

## **Vote NO GMOs on Taxpayer Owned Open Space!**

The 2016 presidential election highlights an underlying dissatisfaction in the electorate nationally. A root cause is the failure of politicians, on both sides of the aisle, to follow through with promises and get things done. In Boulder County we have a prime example.

Deb Gardner and Elise Jones ran for County Commissioner seats in 2011. Both promised to ban GMO crops on public lands. They gathered a lot of support as a result. Unfortunately, zero progress was made to follow through on their commitment. Worse, on February 29<sup>th</sup> and under extremely limited notification, they are proposing extending the policy allowing GMO crops on County Open Space.

Deb and Elise failed the electorate, but also Boulder County farmers by their inaction. Furthermore, their oversight of the administration of Boulder County's Parks & Open Space (POS), the primary agency that manages agricultural resources, suggest little more than passive acceptance.

Instead of providing effective direction and guidance to Parks & Open Space, the commissioners have delegated their leadership to a very small cadre of biotech supporters. For example the Boulder County extension agent, a CSU employee, is deeply tied to biotech funding for two programs he heads up: the Colorado Agricultural Leadership Program and Governor's Forum on Colorado Agriculture. Without biotech funding, many of the extension agent's outside projects would not survive.

Additionally, a group of biotech farmers, under the guise of the "Farmers Alliance", a biotech funded front group, have populated many of the county's citizen advisory panels. The Commissioners give undue weight to the demands of this small subset of farmers despite their industry funding. Their demands reflect a desire to maintain the status quo. As a result the voice of the majority of Boulder County citizens and farmers has been neutralized.

The Commissioners actions with the Boulder County Food and Agriculture Policy Council (FAPC) is particularly egregious. Since 2011 former and current Commissioners allowed POS staff, including the county extension agent, to prevent any significant action by the Food and Agriculture Policy Council (FAPC). The Commissioners cancelled or preempted work at all meetings of FAPC for six months, before unilaterally replacing it with a new "food systems" council with limited scope. The biotech supporters from FAPC were then appointed to the Cropland Policy Council at Open Space, where they are empowered to manage the agenda to achieve their goals without citizen input.

Since its inception in 2009, the FAPC had consistently rejected the use of genetically modified crop systems on county owned agricultural land, but recognized the right

of farmers to use private land as they saw fit. Rather than respecting its reasoned recommendations, the Commissioners intentionally killed off the group in favor of the biotech-friendly POS Cropland Policy Council.

The bottom line is that Boulder County has an unaccountable, tax payer funded organization that encourages GMO growth, refuses to recognize the dangers of glyphosate and fails to embrace the benefits of modern farming and land preservation techniques. Equally troubling is the failure to leverage the water retention, carbon capture and environmental benefits of, regenerative farming methods.

The result is that Boulder County farmers are left at a disadvantage because they're trapped in downward spiral of dependency that ensures minimum economic returns for their crops. GMO sugar beets in particular are being rejected by the market. Significantly higher returns are available from growing alternative crops such as barley for our local, thriving micro-brewing industry.

Even more devastating is the troubling answer to the following question asked of farmers: "How are you going to be able to pass on your farm to your grandchildren under the current economic model." The short answer for many is they don't know. Understandably it worries them to no end. They don't deserve this, particularly given the multi-generational contributions many have made.

The opportunity for new farmers to get established, and leverage Open Space is also squandered. Many new farmers have gone out of business given the lack of Parks & Open Space support. Yet hundreds of young farm families desire to farm, and want to do so using safe regenerative methods. Sadly Parks & Open Space continues to expand GMO farming opportunities that produce ethanol and food additives (white sugar and high fructose corn syrup). This undermines the production of local, nutritious food including sweet corn, pinto beans, sunflower seeds and alfalfa.

The Commissioners decision to continue to defer to POS leadership's willingness to gamble on this failing strategy is a fool's approach to policy. Suppressing balanced input and parroting industry-generated myths is a disservice to all of Boulder County citizens. Consider the top 3:

1. *GMO farming is better for the climate* – regenerative agriculture is better for the planet than GMOs
2. *GMOs have reduced pesticide usage* – "Monsanto's signature herbicide glyphosate, first marketed as "Roundup," is now the most widely and heavily applied weed-killer in the history of chemical agriculture in both the U.S. and globally..." - EWG
3. *GMOs have increased crop yield* – Rodale's 30-year study has confirmed that yield increases are overstated and organic farming is superior to GMO farming in times of drought.

[--- Top 10 myths go to LINK](#)

It's time that Deb Gardner and Elise Jones step up to their commitment to end the growing of GMO crops on Boulder County's public lands. Furthermore, they need to ensure Boulder County's Parks & Open Space is accountable to the people and supports all of our farmers effectively.

The Boulder County Food Systems Advisory Council needs to be reconstituted as an independent, impartial council that reports directly to the Commissioners. The pattern, since 2009, of POS removing people from the advisory councils who are critical of biotech must end. The active prevention of independent studies supporting regenerative practices must end. The control of the council agenda by a CSU representative, the county extension agent, must end. All efforts to suppress participation, such as canceling work at the last 6 meetings of FAPC, must end.

The last poll conducted showed a clear majority of Boulder County didn't want GMOs on Open Space. 71% of voters would prohibit GMOs while only 19% would allow them. Yet the Commissioners have chosen to quietly announce a meeting on February 29<sup>th</sup> to determine next steps. The concern of many is that it is nothing more than an effort to minimize participation, suppress input and maintain the status quo.

America has been a shining beacon of democracy and representation for the world. The seemingly deliberate inaction of sitting Commissioners, along with active efforts within Parks and Open Space leadership to suppress input and change, runs counter to the values of Boulder County.

We need

1. Deb Gardner and Elise Jones to follow through on their commitments to the electorate by eliminating the use of GMOs on public lands and actively engaging all constituents, not just those few with the biggest industry megaphone.
2. A significant Restructuring of Parks and Open Space so it can act independently of industry pressure exerted by FAIR and the CSU extension, and ensure the elimination of conflicts of interest.
3. A new county-wide dedication to supporting the next generation of farmers and the creation of a resilient local and regional food system.
4. An agricultural policy that ensures a healthier return on taxpayer funded Open Space.

Concerned Citizens of Boulder County