

ORRCA

Mission-

ORRCA collaborates to preserve ecosystem health and function across working landscapes and public lands while ensuring equitable access to sustainable recreation, thereby enhancing the region's quality of life.

Vision-

The community will have the resources to fulfill our conservation values and recreation opportunities based on collaborative evaluation of the region's natural landscapes, waterways, wildlife habitats, and existing recreation infrastructure.

Themes that guide ORRCA's vision include:

- Identify and balance outdoor recreation opportunities and conservation values. Prioritize a comprehensive plan for the region based on data that considers wildlife, healthy land and water, climate change, high-quality recreation experiences, agriculture, and resilient local economies.
- Educate about land stewardship, responsible recreation, and cultural history.
- Sustain a resilient community supported by diverse and active collaboration.



MEETING NOTES

STAKEHOLDER MEETING

MARCH 27, 2023, 5-7 pm

ALL – VIRTUAL

AGENDA

MEETING OBJECTIVES:

- 1) OVERVIEW OF NEW ORRCA STORYMAPS**
- 2) REVIEW ORRCA GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE BOUNDARY**
- 3) GAIN A HIGH-LEVEL UNDERSTANDING OF COLORADO NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM (CNHP) INVENTORIES AND PRODUCTS.**
- 4) FINALIZE STAKEHOLDER REQUESTS FOR CUSTOMIZATION OF WILDLIFE AND HABITAT INPUT LAYERS FOR A GIS WILDLIFE/HABITAT SENSITIVITY MODEL BASED ON ORRCA STAKEHOLDER VALUES**

5 pm -- Call to Order & ZOOM Ice Breaker

- **LYNN PADGETT, OURAY COUNTY COMMISSIONER**

In attendance:

Commissioner Lynn Padgett; Lewis French; Alyssa Kircher, DNR/CPW; Craig Grother, BHA; Dolgio Nergui, Ouray Climbers Alliance; Jennifer Cram, citizen; Kelly Crane, CPW; Kelly Ryan, San Juan Huts; Nick Walendziak, Crux Environmental; Robyn Cascade, Great Old Broads; Scott Powers, Western Slope 4x4; Tanya Ishikawa, UWP; Brad Wallis, TOP; Linda Ingo, Fisher Ranch; Kestrel Kunz, American White Water; Michelle Nauer, Ouray County Commissioner; Trevor Peterson, RIGS; Ryan Van West, ROCC Public Lands Committee; Jennifer Peterson, Ouray County PIO.

Regrets: City of Ouray and others sent their regrets because of conflicts. Video recording of meeting will be posted on webpage.

- Group agreed to change the order of the agenda items.

5:03 pm – Overview of Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP) Sensitive Species/Habitats Inventories and Products, including Potential Conservation Areas (PCAs).

- **PEGGY LYON, CNHP BOTANIST**

The Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP) tracks and ranks Colorado's rare and imperiled species and habitats and provides information and expertise on these topics to promote the conservation of Colorado's valuable biological resources. Data maintained in the CNHP database are an integral part of ongoing research at CSU and reflect the observations of many scientists, institutions, and our current state of knowledge. These data are acquired from various sources, with varying levels of accuracy, and are continually being updated and revised. CNHP also offers a wide range of related services, including biological monitoring, research, mapping, and conservation planning services.

- COUNTY SURVEY REPORTS INCLUDING PCAs: <https://cnhp.colostate.edu/projects/county-survey-reports/>
- COLORADO WETLAND INVENTORY TOOL: <https://cnhp.colostate.edu/cwic/tools/mapper/>
- CNHP SPATIAL DATA LAYERS: <https://cnhp.colostate.edu/maps/cnhp-spatial-layers/>

Peggy highlighted the CNHP program based out of the Warner College of Natural Resources, Colorado State University. Peggy discussed:

- **CNHP exists to provide unbiased data.** Main website is <https://cnhp.colostate.edu>. Natureserve.org has info on individual species and natural communities – individual communities and species range. Goal is to advance conservation. The Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP) tracks and ranks Colorado's rare and imperiled species and habitats, and provides information and expertise on these topics to **promote the conservation of Colorado's valuable biological resources.**
- CNHP doesn't track all species – just those considered rare and vulnerable.
- Definitions and terminology used by CNHP – **Element, Element Occurrence, Rankings, PCAs, NCAs** were all discussed. (see <https://cnhp.colostate.edu/ourdata/help/> for definitions of these terms. See <https://cnhp.colostate.edu/rareplant/definitions/> for an explanation of the global (G) and state (S) ranking system used by CNHP and NatureServe.
- CNHP's 1999 Uncompahgre Natural Heritage Assessment was the 3rd one ever done in the state. The report was done in 2 parts and informed the Ouray County 1999 Master Plan. Studies were sponsored by land trusts and co-funded through a state planning grant and counties.
 1. **The Uncompahgre River Basin A Natural Heritage Assessment Volume I** https://cnhp.colostate.edu/wp-content/uploads/download/documents/1999/Uncompahgre_River_Basin_Natural_Heritage_Assessment.pdf
 2. **A Natural Heritage Assessment of Wetlands and Riparian Areas in the Uncompahgre River Basin Eastern Montrose and Ouray Counties Volume II** https://cnhp.colostate.edu/wp-content/uploads/download/documents/1999/Uncompahgre_River_Basin_wetlands.pdf
 - **The Natural Heritage Assessment is now seriously outdated**, and ranks and occurrence patterns will be different now. Some species have more known element occurrences, and some species have disappeared since 1999. Peggy recommends having a new study funded to inform Ouray County's in-progress Master Plan update. Threats and human activities have changed between 1999 and the present. Less gravel mining and more

