

# Colorado Natural Areas Program

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State Natural Areas Program Roundtable

Presented by: Savanna Smith, CNHP/CNAP Botanist



LIVE LIFE  
OUTSIDE



# Colorado Program Scope & Structure

- Program housed within Colorado Parks & Wildlife
- Designation can occur on any land ownership type through a voluntary conservation agreement between the landowner and CNAP/DNR
- 96 designated state natural areas across ~182,000 acres
- 7 member Governor-appointed advisory council
- Staff: 1 full-time permanent staff, 1 temporary technician, 1 dedicated contractor
- Volunteers: 50+ volunteer stewards, volunteer steward program running for 25 years

# Colorado's Newest State Natural Area: Coal Creek Tallgrass Prairie

- Designated in 2023, 1458 acres, owned and managed by City of Boulder Open Space & Mountain Parks
- High quality example of xeric tallgrass prairie
- Designation highlights and helps protect the remnant tallgrass prairie community and its dependent species



# Natural Area Highlight: Pagosa Skyrocket



- 88 acres, purchased by Colorado Parks & Wildlife in 2016 with federal RLA funds to protect federally endangered Pagosa skyrocket
- Designated as a Colorado Natural Area in 2017
- Contains over 50% of the world's population of this species
- CNAP has been conducting quantitative monitoring and research in cooperation with USFWS and CNHP

# Recent “Wins” and Accomplishments

- CO HB24-1257- reauthorization of the Colorado Natural Areas Council
- New State Natural Area designation and two expansions
- 25 year running volunteer steward program continues to be of exceptional value to CNAP

# Program Challenges

- Small staff, big mission- 1 permanent FTE, 1 seasonal technician, 1 dedicated term contractor
- Relevance/value within organizational structure- program is buried within very large parks and wildlife agency with many competing priorities
- Lack of familiarity with CNAP and confusion on roles between CNAP and CNHP

# Emerging Issues- Changes on the Horizon



- Political shift towards biodiversity and species conservation- new legislation directs CPW to study & conserve rare plants and invertebrates
- CNAP has been specifically focused on rare plant conservation for 30+ years, will soon be shifting responsibilities to new dedicated staff
- CNAP utilizing new tools and data to help prioritize future designations

# Contact Info

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Thank You!