

Colorado Parks and Wildlife

Summary Report on Public Outreach Efforts, Summer & Fall 2017:

Future of Hunting, Fishing, and
Outdoor Recreation

November 2017
11-22-2017

Executive Summary

Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) conducted outreach during July - September 2017 to gather public input on initial ideas for legislation that would help CPW's financial sustainability and support a bright future for hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation in Colorado. Through public meetings, online videos and public comments, over 4,500 people connected with CPW on this topic. This report summarizes major themes that emerged from this outreach, such as:

- **Phased license fee increases with inflation adjustments.** Overall CPW found strong support for phasing in higher resident hunting and fishing license prices and adjusting prices with inflation.
- **Charging for senior fishing licenses.** There was considerable interest in charging a nominal resident fishing license fee for seniors that would help CPW take full advantage of federal funding tied to angling participation. There was skepticism about exempting 16- and 17-year olds from purchasing fishing licenses because this would reduce the amount of license revenue and federal funds received.
- **Application fee questions.** Both support and concerns were raised about if and how CPW might increase application fees for hunters who participate in the big game license draw.
- **Alternative funding.** Many participants wanted to explore more non-traditional ways to bring in additional revenue for CPW.
- **Understanding the need.** Meeting attendees expressed a desire to better understand what expenses are contributing to projected shortfalls and how any revenue increases would be applied.

Based on this input, CPW is refining our legislative ideas to share with legislators who may be interested in running another bill to benefit the Coloradans and Colorado visitors who recreate here.

CPW is grateful for the input of all those who took the time to complete a comment form, attend a public meeting, or send an email. The input CPW received through this effort and from outreach efforts these past few years from interested public has been a vital contribution to this process. Every comment that CPW received was read and incorporated into this report.

Background

The revenue of Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) is derived primarily from customer expenditures such as hunting and fishing licenses, camping, and park entrance fees.¹ While the prices for resident hunting and fishing licenses and park entrance have not changed since 2006 and 2010 respectively, the cost of providing outdoor recreation opportunities continues to rise. Basic operational costs, inflation, and an increase in Colorado's minimum wage contribute to the rising expenses, while income remains static or grows at a much slower pace. Financial projections show that CPW may soon be faced with significant wildlife and park budget shortfalls,² putting the agency's ability to effectively manage our state's wildlife and parks in jeopardy.

Without increasing revenues, CPW will have to continue reducing services funded by license sales, effectively reducing hunting and fishing opportunities to residents and non-residents alike. State parks face a similar situation - without increasing revenues, parks staff will have to reduce services and defer needed maintenance on facilities. Faced with this dilemma of either increasing prices or reducing outdoor recreation opportunities, CPW sought the input of the users who would be most impacted.

Over the summer of 2016, CPW began outreach efforts to inform the public of the agency's financial situation and elicit feedback on approaches to address the budget shortfall. 22 meetings were held throughout the state, and CPW elicited feedback through both a survey and public comments. The results of these efforts yielded the [Public Engagement Report](#), which helped shape Colorado House Bill 17-1321. Introduced during the 2017 legislative session, H.B 17-1321 would have granted the Parks and Wildlife Commission the authority to increase resident hunting and fishing license fees to meet the projected funding shortfall. It also would have updated a statutory limitation on parks revenues, enabling the Commission to adjust parks fees in the future. After passing in the Colorado House of Representatives with bipartisan support, the legislative effort fell short when the Senate Finance Committee voted against the bill by a 3-2 vote in May 2017.

The majority of those who testified on H.B. 17-1321 spoke in support of the bill; overall, CPW continues to hear strong support for this effort from interested public. However, we have also heard from sportsmen that they would have appreciated having more input in shaping the bill last session. As a follow-up to the 22 public meetings organized in 2016, CPW sought to connect with the public again to offer people another opportunity to comment on the concept of a fee increase, as well as to increase awareness about the financial status of the agency. Through these outreach efforts, CPW hopes to gain feedback that can be used to inform future legislation. The decision on whether to pursue legislation in 2018 has not been made yet; however, the agency would like to be prepared should an opportunity for legislation arise.

¹ CPW maintains a website with detailed information about the agency's revenue and expenditures: <http://cpw.state.co.us/aboutus/Pages/FinancialSustainability.aspx>.

² Hunting and fishing license fees are only used for the management and conservation of wildlife. Parks fees are only used to fund parks properties, programs, and services. This separation of funds is required by state and federal law.

Methodology

From July to September 2017, CPW held eight public meetings on the Future of Hunting, Fishing and Outdoor Recreation in Colorado in locations across the state (see Appendix A). Three meetings were also broadcast live on Facebook. The meetings sought to convey information about challenges CPW faces in providing the hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation opportunities the public is demanding. In addition, CPW shared nine preliminary concepts (see Appendix B) for potential legislative measures that might help provide for a bright future for hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation in Colorado.

