



# Parks & Open Space

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## PARKS & OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

**TO:** Parks & Open Space Advisory Committee

**DATE:** Thursday, February 24, 2022

**AGENDA ITEM TITLE:** Strategic Plan Overview: Agricultural and Water Resources Workgroup

**PRESENTERS:** Mike Foster, Agricultural Resources Manager

**ACTION REQUESTED:** Information Only

### Background

In 2019, staff embarked on an internal planning process to ensure that our work reflects strategic priorities and moves us toward our desired future conditions and goals. The result of this work is a strategic plan for every workgroup in Parks & Open Space that sets priorities and informs employee workplans. Over the course of 2021, work groups provided an overview of their strategic objectives to POSAC and this month's presentations will be from the Agricultural Resource Management Division.

In 2021, the Agricultural Resource Management Division worked to more clearly define and streamline its short and long-term goals associated with the Department's 2025 Strategic Lenses:

1. **Cultural Responsiveness and Inclusion.** Provide welcoming, inclusive, and responsive opportunities for marginalized and underserved populations.
2. **Resilience.** Prepare for, respond to, and minimize the impacts of climate, environmental, social, and economic changes.
3. **Maintenance Backlog.** Maintain our public amenities, infrastructure, and natural resources.
4. **Safety.** Ensure the safety and well-being of our staff, volunteers, and visitors.

Based on these Strategic Lenses, the Ag Division established five top level goals for the ag team and three goals for water. Under each of those goals, a 2025 Measurement was established in order to help track progress. Nested under the 2025 Measurement are the measurable objectives for 2022, which will be updated each year, that will help achieve progress towards the 2025 target.

### Agricultural Resources DFC

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Thriving agricultural lands for generations to come

#### Agricultural Resources Goals and Objectives

1. **Manage agricultural land for healthy and productive soils and natural resource values**

**2025 Measurement:** Current operating plans in place for all properties and prairie dog population reduced to 75% below 2020 levels

- Complete Operating plans on 10 existing properties and new acquisitions annually
- Eliminate PDs on seven priority properties AHI, Lohr, Bragg, Dirks, Hirschfeld, Cushman and Western Mobile
- Restore prairie dog damage on 60 acres at AHI complex
- Develop soil health scorecard and score five properties and incorporate them into new operating plans

**2. Attract, retain, and partner with good farmers and ranchers to care for the land.**

**2025 Measurement:** 90% of leases are renewed annually based on exemplary performance.

At least 10 new farmers are mentored annually

- Update bid scoring matrix to ensure open and equitable process
- Identify and define qualities of properties that make them appropriate for new farmers/ranchers.
- Establish a succession plan framework for existing tenants
- Develop framework for tenants to engage in outside funding opportunities
- Identify and secure two ag properties for housing

**3. Invest in and maintain infrastructure that supports agricultural operations.**

**2025 Measurement:** Quantify and prioritize the total maintenance backlog

- Successfully complete those projects that receive funding
- Staff receive annual equipment refresher trainings to reduce the risk of injury
- Identify top three infrastructure priorities, by property, with cost estimate
- Develop plan to purchase pivots not owned by county
- Explore workorder system
- Develop methodology to grade/evaluate existing infrastructure

**4. Optimize the efficient and effective on-farm application of irrigation water.**

**2025 Measurement:** Measure water use on 100% of farms irrigated with pivots, laterals and drip systems

- Identify top three infrastructure priorities, by property, with cost estimate
- Install soil moisture monitoring devices on 15 pivots

**5. Optimize inputs to effectively manage ag lands.**

**2025 Measurement:** Develop scorecard to rank pesticide use

- Quantify pesticide use and develop baseline for crop share properties
- Assess Integrated Pest Management (IPM) forms for usefulness and make changes as necessary

**Water Workgroup DFC**

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Water rights are fully utilized to benefit agriculture, ecosystems and recreation on POS lands.

**Water Workgroup Goals and Objectives**

**1. Provide technical and legal guidance for the benefit of Boulder County's watersheds, services, and projects.**

**2025 Measurement:** Ensure interdepartmental projects and programs are consistent with Colorado water law.

- Provide ongoing water rights technical and administrative support for the department.
- Provide outreach and education to the divisions on water rights legal and administrative requirements related to current and future project requests.

**2025 Measurement:** Defend existing and acquire new water rights

- Manage legal counsel and external negotiations on water rights development, changes of use, and defense from legal injury

**2. Develop and maintain a comprehensive inventory of the department's water rights and infrastructure and an understanding of the supply/demand gap**

**2025 Measurement:** Develop and maintain a comprehensive water database

- Document all surface and groundwater assets and related information.

**3. Support the department's efforts to lease, develop, and acquire additional water rights that benefit open space values**

**2025 Measurement:** Establish processes to develop water rights

- Work with other divisions to develop a list of short- and long-term priorities for water rights development
- Create an Off-Stream Livestock Water/Riparian Grazing working group and agree on top 10 priorities
- Develop and implement a well program, including a Standard Operating Procedure for development, permitting, and rehabilitation of new or existing wells and present the new program guidelines to the various divisions
- Work with Real Estate staff to communicate priority acquisitions as well as water resources staff requirements for maintaining new water rights acquisitions, including infrastructure improvements, long term maintenance and regulatory considerations.

**POSAC Action Requested**  
Information Only