trails and recreation. Climate change is now being felt – wildfires, drought, early snowmelt, warmer temperatures. Fens were barely known in 1999. We know more now. Peggy is attempting to revisit known element occurrence sites and update data, but this does not take the place of doing a repeat comprehensive survey to update the two volumes of the Uncompahgre Natural Heritage Assessment. Several areas surveyed in the 1990s are now requesting repeat surveys. These will show changes related to climate change and human activities since the 1990s. CNHP’s director, Dr. David Anderson is looking for funding for repeating the 1990s surveys with GOCO.

- **Peggy specifically recommends that ORRCA, repeat the 1990s on-the-ground survey contemporaneously to inform the Ouray County master plan update.** There is no guarantee that GOCO will offer funding but worth asking. CNHP is booked for the 2023 field season but could be scheduled for 2024. Peggy believes the survey cost around \$50,000 in 1999. But a land trust just got a GOCO grant for \$86,000. The scope of a survey can be adjusted to match available funds and prioritize areas. It would be done in one field season, starting in lower elevations in April or May and working upward in elevation to September/October. The report is written in the winter, and so it is published about 1 year after starting.
- **Peggy recommends scheduling a training with Michael Menefee of CNHP, CODEX** to do a training for ORRCA on the free tool that combines species and habitat data from CNHP, NatureServe, CPW, and more.
- Lynn showed what CODEX looks like onscreen and mentioned Michael has already offered to do a training on the second Monday, April 10. She showed how Envision Chaffee has their own section in CODEX, and that NOCO¹ regional partnership is having CODEX do a model for their “conservation values summary” separate from the CPW habitat sensitivity model. She mentioned that CODEX can report what species are found within a particular boundary. She showed how an ORRCA stakeholder could get their own CODEX login for free, and CODEX users can look at CPW SAMS wildlife data like elk severe winter concentration areas, but also trails and CNHP NatureServe, fens, and other habitat/species data simultaneously.
- There was a group discussion on the CODEX program and integrating it with CPW maps/modeling discussed in the March 2 meeting. **The group expressed interest in using CODEX along with CPW maps.** Lynn will schedule a training for the stakeholders on April 10.
- Lynn shared that several ORRCA stakeholders are confused about the ORRCA area boundary and how it got developed, and areas they think are missing. She discussed that if there is no full consensus, ORRCA can have a larger landscape scale boundary and clip models down to a smaller focus area later.

6:10-6:20 pm – Break

6:20 – 7 pm: Group discussion next looked at the PCA’s discussed during Peggy’s presentation, the “latest” ORRCA boundary, and how to finalize a species list for modeling.

- Group discussion about ORRCA boundary. There was some confusion from group members present and others who had emailed/discussed concerns with Lynn about how the boundary got finalized and by

¹ During the meeting Lynn said “Lake County” was having CODEX do a conservation values summary model during the meeting, based on being told this by Michael Menefee prior to March 27. After the meeting, CPW and CNHP/CODEX clarified that it is actually the NOCO coop that is having CODEX do a model for them. Stakeholders will learn more April 10.

whom. and additional areas such as Sneffels Wilderness and American Flats area should be added. It was mentioned by Tanya that the smaller group made the geographical decisions.

