

A Study of Attitudes of Boulder County, Colorado Residents Regarding Public Policy Issues

Report of Results

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Conducted for
Boulder County Board of Commissioners

by
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Executive Summary

Background and Methods

The Boulder County Survey was administered by phone to a sample of 600 voting-age residents of Boulder County, Colorado from March 12 to March 20, 2002. This survey sought the opinions of voting-age residents of Boulder County regarding a number of County-provided services and public policy issues. The margin of error is no greater than + or - 4% percentage points around any given percent based on County-wide estimates.

General Tracking Questions

The first five questions on the survey had been asked in previous years, and help Boulder County compare responses and ‘track’ public opinions over time. More than half of the respondents (55%) felt that Boulder County is going in the right direction, 27% indicated that the County was ‘off track’ and nearly 1 in 5 (18%) said that the County was neither going in the right direction nor off track, or offered no opinion.

Respondents were asked to identify the most important problems facing the County. Growth management topped the list, with 35% of voters citing it as the single most important problem facing Boulder County. Traffic concerns and affordable housing were mentioned by 9% of respondents.

Questions were also asked about overall satisfaction with Boulder County government and sentiment about the taxes paid to the County. About three-quarters of respondents reported being somewhat or very satisfied with Boulder County government. Just 6% were very dissatisfied. Longmont voters were less satisfied (66% somewhat or very satisfied) than the County overall.

Transportation

Respondents were presented with three scenarios for helping to fund major improvements to regional transportation. A quarter-cent sales tax increase was at least mildly supported by 58% of respondents. A half-cent sales tax increase had slightly lower levels of support (43% at least mildly supporting). A one-dollar toll to travel US 36 garnered the strongest opposition, with nearly two-thirds (64%) at least mildly opposing the toll.

Open Space

The next section of questions asked about different components of the County's open space program. More than 4 in 5 County voters (81%) at least mildly approved of the program.

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of different activities of the Boulder County open space program. Ninety-three percent of surveyed voters said that protecting habitat for wildlife was fairly or very important, making it the most important activity of the program. The next most important activities were hiking (with 91% saying it was fairly or very important) and preserving agricultural lands (with 89% who felt it was at least fairly important).

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with possible reasons for closing open space to the public. Most supported were closures of open space for protection of wildlife during certain parts of the year, with 94% mildly or strongly agreeing with this reason. Ninety-one percent at least mildly agreed with closures for the purpose of creating preservation areas in certain sensitive wildlife areas.

Survey participants were also asked whether or not there was a sufficient number of trails in open space. Two-thirds (67%) said there were about the right number, and about 1 in 5 said there were not enough. Just 5% thought there were too many trails.

Prairie Dogs

A section of the survey was devoted to questions about prairie dogs. First, respondents were asked whether they considered prairie dogs a nuisance or an important species. About one-third (36%) felt that prairie dogs are a nuisance, and close to half (46%) said they are an important species.

Respondents were asked their opinions of two statements related to controlling prairie dog populations. Half said they agreed mildly or strongly that City and County governments have a responsibility to relocate prairie dogs as an alternative to eradication, while 38% at least mildly disagreed. More than three-quarters, however, said they at least mildly agreed that prairie dog populations should be controlled if they are damaging the land. Twenty-percent disagreed mildly or strongly with this statement.

Next, options for controlling prairie dog populations were presented. Nearly three-quarters (73%) mildly or strongly supported the use of captured prairie dogs in endangered species programs, such as feeding them to black-footed ferrets or to birds of prey in raptor rehabilitation programs. Weaker support was found for the other options, relocating or poisoning the prairie dogs, with about 30% at least mildly supporting each option (31% and 30%, respectively) and about 60% at least mildly opposing each option (58% and 61%, respectively).

To further clarify the priorities of County voters, respondents were asked to rate the importance of uses of open space agricultural land. Nearly 9 in 10 (88%) respondents believed that preserving the productivity of agricultural lands was at least fairly important, while just over half

(52%) said that providing prairie dog habitat was fairly or very important. Three-quarters (76%) of respondents said that preserving ranching and farming operations was more important in the case of conflict between existing ranching and farming operations on open space and prairie dogs.

Goose Hunting

Survey participants were questioned about their support for the leasing of open space agricultural lands to allow hunting of Canada geese. Over half (55%) mildly or strongly supported leasing land for this purpose. Twenty-one percent mildly or strongly opposed leasing land for this purpose.

Genetically Modified Organisms

County residents were asked about their familiarity with and views on genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Sixty-nine percent said they were at least somewhat familiar, and 30% were not at all familiar. About half (46%) of respondents said they believe GMOs are harmful to the environment and have not been tested to know whether they are harmful to human health and 36% said they believe GMOs are a scientific advance that will allow us to better feed the hungry and reduce our use of chemicals.

About the Survey

Background and Methods

The Boulder County Survey was administered by phone to a sample of 600 registered voters of Boulder County, Colorado from March 12 to March 20, 2002. This survey sought the opinions of voting-age residents of Boulder County regarding a number of County-provided services and public policy issues. The survey instrument with a complete set of frequencies appears in Appendix V.

Survey results were weighted so that the respondent age and political party were represented in the proportions reflective of all registered voters in the County. (For more information see Appendix I.)

Understanding the Results

Precision of Estimates

It is customary to describe the precision of estimates made from surveys by a "level of confidence" (or margin of error). The 95 percent confidence level for this survey is generally no greater than plus or minus 4 percentage points around any given percent reported for the entire sample (600 completed surveys). For each sub-community (Boulder, Longmont and Southeast County), the margin of error rises to approximately + or - 7% since sample sizes were approximately 200 for each sub-community. (The sub-community of residence was indicated by the respondent as the City on his or her mailing address.)

