

LARIMER COUNTY LAND STEWARDSHIP ADVISORY BOARD

The mission of Larimer County Department of Natural Resources is to establish, protect and manage significant regional parks and open lands providing quality outdoor recreational opportunities and stewardship of natural resource values. We are committed to fostering a sense of community and appreciation for the natural and agricultural heritage of Larimer County for present and future generations.

Date: 2/20/2020

Time: 5:00 – 6:30 p.m.

Location: Larimer County Courthouse, 200 W. Oak St., Fort Collins, CO, 2nd Floor, Lake Loveland Room.

Contact: Please contact Sidney at smichl@larimer.org or 970-619-4462 if you are unable to attend.

AGENDA

Scheduled times are subject to change.

1. CALL TO ORDER/INTRODUCTIONS
2. PUBLIC COMMENT
3. AGENDA REVIEW
4. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF LAST MEETING MINUTES
5. INFORMATION & ANNOUNCEMENTS
 - a. Natural Resource events for this month: See <http://www.larimer.org/naturalresources>.
 - b. 2019 Q4 Board Report
 - c. 2020 Enterprise Rate Increase
6. UPDATES/DISCUSSION ITEMS
 - a. 2019 Noxious Weed Compliance Summary
 - b. 2020 Weed District Cost-share
 - c. Habitat Restoration Policy
 - d. Dept. Restoration and Resource Standards

7. ACTION ITEMS

- a. Online public notice of board and commission meetings

8. OTHER BUSINESS

9. NEXT MEETING SCHEDULED: 5/21/2020 at Larimer County Courthouse, 200 W. Oak St., Fort Collins, CO, 2nd Floor, Lake Loveland Room.

10. EXECUTIVE SESSION: Pursuant to C.R.S. (24-6-402(4)(a)) for discussion pertaining to the purchase, acquisition, lease, transfer or sale of any real, personal or other property interest.

11. ADJOURN

Included in PDF:

- Agenda
- Quarterly Board Report
- Larimer County weed control rates
- 2019 Noxious Weed Compliance summary and maps
- 2020 Weed District cost-share changes
- Habitat Restoration Policy draft
- Restoration Standards and Resource Protection draft
- Larimer County restoration examples

Attached Separately:

- Minutes of last meeting

This meeting will be recorded and archived according to law. Votes require a quorum.

Public can view agenda and minutes at:

<http://legacy.larimer.org/boards/minutes/lsubminutes.htm>





2019 LARIMER COUNTY NATURAL RESOURCES QUARTERLY BOARD REPORT 4TH QUARTER (OCTOBER NOVEMBER DECEMBER)



THE FUTURE OF FORKS PARK



Located in the Big Thompson Canyon, Forks Park was destroyed by the 2013 flood. Soon after, a recreation and conservation assessment of the canyon led by Larimer County outlined the need to restore the river and reopen Forks Park to the public. The assessment also identified the priority to protect additional riverfront parcels, including the 0.33-acre Weis parcel adjacent to Forks Park.

In October, the Weis parcel was purchased by Larimer County which adds to the conservation of the river corridor and public access for fishing and recreation. The restored and expanded Forks Park is scheduled to reopen in April 2020.

CONNECTING STUDENTS TO LARIMER COUNTY OPEN SPACES

In 2019, we partnered with the Poudre and Thompson Valley school districts to provide naturalist-led ecology and geology education programs at several open spaces. A total of 18 schools participated in these programs, reaching nearly 1,000 students and 200 adult chaperones. To help support and encourage low income Title 1 schools to participate in these programs, we offered transportation subsidies.

New this year, we provided a teacher training attended by 26 educators to showcase ecology curricula that meet current school standards that we have developed for school trips to Lions Open Space.



2019 VISITATION NUMBERS NEARLY BREAK RECORDS

After the busiest year in agency history in 2018, we are wrapping up 2019 with the second highest number of visitors ever recorded. The cold and wet spring weather may have dampened the spirits of a few, but we still sold 110,000 daily permits and 5,800 resident vehicle permits, hosted 52,000 nights of camping, and inspected over 55,000 boats for aquatic nuisance species.

According to Peggy Watson, the Horsetooth Area Information Center front desk staff member, "The pushback from the fee increases for entrance permits and camping was limited, because people felt that we are good stewards of the resource and the fees are needed to maintain the park." Even though we are serving and increasing number of visitors, resource protection, customer service, and visitor safety continue to be our top priorities.



NEW CABINS ON THE HORIZON AT HORSETOOTH

As the Horsetooth Reservoir camper cabins were starting to show their age, staff began making plans to replace the existing units with a more standardized design that would last for many years. And what better way to start the process than by becoming a camper yourself?

In 2018, staff stayed in camper cabins throughout Colorado to experience design options first-hand. Along the way, they asked managers and visitors for their opinions and preferences, and ultimately developed a list of cabin specifications. The goal was to create an insect resistant, durable design that could be adapted over time.

The Architects Studio was hired this year and worked with staff to develop the new cabin model, which is anticipated to open to the public at the Horsetooth Reservoir's South Bay Campground in 2021.





EMERALD ASH BORER: THE GREEN MENACE

Emerald Ash Borer (EAB), the most destructive invasive exotic tree pest in the United States, was confirmed in Larimer County in September. Now established in 35 states, EAB infects and kills ash trees which are very prominent in urban forests along the Front Range.

Natural Resources staff have been helping educate private landowners and proactively mitigating for this pest at campgrounds, around facilities, and along county roadways where ash trees have been planted. For more information on EAB in Larimer County contact the County Forester at (970) 498-5765.

CONSERVATION EASEMENT STEWARDSHIP

This quarter, staff completed the state-required annual monitoring of all conservation easements held by the Department of Natural Resources. To an overwhelming extent, landowners proved to be continuing responsible stewardship practices in accordance with conservation values.

A total of 44 easements were monitored for compliance, with only one violation observed. Additionally, new efforts to improve monitoring efficiency helped staff finish a full month sooner compared to the 2018 monitoring season.



HISTORIC BUILDINGS GET A FACELIFT



Earlier this fall, four historic structures from the Herrington and Soderberg homesteads were stabilized and preserved at Horsetooth Mountain Open Space. HistoriCorps, a non-profit organization dedicated to saving historic places, partnered with the County to lead the project and recruit community volunteers.

Over three weeks, Natural Resources staff, HistoriCorps staff, and 15 community volunteers stabilized log walls, updated rafters and roof decking, replaced windows, rebuilt and rehabilitated doors, and repointed mortar. This work was critical to ensuring that these important historic structures remain viable now and into the future.

Fun Fact

In 1896, Eliza Herrington, a widow with three children, decided to go into ranching and homesteaded in the location of the current Soderberg Trailhead.



FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Larimer County Department of Natural Resources has five primary revenue sources which include user fees on park properties, user fees on open space properties, the open spaces sales tax, Colorado lottery proceeds and the weed district property tax. Below are annual

revenue summaries, annual and daily permit sales, and camping reservation nights compared to the same period the previous year. Please note that counts represent the full year of 2018 and January 1st through December 19th of 2019.

Year to Date Revenue (through December 19th 2019)

	2018	2019	% Change
Lottery	\$711,103	\$814,499	+15%
Open Space Sales Tax	\$5,859,800	\$7,327,341	+25%
Open Space Generated User Fees*	\$864,758	\$1,088,094	+26%
Reservoir Park Generated User Fees*	\$3,438,083	\$4,225,276	+23%
Weed District Property Tax	\$619,896	\$631,770	+2%

*user fees include those for entrance, camping, special events, group use areas, and penalty assessments

Year to Date Number of Permit Sales (through December 19th 2019)

	2018	2019	% Change
Open Spaces			
Annual Permits	974	964	-1%
Daily Permits	26,318	21,713	-17%
Reservoir Park			
Annual Permits	9,882	9,956	+1%
Daily Permits	87,784	86,936	-1%

Year to Date Camping Reservation Nights (through December 19th 2019)

	2018	2019	% Change
Open Spaces	8,891	8,049	-9%
Reservoir Parks	45,904	43,928	-4%



Larimer County Department of Natural Resources
 1800 S. County Road 31
 Loveland, CO 80537
 (970) 619-4570 larimer.org/naturalresources



Larimer County 2019 Weed Control Rates

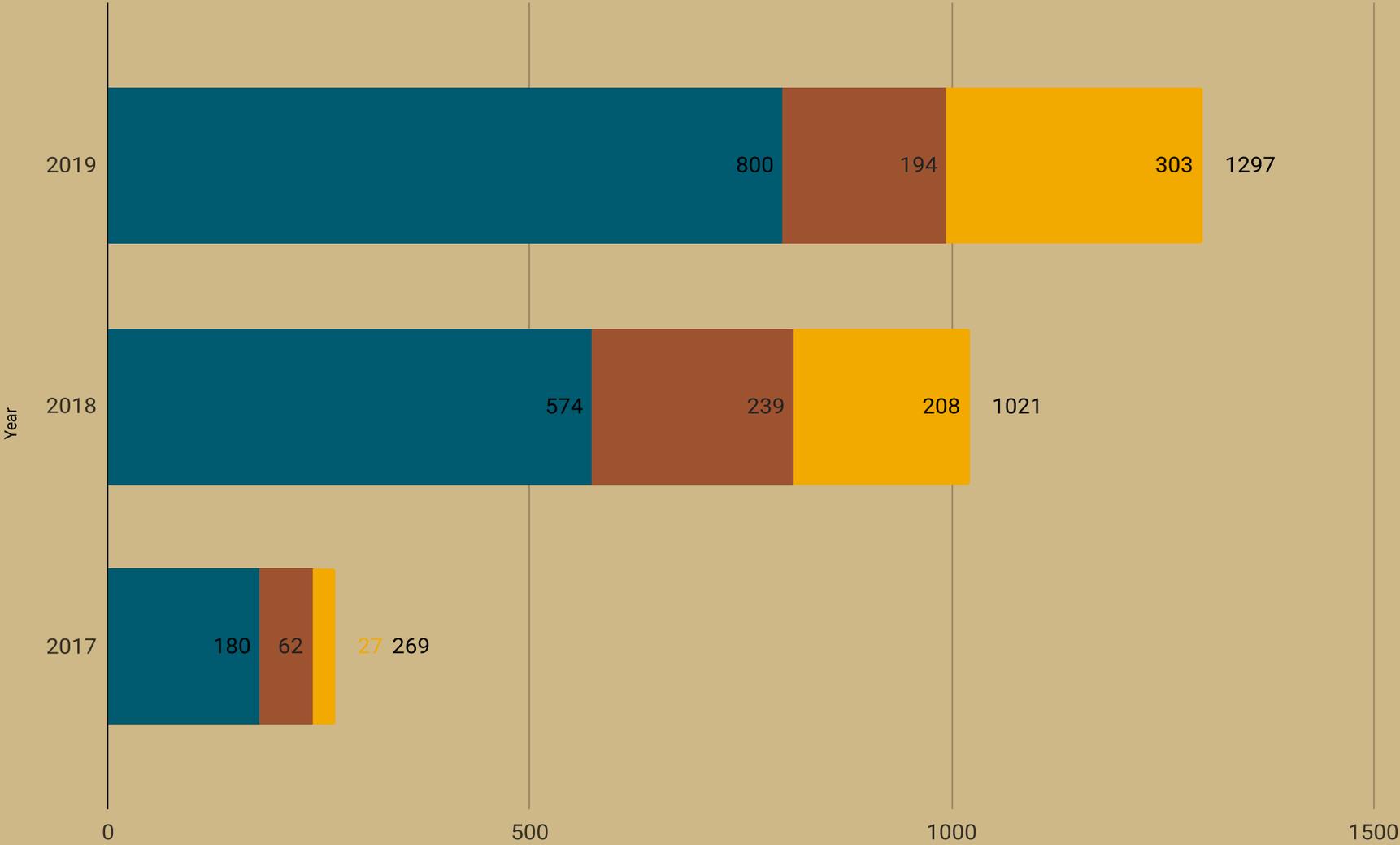
Service	2020 Cost Rates
General Labor/Backpack Sprayer	\$75.00
ATV Spray/Seed	\$140.00
Roadside Truck Spray	\$140.00
Tractor Spray/Mow/Seed	\$140.00
UTV (2 applicators)	\$210.00

Larimer County 2020 Weed Control Rates

Service	2020 Cost Rates
General Labor/Backpack Sprayer	\$77.00
ATV Spray/Seed	\$143.00
Roadside Truck Spray	\$143.00
Tractor Spray/Mow/Seed	\$143.00
UTV (2 applicators)	\$215.00