These public meetings generated media interest, resulting in more than ten print articles in newspapers and magazines, including The Durango Herald and The Coloradoan. In addition to print media, several TV news stations also featured the public meetings.

An informational video with the same information presented at the public meetings was available on CPW's website from August to September 2017. 769 people viewed the online video. In conjunction with the informational video, CPW posted an online comment form to capture public feedback. Additional comments were recorded at public meetings.

Outcomes

212 people attended the public meetings, with over 4,000 viewers watching via Facebook (see Appendix B for attendance totals). The informational video garnered 769 views. A comment form (see Appendix C) was distributed at public meetings, and was made available on CPW's website in August and September 2017. A total of 64 people took the opportunity to provide public comments by either completing a comment form at a public meeting or via the CPW website. Public opinions received will help inform ideas that CPW has for a legislative bill to support the future of hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation in Colorado.

Public Meetings

CPW did not take formal comment at public meetings; instead, we encouraged participants to submit a comment form. Based on informal discussion at these meetings, several common themes emerged:

Phased license fee increases with inflation adjustments. While attendees recognized that raising prices across the board could present challenges to certain populations, they were generally supportive of incremental license fee increases as a way to retain or expand the current hunting and fishing opportunities available in the state. Some participants questioned whether the proposed increases would provide enough funding for CPW to continue doing its current work, as well as meet new demands.

Senior and youth fishing. Many attendees spoke in favor of eliminating free senior fishing licenses. They felt that the majority of seniors could afford to pay a nominal amount for a fishing license, adding their concern about leaving federal Dingell-Johnson (DJ) funds "on the table" because seniors do not currently count towards Colorado's apportionment of these federal funds. There was less certainty about the desirability of offering free fishing licenses

to 16- and 17-year olds in Colorado. People understood the recruitment value of youth fishing, but felt that in most cases youth could afford licenses. There were also concerns about losing federal DJ funds by offering these free licenses.

Alternative funding. At nearly every meeting, there was discussion about creating new alternative sources of revenue. Examples of ideas shared at meetings included registration fees/licenses for mountain bikes and non-motorized watercraft. It was generally acknowledged that such new approaches could take years to flesh out conceptually and build support for, which may not meet CPW's more immediate needs to avoid program cuts.

Understanding CPW's finances and potential next steps better. At some meetings, attendees expressed a desire for more information about expenditures. They mentioned that by increasing transparency in regards to revenue expenditure, CPW can demonstrate the programs and services that hunters, anglers, and wildlife enthusiasts stand to lose if the budget shortfall is not addressed. Attendees also noted that they would like to be kept updated on any potential legislation and how additional revenue, if obtained, would be spent.

Colorado Wildlife Federation comments. CPW received one formal letter from the Colorado Wildlife Federation (CWF) generally supporting the concept of fee increases. CWF noted that increasing fees such as the application fee and Wildlife Council Surcharge was appropriate and necessary, but were not in support of free youth fishing, noting the potential loss of revenue and the importance of retaining these licenses in order to receive federal match funding. CWF urged CPW to provide evidence of processing costs to defend the need for increasing application fees, and stressed the need for all state park users to pay a fee to support our state parks.

