

PRAIRIE RIDGE NATURAL AREA 2018 MANAGEMENT PLAN



CITY OF LOVELAND OPEN LANDS & TRAILS



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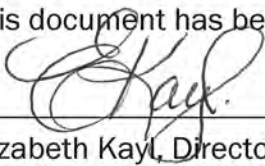
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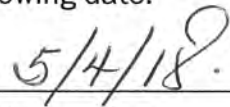
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PRAIRIE RIDGE NATURAL AREA 2018 MANAGEMENT PLAN

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose and Objectives of the Plan

The purpose of the Prairie Ridge Natural Area Management Plan is to establish an inventory and framework for the protection, management, restoration and enhancement of the site's natural, cultural, visual, and recreational resources. The Management Plan also provides specific recommendations for wildlife/habitat protection and restoration, cultural/historic resources preservation, visitor use management, and educational/interpretive opportunities. Management recommendations are presented in conjunction with proposed actions to provide a framework for plan implementation. These actions will be executed as funding and organizational capacity allows.

The objectives of the Prairie Ridge Natural Area Management Plan are fourfold, and include:

- Protect, maintain, and enhance healthy ecosystems and their natural processes.
- Specify management actions that will successfully meet Prairie Ridge Natural Area's site management plan objectives.
- Offer diverse, enjoyable, safe, and environmentally sustainable recreational opportunities that encourage visitors to experience the natural, cultural and visual resources of Prairie Ridge Natural Area.
- Provide opportunities for environmental education and interpretation.

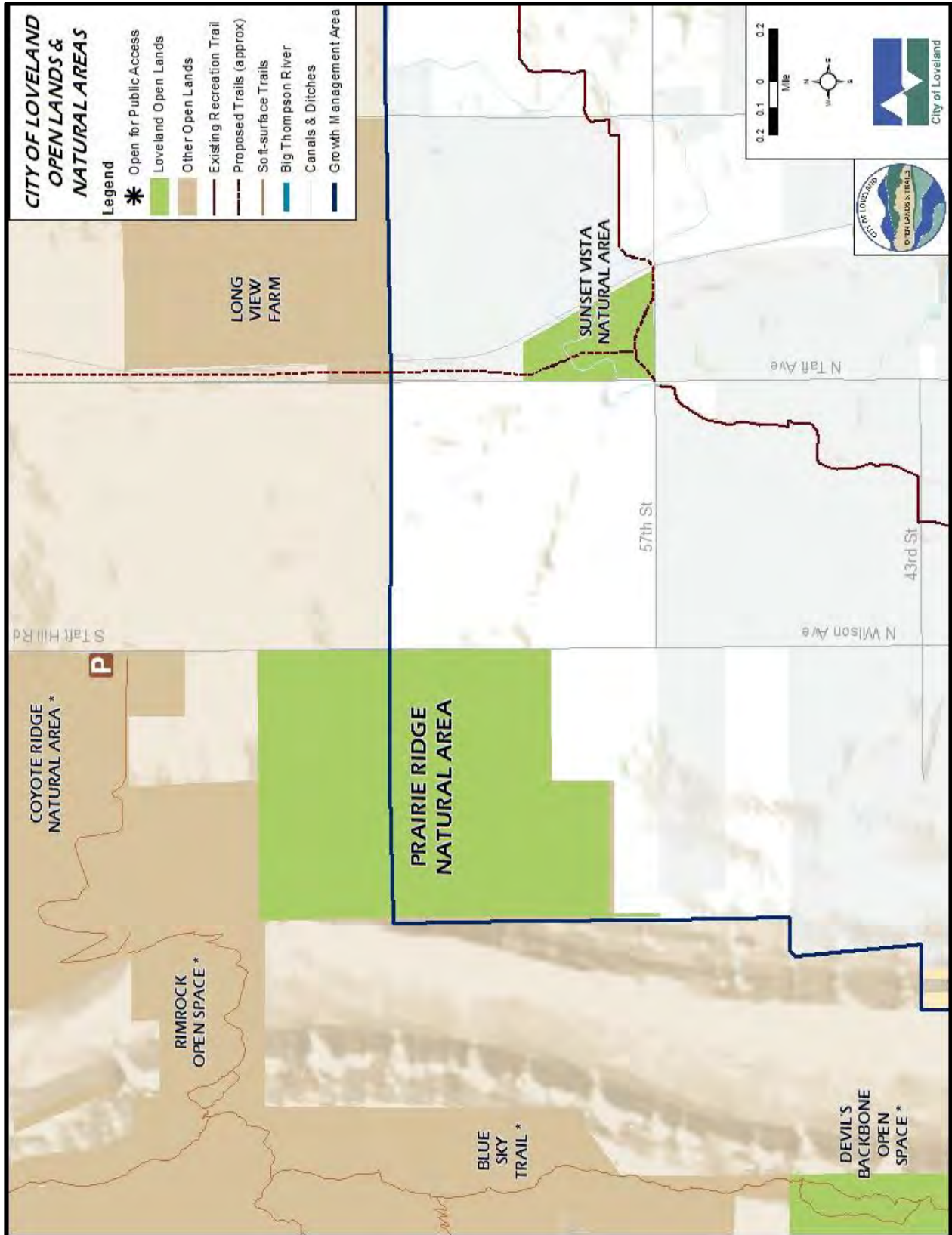
1.2 Land Use History

The Sauer family of Loveland, Colorado owned the property from 1961 until 2000, when the City of Loveland, City of Fort Collins, and Larimer County jointly purchased the 785-acre parcel as part of a 3,500-acre "community separator" between the two cities (see Figure 1 – Location Map). Loveland and Fort Collins co-own Prairie Ridge Natural Area (75% and 25% ownership, respectively), Larimer County and Colorado Open Lands co-hold a conservation easement on the property, and Loveland manages the site.

The Sauers report that the land has been farmed since approximately 1900. From 1961 to 1997, the Sauer family also used the northwestern third of the property for cattle grazing.

Currently, dryland wheat farming continues on the cultivated portion (approximately 550 acres) of the property under a lease agreement with the City of Loveland. Prairie Ridge is the largest open land property managed by Loveland. The site has been closed to public access since its acquisition in 2000.

FIGURE 1: Location Map



1.3 Scope and Organization of the Plan

The Prairie Ridge Natural Area Management Plan is structured to initially describe the existing conditions of the site in order to establish a better understanding of the opportunities and constraints of Prairie Ridge Natural Area. The existing conditions surveyed include: natural, visual and cultural resources, existing improvements, and mineral/water rights.

After describing the existing conditions at the Natural Area, the Management Plan will cover the topics of natural resource management, visitor management and education, cultural resource management, and management plan implementation. Finally, it provides appendices consisting of species lists, the Deed of Conservation Easement, Open Space Management Plan type descriptions, and public feedback comments.

The scope of this plan is limited to management of Prairie Ridge Natural Area and potential future trail connections to adjacent protected lands and trail systems.

1.4 Public and Agency Involvement

Public Outreach and Involvement

The public was invited to share their thoughts about the management and potential public access to Prairie Ridge Natural Area through several venues. In September 2017, the City of Loveland began a public outreach campaign specifically for the Prairie Ridge trail and trailhead project. The City's Open Lands Advisory Commission was consulted to solicit feedback and ensure support prior to taking concepts to the public. A survey designed to obtain feedback on proposed trail development at Prairie Ridge was provided in physical and online formats to the public. In total, 347 community members responded to the survey between September 10 and October 13, 2017. Seventy-five surveys were completed by visitors at the adjacent Coyote Ridge Natural Area on three separate dates in September 2017 and 20 surveys were completed at a public meeting. Online surveys totaled 275 responses. The survey consisted of 10 multiple choice questions and included an optional comment section. The questions identified recreation demographics of potential visitors, including recreational activity preference and frequency, residential area of users, regional trail use, and average distance traveled. The survey also asked users to indicate whether they would use the proposed trail network and to what capacity, as well as to share any comments or concerns regarding the proposal. In addition to multiple choice answers, 167 comments were shared with the department via the survey, and are included for reference in Appendix D.

A public meeting was held on September 29, 2017 from 5:00 to 6:30 pm at Crossroads Church in north Loveland. The purpose of the open house-style meeting was for the public to review site information and draft concept plans and provide input and ideas on the development of the site for passive recreation uses. The meeting was announced to the public through a press release, communicated in interactions with visitors at the Coyote Ridge trailhead, advertised through local media outlets, shared through city social media accounts, and shared on Loveland, Fort Collins, and Larimer County's websites. Stakeholder groups also announced the

meeting to members through email lists. Approximately 35 members of the public attended the meeting including neighbors, open space users, project partners, and other stakeholders.

A soft-surface trail has been planned at Prairie Ridge since its acquisition in 2000, with a general trail alignment identified in the conservation easement. Proposed development plans presented for public input included: 0.65-mile crusher-fine ADA accessible trail, 2.4-mile natural-surface loop trail, 0.8-mile natural-surface connector trail to Coyote Ridge Natural Area, 26-car gravel parking lot, wetland enhancements, road widening and turn lane on Wilson Ave, interpretive sign program, drainage crossing, and vault restroom. The multi-use trail system would accommodate a variety of passive recreation uses, such as hiking, wildlife viewing, trail running and mountain biking. The proposed trails would provide connections to Coyote Ridge Natural Area to the north, thereby linking Prairie Ridge to over 65 miles of regional soft- and natural-surface trails, including Rim Rock, Blue Sky, Indian Summer and Devil's Backbone trails, and trail networks at Horsetooth Mountain Open Space and Lory State Park. Proposed Prairie Ridge trails would also connect south to Loveland's 20-mile Recreation Trail, a 10-foot wide concrete path that encircles the city to provide users with safe, non-motorized transportation options to schools, libraries, parks, neighborhoods, a recreation center, and the Big Thompson River Corridor.

Public feedback from the survey and open house indicated a significant amount of support for trail development at Prairie Ridge. Key findings from the survey include;

- Of the 347 respondents, 192 (or 55%) said they lived in Fort Collins. 106 respondents (or 30.5%) live in Loveland. 24 individuals (7%) live in unincorporated Larimer County. The remaining 25 respondents (7%) answered that they live in other areas.
- 98% of respondents indicated that they would use the proposed trail system at Prairie Ridge.
- Most users (75%) reported using Coyote Ridge Natural Area to connect to other regional trail systems.
- Many respondents (52%) reported that they would use Prairie Ridge to connect to Coyote Ridge and other regional trails and open spaces.
- 18% of respondents specified they would primarily use Prairie Ridge instead of the adjacent Coyote Ridge, and 47.5% said they would use both areas equally.
- This trail will likely attract hikers (60%), mountain bikers (50%), wildlife viewers (30%) and trail runners (25%) based on survey results at Coyote Ridge.
- Visitation numbers collected at Coyote Ridge this year indicate the existing trailhead will receive 40,000 visitors. Given the proximity of Prairie Ridge to Coyote Ridge, approximately 20,000 to 30,000 visitors are anticipated annually at Prairie Ridge.

Supplementary comments provided additional insight into public opinion on trail development at Prairie Ridge. Of the 167 comments submitted, the vast majority were in support of the plan. Common themes in the comments included:

- a desire to build more trails in the region in order to disperse users, especially due to the congestion at Coyote Ridge;
- a desire to mitigate any potential impacts development might have on wildlife;
- desires for additional beginner, intermediate, and advanced mountain bike trails and skills courses;
- a fear of snakes;
- conflicting desires to both allow and ban dogs in the area;
- conflicting desires to have multiple-use trails (including horseback riding) and single-use trails;
- an interest in more regionally-connected trails and access to these trail networks;
- an interest in another connection to soft- and hard-surface trails in Larimer County and Fort Collins for users in Loveland;
- a preference for more parking;
- concerns about the safety of turning left from Wilson Ave and riding bikes along Wilson Ave to access the trailhead; and
- concerns about trespassers on adjacent private property.

The draft management plan was made available to the public online for review and comment in April 2018. Comments were generally favorable to developing the property with trails for public access, connecting to other regional trail systems, and protecting the site's resources. The full list of comments from all public input is attached in Appendix D.

Demand for recreational opportunities has continued to rise in northern Colorado along with population growth, and due to its proximity to urban areas and potential connections to over 65 miles of regional trails, Prairie Ridge Natural Area has the potential to provide crucial opportunities and connections for non-motorized recreation in the region. Prairie Ridge straddles the northwest corner of Loveland's urban growth area, and proposals for five single-family housing developments, each totaling at least 400 homes, are currently being considered for development within one mile of Prairie Ridge. Master planning processes have repeatedly demonstrated Loveland's desire for more access to soft-surface trails and outdoor recreation. The 2014 Loveland Parks and Recreation Master Plan ranked trails and paths as the greatest recreational need in Loveland. The 2015 Larimer County Open Lands Plan identified a desire among county residents to develop a system of regional trails to connect communities to each other and with open spaces and other public lands (Larimer County 2015, 23). The 2013 Colorado Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan identified "complete a regional trail system" as the third most significant investment need in the state (CPW 2013).

