LOVELAND FOOTHILLS NATURAL AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN

(A Plan for Skyline Natural Area and Dakota Ridge Natural Area)

November 30, 2022 ***(Revised July 9, 2025)***

CITY OF LOVELAND OPEN LANDS & TRAILS

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the many citizens, staff, and partners who provided extensive input for the development of the Loveland Foothills Natural Area Management Plan.

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Approval

The Skyline Management Plan was initially approved on November 30, 2022. The plan has been revised to incorporate Dakota Ridge Natural Area, which was reviewed and approved on the following date:

Kara Kish, Director of Parks & Recreation — Date: 5/2/25

Larimer County, Conservation Easement Co-Holder — Date: 7/7/25

Colorado Open Lands, Conservation Easement Co-Holder — Date: 6/24/2025

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Plan Update

The Skyline Natural Area Management Plan, approved in 2022, was developed with extensive public input to guide the management and recreational use of Skyline Natural Area. Recognizing the growing demand for outdoor recreation in Northern Colorado, coupled with the increasing desire to conserve and protect lands of high ecological value, the City of Loveland is now updating and expanding the plan to include the adjacent Dakota Ridge Natural Area, renaming this plan the Loveland Foothills Natural Area Management Plan (Foothills Plan). This update follows an ecologically focused site analysis process to balance conservation with recreation. The expanded plan will ensure sustainable management practices to enhance public access while protecting natural resources.

1.2 Purpose and Objectives of the Plan

The purpose of the Foothills 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 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 allow.

The objectives of the Foothills Plan are fourfold, and include:

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

1.3 Land Use History

The City of Loveland acquired the parcels comprising the 169-acre Skyline Natural Area property in west Loveland in 2015, 2016, 2021, and 2024. The previous owners of the majority of the property (154+/- acres), Fred and Eunice Wenninger, purchased the land in the 1970s. Prior to the Wenningers' ownership, the site was used for grazing and was not developed, with the exception of possible seasonal camps for livestock management or private use.

The Wenninger property was approved and platted for a Larimer County Rural Land Use Plan (RLUP), Hitching Post Ridge RLUP, in 2008. The proposed rural development consisted of six residential parcels and residual conserved land, but was never developed for housing.

Dakota Ridge Natural Area, located north of Skyline Natural Area, was used for grazing and agricultural purposes prior to 2007 when the owner granted a conservation easement of 85.604 acres to Legacy Land Trust and the City of Loveland. An additional 26.625 acres was added to the conservation easement in 2008 and approximately 4.5 acres of building envelope was granted for a water storage tank location. In 2021, the City acquired these parcels and an additional 128.27 acres, totaling the current 245-acre Dakota Ridge Natural Area. This property is defined as where the plains meet the foothills.

Together, the Skyline and Dakota Ridge Natural Areas provide a contiguous preserved natural area facility of 415 acres with nearly 400 feet of elevation change from valleys to ridgelines, connecting habitat and providing opportunities for recreational use, such as hiking and mountain biking, unique to the City's Open Lands and Trails inventory.

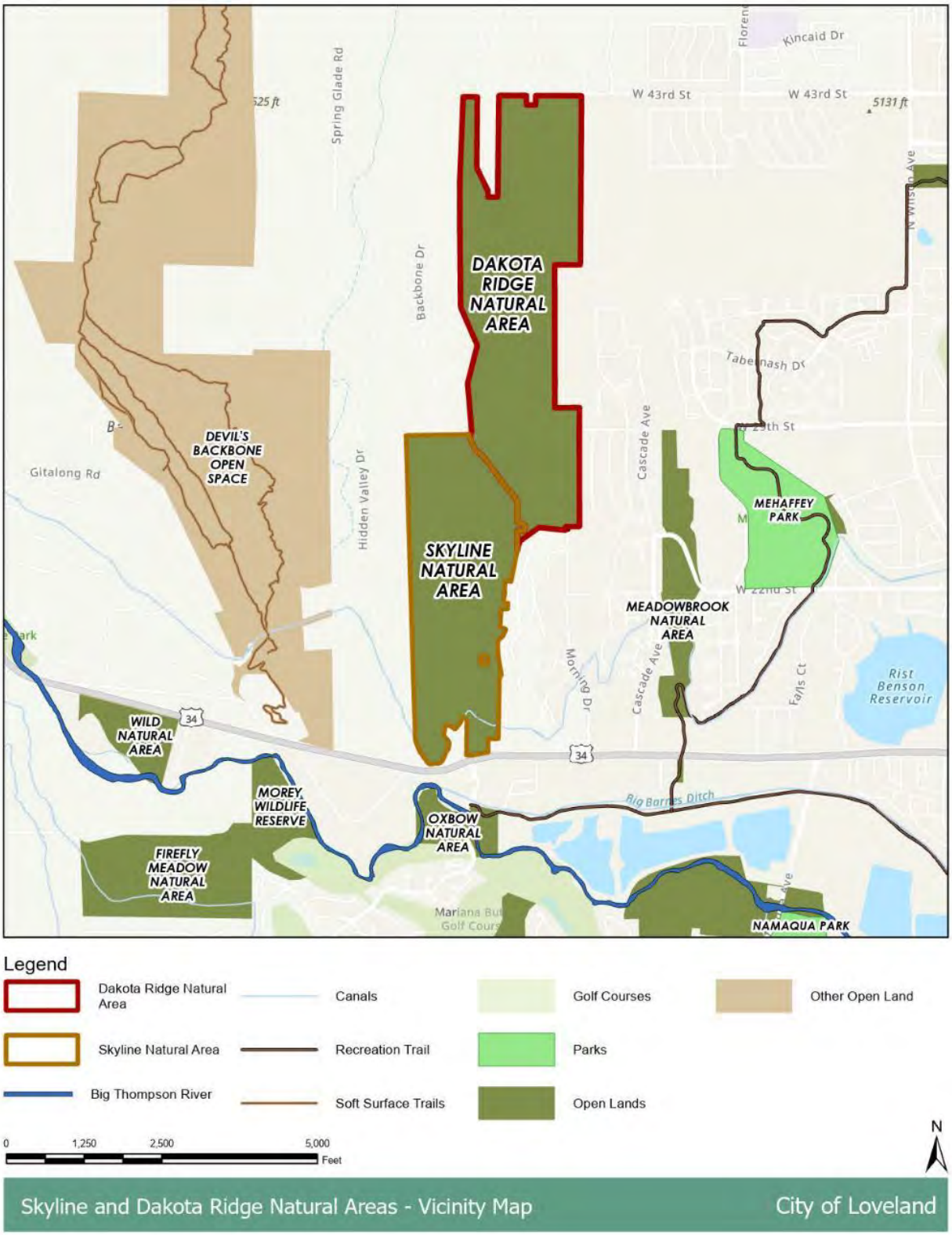
1.4 Scope and Organization of the Plan

The Foothills Plan is structured to initially describe the existing condition of the sites in order to establish a better understanding of the opportunities and constraints of the properties that make up Skyline and Dakota Ridge. The existing conditions surveyed include: natural, visual and cultural resources, existing improvements, and mineral/water rights.

After describing the existing conditions in the natural areas, the 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, Open Space Management Plan type descriptions, and public feedback comments.

The scope of this plan is limited to management of lands currently comprising Skyline Natural Area, Dakota Ridge Natural Area, potential additional acquisitions to Skyline, and possible future trail connections to adjacent lands and trail systems.

Figure 1: Location Map



1.5 Public and Agency Involvement

Public Outreach and Involvement

The public was invited to share their thoughts about the management and potential public access to Skyline Natural Area through several venues when the Management Plan was first initiated. In May 2019, the City of Loveland began a public outreach campaign specifically for the Skyline trail and trailhead project. The City's Open Lands Advisory Commission (now known as the Open Lands and Trails Advisory Commission) was consulted to solicit input and ensure support prior to taking concepts to the public. A public meeting and online forum were designed to obtain feedback on proposed management plan options at Skyline. In total, nearly 100 community members provided feedback during the public meeting and via online responses. The public input process asked attendees and respondents to indicate whether they would use the proposed trail network and in what capacity, as well as to share their thoughts and preferences regarding proposed trail alternatives. A summary of public comments shared with the department are included for reference in Appendix C.

A public meeting was held on May 6, 2019 at Group Publishing Inc. headquarters in west 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 via postcard invitations to neighbors, advertised through local media outlets, shared through city social media accounts, and posted on the City of Loveland website. Stakeholder groups also promoted the meeting to members through email lists. Approximately 50 members of the public attended the meeting including neighbors, open space users, project partners, and other stakeholders.

Exhibit boards presented at the open house meeting were posted on the City's website following the meeting, to solicit additional comments from members of the public. The exhibit boards were available online and feedback was accepted for 30 days and were considered in the development of the draft management plan. The draft plan was made available online for comment from October 27 to November 13, 2020 and comments were again incorporated into the final plan. In July 2024, the City held another open house to update members of the public about the addition of Dakota Ridge Natural Area into the management plan, along with proposed management actions, conceptual trail designs, and future visitor management of the combined sites, prior to a public Location and Extent hearing with Larimer County Planning Commission.

A soft-surface trail system has been envisioned for Skyline Natural Area since its initial acquisition in 2015, with a general trail alignment following existing two-track ranch roads and single-track paths. Proposed development plans initially presented for public input included approximately 2.25 miles of natural-surface trails, a new bridge crossing the Louden Ditch, a gravel parking lot, vault restroom facility, potential neighborhood trail connections, and interpretive sign program. The multi-use trail system would accommodate a variety of passive recreation uses, such as hiking, wildlife viewing, trail running and mountain biking. Three options for various

combinations of multi-use(bicycle and pedestrian) trail usage were presented for feedback. Proposed Skyline trails would also connect east to Loveland's 22-mile Recreation Trail, a 10-foot wide paved 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 open house and online forum indicated a significant amount of support for trail development at Skyline. Key findings from the survey include:

- Respondents generally supported trails at Skyline to provide more local options for a variety of passive recreation uses.
- Separation of uses (pedestrian, bicycle) was favored by some respondents to reduce trail conflicts and keep trails sustainable.
- Most respondents agreed with the concept of trail connections to nearby neighborhoods, other paved and soft-surface trails, and regional trail networks to provide non-motorized, off-street access to Skyline.
- Respondents were mixed about allowing dogs at Skyline. Those in favor agreed with additional restrictions such as requiring leashes, picking up after dogs, and possible seasonal or trial periods for dog use.
- Most respondents preferred operating hours of dawn to dusk for Skyline, vs. normal Loveland Open Lands operating hours of 6 am-10:30 pm, noting that reduced hours would reduce impacts to nearby neighborhoods and benefit wildlife use of the site.
- Some respondents had concerns about trespassers on adjacent private property and were in favor of fencing, signage and enforcement of rules.
- Many respondents supported protection of the site's resources, including wildlife, vegetation, geologic features, and cultural resources.

