

C O L O R A D O P A R K S & W I L D L I F E

# Strategic Plan Progress Report

FY 2022-2023



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# Letter from the Director

Dear Colleagues,

It is my privilege to share the 2022-2023 Strategic Plan Progress Report with you, and to highlight the tremendous amount of work you have achieved this year and your dedication to our agency's mission and the natural resources of Colorado.

It's been a huge year, and though I just started with the agency as Director in May, I am proud of our past and current work and even more encouraged for the future. Because of your efforts, the outdoors and our state's amazing resources continue to be an inspiration to Coloradans and all who visit us. I want to thank you for the work you do to manage and conserve these resources, and your work to educate and inspire those who value Colorado's lands, waters and wildlife.

**Perhaps our largest goal was realized this year** when we achieved the development and unanimous approval of the [Colorado Wolf Reintroduction and Management Plan](#). That was in addition to all the fantastic work by staff to conserve wildlife and habitat, and manage and monitor species of greatest conservation need while working with partners to maintain viable populations.

**We continued our work toward achieving financial sustainability**, launching a whole new model of agency funding this past year with the new Keep Colorado Wild (KCW) Pass. Starting on January 1, 2023, the KCW Pass became available to Coloradans when they register their vehicles and grants access to all Colorado state parks. After just the first six months, over 769,000 Coloradans have the Keep Colorado Wild Pass, generating over \$22 million.

**We continued our long tradition conserving wildlife and habitat**, rolling out a successful new approach for completing Herd Management Plan revisions.

**We also continued managing our state parks for world-class outdoor recreation**, conducting resource surveys for birds, amphibians, reptiles, bats, small mammals, and cultural resources, developing resource stewardship plans for five state parks, and contributing to the updated management plans for Lathrop and Golden Gate state parks.

**We maintained dedicated personnel and volunteers.** I am thrilled with the efforts of this agency to improve its ability to recruit and develop a highly qualified and diverse workforce. In 2021, CPW's hiring process for park ranger and wildlife manager positions took approximately eight months from when positions were announced to when new employees were hired. In 2022, CPW reduced the time from job announcement to when conditional job offers were made to just 1.5 months. As a result of these efforts, CPW saw significant growth in the number of people who applied for the park ranger and wildlife manager positions in 2022.

**We increased awareness and trust for CPW.** The agency completed a full audit of the existing website over the past year and now we're preparing to launch a new website in 2024 with a focus on the customer journey and will more effectively meet our customers' needs.

**We connected people to Colorado's outdoors.** In its first year of operation, the Outdoor Equity Grant Program awarded nearly \$3.1 million to 69 organizations, providing funding to support opportunities for youth and their families from communities who have been historically excluded, so that they have equitable opportunities to get involved in recreational activities and experience Colorado's outdoors.

These goals and plans are only able to be met and refined through the hard work, ingenuity, intelligence and determination of our staff and the help of our volunteers and partners. There's plenty of hard work ahead, but I can't imagine that work being placed in any more capable hands. Thank you for your service to the agency, the state of Colorado and to the natural resources that allow us to proudly keep Colorado such a wonderful place to live, work and play.

Regards,



Jeff Davis

Director, Colorado Parks and Wildlife

# Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the dedicated Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) staff members who helped develop the Strategic Plan in collaboration with our many partners and are leading the implementation of the Operational Plans.

We are grateful for their ongoing efforts to track and report the outcomes and impacts of our work. We would also like to thank CPW's Marketing Unit for their help designing the format of this report.

Finally, we would like to thank CPW's Leadership Team and the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission for their important feedback and support throughout the process of creating and implementing the Strategic Plan.

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## CPW Commission

Dallas May, Chair

Richard Reading, Vice Chair

Karen Bailey, Secretary

Jessica Beaulieu

Marie Haskett

Jack Murphy

Gabriel Otero

Duke Phillips IV

Gary T. Skiba

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Reid DeWalt, Assistant Director for Aquatic,  
Terrestrial & Natural Resources

Justin Rutter, Assistant Director for Financial Services

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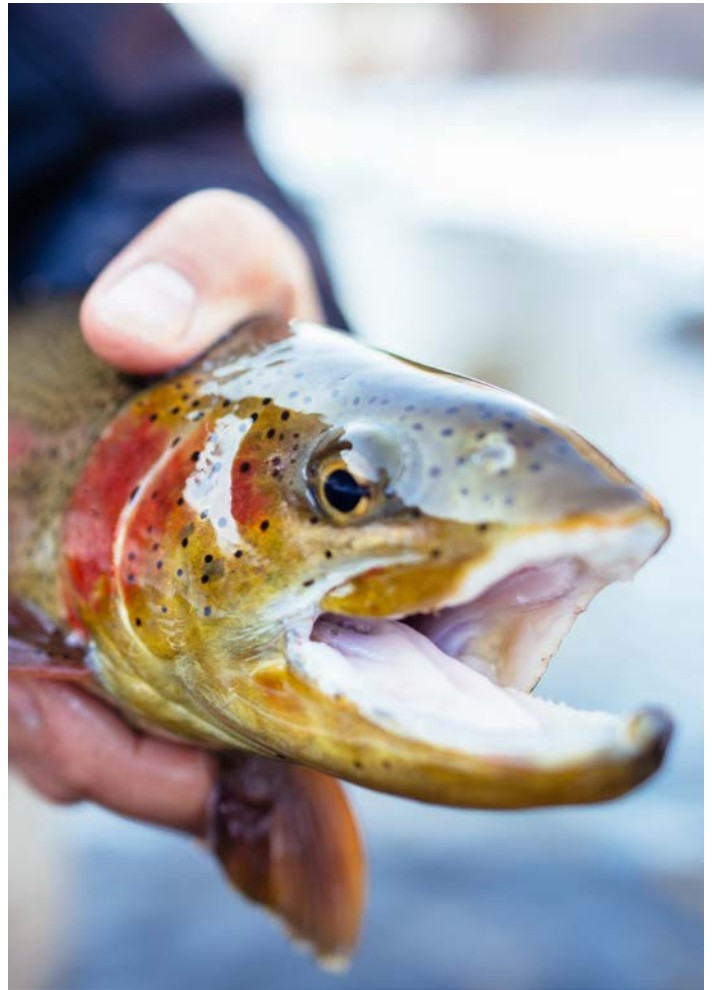
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Mark Leslie, Northeast Region Manager

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## Vision

Colorado Parks and Wildlife is a national leader in wildlife management, conservation and sustainable outdoor recreation for current and future generations.

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## Mission

To perpetuate the wildlife resources of the state, to provide a quality state park system, and to provide enjoyable and sustainable outdoor recreation opportunities that educate and inspire current and future generations to serve as active stewards of Colorado's natural resources. (C.R.S. 33-9-101)





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# Introduction

The Colorado Parks and Wildlife Strategic Plan (Plan), finalized in November 2015, provides a roadmap for achieving the agency’s vision and mission through concrete goals and objectives. The public, stakeholders, partners, the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission, and CPW staff participated in shaping the vision of CPW and the development of the Plan.

The Plan’s goals, objectives, and strategies are intended to be updated as needed. To implement the Plan, CPW develops two-year operational plans; operational plans are developed and reported on a fiscal-year basis and reflect actionable sub-objectives and measurable metrics.

The current plan, Operational Plan 4, covers FY 2022-2023 (FY 23) and FY 2023-2024 (FY 24). This report provides a snapshot of CPW’s work by highlighting our progress on 67 sub-objectives over the first year, FY 23, of the two-year Operational Plan 4 period.

The Plan identifies six goals that the agency will work towards in order to achieve CPW’s mission and vision.

## GOALS

- 1 Conserve wildlife habitat to ensure healthy sustainable populations and ecosystems
- 2 Manage state parks for world-class outdoor recreation
- 3 Achieve and maintain financial sustainability
- 4 Maintain dedicated personnel and volunteers
- 5 Increase awareness and trust for CPW
- 6 Connect people to Colorado’s outdoors

At the end of the first year of the two-year Operational Plan 4 reporting period, CPW staff are “on track” to complete 69% of the sub-objectives by the end of the two-year Operational Plan 4 period. Another 28% of the sub-objectives are a “work in progress,” and only 3% “need improvement” (Figure 1).

