Acknowledgements

Development of the 2015 Colorado Parks and Wildlife Strategic Plan was made possible with input and support of the public, key stakeholders and partners, the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission (Commission), the Department of Natural Resources, and Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) staff.

**Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission**
Appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the State Senate for four-year terms, the eleven members of the Commission consist of citizens representing Colorado’s Agriculture, Parks, and Sportspersons, plus two Members at Large. The Executive Director of the Department of Natural Resources and the Commissioner of Agriculture also serve on the Commission as ex-officio members. The Commission sets regulations and policies for Colorado’s parks and wildlife programs and was actively involved throughout the strategic plan process.

**Colorado Parks and Wildlife Leadership Team and Staff**
Members of CPW’s Leadership Team were involved at key junctures in the strategic planning process and assisted in public workshops, strategic plan visioning sessions, and overall development of the plan.

The Policy and Planning Unit, which facilitated the drafting of this plan, would also like to thank all the CPW staff who assisted in developing the plan. Staff assisted with workshops and provided expertise to inform the drafting of objectives, strategies and benchmarks for success. Their support made the development of the strategic plan possible.
Executive Summary

The 2015 Colorado Parks and Wildlife Strategic Plan (Plan) outlines Colorado Parks and Wildlife’s (CPW) mission, vision statement, goals, and objectives. This Plan presents a roadmap and understanding for where CPW is headed in the future. The Plan was developed with input from the public, stakeholders, Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission (Commission) and CPW staff.

The Plan summarizes several of the pertinent issues that CPW will face in the future. These include but are not limited to a growing population, changes in demographics, and recreation trends and preferences. To develop the Plan, a review of existing data on demographic trends, recreation trends and customer satisfaction was completed. CPW also conducted statewide engagement to gather input from the general public, stakeholders, the Commission, and staff regarding what these groups desire as the future direction of the agency.

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

Goal 1 | Conserve wildlife and habitat to ensure healthy sustainable populations and ecosystems.

Goal 2 | Manage state parks for world class outdoor recreation.

Goal 3 | Achieve and maintain financial sustainability.

Goal 4 | Maintain dedicated personnel and volunteers.

Goal 5 | Increase awareness and trust for CPW.

Goal 6 | Connect people to Colorado’s outdoors.

The Plan is high-level and intended to be a living document, one that will be updated as needed. The goals, objectives and strategies are also high-level and intended to guide the creation and execution of operation and implementation plans. Operation plans will be reviewed and updated by staff every three to five years and implementation plans will be prepared annually.

Mission Statement:

“To perpetuate the wildlife resources of the state, provide a quality state parks system, and 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 (12) (b)).

Vision Statement:

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

On June 26, 2011, Governor Hickenlooper signed into law Senate Bill 11-208 which merged the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation and the Division of Wildlife to become Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW). The purpose of this merger was to find efficiencies, to ensure greater long-term financial viability, and to improve opportunities for outdoor recreation in Colorado.¹

CPW is funded primarily through user fees, Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) grants, and federal and state grants. CPW manages 42 state parks that encompass 220,385 acres as well as 346 state wildlife areas (678,949 acres). During fiscal year 2013/2014, state parks had 11,948,406 visitors, and CPW sold 476,626 hunting licenses, 1,008,245 fishing licenses, and 77,200 combination (hunting and fishing) licenses. That same year, volunteers donated 298,150 hours of service in education and stewardship activities. State parks and other CPW properties provide over 700 miles of motorized and non-motorized trails, and boating opportunities are available at 32 parks.

Accounting for an estimated $34.5 billion annually in total economic impact, wildlife and outdoor recreation represent important parts of Colorado’s heritage, quality of life, and economy. Hunting, angling, wildlife viewing, and state park visitation contribute roughly $6.1 billion annually in economic effects statewide.² CPW has statutory and regulatory authority for over 960 native species, including mammals, birds, fish, reptiles, amphibians, mollusks, and crustaceans. CPW manages the largest elk herd in North America, with an estimated population of 264,000 animals. The agency also manages a variety of other species for hunting and trapping, including nine other big game species and 28 small game species. More than 90 million sport fish are hatched and stocked into Colorado waters annually by CPW’s 19 state fish hatcheries and rearing units. Coloradans have fishing access to over 2,000 natural lakes, 800 reservoirs, and 9,500 miles of streams. CPW is also charged with conservation of federally listed species and species of greatest conservation need.³ CPW conservation activities include mammal, fish and amphibian breeding programs, land agreements, habitat restoration, and reintroduction efforts.

³ Species of Greatest Conservation Need are those identified in the State Wildlife Action Plan and listed as a federal candidate, threatened or endangered species under the ESA; Classified as state endangered or threatened species, or species of special concern; Global ranking scores of G1, G2 or G3 by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program; Identified as conservation priorities through a range-wide status assessment or assessment of large taxonomic divisions; Assigned state ranking scores of S1 or S2 and a global ranking score of G4 by the Colorado Natural Heritage Program.
Mission

“To perpetuate the wildlife resources of the state, provide a quality state parks system, and 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 (12) (b)).

Vision

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

Management Principles

Management principles are the core values and beliefs that guide CPW in achieving its mission and making decisions at all levels of the organization.

Leadership
• Provide leadership to conserve Colorado’s outdoor heritage, economic future and quality of life.

Public Trust and Accountability
• Prioritize public trust and accountability whenever possible.

Science-Based Management Decisions
• Be a national leader in biological and natural resource sciences. Use science to inform management decisions.

Stewardship
• Be stewards of CPW properties, land and water.
• Sustain habitat for healthy, abundant and diverse wildlife populations while supporting wildlife-related uses.

Communities
• Serve communities throughout Colorado, recognizing the value parks and wildlife bring to local economies and quality of life.

Partnerships
• Build and maintain partnerships that enhance capacity to deliver CPW’s mission.

Customer Service
• Provide excellent service to the public in all interactions.

Communication
• Provide interpretive programs and environmental education to enhance the public’s role as stewards, promote outdoor recreation and raise awareness for the importance of wildlife management.

Valued Staff
• Support a culture of collaboration, innovation and commitment to the agency’s mission and assist employees to reach their full potential.

Diversity
• Ensure CPW programs and workforce reflects Colorado’s diverse demographics.
Core Competencies

The core competencies listed below are a set of essential functions where CPW excels. These functions aid CPW in achieving its mission.

**Natural Resource and Recreation Management**
- Manage wildlife, lands, natural resources and outdoor recreation.
- Protect and enhance habitat and water for the benefit of wildlife and citizens.
- Provide science and biological expertise.
- Supply expertise in trail construction and maintenance.

**Public Service and Outreach**
- Provide outdoor opportunities for Colorado’s diverse population.
- Provide essential natural resource and outdoor recreation education.
- Represent Colorado’s parks and wildlife values at state and national levels.
- Maintain and build a statewide network of volunteers focused on natural resource stewardship and education.
- Provide exceptional customer service.

**Safety and Security**
- Provide law enforcement off pavement, in parks, on waterways, and in local communities.
- Regulate wildlife, natural resources, and outdoor recreation.
- Maintain public safety and assist in search and rescue efforts.

**Positive Economic Impacts**
- Support and diversify the economic base of communities by providing outdoor recreation opportunities, funding for local projects, and statewide staff expertise.

Planning Process

The Plan presents a vision for where CPW is headed in the future, developed through a combination of the following key steps:

**Collect, