

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

This *Wildlife Management Plan* (“Plan”) was prepared for the City of Longmont Parks and Open Space Division as an outgrowth of the Open Space and Trails Master Plan adopted on May 7, 2002. The first goal arising from the Open Space and Trails Master Plan process is to preserve natural and cultural resources. This goal directs that the Plan:

- Preserve natural areas, wildlife habitat, wetlands, agriculture, and visual corridors.
- Conserve natural resources including, but not limited to, forestlands, rangelands, agricultural lands, aquifer recharge areas, and surface water.

1.1.1 Wildlife Planning Process

Five policy goals in the Open Space and Trails Master Plan focus on wildlife. These goals, listed below, were used to help direct the development of this Plan:

- Open Space lands are acquired and managed for ecosystem effectiveness and for the accomplishment of multiple goals. The philosophy of the City should be to allow the coexistence of wildlife and human activity on Open Space properties.
- A wildlife management plan should be pursued as a next step, working in unison with neighboring and resource agencies.
- To the extent possible, wildlife management on Open Space sites should preserve existing wildlife habitats and promote improvement of degraded habitats.
- Prairie dog habitat has been identified as the largest single wildlife issue facing the City of Longmont currently. The wildlife management plan should specifically include a section addressing prairie dog habitat management.
- The bald eagle and the Preble’s meadow jumping mouse (“Preble’s”) are listed under the Endangered Species Act and are known to inhabit the Longmont area. The wildlife management plan should specifically include sections addressing bald eagle and Preble’s habitat management.

These policy goals provided the first component of Longmont’s wildlife planning process. The second component, broad-based participation in the process, has included input from the public and a Staff Advisory Team representing multiple municipal departments as well as county, state, and federal agencies, environmental groups, and other interested groups.

1.1.2 Relevant Regulations and Planning Guidance

Although the creation of this Plan was specified in the *Open Space and Trails Master Plan*, it is intended to be implemented on all City-owned or City-managed lands and, in some cases, to provide guidelines for wildlife management on private lands within the City. The *Open Space and Trails Master Plan* also recognized the need for a consistent ecosystem emphasis between Longmont and neighboring jurisdictions and specified that this Plan should be integrated with relevant county,

state, and federal laws and regional planning documents. Many of these other entities have adopted their own ordinances, regulations, and guidance related to wildlife and habitat management. In cases of overlap, federal and state regulations take precedence over this Plan. In addition, a number of parallel policies incorporated into regional planning and guidance documents tier into, and are supported by, this Plan. These are summarized below.

Endangered Species Act

The federal Endangered Species Act provides a program for the conservation of threatened and endangered plants and animals and the habitats where they are found. The [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#) of the [Department of the Interior](#) maintains the list of 632 endangered species (326 are plants) and 190 threatened species (78 are plants). The law prohibits any action that results in a "taking" of a listed species or adversely affects habitat. "Taking" is interpreted broadly to include harassment, interference with critical behaviors (e.g., breeding, feeding), and destruction of nests and critical habitat as well as direct physical harm to individual animals.

<http://endangered.fws.gov/>

Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act

The federal Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act prohibits the taking or possession of and commerce in bald and golden eagles, with limited exceptions. As with the Endangered Species Act, "taking" is interpreted broadly.

<http://ipl.unm.edu/cwl/fedbook/eagleact.html>

Migratory Bird Treaty Act

The federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act implements various treaties and conventions between the U.S. and Canada, Japan, Mexico, or the former Soviet Union for the protection of migratory birds. Under the Act, taking, killing, or possessing migratory birds (including all native species, even if not migratory *per se*) is unlawful. "Taking" is interpreted to include destruction of active nests and activities that interfere with breeding, feeding, or other critical behaviors.

<http://ipl.unm.edu/cwl/fedbook/mbta.html>

Colorado Division of Wildlife Regulations and Strategic Plan

The Colorado Division of Wildlife is charged by the State of Colorado to protect, preserve, enhance, and manage wildlife and habitat. The Colorado Division of Wildlife enforces regulations pertaining to hunting, fishing, and other activities in which human-wildlife interactions are controlled.

<http://wildlife.state.co.us>

The *Colorado Division of Wildlife Strategic Plan* was adopted by the Colorado Wildlife Commission on January 11, 2002. The plan designates 42 goals for the Division, ten of which area considered highest priority. The City of Longmont can contribute to the accomplishment of a number of these goals through specific actions incorporated into the Plan.

<http://wildlife.state.co.us/about/StrategicPlan/StrategicPlanindex.asp>

Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan

The City of Longmont adopted the *Longmont Area Comprehensive Plan* in 1995 and revised it in 2003. That plan includes a number of goals, policies, and strategies that intersect those in this Plan. These include integrating quality development in land use and urban design decisions; redeveloping the central business district; enhancing environmental health through preservation of wetlands and other natural areas; and developing parks, greenways, and Open Space to preserve natural resources, connect spaces, provide low impact passive recreation, and enhance scenic gateways to the City.

<http://www.ci.longmont.co.us/planning/lacp/>

City of Longmont Development Code

The *City of Longmont Development Code* includes a number of regulations that pertain to acquisition or management of wildlife habitat, including required environmental site assessments, zoning districts, potential mitigation requirements, and specified setbacks and buffer zone management for specific natural resources. Some of the topics covered by recommendations presented in this Plan are already addressed in the City of Longmont Development Standards. The inclusion in this Plan of those recommendations is intended to highlight specific changes that the City should consider or to emphasize topics addressed by the existing code requirements.

http://www.ci.longmont.co.us/planning/dev_code/

City of Longmont Open Space and Trails Master Plan

Referred to above, the *Open Space and Trails Master Plan* was adopted in May 2002. The plan provides direction for establishment of priorities to guide Open Space purchases and makes recommendations for trail acquisition and development and Open Space management issues.

<http://www.ci.longmont.co.us/openspace/masterplan.htm>

Boulder County Comprehensive Plan

Most recently amended in 1999, the *Boulder County Comprehensive Plan* recognizes Longmont as a subdivision within its jurisdictional region and the St. Vrain Creek corridor as a significant natural, economic, and regional resource. The Open Space Goals, Policies, and Maps Element incorporates extensive mapping data to define a number of related resource types and locations. These include Natural Landmarks, Natural Areas, Environmental Conservation Areas, Wetlands, Critical Wildlife Habitat, Significant Plant Communities, Rare Plant Areas, and Significant Riparian Corridors. The Plan uses the same data sources as these layers.

<http://www.co.boulder.co.us/lu/bccp/>

Boulder County Open Space Management Plans

A number of Boulder County Open Space holdings are managed under individual plans.

<http://www.co.boulder.co.us/openspace/>

St. Vrain Greenway Master Plan

The *St. Vrain Greenway Master Plan* was updated in July 2001 to include the eastern portion of the St. Vrain Greenway corridor, which extended Longmont's planned greenway from Weld County Road 1 to Weld County Road 7 and the newly acquired Boulder Creek Estates property (Longmont's first Open Space purchase). It calls for creating 7 miles of trail corridor to promote conservation awareness, wildlife habitat improvement, and a variety of recreational opportunities.

http://www.ci.longmont.co.us/parks/park_list/greenwaylist.htm

St. Vrain Creek Corridor Open Space Management Plan

Still in draft form as of the date of the preparation of this Plan, the *St. Vrain Creek Corridor Open Space Management Plan* focuses on Boulder County Parks and Open Space properties located within the St. Vrain Creek corridor. It provides specific management direction for natural, cultural, agricultural, and passive recreational opportunities within the corridor.