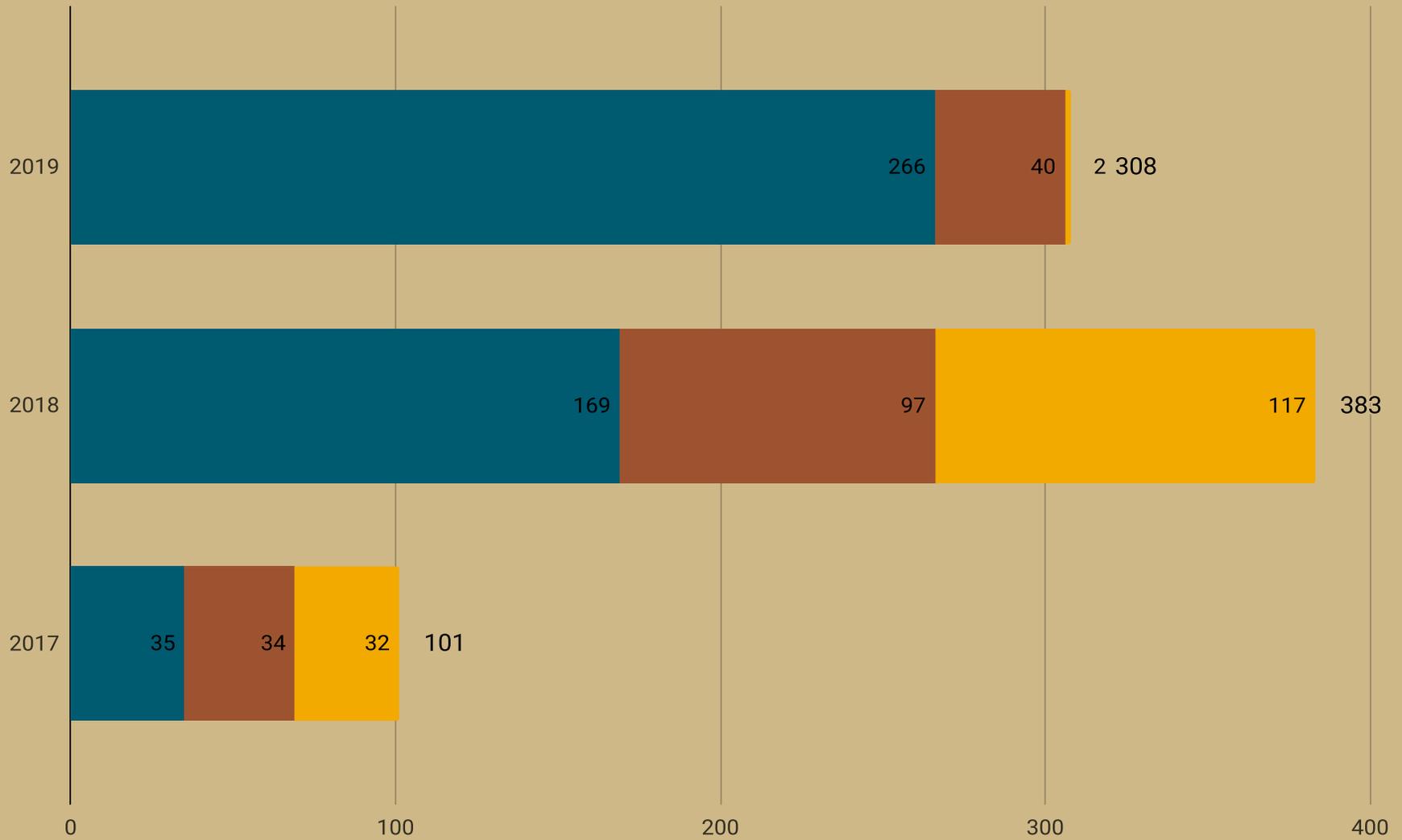
Noxious Weed Compliance Inspections

Indistrict Estes Valley Other Outside District



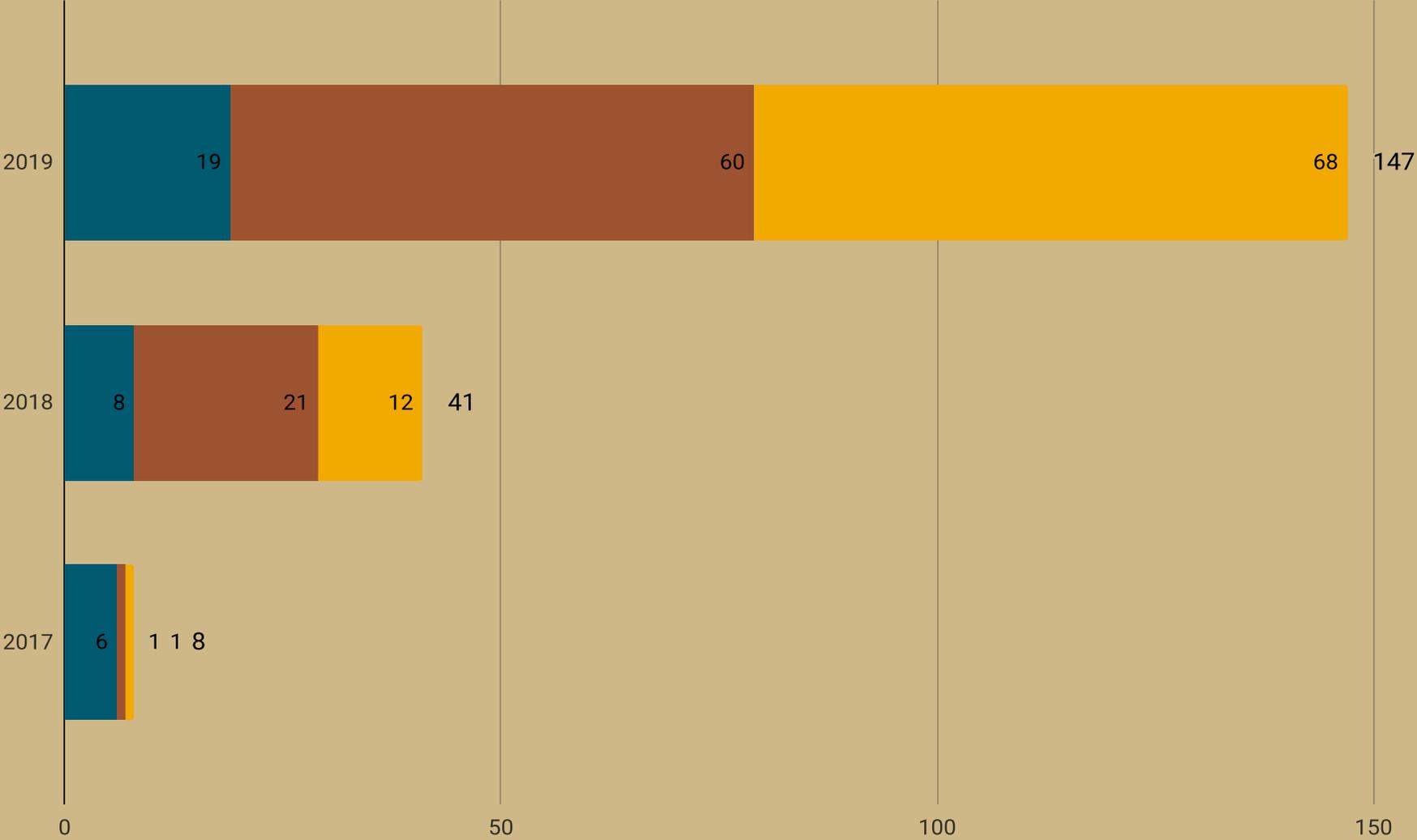
Courtesy Letter

■ Indistrict ■ Estes Valley ■ Other Outside District



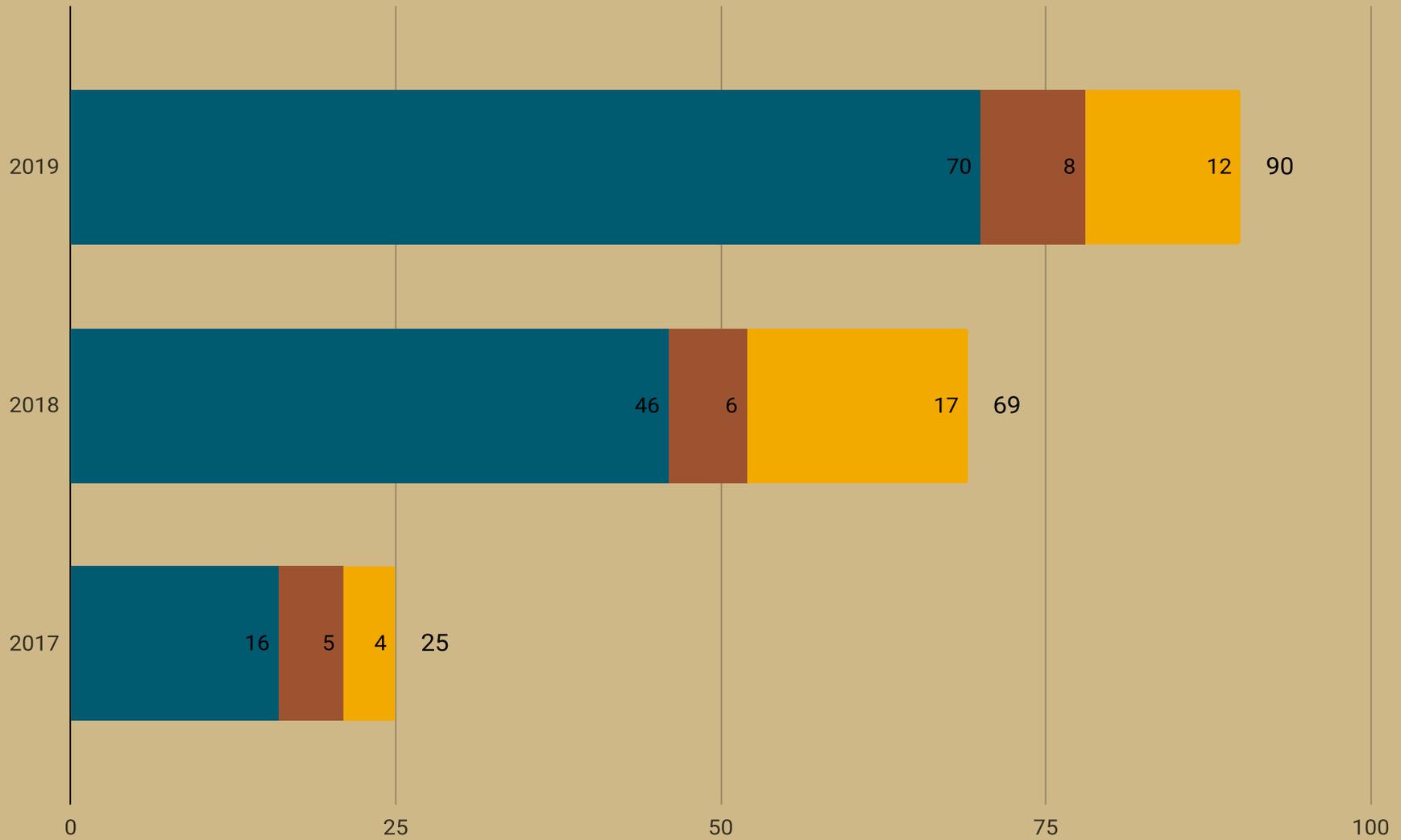
Noxious Weed Early Detection Rapid Response Grant Letter

