economically viable grazing practices that benefit wildlife, soil health, water quality, and native plant diversity. A focus will be on Working Lands Conservation with a priority on ecological services.

We will be working to restore numerous properties using native plant reseeding and soil health amendments in 2026. Additionally, we will be collecting vegetation and soil health data that will be used as ecological benchmarks for measuring the success of our regenerative grazing program.



2025 Achievements

- 12,900 acres of managed grazing
- 93 properties
- 29 grazing tenants