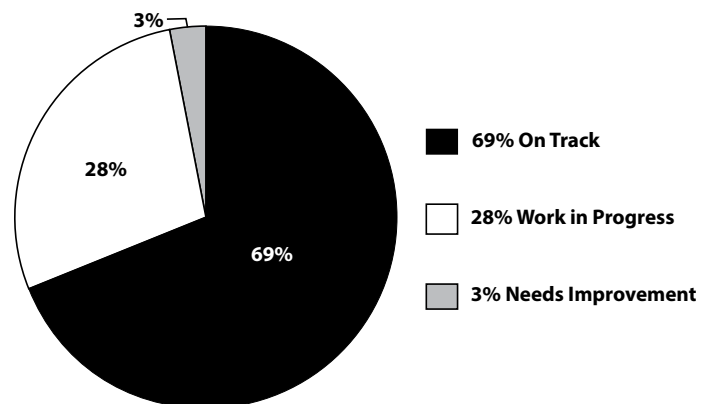


Figure 1: Status of progress on sub-objectives at the end of the first year, FY 2022-2023 (FY 23) of the Operational Plan 4 reporting period.





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# Goal 1: Conserve wildlife and habitat

## **Manage sustainable populations of game and nongame species to support fishing, hunting, trapping and wildlife-viewing opportunities**

Protecting and managing the wildlife resources of the state is at the core of CPW's mission. CPW strives to balance the ecological capabilities of Colorado's terrestrial and aquatic wildlife, and their habitats, along with the demand for wildlife-related recreational opportunities, impact to agriculture, and social tolerance for wildlife. A primary tool used by CPW to reach this balance for big game species is the Herd Management Plan (HMP). Through a public process, long-term objectives are developed outlining how each distinct herd of big game species should be managed. In FY 23, staff rolled out a new approach of completing all of the HMP revisions for a given species in a given region at the same time. This was highly successful with 33 HMPs, including all of the elk HMPs in the Southwest Region and all of the deer HMPs in the Northwest Region, revised in FY 23 alone, well exceeding the target of completing 16 HMPs each year.

CPW staff work hard to ensure big game populations stay within the population objective ranges specified in the HMPs and other regional and statewide management plans, with the goal of increasing the proportion of elk, deer and pronghorn antelope herds that fall within target management objective ranges by 5% each year. An assessment conducted in May 2023 shows that 18 (43%) of the state's elk herds are within their HMP population objective ranges, which is an increase of 10% from the previous year. Six (21%) of the state's pronghorn antelope herds are within their population objective ranges, which is a slight decrease of 1% from the previous year. And, 15 (28%) of the state's deer herds are currently within their population objective ranges, which is a decrease of 24% from the previous year. This decrease is largely because the HMPs for many deer herds were updated in the past six months, which changed their management objectives. It will take time to shift the population to fit within the new objective ranges.

Reducing and limiting the prevalence of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is also essential to sustaining healthy herd populations. CWD is a fatal neurological disease found in deer, elk and moose in Colorado. Approved in 2018, the CWD Response Plan requires CWD testing across many areas of the state to generate reliable estimates of CWD prevalence in herd populations and implement management actions should the prevalence of CWD in adult male deer exceed 5% of the herd population. In the fall of 2022, CPW completed its second round of mandatory testing as prescribed in the CWD Response Plan, including mandatory testing in every deer herd in the state and in 14 priority elk herds. This cycle of testing helps staff to understand prevalence trends and the impact of previous management actions on reducing CWD prevalence. Results from the 2022 mandatory CWD testing effort show that prevalence estimates decreased in three deer herds, remained about the same in four deer herds, and increased in four deer herds in comparison to the previous prevalence estimates generated 4-5 years ago. In two of these herds, CWD prevalence decreased to below the 5% management threshold set in the CWD Response Plan. CPW will need to evaluate why

prevalence increased in some herds and decreased in others. Additional data and robust analyses are needed over the next 9 years of mandatory testing to guide the interpretation of these results. However, these preliminary data are encouraging and suggest harvest-based management actions could be a promising CWD control strategy.

To manage sustainable fish populations, CPW's aquatic biologists regularly evaluate and update the state's fishery management strategies. CPW conducts hundreds of surveys on lakes and streams each year. The collected data are used to track fish population trends, evaluate the effectiveness of management actions such as stocking and regulations, and establish realistic management goals for a given lake or stream. CPW communicates with anglers about the status of the fishery and management goals for specific waters through the use of fishery management survey summaries. Making these fishery management summaries more readable and user friendly, while incorporating standard CPW branding, is a specific goal of the Aquatic Section staff. In FY 23, staff attended several meetings with the web design consultant regarding the new fishery management summaries' formats to ensure they are American Disability Act (ADA) compliant. The format and template will likely be finalized as the new website is developed in the coming months.

## **Preserve and enhance diverse habitat**

Ensuring resilient wildlife populations and healthy ecosystems requires conservation and enhancement of priority habitat. One of the tools that CPW's Real Estate Section uses to conserve habitat is the Colorado Wildlife Habitat Program (CWHP). The CWHP is an annual, incentive-based funding program that gives landowners the opportunity to voluntarily protect vital wildlife habitat and provide wildlife-related recreational access to the public. The program accomplishes strategic wildlife conservation goals and public access goals using conservation easements, public access easements, and in some circumstances, fee title acquisitions. The application period for the 2022 CWHP closed in October 2022, with a budget of \$11 million. The Parks and Wildlife Commission approved staff's recommendations for funding in May 2023 and the Real Estate Section is conducting due diligence on the approved 2022 projects with the hopes that they will close in the next one to two years. Also in May of 2023, the Parks and Wildlife Commission approved launching the request for proposals for the 2023 CWHP. The application website went live on June 6, 2023 and will close on October 10, 2023, also with a budget of up to \$11 million.

CPW Terrestrial Section staff work to restore and improve priority habitat across the state. Many big game species exhibit annual migrations along traditional routes and between seasonal ranges, and the conservation of these migration corridors and critical winter ranges is a significant priority. In alignment with Executive Order 2019-011 for the conservation of Colorado's Big Game Winter Range and Migration Corridors, Terrestrial Section staff conducted movement analyses of five big game herds using GPS collar data to better understand the movement patterns

of big game herds. Staff have also created summary reports displaying these big game movements.

The Habitat Conservation Unit has been working to develop its first Statewide Habitat Conservation and Connectivity Plan (SHCCP), which they hope to finalize by June 2024. In FY 23, staff convened an internal workgroup to manage this planning process and help select priority wildlife species. They have also completed a stakeholder analysis to identify interested parties and the first stakeholder planning meeting took place on June 20, 2023. The Colorado Natural Heritage Program will help with the spatial analysis and writing of the Statewide Habitat Conservation and Connectivity Plan (SHCCP).

Staff use a statewide habitat database to monitor habitat improvement and treatment efforts. In FY 23, the Habitat Conservation Unit completed more than 17 projects directly improving 2,207 acres of big game and sage-grouse habitat. These accomplishments met the established goal, improving between 1,500 and 3,000 acres of big game and sage-grouse habitat each year. The projects cover a variety of enhancement techniques, from native sagebrush community restoration to timber removal. Many of these restoration projects have been completed in partnership with state, federal, and private partners. The Habitat Conservation Unit also provided project planning and technical support, seed mixing logistics and seed storage (through the CPW Delta Seed Warehouse), and grant partnerships for more than 4,800 additional acres of wildlife habitat restoration activities throughout the Western Slope and Front Range of Colorado.

Another tool used by CPW to preserve and enhance diverse habitat for big and small game is the Corners for Conservation (C4C) program. C4C is an initiative that restores grasslands in farmed dryland corners of center pivot irrigation systems and around playa wetlands, creating habitat for upland birds and forage for mule deer and white-tailed deer. Through the C4C program, about 116 corners totaling 911 acres were planted in FY 23, exceeding the goal of improving 800 acres annually.

CPW's Wetlands Program annually awards competitive grants to CPW staff and partners for projects that restore wetlands and riparian areas. These projects create new wetlands, improve the function of existing wetlands, remove non-native invasive vegetation and replace it with native vegetation, manage invasive cattail growth, restore riparian habitat impacted by mining, and reconnect incised creeks with their floodplains. In FY 23, 16 restoration projects, totaling 5,084 acres of wetland and riparian habitat and associated upland habitat, were completed.