Since the establishment of the Dakota Ridge conservation easement in 2007, a soft-surface trail system has also been part of the vision for Dakota Ridge Natural Area. The acquisition of the Dakota Ridge property, including the land encumbered by a conservation easement, was presented to the Open Lands and Trails Advisory Commission on December 9, 2020, where it received unanimous approval. In 2023, the City contracted a consultant to conduct an ecologically focused review and analysis of the existing conditions of Dakota Ridge Natural Area. This extensive review included site visits with staff and members of the public to confirm and assess specific natural and cultural resources and areas of interest. The consultant's findings and recommendations supported the expansion of the 2020 Skyline Natural Area Management Plan to include Dakota Ridge, leading to its renaming as the Loveland Foothills Natural Area Management Plan. The site analysis was completed to define use zones ranging from protected areas to those more suitable for development, which helped guide the conceptual trail alignment. In early 2024, City

staff conducted extensive field reviews of the proposed alignment, making on-site adjustments to the final concept plan.

The Dakota Ridge conservation easement holders, Colorado Open Lands and Larimer County, approved the conceptual trail alignment that City personnel had prepared through in-depth site analysis and field staking in the summer of 2024.

Demand for recreational opportunities has continued to rise in northern Colorado along with population growth. Due to its proximity to urban areas and access to the foothills, Skyline and Dakota Ridge have the potential to provide unique opportunities and connections for non-motorized recreation in the region. These natural areas are uniquely positioned to alleviate demand from Larimer County's nearby Devil's Backbone Open Space and to improve public access to the regional Foothills Corridor trail system. As one of the most popular outdoor recreation destinations in Northern Colorado, Devil's Backbone was already straining from over 70K visitors per year as of its 2014 management plan update (Larimer 2015a).

Skyline and Dakota Ridge are at the western edge of Loveland's growth area, with numerous residential developments planned within city limits to the east. Master planning processes have repeatedly demonstrated Loveland residents' 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 2015b, 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 have provided input and assistance in the development of the draft Foothills Plan for Skyline and Dakota Ridge Natural Areas. The City of Loveland owns and manages the property. The proposed trail concept was developed with the help of trail designers, wildlife biologists, trail construction/ maintenance staff, and other stakeholder groups. Resource specialists from other organizations were also consulted during the planning process, and included Colorado Parks & Wildlife, the Colorado Natural Heritage Program, and CSU's Center for Mountain and Plains Archaeology. Between 2015 and 2024, agency staff and resource specialists visited the site on multiple occasions to inventory resources, assess existing conditions and determine the most sustainable trail design from a maintenance, constructability and resource conservation perspective.

Advisory Board

The City of Loveland Open Lands and Trails Advisory Commission has been involved throughout the Skyline and Dakota Ridge Natural Areas planning processes and reviewed the management plan. Members of the commission were invited to visit the site on several occasions to tour the properties and consider potential development improvements. The advisory commission is considered a stakeholder and input is taken into consideration in this plan.

2. EXISTING CONDITIONS

2.1 Overview

Skyline Natural Area is generally located north of the intersection of W. Eisenhower Blvd. (US Hwy 34) and Rossum Drive in Loveland, Colorado. The site is geographically located in Section 8, Township 5 North, Range 69 West of the 6th Principal Meridian, in Larimer County, Colorado. The site consists of a total land area of 169.52 acres.

Skyline lies on the east side of the Front Range where the foothills of the Rocky Mountains meet the Great Plains and contributes to a network of over 6,000 acres of public land along the foothills conserved by Loveland, Fort Collins and Larimer County. The site is located on a north-south trending ridge, with local topographic highs near the center of the site, gently sloping east-facing terrain to the east, and moderate to steep slopes to the west along the west side. The property is in a natural condition consisting of short-grass prairie grasslands and hogbacks containing mountain mahogany shrublands. Small swales and gullies provide wetland and riparian resources along several drainages, offering a sheltered wildlife movement corridor and habitat for small mammals that supply a prey base for raptors, coyotes, foxes, bobcats, and other predators (see Figure 2: Existing Conditions – Skyline Natural Area).

Dakota Ridge Natural Area is located to the north/northeast of Skyline and, like Skyline, contains high value habitat including a shrub-covered and forested hogback ridge along its western edge and a smaller grassy ridge to the east. The natural landscape of gently rolling terrain, drainage swales, and native vegetation provides critical winter habitat and movement corridors for ungulates such as elk and mule deer, raptors such as red-tailed hawks and kestrels, and numerous species of songbirds, and is a year-round home for bobcats, mountain lions, bears, foxes, coyotes, prairie dogs, and reptiles such as rattlesnakes and prairie lizards (see Figure 3: Existing Conditions – Dakota Ridge Natural Area).

Several notable natural features are located within these foothill properties. The hogbacks that form the central ridge of Skyline and the western edge of Dakota Ridge are part of Natural Area Site 74 – Namaqua Ridge Hogbacks, identified in the City's 2008 Natural Areas Sites report. This habitat is valuable for wildlife due to its connection to the larger Namaqua Ridge system and its shrub-dominated community which provides important foraging, denning/nesting, cover, and hunting habitat for a variety of mammals, raptors, songbirds, and reptiles.

Skyline and Dakota Ridge are located in a rural area of west Loveland. The properties are bordered to the north by 43rd Street; to the west by private property consisting primarily of 3-acre residential parcels and residual conserved lands as part of the Hidden Valley Rural Land Use Plan; to the east by the Namaqua Hills Subdivision and Hunters Run West Subdivision; and to the south by several residences located on the south side of the Louden Ditch. The property has access from the south from US Hwy 34 and via Morning Drive, which continues north through Dakota Ridge as a gravel road which permits access to privately owned parcels on the east side.

Figure 2: Existing Conditions – Skyline Natural Area

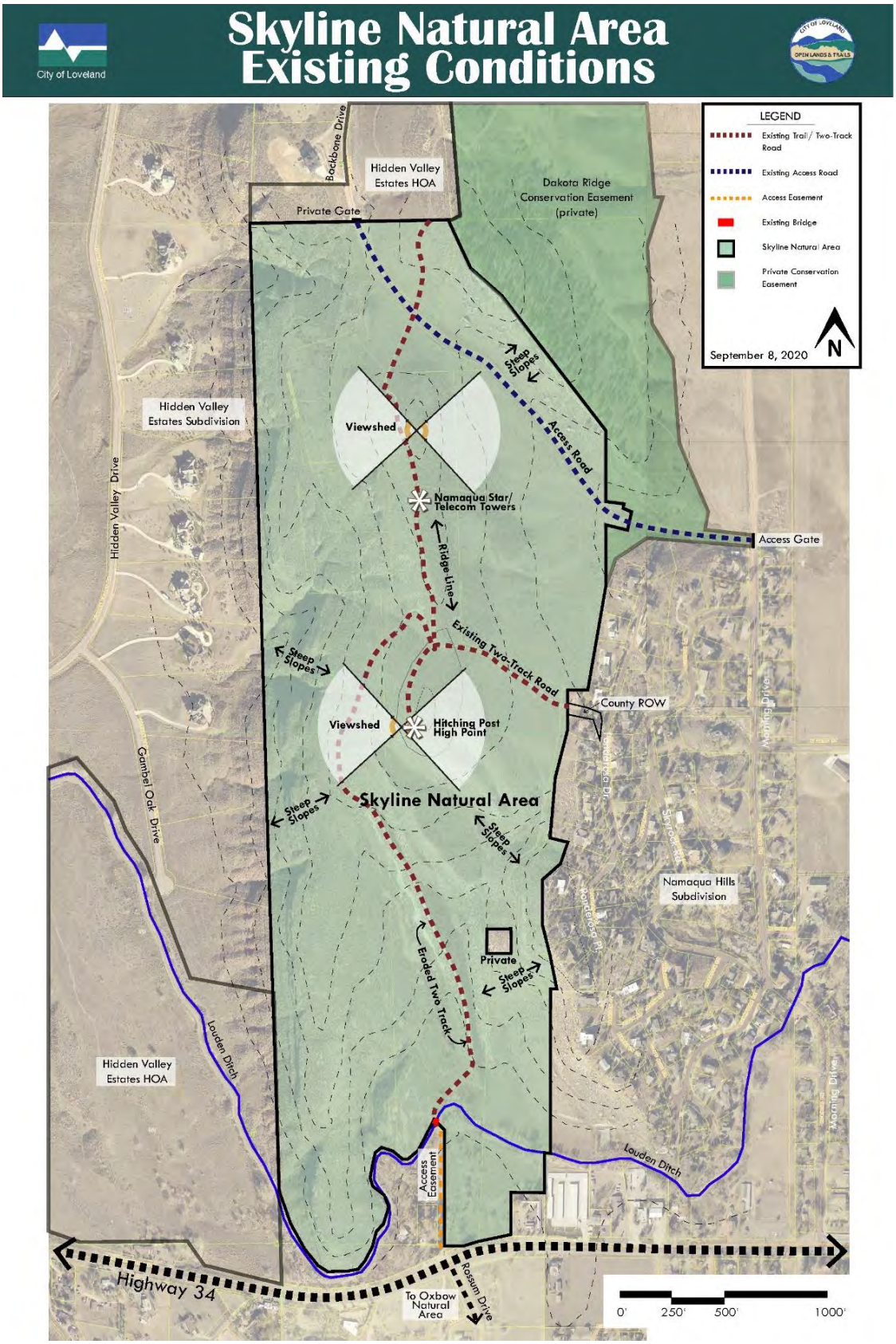
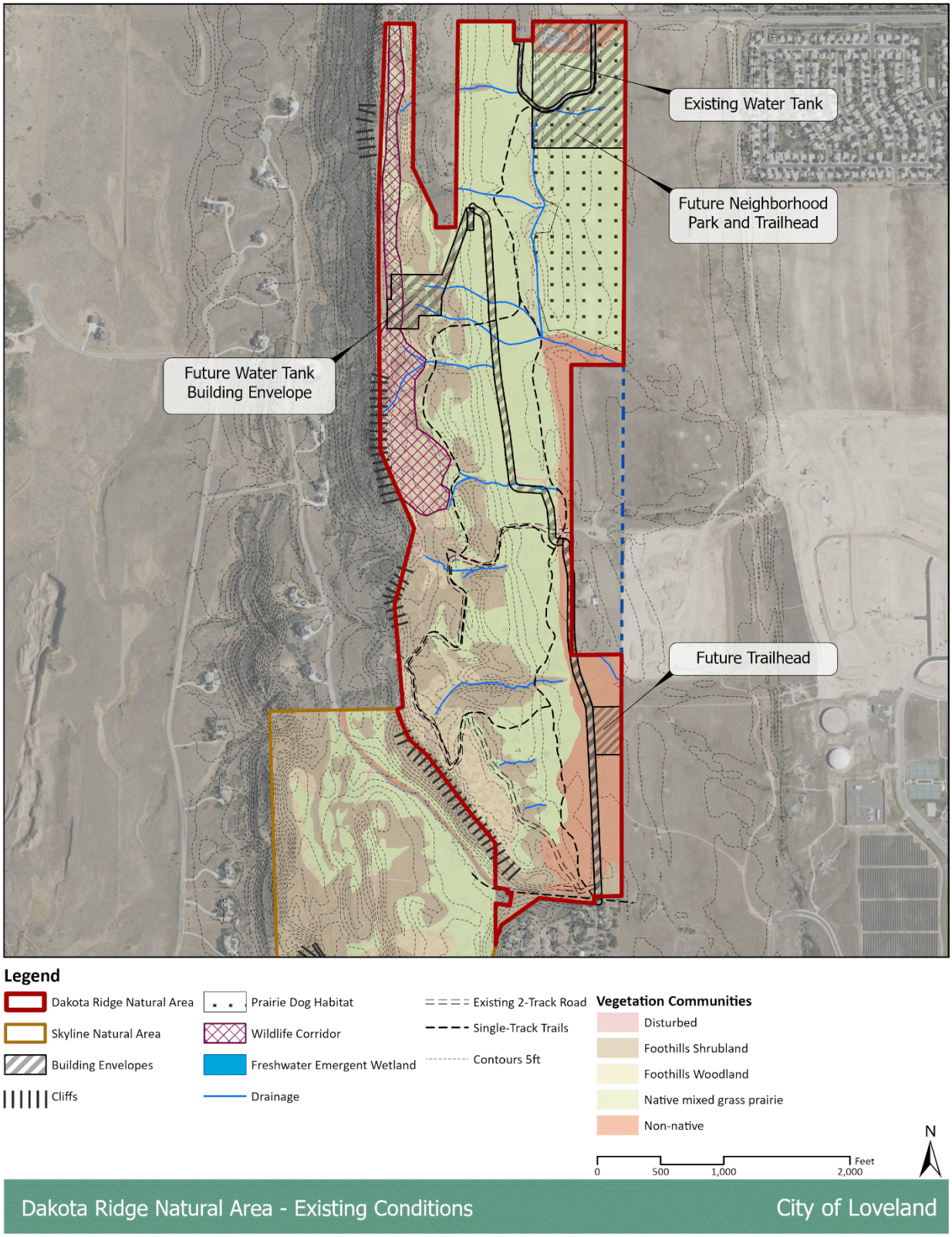


