



Colorado Natural Areas Program

Designation of Coal Creek Tallgrass Prairie and Expansions of Colorado Tallgrass Prairie and White Rocks Natural Areas

Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission
June 22, 2023



LIVE LIFE
OUTSIDE

Presented by:
Raquel Wertsbaugh
CNAP Coordinator

Presentation Outline & Goals

- 1) Colorado Natural Areas Program background
- 2) Solicit a new PWC representative for the Colorado Natural Areas Council
- 3) Coal Creek Tallgrass Prairie proposed designation (ACTION ITEM)
- 4) White Rocks and Colorado Tallgrass Prairie Natural Area proposed expansions (ACTION ITEM)

Geneva Basin Iron Fen Natural Area,
Clear Creek County



Colorado Natural Areas Program: Showcasing our state's natural heritage & biodiversity

- Statewide program within CPW Species Conservation Unit
- Created by statute in 1977
- Highlights and protects Colorado's significant natural features through **voluntary agreements** with landowners
- Advised by Governor appointed Colorado Natural Areas Council
- Staff includes 1 FTE, 1 seasonal

Hoosier Ridge Natural Area,
Park County



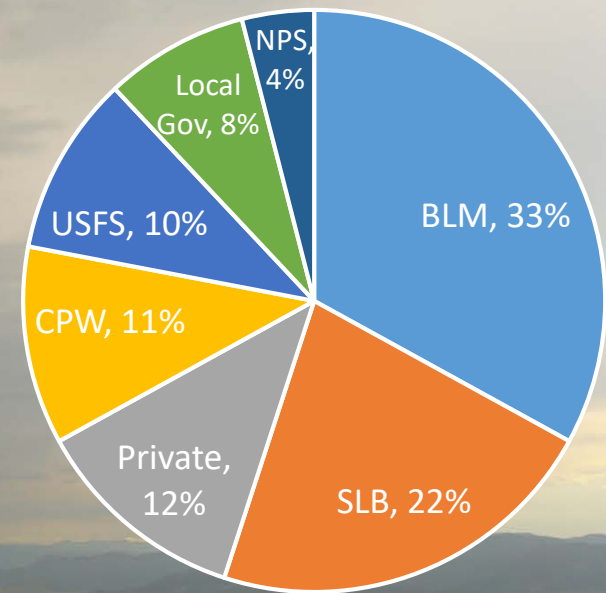
Protecting Colorado's Natural Features



State Natural Areas & Partnerships

- Designation can be on any land ownership type
- Landowner/manager retains all rights including access
- State Natural Area designation highlights the natural features, exemplary stewardship, and assists in monitoring efforts

Land Ownership of Designated State Natural Areas



Orient Mine Natural Area,
Saguache County



Colorado Natural Areas Council

- 7 member Governor appointed advisory council to CNAP
- Makes recommendations on the Natural Areas System to PWC
- Programmatic strategic planning
- Requesting new PWC representative



Volunteer Stewards: Helping the land tell a story

- 55+ volunteer stewards that annually monitor State Natural Areas and natural features
- Over 1/2 of CNAP's volunteers have served over 10 years
- Highly depended on by both CPW/CNAP and partners

High Creek Fen Natural
Area, Park County



Protecting Colorado's Rare Plants

- CNAP has a strong emphasis on rare plant conservation
- Colorado has 117 plants of greatest conservation need, including 15 federally listed species
- Serves as the liaison with U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and other rare plant conservation partners



Explore Colorado's Natural Areas

Story map Link:
[Arcg.is/1ymCnL0](https://arcg.is/1ymCnL0)



Colorado Natural Areas and Significant Natural Features

Colorado Natural Areas Program

Browse through the tab labeled "All Colorado Natural Areas" to learn about all 95 of Colorado's spectacular State Natural Areas. Scroll through the additional tabs to learn more about a selection of the significant features for which State Natural Areas were designated, including unique geologic and fossil features, rare plants, natural communities, and uncommon wildlife and insects. Exact locations may not be shown for every feature or State Natural Area due to privacy concerns or sensitive data. Sites that can be visited by the public are noted. All photos taken by CNAP staff unless otherwise noted.



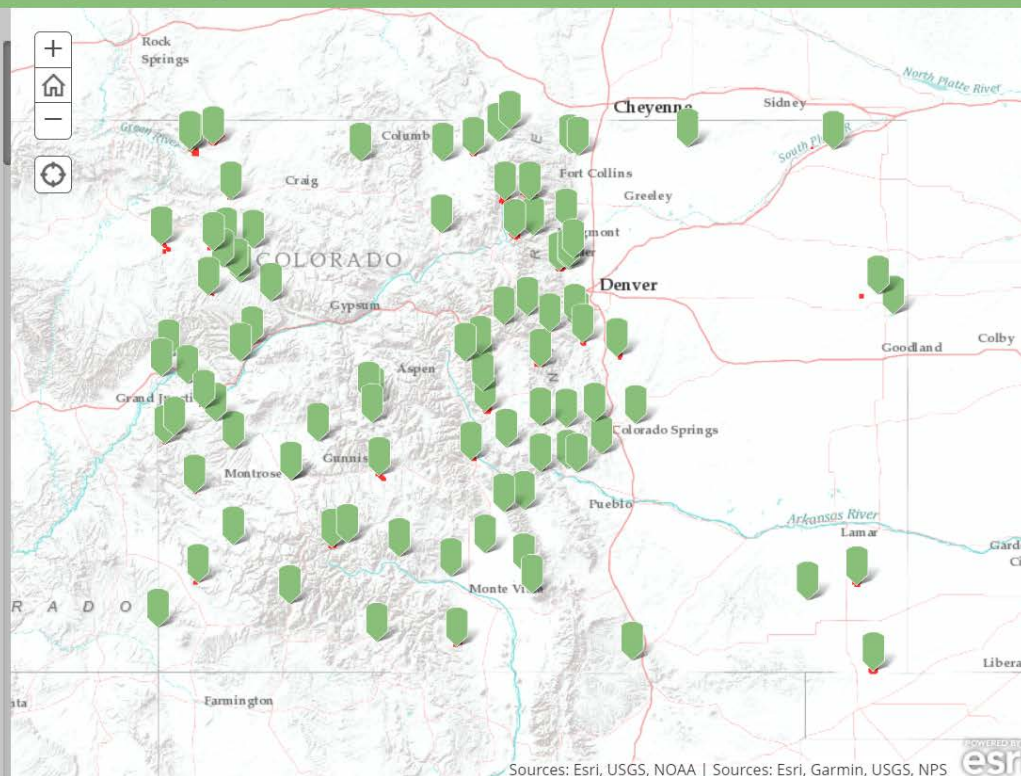
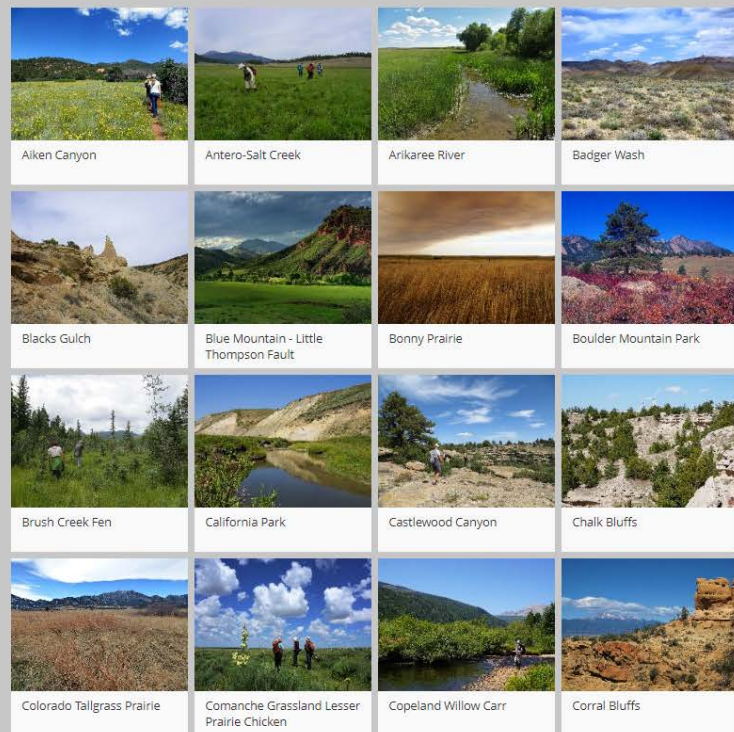
All Colorado Natural Areas

