

CITY OF BOULDER

**Community Planning and Sustainability
Open Space and Mountain Parks
Parks and Recreation**

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June 7, 2011

Dear Kristin,

Please find attached the City of Boulder's application for a "Permit to Capture, Transport, Hold and Relocate Prairie Dogs". The application requests authorization to move prairie dog from an area of city-owned park and open space lands on the western edge of Boulder to a city-owned open space parcel further to the east in the Gunbarrel neighborhood.

The City of Boulder has a long history of balancing multiple community values and perspectives about the protection of black-tailed prairie dogs. Much time and effort has been spent over the past thirty years by the city and the community in identifying values about wildlife protection and management activities, as well as identifying policies for managing prairie dogs and their habitat in the city and on city-owned open space land. These efforts have resulted in the creation of policies and management plans reflecting a broad range of community input and collectively guides how we propose to manage prairie dogs. The city's overall policy on management of prairie dogs is based on a six step decision-making process which emphasizes non-lethal management tools over use of lethal control. These policies are reflected in the city's Wildlife Protection Ordinance, Urban Wildlife Management, and Grassland Ecosystem Management Plans.

The city's direct management of prairie dogs involves and requires the participation and approval by the Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW). The city is requesting a relocation permit from the CDOW to implement actions identified in the Urban Wildlife, and Grassland Ecosystem Management Plans. Over 25,000 acres of grassland habitat are managed by the city Open Space Mountain Parks Department. While OSMP management calls for the conservation of prairie dogs on some three thousand acres, there are more than 50 prairie dog colonies in places inconsistent with the city's management priorities. These are slated for removal. It is the city's preference and policy to relocate these animals to open space areas designated for prairie dogs (prairie dog conservation areas or Grassland Preserves when colony occupancy and vegetative conditions allow). In the event that relocation is not possible or only possible for a portion of these colonies, the city will evaluate alternative management tools to address the conflicts including: mitigation with prairie dogs on site, restoration of unoccupied areas, passive relocation, and lethal control.

The city has received extensive comments from residents living near the proposed receiving site in opposition to the relocation proposal. While the most recent public comments are significant, over the last several years, the city has also received hundreds

of comments from community members opposed to the use of lethal control on prairie dogs in the city or on city-owned lands and in support of the city's prairie dog management framework. This relocation permit application is being submitted after months of careful consideration by the city of the range of strongly held community perspectives about prairie dog management in Boulder and about our alternatives for managing prairie dogs on the sending site or sites. The city recognizes the concerns expressed by the residents in the area of the receiving site and has outlined a plan for mitigating their concerns.

In response to concerns that conditions and land use at the sending site do not warrant relocation, the city has also included alternative sending sites as part of this permit application. The primary sending site on the application (Foothills Community Park Area) is a priority for the city in order to continue to deliver community services associated with a developed park site, including future park development. Each of the additional sending sites have been identified as areas where the presence of prairie dogs is not compatible with conservation of ecological or agricultural objectives. Conflicts at these additional sites include: irrigated and tilled agricultural crop fields, areas adjacent to a proposed restoration area, and a locally rare plant community within a State Natural Area (see **ATTACHMENT A**).

The city intends to continue working with the neighborhood, CDOW and other stakeholders to address any issues that may arise with the proposed relocation project. We welcome any additional project, feedback or recommendations you may have on our proposal and respectfully request guidance to help guide this and future relocation projects. Please contact me with any questions or comments about the attached permit application and associated documents.

Sincerely,

Val Matheson-Project Manger
Urban Wildlife Conservation Coordinator
Community Planning and Sustainability Department

Matt Claussen- Parks and Recreation Department
Urban Resource Manager

Heather Swanson- Open Space and Mountain Parks Department
Wildlife Ecologist

Mark Gershman- Open Space and Mountain Parks
Environmental Planning Supervisor