Statistically significant differences among subgroups are highlighted in grey.

General Tracking Questions

The first five questions on the survey have been asked in previous years, and help Boulder County compare responses and ‘track’ public opinions over time. More than half of the respondents (55%) felt that Boulder County is going in the right direction, 27% indicated that the County was ‘off track’ and nearly 1 in 5 (18%) said that the County was neither going in the right direction nor off track, or offered no opinion. Residents of Boulder were more likely than residents of Southeast County to say that Boulder County was going in the right direction, and voters in Longmont were more likely than the other two regions to suggest that the County was off track.

Question #1: Opinion of Direction of Government				
Would you say things in Boulder County are going in the right direction or do you feel things have gotten pretty seriously off track in the past few years?	Overall	Region of Boulder County		
		Boulder	Longmont	SE County
Right direction	55%	58%	55%	52%
Off track	27%	24%	32%	24%
Neither	8%	10%	7%	8%
No opinion/ no response	10%	8%	6%	15%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

When answers to this question were compared among different demographic groups, younger people were happier with the direction in which the government is going. Likewise democrats were happier with the direction than those affiliated with other parties. (Additional crosstabulations appear in Appendices II and III.)

Respondents were asked to identify the first and second most important problems facing the County. Growth management topped the list, with 35% of voters citing it as the single most important problem facing Boulder County. Traffic concerns and affordable housing were mentioned by 9% of respondents.

Question #2: Single Most Important Problem Facing Boulder County				
In general, what do you consider to be the one most important issue facing Boulder County today?	Overall	Region of Boulder County		
		Boulder	Longmont	SE County
Growth management	35%	36%	37%	34%
Traffic concerns	9%	13%	6%	8%
Affordable housing	9%	12%	7%	8%
General school issues	6%	4%	6%	7%
Open space issues	5%	4%	6%	7%
Governance issues	2%	1%	1%	3%
Tax complaints	2%	2%	1%	2%
Environmental issues	2%	2%	1%	1%
Highway/street infrastructure	1%	2%	1%	1%
Street maintenance	1%	0%	1%	0%
Fiscal school issues	1%	0%	1%	1%
Public safety issues	1%	0%	1%	1%
Social, moral issues	1%	2%	1%	0%
Better bus service	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other	13%	15%	15%	11%
Everything is OK	0%	0%	0%	0%
No opinion/no response	12%	7%	14%	16%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Responses to this question were analyzed among different demographic subgroups. Respondents with higher annual household incomes were more likely to believe that growth is the single most important issue facing Boulder County. (Additional crosstabulations appear in Appendices II and III.)

Traffic concerns were considered the second most important problem facing the County, followed by affordable housing and growth management. Boulder and Southeast voters were more likely to cite traffic concerns than Longmont respondents.

Question #3: Second Most Important Problem Facing Boulder County				
And what would be the next most important issue facing Boulder County today?	Overall	Region of Boulder County		
		Boulder	Longmont	SE County
Traffic concerns	17%	19%	11%	20%
Affordable housing	11%	16%	6%	11%
Growth management	10%	9%	14%	9%
General school issues	10%	6%	16%	9%
Environmental issues	6%	10%	4%	4%
Open space issues	5%	4%	7%	6%
Tax complaints	2%	2%	4%	1%
Highway/street infrastructure	1%	0%	2%	2%
Street maintenance	1%	1%	2%	1%
Fiscal school issues	1%	1%	1%	1%
Public safety issues	1%	1%	2%	1%
Governance issues	1%	1%	2%	1%
Government Finance issues	1%	0%	2%	0%
Social, moral issues	1%	1%	1%	1%
Better bus service	1%	2%	0%	1%
Other	14%	16%	16%	12%
Everything is OK	0%	0%	0%	0%
No opinion/no response	15%	11%	12%	21%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Questions were also asked about overall satisfaction with Boulder County government and sentiment about the taxes paid to the County. About three-quarters of respondents reported being somewhat or very satisfied with Boulder County government. Just 6% were very dissatisfied. Longmont voters were less satisfied (66% somewhat or very satisfied) than the County overall.

Question #4: Satisfaction with Boulder County Government				
Please think for a moment about all of the things that are the responsibility of Boulder County government. Would you say that you are..	Overall	Region of Boulder County		
		Boulder	Longmont	SE County
Very satisfied	10%	12%	9%	9%
Somewhat satisfied	63%	62%	57%	68%
Somewhat dissatisfied	16%	12%	22%	15%
Very dissatisfied	6%	8%	8%	2%
No opinion/no response	5%	6%	4%	5%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Respondents who cited growth as the most important issue facing the County were less likely than those citing non-growth issues to be very satisfied with Boulder County government. Those who felt County taxes were way too high were more likely to be very dissatisfied with the County government. Respondents who had lived in Boulder County for a shorter period of time were generally more satisfied with Boulder County government, as were younger people, more educated respondents and those that were politically unaffiliated or democratic. (Additional crosstabulations appear in Appendices II and III.)

About 1 in 5 (19%) felt that taxes in the County were too high. About three-fourths (76%) said that the taxes were high, but acceptable or about right. Three times as many Longmont residents as City of Boulder said that taxes were way too high.