Figure 2: Existing Conditions – Dakota Ridge Natural Area



2.2 Natural Resources

Climate

Skyline and Dakota Ridge Natural Areas are located along the eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains and have 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 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

Skyline Natural Area mostly contains hilly and steep ridgelines and slopes with a small area of low relief (3-9% slope) in the wetlands area at the south end of the property. Hilly ridges and fans run north to south along the eastern property edge where it borders the Namaqua Hills residential area. The central region contains rocky outcrops, ridges, and hogbacks while the western periphery consists of a steep rock outcrop that gives way to the gentle rolling hills of the Hidden Valley subdivision below. The northeastern corner of this area borders the Dakota Hogback that can be traced from Wyoming to New Mexico. The high point of the property is 5,417' on the centrally located Namaqua Hill summit. The low point is at 5,085' in a wetland area located at the far south end of the property.

The USGS geologic map indicates that the site is underlain by the Lykins Formation, the Entrada Sandstone and Jelm Formation, and the Morrison Formation, including fine sandy loams, bouldery clay loam, stony sandy loam, cobbly loam, and unweathered bedrock (W.A. Braddock et al. 1970). Skyline Natural Area contains 7 soil and soil complex types, as shown in Figure 4. The soil associations listed in the Soils Survey of Larimer County Area, Colorado by the USDANRCS include the following (USDA-NRCS 1980):

12 -- Baller Rock outcrop complex (15-45% slopes)

This complex consists of strongly sloping to steep soils on ridges and hogbacks. It is found in the south-central portion of Skyline situated in between the Purner-Rock complex to the west and Haplustolls complexes on the east. Runoff is rapid and the risk of erosion is severe. This complex is suited to native grasses.

Figure 3: Soil Map for Skyline Natural Area

25 – Connerton-Barnum complex (3-9% slopes)

These gentle slopes consist of well drained sandy to sandy-loam soils and are located in the far southwest and southeast corners of Skyline where runoff is low and water storage capacity is high.

44 - Haplustolls, Hilly (9-50% slopes)

These strongly sloping to steep soils contain a significant mix of cobbly and stony surface layers. It is found in Skyline along the north and northeastern periphery Runoff is rapid, and the risk of water erosion is moderate to severe. This soil is appropriate for native grasses.

45 – Haplustolls-Rock outcrop complex, steep (9-50% slopes)

This complex consists of a mixture of both the Rocky outcrops of 9-25% slopes and the Steep Rock outcrops of 20-50% slopes. The gentler 9-25% steep Rocky outcrops complex consists of well-drained, cobbly to stony colluvium parent material with a boulder clay loam at the surface, becoming more stoney and clay at greater depths. The more steep Rocky outcrops of 20-50% slopes consist of unweathered bedrock with very high runoff and low water storage ability.

58 – Kirtley-Purner complex (5-20% slopes)

This soil complex is found only in a small section at the southeast end of Skyline and consists of a clay loam and loam soil in the lower (5-9%) slopes to a fine sandy loam soil at the steeper (9-20%) slopes. These soils are well-drained with a high runoff which increases its erodibility.

86 – Purner-Rock outcrop complex (10-50% slopes)

This soil complex runs north to south along the western edge of Skyline along the eastern edge of the Haplustolls-Rock outcrop complex. The soils are fine sandy loam with very high runoff capability.

93 – Rock outcrop (25-90% slopes)

A very small strip of this unweathered bedrock exists in the south-central area of Skyline.

Dakota Ridge Natural Area's eastern half features mostly gentle slopes and rolling hills with gradients under 12 percent. In contrast, the western portion of the site has steeper slopes, rugged rocky outcrops, and a cliff band on the southwest edge where it borders Skyline Natural Area. Slopes in this region typically range from 12% to 30%, with certain areas, such as drainage channels, exceeding 30% slopes. The highest elevation on the property reaches 5,472 feet at its northwestern point while the lowest point, at 5,174 feet, is located in the southeastern corner, near Morning Drive and Crown Drive.

The USGS geologic map indicates that the site is underlain by the Lytle and South Platte Formations of the Dakota Group, and the Benton Shale Formation, consisting of sandstone, shale, limestone and bentonite. including sandy loams, clay-loam, and

unweathered bedrock (W.A. Braddock et al. 1970). Dakota Ridge contains 10 soil and soil complex types, as shown in Figure 5. The soil associations listed in the Soils Survey of Larimer County Area, Colorado by the USDA-NRCS, include the following (USDA-NRCS 1980):

12 – Baller Rock outcrop complex (15-45% slopes)

This complex consists of strongly sloping to steep soils on ridges and hogbacks. It is found throughout the western portion of Dakota Ridge, situated in between the narrow band of Emigrant-Redmountain Rock outcrop complex to the west and Kirtley series and Renohill clay loam on the east. Runoff is rapid and the risk of erosion is severe. This complex is suited to native grasses.

21 – Carnero Loam (3-9% slopes)

The Carnero series consists of moderately deep, well-drained, moderately slowly permeable soils that formed in medium and moderately fine-textured residuum from sandstone with addition of wind-blown sediments. These soils are mainly used for pasture, native grasses, and occasionally dry-farmed crops such as wheat or barley. Runoff is moderate and the water erosion hazard is moderate.

25 – Connerton-Sylvandale Complex (3-9% slopes)

The Connerton-Sylvandale complex consists of deep, well-drained soils formed from calcareous (lime-rich) materials and sediments derived from red sedimentary rocks and shale with a loamy to sandy-loam texture. These soils are used mainly for dry farmed crops and pasture. Runoff is moderate and the risk of erosion is moderate to high, depending on the land use.

45 – Emigrant-Redmountain Rock outcrop complex (15-60% slopes)

This complex consists of a mix of shallow to moderately deep, rocky soils and exposed bedrock, typically found on steep mountain slopes and rugged terrain. Runoff is rapid due to shallow soils and steep slopes and the risk of erosion is high.

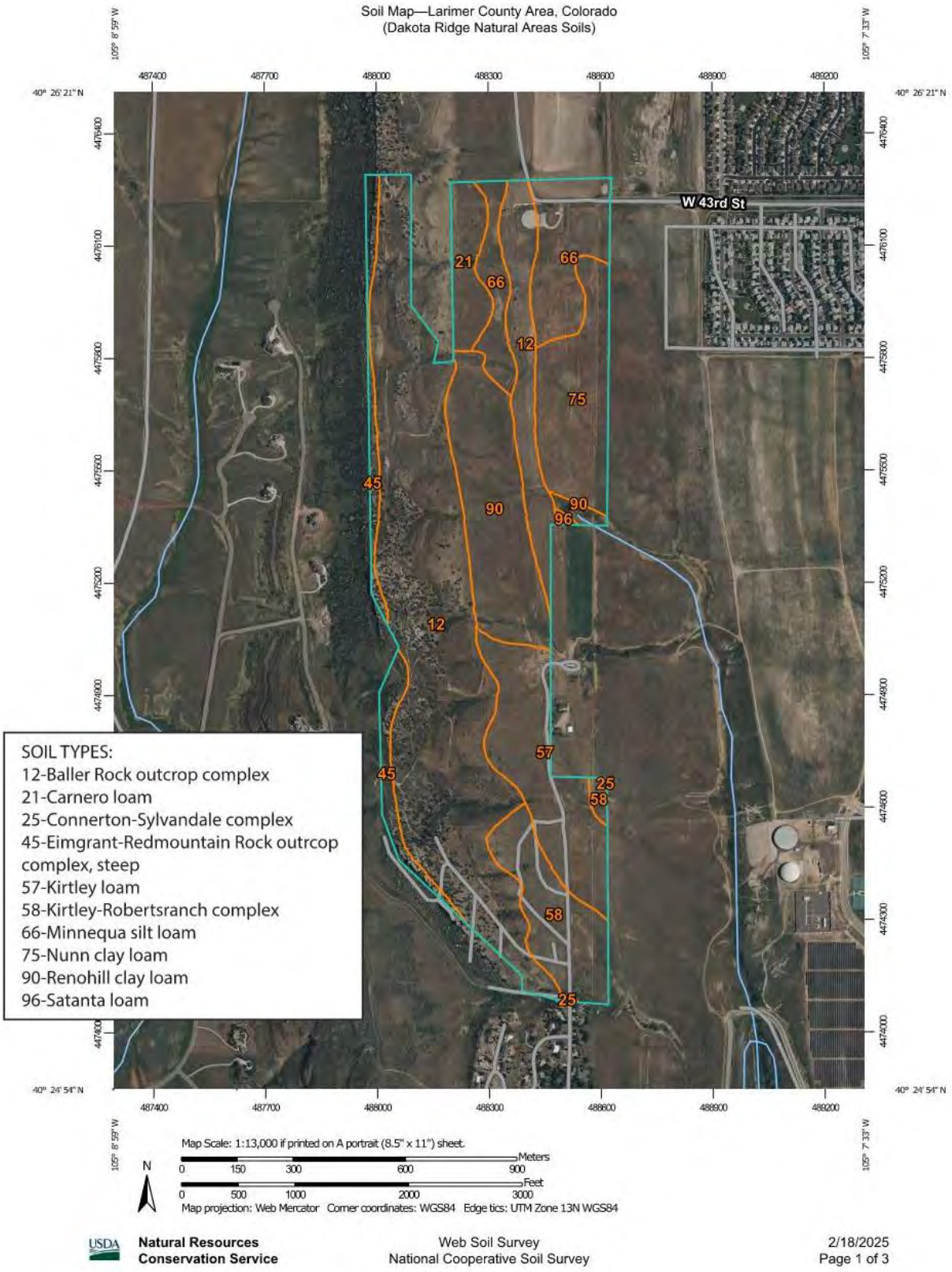
57 – Kirtley loam (3-9% slopes)

The Kirtley series consists of moderately deep, well-drained soils formed in material weathered from reddish brown sandstone and shale. Kirtley loam is found on gently sloping or strongly sloping uplands and valley sides and is suited to pasture and native grasses. Water runoff is moderate and the water erosion hazard is severe.

