

**2026 Legislative Priority Proposal**  
**Updated: 7/18/25**

<b>Preventing Illegal Wildlife Harvesting</b>	
<b>Eagle County (Commissioner Tom Boyd)</b>	
Preferred Contact:	tom.boyd@eaglecounty.us
Co-Sponsoring Counties/Commissioners:	N/A
Who is your subject matter expert?	Phil Kirkman, Senior Open Space Specialist / Ranger, Eagle County. (C) 970-471-9465. phillip.kirkman@eaglecounty.us  Laura Hartman, Senior Policy Analyst, Eagle County. 970-328-8613. laura.hartman@eaglecounty.us
Has this proposal been approved by your BoCC?	Yes.
Have you reviewed the CCI Instructional Memo?	Yes.
Describe the problem your proposal will solve.	Hunters have identified a loophole in current law that allows them to hunt wildlife on land owned by public entities with minimal consequences. Despite posted rules and local regulations restricting hunting or access, hunters have habitually hunted on county open space (for example). In this scenario, the county can only issue a civil infraction and CPW statute does not cover land owned by public entities or recognize local hunting restrictions. Many hunters can simply pay the associated fine (minimal) and keep the illegally taken animal. This is a stark contrast to the consequences for an illegally taken animal on private land. These unequal protections for public lands, like county open spaces, incentivize illegal hunting with minor consequences. Hunters violating local rules bring negative impacts to local hunting programs that provide public education, mentorship, and the public's hunting access.

	<p>Currently, a violation of local hunting rules does not impact the hunter's ability to hunt or allow for animal seizure (by CPW) of an animal taken where prohibited by local laws. If CPW considered the violation of local hunting rules as an "illegal take", then they could treat the incident as they currently do with other "illegal take" situations.</p> <p>Currently, if hunters can just pay the (maximum) \$1,000 civil infraction fine then they can "pay their way" out of illegally harvesting an animal. This fine is overshadowed as our county hosts hunters spending over \$30,000 for a guided or private hunting opportunity. Because of this gap, some hunters might be financially incentivized to illegally hunt on county lands and not participate in guided or private hunting.</p> <p>Counties often partner with CPW on their public lands to pursue wildlife conservation goals. Allowing CPW to enforce on municipal and county public lands will better ensure conservation goals are met and solidify the integrity of existing hunting programs on county open spaces.</p>
Areas of Impact:	Power/Authority/Mandate of county government.
What is the ultimate source of this problem?	<p>In recent years, CPW has not been able to apply the same protections given to private lands on municipally or county owned public lands. There are no CPW statutes that recognize local hunting rules which have rapidly evolved over the last 20 years. Successful land conservation by local open space programs have created thousands of acres which are not eligible for "illegal take" protections. As these acres were secured into public ownership, the state did not afford similar hunting management as found on adjacent federal and state lands. All other public lands in Colorado have forms of site-specific hunting rules, but counties and municipalities (deputies, open space rangers, etc.) have not been afforded the same powers given to state lands and have been asked to rely on CPW. Our federal lands have site specific hunting rules (National Parks, Monuments, sensitive or recreation areas on USFS/BLM) not enforced by CPW, but by federal law enforcement Rangers.</p> <p>Without CPW's assistance, a county's previous option was to summon an individual for a hunting violation and attempt to involve the local District Attorney. They could pursue impacts to the hunter's license privileges and seizure of the animal. However, when the Colorado Legislature changed rule violations on county open space lands from a class 2 petty offence to a civil infraction, they also removed the local District Attorney's ability to act in these cases.</p>
What is your initial proposal to solve this problem?	Eagle County proposes additions to C.R.S. Title 33 to include violations of municipal or county ordinances, laws, or regulations regarding hunting into the definitions of illegal possession and illegal take. Additionally, we propose an amendment to C.R.S. 29-7-101 to increase the penalty for violations of hunting and firearms ordinances to a class 2 misdemeanor.

Please provide sample language for this solution.	<p><b>Add:</b> 33-6-109. Wildlife - Illegal possession. (X) It is unlawful for any person to have in his possession in Colorado any wildlife, taken in violation of municipal or county ordinances, laws, or regulations thereof.</p> <p><b>Add:</b> 33-6-133 (New) Hunting, Trapping, or Fishing on Municipal, County, or State Public Lands (1) It is unlawful for any person to hunt or take any wildlife by hunting, trapping, or fishing in violation of municipal or county ordinances, laws, or regulations.</p> <p><b>Add:</b> A new section to C.R.S. 29-7-101 that would make it a class 2 misdemeanor to violate any local hunting or firearms ordinance, law, or regulation.</p>
Are there any solutions that do not require state-level legislation? Has your county explored these alternatives?	Eagle County has engaged with our Sheriff, local Wildlife Managers, and regional CPW staff to address the issue. Our original approach over the last two years was to have CPW take this issue to their commission, but unfortunately this has not occurred. Communication on this issue has stalled and no progress has been made.
Has CCI or any other organizations sought a solution to this problem before?	Eagle County staff worked with the Rocky Mountain Ranger Association to take up the issue. Their board sent a letter to CPW staff supporting a rule change that would close this "gap" or "loophole" in CPW's ability to enforce. There was no response from CPW on the issue.
What possible organization(s) would <b>support</b> your proposed solution?	The Rocky Mountain Ranger Association and potentially the Colorado Sheriff's Association.
What possible organization(s) would <b>oppose</b> your proposed solution?	Potential opposition from hunters and even CPW. CPW has stated they are not interested in enforcing local hunting ordinances.
Have you spoken with any legislators about your proposed solution? If so, what was their response?	No, we have not contacted legislators.

<p>What are the financial implications of this <b>problem</b> to your county?</p> <p>Are there any financial implications to this <b>solution</b> either?</p>	<p>Administrative and staff time is increasingly spent on hunting enforcement at local open space lands. Hunting in Eagle County brings income and financial benefit to our local economy. Illegal hunting on county open space land negatively impacts our local conservation efforts to improve herd numbers. While there is no actual fiscal loss "number" associated with fewer animals to hunt, the derailing of our conservation efforts may reduce the economic benefits we receive from hunters.</p>
<p>What are the financial implications of this <b>problem</b> to any other impacted parties?</p> <p>What are the financial implications of this <b>solution</b> to any other impacted parties? <i>Please consider any relevant Colorado State Departments.</i></p>	<p>There could be increased costs to CPW for enforcing local hunting ordinances. However, just the closing of the loophole and increase in potential consequences for ignoring local hunting ordinances will serve as a deterrent for illegal wildlife harvesting on open space. So, we believe additional enforcement from CPW would be minimal. The change in law would result in the desired behavior change.</p>