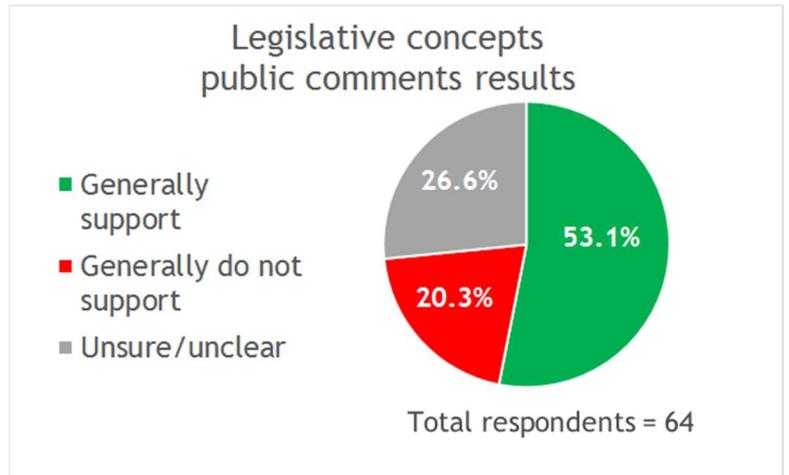
Formal Comments

Who Participated

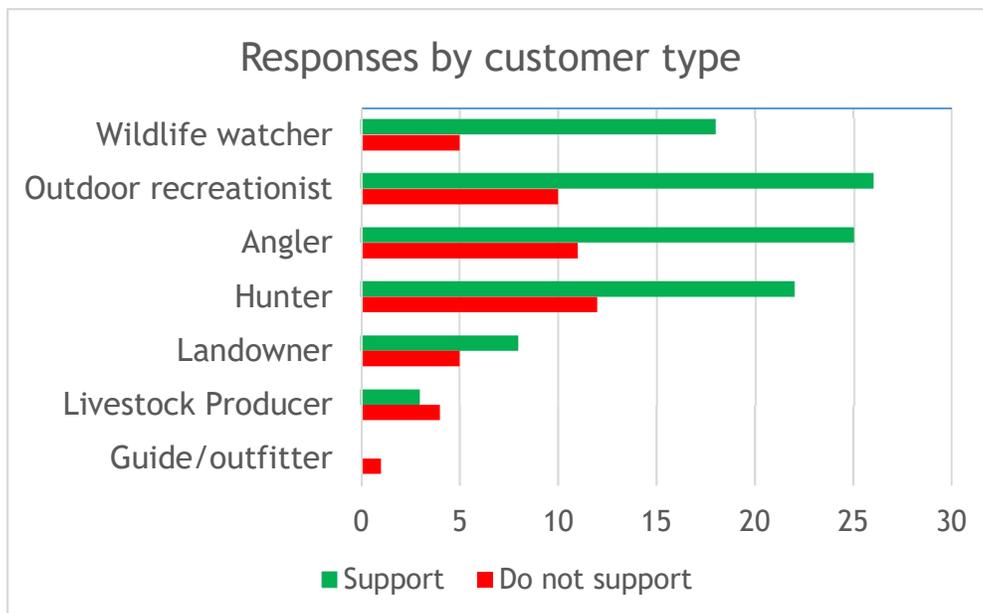
Respondents to the formal comment form were asked to identify their interaction with CPW. Respondents were often involved with CPW in multiple roles (e.g., as a landowner, angler, and outdoor recreationist). The majority of respondents identified as outdoor recreationists (51 respondents, or 79.7%), anglers (50 respondents, 78.1%), or hunters (49 respondents, 76.8%).

Level and Types of Support

Of all respondents, 34 (53.1%) generally were supportive of the bill concepts presented by CPW (10 respondents supported the concepts outright, while 24 were in support of the concepts pending suggestions). 13 respondents (20.3%) were generally unsupportive of the concepts. It is important to note that respondents were not explicitly asked if they supported the concepts, and not all respondents indicated their support or lack thereof.



Support for the concepts was most favorable among wildlife watchers, outdoor recreationists and anglers. Out of the 35 respondents identifying as wildlife watchers, 18 (51.4%) supported the concepts, while only 5 (14.3%) did not. Similarly, of the 51 respondents identifying as outdoor recreationists, 26 (51.0%) supported the concepts, and only 10 (19.6%) were unsupportive. Although weaker trends in support were seen in anglers, the number of anglers who supported the concepts was more than twice the number of those who did not support the concepts.



Common Themes

The comments from participants largely paralleled those provided by public meeting attendees. Four common themes emerged among suggestions:

1. **General restructuring of the tag/point system** (appeared 5 times)
Respondents made suggestions across the board, from allowing second-chance hunts if a tag is not filled, to allowing underage hunters to accrue preference points with a fee.
2. **Eliminate free senior licenses/fees** (appeared 4 times)
Respondents supported no longer offering senior discounts/privileges.
3. **Creating a mountain bike registration fee/license** (appeared 3 times)
Respondents suggested creating registration fees/licenses for mountain bikes (similar to OHV fees/licenses).
4. **Creating a non-motorized boat registration fee/license** (appeared 3 times)
Respondents suggested creating registration fees/licenses for non-motorized boats such as inflatables, paddleboards, kayaks, etc.

It is important to note that respondents were not specifically asked whether they support these suggestions. These suggestions arose organically from open comment.

Conclusion

In 2015, CPW started an extensive outreach program to capture the interests of Colorado sportspeople and outdoor enthusiasts. After the failure of H.B. 17-1321 in spring 2017, CPW continued to reach out to the public to gather input and share the story of how additional revenue would benefit the management of Colorado's outdoor recreation resources through CPW. The 2017 public outreach efforts demonstrate that the majority of the public who are engaged in these recreation and conservation efforts support concepts presented to increase CPW's revenue and avoid budget shortfalls.

Public input is a vital component of the decision-making process at Colorado Parks and Wildlife. The programs supported by CPW's users ensure a bright future for the wildlife and park resources of the state. Looking ahead, CPW is considering all the public opinions received to help inform concepts for a revised legislative proposal to support the future of hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation in Colorado. Once CPW is aware of whether there will be a bill in 2018, staff will inform interested public and share updates throughout the winter and spring. Please email dnr_cpw_planning@state.co.us if you are interested in receiving updates.