Question #5: Opinion of Boulder County Taxes				
Generally speaking, would you say that the taxes you pay to Boulder County are...	Overall	Region of Boulder County		
		Boulder	Longmont	SE County
Way too high	19%	10%	30%	16%
High, but acceptable	45%	43%	42%	49%
About right	31%	40%	25%	28%
Lower than you might expect	1%	1%	2%	1%
No opinion/ no response	4%	6%	1%	6%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

When feelings about the quantity of taxes were analyzed among different subgroups of the survey sample, it was found that respondents who cited growth as the most important issue facing the County were more likely than those citing non-growth issues to say that County taxes were about right. Older people and registered republicans were more likely to believe that taxes were too high. (Additional crosstabulations appear in Appendices II and III.)

Transportation

Respondents were presented with three scenarios for helping to fund major improvements to regional transportation. A quarter-cent sales tax was strongly supported and strongly opposed by similar proportions of those surveyed (19% and 18%, respectively). However, at least 58% at least mildly supported the increase, compared with only about one-third that at least mildly opposed the increase, making this scenario the most supported of the three.

A half-cent sales tax increase had similar levels of at least mild support and opposition (45% and 43%, respectively). There were differing opinions in the 3 areas of the County. A one-dollar toll to travel US 36 garnered the strongest opposition, with nearly two-thirds (64%) at least mildly opposing the toll, and about 3 in 10 (28%) mildly or strongly supporting the toll.

Questions #6, 7 and 8: Support for Transportation Taxes					
		Overall	Region of Boulder County		
			Boulder	Longmont	SE County
How about a quarter-cent sales tax increase to fund the local share of these transportation projects. Do you...	Support strongly	19%	19%	19%	19%
	Support mildly	39%	39%	35%	41%
	Neither support nor oppose	9%	9%	9%	10%
	Oppose mildly	15%	16%	11%	17%
	Oppose strongly	18%	17%	24%	13%
	No opinion/no response	1%	1%	1%	1%
Total			100%	100%	100%
How about a half-cent sales tax increase to fund the local share of these transportation projects. Do you...	Support strongly	14%	17%	14%	11%
	Support mildly	31%	26%	32%	36%
	Neither support nor oppose	10%	12%	5%	11%
	Oppose mildly	18%	19%	13%	22%
	Oppose strongly	25%	24%	34%	19%
	No opinion/no response	2%	3%	1%	2%
Total			100%	100%	100%
How about a toll of about \$1 for a Boulder to Denver trip on US 36, which is the Boulder-Denver Turnpike. Do you...	Support strongly	12%	13%	13%	11%
	Support mildly	16%	15%	17%	14%
	Neither support nor oppose	6%	4%	9%	5%
	Oppose mildly	16%	14%	16%	17%
	Oppose strongly	48%	51%	43%	50%
	No opinion/no response	2%	3%	2%	2%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%

Respondents citing growth as the most important issue facing the County were less likely than those citing non-growth issues to strongly oppose the \$1 toll. Older respondents and those that have lived in Boulder County for longer were more likely to support a \$1 toll, while republicans were more likely to oppose a half-cent tax. (Additional crosstabulations appear in Appendices II and III.)

Open Space

The next section of questions asked about different components of the County’s open space program. More than 4 in 5 County voters (81%) at least mildly approved of the program, and 14% mildly or strongly disapproved of the program. More Southeast County residents mildly or strongly approved of the program than Longmont residents.

Question #9: Approval of Boulder County Open Space Program				
To what extent do you approve or disapprove of the Boulder County open space program?	Overall	Region of Boulder County		
		Boulder	Longmont	SE County
Approve strongly	53%	61%	43%	54%
Approve mildly	28%	20%	34%	31%
Disapprove mildly	7%	7%	8%	6%
Disapprove strongly	7%	5%	10%	6%
Other	5%	6%	5%	4%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Respondents who cited growth as the most important issue facing the County were more likely than those citing non-growth issues to strongly approve of the Boulder County open space program. Respondents who had lived in Boulder County for less time generally voiced stronger approval of the Boulder County open space program, as did those with a higher level of completed education. (Additional crosstabulations appear in Appendices II and III.)

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of different activities of the Boulder County open space program. Ninety-three percent of surveyed voters said that protecting habitat for wildlife was fairly or very important, making it the most important activity of the program. Overall, the next most important activities were hiking (with 91% saying it was fairly or very important) and preserving agricultural lands (with 89% who felt it was at least fairly important). Least important was horseback riding, with just over half of respondents (51%) indicating that it was at least fairly important.

There were differences of opinion among the 3 areas of the County regarding the importance of protecting habitat for wildlife, mountain biking, hiking and horseback riding. Virtually all Boulder residents (97%) said protecting habitat was fairly or very important, compared to 90% and 93% of Longmont and Southeast County residents, respectively. Fewer Longmont residents reported that mountain biking and hiking were very important, and few Boulder residents indicated that horseback riding was fairly or very important.