58 – Kirtley-Robertsranch complex (5-20% slopes)

This complex consists of a mix of moderately deep to deep, well-drained loam and clay-loam soils found on rolling hills and foothills. These soils developed from weathered sedimentary rock and areas are commonly used for grazing, wildlife habitat, and limited dryland farming. Runoff is moderate to rapid and the erosion hazard is moderate to high.

Figure 4: Soil Map for Dakota Ridge Natural Area



66 – Minnequa silt loam (3-9% slopes)

The Minnequa series consists of moderately deep, well-drained soils formed in material from weathered limestone, marl, and limey shale. These soils are found on uplands and are underlain by marl or soft limestone. Vegetation includes native grasses and yucca, and the soil is well suited to pasture if irrigated. Water runoff is moderate, the water erosion hazard is moderate, and the wind erosion hazard is severe.

75 – Nunn clay loam (3-5% slopes)

The Nunn series consists of deep, well-drained soils formed in alluvium. These soils are mainly used for irrigated and dryland crops and pasture. A few areas are used for native grasses. This soil map unit is on high terraces and fans. Water runoff is moderate, the water erosion hazard is moderate, and the wind erosion hazard is slight.

90 – Renohill clay loam (3-9% slopes)

The Renohill series consists of moderately deep, well-drained soils formed in material weathered from sandstone and shale. These soils are on uplands and underlain by soft shale. Native vegetation is blue grama, buffalograss, western wheatgrass, and cactus. Water runoff is rapid and the water erosion hazard is severe. If irrigated, this soil map unit is suited to pasture.

96 – Satanta loam (3-5% slopes)

The Satanta series consists of deep, well-drained soils formed in mixed alluvial and wind-deposited material. These soils are on upland and high terraces. These soils are mainly used for native grass and irrigated and dry-farmed crops. Water runoff is moderate and the water erosion hazard is moderate.

Hydrology

Skyline and Dakota Ridge are in the Mariano Reservoir-Big Thompson River watershed. Several swales and gullies drain the Skyline Natural Area property from the north-south ridgeline, carrying water ephemerally during the year. The large drainage in the southern portion of the property is fed by several small gullies draining the hills surrounding the valley, creating a small wetland just north of Hwy 34. Periods of intense precipitation occasionally create water features running through drainages and over steep rocky faces on the west side of the site.

Several swales and gullies drain the Dakota Ridge property from west to east, including an unnamed ephemeral drainage in the central portion, which flows east to southeast and serves as a tributary to the Big Thompson River. Additionally, two small stock ponds are located on the property which are filled intermittently by runoff before being reabsorbed into the water table.

Vegetation Resources

Much of Skyline Natural Area is dominated by a globally rare plant community that occurs along the front range of Colorado: mountain mahogany/needle and thread shrubland (*Cercocarpus montanus / Hesperostipa comata*). Mountain mahogany is

extremely valuable for winter browse (Stubbendiek et al. 1986) and provides important cover for all wildlife, especially wintering deer.

Mountain mahogany is a colonizer of poor soils because it forms root nodules for nitrogen-fixing bacteria. This is unusual. Nitrogen in the air flows into biological systems through bacteria, which convert more nitrogen than they need and plant roots pick up the leftovers and animals eat the plants. Some plants provide nodules for nitrogen-converting (nitrogen-fixing) bacteria, giving them a protected place to live and access to carbon and micronutrients from the plant. Most of the plants that have nitrogen-fixing bacteria in root nodules are the legumes, pea family, Fabaceae. But this relationship is found in a few other plant species, including the mountain mahoganies. Consequently, mountain mahoganies can grow on nitrogen poor soils where other plants cannot (Keeler 2020).

Needle and thread grass is widespread throughout the West and can be important to livestock and wildlife, especially early in the spring. Needle and thread is moderately palatable to wildlife. Throughout the West, needle and thread is moderately important spring forage for mule deer, but use declines considerably as more preferred forages become available in summer (Dietz and Nagy 1976).

Botanical surveys were conducted on May 25, June 27, and July 28, 2016 by Colorado Natural Heritage Program botanists and field technicians, as well as City of Loveland staff. A total of 89 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 and it is thought that further survey would find more than 100 plant species. Of the 89 identified plant species, 66 were native and 23 were non-native species. See Appendix A for a list of plant species observed during botanical surveys at Skyline Natural Area.

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). Bell's twinpod occurs throughout Skyline, growing in the red sandstone of the Lykins Formation, as well as in shales and limestones of the Niobrara Formation. During the 2016 CNHP botanical surveys, Skyline contained an estimated 300 individuals and their occurrence was ranked as B/C (on a scale from A to D) for good or fair estimated viability using the CNHP Element Occurrence (EO) ranking system. (CNHP 2016)

Four plants of the jeweled blazingstar (*Mentzelia speciosa*), another rare species, were found to occur in Skyline Natural Area during botanical surveys. Due to the low number of this species and surrounding development, this occurrence received a D rank (A to D scale), indicating poor estimated viability. Jeweled blazingstar has been documented in central Colorado and along the Front Range and is ranked as vulnerable to extinction throughout its global and state range. (CNHP 2016)

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

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/needle and thread (*Cercocarpus montanus/Hesperostipa comata*) shrubland is found on the northern Front Range foothills from Douglas to Larimer counties on topographic features such as hogbacks, ridges, mesas, canyon, and slopes from 5,700 to 7,440 feet on the Front Range. This community is dominant in Skyline Natural Area and is currently ranked as good to fair condition by CNHP. The community is an isolated spread of 49 acres within the Skyline Natural Area and is not contiguous with another similar plant community.

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, three List B and four List C Colorado noxious weed species have been observed in Skyline Natural Area. Myrtle spurge (*Euphorbia myrsinites*) is the List A species present in the natural area, which requires eradication in Colorado. Large patches of myrtle spurge were found along the east side of Skyline and appeared to have been unsuccessfully sprayed with herbicide for removal at the time of the botanical surveys. Management efforts aimed at removing Myrtle spurge have been implemented since 2017, with positive results. Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), Russian olive (*Elaeagnus angustifolia*), and leafy spurge (*Euphorbia esula*) are List B species identified in Skyline, which are required to be managed to contain the spread of infestations. Cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*), chicory (*Cichorium intybus*), 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. CNHP also advised that the non-native cereal rye (*Secale cereale*) patches in the southwest corner of the property will continue to spread if more ground disturbance, such as trail building, occurs within these patches. The Loveland Open Lands and Trails Division engages in active noxious weed control on all sites that it manages, typically including the use of herbicides, mowing, and manual removal.

The western half of Dakota Ridge Natural Area spans about 1.5 miles of the Dakota Hogback, the easternmost feature of the Rocky Mountains. It features diverse vegetation across dry, shallow, rocky soils and is part of the Lower Montane-Foothill Shrubland system. The area includes a variety of mountain mahogany plant associations, which vary based on bedrock geology and elevation, and supports diverse native grasses in the understory. This ecological system is common on sandstone hogbacks along the eastern Front Range. In addition, a significant stand of ponderosa pine is located along the north-south ridgeline on the far west side of Dakota Ridge. The eastern half of Dakota Ridge is dominated by grasslands in formerly cultivated and grazed areas, with shortgrass prairie communities occurring along the central ridgeline. Small riparian communities are found along the small drainage swales. The different communities are described below.

Disturbed Grasslands

These areas, impacted by past agricultural use, are dominated by weedy annual and biennial species like cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*), smooth brome (*Bromus inermis*), crested wheatgrass (*Agropyron cristatum*), and western wheatgrass (*Pascopyrum smithii*), as well as field bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis*) and common mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*). Non-native grasses dominate, and native grasses have decreased due to grazing activities.

Shortgrass Prairie

Located on the central ridgeline, this community includes shortgrass prairie species such as cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*), smooth brome (*Bromus inermis*), and western wheatgrass (*Pascopyrum smithii*), with additional occurrences of prickly pear and yucca. Grazing has similarly reduced native grasses and increased non-natives.

Riparian Community

The riparian community is limited to valley swales draining the larger ridge on the west side of the property. No ordinary high-water mark was observed. Species observed included curly dock, sandbar willow (*Salix exigua*), European madwort, and bulbous bluegrass.

Disturbed Community

The disturbed community is limited to a gravel yard, water tanks, a cellular tower, and associated gravel access roads. This area appears to undergo routine maintenance and is devoid of vegetation. The remaining disturbed community is associated with pasture access two-track roads. These roads have vegetation dominated by redstem filaree and European madwort.

State Noxious Weeds

Seven noxious weed species occur on the property. One List A species, two List B species, and Four list C species. Myrtle spurge (*Euphorbia myrsinites*) is the List A species present in the natural area, which requires eradication in Colorado. Scotch thistle (*Onopordum acanthium*) and leafy spurge (*Euphorbia esula*) are List B species identified in Dakota Ridge, which are required to be managed to contain the spread of infestations. Cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*), field bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis*), bulbous bluegrass (*Poa bulbosa*), and common mullein *(Verbascum thapsus*) are List C species identified in the natural area, which are required to be managed where deemed appropriate.

Federally Threatened, Endangered, and Candidate Plant Species

Two federally threatened species, the Ute ladies'-tresses orchid (*Spiranthes diluvialis*) and the western prairie fringed orchid (*Platanthera praeciara*) are potentially present in Larimer County, though the property is not conducive to the establishment of these species due to lack of suitable habitat.

Wildlife

Skyline Natural Area and Dakota Ridge Natural Area habitat supports a limited diversity of wildlife species that are typical of the Colorado Front Range. The natural drainages in the area provide important wildlife habitat and movement corridors (Loveland 2001). Mammals using the properties include mule deer, elk, coyote, red fox, bobcat, black bear, jackrabbit, and cottontail rabbit. Both properties contain a significant portion of a 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.