Agency Involvement

Several local land agencies are involved in the ownership and management of Prairie Ridge. The cities of Loveland and Fort Collins co-own the property (75% and 25% ownership respectively); Larimer County and Colorado Open Lands (a state-wide non-profit land trust) co-hold the Conservation Easement, and Loveland manages the property. The proposed trail concept at Prairie Ridge was developed in close consultation with these partners, along with trail designers, wildlife biologists, trail construction/maintenance staff, and botany specialists (staff from Larimer County, Fort Collins and Loveland). Resource specialists from other organizations were also consulted during the planning process, and include Colorado Parks and Wildlife and the Colorado Natural Heritage Program. Between February 2016 and August 2017, agency staff and resource specialists toured the site on multiple occasions to assess existing conditions and to determine the most sustainable trail design from a maintenance, constructability and resource conservation perspective.

Advisory Boards

Three citizen boards have been included throughout the Prairie Ridge planning process and will review the management plan: the City of Loveland Open Lands Advisory Commission, Larimer County Open Lands Advisory Board, and City of Fort Collins Land Conservation and Stewardship Advisory Board. The advisory boards are considered stakeholders and input is taken into consideration in this plan.

2. EXISTING CONDITIONS

2.1 Overview

The 785-acre Prairie Ridge Natural Area lies on the east side of the Front Range where the foothills of the Rocky Mountains meet the Great Plains, and contributes to over 8,500 acres of public land extending from the plains to the foothills in northern Larimer County. The majority (70% or 550 acres) of the Prairie Ridge property is used agriculturally and is currently in active dryland wheat production, with approximately half left fallow each year. The remaining 30% (approximately 235 acres), along the west side of the property, is in a natural condition consisting of short-grass prairie grasslands and hogbacks containing mountain mahogany shrublands and scattered ponderosa pine. Small swales and gullies cross the property from west to east, providing several wetland and riparian resources. A small ephemeral pond in the northwest section held water for cattle in the past (see Figure 2 – Site Analysis).

Several notable natural features are located within the Prairie Ridge property. Wetland swales traverse the property from west to east and are identified in the City's 2008 Natural Areas Sites Report as part of Site 76 – Ephemeral Drainage. This natural feature is a long, shallow drainage that flows into Dry Creek to the east. The wetlands provide a sheltered wildlife movement corridor and habitat for small mammals that provide a prey base for raptors, coyotes and foxes. The wetlands have potential for enhancement and improvement.

The hogbacks that form the western boundary of the property are part of Site 74 – Namaqua Ridge Hogbacks. This area is valuable for wildlife due to its connection to the larger Namaqua Ridge system and its shrub-dominated community which provides valuable foraging, denning, and hunting habitat for a variety of mammals, raptors, songbirds, and reptiles.

The property is bordered to the north and northeast by Coyote Ridge Natural Area, owned by Fort Collins; to the west by private property consisting primarily of 35-acre residential parcels; and to the south by private property retained and farmed by the Sauer family. The property has access from Wilson Ave. as well as via W. 57th St. through the Sauer family retained land. A private road on the adjacent property to the west (Ridge Park Way) leads to private properties and also connects to two farm roads entering the site from the west. These two-track roads traverse Prairie Ridge Natural Area from south to north at the base of each side of the middle hogback.

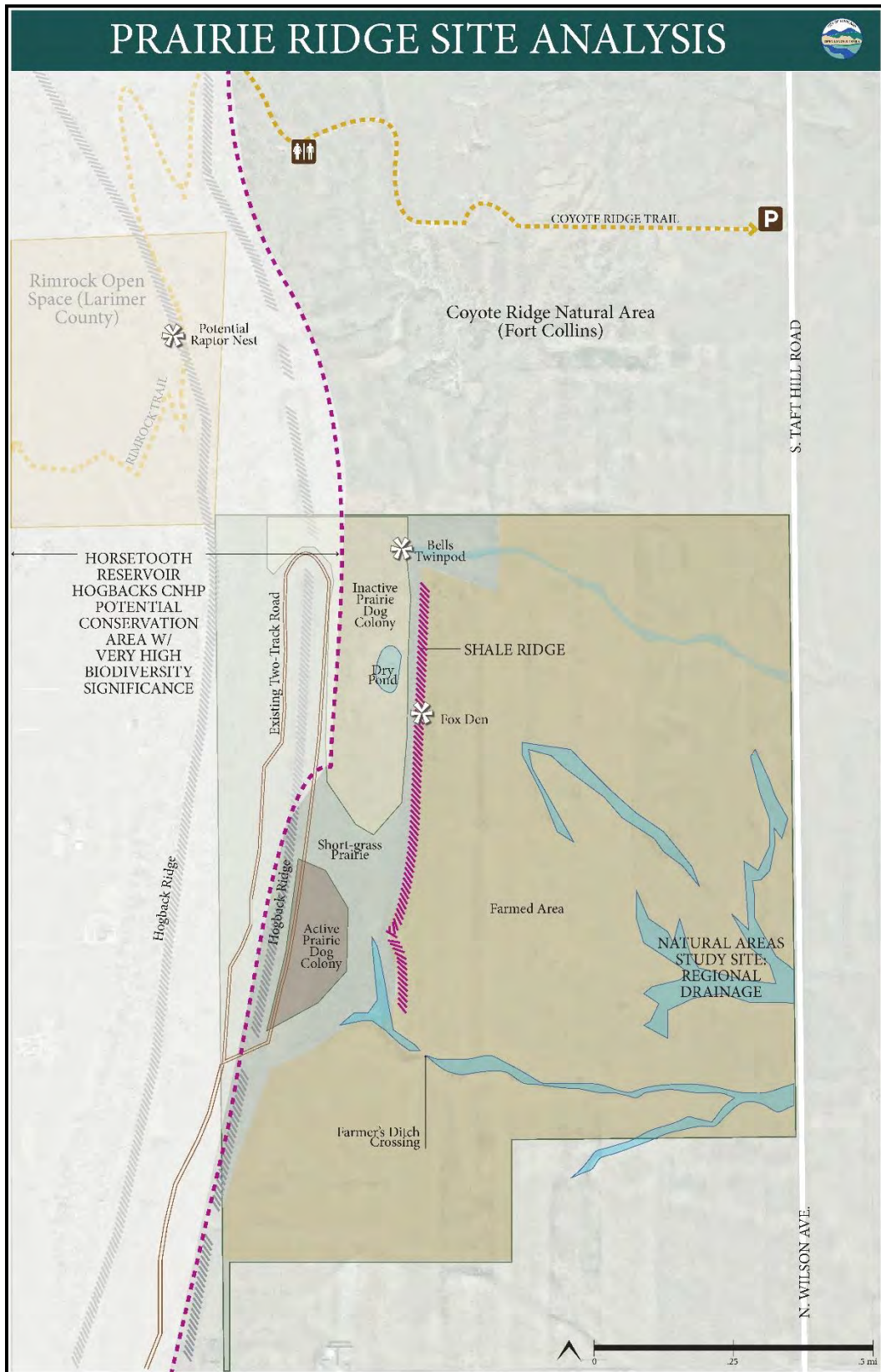
2.2 Natural Resources

Climate

Prairie Ridge Natural Area is located along the eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains and has highly variable weather. The climate is categorized as semi-arid with a strong seasonal variation in temperature, abundant sunshine and relatively low precipitation.

High temperatures average between 81-85°F between June and August and low temperatures average 21-23°F between November and March. Winters are generally

FIGURE 2: Site Analysis



cold but are characterized by significant temperature swings. High temperatures in the 50s are not uncommon in the winter months.

Average annual precipitation is 15-16 inches, with the greatest amount occurring in April and May. Average annual snowfall is approximately 41 inches, but as a result of wind redistribution and topographic patterns, the snow depth can vary throughout the site. Prevailing winds move west-east across the property.

Topography/Geology/Soils

Prairie Ridge Natural Area contains variable topography, including mildly rolling rangeland (0-6% slopes) on the eastern two-thirds of the property, and steeper hogbacks and shale ridges on the western third of the property, where sandstone or sandstone/limestone formations are exposed. A shale ridge bisecting the site north-south through most of the property separates the farmed area from the short-grass prairie. Two hogback ridges run generally north-south, one through the short-grass prairie and the other along the western boundary of the property. The hogbacks are part of the Dakota Hogback that can be traced from Wyoming to New Mexico, and the elevation provides expansive views of farmlands, prairie, and human development to the east and larger mountains to the west (City of Loveland 2001). The high point of the property is at 5,613' and is located in the far northwest corner of the site. The low point is at 5,135', located in the middle swale on the eastern portion of the site.

Prairie Ridge Natural Area contains at least 13 soil and soil complex types, as shown in Figure 3. The soil associations listed in the Soils Survey of Larimer County Area, Colorado by the USDA-NRCS, include the following (USDA-NRCS 1980):

136- Haverson Loam

This very deep, well-drained soil is found on gentle (0-3%) slopes. It is located in a small patch near the center of the Natural Area in the agricultural section. Runoff is very slow, and the risk of erosion is slight. The soil is suited to western wheatgrass, big bluestem, little bluestem, and green needlegrass.

96- Santana loam

This gently sloping soil (3-5% slopes) is generally found on terraces and uplands. It is located on a large portion of the southwestern corner of Prairie Ridge. Runoff is medium, and the risk of erosion is moderate. Under dryland management this soil is suited to wheat and barley.

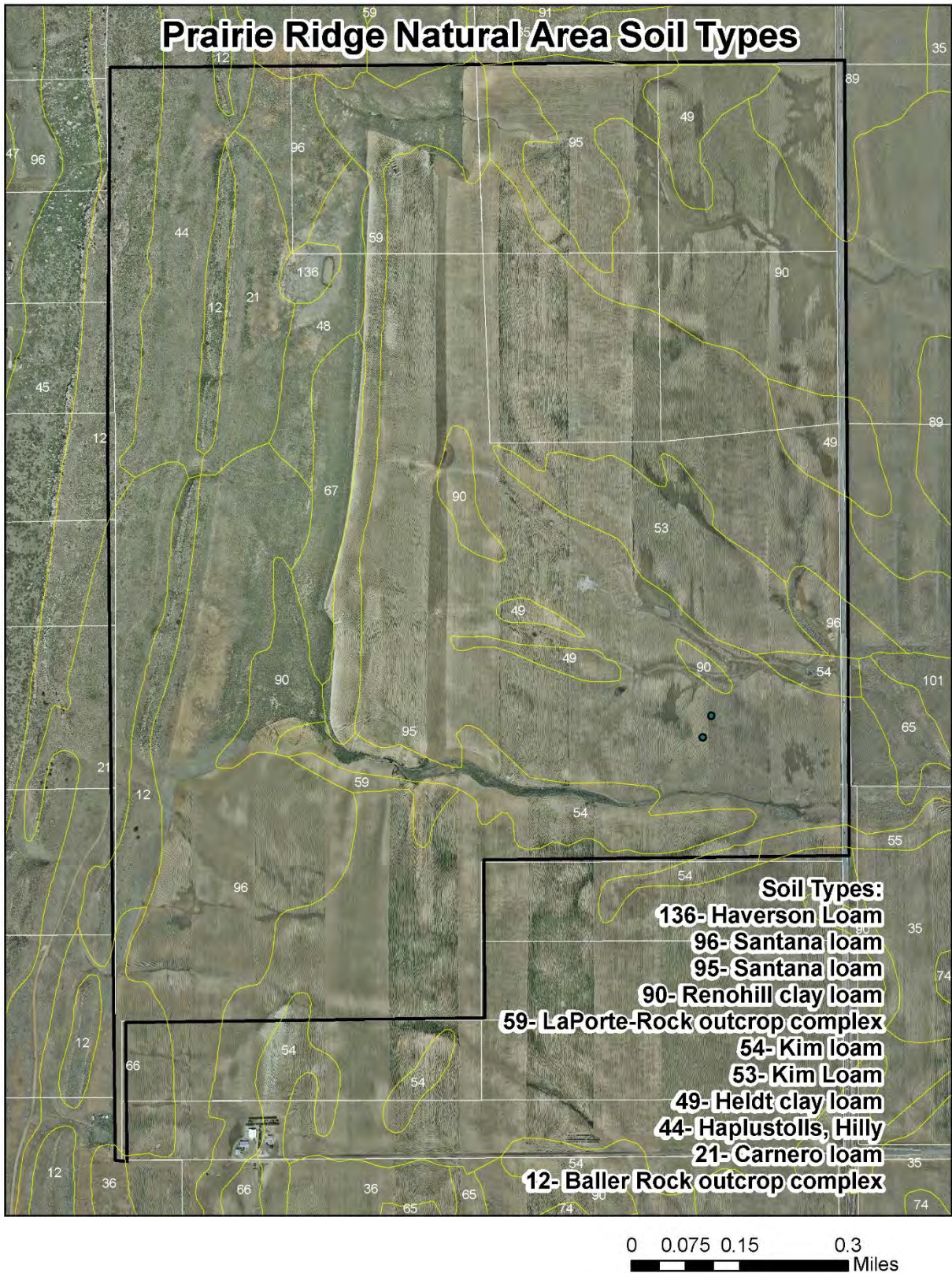
95- Santana loam

This nearly level soil (1-3% slopes) is generally found on terraces and uplands. This soil comprises much of the eastern portion of Prairie Ridge currently being used for agricultural purposes. Runoff is slight and the risk of erosion is slight to moderate. Under dryland management it is suited to wheat and barley, as well as pasture and native grasses.

