



Growers' Association for Boulder County Parks and Open Space Agriculture Leases

April 30, 2013



THIS IS A MODEL FOR DEVELOPING ACCESS TO BOULDER COUNTY PARKS AND OPEN SPACE AGRICULTURAL LAND (BC-POS AG) FOR COMMERCIAL SMALL FARM OPERATIONS, DEFINED HERE AS FARMS SMALLER THAN 20 ACRES. THE GROWERS' ASSOCIATION WILL BRING TOGETHER SEVERAL PRODUCERS ONTO ONE PARCEL OF LAND. PRODUCERS WILL COORDINATE MANAGEMENT OF THE SHARED RESOURCES (WATER, ROADS, SOIL, ETC.)

Justification:

- POS-Ag will have parcels for lease that are larger than the size required by some small parcel farmers.
- Boulder County is home to direct marketing opportunities. Many of these farms operate on less than 20 acres.
- Farmers have approached POS-Ag requesting access to lease smaller parcels
- An association model would also create a mechanism for new farmers to start farming in Boulder County, given the prohibitive cost of farm land currently
- The 2005 POS-Ag Small Farm Committee has developed a list of needs for fruit and vegetable operations directly marketing their products.
- Boulder County Commissioners are interested in seeing more food crop production on county ag land for local consumption

Prerequisites for Producers Interested in Growers' Association (GA)

Each member in an association must meet **one** of the following criteria:

1. Farmer/main operator on a vegetable/fruit/flower/herb farm >1/2 acre for at least 1 full season
2. Are an intern/apprentice/farm worker with at least 2 years farming experience vegetable/fruit/flower/herb farm >1/2 acre (1/2 acre = 21,780 square feet)
3. Gardened a large (20 x 20 feet) garden plot for at least 3 full seasons*
4. Will sublease from another GA member with at least 3-years farming experience and that GA member will provide mentorship and oversight

*This member must be a graduate of the CSU Extension Building Farmers Program with a certificate of completion.

Growers' Association (GA) Proposals

- Groups of farmers interested in forming a GA will present a set of business plan specifics from each member business to POS for review prior to sublease. Desired business plan specifics available upon request.
- Each GA must submit bylaws with a bid and documentation of legal entity status (see CO Sec of State or Small Business Development Center for legal entity considerations)
- Additional members of any GA will be reviewed and approved by POS based on the same prerequisites and business plan specifications described above.

Guidelines on bids:

The following is a list of factors considered with each bid or request for new GA members and generally explore a producer's ability to execute their proposed plan:

- Experience and/or training in production and business management
- Resources available (financial, equipment, labor, technical advising, etc.)
- Business plan

Assumptions:

- Farmers will be able to work together as an association to manage shared resources and have the ability to carry out their proposed operation
- Farmers have the skills to execute a successful farming enterprise

Protocols

- Farmers interested in small farm parcels will work with CSU Extension in Boulder County as a first contact. Extension will assist farmers with initial group facilitation, assessment of production and business skills, and ongoing technical advising.
- Specifics on leases and infrastructure will be negotiated with Ag Division manager, Ag Supervisor, Ag Specialist, Ag Lease Administrator
- POS-Ag will appoint a representative to work with each GA
- Each GA will appoint a representative to work with this POS-Ag representative as one point of contact. GA reps will conduct GA business in accordance with requirements established by POS.
- POS-Ag will work to optimize the use of water rights associated with the lease. When sufficient resources are available at a specific property, POS-Ag may develop and maintain potable water spigots for washing fruits and vegetables and 110V (220V also if possible) electrical boxes for various applications. **Most properties that POS-Ag manages DO NOT have potable water taps nor electrical lines run to the property**
- POS-Ag will advise on early development, designate field areas and approve of final locations of all businesses within each GA
- GA members are expected to engage in practices that contribute to a viable commercial agriculture enterprise. If a GA member parcel is not managed for commercial purposes (cash crop, cover crop, clean till, chemical fallow, grazing, etc.) for one season (April – October) POS reserves the right to remove that GA member from the GA.

Growers' Association Example (This is a Hypothetical Scenario):

The Jones Property is 18.5 acres. Producer A wants to grow 3 acres of mixed veggies for the farmers' market. Producer B wants 10 acres to grow sweet corn and winter squash/pumpkins in rotation. Producer C wants 1 acre to grow strawberries and raspberries. Producer D wants 4 acres to grow mixed vegetables and cut flowers. Growers form a legal entity such as a Limited Liability Corporation or Limited Liability Partnership. These producers submit a bid on the property as the "Jones Growers' Association" at \$100 per acre. The bid is accepted based on established guidelines.

The association meets in February to discuss planting plans for the season and to work out an irrigation schedule based on forecasted crop water needs. Growers have walked the property extensively and are aware of the varying soil texture and weed populations. Those with sandier soils express their needs for more frequent but shorter duration irrigation options.

Individual farm plot boundaries are determined by POS-Ag and service roads are established. Row lengths are laid out to allow for sufficient tractor turnaround (about 30 feet). These considerations take up the remaining 0.5-acre.

For More Information:

Initial interest: <http://www.extension.colostate.edu/boulder/ag/smallfarms.shtml>

(see sections, "Exploring a Market Farm Business" and Leasing BC POS-Ag land) and then contact Adrian Card at 303-678-6383 or acard@bouldercounty.org

Specifics on parcels and leases: POS-Agriculture Resources Division, 303-678-6200 (main desk), Div Manager - 303-678-6234, Ag Supervisor - 303-678-6239, Ag Specialist - 303-678-6111, Administrator of Ag Leases, 303-678-6226