Appendix A - Public Meeting Schedule and Attendance

Date	Location	Attendance	Facebook Live Views ³
July 13	Colorado Springs	21	2,200
August 2	Fort Collins	39	1,100
August 24	Grand Junction	7	-
September 6	Steamboat Springs	20	-
September 14	Sterling	3	-
September 25	SW Region	35	-
September 25	Denver	25	-
September 26	Pueblo	62	1,500
Total		212	4,400

³ Approximate views as of October 25, 2017

Appendix B - Bill Concepts

1. Allow the Parks and Wildlife Commission to increase resident hunting/angling license fees to the level they would be at today if the prices in 2006 (the last time fees were increased) had increased annually with inflation. Increases for most popular licenses will be limited to no more than \$5.00 in any year until the CPI cap is reached (excludes higher-cost goat, moose, lion, rocky mountain bighorn, and desert bighorn licenses). After reaching the 2006 inflation-adjusted levels, the price of resident licenses would adjust with inflation in subsequent years.

For example, the current price of a resident elk license is \$45, the same as it was in 2006. Had that 2006 price risen with inflation, it would be \$58 today. Under this approach, the price would increase in \$5 increments until reaching the inflation-adjusted price. In subsequent years, the price would adjust with inflation.

License Price	2006 price	2017 price	2017 Inflation-adjusted price	1 st year	2 nd year	3 rd year	4 th year
Elk (resident)	\$45	\$45	\$58	\$50	\$55	\$58	\$58 + inflation

2. Allow the Commission to set application fees for the draw at levels that cover the costs of application processing. The existing fee is \$3.00, while the average processing cost including credit card fees is currently \$16.00. This fee could be tiered to ensure that purchasers of higher-cost licenses paid a higher fee.
3. Set resident annual senior fishing licenses at no more than \$1.00 above the amount required to receive matching federal funds (license estimated to be below \$10.00, including PEAC and SAR).
4. Set the maximum fee for products such as non-resident annual fishing licenses at \$100.00, the Wildlife Council surcharge at \$1.50, the waterfowl stamp at \$10.00, and licenses not provided for in statute at \$100.00.
5. Remove the requirement to purchase a fishing license for residents 16-17 years old.
6. Allow CPW to issue discounted “Outreach Licenses” for the purposes of recruiting new sportsmen/women. Targets include groups such as veterans and youth under the age of 26.
7. Change the base-year for the 20% cap on park fee revenue from 2011 to 2017. Additionally, allow the revenue cap to increase based on future CPI increases and park

visitation increases. Increases in park entrance fees will be limited to no more than \$1.00 in any year for a daily pass and \$10.00 in any year for an annual pass.

8. Streamline various park fee requirements, such as removing requirements that any park passes must be “affixed” to a vehicle. Another example is removing the statutory cap on the value of inventory and cash held at parks retail locations.
9. Ensure accountability by requiring regular reports about fee increases, expenses supported by the fee increases, and the impact of the bill on hunting/fishing license sales and park visitation.

COLORADO PARKS & WILDLIFE

Future of Hunting, Fishing & Outdoor Recreation

2017 Public Comment Form

For 120 years Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) has enhanced Colorado's outdoors by providing healthy wildlife populations, opportunities for fishing and hunting, 41 diverse and remarkable state parks, and thousands of miles of recreational trails. Looking toward the future, CPW hopes to continue to offer these same opportunities to meet Colorado's growing population and evolving interests in outdoor recreation while inspiring the next generation to enjoy the outdoors.



CPW is working with state leaders to develop a bill to help support the future of hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation in Colorado. **Your opinions matter** and will help shape future use and management of Colorado's wildlife and natural resources! In order to respond to public needs and interests, we created this brief comment form. **Please share your thoughts** on the concepts CPW is proposing for this bill. To learn about these concepts, watch this 15 min presentation at: cpw.state.co.us/aboutus/Pages/Future-Conservation-Recreation.aspx

1. Please use the space below to **provide any comments you may have in regard to the concepts presented for a legislative proposal**. If you think there is something missing from these concepts, please tell us about it as well.

2. Which of the following best describes how you interact with Colorado Parks and Wildlife? (Please check all that apply.)

- As a wildlife watcher
- As a landowner
- As a hunter
- As an angler
- As a livestock producer
- As an outdoor recreationist (e.g., hiker, skier, mountain biker, etc.)
- As a guide/outfitter
- Other (Please specify): _____

Please enter your name and email address below if you would like to receive occasional updates about this topic. Your name and email will not be associated with your responses or included in CPW reporting or other communications.

Name: _____ Email: _____

Please complete and return this form by **September 30, 2017** to 1313 Sherman St, Denver CO 80203. You may also participate online at: www.research.net/r/CPW-Future

Thank you for sharing your thoughts with us!