Geology & Paleontology

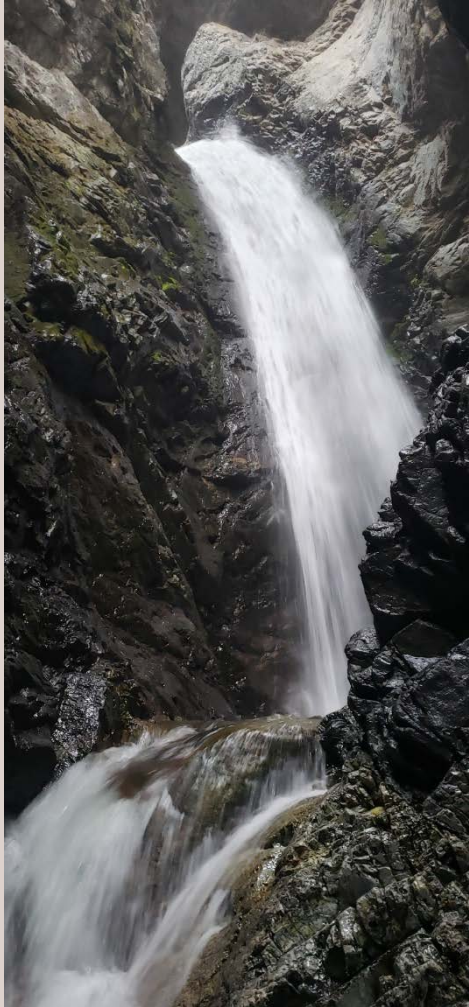
Natural Communities

Rare Plants

Wildlife & Insects




Local Highlight: Zapata Falls State Natural Area



- Located near Great Sand Dunes National Park
- Owned by Colorado State Land Board, managed by Colorado Parks & Wildlife
- Designated in 2002; contains 628 acres
- Designated for the rare black swift and geologic importance
- Black swifts (Tier 2 SGCN), rare bird that nest behind waterfalls, Colorado has highest # of known breeding sites





Coal Creek Tallgrass Prairie
Designation and Expansions of
White Rocks and Colorado
Tallgrass Prairie (ACTION ITEMS)



Designation Steps

- Identification → Registration → Designation
- Current step= final approval by PWC
- Signatures on Articles of Designation, Certificate of Designation presented to owner
- Site will be added to Natural Areas System, CNAP will coordinate with owner on monitoring/reporting
- Owner agrees to protect natural features in perpetuity & retains full management responsibility

