

State Trails Program

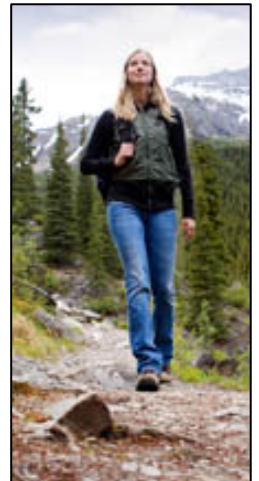


Overview

Trail use is the number one recreational activity in Colorado. Each year Coloradans access trails over 250 million times. Roughly nine out of ten Coloradans (87%) report they use trails annually and about half (48%) say they generally use trails one or more times a month. State, federal, municipal, regional and cities provide extensive trail opportunities to the public. These groups work together to offer connecting trail opportunities, enabling people to bike, hike or walk around Colorado. Trails are also Colorado's top outdoor recreational "gateway" activity.

In 2012, the Outdoor Industry Foundation reported that Colorado's outdoor recreation generated more than \$13.2 billion annually in consumer spending and \$4.2 billion in state wages and salaries. Trail based recreation (non-motorized and motorized trails recreation) makes up a significant, yet largely unrecognized portion of that total.

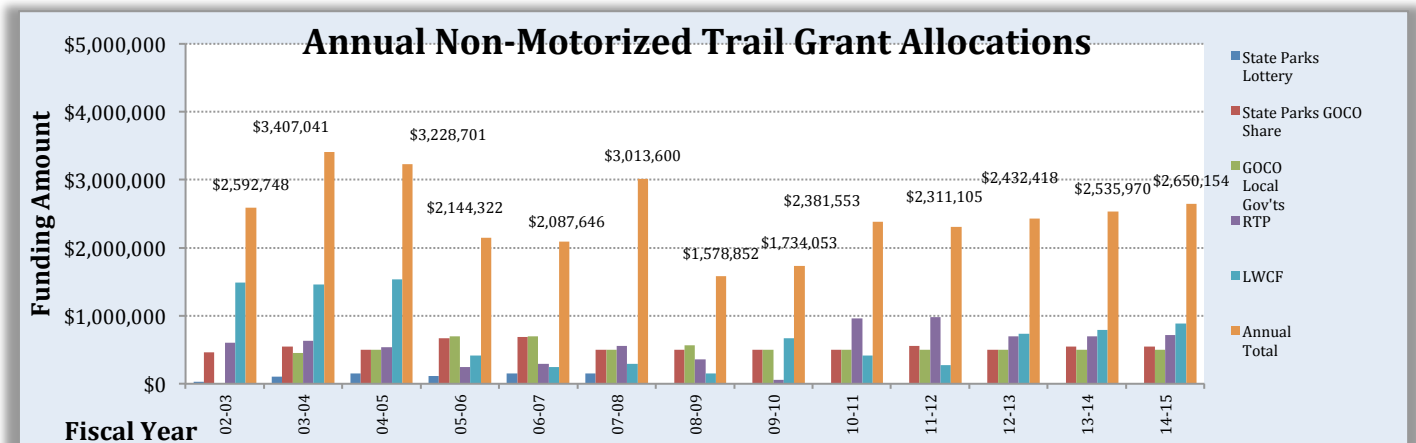
Health care professionals increasingly acknowledge the significant benefits of regular outdoor activity. Eighty percent (80%) of Coloradans say they have convenient access to trails. Local, regional and neighborhood trails offer valuable opportunities for healthy life styles.