Question #10: Importance of Different Activities in Boulder County Open Space					
		Overall	Region of Boulder County		
			Boulder	Longmont	SE County
Protecting habitat for wildlife	Very important	71%	77%	65%	72%
	Fairly important	22%	20%	25%	21%
	Not very important	5%	2%	6%	6%
	Not at all important	2%	0%	4%	1%
	No opinion/no response	1%	0%	1%	0%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%
Fishing	Very important	26%	23%	32%	24%
	Fairly important	42%	43%	40%	42%
	Not very important	20%	22%	17%	20%
	Not at all important	9%	8%	8%	12%
	No opinion/no response	3%	4%	2%	2%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%
Picnicking	Very important	31%	35%	30%	27%
	Fairly important	50%	46%	49%	54%
	Not very important	15%	14%	15%	15%
	Not at all important	4%	4%	4%	2%
	No opinion/no response	1%	0%	1%	2%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%
Mountain biking	Very important	25%	28%	17%	28%
	Fairly important	46%	43%	50%	46%
	Not very important	20%	21%	22%	18%
	Not at all important	7%	5%	10%	7%
	No opinion/no response	2%	3%	1%	0%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%

Question #10: Importance of Different Activities in Boulder County Open Space					
		Overall	Region of Boulder County		
			Boulder	Longmont	SE County
Hiking	Very important	57%	66%	45%	60%
	Fairly important	34%	29%	42%	32%
	Not very important	5%	3%	7%	5%
	Not at all important	3%	2%	4%	2%
	No opinion/no response	1%	0%	1%	0%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%
Providing buffers between communities	Very important	47%	52%	42%	48%
	Fairly important	32%	31%	37%	29%
	Not very important	11%	8%	12%	13%
	Not at all important	5%	4%	5%	5%
	No opinion/no response	5%	5%	4%	5%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%
Preserving agricultural lands	Very important	59%	58%	64%	54%
	Fairly important	30%	33%	27%	32%
	Not very important	7%	7%	5%	9%
	Not at all important	3%	2%	3%	4%
	No opinion/no response	1%	1%	1%	1%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%
Nature study	Very important	39%	46%	34%	38%
	Fairly important	45%	43%	49%	42%
	Not very important	10%	7%	11%	13%
	Not at all important	4%	4%	4%	4%
	No opinion/no response	1%	0%	1%	2%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%
Walking dogs	Very important	32%	35%	29%	32%
	Fairly important	41%	38%	45%	42%
	Not very important	17%	18%	15%	16%
	Not at all important	8%	7%	9%	9%
	No opinion/no response	2%	2%	2%	1%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%
Horseback riding	Very important	12%	14%	13%	11%
	Fairly important	39%	34%	41%	43%
	Not very important	31%	32%	34%	27%
	Not at all important	14%	13%	9%	19%
	No opinion/no response	4%	7%	3%	1%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%

Question #10: Importance of Different Activities in Boulder County Open Space					
		Overall	Region of Boulder County		
			Boulder	Longmont	SE County
Assisting with growth management	Very important	55%	56%	60%	51%
	Fairly important	28%	26%	29%	30%
	Not very important	7%	9%	3%	8%
	Not at all important	5%	6%	4%	5%
	No opinion/no response	5%	4%	4%	6%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%

Younger respondents more than older respondents felt that protecting habitat for wildlife and was more important, but the opposite was true for providing buffers between communities. Respondents with a lower level of education were more likely to believe that fishing and walking dogs were important but less likely to think that hiking was important than respondents with higher levels of education. (Additional crosstabulations appear in Appendices II and III.)

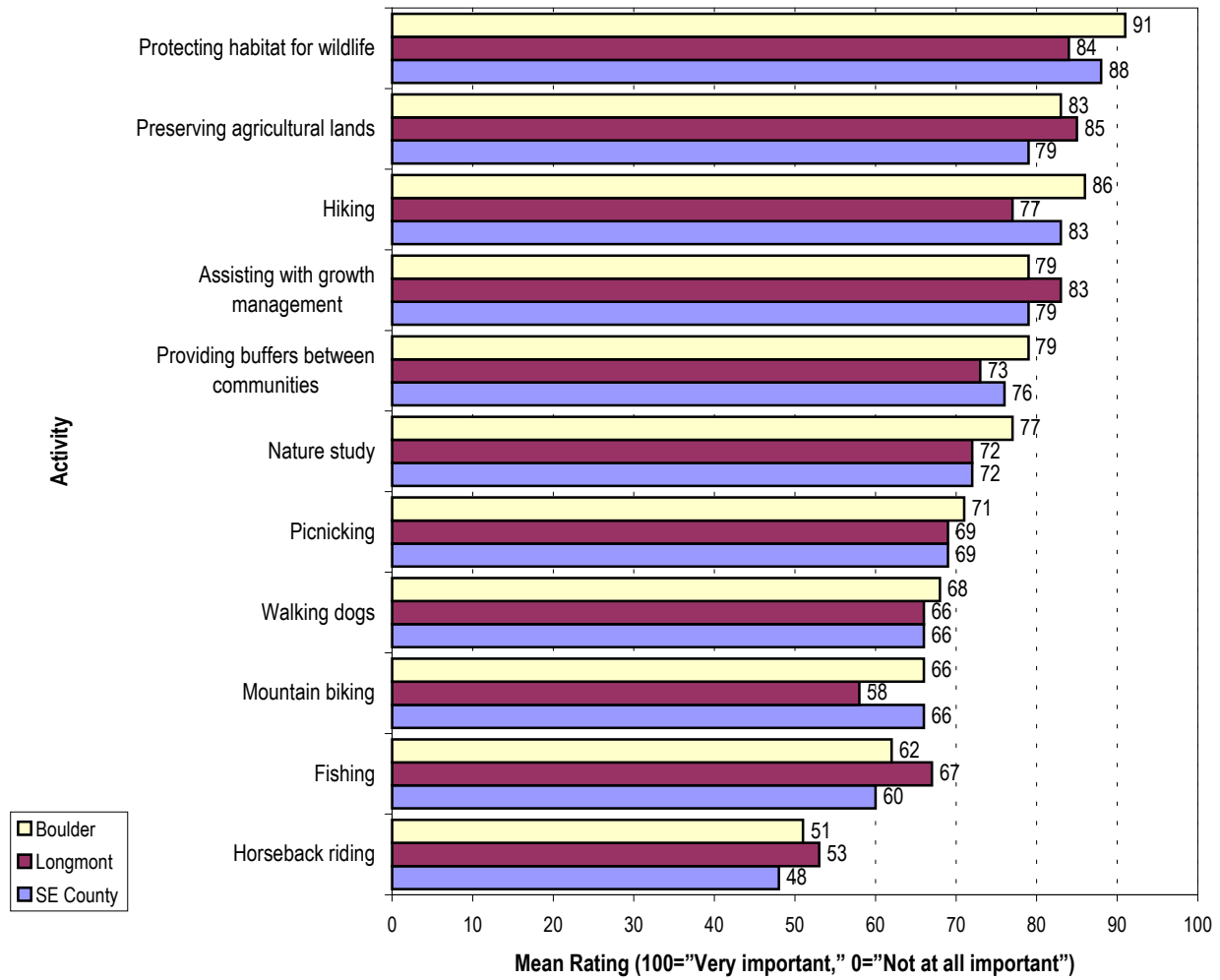
Putting Evaluations Onto a 100-Point Scale