Listed below and included in Appendix A are wildlife species that have been observed either directly and/or with sign, and additional species likely to be encountered in this area.

Birds

To date, more than 80 bird species have been documented in Skyline and Dakota Ridge Natural Areas and adjacent lands, from annual Audubon bird surveys and counts (2015-2024), a Master's Thesis study (May-June 2014 and May-June 2013), and other on-site surveys (2016-2024).

Mammals

The dominant plant community of both Skyline and Dakota Ridge, mountain mahogany shrubland, provides year-round browse and cover for mule deer, which typically use the lower flats for nighttime bedding then move to the higher slopes for daytime forage and cover. The mountain mahogany slopes also provide winter

browse and cover for elk that migrate down from nearby higher elevation slopes. Observations and/or sign of other mammals include coyotes, red fox, bobcat, mountain lion, black bear, striped skunk, cottontail rabbit, raccoon, and Mexican woodrat. Other mammals likely to occur in this area, but not yet observed include prairie and meadow voles, hispid pocket, rock, and deer mice, black-tailed prairie dog, golden-mantled ground and rock squirrels, least and Uinta chipmunks, and white-tailed deer.

Reptiles and Amphibians

Bull (gopher) snakes and prairie rattlesnakes occur in this area. Other possible species include western tiger salamander, Woodhouse's toad, boreal chorus frog, short-horned lizard, prairie lizard, plains garter snake, North American racer, and six-lined racerunner lizard.

Invertebrates

Mountain mahogany is the host plant of at least 19 species of native moths and butterflies (Keeler 2020).

Environmental Site Assessment

A Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) was conducted by the City of Loveland prior to the acquisition of Skyline Natural Area in 2015 and in 2021 prior to the acquisition of Dakota Ridge Natural Area. The ESAs found an absence of significant environmental concerns at both properties (City of Loveland Risk Management Division, 2015/2021). Interviews, site inspections, and records research performed during the ESAs 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 properties (ibid). Historically, there has been normal agricultural use of pesticides and herbicides at the properties (ibid). 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 sites (ibid).

2.3 Visual Resources

The area surrounding Skyline Natural Area and Dakota Ridge Natural Area is conserved as part of a 6,000-acre effort to preserve the foothills through protected open space, and as such offers a wide assortment of scenic views of relatively undeveloped land. Skyline and Dakota preserve nearly two miles of the scenic Front Range Mountain backdrop, including the prominent Namaqua Ridge and setting for the seasonally lit Namaqua Star/Heart. From their elevated ridgelines, Skyline and Dakota Ridge Natural Areas provide expansive views of the distant eastern plains of Colorado, Prairie Ridge and Coyote Ridge Natural Areas to the north, Mariana Butte to the south, and dramatic views of Devil's Backbone and the Rocky Mountains to the west.

In addition to conserving viewsheds, preservation of these scenic values will enrich the experience of recreational trail users on this and other nearby public lands.

2.4 Cultural Resources

A Cultural Resource Survey was performed by faculty and graduate students from the CSU Center for Mountain and Plains Archaeology in 2017. The purpose of the pedestrian survey was to locate and assess cultural resources within the area of the proposed trail system of Skyline Natural Area. The crews noted ten new sites/isolates and attempted to revisit three previously known sites. A summary of the report is provided below (LaBelle et al. 2017).

Brief Site History

The hogbacks along the Big Thompson River are well known for an abundance of prehistoric archaeological materials, as sites have been noted in the area since at least the 1930s. Edison Lohr, a former Loveland resident and Lindenmeier crew member, made notable collections along the Big Thompson River and in Larimer County, eventually sharing his notes and collections with Dr. Joe Ben Wheat of the University of Colorado. In addition, both Colorado State University and the University of Northern Colorado have conducted research in the general area of the Devil's Backbone, including excavation of the Valley View and Echo Cave sites to the west. Limited archaeological work had been conducted on Skyline Natural Area prior to this survey. Lauri Travis (CSU) and Dr. Elizabeth Ann Morris (CSU) recorded a number of prehistoric Native American sites on and around the property in the 1970s and 1980s. These were described in Travis' MA thesis from Colorado State University and later published in the journal Plains Anthropologist. Five prehistoric finds were known in the general open space area. Three of these were thought to be located on the Skyline property itself and attempts were made to revisit these sites during the project. None of the sites could be relocated, possibly due to poor ground visibility.

A 1988 archeological survey of a 2.5-mile stretch of the Dakota Ridge Hogback, including Skyline Natural Area and Dakota Ridge Natural Area, presented evidence of human activity dating as far back as the early archaic period (10,000 to 8,000 years ago). Evidence of early human habitation in the Dakota Ridge hogback area includes a number of materials, sites and remains of structures. Travis theorized that the area offered safe shelter and a moderate climate, with morning sun and advantageous eastern views watching for game and approaching people. Ten cultural resources (or potential resources) were noted during the CSU reconnaissance survey of Skyline in March 2017. Most of the sites are not located near the proposed trails and therefore will not be affected by the trail construction. A few sites are within 30m of the trail centerline and should be avoided if possible. This survey was of reconnaissance nature and aimed at examining potential trail corridors. Additional inventory and documentation of identified sites should be undertaken to ensure appropriate management of these resources.

At Dakota Ridge, cultural resource sites identified previously and included in Travis' survey were considered during the layout of the conceptual trail plan (Travis, 1988).

2.5 Existing Improvements

Skyline Natural Area is undeveloped but is crossed by two-track roads and several single-track pathways. A group of communication towers and the Namaqua Star/Heart are centrally located along the top of the ridgeline. As the property has not been opened to public access, recreational improvements have not yet been developed at Skyline.

No residential or agricultural structures are on the Dakota Ridge property. Two large municipal water tanks and associated structures occupy about 6.5 acres of the northern portion of the property. A 12-acre building envelope for a future City of Loveland neighborhood park and trailhead parking area is located in the northeast corner of the property. A 2-acre building envelope for a future trailhead is located along the east property boundary of Dakota Ridge. A powerline is located along the eastern boundary, but no other utilities are provided to or on the property.

Dakota Ridge Natural Area is also crossed by multiple two-track roads and several single-track pathways. In some areas, the roads have become highly eroded, creating steep-sided ravines. In the southern portion of the property, Morning Drive extends about 3,000 feet from the southern boundary north, to an adjacent residential property.

Roads

Improvements for past agricultural uses of the property consist primarily of two-track ranch roads for access. A gravel road enters the Skyline property from the east (Crown Drive) and continues across the north end of the property to provide emergency access to and from the Hidden Valley Estates rural subdivision to the west. From Crown Drive, a two-track road leads south to the ridgeline of Skyline for utility access to the communication towers and Namaqua Star/Heart. An additional two-track utility access road leads west up to the ridge from Ponderosa Drive in the Namaqua Hills subdivision.

Dakota Ridge contains a road easement that extends from the southern boundary at Crown and Morning Drive to the adjacent private parcels along the eastern boundary. This easement partially overlaps a 25-foot maintenance and access road easement leading to a future water tank on the western ridgeline. However, through an MOU with the City Water & Power Department (dated July 10, 2024) the access road for the future water tank will be relocated. It will now be partially co-located along an existing non-exclusive easement on the northern section of the property, which also provides access to a cell tower on an adjacent parcel.

Ditches

The Louden Ditch runs along the south boundary of the Skyline property and there is a pedestrian bridge on the south end of the property. There are no ditches crossing the Dakota Ridge property.

Power Lines

Power lines run east-west along Hwy 34 near the south boundary of Skyline and east-west along the north boundary of Skyline for approximately 700 feet along Crown Drive from the intersection with Morning Drive. Power lines also run north-south on the east side of Dakota Ridge.

Fencing

Barbed wire fencing was used in the past for livestock management and for delineation of property boundaries at Skyline and Dakota Ridge. Much of the fencing is dilapidated and is no longer used for land management purposes.

2.6 Water and Mineral Rights

According to the purchase contract for the Skyline Natural Area property, the seller retained one-half interest in any and all mineral interests under the property. This reserved interest will expire 20 years from the date the property was purchased (August 20, 2015), or so long as oil or gas is being produced and paying quantities from the property, whichever is later. The seller did not retain any rights to surface use or mining on the property and may not grant or convey said surface rights to others.

The Skyline acquisitions included ½ share of Louden Ditch water rights. Also, according to the Phase I ESA, based on a review of the Colorado Division of Water Resources' records, there is one registered well on the site. The well is registered to F. Wenninger but the agency records do not indicate how deep the well is. The well was not observed during reconnaissance for the Phase I ESA.

There are two existing wells on the Dakota Ridge Natural Area property and the mineral rights have not been severed. Well #303929 can produce approximately 1.75 gpm and is not currently active. Well #303480 can produce 20 gpm and will be available for residential use for 3 lots in Dakota Ridge 1st Subdivision per the purchase agreement. An agreement has been executed between the City and Camco LLC for access and maintenance to well #303480.

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 Skyline and Dakota Ridge Natural Areas while providing new opportunities for passive outdoor recreation in Loveland. To these ends, multiple management tools will be utilized.

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 and Trails Division will utilize visitor management methods to monitor the impact of recreational use at Skyline and Dakota and implement necessary changes to ensure that recreation does not conflict with ecological, visual, or cultural values provided by the natural areas.

The Site Plan shown in Figure 6 incorporates all of these objectives, by providing opportunities for public access while conserving the sites' valuable natural, cultural and visual resources.