90- Renohill clay loam

This soil is gently to strongly sloping (3-9%) and is located on uplands. It is found in Prairie Ridge in the northeast and southwest quadrants of the property, and

FIGURE 3: Soil Map



intermittently throughout the center of the property. Runoff is rapid and the risk of water erosion is severe. This soil is suited to pasture and native grasses.

59- LaPorte-Rock outcrop complex

This complex consists of gently to steeply sloped soils and rock outcroppings (3-30%) on uplands and ridges. In Prairie Ridge, it is located on a narrow strip running north-south at the eastern edge of the hogback. The soil is suited to pasture and native grasses.

54- Kim loam

This gradually sloping soil (3-5% slopes) consists of deep, well drained soils that formed in mixed alluvium. Runoff is medium and the risk of erosion is moderate. This soil comprises most of the drainage running east to west through the southern portion of Prairie Ridge. Under dryland management this soil is suited to pasture and native grasses.

53- Kim Loam

This nearly level soil (1-3% slope) consists of deep, well drained soils that formed in mixed alluvium. This soil is located on the eastern side of Prairie Ridge Natural Area. Runoff is slow and the risk of erosion is slight. Under dryland conditions this soil is suited for native grasses or pasture.

49- Heldt clay loam

This soil is found on gently- to strongly-sloping fans and hillsides (3-6% slope) and consists of deep, well drained soils formed in alluvium from clay shale. This soil type is found intermittently along the eastern portion of Prairie Ridge Natural Area. Runoff is rapid and the risk of wind erosion is moderate, while the risk of water erosion is high. Under dryland management this soil is suited to pasture and native grasses.

44- Haplustolls, Hilly

These strongly sloping to steep soils contain a significant mix of cobbly and stony surface layers. It is found in Prairie Ridge along the western border running north-south in a strip directly between two strips of Baller Rock outcrop complex. Runoff is rapid, and the risk of water erosion is moderate to severe. This soil is appropriate for native grasses.

21- Carnero loam

This gently to strongly sloping soil (3-9% slope) consists of moderately deep, well-drained soils and is found in the western portion of Prairie Ridge. Runoff is medium and the risk of water erosion is moderate. Under dryland conditions this soil is suited to wheat, barley, pasture, or native grasses.

12- Baller Rock outcrop complex

This complex consists of strongly sloping to steep (15-45%) soils on ridges and hogbacks. It is found in Prairie Ridge along the western border running north-south in a narrow strip. Runoff is rapid and the risk of erosion is severe. This complex is suited to native grasses.

Hydrology

Several swales and gullies cross the property from west to east, carrying water ephemeral during the year. The large swale in the southern portion of the property is fed by three main drainages that traverse the southern portion of the property from west to east (see Figure 2 – Site Analysis). Evidence of salts or alkalinity appears in the wet areas around the swales, which is likely due to runoff from agricultural practices. Wetlands act as natural filters for sediments in agricultural runoff. These drainages are designated by FEMA as being an area of minimal flood hazard.

A playa (a shallow wetland fed exclusively by rainfall and runoff) exists in the northwest portion of the property. Playas are generally dry for much of the year but may contain standing water after rain events. Playas provide important wetland functions, and this particular playa contains hydrophytic vegetation (wetland species) such as spreading yellowcress (*Rorripa sinuata*), which is a facultative wetland plant (CNHP 2017). This playa contains a diverse set of plant species and adds to the biodiversity of Prairie Ridge (CNHP 2017). The playa was also used in the past for livestock watering.

Vegetation Resources

Prairie Ridge Natural Area contains two distinct vegetative zones – the eastern two-thirds are currently cultivated in dryland wheat, and the western third contains more natural vegetation consisting of native and non-native shortgrass prairie, former rangeland, and foothills shrubland (see Figure 2 – Site Analysis). Botanical surveys were conducted on June 19 and September 23, 2017 by Colorado Natural Heritage Program botanists and field technicians, as well as a City of Loveland resource specialist. A total of 71 plant species were observed during these surveys of the natural area, although it should be noted this does not represent a complete inventory of the area. Of the 71 identified plant species, 57 were native and 14 were non-native species. See Appendix A for a list of plant species observed at Prairie Ridge Natural Area.

The western portion of the property includes a mix of very good condition native prairie with patches of more disturbed grasslands that contain numerous non-native species, likely due to historic grazing practices (CNHP 2017). The natural area also contains mountain mahogany and ponderosa pine on two hogbacks, with prairie grassland habitat distributed throughout, especially on the west side of the hogbacks.

The western portion of Prairie Ridge is located within the Rocky Mountain Lower Montane – Foothills shrubland ecosystem. This ecological system is found in the foothills and lower mountains of the Rocky Mountains, ranging from southern New Mexico to Wyoming. Scattered trees and inclusions of grassland patches may be present, but the vegetation is typically dominated by a variety of shrubs. A small portion of Prairie Ridge Natural Area lies within the Horsetooth Reservoir Hogbacks Potential Conservation Area (PCA) designated by Colorado Natural Heritage Program and ranks as a high biodiversity site (CNHP 2017). See Figure 2 – Site Analysis for a map of the Potential Conservation Area.

Two plant communities' habitats are present in the Lower Montane – Foothills Shrubland ecosystem. However, neither community was found in the abundance necessary to be considered present on the property. These potential communities include Mountain Mahogany/Scribner's Needlegrass shrubland (*Cercocarpus montanus* /*Archnatherum scribneri*) and Mountain Mahogany/New Mexico Feathergrass shrubland (*Cercocarpus montanus* /*Hesperostipa neomexicana*).

Rare Plants

Bell's Twinpod (*Physaria belli*) is endemic to Colorado and is only known to occur in Boulder and Larimer counties. The plant is considered to be state and globally threatened, and was included in the USGS 2015 State Wildlife Action plan species of greatest conservation concern list for Colorado (CNHP 2017). The Niobrara shale present in the shale ridge at Prairie Ridge Natural Area is typically associated with this rare species (City of Loveland 2001). Over 870 individuals of this species were located in a small area (approximately 50m x 30m) and the area was considered to be in very good condition (B rank) during a 2017 inspection (CNHP 2017).



Bell's Twinpod (Physaria belli). Photo courtesy Pam Smith

Another rare species, the Jeweled Blazingstar (*Mentzelia speciosa*), is known to be found nearby, and dead plant stalks of the species were identified in Prairie Ridge, although they contained no seeds or seedpods so their presence could not be confirmed (CNHP 2017).

Endangered and Threatened Plants

The site was surveyed for threatened and endangered species and none were observed. Consultation with Colorado Parks and Wildlife revealed this project would have negligible impacts on any threatened or endangered plant species located in the area.

Rare Plant Communities

The mountain mahogany-skunkbush sumac/big bluestem (*Cercocarpus montanus*-*Rhus trilobata*/*Andropogon gerardii*) Foothill Shrubland is only known to exist in

Colorado's northern Front Range, and is globally imperiled (CNHP 2017). The community has only six known locations, four of which are very small. This community was documented in the northwestern corner of Prairie Ridge Natural Area and is currently ranked as good to fair condition by CNHP. The community extends north into the adjacent Coyote Ridge Natural Area.

Exotic Plants and Noxious Weeds

The Colorado Noxious Weed Act, passed in 1991 and amended in 1996, mandates the control of noxious weeds by local governments. One List A, two List B and three List C Colorado noxious weed species have been observed in Prairie Ridge Natural Area. Cypress spurge (*Euphorbia cyparissias*) is the List A species present in the natural area, which requires eradication in Colorado. Approximately 30 Cypress spurge plants were identified within 70 meters of the rare Bell's twinpod plants. Jointed goatgrass (*Aegilops cylindrical*) and Musk thistle (*Carduus nutans*) are List B species identified in Prairie Ridge, which requires management to contain the spread of infestations. Cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*), Field bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis*), and Common Mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*) are List C species identified in the natural area, which are required to be managed where deemed appropriate. The Loveland Open Lands Division engages in active noxious weed control on all sites that it manages, typically including the use of herbicides and mowing.

Agricultural Resources

The eastern two-thirds of the property, representing approximately 550 acres, is cultivated for dryland wheat farming under a lease agreement with the City of Loveland. Half of this agricultural area remains fallow, with farmed/fallow strips alternating each year. The cultivated portion of Prairie Ridge is part of nearly 1,500 acres of contiguous dryland wheat farmland. Irrigation water is not available to the site, limiting the types of crops that can be grown. When dryland wheat production is no longer feasible, the land would be reclaimed with native prairie vegetation.

Wildlife

Prairie Ridge Natural Area habitat supports a wide variety of wildlife including mule deer, coyote, fox, bobcat, cottontail, golden eagle, prairie falcon, red-tailed hawk, western meadowlark, western kingbird, bullsnake, western rattlesnake, prairie lizard, Woodhouse's toad, and other species. The natural drainages in the area provide important wildlife habitat and movement corridors (Loveland 2001). The property contains a portion of a large mule deer winter concentration area, according to Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW 2017).

Ridges, hogbacks, and prairies also provide important raptor habitat for foraging and potential nesting. See Appendix A for a list of species observed or likely present at Prairie Ridge Natural Area.

An active fox den was observed at the western edge of the wheat field during 2017 vegetation surveys. Red foxes (*Vulpes vulpes*) were seen exiting the den (CNHP 2017).



An active black-tailed prairie dog (*Cynomys ludovicianus*) colony is located along the western hogback near the center latitude of the property. An inactive prairie dog colony is located along the northern edge of the hogbacks. Prairie dog populations are highly dynamic and are exceedingly susceptible to plague. Entire colonies can be extirpated through plague in less than a year. Prairie dogs are ecologically important in a number of ways, as they positively alter plant communities, create habitat for other species, improve soil quality, and provide an important source of prey for numerous predators (Larimer County 2015). The US Fish and Wildlife Service determined in 2009 that the black-tailed prairie dog is not eligible for protection under the ESA (FWS 2009). No other species identified in the area are listed for protection under the ESA. The Black-Tailed Prairie Dog is a Colorado state-wide Species of Concern (CPW 2017).

Environmental Site Assessment

A Phase I Environmental Assessment (EA) was performed by the City of Loveland Department of Power and Water following the acquisition of the property in 2000. The EA found an absence of significant environmental concerns at the property (Dept. of Water and Power 2000). Interviews, site inspections, and records research performed by the Department indicate there have been no significant contamination of soils or storage of hazardous materials on the site. There have been no environmental liens, violations, or lawsuits pertaining to hazardous materials, petroleum products, or environmental regulations involving the site (ibid). Historically, there has been normal agricultural use of pesticides and herbicides at the property, which were stored on the retained Sauer property, outside Prairie Ridge Natural Area boundary (ibid). Maintenance of farm equipment was also performed on the retained Sauer property. None of the adjoining properties have been used for industrial uses or other land uses likely to emit significant pollutants, and no NPL or RCRA sites exist in near proximity to the site (ibid).

2.3 Visual Resources

The area surrounding Prairie Ridge Natural Area is conserved as part of a 3,500-acre effort to keep the cities of Loveland and Fort Collins separated through protected open space, and as such offers a wide assortment of scenic views of relatively undeveloped land. Prairie Ridge preserves approximately one mile of the scenic Front Range Mountain backdrop, including lower hogbacks and adjoining ridgelines, as well as a rolling expanse of wheat fields and prairies leading west towards this backdrop. From its elevated western hogbacks, Prairie Ridge Natural Area provides expansive views of farmlands, prairie, and developed land uses to the east and dramatic views into the Rocky Mountains to the west.