Responses to question 10 were made on a 4-point importance scale from “very important” to “not at all important.” To make comparisons easier, the results for this question are reported on a common scale where 0 is “not at all important” and 100 is “very important.” For the purposes of this conversion, reported responses are for those who had an opinion – “don’t know” responses were removed from the analyses.

Question #10: Mean Ratings of Importance of Different Activities in Boulder County Open Space				
<i>100="Very important," 0="Not at all important"</i>	Overall	Region of Boulder County		
		Boulder	Longmont	SE County
Protecting habitat for wildlife	88	91	84	88
Hiking	82	86	77	83
Preserving agricultural lands	82	83	85	79
Assisting with growth management	80	79	83	79
Providing buffers between communities	76	79	73	76
Nature study	74	77	72	72
Picnicking	70	71	69	69
Walking dogs	67	68	66	66
Mountain biking	63	66	58	66
Fishing	62	62	67	60
Horseback riding	51	51	53	48

A graph of these ratings for each sub-community appears on the following page.

Question #10: Mean Ratings of Importance of Different Activities in Boulder County Open Space



Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with possible reasons for closing open space to the public. Most supported were closures of open space for protection of wildlife during certain parts of the year, with 94% mildly or strongly agreeing with this reason. Ninety-one percent at least mildly agreed with closures for the purpose of creating preservation areas in certain sensitive wildlife areas.

About one-third (30%) mildly or strongly agreed that it is never acceptable to close open space to the public. Seven in 10 disagreed mildly or strongly with this statement.

Longmont respondents were more likely than those in other areas of the County to agree that leasing lands to farmers was a good reason to close open space to the public at the same time that Longmont residents generally believed that open space should never be closed.

Question #11: Agreement with Reasons for Closing Open Space					
		Overall	Region of Boulder County		
			Boulder	Longmont	SE County
To protect wildlife during certain parts of the year. Do you...	Agree strongly	72%	76%	63%	76%
	Agree mildly	22%	19%	27%	19%
	Disagree mildly	3%	2%	5%	3%
	Disagree strongly	3%	2%	4%	2%
	Other	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%
To lease lands to farmers for agricultural production. Do you...	Agree strongly	37%	29%	46%	37%
	Agree mildly	40%	42%	33%	44%
	Disagree mildly	12%	15%	12%	10%
	Disagree strongly	8%	9%	8%	8%
	Other	3%	6%	1%	2%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%
To create a plan to properly manage a newly bought piece of land, even if the management plan takes 2-3 years to create. Do you...	Agree strongly	27%	31%	23%	25%
	Agree mildly	40%	35%	41%	44%
	Disagree mildly	18%	20%	19%	15%
	Disagree strongly	12%	10%	14%	11%
	Other	4%	4%	3%	4%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%
To create preservation areas in certain sensitive wildlife areas. Do you...	Agree strongly	62%	62%	55%	67%
	Agree mildly	29%	29%	33%	24%
	Disagree mildly	5%	4%	4%	5%
	Disagree strongly	4%	3%	7%	3%
	Other	1%	1%	1%	0%

Question #11: Agreement with Reasons for Closing Open Space					
		Overall	Region of Boulder County		
			Boulder	Longmont	SE County
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%
It is never acceptable to close open space to the public. Do you...	Agree strongly	17%	15%	21%	15%
	Agree mildly	13%	12%	18%	9%
	Disagree mildly	27%	24%	29%	27%
	Disagree strongly	43%	48%	31%	49%
	Other	1%	2%	1%	0%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%

Democrats, politically unaffiliated respondents and younger respondents were more likely to feel that wildlife protection and preservation areas are acceptable reasons for closing open space than other respondents. (Additional crosstabulations appear in Appendices II and III.)

Also included was a question regarding closures of select trails to dogs. Three-quarters mildly or strongly supported this type of closure, while 10% mildly or strongly opposed the closure.

Question #12: Support for Closure of Select Trails in Sensitive Areas to Dogs					
To what extent do you support the closure of trails to dogs in sensitive area in order to minimize impacts to wildlife and the ecosystem?	Overall	Region of Boulder County			
		Boulder	Longmont	SE County	
Support strongly	45%	44%	41%	49%	
Support mildly	30%	28%	33%	29%	
Neither support nor oppose	15%	16%	16%	13%	
Oppose mildly	9%	11%	10%	8%	
Oppose strongly	1%	1%	0%	1%	
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	

Respondents who have lived in Boulder County for a longer period were generally more likely to support closure of select trails than newer residents, as were more educated respondents, democrats and politically unaffiliated respondents. (Additional crosstabulations appear in Appendices II and III.)