### **Manage and monitor species of greatest conservation need (SGCN) while working with partners to maintain viable populations**

The 2015 SGCN list of vertebrate animals and mollusks – the groups for which CPW has statutory authority – contains 159 species. According to the 2015 State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP), 55 species have been identified as Tier 1 SGCN, including 2 amphibians, 13 birds, 25 fish, 13 mammals, and 2 reptiles.

Collaboration with partners, including federal and state agencies, private landowners, and non-governmental organizations, is essential to conserving Colorado's SGCN. In FY 23, CPW's

Conservation Coordinators worked along with partners to manage nongame species and habitat through research, population status monitoring, reintroduction, habitat protection, and habitat restoration, achieving CPW's goal to participate in collaborative planning and partnership processes for at least 10 terrestrial SGCN. A sample of the work performed in FY 23 includes:

- ▶ Developing the Colorado Wolf Restoration and Management Plan in collaboration with stakeholders
- ▶ Participating in the ongoing development of the Gunnison Sage-grouse Resource Management Plan Amendment process
- ▶ Initiating preliminary discussions for the development of the 2025 State Wildlife Action Plan revision
- ▶ Participating in Colorado Statewide Habitat and Connectivity Plan discussions
- ▶ Participating in collaborative initiatives for white-nose syndrome monitoring and black-footed ferret reintroduction and management
- ▶ Continuing ongoing discussions and planning in collaboration with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) related to the National Listing Workplan
- ▶ Participating in the Central Grasslands Roadmap planning efforts.

Similarly, for aquatic fish and amphibian SGCN, CPW actively participated in eight multi-agency conservation and recovery teams, including chairing or co-chairing five of the teams.

Ongoing population monitoring targets are also on track for 60 terrestrial SGCN and 25 fish SGCN. A sample of the activities in FY 23 includes:

- ▶ Broad-scale monitoring programs for multiple bird and bat species
- ▶ Annual counts for greater sage-grouse, Gunnison sage-grouse, Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, lesser prairie-chicken, and greater prairie-chicken
- ▶ A statewide population occupancy study for lynx
- ▶ Annual surveys for black-footed ferrets at release sites and the implementation of a research study to evaluate the use of scent dogs for survey efforts
- ▶ Continued species-specific studies to determine the population status of western yellow-billed cuckoo, black swift, pinyon jay, white-tailed ptarmigan, Gunnison prairie dog, white-tailed prairie dog, burrowing owl, and mountain plover
- ▶ Sampling to track distribution and status of all native fish species on the eastern plains, including 48 sites representing 21 streams in the South Platte and Arkansas river basins
- ▶ Monitoring 81 boreal toad breeding sites
- ▶ Extensive survey work to characterize northern leopard frog distribution and abundance
- ▶ Sampling five waters containing greenback cutthroat trout, 31 waters with conservation populations of Colorado River cutthroat trout, and 17 waters with conservation populations of Rio Grande cutthroat trout to determine population status, estimate population size, and/or assess reintroduction success
- ▶ Monitoring populations of West Slope warmwater SGCN fishes in 10 waters.



The restoration of wolves took priority in FY 23 with the development and unanimous approval of the Wolf Reintroduction and Management Plan by the Parks and Wildlife Commission in May 2023. Efforts are now being directed toward implementation logistics to prepare for the initial reintroduction of wolves in December 2023. This includes continued coordination with USFWS on the establishment of a 10(j) rule to allow for greater management flexibility under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Staff anticipate the 10(j) rule will be in place by late fall 2023 to allow for reintroductions to begin as planned.

Along with this, CPW biologists took initial steps in the process of reintroducing wolverines to Colorado through internal conversations and budget planning. A clearer timeline for this process will be developed next year after a decision from the USFWS regarding the ESA listing status of the wolverine.

### **Protect and enhance water resources for fish and wildlife populations**

Providing a reliable and adequate water supply helps ensure that high quality hunting, angling and water-based recreation opportunities continue in Colorado. Administering CPW's water rights is a key aspect of protecting and improving water throughout the state. To achieve this, the Water Section set the goal of filing a minimum of four applications in Water Court each year for new water rights or to correct the use or location of existing rights. In FY 23, the Water Section coordinated the filing of eight water court applications, doubling the target. Specific applications include: diligence applications for San Luis Lakes and springs at Sylvan Lake State Park and Sweetwater Lake; new appropriation applications for Piedra Transmountain Diversion, Mount Ouray State Wildlife Area, and Mount Shavano State Fish Unit; and claims for absolute storage rights for Chatfield Reservoir.

Another key part of maintaining healthy fisheries for current and future generations is keeping the water at a healthy level in Colorado's rivers and lakes. The establishment of minimum instream flow (ISF) water right protections and natural lake level (NLL) recommendations for consideration by the Colorado Water Conservation Board (CWCB) is paramount to this work. During FY 23, the Water Section collected, evaluated, and analyzed field data for 14 potential ISF and NLL recommendations. They also coordinated with Regional and Aquatic Section staff for six ISF appropriations, seven ISF acquisitions, and one letter of support that was formally submitted to the CWCB. The Water Section provided ongoing biological consultation to the CWCB in relation to their active statements of opposition in Water Court to protect decreed ISF water rights, requests to inundate ISF water rights, requests to injure ISF water rights, and monitoring and enforcement of recent ISF acquisitions.

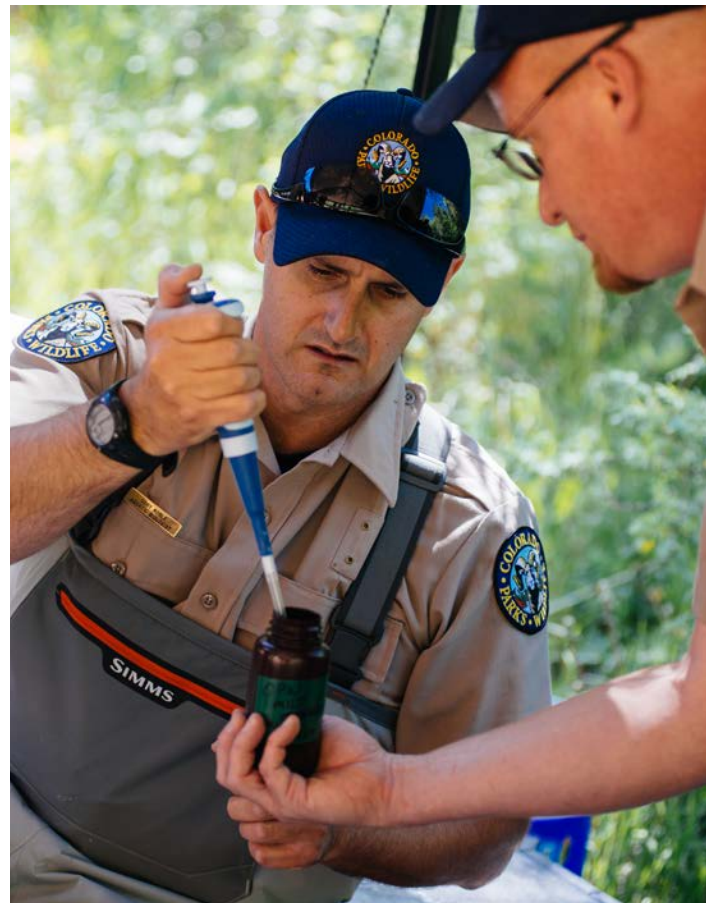
Finally, the Water Section works hard to protect and restore water quality by advocating for protecting aquatic life at the Water Quality Control Commission (WQCC) and as a part of other decision making processes. In FY 23, the Water Section participated in four hearings before the Water Quality Control Commission, including the South Platte Antidegradation hearing, the Arkansas and Rio Grande Issues Formulation hearing, Colorado's Section 303(d) List of Impaired Waters and Monitoring and Evaluation List, and the statewide Lakes Nutrients hearing. At all four hearings, the Water Section staff provided essential data and testimony and successfully advocated for improved water quality standards to protect CPW's interests.