Indistrict Estes Valley Other Outside District



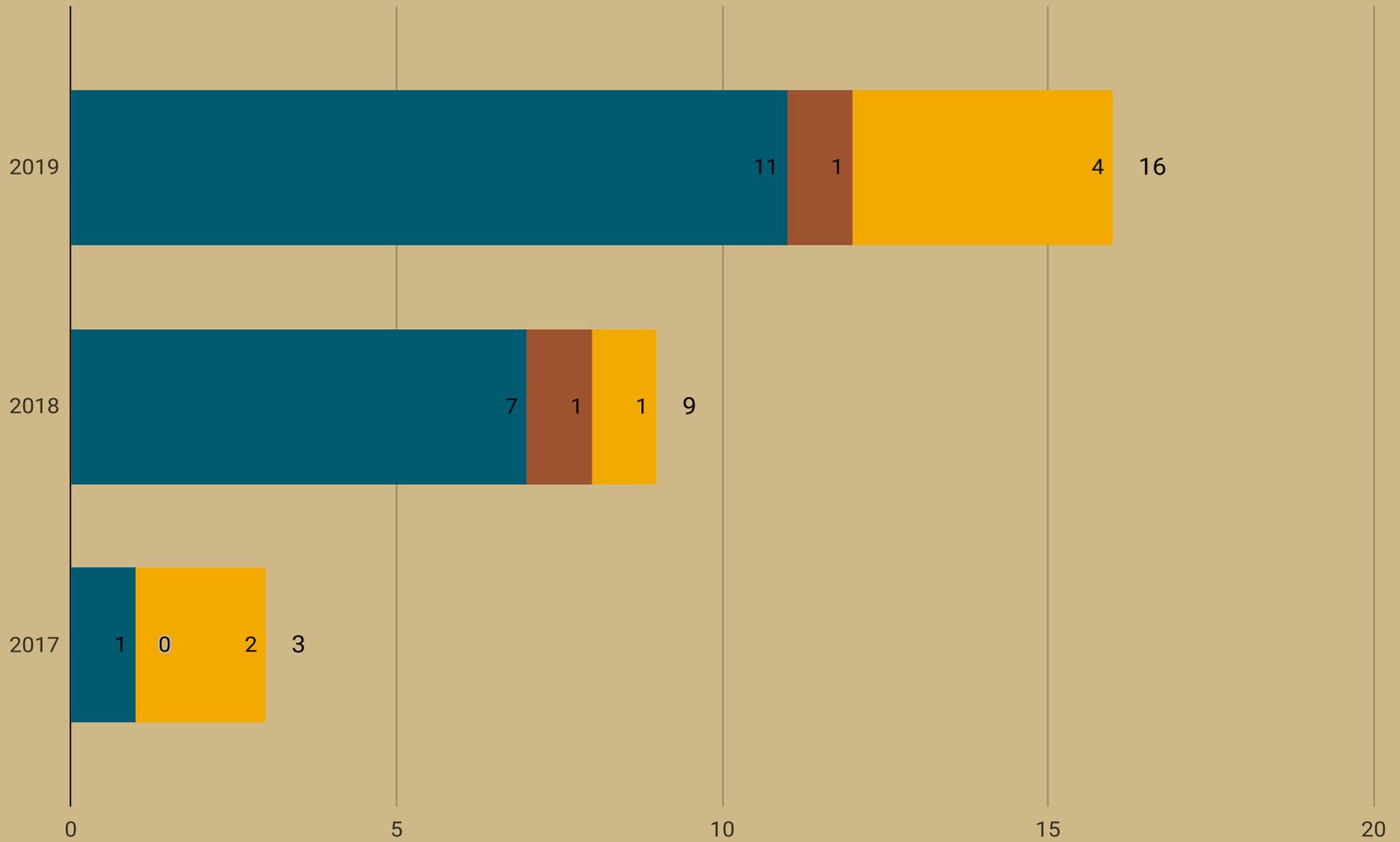
Enforcement Letter

■ Indistrict ■ Estes Valley ■ Other Outside District



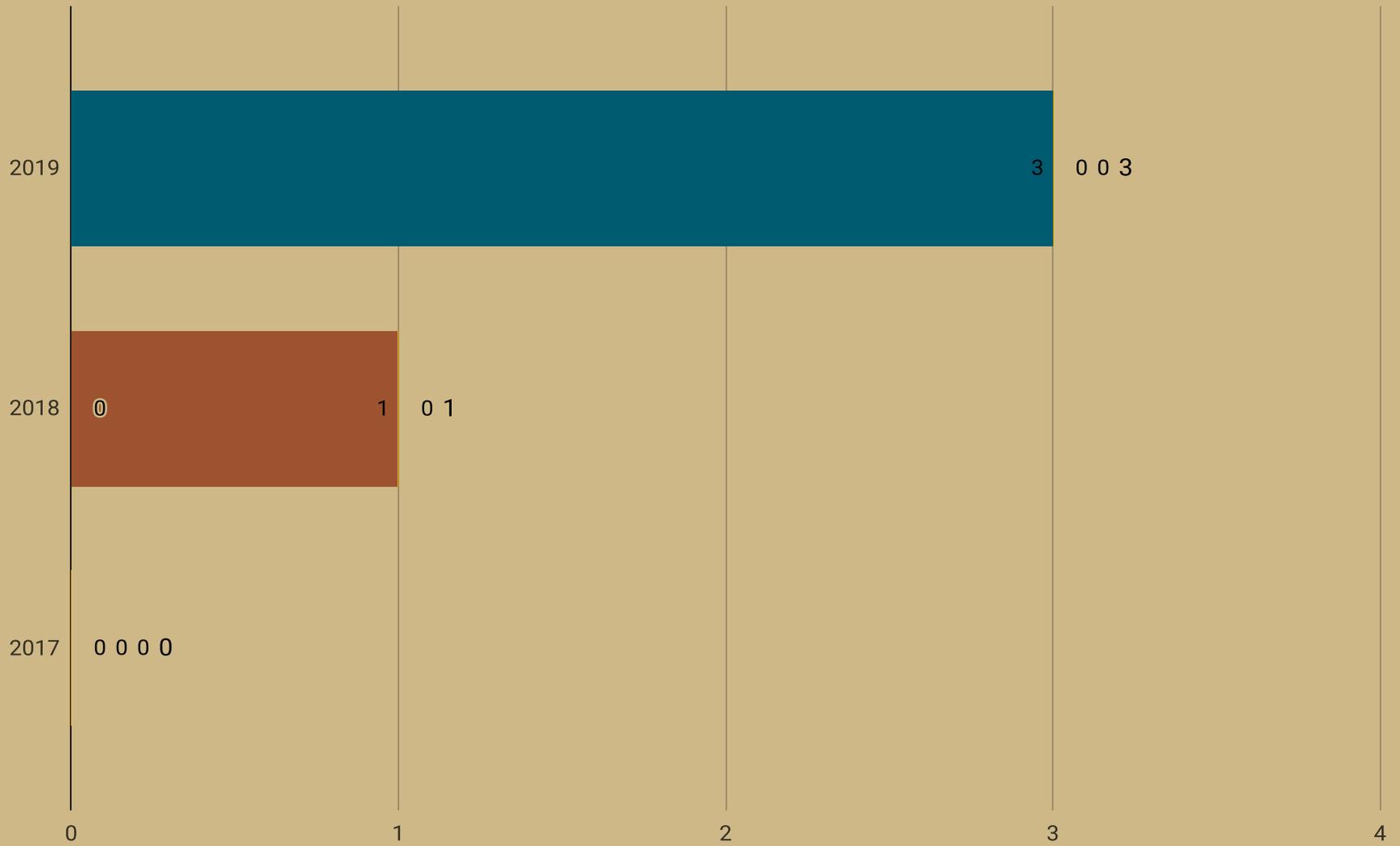
Right Of Entry

■ Indistrict ■ Estes Valley ■ Other Outside District



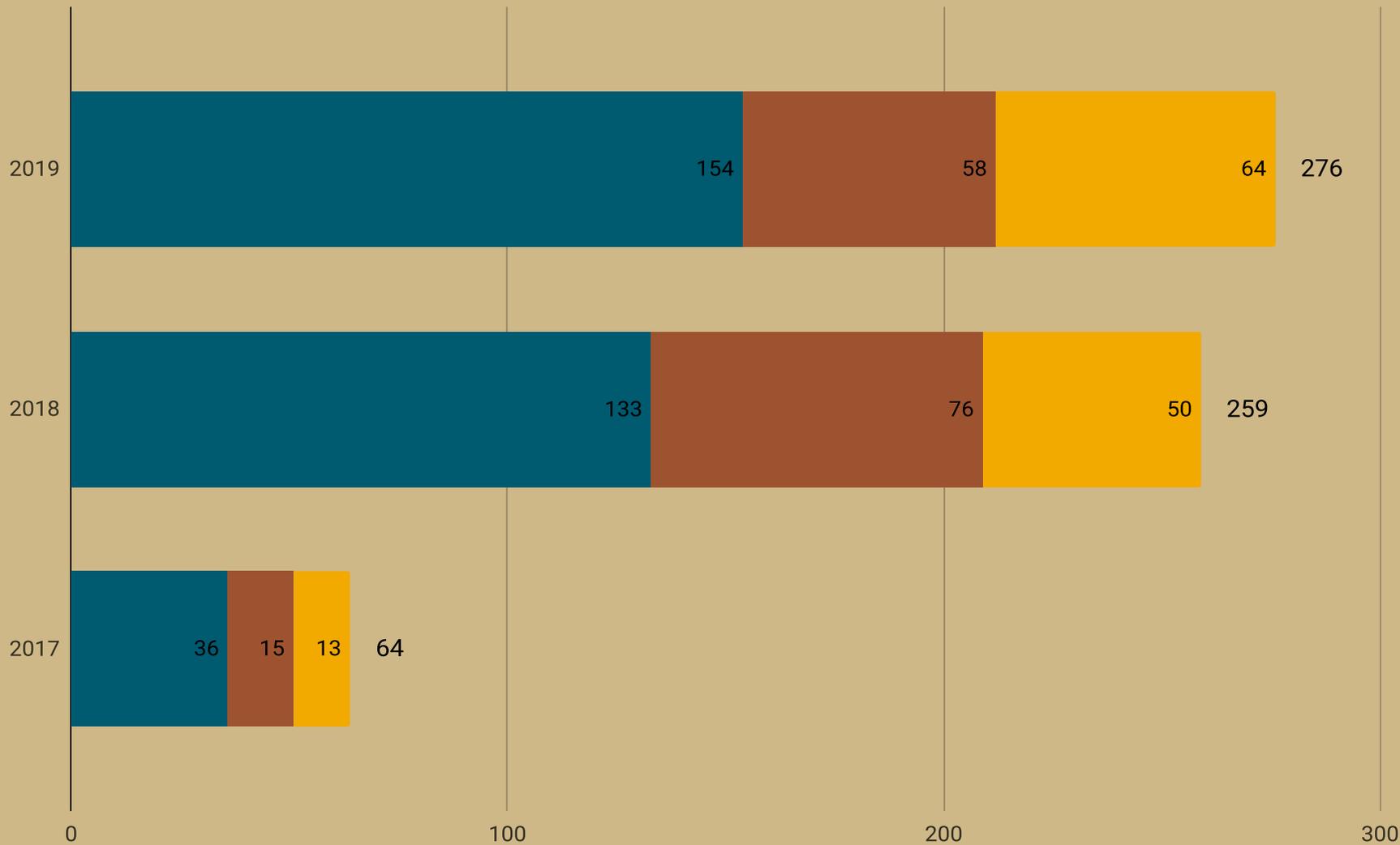
Noxious Weed Enforcement Actions

■ Indistrict ■ Estes Valley ■ Other Outside District

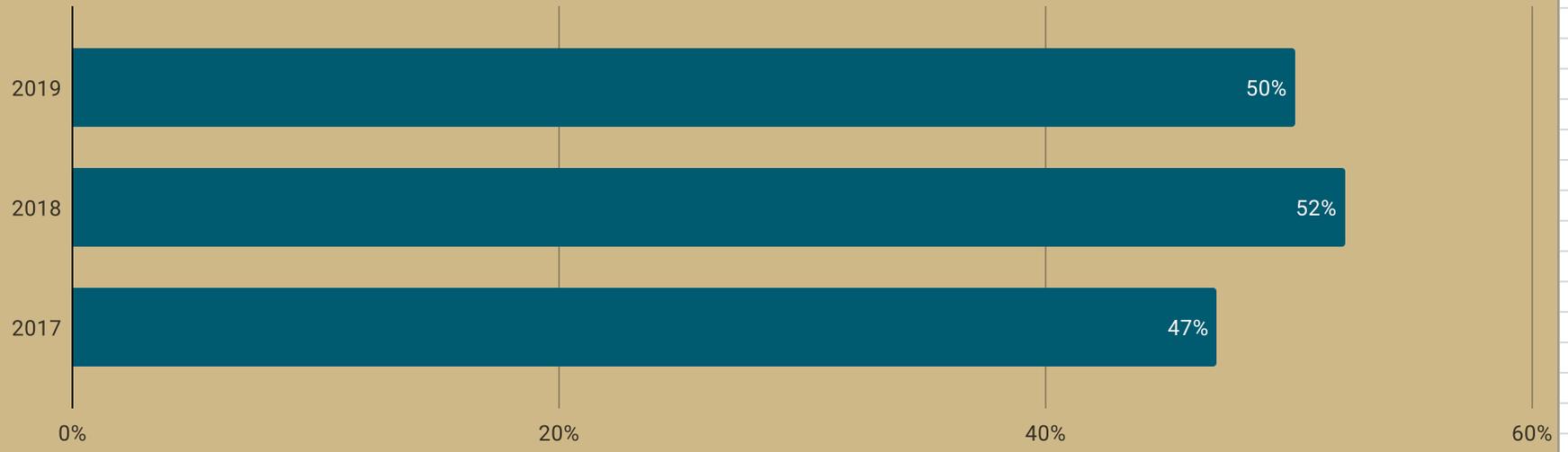


Landowners Responded to Noxious Weed Letters

■ Indistrict ■ Estes Valley ■ Other Outside District