<http://www.ci.longmont.co.us/openspace/masterplan.htm>

St. Vrain Trail Master Plan

The Boulder County Commissioners adopted the *St. Vrain Trail Master Plan* in January 2004. It focuses on natural resource protection and recreational enhancement in the St. Vrain Creek corridor.

http://www.ci.longmont.co.us/openspace/managment_plans/

1.2 Purpose of the Longmont Wildlife Management Plan

The primary purposes of this Plan are threefold:

- Develop management policies and information for three broad categories of wildlife: federally listed threatened or endangered species, other species with a special legal status (“regulatory species”), species that add significantly to Longmont’s biodiversity, and species that may in some situations represent a nuisance or management problem (“problem wildlife”).
- Develop and apply a methodology using spatial analysis of satellite imagery, existing GIS-based resource information, limited ground-truthing, and basic principles of ecology to classify Open Space lands into “management zones” (preservation, restoration, recreation, maintenance).
- Develop and apply a methodology using the same inputs as in the preceding bullet to prioritize future acquisition of lands for addition to the Open Space system.

Section 2 describes the public process for the Plan. Section 3 describes the project area. Sections 4 through 6 present information related to the three purposes listed above. Section 7 recommends policies, ordinances, and modifications to the Land Development Code to help in meeting Plan goals. Appendices A through E present supporting information, as follows: Appendix A – Figures 1 through 6; Appendix B – Vertebrate Species List; Appendix C – Maps 1 through 6; Appendix D – City of Longmont Development Standards, Sections 15.05.02 (*Protection of Rivers/Streams/Wetlands*), 15.05.03 (*Habitat and Species Protection*), and 15.05.04 (*Open Space, Including Parks and Greenways*); and Appendix E – Summaries of Focus Group Meetings.

2 PUBLIC PROCESS

Development of this Plan has included a number of steps to engage the community's interests. These were scoped to reflect the "consult" level of the City's public involvement guidance, which assures the public that the project will endeavor to "keep them informed, acknowledge concerns, and provide feedback to demonstrate how the public input influenced the decision."

During development of this Plan, a Staff Advisory Team was formed, comprising:

- Longmont's Project Manager (Daniel Wolford)
- representatives of City departments (Airport, City Attorney, City Manager, Fire, Forestry, Golf Services, Neighborhood Resources, Open Space and Trails, Parks, Planning and Development, Police/Animal Control, Public Information, Public Works, and Water/Wastewater Utilities)
- representatives of Boulder County Parks and Open Space, the Weld County Planning Department, the Colorado Division of Wildlife, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service

The Staff Advisory Team provided invaluable assistance by sharing "on the ground" experience and resources previously developed for their own wildlife management efforts.

Members of the Staff Advisory Team and the consultants held internal discussions and conducted four public meetings to begin the process of gathering input from the community. The internal discussions focused on laying out the objectives and approaches for the project and reviewing methodologies and preliminary information. Public participation included an initial community open house forum and a series of three focus group meetings.

Prior to the community open house in April 2004, the City mailed more than 3,000 postcards to the citizens of Longmont to announce the launching of the Plan development process and invite their attendance and participation. Approximately two dozen citizens attended the open house and, although this number was much smaller than anticipated, conversations between the project team and public participants were very helpful and identified individuals who would be interested in participating in the focus group meetings.

The project team then developed agenda for three focus group discussions to review the context and environmental considerations of the project, including habitat considerations, species of concern, and "problem" wildlife. The focus group meetings were held in May, June, and July 2004. Approximately twelve citizens representing a range of community components—including business, City boards, environmental groups, and agricultural interest—participated in the information review and discussions. The focus groups aided the consultant team greatly by identifying wildlife species, wildlife habitat types, and wildlife management issues of greatest concern to community interest leaders and indicating the types of wildlife management practices that citizens would support. Summaries of the three focus group meetings are provided in Appendix E.

This Plan was reviewed in front of the community in one public meeting in October 2004 and presented to the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (also with public input) in November 2004. The Plan was then revised to reflect suggestions and concerns from the Board prior to consideration by City Council in December 2004. A subsequent revision incorporated additional input from City planning staff and the City Manager, Gordon Pedrow.