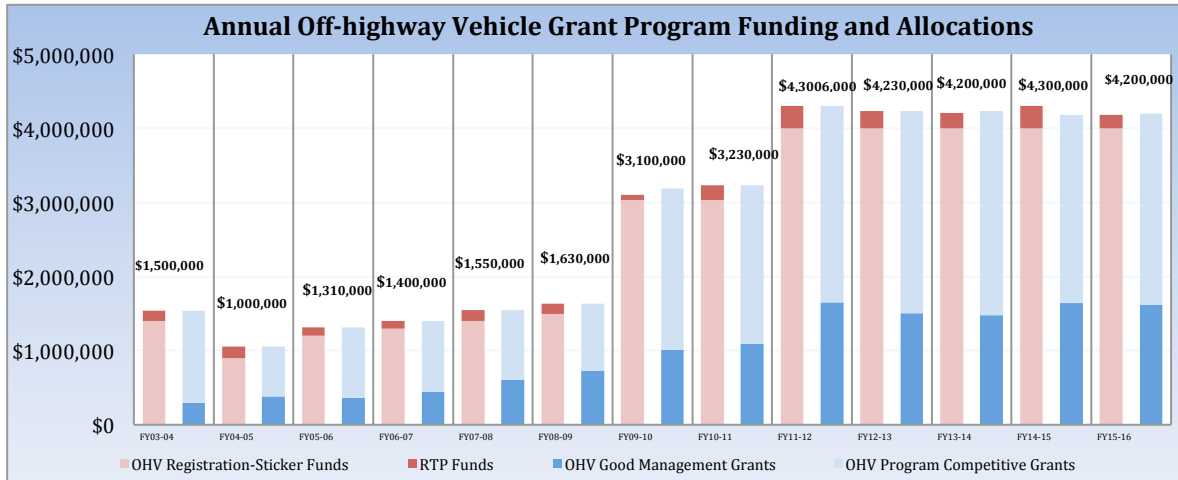
Colorado's State Trails Program

Established by the Colorado General Assembly in 1971, **Colorado Recreational Trails Committee** advises the Parks and Wildlife Commission on trail plans and development, standards and funding issues and grants. This nine member panel is a volunteer body. Colorado's Parks and Wildlife Division's (CPW) Trails Program consists of three principal, programmatic components: the **Recreational (non-motorized) Trails Program**; the **Off-highway Vehicle (OHV) Program** and; the **Snowmobile Program**. The Trails Program offers technical assistance to anyone interested in submitting trail grant applications through site visits or grant writing workshops. Assistance with trails construction and maintenance is offered as well.

The Recreational (non-motorized) Trails Program assists local governments, clubs, nonprofit partners and federal land managers through grants and expertise for non-motorized trails in Colorado. Every year the program awards \$2 to \$2.5 million in non-motorized trails grants depicted in the chart below that shows CPW's annual non-motorized grant awards (light blue columns) and the funding sources (other columns). Public interest in trails access and use continues to increase, representing a significant obligation to CPW's Trails Program. Unfortunately each year, the difference between funding requests and available grant funds grows annually. The erratic and generally declining federal funds seriously hinder CPW's ability to meet Colorado's growing trails needs. In particular, federal Land and Water Conservation Funds and the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) funding levels continue to decline. Fortunately, the reliability of Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) funding provides some consistency for non-motorized trail grants. These funds are especially important for clubs, nonprofits and other trail supporters to continue their trails based work. The need to create a stable, dedicated funding stream for non-motorized trails is crucial.



The largest block of federal funding derived from the Federal Highway's non-motorized, OHV and Snowmobile, consistent with federal requirements. **Colorado's OHV (Off-Highway Vehicle) Program** funding comes principally 170,000 OHV registrations and use permits. This enabled the OHV Program to maintenance, rider education and compliance programs. Colorado has developed a unique and groundbreaking OHV trail maintenance approach known as the "Good Management Program."



The chart above details OHV grant funding and the allocations to the Good Management Program and other competitive OHV grants. Revenue from OHV registrations continues to increase. Annual requests for OHV grants always exceed the available funding.

The OHV program initiated a Law Enforcement and Field Presence Program with the US Forest Service and BLM in 2011 to document rider compliance with OHV regulations. Through 2014, officers and OHV rangers have contacted over 40,000 OHV riders. Data and results have shown that 95 % of riders in Colorado comply with OHV rules in OHV riding areas across Colorado. Results also documented little environmental damage from OHV use in sensitive areas. Trail maintenance, education, and signage are identified as top priorities for further action.

The Snowmobile Program provides funding for trail grooming, trail improvements, the Snowmobile Safety Certification Program as well as enforcement and signing. Program funding comes from registrations and out-of-state use permits. Grants totaled over \$900,000 in 2015, with grants going to 28 snowmobile clubs affiliated with the Colorado Snowmobile Association. Through this program clubs groom approximately 3,000 miles of snowmobile trails for the use and benefit of all winter sports enthusiasts. These groomed trails provide critical access to first responders for emergency back country evacuations and rescues.

Summary

Over the past decade, CPW's Trails Program distributed over \$54 million for trail grants, capital improvements that benefit trail use and winter trail grooming operations. These funds created job opportunities especially through the Youth Corp organizations, which received about \$1.6 million to build and maintain trails.

While these funds are significant, the program's available funding clearly does not keep pace with the growing demand for trail improvements. Over the past five years, applications for trail grants totaled over \$80 million while money for grants provided about \$47 million in grants. The decreases in federal trail funding seriously erodes CPW's ability to meet public expectations for trails, even as the wellness benefits of outdoor recreation receive stronger attention.