### **Conduct research and monitoring to inform management decisions**

To ensure conservation actions for wildlife resources and habitat are carried out in a scientifically sound and effective way, CPW's research scientists conduct rigorous applied research on priority management issues. During FY 23, CPW's research scientists completed annual progress reports on 51 ongoing avian, aquatic, mammal, and wildlife health research projects. These reports can be found on the respective research units' web pages on the CPW website. In addition, 32 peer-reviewed publications have been published by CPW research personnel over the past year; the updated list of CPW peer-reviewed publications is being added to the main research web page on the CPW website.

In addition, CPW researchers work closely with managers to interpret, communicate, and implement research findings. Research staff performance plans all have individual performance objectives for communicating research results. CPW research units produced a new annual fact sheet highlighting examples of applications of research results for agency management and planning.

One example of how CPW staff collaborate to achieve research and management objectives is the development of a new water quality sampling pilot program where aquatic biologists collect and submit water quality samples at strategic fish sampling locations, as a part of CPW's River Watch Program. During FY 23, eight aquatic biologists signed up for the pilot program. A one-day training on the proper procedures for collecting, submitting, and analyzing water quality samples occurred on April 20, 2023 in Leadville, CO and included several seasonal employees who will assist with sample collection. Biologists have already begun collecting and submitting water samples to the River Watch lab.



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## Goal 2: Manage state parks for world-class outdoor recreation

### Manage facilities and outdoor recreation amenities within state parks to provide positive experiences for Coloradans and visitors

Ensuring our facilities and amenities will continue to provide world-class outdoor recreation sustainably into the future requires thoughtful planning. Creating and maintaining updated management plans at all of our state parks is an important part of this process. However, only a subset of state parks have a current management plan. Staff in the Policy and Planning Unit set a goal to increase the percentage of parks with current management plans from 15% to 30% by the end of FY 24. With the completion of updated plans for Lathrop and Golden Gate state parks, the percentage of parks with an updated management plan increased to 19% at the end of FY 23. Staff are on track to achieve this goal with the planning process already underway at Staunton, Castlewood Canyon, Steamboat Lake and Pearl Lake state parks. In addition, a master plan for Fishers Peak State Park was recently completed, and a great deal of staff resources have been devoted to planning at Sweetwater Lake.

Compiling and studying existing natural and cultural resource information on all Colorado state parks is an integral part of the planning process. CPW's Resource Stewardship Section is responsible for natural and cultural resource inventories, habitat mapping and habitat condition assessments. During FY 23, activities included:

- ▶ Mapping invasive weeds and creating integrated weed management plans for eight state parks
- ▶ Conducting 20 resource surveys for birds, amphibians, reptiles, bats, small mammals, and cultural resources
- ▶ Coordinating volunteers and staff to monitor raptors at 27 parks
- ▶ Developing resource stewardship plans for five state parks, and
- ▶ Contributing to the updated management plans for Lathrop and Golden Gate state parks.

### Explore fiscally sound real estate opportunities for new or expanded state parks

As Colorado's population and interest in outdoor recreation continues to grow, CPW has worked to expand its state park and recreation system. In the last five years, CPW has acquired several properties and is working to develop each new property, as outlined below, some of which has been funded with help from \$14 million from the General Fund allocated in 2021 (House Bill 21-1326).

#### Sweetwater Lake Project

On August 31, 2021 the Forest Service closed on the purchase of the 486-acre Sweetwater Lake area property. The Conservation Fund had purchased the property from a group of private investors a year earlier to hold it for eventual Forest Service purchase. Local governments including counties and towns, commercial entities, non-profit organizations, and individuals alike came together to provide funding and support for this amazing acquisition. A partnership was formed between Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Eagle Valley Land Trust, and USFS White River National Forest to create and implement a long-term plan improving public access to Sweetwater Lake, enhance the

recreation opportunities historically offered in the Sweetwater Lake area and protect the social and natural characteristics of the area. The Sweetwater Partnership is now preparing for the next step in long-term management planning for Sweetwater Lake, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process.

#### Colorado Clays State Recreation Area

Also in 2021, CPW closed on the purchase of the Colorado Clays Shooting Park in Adams County and began managing it as a state recreation area. Located just 30 minutes northeast of Denver and near Barr Lake State Park, Colorado Clays Shooting Park offers both recreational and competitive shooters a wide variety of clay target shooting, including sporting clays, skeet and trap, as well as both rifle and pistol shooting. In 2022, Colorado Clays operated under a successful concession agreement, which was extended into 2023. Work to develop a sustainable operating plan for Colorado Clays is ongoing and expected to be implemented in 2024.

#### Cameo Shooting and Education Complex

The Cameo Shooting and Education Complex (CSEC) is a world-class educational and training facility and a top destination for people to participate in organized shooting competitions, sharpen their skills, or learn about the safe use of firearms. CSEC already provides some of Colorado's finest shooting and archery ranges, and work on the facility continues to progress. The design for Phase 2, which includes the "Campus Complex" was completed in 2022. It will include four classrooms, a wetlands riparian ecology study area, native plant species botanical garden, natural history displays and other immersive educational opportunities for school children and the general public. In FY 23, staff turned their focus to developing marketing materials to help secure large donations and sponsorships to fund the remaining construction of the education complex.



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## Fishers Peak State Park

The 19,200-acre Fishers Peak property was purchased in February 2019 through a collaboration between the City of Trinidad, The Nature Conservancy, The Trust for Public Land, GOCO, and CPW. In April 2020, CPW acquired the land and began the process of developing Colorado's next state park. Several significant milestones have been accomplished in the past three years, including opening 250 acres of the park to the public on October 30, 2020 and finalizing the Master Plan, which serves as an overarching guide for the operation of the park. In FY 23 staff began developing a trail to the top of Fishers Peak, which is slated to be finished in the fall of 2023. Additionally, staff have been working with the Colorado Department of Transportation to secure the entrance road off of Interstate 25, which will facilitate the design and construction of the main entrance, visitor center footprint, campgrounds and other major trailheads by the end of 2023.

In addition, funding from the General Assembly in 2021 added \$20 million of General Fund dollars (Senate Bill 21-112) to support parks infrastructure projects to provide facility and public access improvements at 12 parks statewide by expanding or enhancing facilities that are seeing a great deal of public use. Staff continued to work on these projects throughout FY 23 with several of the projects nearing completion, including electrical upgrades at North Sterling and Jackson Lake state parks, as well as the expansion of Highline Lake State Park to add about 20 campsites and a new day-use area (funded through House Bill 21-1326).

Finally, as opportunities for new state parks and recreation areas continue to develop, staff have begun to update and create guidelines and best practices for the process of opening new areas.

## Enhance technology to provide accessible information and parks products

CPW is taking steps to maintain and manage recreational opportunities at state parks using the latest technology. Ensuring visitation is measured in a consistent and reliable manner has long been a goal of CPW staff, and will be especially important with potential changes in visitation trends due to the Keep Colorado Wild pass, a new annual state park pass launched in January 2023. A partnership with the Volpe National Transportation Systems Center was formed in FY 23 to update the existing inventory of vehicle and pedestrian counters, assist CPW in repairing and purchasing new counters, create a best practices guide on how to install and maintain counters, and develop recommendations for data collection and analysis. Work will continue with Volpe into FY 24. Also in FY 23, staff are also exploring the possibility of using cellular geofencing as a complementary technology to measure visitors' movement patterns within state parks and recreation areas.

As visitation continues to increase at state parks, park managers are increasingly looking to technology to help manage visitor use, especially at state parks that frequently reach capacity. The first step in this process has been thinking through how to define and measure the capacity of a recreation area in terms of the available facilities, ecological conditions, spatial configuration and social considerations. Staff are documenting current visitor capacity issues and thinking through possible solutions for future operations. One such solution is a timed entry reservation system, which is being piloted at Eldorado Canyon State Park during the summer months. The pilot program has had great initial success in reducing crowding at the entrance and parking areas, and the pilot test will continue into 2024. Staff have also been exploring camera systems and other technologies as possible methods of reporting when parking lots reach capacity.

Finally, through a partnership with Rivian, LLC, CPW is installing a series of public electric vehicle chargers throughout the state park system. Twenty electric vehicle charging ports were installed at state parks across the Front Range in FY 23, and more are planned for installation in FY 24.