In addition to conserving viewsheds from the east, preservation of these scenic values will enrich the experience of recreational trail users throughout the region.

2.4 Cultural Resources

Brief Site History

Human occupation of the Prairie Ridge property likely dates back thousands of years, with big game hunters and numerous Native American tribes inhabiting the site for subsistence uses (Travis 1988). The most noticeable evidence of human disturbance on the pastureland is a rock pile built at the west end of a gully in the northern portion of the property, which may have resulted from the clearing of agricultural fields. No buildings or other structures currently exist on the site.

A 1988 archeological survey of a 2.5-mile stretch of the Dakota Ridge Hogback, including Prairie Ridge, presented evidence of human activity dating as far back as the early archaic period (10,000 to 8,000 years ago)(Travis 1988). Evidence of early human habitation in the Dakota Ridge hogback area includes a Paleo-Indian point, chipped stone tools, numerous primitive camp sites, a number of rock shelters, hearths, and remains of aboriginal structures that may have been used as eagle traps. 80% of sites were found on east-facing sites along the Dakota Ridge hogback. Travis states that “This area has an unusually high density of sites, perhaps because it does not experience the extremes in weather found in the mountains to the west or the high plains to the east... these sites would be warmed by the morning sun...views would have been advantageous when watching for game or approaching people” (1988, 171).

Specific sites on the Prairie Ridge property have not been identified, although it is likely that the hogback areas in the western portion of the site were valuable for Native American subsistence uses.

2.5 Existing Improvements

Improvements for past and current agricultural uses of the property consist of two-track ranch roads for access, barbed wire fencing for livestock management, and the development of the playa area as a stock pond for watering livestock. Public improvements help to make open lands safe and enjoyable for visitors and help to protect natural resource values. These improvements may include trails, parking lots, restrooms, kiosks, benches, wildlife observation structures, signs, and fencing. As the property has not been opened to public access, recreational improvements have not yet been developed at Prairie Ridge.

Roads

A road on the adjacent property to the west (Ridge Park Way) leads to private properties. Ridge Park Way also provides a connection to two farm roads entering Prairie Ridge from the west. These two-track roads traverse the pastureland from south to north at the base of each side of the lower hogback. Wilson Ave. abuts the east side of the property.

Corridor for Recreation Trail

A 50-foot wide corridor in the southwest corner of Prairie Ridge Natural Area was acquired to connect the property to the W. 57th St. alignment and provide trail

connections to the existing 20-mile Loveland recreation trail system and planned 57th St. right-of-way. The Loveland recreation trail has recently expanded to a regional scale, following construction of the North Front Range Trail, which links Loveland and Fort Collins through a multi-use paved trail. In addition, in 2018, the Long View Trail will also connect Larimer County's two largest cities, resulting in two connections between the two municipal networks that contain more than 65 miles of existing paved trail.

Ditches

No human-created ditches run through Prairie Ridge Natural Area.

Power Lines

Power lines run north-south through Prairie Ridge Natural Area along its eastern boundary with Wilson Ave.

Fencing

Barbed wire fencing runs north-south through Prairie Ridge along its eastern boundary with Wilson Ave. and east-west along the northern boundary with Coyote Ridge Natural Area. Barbed wire fencing also runs through various areas of the property separating former grazing lands from cultivated farmland for livestock management. Much of the fencing is dilapidated and is no longer used for land management purposes.

2.6 Water and Mineral Rights

The conservation easement prohibits the mining, extraction, or removal of soil, sand, gravel, rock (including moss rock), oil, natural gas, fuel or any other mineral substance, except for minimal extraction as needed for trail construction and public safety.

No water rights exist for the property. There are no public or private wells on the property.

3. MANAGEMENT PLAN

3.1 Overview

This management plan aims to provide a framework for the conservation of the visual, cultural, and natural resources provided by Prairie Ridge Natural Area while providing new opportunities for passive outdoor recreation in Loveland. To these ends, multiple management tools will be utilized.

Dryland wheat farming will continue to be used as a land management tool to provide the cultural context of Loveland's agricultural history and to protect the resource from both visual and environmental perspectives. Native shortgrass prairie and wetlands will be restored throughout the site over time, and noxious and non-native species will continue to be addressed through multiple land management tools.

Impacts to natural resources will be mitigated through the use of buffers and avoidance of wetlands, sensitive plant communities and important wildlife habitat.

Finally, the Open Lands Division will utilize visitor management methods to monitor the impact of recreational use at Prairie Ridge and implement necessary changes to ensure it does not conflict with ecological, visual, or cultural values provided by the natural area.

The Master Plan shown in Figure 4 incorporates all of these objectives, by providing opportunities for public access while conserving the site's valuable natural, cultural and visual resources.

3.2 Natural Resources Management

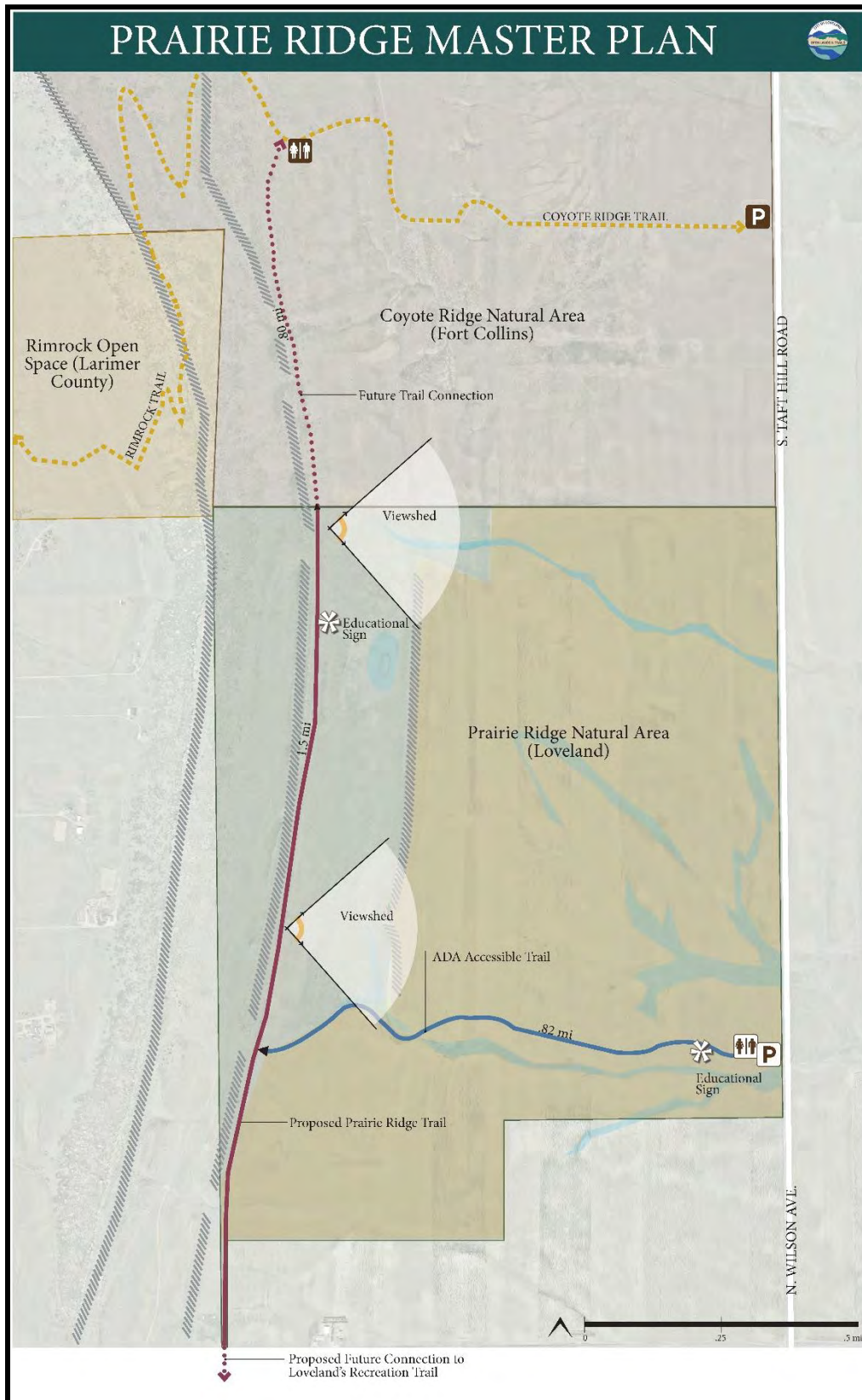
3.2.1 Vegetation Management

Prairie Ridge Natural Area contains a wide variety of vegetation types. Recent field observations by agency staff and CNHP provide applicable information on a number of species and plant communities present and the general characteristics of Prairie Ridge's vegetation. Current funding and staff resources make a complete assessment of the site's vegetation impractical. Weed populations are one of the largest obstacles affecting a natural area's ability to contribute and sustain healthy ecosystems. If left unchecked, invasive weeds can overtake and permanently injure native plant populations. When no measures of removal or management are implemented, weeds will continue to endanger the condition of natural areas and restrict the variety of recreational pursuits that can occur there. Control of exotic and noxious weeds helps control their spread and eliminate threats to ecosystem function.

The following vegetation resource management actions will help ensure that Prairie Ridge Natural Area's natural resources receive the special attention and protection they require:

- Continue to monitor native plant communities to assess their health and implement further management actions.

FIGURE 4: Master Plan



- Apply adaptive, contemporary, integrated weed control methods. An integrated weed management plan will help manage infestations by cultural, mechanical, biological and chemical control methods.
- Sustain and improve healthy plant communities, including:
 - Restore upland areas degraded by past grazing with native grasses and forbs.
 - Restore currently cultivated wetland areas in the buffer adjacent to the ADA trail with a diversity of native species using local wetland ecotypes.
- Limit impacts to ecologically sensitive wildlife and plant communities on site, including these actions:
 - Condense internal trails to a single north-south alignment rather than a loop trail to reduce overall trail impacts to vegetation and wildlife.
 - Refrain from constructing a regional connection directly to Rimrock Open Space to protect a rare plant community and major wildlife corridor along the western hogback of Prairie Ridge.
 - Relocate initially proposed trails to avoid the rare Bell's Twinpod and Jeweled Blazingstar plant communities.
 - Implement a buffer from adjacent wetlands for the ADA trail.
 - Incorporate appropriate landscaping measures in the parking area for stormwater infiltration and treatment.
 - Offer education and interpretive signage on rare plants and vegetation resources to visitors.

3.2.2 Agricultural Management

The 2001 conservation easement pointed out “the property is one of the last working farms along the Loveland-Fort Collins corridor, an area with tremendous suburban growth development pressure. The farm has been a working farm for more than fifty years and is representative of the dry-land farming heritage in Larimer County” (2001, 1). Approximately 550 acres in the eastern portion of the property remains cultivated for dryland wheat farming under a lease agreement with the City of Loveland. Half of this agricultural area remains fallow each year, with farmed/fallow strips alternating every year. This sequence is designed to provide organic residue to maintain or improve soil tilth, reduce soil erosion, and improve water quality. Crops are grown in alternate crop-fallow strips to reduce wind erosion hazard, with strips approximately perpendicular to the prevailing erosive winds. Seeding will be done prior to September 30 each year. Dryland farming practices will continue for the foreseeable future on this portion of the property, and the area will eventually be converted to native vegetation when farming is no longer feasible. Farming may be phased out gradually to allow the cost of restoration to be spread out over time.

The deed of conservation easement specifies that “the landowners may continue to enter into a farm lease for the farming of the property, which lease shall require that any leased portions of the Property shall be managed in accordance with the Land Management Plan, and shall not substantially diminish or impair the Conservation Values of the property” (2001, 4). The deed also specifies that “in the event that the property is no longer used for agricultural purposes, the landowners agree that, subject to availability of appropriated funds, Landowners shall cause the Property to be planted with native grasses” (2001, 6). Under the lease, “the tenant agrees to use his best efforts to keep the land in a neat and clean condition, free of noxious weeds and other in accordance with local farming customs” (2001, 1). The current lease expires in 2018, and will then go out to bid for another five-year lease to continue sustainable dryland wheat farming practices, through 2023, with an additional five-year lease renewal option. Under the lease agreement, the tenant retains 100% of the crop and all Production Flexibility Payments from the Farm Service Agency. The tenant is responsible for all costs related to crop production, insect control, and weed control for all cultivated areas of the property, including fallow lands. The following agricultural management actions will assist in addressing the management of agricultural resources at Prairie Ridge Natural Area:

- Renew five-year agricultural contract in 2018, and again in 2023.
- Leave half of cropland fallow, alternating halves each year.
- Continue to monitor and control noxious weed species in cropland.