% of Landowners Responded to Noxious Weed Letters

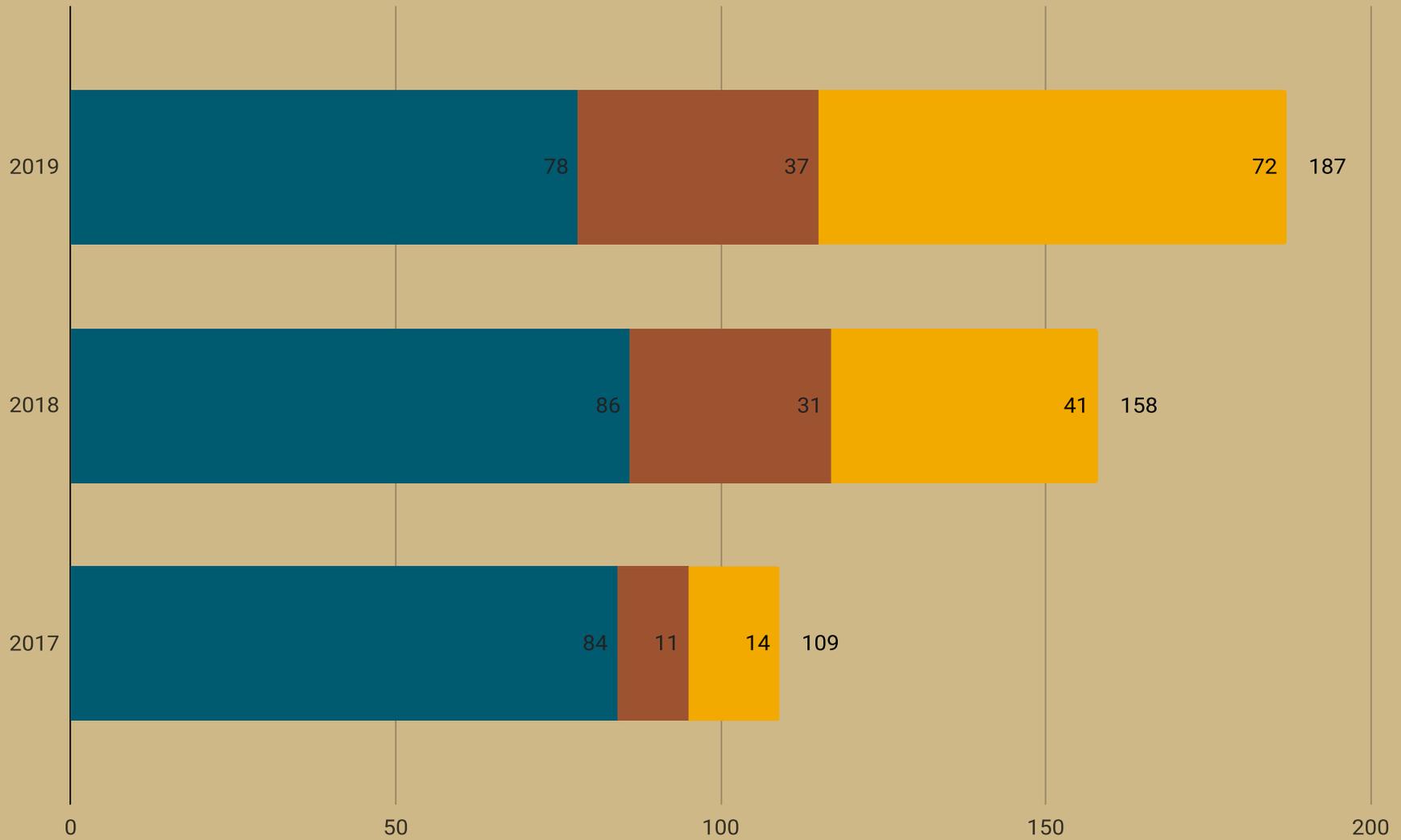


Responded and Wanted Additional Services



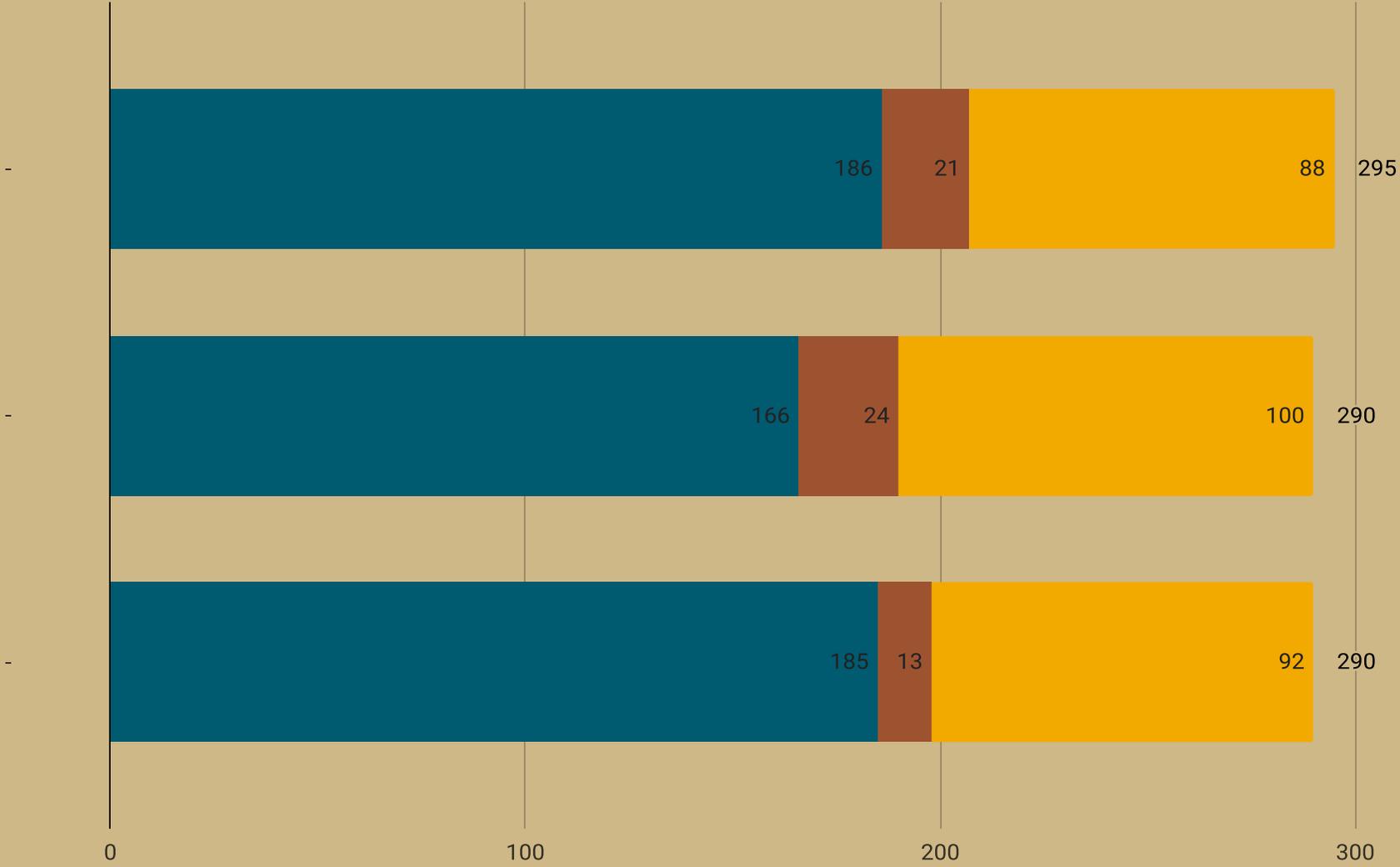
Yearly Total Site Visits

■ Indistrict ■ Estes Valley ■ Other Outside District



Yearly Total Herbicide Sales

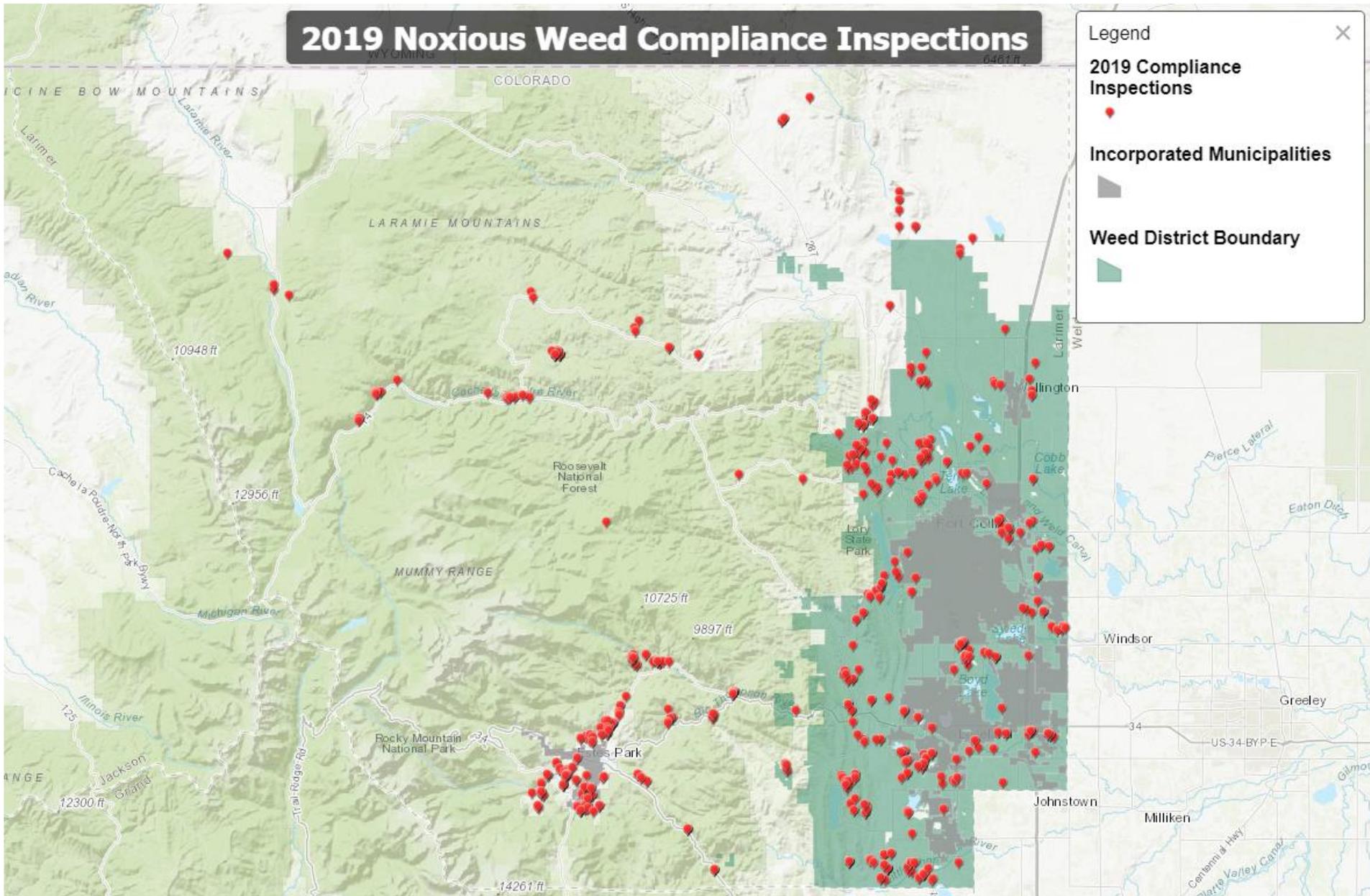
Indistrict Estes Valley Other Outside District



2019 Noxious Weed Compliance Inspections

Legend

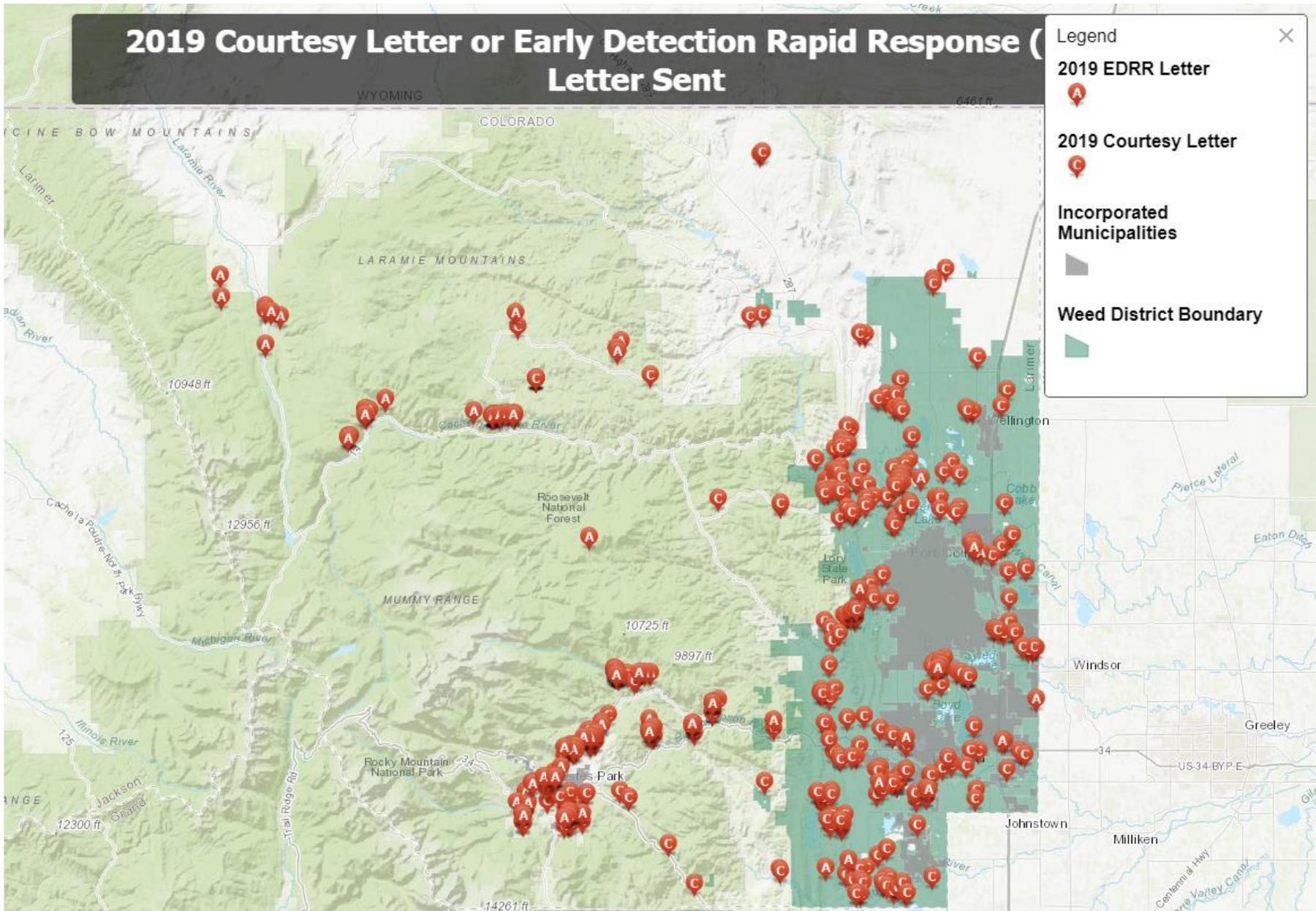
- 2019 Compliance Inspections
- Incorporated Municipalities
- Weed District Boundary