Respondents were asked how frequently they used County open space trails. About half (47%) used the trails frequently, 43% reported using trails occasionally, and just 10% said they never used open space trails. Boulder residents were significantly more likely than Longmont and Southeast County residents to use trails frequently.

Question #13: Frequency of use of Boulder County Open Space Trails				
How often do you or someone in your family use Boulder County open space trails?	Overall	Region of Boulder County		
		Boulder	Longmont	SE County
Frequently	47%	64%	29%	47%
Occasionally	43%	31%	52%	48%
Never	10%	5%	19%	6%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Respondents who were newer to the area, more educated and with higher incomes were more likely to use Boulder County trails frequently. (Additional crosstabulations appear in Appendices II and III.)

The next question regarded whether or not there was a sufficient number of trails in open space. Two-thirds (67%) said there were about the right number, and about 1 in 5 said there were not enough. Just 5% thought there were too many trails.

Question #14: Number of Trails in Boulder County Open Space				
Thinking about all possible uses of trails, does Boulder County open space have too many trails, about the right number or not enough trails?	Overall	Region of Boulder County		
		Boulder	Longmont	SE County
Too many trails	5%	4%	4%	7%
About the right number of trails	67%	71%	65%	67%
Not enough trails	22%	22%	23%	20%
No opinion/no response	6%	4%	8%	6%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Younger respondents, as well as respondents with a higher annual income were more likely to believe that Boulder County Open Space does not have enough open space trails. (Additional crosstabulations appear in Appendices II and III.)

Respondents who said that there were not enough trails were asked which types of trails Boulder County should add. Hiking trails were cited by 49%, biking trails by 41% and horseback riding trails by 9%. One-third cited other types of trails. The “other” responses can be found in Appendix IV.

Question 15: Types of Trails of Which Boulder County Needs More*				
	Overall	Region of Boulder County		
		Boulder	Longmont	SE County
Hiking trails	49%	43%	42%	62%
Biking trails	41%	44%	34%	44%
Horseback riding trails	9%	6%	8%	13%
Other	33%	43%	29%	26%
No opinion/no response	3%	1%	5%	1%

*Note that the total exceeds 100% as respondents could give more than one answer.

Prairie Dogs

The next section of the survey included questions about prairie dogs. First, respondents were asked whether they considered prairie dogs a nuisance or an important species. About one-third (36%) felt that prairie dogs are a nuisance, and close to half (46%) said they are an important species. Four percent said they are both a nuisance and an important species. Longmont residents were more likely to believe that prairie dogs are a nuisance than residents of Boulder or Southeast county.

Verbatim responses from the “both” and “other” categories can be found in Appendix IV.

Question #16: Opinions About Prairie Dogs				
Do you think that prairie dogs are...	Overall	Region of Boulder County		
		Boulder	Longmont	SE County
A nuisance	36%	27%	46%	35%
An important species	46%	54%	38%	45%
Both a nuisance and an important species	4%	5%	2%	3%
Other	4%	4%	3%	6%
Don't know/no response	10%	10%	10%	11%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Respondents with a lower level of education were more likely to think of prairie dogs as a nuisance than those with a higher level of education. (Additional crosstabulations appear in Appendices II and III.)

Respondents were asked their opinions of two statements related to controlling prairie dog populations. Half said they agreed mildly or strongly that City and County governments have a responsibility to relocate prairie dogs as an alternative to eradication, while 38% at least mildly disagreed.

More than three-quarters, however, said they at least mildly agreed that prairie dog populations should be controlled if they are damaging the land. Twenty-percent disagreed mildly or strongly with this statement.

Opinions varied among the 3 areas of the County.

Question #17: Agreement with Statements About Prairie Dogs					
		Overall	Region of Boulder County		
			Boulder	Longmont	SE County
City and County governments have a responsibility to relocate prairie dogs as an alternative to eradication. Do you...	Agree strongly	33%	34%	31%	35%
	Agree mildly	27%	26%	23%	30%
	Disagree mildly	18%	22%	14%	17%
	Disagree strongly	20%	15%	31%	15%
	Other	2%	3%	1%	3%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%
If prairie dogs are damaging the land, their population should be controlled. Do you...	Agree strongly	43%	33%	54%	43%
	Agree mildly	34%	36%	29%	36%
	Disagree mildly	12%	18%	5%	11%
	Disagree strongly	8%	10%	10%	6%
	Other	3%	3%	2%	4%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%

When results to these questions were analyzed among various demographic subgroups, differences were noted among different age groups and political affiliation. Older respondents were more likely to agree with the relocation of prairie dogs as an alternative to eradication and republicans were more likely to agree with population control. (Additional crosstabulations appear in Appendices II and III.)

Next, options for controlling prairie dog populations were presented. Nearly three-quarters (73%) mildly or strongly supported the use of captured prairie dogs in endangered species programs, such as feeding them to black-footed ferrets or to birds of prey in raptor rehabilitation programs, while 18% mildly or strongly opposed this option.

Weaker support was found for the other options, relocating or poisoning the prairie dogs, with about 30% at least mildly supporting each option (31% and 30%, respectively) and about 60% at least mildly opposing each option (58% and 61%, respectively).

Opinions varied among the 3 areas with regard to the relocation and poisoning options.