3.2 Natural Resources Management

3.2.1 Vegetation Management

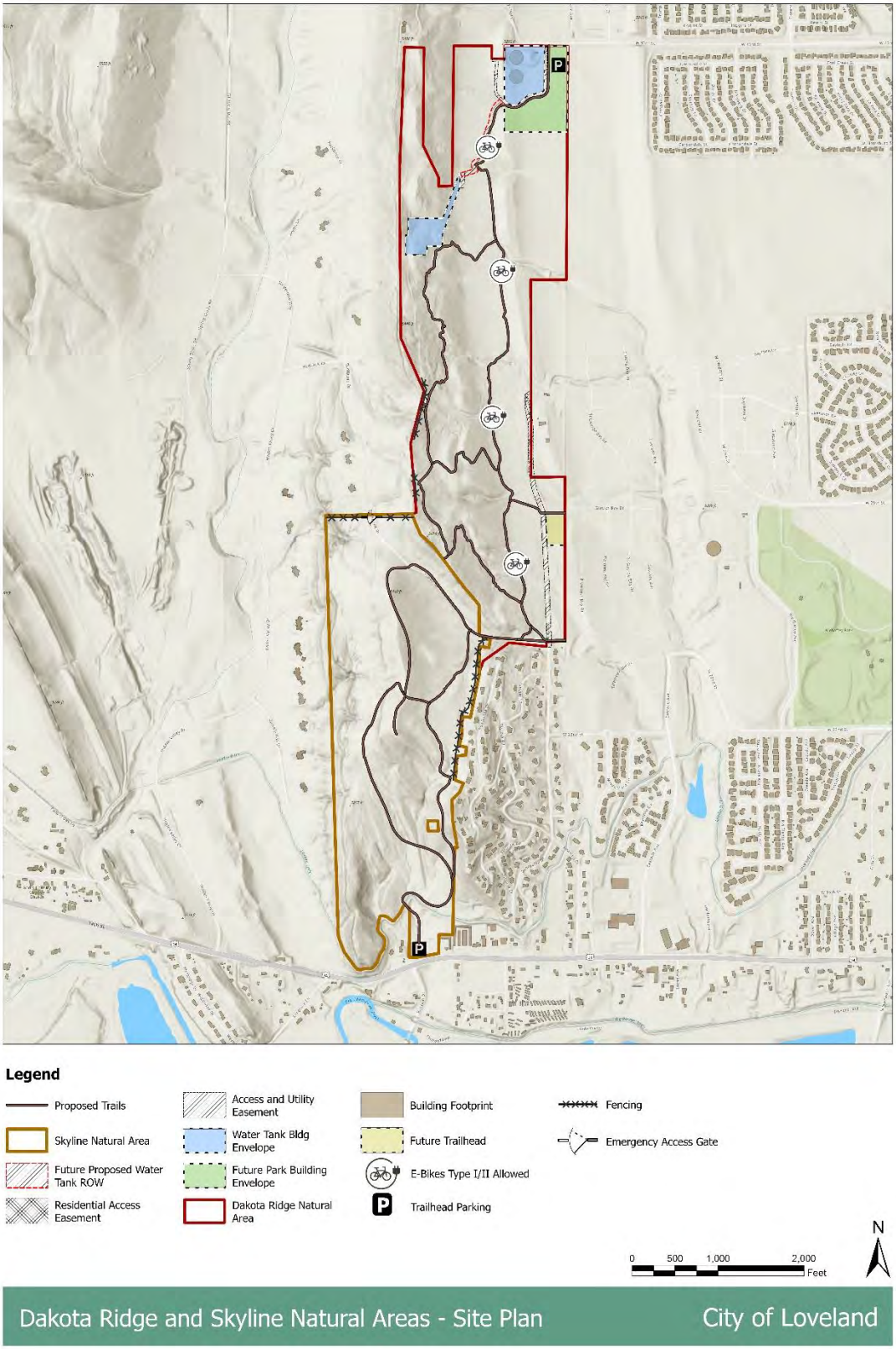
Skyline and Dakota Ridge Natural Areas contain a wide variety of vegetation types. Recent field observations by agency staff, CNHP, and contractors provide applicable information on a number of species and plant communities present and the general characteristics of the vegetation. This plan focuses on vegetation around trail corridors as current funding and staff resources make a full 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. Management 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 these Natural Area 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 5: Site 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 wetland areas with a diversity of native species using local wetland ecotypes.
    - Provide a boardwalk crossing or realign trails at drainageways to prevent erosion and preserve the water resource.
- Limit impacts to ecologically sensitive wildlife and plant communities on site, including these actions:
    - Use existing trails and two-tracks where feasible to reduce overall trail impacts to vegetation and wildlife.
    - Locate trails to avoid impacts to the rare Bell's twinpod and jeweled blazingstar plant communities.
    - Avoid fragmentation of sensitive plant populations and communities to minimize impacts and reduce the chance of introducing and spreading non-native species.
    - Minimize ground disturbance and herbicide treatments in areas of sensitive plant species and communities.
    - Implement a buffer from adjacent wetlands and minimize impacts when a wetland crossing is unavoidable.
    - Trails within the foothills woodland and shrubland habitats should be unpaved. They should be sited and built during final design to preserve the existing geology, preserve wildlife use, prevent future erosion, and premeditate potential social trail development.
    - Incorporate appropriate landscaping measures in the parking areas for stormwater infiltration and treatment.
    - Offer education and interpretive signage on rare plants and vegetation resources to visitors.
- Coordinate with Loveland Fire Rescue Authority (LFRA) to manage vegetation to mitigate fire risk.

3.2.2 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 that 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.

Skyline and Dakota Ridge Natural Areas contain biologically diverse wildlife habitat in the transition zone between the Rockies and the Great Plains, including mountain mahogany/needle and thread shrubland, ephemeral aquatic features, and hogback habitats, all of which support a variety of wildlife species. These foothill properties function as an island buffer protecting high quality habitat from mini-ranch type rural development along the north and west sides, Highway 34 along the southernmost boundary, and residential development along the eastern boundary. The following wildlife management actions will assist in addressing the management of wildlife needs at Skyline and Dakota Ridge Natural Areas:

- Trail improvements within more sensitive habitats should be considerate of natural resources present. Existing two-track roads and trails located at more sensitive areas should be relocated if use will continue. Select trails can be located in more sensitive areas to provide access to locations with ideal views, using best management practices for minimal impacts.
- Avoid fragmenting sensitive wildlife habitat when developing new trails and accesses, such as migration corridors, mountain mahogany shrublands, and wetland drainages.
- 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 and apply adaptive management, such as seasonal trail closures.
- Provide educational signage and fencing to deter access and climbing along the ridge where bird nesting habitat is higher quality.

3.3 Visitor Management and Education

The purpose of visitor management is to emphasize the safety, health, and enjoyment of Skyline and Dakota Ridge 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 conserved, 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.

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.

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.

Skyline Natural Area Trails

- The main trailhead for Skyline Natural Area will be located in the southern portion of the property with access from Hwy 34. The trailhead will include standard and ADA-accessible vehicle parking stalls, an informational kiosk, ADA-accessible vault toilet, entrance sign, and two-rail fencing encircling the lot. The parking lot's capacity is sized to ensure the trailhead meets current and future use levels and capacity of the site.
- Trails at Skyline will be soft-surface, consisting of packed crusher-fine materials, natural-surface trails, and segments of gravel road base where needed for maintenance and emergency access.
- From the Skyline parking lot, a multi-use trail will enter the property and cross the Louden Ditch via a new bridge crossing.
- An additional access point near the northeast corner of Skyline Natural Area will connect into Dakota Ridge Natural Area.
- From these two access points, the main trail system at Skyline Natural Area will consist of a "figure 8" loop around the site, with a short spur to the "hitching post" overlook at the site's highest point.
- The majority of the trail system will accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists on a single-track (3-4' wide) trail.
- Trails may be separated by use or direction as needed for management and operational purposes.

- Trails will be located to minimize impacts to resources and reduce visibility to nearby homes as much as feasible.
- The spur trail to the "hitching post" overlook will be pedestrian-only.
- Access to the communication towers and the Namaqua Star/Heart will be restricted by fencing and signage and monitored via remote cameras.

Dakota Ridge Natural Area Trails

- The main trailhead for Dakota Ridge Natural Area will be located in the northern portion of the property with access from West 43rd Street. The trailhead will include standard and ADA-accessible vehicle parking stalls, an informational kiosk, ADA-accessible vault toilet, entrance sign, and two-rail fencing encircling the lot.
- Skyline Natural Area trail connects to Dakota Ridge Natural Area at the southeast boundary of Dakota Ridge. Just north of this boundary, two future trail connections will extend east into adjacent residential neighborhoods to provide multi-use access and connections to the city's paved Recreation Trail, Meadowbrook Natural Area and Mehaffey Park. These trail connections will be made when access is available from adjacent residential development. One trail connection will be located at the southeast corner of Dakota Ridge and the other will connect at West 29th Street and may include a trailhead.
- Trails at Dakota Ridge will be soft-surface, consisting of packed crusher-fine materials, natural-surface trails, and segments of gravel road base where needed for maintenance and emergency access.
- A north-south trail is planned along the eastern side of Dakota Ridge, featuring a gentler grade and a wider trail profile to accommodate higher traffic. It will be approximately 6'-8' wide and surfaced with Class 6 road base or similar material to allow for emergency access for wildland fire trucks and maintenance vehicles.
- This eastern trail will connect into the Dakota Ridge parking lot and trailhead at the property's northeast corner.
- A separate north-south trail along the western portion of Dakota Ridge will link to the wider, eastern trail at three points: the southern end, the midpoint, and the northern segment, ultimately creating two smaller loops: a ridge-top loop and a panorama loop.
- The ridge trail system will be a single-track trail (3-4' wide) designed for pedestrians and bicyclists.

- Wetland and drainage crossings will consist of wildlife-friendly culverts and will be designed to improve habitat downstream.
- Disturbed and degraded wetlands will be restored with native species to enhance wildlife, bird and pollinator habitat.

- 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 and horses will not be permitted at either Skyline or Dakota Ridge.
- Rock climbing will not be permitted, to protect sensitive vegetation, cultural resources and wildlife habitat.
- To reduce impacts and benefit wildlife use of the site, operating hours will be sunrise to sunset daily.
- For the protection of sensitive wildlife, trails may be closed during critical seasons for wildlife or birds (e.g., denning, calving, nesting, or severe conditions).
- Barbed-wire fencing will be removed, and fencing will be installed as needed throughout the site for safety, visitor management, property delineation, and protection of sensitive resources.
- 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 Skyline, Dakota and surrounding landscapes, such as hogbacks, cultural history, native and rare plants, wildlife, and wetlands.
- Signs will be placed to mark the boundary of the site and to instruct visitors on trail etiquette, including stipulating on-trail use, sharing trails with other users, and other regulations as needed.
- Gates will be used to close access to the site or certain trails when mud exists or during sensitive wildlife periods, in order to protect resources from damage and impacts 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 opportunities, 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.

- A trail connection to Devil's Backbone Open Space will continue to be explored for feasibility, dependent on easements and agreements with adjacent property owners, agencies, and easement holders, and available funding.
- A trail connection to Oxbow Natural Area and the Loveland Recreation Trail System, via underpass or signalized at-grade crossing of Hwy 34, will continue to be studied for implementation when access and funding are available. Until such time as an underpass or at-grade crossing is possible, signage will be added to direct users to the existing underpass near Hwy. 34 and Cascade Ave.
- A trail connection from 43rd Street north to Prairie Ridge Natural Area will continue to be established through a combination of easements and conditions on future development.