Coal Creek Tallgrass Prairie
Jefferson County

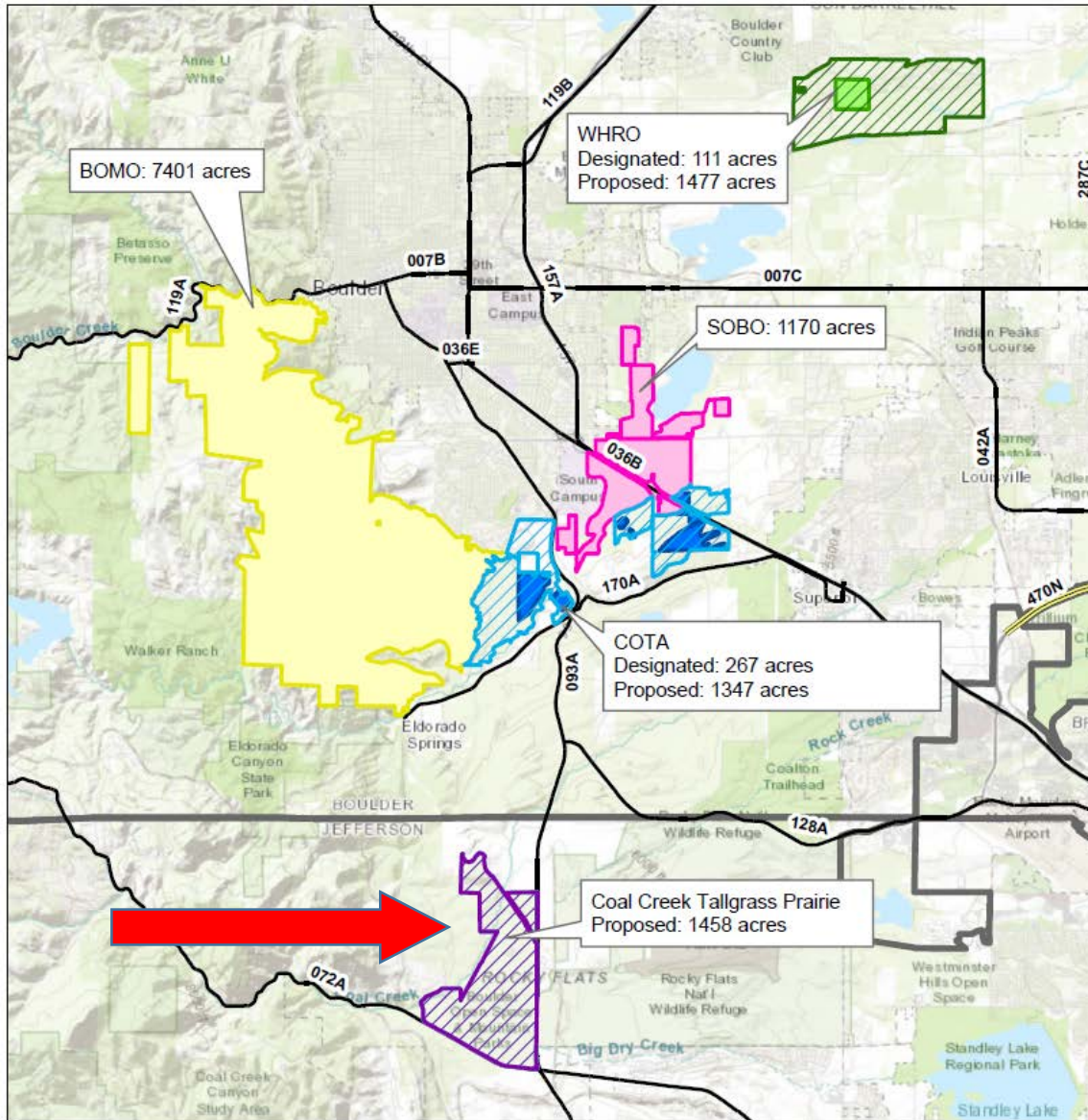


Partnership & Designation History with City of Boulder

- CNAP and City of Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks (OSMP) partnership and collaboration for over 45 years
- Past designation of 4 State Natural Areas: White Rocks, Colorado Tallgrass Prairie, South Boulder Creek, Boulder Mountain Park
- Collaboration on new expansions/designation ongoing for 13 years
- Articles of Designation serve as voluntary conservation agreement
- All management is retained by the City of Boulder

Colorado Tallgrass Prairie Natural Area,
Boulder County





Current and Proposed City of Boulder OSMP Natural Area Boundaries



Proposed New Boundaries

- Colorado Tallgrass Prairie
- White Rocks
- Coal Creek Tallgrass Prairie

Current Designated Natural Area Boundaries

- Boulder Mountain Park (BOMO)
- Colorado Tallgrass Prairie (COTA)
- South Boulder Creek (SOBO)
- White Rocks (WHRO)
- interstates
- highways
- County Boundary



Map created by Savanna Smith
 Colorado Natural Areas Program
 August 16, 2021
 NAD83 UTM Zone 13N