2019 Courtesy Letter or Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR) Letter Sent

Legend

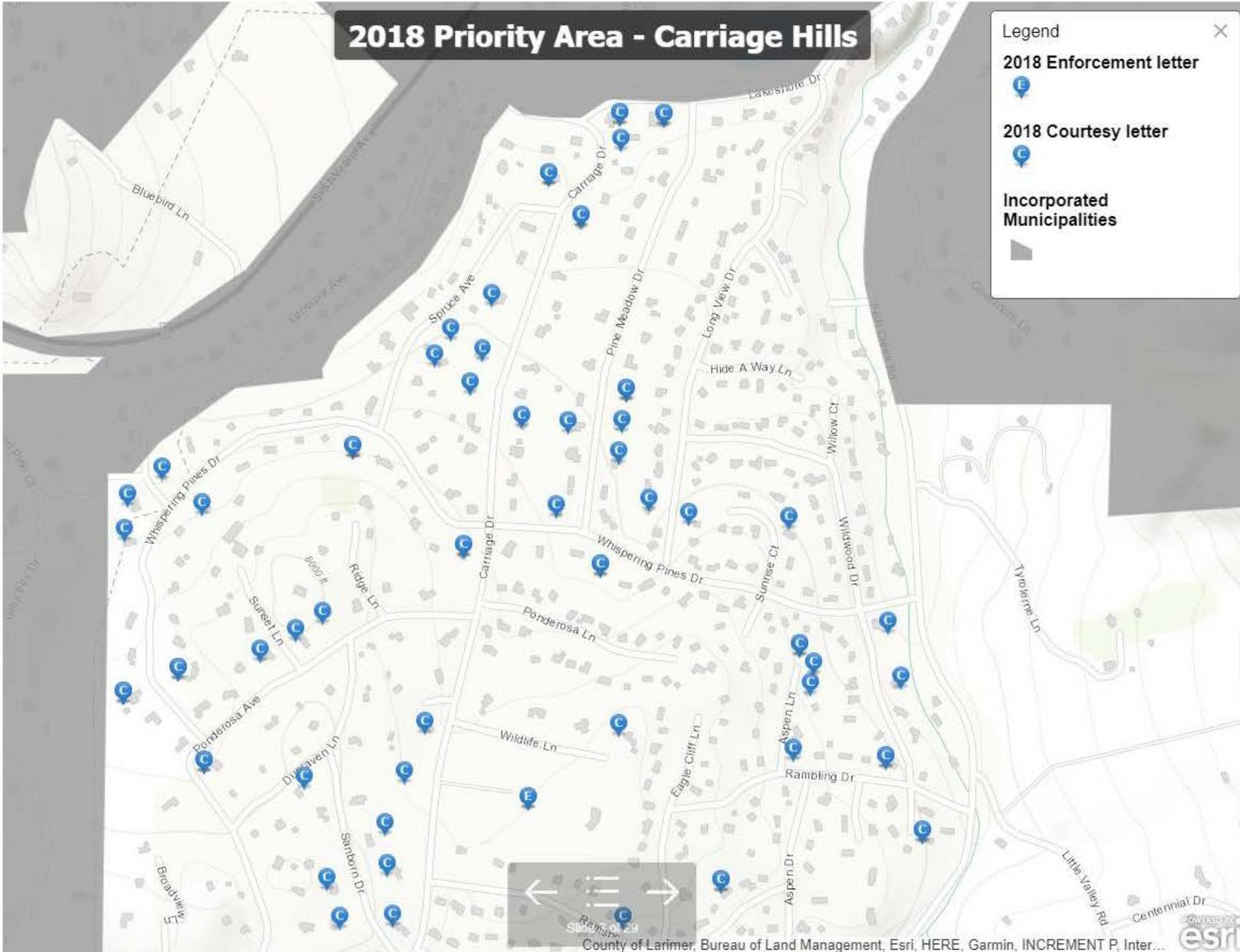
- 2019 EDRR Letter (Red pin with 'A')
- 2019 Courtesy Letter (Red pin with 'C')
- Incorporated Municipalities (Grey shaded area)
- Weed District Boundary (Green shaded area)



2018 Priority Area - Carriage Hills

Legend

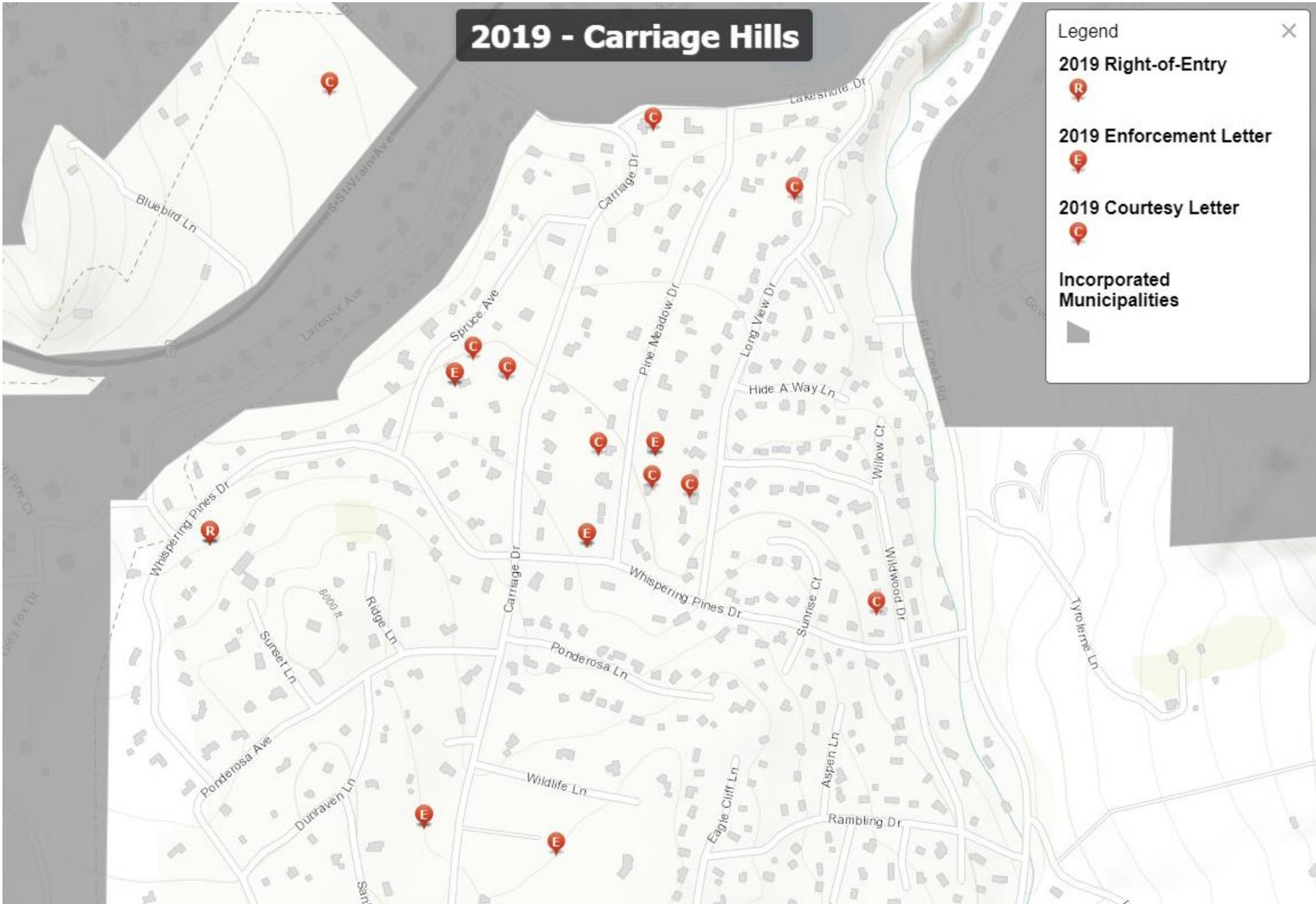
- 2018 Enforcement letter
- 2018 Courtesy letter
- Incorporated Municipalities



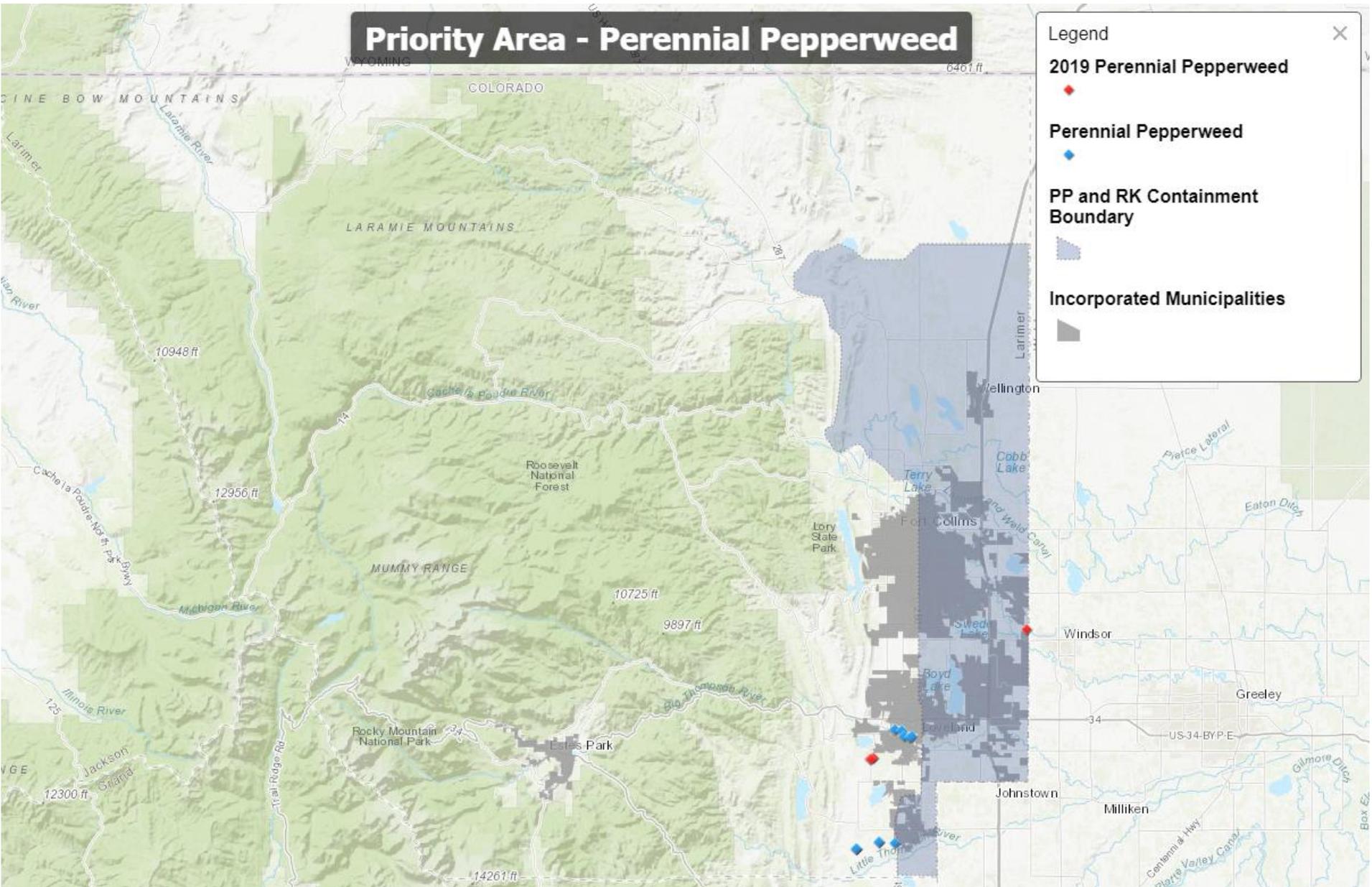
2019 - Carriage Hills

Legend

- 2019 Right-of-Entry
- 2019 Enforcement Letter
- 2019 Courtesy Letter
- Incorporated Municipalities



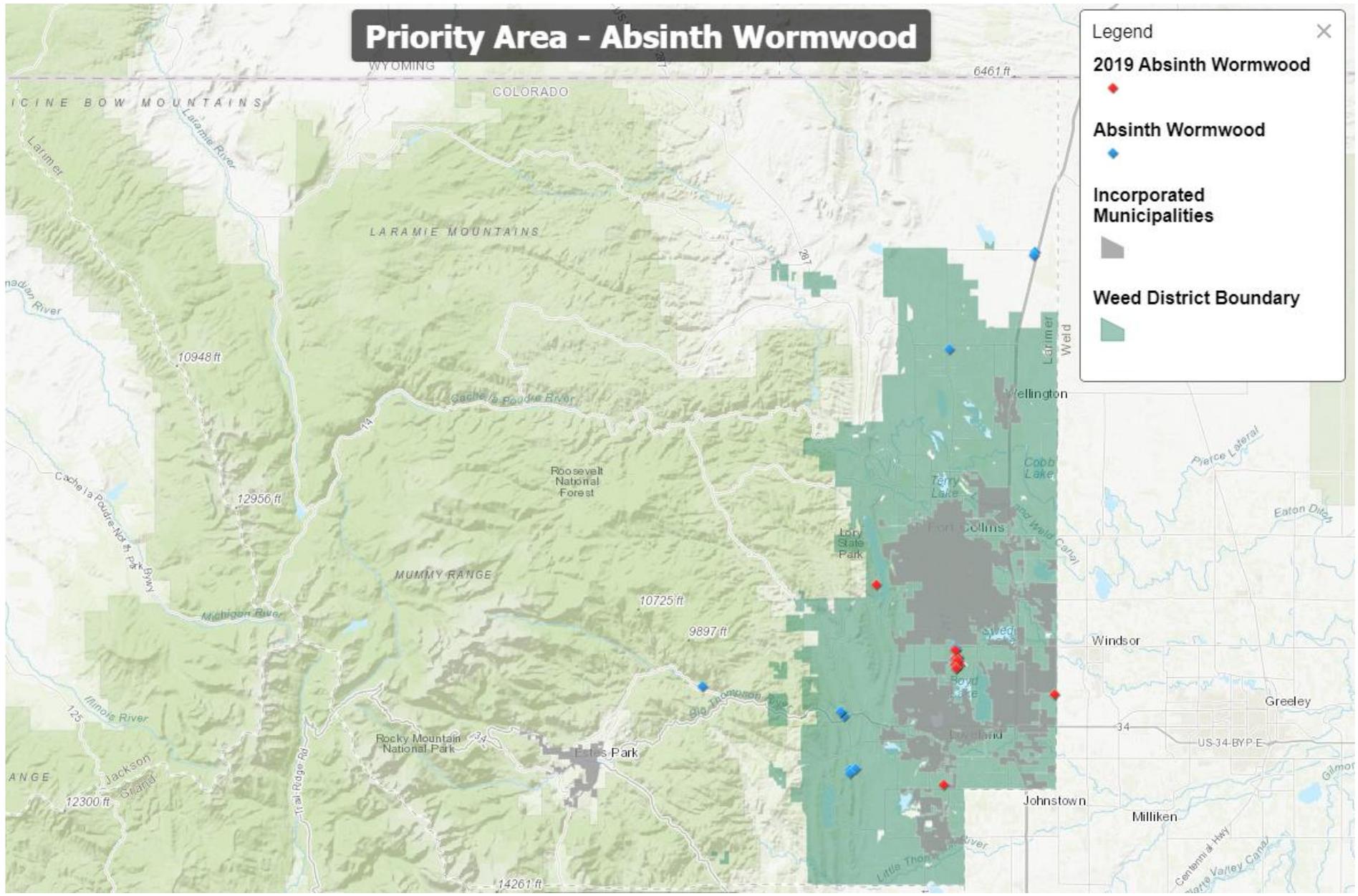
Priority Area - Perennial Pepperweed



Legend ✕

- ◆ 2019 Perennial Pepperweed
- ◆ Perennial Pepperweed
- PP and RK Containment Boundary
- Incorporated Municipalities