3.4 Cultural Resource Management

Skyline and Dakota Ridge Natural Areas offer unique opportunities for visitors to learn about the lives of previous 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 cultural resources of Skyline and Dakota Ridge are documented and properly managed:

- Inventory potentially important cultural resources identified on the property, to ensure appropriate management of these resources.
- Create a buffer around any areas with historic significance to protect these resources and reduce potential impacts.
- 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	2021-2026	2027-2032	Notes
Vegetation Management				
Monitor grassland and vegetative health	Minimal	Annual	Annual	
Revegetate disturbed areas	Moderate	2022-2027		
Apply vegetation control methods for noxious and invasive weed species	Moderate	Ongoing	Ongoing	
Educate visitors on rare plants	Minimal/ Volunteer	Ongoing	Ongoing	
Manage vegetation to mitigate fire risk	Minimal	Ongoing	Ongoing	
Wetland Management				
Restore and enhance wetlands with culverts, plantings, buffering and weed management	Moderate	2020-2032		
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 trails and trailheads	Moderate	2024-2025		
Construct natural-surface trails	Moderate + Volunteer	2025-2026		
Construct trailheads and associated amenities, including vault restroom	Moderate	2025-2026		
Install gate(s) to close access/trails for muddy conditions or sensitive wildlife	Moderate	2025		
Install regulatory and trail etiquette signage	Moderate	2026	Replace as necessary	
Remove, repair and replace fencing	Moderate + Volunteer	2024-2025		Possible Larimer Co. Conservation Corps projects

Implementation Steps	Cost Estimate	2021-2026	2027-2032	Notes
Install interpretive signage	Moderate	2026		
Construct connection to Loveland Recreation Trail	Moderate	2027-2028		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 trailheads	Minimal/ Volunteer	Ongoing	Ongoing	
Provide opportunities for visitor education at the property	Minimal/ Volunteer	2023-on		
Cultural Resource Management				
Investigate and document cultural resources	Minimal	2020-2025		
Incorporate cultural history into interpretive materials	Minimal	2026		

3.6 Conclusion

This management plan provides a framework and implementation actions for protection, management, restoration and enhancement of Skyline and Dakota Ridge Natural Areas and their identified conservation values. 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 Skyline Natural Area

Mammals

Prairie vole	*Microtus ochrogaster*
Meadow vole	*Microtus pennsylvanicus*
Mexican woodrat	*Neotoma mexicana*
Hispid pocket mouse	*Perognathus hispidus*
Rock mouse	*Peromyscus difficilis*
Deer mouse	*Peromyscus maniculatus*
Black-tailed prairie dog	*Cynomys ludovicianus*
Golden-mantled ground squirrel	*Citellus lateralis*
Rock squirrel	*Citellus variegatus*
Least chipmunk	*Eutamias minimus*
Uinta chipmunk	*Eutamias umbrinus*
Mountain cottontail rabbit	*Sylvilagus nuttalli*
Bobcat	*Lynx rufus*
Mountain lion	*Felis concolor*
Red fox	*Vulpes fulva*
Coyote	*Canis latrans*
Black bear	*Ursa americanus*
Striped skunk	*Mephitis mephitis*
Raccoon	*Procyon lotor*
Elk *(winter range)*	*Cervus canadensis*
Mule deer *(critical winter range)*	*Odocoileus hemionus*
White-tailed deer	*Odocoileus virginianus*

Amphibians & Reptiles

Western tiger salamander	*Ambystoma mavortium*
Woodhouse's toad	*Anaxyrus woodhousii*
Boreal chorus frog	*Pseudacris maculata*
Short-horned lizard	*Phrynosoma hernandesi*
Prairie lizard	*Sceloporus undulatus*
Bullsnake	*Pituophis catenifer sayi*
Plains garter snake	*uns radix*
North American racer	*Coluber constricto*
Prairie rattlesnake	*Crotalus viridis*
Six-lined racerunner lizard	*Aspidoscelis sexlineatus*

Bird Species Observed at Skyline and Dakota Ridge Natural Areas

American crow
American goldfinch
American kestrel
American robin
American tree sparrow
Barn swallow
Black-billed magpie
Black-capped chickadee
Blue grosbeak
Blue jay
Blue-gray gnatcatcher
Brewer's sparrow
Broad-tailed hummingbird
Brown-headed cowbird
Bullock's oriole
Canada goose
Canyon wren
Cassin's sparrow
Cedar waxwing
Chipping sparrow
Cliff swallow
Common grackle
Common nighthawk
Common raven
Cooper's hawk
Cordilleran flycatcher
Dark-eyed junco
Double-crested cormorant
Downy woodpecker
Dusky flycatcher
Eastern kingbird
Eurasian collared-dove
European starling
Grasshopper sparrow
Gray catbird
Green-tailed towhee
House finch
House sparrow
House wren
Lark bunting
Lark sparrow
Lazuli bunting
Lesser goldfinch
Lincoln’s sparrow
Loggerhead shrike
Mallard
Mountain bluebird
Mourning dove
Northern flicker
Northern rough-winged swallow
Red crossbill
Red-headed woodpecker
Red-tailed hawk
Red-winged blackbird
Rock dove
Rock wren
Sage thrasher
Say's phoebe
Song sparrow
Spotted towhee
Swainson's hawk
Tree swallow
Townsend’s solitaire
Turkey vulture
Vesper sparrow
Violet-green swallow
Western kingbird
Western meadowlark
Western tanager
Western wood-pewee
White-breasted nuthatch
Woodhouse’s scrub jay
Yellow warbler
Yellow-breasted chat
Yellow-rumped warbler

Plant Species Observed and Likely Present at Skyline and Dakota Ridge Natural Areas:

Compiled from surveys by Colorado Natural Heritage Program (2016).

Scientific Name	Family	Common Name	Native Status (USDA)	Noxious Weed
Acer negundo var. *negundo*	Aceraceae	boxelder	Native	
Achnatherum scribneri	Poaceae	Scribner needlegrass	Native	
Agropyron cristatum	Poaceae	crested wheatgrass	Non-native	
Allium textile	Liliaceae	textile onion	Native	
Alyssum simplex	Brassicaceae	alyssum	Non-native	
Ambrosia psilostachya	Asteraceae	Cuman ragweed	Native	
Andropogon gerardii	Poaceae	big bluestem	Native	
Aristida purpurea	Poaceae	purple threeawn	Native	
Artemisia dracunculus	Asteraceae	tarragon	Native	
Artemisia frigida	Asteraceae	prairie sagewort	Native	
Artemisia ludoviciana	Asteraceae	white sagebrush	Native	
Asclepias engelmanniana	Asclepiadaceae	Engelmann's milkweed	Native	
Astragalus drummondii	Fabaceae	Drummond's milkvetch	Native	
Astragalus shortianus	Fabaceae	Short's milkvetch	Native	
Bouteloua curtipendula	Poaceae	sideoats grama	Native	
Brickellia eupatorioides	Asteraceae	false boneset	Native	
Bromus inermis ssp. *inermis*	Poaceae	smooth brome	Non-native	
Bromus tectorum	Poaceae	cheatgrass	Non-native	List C
Buchloe dactyloides	Poaceae	buffalo grass	Native	
Camelina microcarpa	Brassicaceae	littlepod false flax	Non-native	
Celtis reticulata	Ulmaceae	netleaf hackberry	Native	
Cercocarpus montanus	Rosaceae	alderleaf mountain mahogany	Native	
Cichorium intybus	Asteraceae	chicory	Non-native	List C
Cirsium arvense	Asteraceae	Canada thistle		List B
Comandra umbellata ssp. *pallida*	Santalaceae	pale bastard toadflax	Native	
Conringia orientalis	Brassicaceae	hare's ear mustard	Non-native	
Convolvulus arvensis	Convolvulaceae	field bindweed	Non-native	List C
Conyza canadensis	Asteraceae	Canadian horseweed	Native	
Cystopteris fragilis	Dryopteridaceae	brittle bladderfern	Native	
Descurainia sp.	Brassicaceae	tansymustard	Non-native	
Echinocereus viridiflorus	Cactaceae	nylon hedgehog cactus	Native	
Elaeagnus angustifolia	Elaeagnaceae	Russian olive	Non-native	List B
Erigeron flagellaris	Asteraceae	trailing fleabane	Native	
Euphorbia esula var. esula	Euphorbiaceae	leafy spurge	Non-native	List B
Euphorbia myrsinites	Euphorbiaceae	myrtle spurge	Non-native	List A

Scientific Name	Family	Common Name	Native Status (USDA)	Noxious Weed
Festuca sp.	Poaceae	fescue	Unknown	
Gaillardia pulchella	Asteraceae	firewheel	Native	
Gutierrezia sarothrae	Asteraceae	broom snakeweed	Native	
Harbouria trachypleura	Apiaceae	whiskbroom parsley	Native	
Helianthus annuus	Asteraceae	common sunflower	Native	
Helianthus pumilus	Asteraceae	little sunflower	Native	
Hesperostipa comata	Poaceae	needle and thread	Native	
Hesperostipa neomexicana	Poaceae	New Mexico feathergrass	Native	
Hymenopappus filifolius	Asteraceae	fineleaf hymenopappus	Native	
Koeleria macrantha	Poaceae	prairie Junegrass	Native	
Krascheninnikovia lanata	Chenopodiaceae	winterfat	Native	
Leucocrinum montanum	Liliaceae	common starlily	Native	
Liatris punctata	Asteraceae	dotted blazing star	Native	
Linaria sp.	Scrophulariaceae	toadflax	Unknown	
Machaeranthera pinnatifida	Asteraceae	lacy tansyaster	Native	
Medicago sativa	Fabaceae	alfalfa	Non-native	
Melilotus officinalis	Fabaceae	yellow sweetclover	Non-native	
Nuttalia speciosa [syn=*Mentzelia speciosa*]	Loasaceae	jeweled blazingstar	Native	
Monarda pectinata	Lamiaceae	pony beebalm	Native	
Nassella viridula	Poaceae	green needlegrass	Native	
Nepeta cataria	Lamiaceae	catnip	Non-native	
Opuntia macrorhiza	Cactaceae	twistspine pricklypear	Native	
Opuntia polyacantha var. *polyacantha*	Cactaceae	hairspine pricklypear	Native	
Orobanche ludoviciana	Orobanchaceae	Louisiana broomrape	Native	
Oxytropis sericea	Fabaceae	white locoweed	Native	
Panicum dichotomiflorum	Poaceae	fall panicgrass	Native	
Panicum virgatum	Poaceae	switchgrass	Native	
Penstemon secundiflorus	Scrophulariaceae	sidebells penstemon	Native	

Scientific Name	Family	Common Name	Native Status (USDA)	Noxious Weed
Phacelia alba	Hydrophyllaceae	white phacelia	Native	
Physaria bellii	Brassicaceae	Front Range twinpod	Native	
Physocarpus monogynus	Rosaceae	mountain ninebark	Native	
Pinus ponderosa var. *scopulorum*	Pinaceae	ponderosa pine	Native	
Plantago patagonica	Plantaginaceae	woolly plantain	Native	
Populus deltoides ssp. *monilifera*	Salicaceae	plains cottonwood	Native	
Prunus virginiana var. melanocarpa	Rosaceae	black chokecherry	Native	
Psoralidium tenuiflorum	Fabaceae	slimflower scurfpea	Native	
Quincula lobata	Solanaceae	Chinese lantern	Native	
Rhus trilobata var. *trilobata*	Anacardiaceae	skunkbush sumac	Native	
Salix fragilis	Salicaceae	crack willow	Non-native	
Schizachyrium scoparium	Poaceae	little bluestem	Native	
Scutellaria brittonii	Lamiaceae	Britton's skullcap	Native	
Secale cereale	Poaceae	cereal rye	Non-native	
Silene antirrhina	Caryophyllaceae	sleepy silene	Native	
Sisymbrium altissimum	Brassicaceae	tall tumblemustard	Non-native	
Solidago missouriensis	Asteraceae	Missouri goldenrod	Native	
Sphaeralcea coccinea	Malvaceae	scarlet globemallow	Native	
Stephanomeria sp.	Asteraceae	wirelettuce	Native	
Thelesperma megapotamicum	Asteraceae	Hopi tea greenthread	Native	
Thinopyrum ponticum	Poaceae	tall wheatgrass	Non-native	
Townsendia grandiflora	Asteraceae	largeflower Townsend daisy	Native	
Tradescantia occidentalis	Commelinaceae	prairie spiderwort	Native	
Tragia ramosa	Euphorbiaceae	branched noseburn	Native	
Triodanis perfoliata	Campanulaceae	slimpod Venus' looking glass	Native	
Verbascum thapsus	Scrophulariaceae	common mullein	Non-native	List C