3.2.3 Wildlife Management

The rapid urbanization of Loveland and Colorado in general has created many challenges and opportunities for wildlife management. When humans and wildlife meet, there is an inherent possibility of conflict, but also a chance for preserving wildlife populations and improving the public’s understanding of and appreciation for wildlife. Natural areas located in the urban/suburban setting are critical for wildlife populations who are sensitive to development. Natural areas and open lands offer a variety of important services to wildlife including providing habitat for pollinators and the plants relying on pollinators to reproduce, and creating the proper space and habitat for wildlife to breed, forage, travel and find protection from predators. The conservation and management of Loveland’s remaining wildlife habitat through natural areas and open lands provides accessible recreation and education opportunities and addresses the separation from nature that many urban populations experience.

Prairie Ridge Natural Area contains biologically diverse wildlife habitat in the transition zone between the Rockies and the Great Plains, including shortgrass prairie, ephemeral aquatic features, and hogback habitats, all of which support a variety of wildlife species. This property functions as a buffer protecting high quality habitat from planned adjacent residential development. The following wildlife

management actions will assist in addressing the management of wildlife needs at Prairie Ridge Natural Area:

- Avoid fragmenting sensitive wildlife habitat when developing new trails and accesses, such as the migration corridor to the west of the first hogback.
- Protect and buffer high priority wildlife habitats, including the mule deer winter concentration area as well as hogbacks and ridgelines important for raptors.
- Offer education and interpretive signage on the ecology of wildlife to protect both wildlife and visitors.
- Monitor for impacts of recreational use on wildlife populations.

3.3 Visitor Management and Education

The purpose of visitor management is to emphasize the safety, health, and enjoyment of Prairie Ridge Natural Area's visitors while conserving the site's biological, physical and ecological features. When members of the public visit a natural area and experience the natural resources that are preserved, they will be more aware of how recreational pursuits can coexist with conservation goals on open lands. Educating youth on the intricacies of nature prepares them to be better future stewards of Loveland's natural resources and to become leaders in the conservation of open lands.

The following visitor management and education actions will assist in protecting both visitors and the natural resources of the site while improving the overall visitor experience.

- The proposed trailhead will include ADA-accessible parking stalls, standard vehicle parking stalls, an informational kiosk, entrance sign, and two-rail fencing encircling the lot. The entrance drive into the parking lot will be paved to meet local street standards, while the remainder of the lot will be gravel. The parking lot's capacity is the maximum size allowed by the conservation easement (0.5 acre) to ensure the trailhead meets current and future use levels.
- An ADA-accessible multi-use trail will extend westward from the trailhead along a regional drainageway for approximately one mile, where it will connect into the north-south natural-surface trail. The ADA trail will be 8 feet wide and will be constructed of soft-surface material with binder for compaction. The trail will include a culvert crossing of the regional drainage swale that will be designed to improve wetland habitat downstream, as the current crossing consists of fill material. The trail will be located outside an adequate buffer from the wetlands, and the buffer area will be restored from current agricultural use to native wetland and prairie habitat.
- A two-stall unisex ADA-accessible vault toilet will be installed.

- The loop trail was removed from the original concept plan and replaced with a linear 1.5-mile natural-surface multi-use trail, which can be used to connect to Loveland's recreation trail to the south and Coyote Ridge Natural Area to the north in later trail phases. This adjustment was agreed upon by project partners and stakeholders in order to protect rare plant communities and wildlife habitats.
- Trails will be designed to minimize impacts to vegetation and wildlife resources and will be built to sustainable trail construction and maintenance standards.
- Multi-use trails will accommodate pedestrians, hikers, runners, and bicyclists.
- Recreational use will be limited to on-trail use only and trails may be closed when muddy, to limit impacts to vegetation, wildlife and trails.
- To protect sensitive vegetation and wildlife resources, dogs will not be permitted at Prairie Ridge.
- The Prairie Ridge parking lot will not be designed to accommodate horse trailers. Parking for horse trailers is available at Coyote Ridge Natural Area. Equestrian users will be permitted to enter Prairie Ridge from Coyote Ridge when trail connections are constructed.
- Rock climbing will not be permitted at Prairie Ridge to protect sensitive vegetation and wildlife resources.
- Barbed-wire fencing will be removed and two-rail fencing will be installed around the parking lot and as needed throughout the site for visitor management.
- Implementation of best management practices during construction activities will minimize damages caused by erosion, sedimentation, and stormwater runoff.
- Interpretive signs will be incorporated along trails to highlight the natural and cultural features of Prairie Ridge and surrounding landscapes, such as hogbacks, agricultural land, native plants and wildlife, wetlands and prairies.
- Signs will be placed to mark the boundary of the site and to instruct visitors on trail etiquette – including encouraging on-trail use - and other regulations as needed.
- Gates will be used to close access to the site when mud or other conditions exist, in order to protect the resource from damages stemming from recreational activities.
- Benches will be installed periodically along the trail system for visitors to rest and enjoy the sweeping vistas.
- Opportunities for user education and engagement will be provided through environmental education programs, guided hikes and programs, citizen science initiatives, and volunteer stewardship projects.

- Visitor management and enforcement of regulations will be carried out by agency staff and volunteers in accordance with agreements between the agencies.

3.4 Cultural Resource Management

Prairie Ridge Natural Area offers unique opportunities for visitors to learn about the lives of historic populations and their relationships with Loveland's natural resources. Cultural resources expand our understanding of history by offering data on the historic uses and importance of sites used in the past and also serve as an alternative method of attracting visitors to a site.

The following cultural resource management actions will help ensure that Prairie Ridge Natural Area's cultural resources are highlighted:

- Create a buffer around any areas with potential historic significance.
- Include interpretive signage regarding historic use and importance of the hogback areas for Native American uses.

3.5 Management Plan Implementation

Implementation Steps	Cost Estimate	2018-2022	2023-2027	Notes
Prairie Management				
Monitor grassland health	Minimal	Annual	Annual	
Revegetate disturbed areas	Moderate	2019-2020		
Apply noxious and non-native vegetation control methods	Moderate	Ongoing	Ongoing	
Educate visitors on rare plants	Minimal/ Volunteer	Ongoing	Ongoing	
Agricultural Management				
Renew 5-year lease to continue dryland wheat farming (per conservation easement)	Minimal	2018	Re-negotiate in 2023	
Protect resource by leaving ½ cropland fallow each year	Tenant cost	Ongoing	Ongoing	
Wetland Management				
Restore and enhance wetlands with culverts, plantings, buffering and weed management	Moderate	2018-2020		
Wildlife Management				
Inventory and monitor the locations of sensitive and non-sensitive species	Minimal / Volunteer	Annual	Annual	
Offer education on the ecology of wildlife to protect both wildlife and visitors	Minimal/ Volunteer	Ongoing	Ongoing	
Collaborate with CPW to enhance wildlife habitat as needed	Minimal	As needed	As needed	
Visitor Management				
Design trail and trailhead	Capital	2018		
Construct trailhead and associated amenities	Capital	2018-2019		
Construct ADA trail	Capital	2018-2019		
Construct natural-surface trail	Capital	2019		
Install regulatory and trail etiquette signage	Moderate	2019	Replace as necessary	

Implementation Steps	Cost Estimate	2018-2022	2023-2027	Notes
Install gate to close access when muddy conditions exist	Moderate	2018		
Remove, repair and replace fencing	Moderate	2018-2019		Possible Larimer Co. Conservation Corps projects
Install interpretive signage	Moderate	2019		
Construction of connector trail to Coyote Ridge Natural Area	Moderate	2020		
Construct connection to Loveland Recreation Trail	Capital			Development-driven
Perform trail maintenance as needed	Moderate	Ongoing	Ongoing	
Monitor recreational use to ensure it does not conflict with other values	Minimal/Volunteer	Ongoing	Ongoing	
Continually monitor capacity at trailhead	Minimal/Volunteer	Ongoing	Ongoing	
Provide opportunities for visitor education at the property	Minimal/Volunteer	2019-on		
Cultural Resource Management				
Incorporate cultural history into interpretive materials	Minimal	2018		
Develop cultural history map	Minimal	2019		Possible volunteer project

3.6 Conclusion

This management plan provides a framework and implementation actions for protection, management, restoration and enhancement of Prairie Ridge Natural Area and protection of conservation values in accordance with the recorded conservation easement. This document will be reviewed as needed and future updates will be initiated based on results of plan implementation, site conditions and recreational use patterns.

APPENDIX A: Species Lists

Wildlife species observed or likely present at Prairie Ridge Natural Area

Mammals

Eastern cottontail rabbit
Black-tailed prairie dog
Coyote
Red fox
Black bear
Raccoon
Badger
Striped skunk
Mountain lion
Bobcat
Mule deer
Elk

Amphibians & Reptiles

Chorus frog
Woodhouse's toad
Short-horned lizard
Prairie lizard
Racer
Bullsnake
Plains garter snake
Prairie rattlesnake

Birds

American Coot
American Crow
American Goldfinch
American Kestrel
American Robin
American White Pelican
Bald Eagle
Bank Swallow
Barn Swallow
Belted Kingfisher
Black-billed Magpie
Black-capped Chickadee
Black-chinned Hummingbird
Black-headed Grosbeak
Blue Grosbeak
Blue Jay
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Bobolink
Brewer's Blackbird
Brewer's Sparrow
Broad-tailed Hummingbird
Broad-winged Hawk
Brown-headed Cowbird
Bullock's Oriole
Bushtit
Canada Goose
Canyon Wren
Cassin's Sparrow
Cedar Waxwing
Chipping Sparrow
Clay-colored Sparrow
Cliff Swallow
Common Grackle
Common Merganser
Common Nighthawk
Common Poorwill
Common Raven
Common Yellowthroat

Cooper's Hawk
Cordilleran Flycatcher
Dark-eyed Junco
Double Crested Cormorant
Double-crested Cormorant
Downy Woodpecker
Eastern Kingbird
Eurasian Collared-Dove
European Starling
Golden Eagle
Grasshopper Sparrow
Gray Catbird
Great Blue Heron
Great Egret
Great Horned Owl
Green Heron
Green-tailed Towhee
Grey Catbird
Horned Lark
House Finch
House Sparrow
House Wren
Killdeer
Lark Bunting
Lark Sparrow
Lazuli Bunting
Lesser Goldfinch
MacGillivray's Warbler
Mallard
Marsh Wren
Mourning Dove
Northern Flicker
Northern Mockingbird
Northern Pygmy-Owl
Northern Rough-winged Swallow
Orchard Oriole
Osprey
Pied-billed Grebe
Pine Siskin

Plumbeous Vireo
Prairie Falcon
Red Crossbill
Red-tailed Hawk
Red-winged Blackbird
Rock Pigeon
Rock Wren
Sage Thrasher
Savannah Sparrow
Say's Phoebe
Song Sparrow
Spotted Sandpiper
Spotted Towhee
Steller's Jay
Swainson's Hawk
Swainson's Thrush
Tree Swallow
Turkey Vulture

Vesper Sparrow
Violet-green Swallow
Virginia Rail
Warbling Vireo
Western Kingbird
Western Meadowlark
Western Scrub-Jay
Western Tanager
Western Wood-Pewee
White-breasted Nuthatch
White-throated Swift
Wilson's Snipe
Wilson's Warbler
Wood Duck
Yellow Warbler
Yellow-breasted Chat
Yellow-rumped Warbler

Plant Species Observed or Likely Present at Prairie Ridge Natural Area:

Plant list last updated 9/23/17

FERNS AND FERN ALLIES			
Species Name	Common Name	Native or Exotic	Symbol*
None documented			
GYMNOSPERMS			
Species Name	Common Name	Native or Exotic	Symbol*
Family - Pinaceae			
<i>Pinus ponderosa</i> var. <i>scopulorum</i>	ponderosa pine	N	PIPOS
ANGIOSPERMS			
Species Name	Common Name	Native or Exotic	Symbol*
Family - Agavaceae			
<i>Yucca glauca</i>	yucca	N	YUGL
Family - Anacardiaceae			
<i>Rhus trilobata</i> var. <i>trilobata</i>	skunkbrush	N	RHTRT
Family - Asteraceae			
<i>Artemisia dracunculus</i>	wild tarragon	N	ARDR4
<i>Artemisia frigida</i>	prairie sagewort	N	ARFR4
<i>Artemisia ludoviciana</i>	cudweed sagewort	N	ARLU
<i>Carduus nutans</i>	musk thistle	E	CANU4
<i>Cirsium ochrocentrum</i>	yellow spine thistle	N	CIOC2
<i>Cirsium undulatum</i>	wavy-leaf thistle	N	CIUN
<i>Ericameria nauseosa</i>	rubber rabbitbrush	N	ERNA10
<i>Erigeron flagellaris</i>	fanleaf fleabane	N	ERFL
<i>Gutierrezia sarothrae</i>	broom snakeweed	N	GUSA2
<i>Heterotheca villosa</i>	hairy goldenaster	N	HEVI4
<i>Ratibida columnifera</i>	prairie coneflower	N	RAC03
<i>Thelesperma megapotamicum</i>	Hopi tea greenthread	N	THME
<i>Townsendia grandiflora</i>	largeflower daisy	N	TOGR
Family - Boraginaceae			
<i>Onosmodium bejariense</i> var. <i>occidentale</i>	western marbleseed	N	ONBEO
Family - Brassicaceae			
<i>Physaria bellii</i>	Bell's twinpod	N	PHBE2
<i>Rorippa sinuata</i>	spreading yellowcress	N	ROSI2

<i>Sisymbrium altissimum</i>	tumble mustard	E	SIAL2
Family - Cactaceae			
<i>Opuntia polyacantha</i>	prickly pear cactus	N	OPPO
Family - Caryophyllaceae			
<i>Paronychia jamesii</i>	James' nailwort	N	PAJA
Family - Chenopodiaceae			
<i>Chenopodium album</i>	lambsquarters	E	CHAL7
<i>Monolepis nuttalliana</i>	Nuttall's povertyweed	N	MONU
Family - Convolvulaceae			
<i>Convolvulus arvensis</i>	field bindweed	E	COAR4
<i>Evolvulus nuttallianus</i>	shaggy dwarf morning glory	N	EVNU
Family - Euphorbiaceae			
<i>Euphorbia brachycera</i>	horned spurge	N	EUBR
<i>Euphorbia cyparissias</i>	cypress spurge	E	EUCY2
<i>Euphorbia marginata</i>	snow on the mountain	N	EUMA8
<i>Tragia ramosa</i>	branched noseburn	N	TRRA5
Family - Fabaceae			
<i>Astragalus bisulcatus</i>	two-grooved milkvetch	N	ASBI2
<i>Astragalus sericoleucus</i>	silky milkvetch	N	ASSE5
<i>Astragalus shortianus</i>	Short's milkvetch	N	ASSH3
<i>Astragalus tridactylus</i>	foothill milkvetch	N	ASTR7
<i>Oxytropis sericea</i> var. <i>sericea</i>	white locoweed	N	OXSES
<i>Psoraleidium tenuiflorum</i>	slimflower scurfpea	N	PSTE5
Family - Linaceae			
<i>Linum lewisii</i>	blue flax	N	LILE3
Family - Loasaceae			
<i>Mentzelia decapetala</i>	ten petal mentzelia	N	MEDE2
<i>Mentzelia speciosa</i>	jeweled blazingstar	N	MESP4
Family - Malvaceae			
<i>Sphaeralcea coccinea</i>	scarlet globemallow	N	SPCO
Family - Onagraceae			
<i>Oenothera caespitosa</i> ssp. <i>caespitosa</i>	tufted evening primrose	N	OECAC2
<i>Oenothera howardii</i>	Howard's evening primrose	N	OEHO2
Family - Papaveraceae			
<i>Argemone polyanthemos</i>	prickly poppy	N	ARPO2
Family - Poaceae			
<i>Achnatherum hymenoides</i>	Indian ricegrass	N	ACHY
<i>Aegilops cylindrica</i>	jointed goatgrass	E	AECY
<i>Andropogon gerardii</i>	big bluestem	N	ANGE
<i>Aristida purpurea</i>	purple threeawn	N	ARPU9

<i>Bromus inermis</i>	smooth brome	E	BRIN2
<i>Bromus japonicus</i>	field brome	E	BRJA
<i>Bromus tectorum</i>	cheatgrass	E	BRTE
<i>Buchloë dactyloides</i>	buffalograss	N	BUDA
<i>Elymus elymoides</i>	bottlebrush squirreltail	N	ELEL5
<i>Hesperostipa comata</i>	needle-n-thread	N	HECO26
<i>Hordeum jubatum</i>	foxtail barley	N	HOJU
<i>Hordeum pusillum</i>	little barley	N	HOPU
<i>Nassella viridula</i>	green needlegrass	N	NAVI4
<i>Pascopyrum smithii</i>	western wheatgrass	N	PASM
<i>Pseudoroegneria spicata</i>	bluebunch wheatgrass	N	PSSP6
<i>Secale cereale</i>	cereal rye	E	SECE
<i>Sporobolus compositus</i>	composite dropseed	N	SPCO16
<i>Thinopyrum intermedium</i>	intermediate wheatgrass	E	THIN6
<i>Thinopyrum ponticum</i>	tall wheatgrass	E	THPO7
<i>Triticum aestivum</i>	common wheat	E	TRAE
Family - Polemoniaceae			
<i>Ipomopsis spicata</i>	spiked ipomopsis	N	IPSP
Family - Ranunculaceae			
<i>Delphinium carolinianum</i> ssp. <i>virescens</i>	Carolina larkspur	N	DECAV2
Family - Rosaceae			
<i>Cercocarpus montanus</i>	Mountain mahogany	N	CEMO2
Family - Santalaceae			
<i>Comandra umbellata</i> ssp. <i>pallida</i>	pale bastard toadflax	N	COUMP
Family - Scrophulariaceae			
<i>Verbascum thapsus</i>	common mullein	E	VETH
Family - Ulmaceae			
<i>Ulmus pumila</i>	Siberian elm	E	ULPU
Family - Verbenaceae			
<i>Phyla cuneifolia</i>	fogfruit	N	PHCU3

Compiled from surveys by Colorado Natural Heritage Program (2017).

*Nomenclature follows USDA, NRCS. 2017. The PLANTS Database (<http://plants.usda.gov>, 12 December 2017). National Plant Data Team, Greensboro, NC 27401-4901 USA. **and/or** Ackerfield, J. 2015. Flora of Colorado. Colorado State University. Botanical Research Institute of Texas Press.

APPENDIX B: Deed of Conservation Easement

(following page)

APPENDIX C: Open Space Management Plan Type Descriptions

Developed Open Space: Portions of a Natural Area that allow for full public access and use. Generally includes facilities such as parking lots, picnic areas, and fishing access points.

Public Access Open Space: Portions of a Natural Area that allow for access that is on- and off-trail. Some public facilities may exist.

Resource Protection Area: Portions of a Natural Area that are primarily travel zone areas with limited development. Access is generally limited to on-trail.

Closed Area: Natural Areas or portions that are closed to the public because public access is not currently appropriate. Areas are managed to maintain or improve natural resource values.

APPENDIX D: Public Comments

The following public comments were submitted to the Loveland Parks and Recreation Department via online and physical surveys between September 13 and October 13, 2017.

- I enjoy visiting Coyote Ridge for wildlife viewing, especially prairie dogs. There are so many associated species that I typically see as well, I hope the trail development includes incorporation of their habitat. It seems like there are fewer and fewer places to view them undisturbed. 10/13/2017 3:58 PM
- This is a great idea, but we need to make sure that prairie dogs are respected when building trails! 10/13/2017 1:58 PM
- I absolutely support and am excited about this expansion and open-land access. However, I want to be very careful to preserve front range wildlife and plants. The "leave no trace" philosophy should also extend to minimal impact during trail development. Seeing prairie dogs was the first "Colorado moment" I had when moving here from Florida, but since then (just 4 years ago) I've seen so many populations killed. It's rare that I see them at all any more. I support this if it preserves the prairie dogs there. 10/13/2017 9:48 AM
- Trust that the trail will not be made into a through fare as too many people voids the natural area. Coyote Ridge onto Wilson is often very dangerous. Thanks for asking for feedback. 10/12/2017 8:13 PM
- Yes, that would be good. 10/12/2017 8:04 PM
- It would be nice to have a dedicated hikers/walkers/runners only trail. The mountain bikers never seem to heed right of way rules and zip by so fast and wrecklessly. A dedicated walking trail may help limit and/or prevent conflicts between hikers and bikers. Also, are there plans to allow dogs here? While I respect the no dogs allowed at Coyote Ridge and Rim Rock, it would be great a great option for dog lovers in Loveland wanting to access the area to have more outdoor trail options with their fur friends. 10/12/2017 8:00 PM
- keep Prairie Ridge dog free like Coyote Ridge. 10/12/2017 2:17 PM
- rattlesnakes my concern 10/12/2017 9:44 AM
- I am hoping you do not harm the prairie dogs in the process of building trails..they make the wildlife viewing much more pleasurable and interesting..and pose no threat to well being of folks using the trail. 10/12/2017 9:34 AM
- I greatly enjoy visiting Coyote Ridge to watch prairie dogs (and burrowing owls, coyotes, and other raptors and wildlife). I support building more trails to allow more access to Prairie Ridge Natural Area in part to support further wildlife viewing, but I DO NOT want any prairie dogs in either natural area to be harmed during the trail-building process! Thank you for your consideration, 10/12/2017 9:25 AM
- I very much enjoy Coyote Ridge and its wildlife viewing. I support the building of the Prairie Ridge Natural Area Trail, but I do not want any prairie dogs harmed at either site during the trail building process. I really enjoy watching prairie dogs in their natural habitat and all the other wildlife that they support such as burrowing owls, coyotes, and hawks. 10/11/2017 10:38 PM
- I am very glad that the city is preserving this open space and making it accessible. I am concerned about all of the development in Loveland. 10/11/2017 8:47 PM
- Awesome can't wait to use the trails! 10/11/2017 8:02 PM
- I love the fact that the natural area that supports both wildlife and watchers would be growing. 10/11/2017 3:08 PM
- The trail and facilities should be designed to keep prairie dogs & thier burrows separated from visitors. 10/10/2017 11:49 PM
- I like watching the prairie dogs and burrowing owls southwest of the parking lot. Please avoid damaging current wildlife habitat. 10/10/2017 11:24 PM
- I enjoy viewing all the wildlife, including owls, coyotes and prairie dogs. I that NO wildlife be harmed in the process of making the trail. I enjoy watching the prairie dogs! 10/10/2017 10:42 PM
- Be kind to the prairie dogs. 10/10/2017 9:39 PM
- If more trails are built, please do not hurt or harm prairie dogs or wildlife. Please keep our open spaces wild. Thank you. 10/10/2017 9:26 PM
- I'd just like to be sure there's no at-risk species whose habitat would be intensely compromised by development of the new trail system. 10/10/2017 9:19 PM
- 21 Please preserve and protect prairie dog habitat. 10/10/2017 9:15 PM