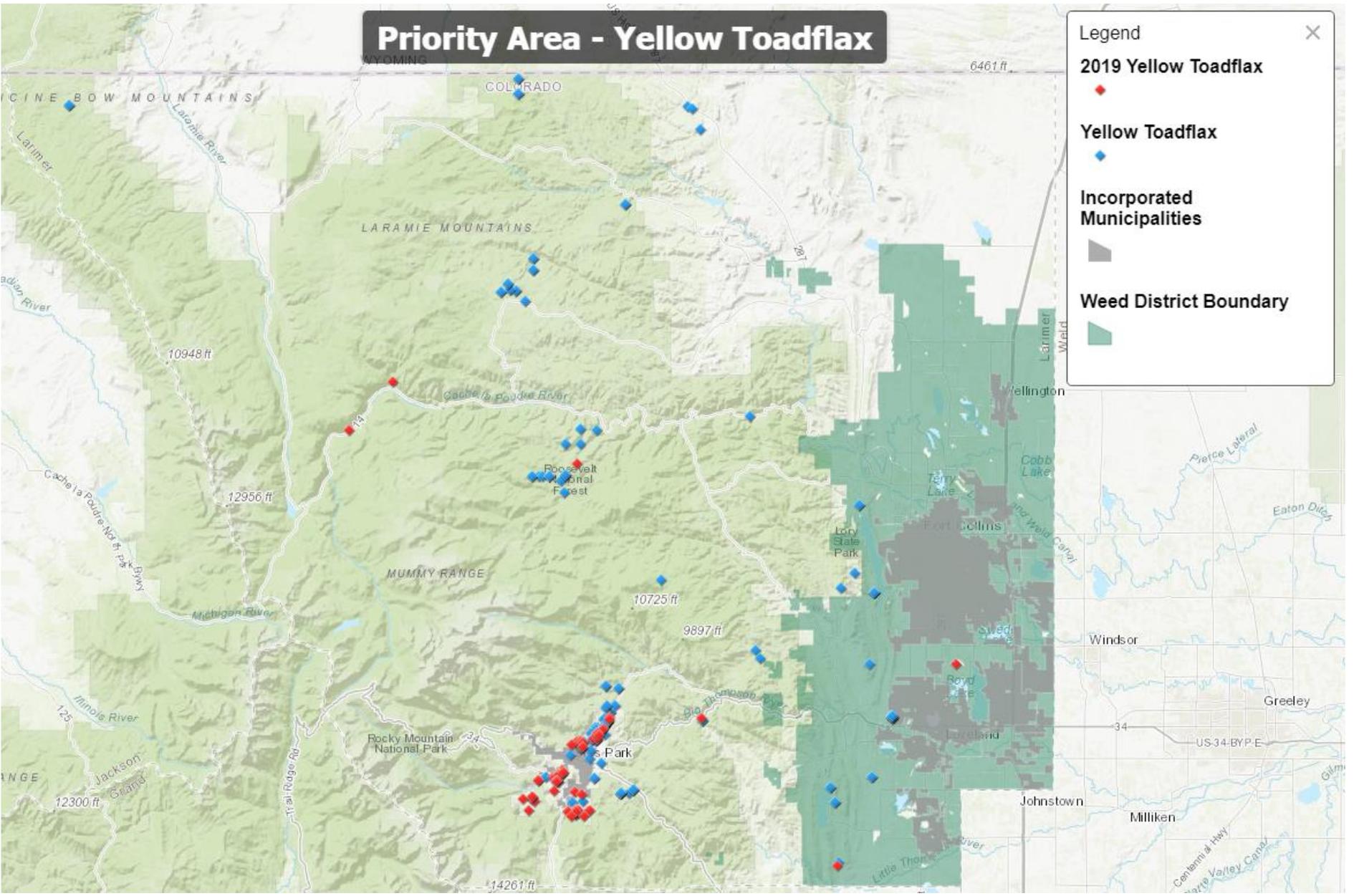
Priority Area - Absinth Wormwood



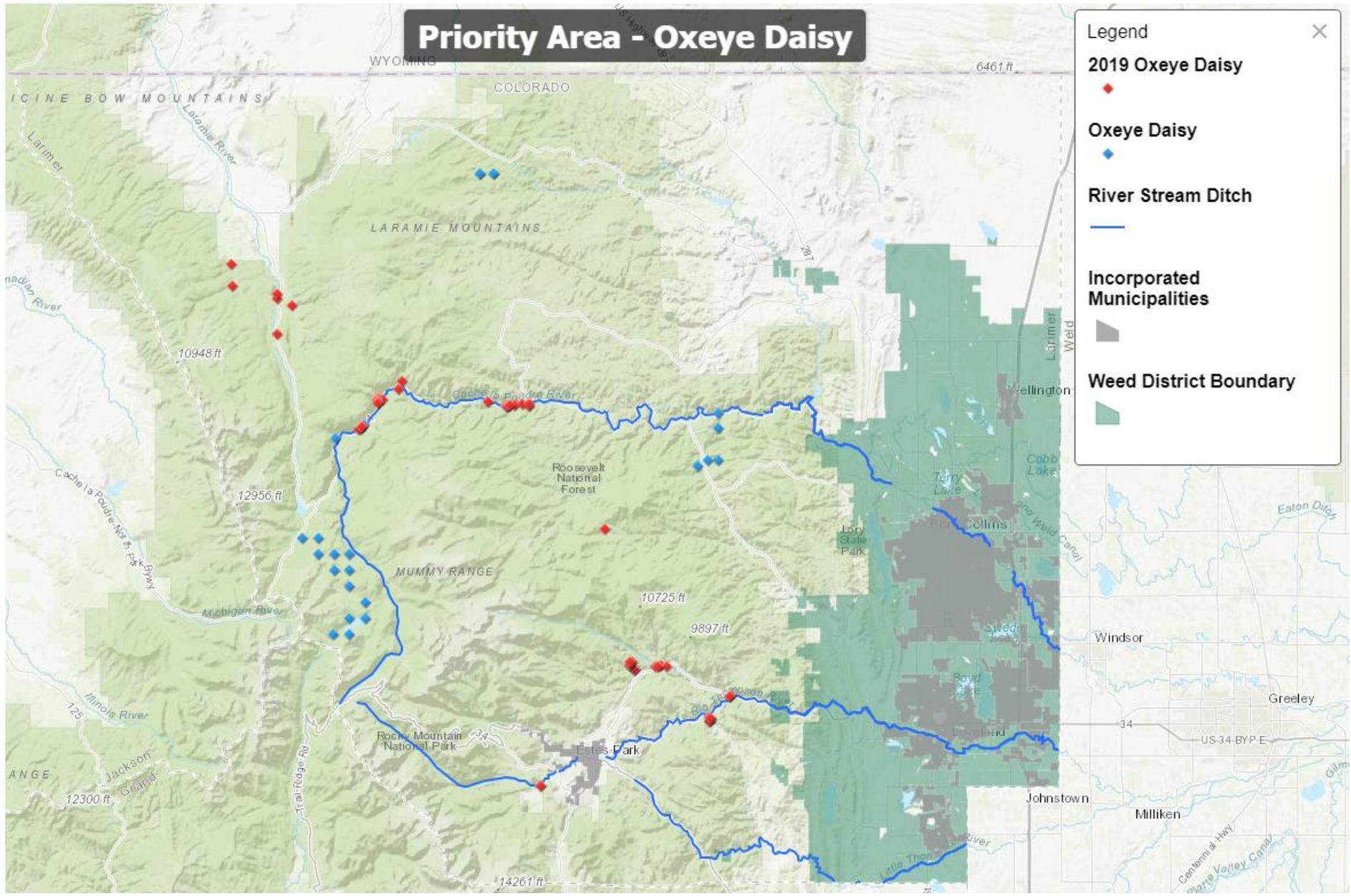
Priority Area - Yellow Toadflax

Legend

- 2019 Yellow Toadflax
- Yellow Toadflax
- Incorporated Municipalities
- Weed District Boundary



Priority Area - Oxeye Daisy



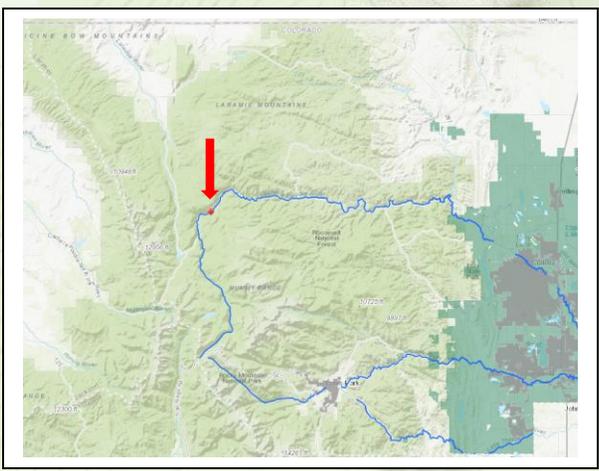
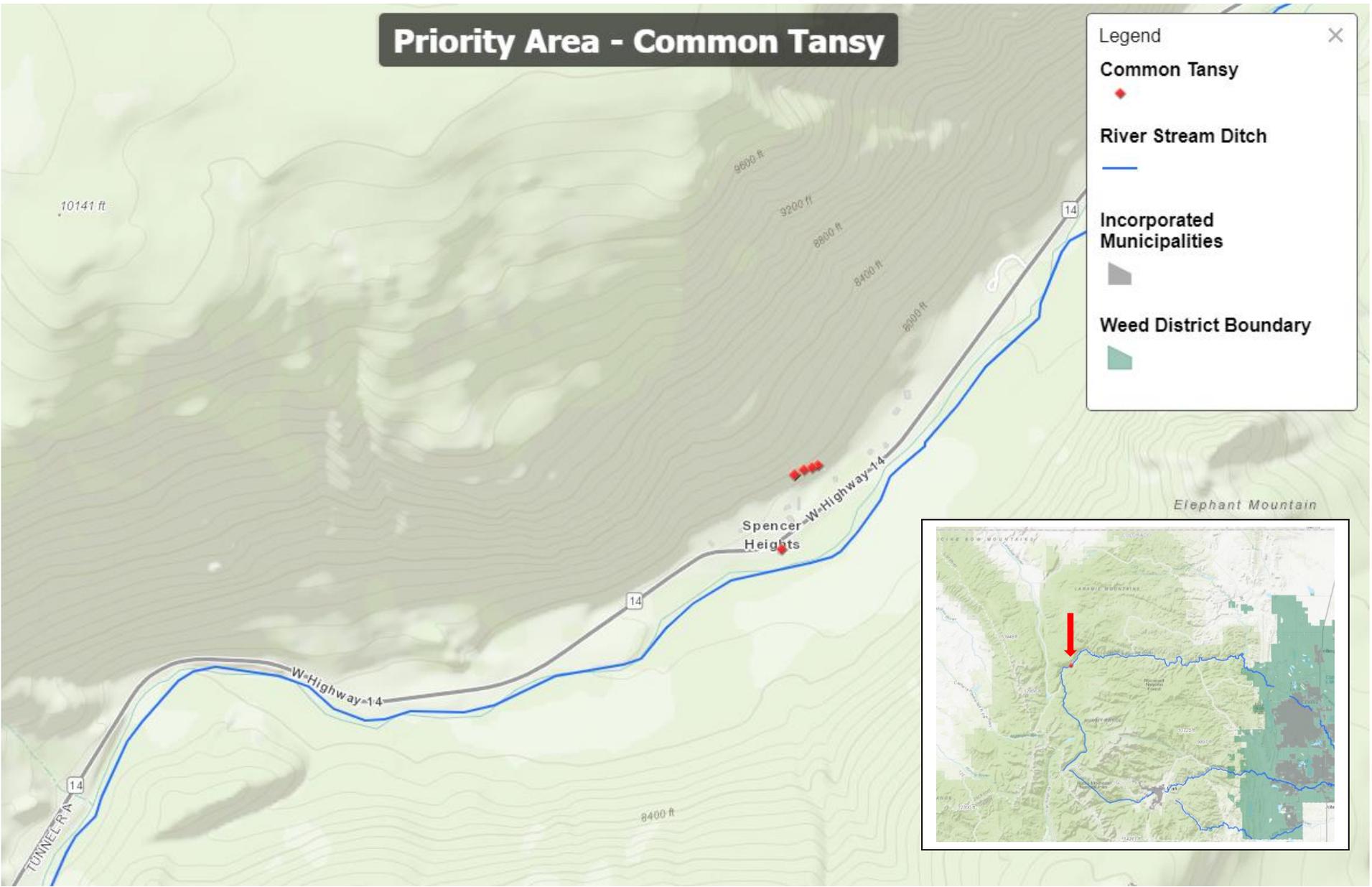
Legend ✕

- 2019 Oxeye Daisy**
◆ (red diamond)
- Oxeye Daisy**
◆ (blue diamond)
- River Stream Ditch**
— (blue line)
- Incorporated Municipalities**
■ (grey square)
- Weed District Boundary**
■ (green square)

