CPW Stakeholder Engagement & Prairie Dog Rulemaking Overview

Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission
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COLORADO
Parks and Wildlife
Department of Natural Resources

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Prairie Dog Rulemaking Timeline Overview

- Citizen petition received to prohibit the take of prairie dogs on public lands in April 2026.
- Staff formed internal working group to discuss stakeholder engagement and the issue paper.
- Staff met with the petitioner to discuss petition
- Rulemaking initiated on September 2nd by PWC.
- Staff drafted an issue paper for the September 10th deadline.
- Staff met with the petitioner and key stakeholders to inform them of the rulemaking process.
- Final regulatory language was due October 21st for PWC meeting (Step 1).



Photo: W. Lewis

Petitioner Engagement -The Prairie Dog Coalition

- CPW Staff met with the petitioner 3 times before and 3 times since the September Commission Meeting.
- The focus of these meetings was ensuring that CPW fully understood the intent of the petitioner and sharing information about the next steps for rulemaking.



Photo: W. Lewis

Stakeholder Engagement -Key Stakeholder Meetings

CPW Staff met with key stakeholders who requested a meeting and discussed:

- The petition and where stakeholders could view it.
- Presentations to the Commission on the subject, and how they could be viewed.
- The timeline for rulemaking, and how they could submit comments either in writing, in person, or virtually.



Photo: D. Tripp

Stakeholder Engagement Representation

CPW met with or notified the following stakeholders:

- US Forest Service
- Southern Ute Indian Tribe
- Ute Mountain Ute Tribe
- Colorado Counties, Inc.
- State Land Board
- Agricultural Representatives
- Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs)



Tribal Engagement

- CPW sent emails to the Southern Ute and Ute Mountain Ute Tribes.
- The email content included an overview of the prairie dog rulemaking and how to engage in the rulemaking process.
- These regulation changes would not affect tribal hunting rights.



Stakeholder Engagement -Electronic Notification

Staff created a stakeholder contact list. When the agenda and commission materials for this meeting were posted, CPW notified those stakeholders about the rulemaking process, and their opportunity to participate in the rulemaking.



Photo: W. Lewis

Considerations for Prairie Dog Rulemaking

- CPW convened a Prairie Dog Working Group to address this petition.
- CPW manages prairie dogs through a suite of management and conservation plans.
- CPW proactively manages plague.
- Prairie dogs are classified as small game in statute.
    - The petition proposes banning the take of prairie dogs on public lands as small game.



Photo: W. Lewis

Prairie Dog Issue Paper Regulatory Language

Alternative One: Status quo

Alternative Two : Eliminate the recreational take of prairie dogs on public land by changing the bag limit for black-tailed, white-tailed, and Gunnison prairie dogs from unlimited to 0 by amending 2 C.C.R. § 406-3:309.



Photo: W. Lewis

Prairie Dog Rulemaking Considerations

- This change will **not** affect the ability of individuals to take prairie dogs causing damage under Title 33 (C.R.S. § 33-6-107(9)) or Title 35 (C.R.S. § 35-7-201).
- This change will close the prairie dog season on public lands.



Photo: W. Lewis

Prairie Dog Rulemaking Considerations

- The petitioner intent is to ban **all take** of prairie dogs on public lands, not just the take via shooting.
- This alternative must be supported by a commission finding that the action "is necessary to assure maintenance of adequate populations of wildlife or to preserve the proper ecological balance of the environment." C.R.S. § 33-1-106(1)(a).
- A process to inform the development of additional regulatory alternatives typically requires a minimum of 3-4 months to plan, conduct, analyze feedback, and report qualitative social data to decision-makers.



Photo: W. Lewis



Questions?