- I support the building of new trails, but only if the existing prairie dog population isn't disturbed. 10/10/2017 8:24 PM
- Leave the prairie dogs alone. 10/10/2017 6:37 PM
- I love wildlife. I would be more likely to use the trails if I knew that there was wildlife in the area. Make sure that whatever you do you provide space for and protect the prairie dogs. Note that I am no longer voting for public buildings or areas unless there is a provision to protect the prairie dogs. I voted for the Larimer county building in Loveland and they killed the prairie dogs to build the building. I was devastated and felt responsible. 10/10/2017 1:00 PM
- Don't kill any wildlife such as prairie dogs when making this trail. 10/10/2017 11:34 AM
- I do not want any prairie dogs in either natural area to be harmed during the trail-building process. 10/10/2017 11:07 AM
- I am thrilled you are trying to accommodate prairie dogs into our lives. Thank you. It's easy to annihilate them but this is MUCH better 10/10/2017 11:04 AM
- A beautiful area -- I love the wildlife and would like to see more in the area, especially prairie dogs -- their antics are so much fun to watch. 10/10/2017 10:55 AM
- This seems like a great plan. I hope you'll make viewing of wildlife, including prairie dogs, a priority. 10/10/2017 10:29 AM
- This could be a great addition, but it should not interfere with the wildlife viewing options already present. I know many who are drawn to Coyote Ridge to see the burrowing owls, I hope to be able to refer people to this spot to see them for some time to come. 10/10/2017 10:05 AM
- Great idea to connect the trail with the Loveland system. You really need a connector to Coyote Ridge, preferably the western option. 10/10/2017 9:01 AM
- Interconnection is important, not only for close in access for weekend warriors (I am retired and would use it frequently) but to create safe wildlife corridor and safe haven for many of our indigenous wildlife including prairie dogs. 10/10/2017 8:16 AM
- Please take care of the wildlife!!!! 10/10/2017 7:53 AM
- I support this as an extremely valuable use of our public lands. So few natural wildlife protected areas. I would travel to enjoy this beautiful and natural preserve. Thank you. 10/10/2017 7:48 AM
- I enjoy visiting Coyote Ridge to watch prairie dogs and birds and other and I do not want any prairie dogs in either natural area to be harmed during the trail-building process. 10/10/2017 7:42 AM
- I'm an active supporter of open spaces, trails, and wildlife conservation. I would actively oppose any trail plan that involves harming wildlife and their habitat, such as prairie dogs. 10/10/2017 7:16 AM
- Please don't harm any prairie dogs during your project 10/10/2017 7:03 AM
- I hope that the prairie dogs already living there will not be harmed in order to build the trails. 10/10/2017 6:58 AM
- I love the idea of connecting these trail systems. More connectivity and variety is always great! 10/9/2017 11:25 PM
- Leave the natural wild habitat alone...too much traffic and access could easily be too disruptive to what makes this area so great to visit. Natural space should be protected and enjoyed via human constraints- not by putting more constraints on the wild life habitats. 10/9/2017 8:55 PM
- no, thx 10/9/2017 7:45 PM
- Coyote Ridge, Rimrock, Blue Sky, and Devil's Backbone all have multi-use trails (including horseback riding). I understand that Loveland trails do not allow horses. I would really like to see the Prairie Ridge trails open to horses, with the possible exception of the ADA trail. 10/9/2017 2:12 PM
- It's a great idea to connect easy and moderate trails in the area, and connect these open spaces! There's so much more to offer when combined, than each separately. 10/9/2017 2:09 PM
- As an ultramarathon runner, I applaud any time more trails are constructed -- and I put them to good use! I just wouldn't want the new trails to come at the expense of any of the wildlife. Put the trails through, by all means, but please don't kill any prairie dogs in order to do it. Thanks! 10/9/2017 1:37 PM
- Thanks for improving trails and making them accessible. 10/6/2017 7:41 PM
- the county is notorious for too many trails in the middle of good habitat. 10/6/2017 5:25 PM
- Please keep fragmentation of the prairie to a minimum. I hope you will add interpretive signs about the value of the prairie and foothills ecotone. 10/6/2017 4:02 PM
- Be sure there is enough parking and outhouses. Would leashed dogs be allowed? 10/4/2017 3:52 PM

- Love the idea. Please consider use of the trails for hikers, runners and cyclists when designing. Thank you. 10/4/2017 10:25 AM
- Danger from busy road. Every time the city makes trails it ruins a piece of open space with its modifying. 10/4/2017 9:50 AM
- I like when the hiking and biking trails are separate. 10/4/2017 8:29 AM
- Horse trailer parking would be nice 10/4/2017 6:22 AM
- I work with students at PSD who have disabilities. I appreciate that ADA trail is on proposal 10/3/2017 8:02 PM
- regionally interconnected trails are great and we need more of them. It would be nice to connect east to the new Long View Trail also. 10/3/2017 2:59 PM
- i appreciate trail connections that give options as well as additional parking since the existing nearby trails are highly used 10/3/2017 2:28 PM
- Please keep pets (dogs and feral cats) banned. 10/3/2017 1:32 PM
- Thank you for bringing more trails to the area! 10/3/2017 11:53 AM
- I think it's a great idea. And, having the connection to Coyote Ridge allows for a longer walk. 10/3/2017 11:25 AM
- Wow this would be a great to connect Loveland Fort Collins trails. I run all the trails around our region and enjoy every one of them! Also I would love a "flat" option at Coyote Ridge, I don't always want to run the "hills". 10/3/2017 11:25 AM
- I am excited for the further interconnecting of our trail systems, thank you for your work. 10/3/2017 10:52 AM
- Connectivity between trails is very important to me, as is biking access. Soft surface trails are preferred for trail running. 10/3/2017 10:51 AM
- I would definitely use Prairie Ridge Natural Area as another trail running option if dogs are allowed. I definitely understand that it is good to have places that dogs aren't allowed, but then personally I never visit those places. 10/3/2017 10:49 AM
- This is a great idea. Thank you. 10/3/2017 10:41 AM
- More intermiate/advanced mountain bike trails 9/29/2017 10:24 PM
- Need seating along trail 9/27/2017 4:20 PM
- I love the idea of trail connectivity. This is a great idea. 9/27/2017 4:03 PM
- Proposed trails would be a critical addition to this area to further disperse users, add loop and connectivity options and add beginner trails in an area that really needs them. Would fully support seeing trails at this property! 9/27/2017 9:25 AM
- The Coyote Ridge parking lot is frequently full; especially on the weekends. A trail connection would help disperse users and improve the overall experience. 9/27/2017 9:22 AM
- I think that this sounds great all of the trails are so busy that another would really help reduce the crowds. 9/26/2017 4:44 PM
- Please keep building more trail! Our local user ship is out growing our trails. The more trails and trail systems that we have that can connect the better we will be able to disperse and server our community 9/26/2017 12:00 PM
- This is a great idea for a return loop for DB users from Foco. Please do this. 9/26/2017 11:23 AM
- It is important to continue to increase the number of trails in the area to accommodate all users to mitigate trail damage due to over usage and prevent crowding. 9/26/2017 11:13 AM
- Initially this trail looks like it could add some additional miles to a regular Coyote Ridge ride I do on average about once a week. I would primarily be looking to mountain bike on it and would love, although it's going to be easy, to see some interesting rock features included in the design and planning. 9/26/2017 10:34 AM
- I don't walk Coyote Ridge anymore because the restrooms are a mile uphill. That's too far for older folks or young children. I think restrooms need to be a little closer to the parking lot. Perhaps at the ADA trailhead 9/26/2017 9:47 AM
- Very excited to see these new proposed trails. I would like to see them get built as soon as possible. 9/26/2017 9:42 AM
- with the increase in users of all types we need more trails 9/26/2017 8:16 AM

- It would nice to have a safe route to access the trails on your bike. Riding on Wilson has become too dangerous. The same goes for The Backbone. We ride along 34 from cascade on, I look forward on the completion of the bike path up to Rossum and maybe further. All the progress you are making is so exciting for the residents in Loveland. If their is anything I can do to help promote your actions please let me know. Barbara Schultz Bike enthusiast 9/26/2017 7:29 AM
- Trails are heavily used. More trails will disperse users over a wider area. 9/25/2017 8:03 PM
- I think it would be a great addition and help spread out the heavy traffic on the existing trails, especially when you factor in the the population growth over the coming years. 9/25/2017 4:58 PM
- More trails are sorely needed as existing trails are getting so crowded 9/25/2017 4:49 PM
- Overall I like the thought of more trails connecting to different land agencies however, I see a lot of strain being put on some of these connectors with so many different ability types using them. Across the front range our soft surface trails are seeing a huge increase of users from all user groups and the problem I see, as a mountain biker, is that the trails in the area are not keeping up with ability levels of increased usage. When a hiker or runner runs more they run farther and may go a little faster or up steeper grades. When a mountain biker rides more their abilities increase both in speed and type of terrain they can ride. If the terrain stays the same a mountain biker will challenge themselves by going faster. This increased speed only increases the chance of hiker/biker interactions. When adding new trails to new open spaces ability levels of all user groups should be considered. 9/25/2017 1:59 PM
- Linking trails in our area is key to spreading out users. There are plenty of difficult trails in Larimer County, but few easier trails where beginners can ride and practice. More easier trails is very important in our development plan. 9/25/2017 1:59 PM
- I'd like to see another route to the top of the ridge. Coyote Ridge's ascent is so crowded and the trail is not that great. 9/25/2017 1:42 PM
- I think it's a great idea. This is why people love and visit northern Colorado. It will provide better connection between Loveland and Fort Collins not only for recreation, but better commuting. My friends and I are planning on using it a lot. 9/25/2017 1:41 PM
- I love living in this area because of these types of options opening up regularly. I moved from another part of the country where nothing ever changes. Thanks for thinking of the citizens of the area! 9/25/2017 1:06 PM
- I'm not sure if there are hogbacks in this area, but if there are, it would be really nice to add trails that cater to mountain bikers. A well thought out set of sustainable switchbacks would complement the already great trails of RimRock, Indian Summer, and DBB. It would be great if this area would someday have the allure of a mountain bike designation like Fruita. 9/25/2017 12:56 PM
- Connecting the Coyote Ridge trails with other regional trails, both north and south, with provide hikers, cyclists and equestrians with additional off-road mileage. These trail connections will bring more users to the trails without requiring an increase in parking capacity. It's a win-win situation for both Loveland and Ft Collins! 9/25/2017 12:53 PM
- I live at 50th and Taft in Loveland. I enjoy mountain biking at coyote ridge but I rarely do so because of the effort to load up bikes in the car. I've biked there on the road, but the cars drive really fast there so its kind of sketchy/ scary. Someone got hit by my house and died a few months ago. These natural area trails would allow me to bike to coyote ridge without having to ride on Wilson, which would be amazing! Please connect to Coyote Ridge and the paved Loveland trails!! Thanks 9/25/2017 12:53 PM
- I feel this is a fantastic proposal. Creating more interconnected trail networks will allow users to ride/walk/run to trails without having to drive, encourage new users to participate in our natural areas, and increase the appeal of our region. 9/25/2017 12:49 PM
- Please make it happen, the more dirt access for bikes the better. 9/25/2017 12:39 PM
- This soft-surface trail system along with each "potential trail connection" would be a fantastic addition to our regional soft-surface trail system. Lack of trail connectivity from neighborhoods/urban areas is a serious concern for all trails users, but especially youth and nondriving individuals. Improving connectivity will greatly reduce strain on existing parking/trailhead areas by allowing residents and visitors direct access without having to ride/hike/run on busy roadways; it creates many new loop options which will reduce impacts on existing trails/resources; it helps disperse the rapidly increasing trail user population. An improved and better connected soft-surface trail system also brings widely-known quality of life and economic benefit increases to communities. 9/25/2017 11:47 AM

- It is great to see Loveland continue to develop areas that allow outdoor recreation. I think it is extremely important to keep these areas open and available to keep Loveland a thriving community. We consider moving to Fort Collins because there is more access to outdoor activities. 9/25/2017 11:33 AM
- Adding access from Prairie Ridge to the Coyote Ridge area would do a lot to relieve the congestion at Coyote, which I strongly support. Very happy to see this proposal! 9/25/2017 10:12 AM
- This is such a great idea! Having the extra trail space will help spread out the existing trail traffic so everyone has a more pleasant experience, AND it will add some great variety in the routes/loops that are available from the Coyote Ridge trailhead. 9/25/2017 10:08 AM
- Lets do this! 9/24/2017 5:34 PM
- The more connectivity we have the better for both trail running, hiking, and mountain biking. Do it! 9/24/2017 3:03 PM
- I adore the plans to connect Loveland to Ft C! I adore the plans to connect the Loveland bike trails to the other bike trails. Yes! 9/24/2017 2:54 PM
- This would be awesome! Connection to other trails is one of the biggest issues for most of us trail users! 9/24/2017 10:18 AM
- I tend not hike Coyote Ridge because dogs are not allowed on the trail. If dogs are not allowed in Prairie Ridge, I would not be likely to use it, either. 9/24/2017 8:24 AM
- We have been waiting (and funding open spaces with our tax dollars to support...) for these trails nearby where we live that connect with other trails in the area. For long rides and runs, we would enjoy the soft surface connector trails and the loop trails (and further connectivity south) so so much. We will help build them! Thank you!!! 9/23/2017 3:24 PM
- With the City of Fort Collins potentially constructing a trail that connects Cathy Fromme Prairie to Coyote Ridge, this additional connectivity would allow for more residents of Loveland and Fort Collins to access more trail options, closer to their homes, and importantly, SAFELY, AND, without getting in a vehicle or having to interact with high speed vehicle traffic. Please build all the proposed soft-surface connectivity focused trails as well as the loop. 9/23/2017 3:20 PM
- I love this plan and hope it goes through. I also hope the connector South to Loveland goes in. I live just off the recreation trail and would love to be able to bike up to Prairie Ridge. 9/23/2017 1:09 PM
- I am curious to know how this will impact local/native wildlife. We all know that most trail users are very aware of their impact but there are a few that like to litter, go off trail and create a much higher impact. I will attend the open house to learn more. 9/23/2017 9:48 AM
- Please make it happen, this would be an excellent addition to our trail system. Riding on the road these days feels too dangerous. 9/23/2017 7:37 AM
- Do this! 9/23/2017 6:40 AM
- It would be really nice if Kathy Fromme tied into this network. 9/23/2017 6:24 AM
- Build it and they will come! 9/22/2017 9:15 PM
- it's a great idea! And a Cathy Fromme connector to Coyote would allow much safer trail access than riding out on Taft. Gets scary! 9/22/2017 1:51 PM
- Please allow Dogs! 9/22/2017 1:07 PM
- I would also like to see more pedestrian/bike friendly means of connecting to Coyote Ridge from Fort Collins other than having to use Taft Hill road. A trail connection from Cathy Fromme between Shields and Taft, with an underpass beneath Taft Hill that connected near the Coyote Ridge parking area would be ideal and would make my trips to Coyote Ridge much more frequent as I prefer to ride my bike there, but do not like riding on Taft, especially during busy traffic hours. 9/22/2017 1:04 PM
- I can't wait for more trails! 9/22/2017 12:59 PM
- As long as it doesn't impact Wildlife I'm okay with it 9/22/2017 12:47 PM
- really this is a fantastic way for people to get to and from Fort Collins/ Loveland on a beautiful trail along the foothills, great idea and would love to see it come to life 9/22/2017 12:09 PM
- This would be an amazing trail to have and an important part of linking the trail systems between Fort Collins and Loveland. It would bring to Loveland more and I would be spending money there for lunch, dinner or refreshments that I previously did not. 9/22/2017 11:48 AM
- Please, please, please build the trail connection. It would open up a whole new area for riders, runners and hikers. The combination of this connection and the connection from Cathy Fromme Prairie would be huge. 9/22/2017 11:29 AM