# Goal 3: Achieve and maintain financial sustainability

## Identify potential new and broader sources of funding

Diverse, stable, long-term funding that is equitable and supported by a broad set of stakeholders is important to the success of CPW in the future. CPW has been exploring ways to achieve and maintain financial sustainability by expanding the agency's relevance to a broader audience and identifying new sources of revenue. CPW and DNR worked throughout FY 21 to develop and build support for Senate Bill 21-249, legislation creating the Keep Colorado Wild Pass. Starting on January 1, 2023, the Keep Colorado Wild Pass is available to Coloradans when they register their vehicles and grants access to all Colorado state parks. After just the first six months over 769,000 Coloradans have the Keep Colorado Wild Pass, which is about 30% of the total eligible vehicle registrations generating over \$22 million.

Additionally, over the last two years CPW has made consistent progress towards formalizing a Philanthropy Program. This effort includes both raising funds and distributing donated funds in support of agency programs and projects. Staff continue to build awareness and educate the public about CPW's activities and funding structure. They have also created informational websites that encourage and streamline the donation process. Encouraging donations through events has also been successful. The CPW On Tap events, which were held at participating breweries in conjunction with celebrations for the 125th Anniversary of CPW, helped contribute funds and also encouraged engagement in communities across the state.

Staff have also been working with OIT and other internal stakeholders to implement a comprehensive software system to better support fundraising efforts, as well as streamline the internal process for accepting donations and distributing funds. More than half of the donations CPW currently receives are restricted to specific programs. For the remaining unrestricted funds, a two-channel system is being established to distribute these funds, including an internal application process whereby staff can apply to fund projects with donor dollars.

All of these efforts have increased donor support consistently each year. In FY 23, private donations totaled over \$860,000 and add-on or round-up donations added to license and pass purchases totaled over \$300,000, exceeding the overall goal of \$985,000.

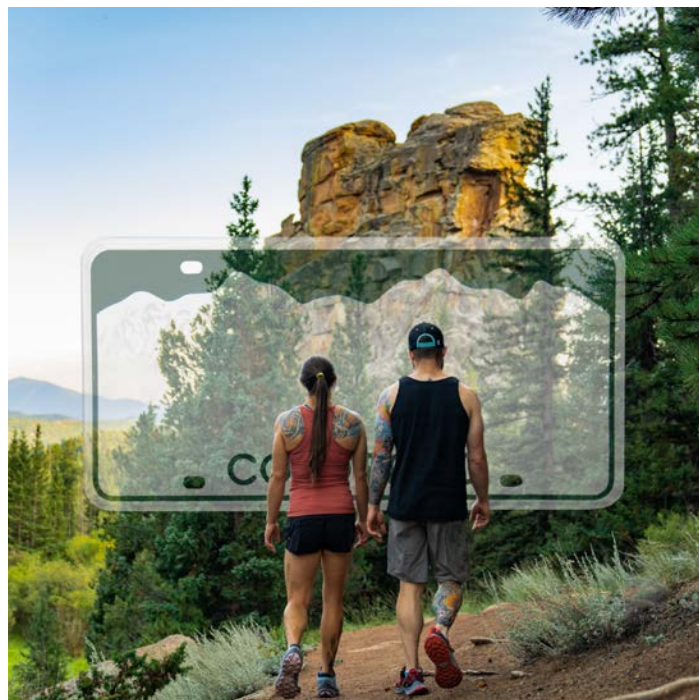
## Maintain existing sources of funding

CPW receives funding from myriad sources. Given changes made to the parks pass system with the advent of the Keep Colorado Wild Pass, Financial Services staff were interested in monitoring revenue from both existing passes and the new Keep Colorado Wild Pass to ensure sufficient revenue going forward. They set a goal to increase all park pass entry fee revenue from the FY 22 baseline of \$25 million to \$27 million in FY 23 and \$30 million in FY 24. They have far surpassed their target in FY 23, with park pass and entry fee revenue totaling nearly \$41 million.

Financial Services staff also need to ensure the annual budget maintains "enterprise status," in that the revenue received from the State's General Fund is less than 10%. Financial Services calculates the Divisions' compliance through actual calculations and estimates in future years. CPW is not at risk of losing enterprise status in FY 23 or in the near future based on actual figures or projections.

## Deploy financial and workforce resources responsibly

The responsible use of resources also contributes to the Agency's ability to achieve and maintain financial sustainability over time. One way that CPW documents the use of these resources is through the annual Future Generations Act Report. This report is made available to the legislature, commission, staff and the public by November 1 of each year and details the steps CPW has taken during the prior year to effectively, efficiently, and responsibly manage resources. CPW continues to make excellent progress on the goals outlined in the Future Generations Act, and Policy & Planning Section staff has consistently reported on these goals since the first annual report was published in FY 19. The latest progress report is available [online](#).



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# Goal 4: Maintain dedicated personnel and volunteers

## **Capitalize on the knowledge and experience of all personnel**

Employees go through different stages as they engage with CPW, moving from initial attraction and recruitment to onboarding, development and retention, and then finally to separation. Recognizing that the needs of employees change as they move through the “employee lifecycle,” staff set a goal of gathering data about employee satisfaction through surveys at various key moments in an employee’s career. The hope was to use the results of these surveys to develop better tailored training programs for employees at different stages in their career. In FY 23, Organizational Development Section staff have had several conversations with the Department of Natural Resources Human Resources Department about this objective, and are currently working through issues with employee privacy and confidentiality that make it challenging to consistently survey employees at various stages. Section staff are looking into various solutions, including allowing employees to opt out of surveys, but work towards this objective may be limited as a result.

## **Recruit and develop a highly qualified and diverse workforce**

### **Identify opportunities/challenges for recruiting and retaining full-time staff**

CPW regularly looks for ways to recruit and retain a highly-qualified and diverse workforce. Specifically, staff would like to grow the pool of qualified applicants for the park manager and wildlife manager positions, which are hard-to-fill positions, by 10% annually over the next two years. To accomplish this goal, in FY 23, staff attended more than 23 career fairs and career-related outreach events, and developed a regular posting schedule on LinkedIn, which increased engagement by over 500% and increased followers by over 90%. Staff also updated the park ranger and wildlife manager career pages on the CPW website, and added more information about opportunities to “ride along” with parks or wildlife officers. At least 45 community members participated in ride along opportunities in FY 23.

Additionally, the agency made significant changes to the hiring process for these officer positions. In 2021, CPW’s process took approximately eight months from when positions were announced to when new employees were hired. The process also required prospective employees to make four separate trips to the Denver area prior to a conditional job offer. In 2022, CPW reduced the time from job announcement to when conditional job offers were made to just 1.5 months. The in-person steps of the hiring process were all done within about one week, and many applicants were able to accomplish this during just one trip. CPW also secured a waiver to accept applications from out-of-state applicants for these positions, and launched a digital ad campaign to promote the openings. These digital ads drove over 24,000 new users to the application web page, and generated over 960,000 impressions and over 55,000 clicks. The officer recruitment campaign was targeted towards residents in Colorado, as well as residents in California, Texas, Florida, West Virginia, Illinois, and Michigan.

As a result of these efforts, CPW saw significant growth in the number of people who applied for the park ranger and wildlife manager positions in 2022, with a 111% increase in park ranger applications and a 143% increase in wildlife manager applications

over the previous year. Also promising, the increases in the applicant pool were maintained throughout the various hiring process steps.

The Section also continues to identify ways to strengthen its paid internship programs as a means to recruit future employees. In FY 23, staff worked to increase engagement in the Youth Internship Program (YIP) by implementing monthly orientations, developing new resources, coordinating events, implementing engagement and exit surveys, and increasing opportunities for job shadowing and professional development. They also coordinated two resume and cover letter writing workshops for YIP interns and created a centralized YIP training and development budget to connect interns to conferences, certifications, training, online coursework, and professional memberships. A reflection of these efforts, twelve interns who worked in FY 22 are now full-time employees with CPW.