Question #18: Support for Options to Control Prairie Dog Population					
		Overall	Region of Boulder County		
			Boulder	Longmont	SE County
Using captured prairie dogs in endangered species programs, such as feeding them to black-footed ferrets or to birds of prey in raptor rehabilitation programs. Do you...?	Support strongly	41%	43%	40%	39%
	Support mildly	32%	31%	31%	32%
	Neither support nor oppose	7%	5%	5%	11%
	Oppose mildly	7%	8%	7%	5%
	Oppose strongly	11%	10%	14%	11%
	No opinion/no response	2%	3%	3%	2%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%
Relocating prairie dogs at a cost of about \$75 to \$100 per prairie dog if about half of them will survive relocation. Do you...	Support strongly	8%	9%	6%	10%
	Support mildly	23%	26%	17%	25%
	Neither support nor oppose	9%	7%	8%	12%
	Oppose mildly	19%	21%	16%	20%
	Oppose strongly	39%	36%	52%	32%
	No opinion/no response	2%	2%	2%	2%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%
Poisoning prairie dogs at a cost of about \$5 to \$10 per prairie dogs. Do you...	Support strongly	11%	5%	16%	13%
	Support mildly	19%	23%	18%	15%
	Neither support nor oppose	7%	3%	10%	8%
	Oppose mildly	15%	15%	14%	17%
	Oppose strongly	46%	52%	41%	44%
	No opinion/no response	2%	2%	1%	2%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%

Older respondents were less likely to support the use of prairie dogs in endangered species programs, but more likely to support poisoning them. Respondents with a lower annual income were less likely to support poisoning prairie dogs or using them in endangered species programs. Republicans and males were also more likely to support the poisoning of prairie dogs. (Additional crosstabulations appear in Appendices II and III.)

To further clarify the priorities of County voters, respondents were asked to rate the importance of uses of open space agricultural land. Nearly 9 in 10 (88%) respondents believed that preserving the productivity of agricultural lands was at least fairly important, while just over half (52%) said that providing prairie dog habitat was fairly or very important. Ten percent said preserving the productivity of agricultural lands was not very or not at all important, while 46% said the same of providing prairie dog habitat.

Longmont residents were more likely to feel that preserving the productivity of agricultural lands was very important.

Question #19: Importance of Uses of Open Space Agricultural Land					
		Overall	Region of Boulder County		
			Boulder	Longmont	SE County
Preserving the productivity of agricultural lands	Very important	53%	47%	65%	49%
	Fairly important	35%	36%	29%	39%
	Not very important	8%	13%	3%	8%
	Not at all important	2%	2%	2%	2%
	No opinion/no response	2%	2%	2%	2%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%
Providing prairie dog habitat	Very important	16%	17%	12%	18%
	Fairly important	36%	39%	34%	35%
	Not very important	27%	28%	25%	26%
	Not at all important	19%	12%	25%	19%
	No opinion/no response	3%	4%	4%	2%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%

Older respondents were more likely to feel that the maintenance of agricultural productivity is important. (Additional crosstabulations appear in Appendices II and III.)

Three-quarters (76%) of respondents said that preserving ranching and farming operations was more important in the case of conflict between existing ranching and farming operations on open space and prairie dogs. Thirteen percent felt that providing habitat for prairie dogs would be more important in a conflict. Respondents from Boulder were more likely to feel that prairie dog habitat would be a priority, although only 20% gave that response.

Question #20: Preferred Solutions to Conflicts Between Ranching Operations and Prairie Dog Habitats				
When there is conflict between existing ranching and farming operations on open space and prairie dogs, which is more important?	Overall	Region of Boulder County		
		Boulder	Longmont	SE County
Preserve ranching and farming operations	76%	65%	87%	78%
Provide habitat for prairie dogs	13%	20%	7%	11%
No opinion/no response	11%	15%	6%	11%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Republicans were much more likely to favor ranching and farming options over prairie dogs than other respondents. (Additional crosstabulations appear in Appendices II and III.)

Goose Hunting

Respondents were then asked about their support for the leasing of open space agricultural lands to allow hunting of Canada geese. Nearly two-thirds (65%) mildly or strongly supported leasing land for this purpose. Twenty-one percent mildly or strongly opposed leasing land for this purpose.

Support was strongest among Longmont respondents, although a majority in each geographic area supported the hunting.

Question #21: Support for the Hunting of Canada Geese on Open Space Lands				
To what extent would you approve or disapprove of the leasing of open space agricultural lands that are not open to the public to allow the hunting of Canada geese?	Overall	Region of Boulder County		
		Boulder	Longmont	SE County
Support strongly	36%	29%	49%	30%
Support mildly	29%	31%	23%	33%
Neither support nor oppose	13%	11%	10%	18%
Oppose mildly	8%	9%	6%	8%
Oppose strongly	13%	17%	11%	10%
No opinion/no response	1%	2%	0%	1%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Respondents who strongly supported the leasing of open space for goose hunting were:

- more likely to consider prairie dogs a nuisance than an important species,
- more likely to disagree that City and County governments have a responsibility to relocate prairie dogs as an alternative to eradication and more likely to agree that prairie dog populations should be controlled when they are damaging the land,
- more likely to support using prairie dogs in endangered species programs, oppose relocation and support poisoning prairie dogs, and
- more likely to cite the importance of preserving agricultural lands and say that providing prairie dog habitat was not at all important.

Approval of hunting Canada geese was analyzed for various demographic subgroups. Republicans were more likely to support the hunting of geese than other respondents. (Additional crosstabulations appear in Appendices II and III.)

