



**CITY OF BOULDER
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM**

MEETING DATE: October 18, 2011

AGENDA TITLE:

Consideration of a motion accepting the Black Bear and Mountain Lion Component of the Urban Wildlife Management Plan (UWMP).

PRESENTERS:

Jane S. Brautigam, City Manager
Paul J. Fetherston, Deputy City Manager

Department of Community Planning & Sustainability

David Driskell, Executive Director
Susan Richstone, Comprehensive Planning Manager
Val Matheson, Urban Wildlife Conservation Coordinator

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The purpose of this item is to request City Council's acceptance of the Black Bear and Mountain Lion Component of the Urban Wildlife Management Plan (UWMP). Staff from Community Planning and Sustainability, Parks and Recreation, and Open Space and Mountain Parks have worked collaboratively to develop the plan (**Attachment A**). The Bear and Mountain Lion component includes strategies to minimize human/wildlife conflicts and increase public awareness on how to better coexist with these animals. The plan objectives include:

- Develop strategies to reduce bear attractants in the urban area.
- Increase public awareness of how to minimize conflicts with black bear and mountain lion.
- Identify costs and prioritize actions for plan implementation.
- Identify and clarify the role of the city in black bear and mountain lion management.

The first phase of the UWMP was the development of guiding principles, vision and goals for urban wildlife management accepted by City Council in January 2006 (www.bouldercolorado.gov/files/Wildlife/p_dog_component.pdf). The guiding principles

emphasize the use of humane, non-lethal control methods when wildlife in the city is in conflict with use or development of a site.

Phase II of the UWMP is focused on species-specific components of the plan. The first component, accepted by City Council in 2006, addressed the management of black-tailed prairie dogs in the city. This is the second component of the plan and addresses management of black bear and mountain lion.

Development of the Black Bear and Mountain Lion component of the UWMP included three phases (see plan **Appendix A** for process chart). Phase I included issue identification and was completed in early 2010. Phase II included option development, analysis of the options, and concluded with council direction in April supporting the staff recommendations of addressing black bear trash attractants through an adaptive management approach and improving communication and awareness about mountain lions in the community. Phase III (current) includes City Council consideration of the plan.

Suggested Motion Language:

Staff requests council consideration of this matter and action in the form of the following motion:

Motion to accept the Black Bear and Mountain Lion component of the Urban Wildlife Management Plan (UWMP).

COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENTS AND IMPACTS:

- **Economic:** The actions planned for bear and mountain lion management will have no economic impact on landowners or the community since both will involve education and voluntary action.
- **Environmental:** Increasing public awareness of the conflicts between black bears and humans due to trash management may help to protect the health of the animals. Monitoring of incidents over the next few years will provide more information on the impact. The approach of increasing communication about and awareness of mountain lions will have no direct impact on the animals, but may reduce the likelihood of incidents due to changes in residents' behavior.
- **Social:** Increasing public awareness will promote voluntary action to discourage black bear and mountain lion from coming into the city and to exercise appropriate personal safety precautions. Education and outreach will lead to a better community understanding and appreciation of the relationship between people and the natural environment.

OTHER IMPACTS:

- **Fiscal:** Implementing the Action Plan will cost approximately \$10,000 annually over the next three years. The 2012 recommended budget will allow for spending \$10,000 of the Community Planning and Sustainability budget for the Urban Wildlife program to

implement this plan by improving the city's website and for additional public outreach and education. Implementation at this level in future years will be dependent on continued funding.

- Staff time: Staff time will be required to implement this plan. There is also the possibility of increased staff time necessary if adaptive management leads to further actions in the future.

PUBLIC FEEDBACK:

A public meeting was held in January 2010 to identify issues associated with black bears and mountain lions in the urban service area. Public input gathered at this meeting, through community listserves and the city website identified the following key issues:

- Inconsistent communication coming from the city and the Colorado Division of Wildlife;
- Need for additional ongoing public education;
- Insufficient management of trash and other attractants; and
- Feeding wildlife.

This feedback was considered in the development and evaluation of the proposed options. Public input on policy options was also gathered at five "Boulder Matters" events in fall 2010 and through the city's website. Public input on the draft plan was requested through community listserves, a public open house on Sept. 14, 2011 and through the city's website (**Attachment B**).

BACKGROUND:

The need for the UWMP was recognized during the development of the city's Wildlife Protection Ordinance in 2005. During the ordinance adoption process, council highlighted the need for a broad, citywide context for making site-specific wildlife management decisions. In response to this need, council directed staff to develop an urban wildlife management plan, beginning with a prairie dog management component.