Organizational Development Section staff also sought to support staff in developing inclusive job descriptions, equitable hiring practices, opportunities to cultivate diverse applicant pools, and creating an inclusive work environment. Organizational Development Section staff facilitated six Insights Discovery workshops to help teams work together and communicate with one another better, thus contributing to better retention and a more inclusive work environment. They also led an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)-focused leadership and communication workshop for the Northeast Region. Additionally, they are developing a Recruitment and Outreach Toolkit for CPW staff which contains a career fair calendar, a list of recruitment avenues, recruitment presentations, resources on inclusive hiring practices, and tips for developing equitable and inclusive job descriptions.

## **Improve organizational effectiveness by investing in leadership training programs and encouraging professional growth**

CPW also takes seriously the importance of investing in its highly qualified employees. To advance this goal, the Organizational Development Section staff are developing a pilot program to promote peer coaching and mentoring starting in January 2024. In FY 23, staff researched and documented ideas on what an agency-wide program could look like and began discussions with the Aquatic Section about piloting the mentorship program in fish hatcheries. Staff also began meeting with the Law Enforcement Unit to establish a peer support mental health program at CPW, and plan to train the core support team in the coming months. Staff are also working to design and deploy a new adaptive leadership program for the agency by January 2024.

The Organizational Development Section staff have been sending out email communications about training opportunities to CPW staff quarterly, and are working with FranklinCovey to bring in training options for supervisors and individual contributors. Finally, Section staff have developed a system for reviewing applications/statements of interest for leadership training programs in CPW, greatly facilitating the opportunities for this type of training for all staff.



## Work with partner organizations to create career pathways

Partner organizations throughout Colorado are also important sources of future talent for CPW. To help strengthen those connections, staff implemented a pilot internship program with two partner organizations: Colorado Youth Corps Association (CYCA) and Hispanic Access Foundation. In FY 23, CPW staff placed three CYCA interns and two Hispanic Access Foundation interns with CPW mentors at CPW locations across the state. As a part of this pilot program CPW staff developed scopes of work, policies, processes, and evaluation materials.

They also maintained partnerships with Environmental Learning for Kids (ELK) to provide career exploration and skills development opportunities to young adults from diverse backgrounds.

CPW has been working to promote agency awareness and future growth in candidate pools by developing high quality resources and experiences for both educators and students in Career and Technology Education (CTE) programs through partnerships with formal education organizations such as Colorado Community College Systems (CCCS), Colorado Department of Education, school districts, community colleges and universities. In FY 23 they created an annual teacher externship program to build career awareness and relevant hands-on curriculum for the classroom. Staff piloted the first teacher externship with two teachers from Littleton Public Schools and two teachers from Jefferson County Public schools. During the 2-day externship, they visited Bellvue-Watson Hatchery, the River Watch Water Quality Lab, the Aquatic Toxicology Lab, and the Aquatic Nuisance Species program. Feedback from the teachers and staff involved will be used to develop the outline for future teacher externships, which will use a cohort framework.

Additionally, staff set a goal of developing a new Career and Technology Education (CTE) pathway plan in natural resources with one school district by June 2024. In FY 23, they worked on an advisory group for CCCS and have been working closely with Littleton Public Schools to develop their first course which will be available to students in the fall of 2023. Jefferson County Public Schools is also beginning to plan a natural resource course that will be co-taught between science and math teachers. Staff continue to work on the development of the content, and the course will be open to students for the 2024-2025 school year. The goal is then to bring other high schools across the district on board with the course.

## Attract inspired volunteers committed to CPW's mission

CPW's volunteers are essential to achieving CPW's mission and serve in a variety of roles, such as camp hosting, education and outreach, community science, habitat and trail work, maintenance and construction, wildlife projects, customer service, and many more. CPW's Volunteer Program provides recruitment, screening, training, retention, support and resources for state parks, wildlife areas, hatcheries, educational programs, and CPW's administrative offices throughout Colorado. Ensuring the number of volunteers and their hours are tracked and reported consistently is a continuous challenge. In FY 23, volunteer coordinators provided daily support to volunteers and staff to ensure they know how to use the volunteer database to track volunteer activity consistently and accurately. Staff also sent our bi-annual, personalized "call-for-hours" emails to remind all volunteers to record their time. The Volunteer Database also includes tools that automatically calculate volunteer hours for scheduled activities and shifts. For FY 23, approximately 4,681 volunteers contributed 297,305 hours of time. This is an equivalent of 143 FTE and an economic impact of over \$10.2 million.



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Developing staff skills and knowledge on how to best engage volunteers is essential to effectively achieve CPW's mission. During FY 23, staff implemented three training opportunities, including: a full-day training on volunteer and partner engagement for 22 new park rangers and wildlife managers at the Calwood Education Center; the annual Education and Volunteer Training, which focused on deepening staff's tools and techniques for managing their volunteers with 50 attendees; and a session at the annual Seasonal Naturalist Training focused on volunteer management and inclusive programs for 40 attendees. Participants gave very positive reviews of all three of the training opportunities.

Staff also conduct an annual volunteer and staff survey to assess experiences. The results help to inform statewide and regional strategies, such as how often to communicate with volunteers (monthly) and through what method (email), as well as how to recognize volunteers. In FY 23, there were 954 volunteer respondents and 117 staff respondents. The results indicate that among volunteers:

- ▶ 92% enjoy volunteering with CPW
- ▶ 94% are satisfied with their experience
- ▶ 91% agree that their volunteer service is meaningful and makes a positive difference
- ▶ 91% would recommend volunteering with CPW to a friend or family member.

Additionally 58% of volunteer respondents purchased a hunting or fishing license, 42% purchased a state park pass, 47% purchased merchandise, 36% reserved campsites, and 29% donated via in-kind goods.

The results are similarly positive for staff indicating that:

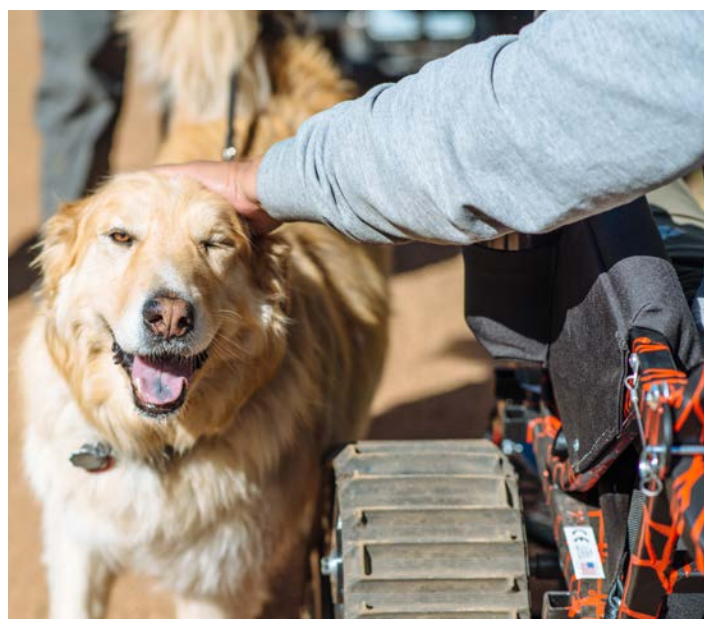
- ▶ 87% agree that volunteers are partners in achieving their work.
- ▶ 90% are satisfied with their experience working with volunteers
- ▶ 87% agree that volunteering helps people understand our mission and agency better.

Ensuring CPW engages the next generations of volunteers in an inclusive and accessible manner is also of strategic importance. To help accomplish this objective, in FY 23, staff conducted research on youth volunteerism trends. Additionally, a consultant from the Minnesota Alliance for Volunteer Advancement reviewed and proposed revisions to both the Volunteer Program Staff Manual and Volunteer Handbook. These resources have been updated and are pending review by Regional Volunteer Coordinators. Final resources are expected to go out to staff and volunteers sometime in July 2023.

Finally, staff sought to foster partnerships with volunteer organizations, agencies, and groups to actively recruit new volunteers. Among other activities in FY 23, staff deepened the relationship with the Friends of State Parks groups and developed a new partnership with the Office of Information Technology to coordinate a series of volunteer projects across the state. Staff have also been working to establish a partnership with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, with the goal of placing people with disabilities in paid and volunteer positions with CPW.