Priority Area - Common Tansy

Legend

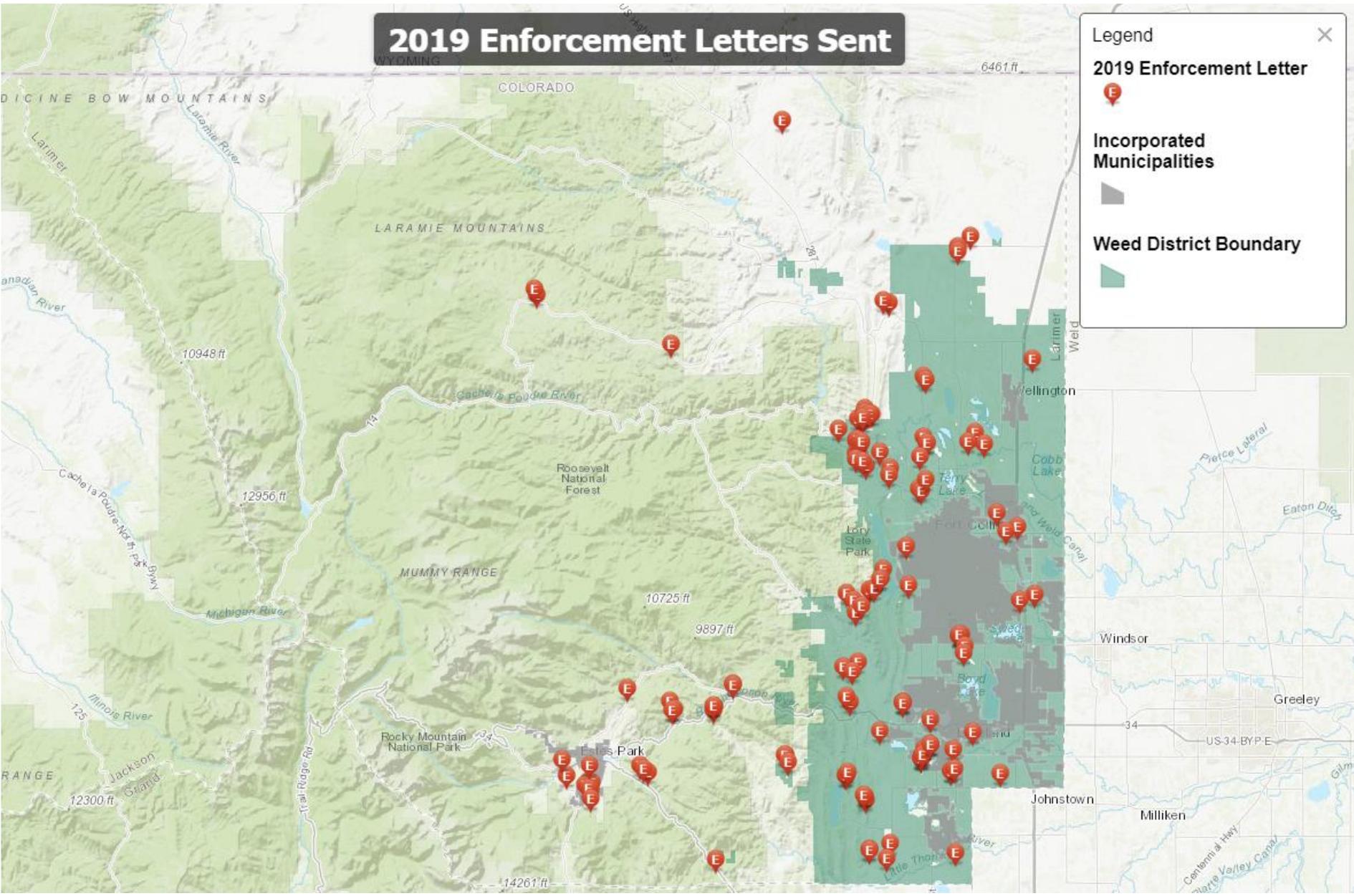
- Common Tansy
- River Stream Ditch
- Incorporated Municipalities
- Weed District Boundary



2019 Enforcement Letters Sent

Legend

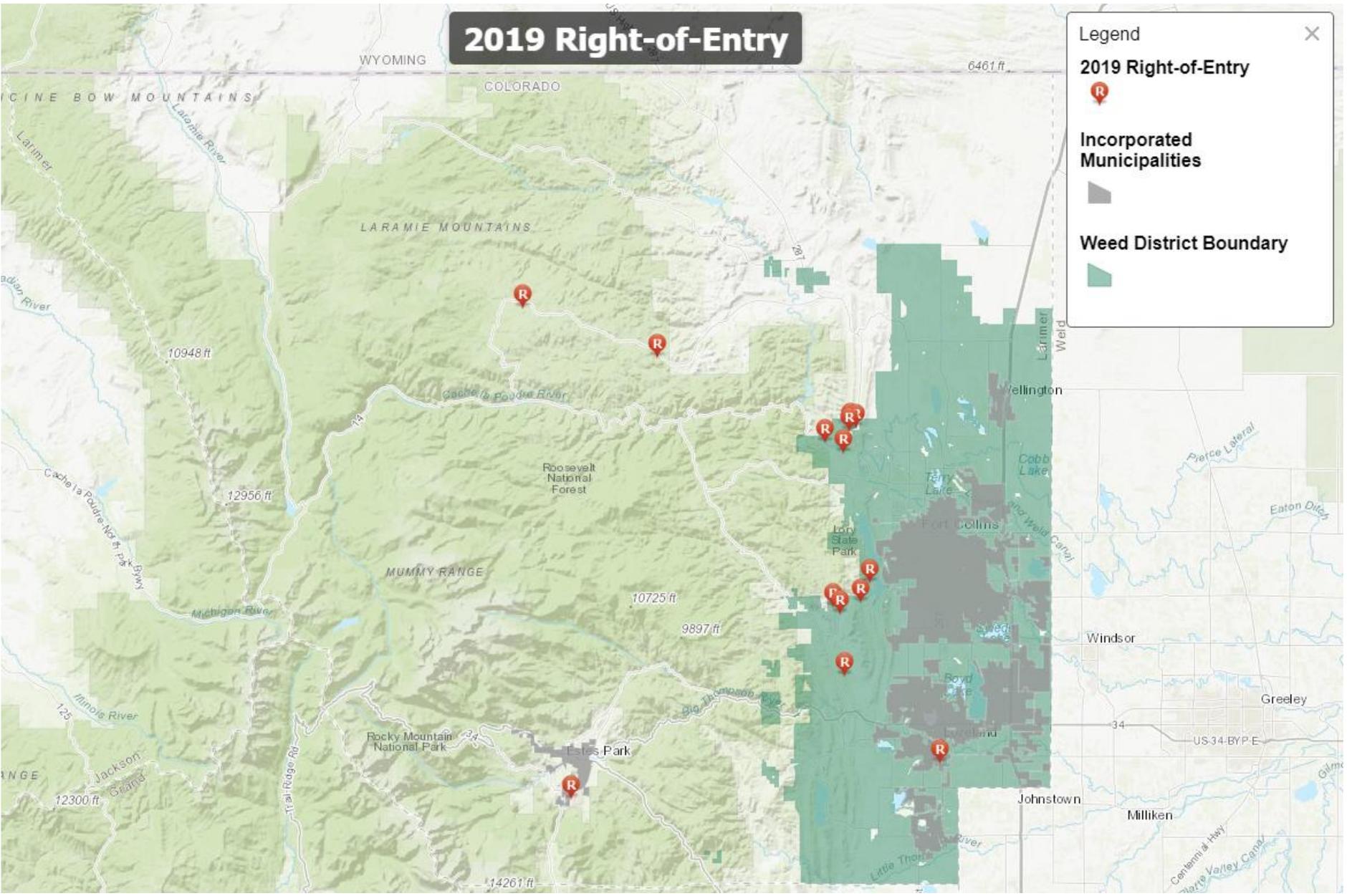
- 2019 Enforcement Letter
- Incorporated Municipalities
- Weed District Boundary



2019 Right-of-Entry

Legend ✕

- 2019 Right-of-Entry 
- Incorporated Municipalities 
- Weed District Boundary 



2019 Enforcement Action

Legend ✕

2019 Enforcement Action

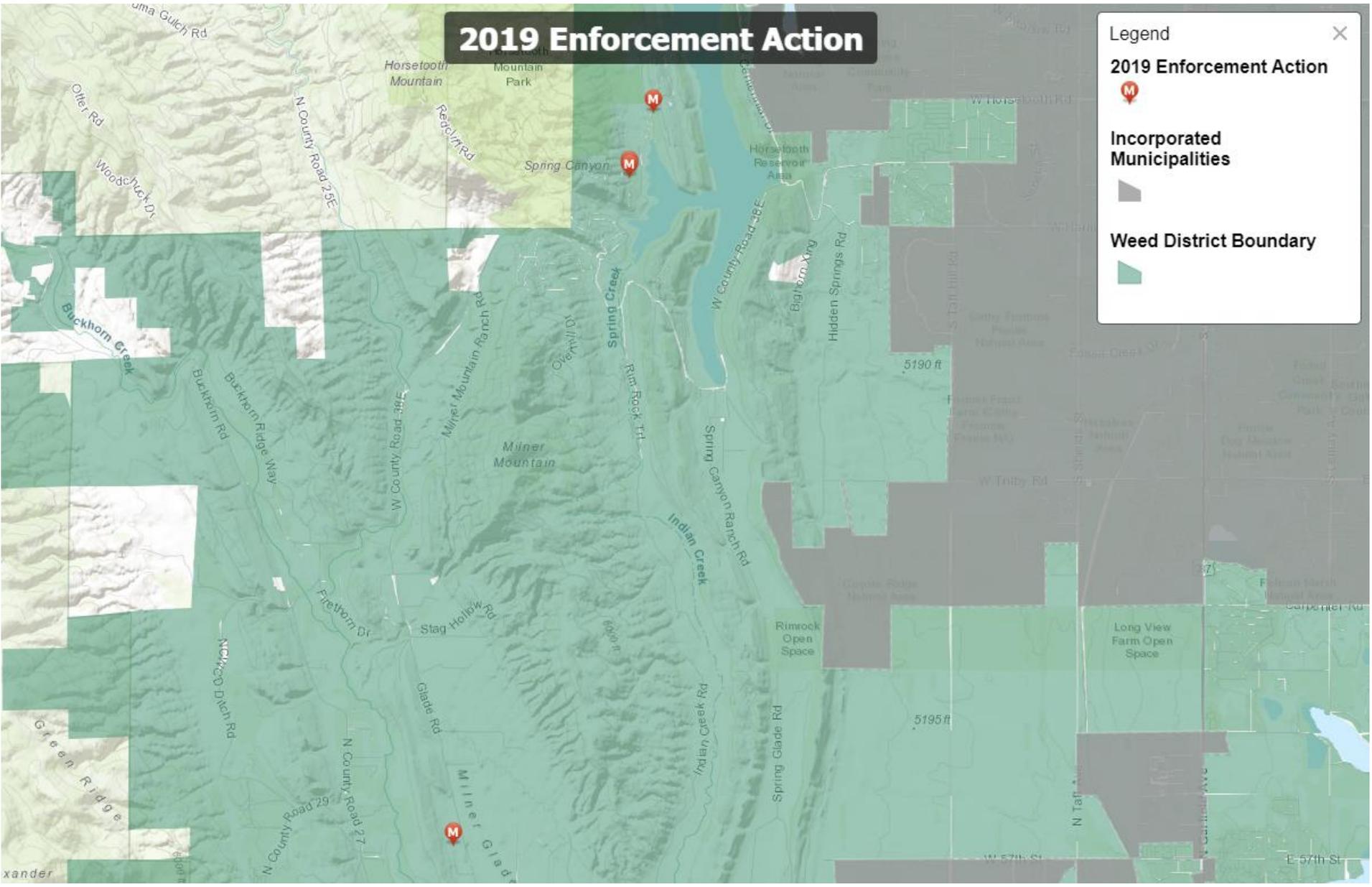
2019 Enforcement Action

Incorporated Municipalities

Incorporated Municipalities

Weed District Boundary

Weed District Boundary



Leafy spurge enforcement on Glade Road.



Myrtle Spurge enforcement near Horsetooth Reservoir.



Absinth wormwood enforcement near Horsetooth Reservoir.



Larimer County Weed District 2020 Cost-Share Changes

Existing Program

- Eligible lands within Weed District boundary
- Cost-share must be pre-authorized by staff
- Landowner cost-share cap per year - \$250
- 25% cost-share on herbicides
- \$10/acre cost-share on mowing
- Does not apply to labor, equipment, sales tax, bareground, crop, turf or ornamental applications
- CRP lands not eligible
- Application and itemized receipt due by Dec. 10

Proposed Program

- Eligible lands within Weed District boundary
- Cost-share must be pre-authorized by staff
- Property weed management plan must be submitted and approved
- Landowner cost share cap per year - \$1,000
- 25% cost-share for herbicides
- 25% contractor labor
- Does not apply to sales tax, bareground, crop, turf or ornamental applications
- CRP lands not eligible
- Application and itemized receipt due Dec. 10
- 2020 cost share budget - \$5,000

Habitat Restoration Policy

Purpose

This policy will define what is considered habitat restoration to meet eligibility and appropriate uses of the Help Preserve Open Space sales tax funds. This policy also defines and prioritizes the use of habitat restoration funds based on the following ranking:

- 1) Lands owned or managed by Larimer County Department of Natural Resources (LCDNR).
- 2) Conservation easements paid with Larimer County Help Preserve Open Spaces sales tax funds and held by Larimer County.
- 3) Lands adjacent or connected to LCDNR owned or managed parks and open spaces, where restoration activities directly influence desired conservation outcomes on the LCDNR owned park or open space.

Background

Beginning in 2019, the Help Preserve Open Space (HPOS) sales tax extension specifies 35%, and up to 50%, of the tax to pay for land acquisition and for “restoring and enhancing native plant and animal communities and other habitat related restoration”.

Larimer County Natural Resources Department developed this policy to define and specify what is considered restoration in order to meet eligibility requirements for use of the HPOS funds. Land Restoration Principles based on desired conservation outcomes were developed by DNR staff using ecological restoration guidelines, best management practices, and professional experience.