Genetically Modified Organisms

County residents were asked about their familiarity with and views on genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Fifteen percent said they were very familiar, 54% were somewhat familiar, and 30% were not at all familiar. Boulder residents were more likely than Longmont or Southeast County residents to be very familiar with GMOs.

Question #22: Familiarity with Genetically Modified Organisms				
How familiar are you with "genetically modified organisms," or GMOs?	Overall	Region of Boulder County		
		Boulder	Longmont	SE County
Very familiar	15%	25%	12%	9%
Somewhat familiar	54%	49%	55%	57%
Not at all familiar	30%	26%	33%	33%
Don't know/refused	0%	0%	0%	1%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Respondents with higher annual income and males were more likely to be familiar with GMOs. (Additional crosstabulations appear in Appendices II and III.)

About half (46%) said they believe GMOs are harmful to the environment and have not been tested to know whether they are harmful to human health and 36% said they believe GMOs are a scientific advance that will allow us to better feed the hungry and reduce our use of chemicals. Boulder residents were more likely than respondents from Longmont or Southeast County to believe that GMOs are harmful.

Question #23: Views of Genetically Modified Organisms				
Which is closer to your view of GMOs?	Overall	Region of Boulder County		
		Boulder	Longmont	SE County
GMOs are harmful to the environment and have not been tested to know whether they are harmful to human health	46%	59%	41%	39%
GMOs are a scientific advance that will allow us to better feed the hungry and reduce our use of chemicals	36%	28%	43%	39%
No opinion/no response	17%	13%	16%	22%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Respondents who strongly approved of the Boulder County open space program were more likely to say that GMOs are harmful to the environment. Males and republicans were more likely than female respondents and those with other political affiliations to think of GMOs as a scientific advance that will allow us to feed the hungry and reduce our use of chemicals. (Additional crosstabulations appear in Appendices II and III.)

Demographics

This section of the report includes demographic information about respondents, broken by the region in which respondents live.

Question #24: Access to Computers and the Internet					
		Overall	Region of Boulder County		
			Boulder	Longmont	SE County
Do you have access to a computer in your home?	Yes	91%	88%	89%	95%
	No	9%	12%	11%	5%
	Refused/no response	0%	0%	0%	0%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%
Does this computer have a modem or access to the Internet?	Yes	95%	92%	94%	97%
	No	5%	8%	5%	3%
	Don't know	0%	0%	1%	0%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%
Do you have access to a computer at work?	Yes	70%	69%	67%	74%
	No	19%	22%	22%	14%
	Refused/no response	11%	9%	11%	12%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%
Does this computer have a modem or access to the Internet?	Yes	95%	96%	92%	97%
	No	4%	4%	8%	2%
	Don't know	0%	0%	0%	1%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%
Do you have access to a computer at school?	Yes	21%	24%	21%	17%
	No	18%	19%	22%	13%
	Don't know	0%	1%	0%	0%
	Refused/no response	61%	56%	57%	70%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%
Does this computer have a modem or access to the Internet?	Yes	98%	99%	95%	100%
	No	1%	0%	4%	0%
	Don't know	1%	1%	1%	0%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%

Question #25: Length of Residency in Boulder County				
How long have you lived in Boulder County?	Overall	Region of Boulder County		
		Boulder	Longmont	SE County
Less than 1 year	8%	10%	3%	12%
1 to 4 years	17%	18%	12%	21%
5 to 9 years	17%	14%	18%	19%
10 to 19 years	21%	18%	23%	23%
20 years or more	35%	40%	43%	24%
Refused/no response	0%	0%	0%	1%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Question #26: Age of Respondents				
Which of the following categories includes your age?	Overall	Region of Boulder County		
		Boulder	Longmont	SE County
18 to 24	15%	21%	12%	11%
25 to 34	22%	18%	16%	33%
35 to 44	21%	16%	23%	24%
45 to 54	21%	20%	23%	20%
55 to 64	11%	11%	16%	6%
65 and above	10%	13%	11%	5%
Refused/no response	1%	0%	0%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Question #27: Level of Education of Respondents				
What level of education have you completed?	Overall	Region of Boulder County		
		Boulder	Longmont	SE County
High school or equivalent	14%	11%	21%	12%
Some college	22%	20%	24%	21%
College degree	35%	38%	32%	34%
Graduate studies	11%	11%	9%	13%
Master's degree	13%	14%	11%	14%
Doctor's degree	4%	5%	3%	6%
Other	1%	2%	0%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Question #28: Level of Income of Respondents				
About how much was your household's total annual income before taxes for all of 2001?	Overall	Region of Boulder County		
		Boulder	Longmont	SE County
Less than \$20,000	5%	11%	2%	2%
At least \$20,000 but less than \$40,000	14%	17%	11%	13%
At least \$40,000 but less than \$60,000	17%	13%	21%	16%
At least \$60,000 but less than \$100,000	25%	20%	29%	26%
At least \$100,000 and above	24%	20%	22%	31%
Refused/no response	10%	13%	8%	7%
Don't know	6%	6%	8%	4%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Question #29: Political Affiliation of Respondents				
With which political party do you consider yourself affiliated?	Overall	Region of Boulder County		
		Boulder	Longmont	SE County
Republican	25%	17%	32%	28%
Democrat	33%	37%	31%	32%
Independent/unaffiliated	37%	41%	32%	37%
Other/none	1%	1%	2%	0%
Don't know/refused	3%	4%	3%	2%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Question #31: Gender of Respondents				
Gender of respondent	Overall	Region of Boulder County		
		Boulder	Longmont	SE County
Male	51%	55%	47%	49%
Female	49%	45%	53%	51%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%