**Dark Skies Overview**

Excess light at night endangers our ecosystem by harming wildlife, and negatively affects our urban forest. Studies have shown the importance of dark nighttime skies to the health of our citizens. 80% of Americans cannot see the milky way. Dark sky places encourage ecotourism and help boost the local economies. In September of 2024 the town of Paonia was awarded the designation of an “Internationally Recognized Dark Sky Community” by Dark Sky International (IDA). To maintain this important designation, three locations continuously monitor the quality of our nighttime skies; one located below Jumbo mountain, one at River Park and one on the roof of Paonia town hall. Readings from these sky quality meters help determine if there are significant changes in sky quality and how any change can be mitigated. A dark sky lighting ordinance was passed in 2022 , town street lights were replaced to meet IDA standards.

Policies Dark Skies

**Goal**

Goal – Infra

Improve the quality of our dark nighttime skies and help foster the stewardship of the night sky to enhance the quality of life, our health, the health of the ecosystem and the economy.

**Policies**

Policy Infra - 1. 1

Replace non-conforming lights with night sky friendly lights. Enforce lighting ordinance for new construction and developments.

Policy Infra – 1.2

Enforce the dark sky lighting ordinance. Replace non-conforming lights with IDA certified fixtures. Maintain our International Dark Sky Community status by ensuring all Residential and town owned lights meet dark sky requirements by 2032.

Policy Infra - 1.3

Support Dark Skies Paonia’s educational efforts, sky viewing events and dark sky tourism.

Policy Infra – 1.4

Support efforts to mitigate light trespass on neighboring properties.