- I would like a more direct connection to Rimrock and the top of the ridge on Coyote Ridge. 9/22/2017 11:13 AM
- I wouldn't put a trail connector through the current dryland farming. That should be preserved and leased for its current use (Farming). I probably won't use this as much because I'm a hiker and don't run or bike which is the likely user of this area. 9/22/2017 11:09 AM
- All good ideas. For me, connections to different areas and trail systems are priority 9/22/2017 8:41 AM
- Build it! We need to connect our existing trails to each other, and to population centers. 9/21/2017 9:35 AM
- This would be a wonderful addition to our excellent trail system and I hope it goes forward as soon as possible! 9/21/2017 9:01 AM
- It would be nice to have trails that connect to Loveland so riders wouldn't have to ride on the busy road. 9/21/2017 6:56 AM
- Coyote doesn't always have enough parking. Not sure if that gets better or worse with Prairie Ridge. Also, I LOVE LOVE LOVE the idea of connecting more trail systems together. 9/20/2017 9:53 PM
- Great Idea 9/20/2017 8:50 PM
- A mountain bike skills area would be awesome! 9/20/2017 7:11 PM
- A connection to the Loveland rec trail would be incredible, it would provide an opportunity to ride from home to trail without using busy roads! Also, if the parking were more removed from the road, a shorter loop and picnic area could be good for families with young kids. 9/20/2017 7:05 PM
- I have always thought a continuation of the trail at the top of Coyote headed south (understanding property boundaries are an issue) would be a great connector, especially for times when accessing Rim Rock, Blue Sky, etc isn't possible (e.g. after/before work) 9/20/2017 6:08 PM
- Thank you for your work on this. Connected trail systems through parks and open space are wonderful. Parking could become a concern but I guess it is also a way to limit use. Please don't forget horse riders! And let us know how we can help. 9/20/2017 5:56 PM
- Would be nice to have a trail on Prairie Ridge that goes directly to Rim Rock. 9/20/2017 4:09 PM
- With all the people moving here, we need all the trails we can get. Please help get this done. 9/20/2017 2:28 PM
- I am a runner/hiker. I really don't like mountain bikers. Will you implement No-bike days or trails? Bikers speed up on Coyote trails and really don't care of others. 9/20/2017 1:27 PM
- Closer to Boulder than Coyote 9/20/2017 12:45 PM
- This is exciting! I hope to see this trail system sometime soon :) 9/20/2017 10:35 AM
- A single track mountain bike trail would be most useful. 9/20/2017 9:44 AM
- Would love Ada trail for my wife to use 9/19/2017 9:58 PM
- As a mountain biker, I enjoy a variety of trails conditions like technical intervals and tight turns, but I believe such conditions on the Blue Sky Trail have too much technical stretches and tight turns to relax for a bit and enjoy the ride. I hope these miles can strike a nice balance. 9/19/2017 8:40 PM
- Make sure the proposed parking lot is big enough when the area gets developed. The loop seems great and I like the idea of connector trails to other parks and open space areas. 9/19/2017 8:16 PM
- Put the bathroom by the parking lot. Not at the end of the ADA trail. 9/19/2017 7:45 PM
- Please make sure this trail isn't fragmenting habitat. 9/19/2017 6:11 PM
- Having places to ride horses on trails is important to folks that want to ride locally. Do need adequate parking for trailers. And signage for riding areas. 9/19/2017 4:05 PM
- As a Loveland resident, I think this new trail will be a great addition to our community. I am terrified of snakes, which is why I rarely hike Coyote Ridge but I do know many people in our community enjoy it. Thank you! 9/19/2017 4:03 PM
- I'm supportive on just about any initiative to add trails! 9/19/2017 3:58 PM
- I tend to avoid Coyote Ridge parking due to congestion. 9/19/2017 3:12 PM
- I vote yes!! I sure would love to see all of the proposed and potential trail connectors created, both into Coyote Ridge as well as south to the Loveland Rec Trail. This would be so great! I also would like to submit the idea for a trail that would connect from Prairie Ridge to Rim Rock open space, at the top of the hogback - or perhaps to Coyote Ridge in between the two hogbacks. 9/19/2017 2:58 PM
- I hope dogs on leash will be allowed, it's really a pain that we can take dogs on Blue Sky Trail, but not on Coyote Ridge trail. Thank you. 9/19/2017 2:57 PM

- My concern is for the private properties and private activities that surround your open spaces. We had a rifle range that had a backstop on the North for protection for anything North of our property. When Rimrock was put in we moved the range because we did not want the slightest change of any unlikely ricochet straying to where people might be. Soon there will be no direction safe for shooting out here. Also PEOPLE do not stay on the trails. You need a fence and clear signage along the property boundary. 9/19/2017 2:19 PM
- Great work! Excited to see the end results. 9/19/2017 1:51 PM
- While the prairie trail connection might seem appealing, I think I'd prefer pushing people up into the ridgeline before connecting to Coyote Ridge. Still, it's important to provide accessibility and the prairie trail connection would do that. 9/19/2017 1:38 PM
- I live in the area so I'd like to see it stay as unused natural area to support our areas wildlife (eagles, bobcats, mountain lions, bears, deer, occasional elk, etc.), but if it is going to happen then it looks like it will be very similar to Coyote Ridge and that is a good space. 9/19/2017 11:57 AM
- My family is very excited about bike trail connection this fall (Boyd - Carpenter Road). The more connections the better. It encourages more people to be active and takes pressure off of heavy use trails. We love that the hogbacks are open space (no development) and we would like more trails to enjoy that space. Thank You very much for asking! 9/19/2017 11:57 AM
- I love the trail concept that might include more accessible trails for mountain biking with my kids. 9/19/2017 11:10 AM
- I love it. 9/19/2017 10:18 AM
- I assume you will allow mountain biking on the trail? If not, please reconsider. 9/19/2017 10:15 AM
- Will there be a buffer/fence along the west side of this area in order to keep people off of the private properties of Sprenger Valley Estates? SV abuts the south boundary of Rim Rock in the valley and the eastern lots on the hogback go down the east side of that hogback a ways. 9/19/2017 10:01 AM
- It would be great to be able to access the natural areas without having to ride on the very busy Wilson/Taft Hill, and without having to drive to the trailhead. 9/19/2017 9:58 AM
- Please keep impervious ground cover to a minimum and honor the dark skies goal. Thank you for the additional open space - and bathroom! (Please remind Larimer County they still need a bathroom midway on the Blue Skies trail.) 9/19/2017 8:32 AM
- Restroom would be nice. 9/18/2017 7:47 PM
- Please design the trail with input from mountain bikers. In my experience, this will lead to trails that withstand erosion and heavy traffic. 9/18/2017 5:35 PM
- No 9/18/2017 4:49 PM
- Love it, especially connecting to other Loveland trails. My wife and I hike on local trails every week. 9/18/2017 4:16 PM
- First off, I'd like to say thank you for all the awesome trail systems mentioned above. When my wife and I were looking at houses across the Front Range and eventually settled in Marianna Butte, one of the major reasons we were interested and eventually bought there was the trail system and the ability to ride to Horsetooth by trail. Having a trail system that is connected with that many miles is a rare and beautiful thing on the Front Range. What I personally would love to see are bike friendly, new trails at PRN connect to all of that. 9/18/2017 3:23 PM
- Although I currently live in Austin, Texas, I lived in Loveland's north side and this would have been a great connector to Coyote Ridge and the other trails connected from CR. Great idea, I would love to see it happen for our family to use when we visit! Great idea Loveland!!! 9/18/2017 2:49 PM
- I love the idea of this new natural area concept!!! Kudos to all involved with its planning and development!!! 9/18/2017 2:21 PM
- I frequently, almost daily, use the small section of recreation trail from 43rd street to 57th street in my neighborhood and I'm looking forward to being able to go further. I think many of my neighbors would use it too. 9/18/2017 1:44 PM
- A bike park concept similar to Valmont (Boulder) and/or Ruby Hill (Denver) would be a great addition to our area as well :) 9/18/2017 1:38 PM
- Not enough hills at Prairie Ridge 9/18/2017 1:37 PM
- Thank you for considering this trail connection 9/15/2017 4:12 PM

The following public comments were submitted to the Loveland Parks and Recreation Department via email between April 16-30, 2018.

- I drive by this public owned piece of land every day on my commute to Fort Collins and really enjoy the fact that there is nothing on it. It's quiet, natural and I honestly think it should stay that way. As far as recreational opportunities go, I don't see it really worth developing, just a little bit down the road is Coyote Ridge and that is perfect for the area but do we need another similar natural area so close to an existing one?
- I am glad to see that in the latest map the restrooms are located near the parking lot and Taft Avenue, rather than being located near the private property on the west side.
- As an owner of property that borders the west side of the PRNA, I am hopeful that eventually when the area to the south of PRNA (just south of 57th street) is developed, there will be paved access to the existing two-track road which runs to private properties north and south between the two hogback ridges. This would provide easier access for maintenance vehicles to reach the west side of the PRNA and the Loveland Recreational Trail. Also, for most neighborhoods, Fire Departments typically require two disparate pathways to enter and evacuate an area. At present, the entire Sprenger Valley and a large area along the existing "two track road" has only one way of entry and egress (43rd Avenue west to the larger Hogback Ridge and then north on the dirt road and dirt two-track road to a point close to where the proposed PRNA ADA trail meets the proposed LRT). If 57th Street was paved and extended west to the area of the existing "two-track road", that would provide a pathway for maintenance and fire fighting vehicles to reach critical areas that they otherwise might not be able to reach. Some street maps for the City of Loveland that I have seen actually show an extension of 57th Avenue to the west (between the hogbacks). If this 57th Street extension did materialize, I would assume that there would be stop signs or yield signs for vehicular traffic where 57th Street and the Loveland Recreational Trail meet.
- As a member to the Loveland community, I am very excited to see all this natural areas adapted or developed for the people of Loveland to enjoy. I feel that our environment is a great asset in living in this area. I am also a part of the Loveland cycling community. Our roads are getting more and more crowded and dangerous for runners and cyclists alike. Need less to say, is how excited I am for the new bike path that is going to connect Loveland and Fort Collins, a long Taft road. However, this could be a great opportunity to keep out cyclist safer, de-congests the roads slightly, and connect many different paths and natural area. It would be great that if some how we could connect the Coyote Ridge natural area with the Prairie Ridge natural area and, either, a bike path, dirt road or dirt trail that connects with the new bike path. As i am looking at the areal foto of the area, it could be an easy thing to do and it will provide access to the parks for so many people, that like me, do not like to drive and fill up the parking lots, that they are already very full on holidays, weekends and evenings. I really hope that you consider the safety of the public, runners and cyclist and you look at some access, connection or path (doesn't have to be paved) to connect the existing trails-paths with the new area and Coyote ridge.
- It all sounds great except I'm a little disappointed that the trails have been scaled back. I would really like to see a second access to Rimrock. As more people use the trail system there will be more congestion and occasional conflict between bikers/hikers climbing from Coyote Ridge to Rimrock. It would be nice to have a separate trail like the Devil's Backbone/Hidden Valley Trail to separate the users.
- In reviewing the plan, I believe that Section 3 in its entirety should be strictly enforced to especially avoid disturbing wildlife. I do believe that the development of the land for hiking etc. is a progressive and wonderful idea.

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