Coal Creek Tallgrass Prairie Background

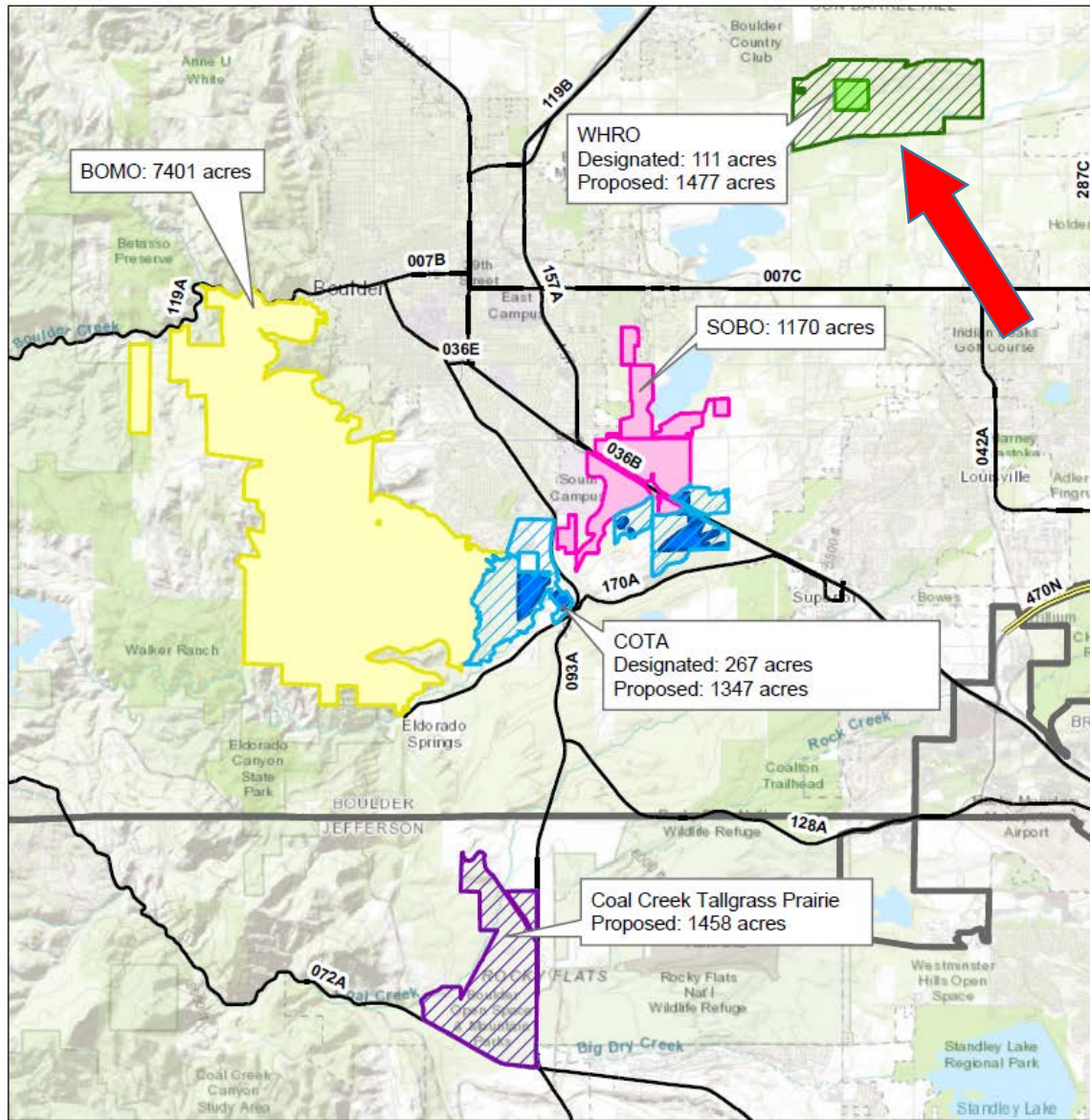
- 1458 acres, owned and managed by City of Boulder OSMP
- Located in Jefferson County, property purchased by City of Boulder in 1999
- High quality example of xeric tallgrass prairie
- Designation would highlight and expand the protection of the remnant tallgrass prairie community and its dependent species



Significant Natural Features

- Tallgrass prairie represents a particularly rare blend of montane and prairie plant species
- Grassy slope sedge- normally occurs at higher elevations
- Northern leopard frog
- Grassland nesting birds
- Rare butterfly species





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White Rocks Natural Area Background