Wildlife species observed or likely present at Dakota Ridge Natural Area

Common Name	Scientific Name
Amphibians	
Bullfrog	*Rana catesbeiana*
Great plains toad	*Bufo cognatus*
Northern leopard frog	*Rana pipiens*
Western chorus frog	*Pseudacis triseriata*
Western tiger salamander	*Ambystoma mavortium*
Woodhouse's toad	*Bufo woodhousii*
Birds	
American crow	*Corvus brachyrhynchos*
American goldfinch	*Carduelis tristis*
American kestrel	*Falco sparverius*
American robin	*Turdus migratorius*
American tree sparrow	*Spizella arborea*
Bald eagle	*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*
Bell's vireo	*Vireo bellii*
Black-billed magpie	*Pica pica*
Black-capped chickadee	*Poecile atricapillus*
Blue grosbeak	*Guiraca caerulea*
Blue jay	*Cyanocitta cristata*
Brewer's sparrow	*Spizella breweri*
Canada goose	*Branta canadensis*
Cassin's kingbird	*Tyrannus vociferans*
Cassin's sparrow	*Aimophila cassinii*
Common Raven	*Corvus corax*
Cooper's hawk	*Accipiter cooperii*
Dark-eyed junco	*Junco hyemalis*
European starling	*Sturnus vulgaris*
Ferruginous hawk	*Buteo regalis*
Field sparrow	*Spizella pusilla*
Grasshopper sparrow	*Ammodramus savannarum*
Great horned owl	*Bubo virginianus*
Great-tailed grackle	*Quiscalus mexicanus*
Harris' sparrow	*Zonotrichia querula*
Horned lark	*Eremophila alpestris*
House finch	*Carpodacus mexicanus*
Lark bunting	*Calamospiza melanocorys*
Lark sparrow	*Chondestes grammacus*
Lazuli bunting	*Passerina amoena*
Mourning dove	*Zenaida macroura*
Northern flicker	*Colaptes auratus*
Northern mockingbird	*Mimus polyglottos*
Red-tailed hawk	*Buteo jamaicensis*
Rock wren	*Salpinctes obsoletus*
Turkey vulture	*Cathartes aura*
Western burrowing owl	*Athene cunicularia*
Western kingbird	*Tyrannus verticalis*
Western meadowlark	*Sturnella neglecta*

Common Name	Scientific Name
Western tanager	*Piranga ludoviciana*
White-throated sparrow	*Zonotrichia albicollis*
Wild turkey	*Meleagris gallopavo*
Mammals	
Black bear	*Ursa americanus*
Black-tailed prairie dog	*Cynomys ludovicianus*
Bobcat	*Lynx rufus*
Coyote	*Canis latrans*
Deer mouse	*Peromyscus maniculatus*
Eastern cottontail	*Sylvilagus floridanus*
Elk	*Cervus canadensis*
Hispid pocket mouse	*Chaetodipus hispidus*
House mouse	*Mus musculus*
Mountain lion	*Felis concolor*
Mule deer	*Odocoileus hemionus*
Northern grasshopper mouse	*Onychomys leucogaster*
Plains pocket gopher	*Geomys bursarius*
Plains pocket mouse	*Perognathus flavescens*
Porcupine	*Erethizon dorsatum*
Prairie vole	*Microtus ochrogaster*
Raccoon	*Procyon lotor*
Red fox	*Vulpes vulpes*
Silky pocket mouse	*Perognathus flavus*
Striped skunk	*Mephitis mephitis*
Western harvest mouse	*Reithrodontomys megalotis*
White-tailed jackrabbit	*Lepus townsendii*
Reptiles	
Bullsnake	*Pituophis catenifer sayi*
Fence lizard	*Sceloporus undulatus*
Plains garter snake	*Thamnophis radix*
Prairie rattlesnake	*Crotalus viridis*
Western terrestrial garter snake	*Thamnophis elegans*

APPENDIX B: 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 C: Public Feedback Comments

The following public comments were submitted to the Loveland Parks and Recreation Department during the public meeting for Skyline Natural Area held on May 6, 2019 and received via email between May 7 and May 31, 2019.

Trail Uses

Should trails be restricted to certain uses?

- No bikes (2)
- No rock climbing/trespassing on cliffs north of road
- No access off of Ponderosa Dr. Use Morning/Crown Dr entrance
- Limit parking below Crown Drive
- Too close to subdivision (7) – move trails further west
- Suggestion for odd and even days for hikers/bikers
- Allow golf carts

Trail Use Options

- Pedestrian-only SE trail/Option 1 (34)
- Pedestrian-only SE trail + bike-only SW trail/Option 2 (8)
- Pedestrian-only E trails + bike-only W trails/Option 3 (17)
- Option 2 or 3 (11)
- Pedestrian-only (11)
- Eliminate east trail (2)
- No trails (1)

Trail Connections

Should the trail network be connected to surrounding subdivisions or regional trails?

No (7)

Reasons:

- Too hard to control other entrances to keep out motorbikes/mopeds/ATVs
- No loops – viewing area at the star only, if people want to walk use Skyline, too much traffic, no through connection
- The city doesn't maintain the neighborhood roads

Yes (33)

Reasons:

- As many access points as possible, thins out the crowds
- Connect to as many natural areas as possible
- Connection to Devil's Backbone would be great
- Connection to Rossum Drive
- CE to the north only – trail from there diagonally to Hitching Post; move away from existing deer trail

Are any access points or connections missing?

- Connections to other trails like Coyote Ridge and Blue Sky
- Connect to Mehaffey Park
- No parking or access on top – gate
- Park at Mehaffey rather than building a parking lot on [Hwy] 34
- Parking at 22nd St down below, east of subdivision

Dogs

Should dogs be allowed at Skyline Natural Area?

No (28)

Reasons:

- Namaqua Hills homes not allowed to have fences to keep dogs out; too close; pets at risk
- Wildlife concerns
- Enforcement of leash laws
- Poop pickup

Yes (8)

If so, should additional restrictions be implemented?

Yes (additional restrictions should be implemented if dogs are allowed)

Comments:

- Leash law
- Pick up poop
- At least part of the year
- Trial period
- Don't allow on bike trails

Hours of Operation

Should Skyline Natural Area follow typical City open land hours of 6:00am-10:30 pm or be limited to dawn to dusk hours?

Dawn to dusk (27)

6a-10:30p (7)

Comments:

- Adjacent to neighborhoods
- Late users always cause problems
- Devil's Backbone closes at dusk
- Gated access to close and keep out people after hours
- Late hours allow for skygazing
- Limited hours for bikes
- 10 am – 3pm

Did we miss anything?

Additional comments, thoughts and ideas

- Prohibit alcohol, marijuana, etc
- No fires or camping
- Graffiti problems
- Kids have fires
- Rossum Drive at US34 is a blind corner, accidents happen here already
- Protect cliffs – no rock climbing. Also - allow rock climbing in limited area.
- Can we just leave/protect as an easement? More space for wildlife – no trail (2)
- Wildlife protection
- Fix erosion problems (2)
- Fire dangers need to be mitigated (to houses, climbing cliffs and ridges), enforcement?
- Communicate with Larimer County re: access road as secondary access for HVE
- Limit trespassing to private property
- Fencing, including Ponderosa access point
- Destroys open space wildlife – there is a small herd of deer that live in this valley and they will be destroyed
- Options 2 & 3 force all foot traffic toward houses
- Neighbors – "want access, no parking"
- No horses
- No parking in area by Meadowbrook – adjacent to wetlands
- Take away "trail connection" on east side completely

The following comments were submitted to the Loveland Parks and Recreation Department during the public comment period for the Foothills Plan, received via email between March 14 and March 31, 2025.

Trail Uses

Will e-bikes be allowed?

- Type 1 and 2 e-bikes will be allowed on the lower/eastern portion of the Dakota Ridge trail, where the trail will be wider to accommodate a variety of trail users.

Bikes should be allowed (2); Separate uses (bicyclists and pedestrians)(1)

- Bikes will be allowed on multi-use trails. Pedestrian-only trails will be included in sensitive areas.

Bikes should not be allowed (2); cause damage to trails, user conflicts

- Trails will be built with sustainable features to accommodate multiple uses.
- Signage will promote trail etiquette, safe speeds, and yielding to pedestrians.

Visitor Management

Include fencing to protect sensitive resources

- Barbed-wire fencing will be removed, and fencing will be installed as needed throughout the site for safety, visitor management, property delineation and protection of sensitive resources.

Include signage to interpret historic use

- Signage will be created to interpret historic and cultural uses.

Include benches at overlooks and rest stops

- Benches will be added at overlook areas and along trails for rest stops and scenic viewsheds.

Will there be a trail connection into Dakota Ridge from 29th Street?

- A neighborhood trail connection at 29th Street will be made when adjacent development is completed, to connect neighborhoods, Mehaffey Park and the Loveland Recreation Trail to the Foothills Natural Areas.

Need a safer crossing at Hwy 34 from the south

- Until such time as an underpass or at-grade crossing is possible, signage will be added to direct trail users to the existing the underpass near Cascade Ave. for access.

Protect the Namaqua Heart/Star from vandalism

- Access to the communication towers and the Namaqua Star/Heart will be restricted by fencing and signage and monitored via remote cameras.

Dogs

Dogs should not be allowed (2)

- Comments:
  - Wildlife concerns
  - Enforcement of leash laws
  - Poop pickup

Dogs should be allowed (9)

- Comments:
  - Opportunity to recreate with pets
  - Exercise for pets
  - Limited hours or locations

Habitat

Protect breeding bird habitat and insect populations

- To reduce impacts and benefit wildlife use of the site, operating hours will be sunrise to sunset daily.
- Signage and fencing will deter access and climbing along the ridge.
- Trails may be closed during critical seasons for wildlife or birds (e.g., denning, calving, nesting, or severe conditions).
- Wetland and drainage crossings will consist of wildlife-friendly culverts and designed to improve habitat downstream.
- Disturbed and degraded wetlands will be restored with native species to enhance wildlife, bird and pollinator habitat.

Protect prairie dogs from disturbance

- Prairie dog populations will be allowed to self-regulate except when impacting safety or infrastructure.

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