ANALYSIS:

The plan was drafted based on public, board and council feedback collected over the past two years. The plan includes an adaptive management approach to addressing trash as the primary urban attractant for black bears. Adaptive management involves working with the community, monitoring, and proposing next steps based on results (see Chapter II of the plan). This component also includes a Mountain Lion Awareness Plan to improve interagency communication and increase public awareness about mountain lion activity.

Adaptive Management Approach

Four alternative options to address trash attracting bears were explored (see Chapter II for description of options). While the most effective approach to reducing trash as an attractant is to increase the use of bear-resistant containers in western Boulder, requiring the use of bear resistant containers does not appear to be supported by the community, due to the associated costs. Thus, this approach is not recommended by staff at this time. Using the plan's adaptive management approach, staff will evaluate alternative methods and community reception to successfully secure trash from bears, while addressing the identified obstacles over the next two years. A successful community-supported program that improves the way trash is secured from bears must consider the following:

1. Cost

While community members do not seem opposed to the use of bear resistant-containers, the city received feedback that the current cost estimates of an additional \$12 per month per household is too expensive. Staff will work with the community and trash service providers over the next two years to explore ways to decrease the cost that would be borne by residents.

2. Increased compliance with current trash ordinance

Although Boulder requires residents and businesses to secure trash from animals, the law has been difficult to enforce because violations are only investigated when reported, and trash is often visited and scattered by bears in the evening or early morning hours. If an incident is reported, the trash has often been cleaned up prior to the arrival of an officer, leaving no evidence of bear activity and thus preventing staff from issuing a warning or summons. Prior to creating new trash ordinances, staff will explore ways to improve compliance with current trash requirements through additional education and outreach.

3. Greater community consensus on solutions to resolve the bear “problem”

An underlying assumption of this plan is that it is unacceptable for residents to create situations in which bears can: continually (weekly or daily) access trash; become habituated to people and the attractants they generate (primarily trash); and to consequently be killed (approximately one per year) due to their behavior that is either a nuisance or a potential threat to public safety. Staff will continue to document the magnitude of bear activity related to trash, the investment and cost of staff time responding to bear calls in the city, and the impact to the bears themselves. This information will be used to solicit ideas and feedback from the community on future program and trash management changes that work to improve the issues that have been identified.

4. Compatibility with Zero Waste Master Plan

The city is in the process of updating the Master Plan for Waste Reduction. The update to this plan, now titled the Zero Waste Master Plan, will identify recommended facilities, programs, services and regulatory changes that will move Boulder toward its zero waste goals. Staff will continue to work together to ensure a coordinated approach to management of food waste, recognizing potential impacts to bears.

Mountain Lion Awareness Plan

Possible approaches to reducing mountain lion attractants in the city are controversial and not largely supported by the community. As managing lion attractants or prey is extremely challenging (see plan **Appendix E** for a discussion of management strategies), staff is proposing to focus efforts on education and increasing public awareness through a Mountain Lion Awareness Plan. This strategy was developed with consideration of preliminary findings in the Colorado Department of Parks and Wildlife (CPW, formally CDOW) Front Range Mountain Lion Study (**Attachment C**).

NEXT STEPS:

Implementation of the plan will begin in 2012 with the following action items:

- Develop a website to provide public access to data on reported activity and information on local black bear and mountain lion behavior.
- Enhance current education and outreach efforts which include educational programs, media story placements, printed pamphlets and sign postings.
- Establish protocols for interagency and interdepartmental exchange of black bear and mountain lion sighting and management information.
- Implement monitoring of bear activity related to trash.
- Use information gathered in bear activity monitoring to inform Zero Waste Master Plan policy decisions.

Action item scheduled for 2013 include:

- Continue website enhancements, increased education and outreach efforts, and communication protocols, adjusting as appropriate based on experience and feedback from 2012 activities.

Action item scheduled for 2014 include:

- Solicit feedback and evaluate community reception and economic feasibility of policy change associated with securing trash from black bear.

ATTACHMENTS:

- A:** City of Boulder Urban Wildlife Management Plan Black Bear and Mountain Lion Component
- B:** Comments Received on the Draft Black Bear and Mountain Lion Component of the Urban Wildlife Management Plan
- C:** Article on the Front Range Mountain Lion Study currently being conducted in Boulder titled: *Cougars on the Edge*