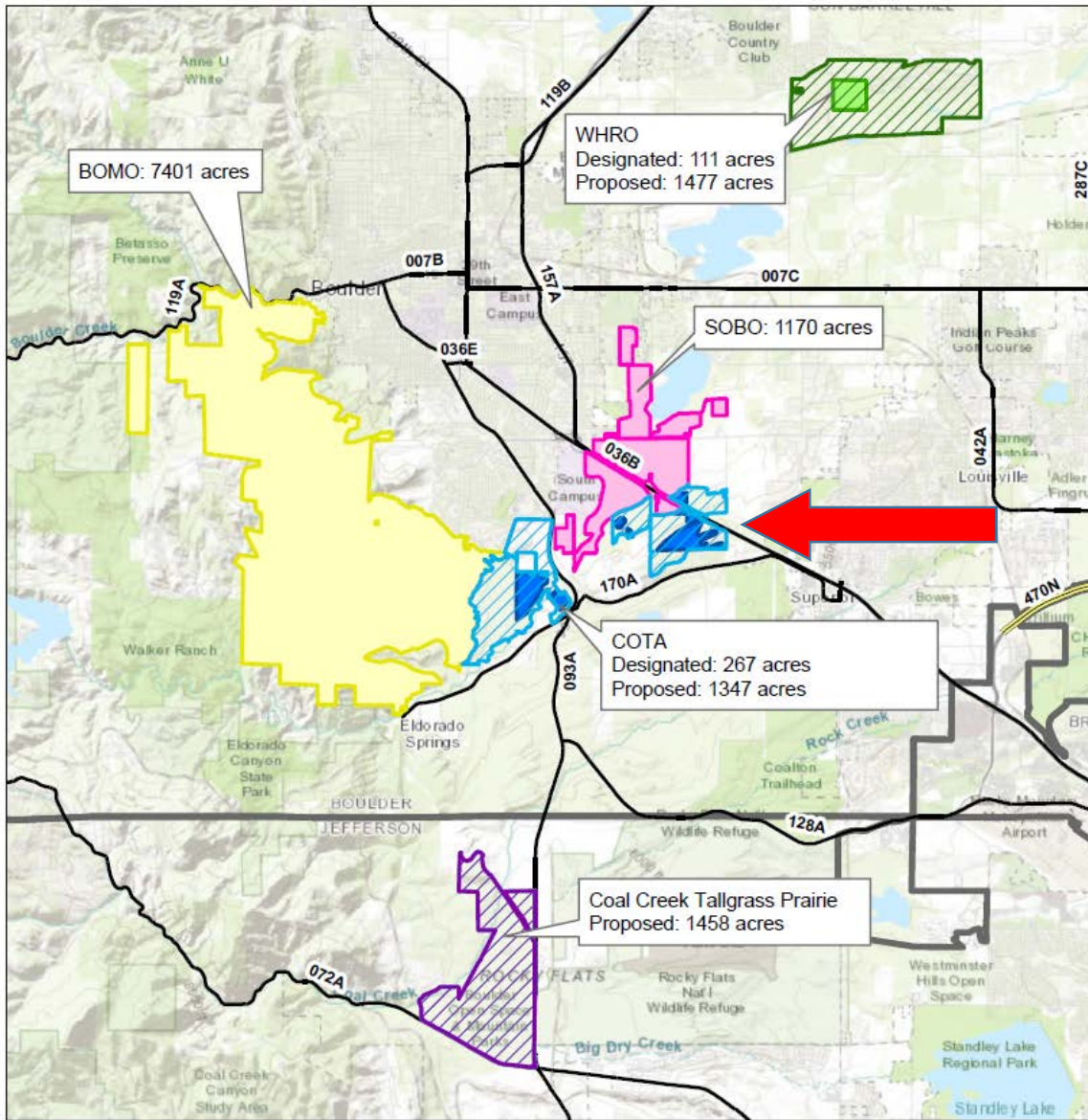
- Designated in 1979, 105 acres with private landowner Martha Weiser
- Land transferred to City of Boulder in 2011, City bought surrounding properties in 2015
- Outstanding geologic feature
- Rare plant species, unique assemblage of plant communities
- Numerous wildlife SGCN



White Rocks: Values and benefits of proposed addition

- Natural Area would expand from 105 acres to 1477 acres
- Include additional acreage now owned by City and encompass White Rocks geologic feature, habitat for associated flora & fauna
- OSMP and CNAP can better highlight and protect White Rocks and Boulder Creek wetland habitat





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Colorado Tallgrass Prairie Natural Area Background

- Designated in 1984 (269 acres)
- Xeric and mesic tallgrass prairie system
- Supports numerous rare plant species, including federally threatened Ute ladies' tresses
- Habitat for over a dozen SGCN, including federally threatened Preble's meadow jumping mouse, grassland birds, and pollinators



Colorado Tallgrass Prairie: Values and benefits of proposed additions

- Natural area would expand from 269 acres to 1,347 acres
- Include additional acreage of tallgrass prairie and habitat for associated flora & fauna species
- Proposed additions will increase connectivity between existing Natural Areas
- OSMP and CNAP can better highlight and protect Boulder's tallgrass prairie communities



Requested Action

CNAP requests that the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission:

- Approve the designation of Coal Creek Tallgrass Prairie Natural Area and accept the Articles of Designation
- Approve the expansions of the White Rocks and Colorado Tallgrass Prairie Natural Areas and accept the amended and restated Articles of Designation



Questions?

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CNAP Website:
<https://cpw.state.co.us/aboutus/Pages/CNAP.aspx>