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# Goal 5: Increase awareness and trust for CPW

## **Communicate information about CPW's mission, funding and key programs**

A central way that CPW increases the public's awareness of the agency, as well as highlights CPW's relevance in the lives of Coloradans and visitors, is through the use of strategic communication. The development and implementation of salient, targeted communication strategies create brand consistency and reinforce connection with CPW's mission and work. In 2022, Communications Section staff created new campaigns around "responsible recreation" and "fire/drought" to enhance media mentions and educate the public. Staff track the impact of these strategic campaigns through a software program called Critical Mention. For example, in 2022, CPW received 133 media mentions on topics related to "responsible recreation," and the coverage reached a national television audience of over 406,000, a total radio audience of over 764,000, and a total online news audience of over 16 million people.

Similarly, Communications staff sought to increase media mentions of existing campaigns, by 10% annually. Strategic use of the "bear aware" media kit increased CPW's media mentions by approximately 84% in 2023. The "leave young wildlife alone" campaign also saw an increase in media coverage of 310% in 2023, and the "aquatic nuisance species" campaign increased media mentions by 25% in 2023.

Creating a branding and communications toolkit, encompassing guidelines for various types of communication efforts for staff, has been an ongoing goal. While this project was delayed due to staffing changes within the Information and Education Branch, it has been restarted and refocused recently with the help of new team members. The toolkit will consolidate resources, and informational webinars will be offered to staff to help to ensure the consistent communication of CPW's mission.

Responsive and timely communication with both external and internal stakeholders is also essential. Towards that end, the Licensing Section continued its use of the Power BI software to create easy-to-use visualizations of license and pass sales data. During FY 23, a new optional ethnicity question was added to the IPAWS customer purchase flow, increasing the information about the demographics of CPW's customers. Staff hope to adapt data from the current Power BI reports into simple annual visualizations that can be shared with the public, but that project has been delayed due to staff turnover.

## **Provide opportunities for stakeholder and public involvement**

CPW strives to engage stakeholders from various interests in planning and decision making processes. The agency uses several tools including public comment forms, newsletters, educational outreach, town halls, virtual meetings, as well as partner networks and social media to enable two-way conversations with thousands of Coloradans and visitors alike. One key communication channel, CPW's website, will soon undergo an update. During FY 23, CPW completed a full audit of the existing website. Staff also started the process of working with a consultant to develop a website that will be focused on the "customer journey," and continue to work with staff to develop resources that will more effectively meet customers' needs.

Additionally, CPW has begun to better utilize coordinated multiple-channel communications, including website, blog, social

media, eNews and more, to increase awareness of virtual and in-person public participation opportunities. The agency leverages platforms such as Zoom, Facebook live, and YouTube live, often in concert, to expand both meeting access opportunities and capacity. The multi-channel approach also increases opportunity for dialogue with constituents by allowing staff to support question and answer opportunities whenever possible. CPW continues to review current accessibility challenges across all platforms, and regularly reviews options to improve compliance with standards outlined in House Bill 21-1110.

Finding effective ways to involve broader, more diverse audiences is crucial to CPW's mission and strategic goals. During FY 21, CPW adopted the Community Partnership Principles Guide, which was developed by the Colorado Equity Alliance. This Guide provides best practices to advance inclusive and equitable community engagement practices and foster participation from traditionally underrepresented populations in decision making. In the past year, CPW has applied the Community Partnership Principles across several projects such as the marketing of the Keep Colorado Wild Pass where CPW partnered with a contractor, Upstream Consulting, to engage with disproportionately impacted communities through focus groups held throughout the state. The engagement directly resulted in CPW proposing revised eligibility and documentation requirements for both the income-eligible Centennial Pass and other income-eligible CPW products, making it easier to demonstrate eligibility.

CPW's wolf restoration planning process was a multi-year effort that culminated in a final wolf restoration and management plan being adopted in May 2023. Community Partnership Principles were applied throughout the process, including the robust public input opportunities provided following the release of the draft plan. Communities throughout the state were engaged through in-person and virtual public meetings that provided opportunities for public comment and engagement. Additionally, CPW provided professionally translated wolf planning materials, including the advisory group reports, draft wolf plan, and final wolf plan, in Spanish.

Similarly, when modifying State Wildlife Area (SWA) regulations, CPW worked alongside partners from community organizations to identify possible changes for both general and property-specific SWA regulations. In order to both explain the proposed changes and gauge the general public's opinion on the changes, CPW developed interactive pages on the Division's public engagement site, Engage CPW. Information was presented in a format that was easy to follow for the reader. Comments made by the public were publicly viewable on Engage CPW to increase transparency in the decision making process.

## **Increase public awareness about the importance of wildlife management**

The Colorado Wildlife Council (CWC) exists to educate the general public about the benefits of wildlife, wildlife management, and wildlife-related recreation opportunities in Colorado, while in turn, generating increased support for CPW's mission. By statute, the CWC is responsible for overseeing the design of a comprehensive media-based public information program to accomplish these objectives. Funding for CWC's work is generated through a \$1.50 surcharge on Colorado hunting and fishing licenses.

In April 2023, CWC approved the FY 24 budget with R&R Partners (contracted advertising agency). The Council also approved the recommended campaign (A Day In The Life Of A Wildlife Biologist) which was filmed in June 2023 and will go live in August 2023. The new campaign, based on extensive research efforts, will target new, refined audiences. CWC has expanded their partnership with The Colorado Rockies, which included a new interactive mural at Coors Field and increased interaction on social media. The CWC Outreach team was successful in hiring a temporary event coordinator and two temporary staff to attend events. The Outreach Team piloted multiple event sponsorships across the state to promote CWC and has promoted the CWC newsletter, increasing subscribers by over 250%.

Finally, better engaging anglers about fishery management, fish stocking, and potential regulation changes is a goal of Aquatic Section staff. In partnership with the Information and Education Branch, the Aquatic Section staff provided additional content and ideas to freshen up the weekly fishing report, including updating the fish stocking report and the individual sportfish management strategies. Staff continue to look for the best pathway to share proposed fishing regulation changes as the new website is being developed.



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# Goal 6: Connect people to Colorado's outdoors

## **Broaden the access and variety of recreation opportunities available to Coloradans and visitors**

The Outdoor Equity Grant Program was established in 2021 to provide funding to support opportunities for youth and their families from communities who have been historically excluded, so that they have equitable opportunities to get involved in recreational activities and experience Colorado's outdoors. The Board hosted two grant application processes in 2022, in April and August. Throughout the first year, the Board met frequently to establish grant protocols, procedures, and solicitation processes. By August 2022, the Board created a grant application that gathered information from applicants that is crucial to investment decisions, including equity and inclusion criteria. Throughout both application periods, the Board received over 300 applications, totaling to over \$23 million in requests. Grant awards were announced in July and December. In its first year of operation, the Outdoor Equity Grant Program awarded nearly \$3.1 million to 69 organizations. In Spring 2023, the Board undertook a values creation effort with a facilitator to further refine eligibility criteria, application process, and grant selection and award process. The Board's values were finalized in July 2023 and will help guide investment decisions this fall.

Trails throughout the state also help to connect residents and visitors to nature and provide safe access to recreational opportunities while protecting Colorado's resources. CPW's State Trails Program supports trail management, maintenance and improvement through a number of grant programs. The State Trails Program continues to emphasize maintenance projects for both non-motorized and off-highway vehicle (OHV) trail grant projects to address the increased need to repair and improve existing trails, as well as address resource impacts due to increased visitation on public lands. In FY 23, they funded over 148,000 trail crew hours through trail grants, exceeding the target of 145,000 hours.

Another way that CPW encourages Coloradans and visitors to experience the outdoors, while recreating responsibly, is by offering educational and interpretive programs. In October 2020, an activities database was launched to allow CPW field staff to consistently report data on program attendance to better gauge program quality and interest. However, improving the reporting and tracking process for education and interpretation programming remains a goal of the Education Section staff. Despite initial progress towards this objective, a lack of time and changing priorities and staff members has meant there has not been as much of a focus on this objective as anticipated in FY 23.