- Nick said that in late 2022 the working group and stakeholder group settled on the “latest” boundary by starting with the original grant boundary, and Nick did add the American Flats into the boundary. Hinsdale and Gunnison County have been contacted, and there will be a collaboration with them if there is any management or projects identified in those counties by ORRCA.
- Jennifer Cram questioned if ORRCA boundary was bigger – would it make ORRCA’s job harder but ORRCA could look at studies over a larger area?
- Robyn said there was a previous discussion about including Bear Creek to Cimarrons and BLM lands north of the Engineer Pass Road. Feels less familiar with southwestern Uncompahgre Plateau and south of Engineer Pass Road. Sees including the entire Sneffels Range and the entire Dallas Trail. The boundary was developed by the Working Group before and just reviewed with the Stakeholder Group after development.
- Kelly said she thought the discussions about American Flats would include the whole area – more of the American Flats & Bear Creek loops would be included. She advocates for including all of Sneffels Wilderness and all of Dallas Trail since they are cohesive recreational units in our area.
- Steve said from a biologist’s point of view, contemplating the larger landscape scale for wildlife mapping since wildlife moves around. But for hiking trails, such a large area might not be needed, but motorized routes cover large areas. Hard to manage trails at just the Ouray County boundary level.
- Scott said his group handles trails from Pearl Pass, Williams Pass, San Miguel, and Ouray Area. His concern with Envision Chaffee County is they want to shut everything down to just foot or horse trail and bring everything down to populated areas. It is a big concern and wonders why there isn’t more of a response from businesses in the Ouray area.
- Lynn suggested if this is not an open question, the boundary needs to be communicated to the stakeholders better. If it is an open question, then we need to get all the voices and as much consensus as possible from all of the stakeholders, or confusion could undermine ORRCA’s work. She said it feels like more discussion and communication is needed to make sure it is the right boundary. This meeting has fewer stakeholders present, perhaps because of meeting conflicts this week.
- Robyn said there has been limited meeting attendance and doesn’t think it is bad to revisit the geographic scope. Wants to get all the voices in the same room and come to a consensus.
- Tanya said she remembers the geographic boundary decision was made by a smaller group (like 10 or 12 people) than present at tonight’s meeting [fluxing between 20 and 25]. She doesn’t think the earlier decision holds more weight. She thinks it is good we are getting agendas and materials earlier before meetings to be ready for why and when we are having meetings. She likes the expansion ideas she is seeing now.
- Comments reflected that group members enjoyed having agendas and deliverables for meetings.
- Lynn said there could be one larger boundary for models and studies and a smaller one for doing projects.
- Dolgio remembers being in meetings where the geographic scope was discussed and likes the wider scope now. She thinks there was a compromise because the attendees were told to stay small and closer to the grant boundaries at the time. She thinks including areas like south of Red Mountain Pass is more accessible to Ouray residents than La Plata. But there were told other RPIs might start looking at the areas south of Ouray County. She noted that wildlife doesn’t care about political boundaries and advocates for widening the geographic scope, if not now, then after a new grant application. She noted

that there was confusion about tonight's meeting due to a google invite error, so the City of Ouray is not here tonight.

- Suggestion to have a single-item meeting well announced in advance to settle the boundary in one meeting. Lynn dubbed it a "boundary scrum meeting."
- Discussion on whether the Stakeholder Group and Working Group should be merged to increase attendance/participation. The suggestion that it is no longer necessary to have a stakeholder group and a working group since it's mostly the same people. Nick said the average stakeholder meeting was 10 to 12 and 20 people for in-person previously (before March 2).
- Nick mentioned that the Working Group created the Mission/Vision statements and that this group was created when the Forest Service was facilitating before he came on board. Nick shared that the latest geographic scope boundary was decided by the mission/vision subgroup of about 17 or so people. He led the discussion of what the boundary should be and points of access being important, and wilderness areas/American Flats with high-quality habitat being important. Mentioned he talked privately to Ouray County Commissioners about expanding to Montrose and San Miguel Counties and that the Commissioners wanted to stay small now and expand in the future after the next round of funding. Says the "MV" (Mission/Vision) group did talk to the stakeholder group.
- Lynn wondered if it makes sense to do the same modeling work twice if the study boundary was expanded later instead of now.
- Alyssa Kircher (CPW) requested that if changes need to be made to the geographic scope boundaries, it needs to be done sooner than later to respect the CPW GIS department's time. ORRCA can work on the species list and boundary at the same time and need it all to be well-defined when sent to CPW.

6:52 pm – 7 pm – Discussion of ORRCA requests for GIS habitat sensitivity model customization for direction to Colorado Parks & Wildlife (CPW).

- Lynn visually showed on a map where the PCAs and NCAs that Peggy spoke of tonight are in CODEX.
- She showed the CPW High Priority Habitat (Terrestrial and Aquatic) for SB-181 has the species brought up by ORRCA stakeholders during the March 2 meeting – fish, bighorn sheep, specific elk migration subsets, nesting sites, piping plover, bats... and proposed that she would put this up in a StoryMap for stakeholders to interact with.
- Boundary and species list needs to be finalized to send to CPW, and a decision on getting CODEX models in addition.
- **The Spreadsheet with changes made by consensus during the second half of the March 2 meeting is [HERE](#) (https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1_A8uo6k1L2W2t2HM5kTVs8obZnSNXsLS/edit?usp=sharing&oid=107931067833494421528&rtpof=true&sd=true)**
- Stakeholder Discussion Aid - Wildlife & Sensitive Species Habitat Model Inputs: <https://arcg.is/vHWeb>

7:00 PM -- Adjourn •Save the date: NEXT STAKEHOLDER MEETING: Monday, April 10, 2023 For CODEX presentation and training.