Policy

Habitat restoration projects must be aligned with the following four Land Restoration Principles to be eligible for HPOS funds:

1. Restoration projects will align with the Help Preserve Open Spaces ballot language.
2. Restoration projects will be fiscally responsible.
3. Restoration projects will be evaluated relative to desired conservation outcomes and existing property management plan goals to ensure that they contribute to improving ecological function.
4. Restoration projects will be designed to be self-sustaining once established with desired conditions based on predefined metrics.

Restoration projects will be eligible for Habitat Restoration Funds throughout project design, implementation, and adaptive management phases until the predetermined project goals are accomplished. Once the goals have adequately been met, ongoing stewardship of the site will be

paid for with funds (HPOS or other) earmarked for long-term management. Habitat Restoration Funds will not be used for restoration components of capital facility or infrastructure construction projects or for landscaping improvements and maintenance. The Land Conservation, Planning and Resource Division Manager will ultimately sign off on completion of the project phase and beginning of the maintenance phase of restoration projects. This decision will be a professional determination based on monitoring data, accomplishment of pre-defined project metrics, and staff recommendations.

Restoration Standards and Resource Protection for Construction Activities

on Larimer County Natural Resources Department Properties

February 12, 20120

I. Introduction

- a. The purpose of this document is to establish accountability and the appropriate level of communication regarding resource protection and restoration of natural resource values before, during and following construction activities from department capital projects, external parties (utility easements, etc.), natural disaster recovery, or other disturbance on Larimer County managed parks and open spaces.
- b. The mission of Larimer County Department of Natural Resources (LCDNR) is to establish, protect and manage significant regional parks and open lands providing quality outdoor recreational opportunities and stewardship of natural resource values. We are committed to fostering a sense of community and appreciation for the natural and agricultural heritage of Larimer County for present and future generations.
- c. LCDNR conserves and manages ecologically diverse lands that provide critical habitat and vital ecosystem services. Ranging from mixed grass prairies to mountain mahogany foothills shrublands to ponderosa pine dominated montane environments, restoration on LCDNR park and open space properties will require efforts that are specifically tailored to each project.
- d. LCDNR staff is responsible for ensuring that each construction disturbance or natural disaster recovery is addressed in an appropriate manner to protect resources and restore environmental resiliency. To be effective in doing so, key staff members must be integrated throughout a project from planning to implementation to monitoring and adaptive management.

II. Project Management

- a. For all construction projects on parks and open spaces, resource management staff will be notified and integrated into the planning, design and construction process. Depending project goals and current staff workloads, restoration activities will be conducted either in-house (to assigned resource management or other staff resources) or via contractor, with an assigned resource management staff designated as liaison or lead for the restoration project.
- b. Resource staff will be consulted at the beginning of the design stage of a project to ensure specifications for site protections and desired outcomes for restoration are included in project scopes and construction documents.

- c. Prior to and during construction, resource staff will provide technical expertise to either conduct restoration activities or oversee/inspect restoration by contractors as needed.
- d. After construction is complete, vegetation maintenance and monitoring will be conducted either in-house (to assigned resource management or other staff resources) or via contractor depending on project goals and staff workload. An assigned resource management staff will be designated as liaison or lead for the restoration monitoring.

III. Restoration Standards

a. Desirable Condition

- i. Desirable post-disturbance conditions are determined by considering pre-disturbance conditions or appropriate reference site condition, habitat connectivity, a cost/benefit analysis, and conservation outcomes that align with the property's management plan and department mission.
- ii. At a minimum, the site will be restored to function at the same level as the pre-disturbance site or appropriate reference site.
- iii. Native seed and native plant materials must be used exclusively at all sites. The only exception is the use of sterile nurse or cover crops to improve native vegetation establishment and discourage invasive weeds.

b. Planning

- i. Construction projects will be planned and designed to include site protection and restoration specifications to ensure that these costs are included in the project scope and budget.
- ii. Resource staff will compile a summary of restoration goals, measurable objectives, restoration prescription and a cost estimate.

c. Acceptable materials

- i. Native seed and plant materials must be used exclusively at all sites. The only exception is the use of sterile nurse or cover crops to improve native vegetation establishment and discourage invasion of invasive weeds.
- ii. Seed and plant lists must be approved by LCDNR staff. Seed and plant substitutions proposed by contractors must receive written approval by staff.
- iii. Erosion control materials must be fully bio-degradable (*not photodegradable*) and made of the highest quality materials.
- iv. Straw used for erosion control must be certified weed free.
- v. Hydromulch must be biodegradable and rated with a functional longevity of 12 months.
- vi. Straw crimping will only be applied on flat surfaces when the seed is planted no more than one month prior to the growing season.
- vii. Soil amendments must conform to project specifications and approved by LCDNR staff. No pre-mixed products shall be used unless the written consent of staff is given.

- d. Soils
 - i. Topsoil must be salvaged and stockpiled appropriately when possible. Staff will designate the depth of soil that must be salvaged and the stockpile location, preferably protected by prevailing wind conditions.
 - ii. Soil testing will occur prior to seeding to determine any amendments necessary.
 - iii. Soil compaction must be ripped to a depth of 18" and seed bed prepared to staff specification.

- e. Planting
 - i. Seed mix must be applied at the specified rate either with a seed drill or hand broadcasted. If hand broadcasted, seed must be incorporated into the top 0.25"–0.5" of soil.
 - ii. Plant material cannot be stressed and approved by staff prior to installation.
 - iii. Trees in balls and burlap must be **(DAVE L, please fill in the blank)**
 - 1. Installation of balled and burlap trees must be planted, maintained, watered and protected in a manner consistent with the International Society of Arborist standards: <https://www.isa-arbor.com/education/onlineresources/cadplanningspecifications>
<https://www.isa-arbor.com/education/onlineresources/cadplanningspecifications>

- f. Tree Removal
 - i. All trees shall be cut as low to the ground as possible unless specified otherwise. Stumps will be ground unless specified otherwise.
 - ii. An appropriate herbicide must be approved by staff and applied to the stump within five minutes of the final cut on all deciduous tree removals.

- g. Erosion control must be installed in accordance with the Storm Water Management Plan, MS4 Permit and any other applicable permits.

- h. Inspections will occur by staff throughout restoration implementation for quality assurance purposes. Inspections will typically examine the following elements to ensure they meet specifications:
 - i. Equipment has been properly decontaminated and cleaned of mud and plant materials before entering the site. This includes but is not limited to tracks, tires, undercarriage, seed drills and hydro mulchers.

 - ii. Seed tags with rates and scientific names
 - 1. Tag must remain on the seed bags until approved by an inspector
 - iii. Proper mulch and straw materials.
 - iv. Proper erosion control installation and materials
 - v. Proper plant installation and materials
 - vi. Proper seed bed preparation
 - vii. Compliance with wildlife protection requirements

- viii. Compliance with MS4, the Storm Water Management Plan and any other applicable permits
 - i. Monitoring will occur at specified intervals to determine if the project has met the objectives as defined in the construction plan set.
 - j. Adaptive management will be based on monitoring data until all restoration objectives have been met.
- IV. Resource Protections – the County will impose appropriate measures to assure adequate protection of key resources on the parks and open spaces. The following is a list of resource considerations when planning and implementing any construction project:
- a. An ecological inventory listing soils, plants, wildlife and cultural resources shall be compiled prior to construction. The inventory is necessary to determine appropriate restoration prescription.
 - b. Wildlife and vegetation must be protected at the parks and open spaces.
 - i. See appendix A for wildlife protection standards
 - ii. If temporary livestock fencing is needed on-site, the fence must be three strands of smooth wire unless otherwise specified by staff.
 - 1. Top wire must be 40" in height, center wire 30" above ground and bottom wire a minimum of 16" above the ground.
 - 2. Wood or steel posts placed at 16.5' intervals.
 - iii. If permanent livestock fencing is necessary on-site, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, wildlife friendly fencing specifications will be required. See appendix C for wildlife friendly fencing specifications.
 - iv. Tree protection standards
 - a. Desirable trees to be left on site after construction must be protected from heavy equipment both for trunks and branches as well as roots. Trees must be wrapped with construction blankets and flagged if within X distance of the project work or flagged if in X distance of the project work.
 - b. Any additional required tree protections including signage and fencing will be specified by staff.
 - c. If rare or endangered plant species or communities are found at the site, *a setback buffer will be required from the boundary of the plant community. The distance of the setback will be based on the plant community and determined by LCDNR staff based on best available science.*

- c. Topsoil shall be salvaged and reapplied following construction prior to revegetation activities.
 - i. For areas with native vegetation, strip topsoil in all areas of excavation to a depth of 8 inches and stockpile separately.
 - 1. Wetland and upland soils must be stockpiled separately from each other.
 - ii. Stockpile height must not exceed 2' unless otherwise specified by staff in writing.
- d. Heavy equipment may be required to use biodegradable hydraulic fluid when working in or near water resources.
- e. Damage penalties
 - i. Staff must document resource protection measures as well as resource condition prior to construction.
 - ii. If the staff inspector finds that the resource protection measures were not taken or adhered to, and resources were damaged during construction then a penalty may be assessed commensurate with restoration or mitigation costs.

V. Permitting Process

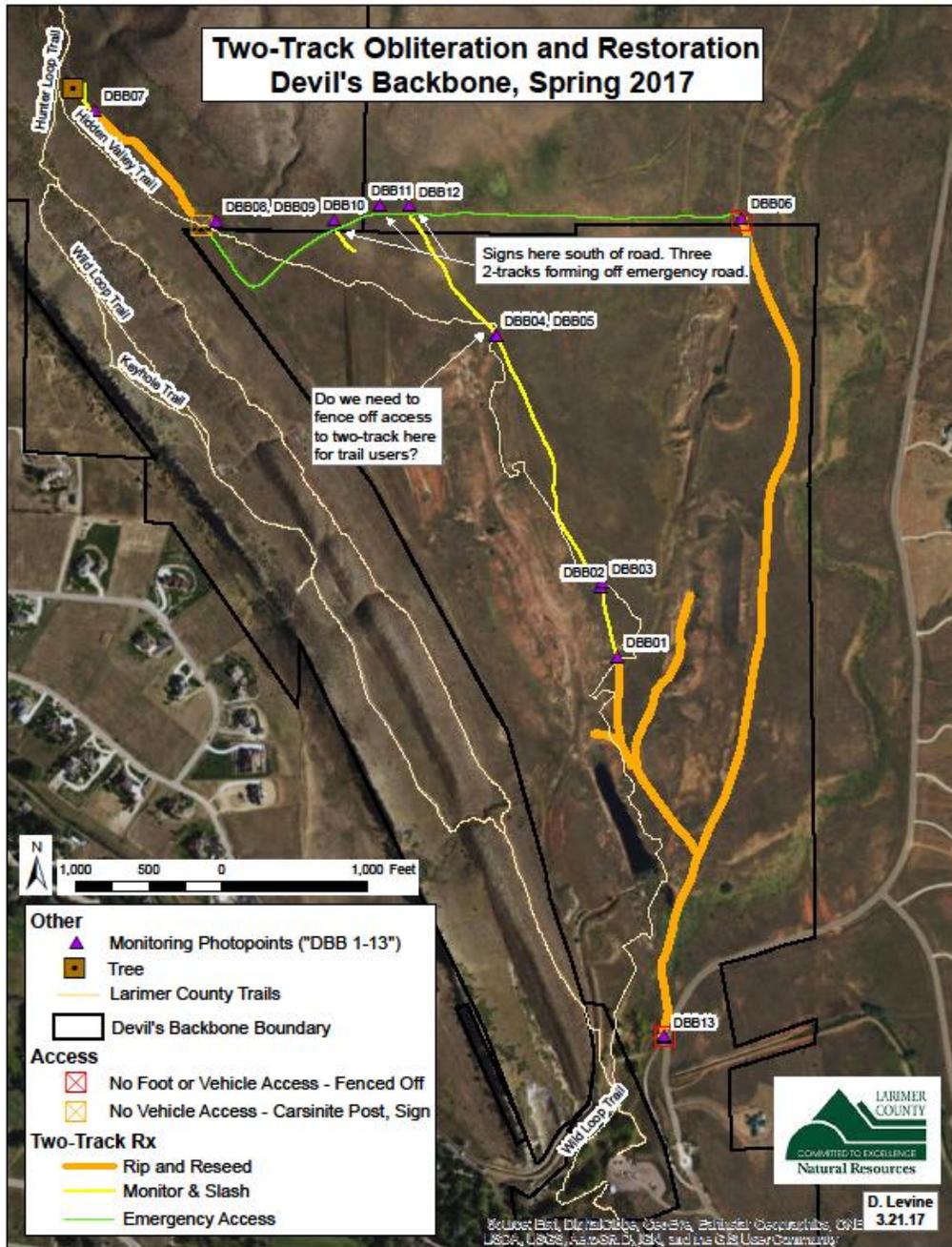
- a. Easement access – *(CHARLIE J. OR TIM, please outline this process)*
- b. Site assessment and compensation for disturbance (easements)
 - i. Explanation for compensation
 - ii. Use Fort Collins compensation table
 - iii. Will this section address requirements for escrow of funds?

Devil's Backbone Open Space: two-track restoration

Photopoint 5: Slash/monitor



Photopoint 6: Rip/re-seed



The Narrows: Located on the Big Thompson River, damaged by flooding in 2013. Restoration activities included contouring, boulder placement in the river, non-native tree removal, upland and riparian seeding, and trail construction.



The Narrows, post-flood, July 2016



Willow and riparian seeding, April 2017



Upland seeding and trail installation, June 2019



The Narrows – Hazard Tree Removal



Boulder placement, April 2019

River Bluffs Open Space: damaged by floods in 2013. Restoration activities included recreating high-flow channels, removing berms to reconnect floodplain, seeding and planting of native vegetation.

Sept. 2018



Berm (looking north)

April 2019



Sept. 2018



Sept. 2018



Field of smooth brome (looking north)

April 2019



April 2019