## **Provide facilities, infrastructure and access to support opportunities for premier outdoor recreation experiences**

CPW manages more than 1,400 facilities across Colorado, including buildings, shooting ranges, dams, roads, trails and other constructed facilities that provide opportunities for recreation, education and research. CPW owns and manages many physical assets throughout the state that require ongoing maintenance and care. During FY 19 and FY 20, CPW's Capital Development Section created an inventory of buildings and facilities to determine existing asset conditions and to prioritize maintenance needs and funding levels into the future. During FY 21, staff made refinements to the system using GIS to better align the information in the system with the assets on the ground. Staff were also trained on ArcGIS Online and other tools to ensure

that the asset, utility, and structure inventories are accurate. During FY 23, staff set the goal to expand data collection tools for field staff around the state, and recently purchased tablets to allow field staff to inventory and assess conditions directly in the field. The results have been promising with 680 new asset records added into the Asset Management system.

Additionally, in the past six months, significant effort has been put into updating the inspections on the existing assets, with 387 inspections conducted. This information helps to determine the existing maintenance backlog across the agency and guides future budgeting of capital funds. Significant work has also been undertaken to align the risk management system with the asset management system, providing essential information on managing insured assets.

CPW continues to make significant investments in large capital construction projects as well. Among CPW's highest infrastructure priorities is the management and repair of the 115 state-operated dam structures. In July 2021, funding became available to hire a consulting firm to update the Screening Level Risk Analysis (SLRA) for all high and significant hazard dams. The SLRA provides critical information CPW's Engineers need to plan for risk-based repairs and preventative maintenance. Work by the consultant to update the SLRA was ongoing in FY 23.

Modernization of CPW's aging hatchery system, dating back over 100 years, is essential to its continued operation for the next 100+ years. In 2019, CPW began a multi-phase process to modernize the hatchery system. In FY 22, the Hatchery Section began work on Phase III of the Hatchery Modernization Plan. Phase III provides a comprehensive design for modernizing Mt. Shavano Fish Hatchery. After severing ties with the initial design consultant due to insufficient deliverables, CPW is finalizing a contract with a new design consultant. The design will be completed by summer 2024.

In FY 23, the Hatchery Section also completed a large capital project to replace old, brittle plumbing and valves in the Pitkin Hatchery building, which will ensure a more reliable water supply to fish and eggs in the building. Work has also continued on the installation of new supply wells at the Bellvue-Watson, Mt. Ouray, and Native Species Restoration hatcheries to improve and secure water supplies for these facilities. The Hatchery Section has also recently replaced failing drain valves at the Durango Hatchery and refurbished a supply well at the Roaring Judy Hatchery.

Another important aspect of supporting access to outdoor recreational opportunities is providing the technological infrastructure to make getting outside as convenient as possible. The My CPW app was launched to the public on March 1, 2022 and continues to have enhancements made, including adding biometric log-in capabilities, a link to sign-up for CPW's e-newsletter, and the addition of the Keep Colorado Wild Pass. The Licensing Section staff also set the goal of reducing the number of licenses that need to be reversed after the big game draw due to customers failing to pay for them by 50%. As a result of increased notifications and clearer instructions in the customer user interface, between 2021 and 2023, customers who failed to pay for big game licenses fell by almost 1,500, just short of the 50% reduction target.



CPW's Business Operations Section also continues a plan for infrastructure upgrades and expansion that will improve bandwidth at 15 percent of CPW's network-enabled sites. Staff have made many improvements to CPW's information technology infrastructure over the past year, including replacing out of date cabling, routers and switches at the Lamar Area Office, North Sterling State Park, Ridgway State Park, Steamboat Area Office, Montrose Area Office, and 6060 Broadway Headquarters. New connectivity was also established at the Dune Ridge SWA, the Pueblo Hunter Education Building and the Rifle Gap Shop, and connectivity was improved at Bosque SWA, State Forest State Park, Bellvue-Watson Fish Hatchery, Crawford State Park, Mueller State Park, and Vega State Park. In addition, a project is underway to update all of CPW's wireless access points and move them to the Department of Natural Resources enterprise wireless controller.

### **Foster partnerships to enhance recreation opportunities**

CPW's Partners Program is an outward-facing effort that brings together diverse interests from across the state, representing a large spectrum of the outdoor industry, in support of the agency's mission to manage wildlife, provide a quality state parks system, and inspire people to be active stewards of Colorado's natural resources. The Partners Program helps to foster alignment, awareness and trust among CPW and its many partners.

In FY 23, Partners Program staff are working with Civic Consulting Collaborative (CCC) to host listening sessions and virtual engagements to strengthen overall partner relationships across the state. CCC will facilitate six listening sessions for our partners during August 2023. CCC is also conducting a gap analysis to identify who we are working with and where there are big or important gaps, and they will conduct a series of more in-depth interviews with partners. Finally, a virtual survey was also sent out recently to better understand CPW's partner network.

Within CPW's Partners Program exists the Colorado Outdoor Partnership (CO-OP). The CO-OP is a collaboration of organizations representing the intersection of conservation, outdoor recreation, and interests related to land, water, and wildlife in Colorado. In the spring of 2023, CPW announced the recipients of the fourth round of Outdoor Regional Partnership grant funding, bringing the number of regional partnerships up to 16. CPW also hosted an annual Outdoor Partnership Summit in April 2023 to share best practices and enhance alignment across regional and statewide planning efforts with 100% participation among regional partnerships.

### **The spring 2023 grant recipients include:**

- ▶ Envision Chaffee County
- ▶ Metro Denver Nature Alliance
- ▶ Montelores Coalition
- ▶ NoCo PLACES 2050 (Northern Colorado People, Land, Access, Conservation, Ecosystems, and Sustainability)
- ▶ Pikes Peak Outdoor Recreation Alliance
- ▶ Routt Recreation & Conservation Roundtable
- ▶ San Luis Valley Great Outdoors (SLV GO!)
- ▶ Southwest Colorado Conservation & Outdoor Recreation Roundtable
- ▶ Two Rivers Recreation and Conservation Roundtable



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CPW also seeks to support safe, responsible, and accessible outdoor recreation through multi-agency marketing and education campaigns. In FY 23, staff worked closely with GOCO, the Governor's Office and key CO-OP and Regional Partnership Initiative members to discuss the development of Colorado's Outdoor Strategy, including the need for coordinated messaging around responsible recreation in the coming years. Staff also renewed contracts with Leave No Trace and the Colorado Tourism Office for sharing messaging and materials across platforms. Specific campaign planning was delayed based on staff changes and other large-scale initiatives. However, "responsible recreation" campaigns were created and shared.

**Promote the value of CPW's mission and services to expand awareness, grow CPW's volunteer network and inspire stewardship**

With the goal of fostering active stewardship while experiencing the outdoors, CPW refines its messaging and communication to resonate across various audiences. In FY 23, the focus turned to clearly communicating the opportunity, benefits and pricing for the Keep Colorado Wild Pass and the importance of participating in conservation. Staff began marketing the Keep Colorado Wild Pass in July 2022, six months in advance of its launch. This included a website and a \$400,000 campaign in print, media, and paid social media advertising. Custom kits for the Department of Motor Vehicles and county offices were sent in August 2022. Also, marketing for the Columbine pass (a version of the KCW pass for income-eligible residents) was launched in February 2023 to both rural and urban markets. In June of 2023, CPW also secured a media planner to assist in broadening the media scope for FY 24.

**Become familiar with the needs, interests and expectations of residents and visitors who are new to outdoor recreation**

CPW is constantly trying to better understand and adapt to the current demand for outdoor recreation activities in Colorado. With a goal of offering hands-on training that meets current recreational demands and trends, CPW's Boating Safety Program offered two paddle events with Latino Outdoors in FY 23. The first one was at Cherry Creek State Park (held in conjunction with Barr Lake State Park staff) where participants learned how to kayak. The second event was at Chatfield State Park (held in conjunction with 5280 SUP), where participants learned how to stand up paddleboard.

Better understanding how to measure participant satisfaction has also been a goal of CPW's. In FY 22, the Education Section pilot tested three methods for implementing

participant surveys at several events across the state. Staff found the completion rates were highest when cell service was available or a direct link to the survey was emailed to participants.

In FY 23, they set the goal of collecting and establishing baseline measures of participant satisfaction. While work began with the Regional Education Coordinators to improve their confidence in using the standard survey tool, adoption by staff has been slow, and efforts continue to work towards staff using it at all of their events.



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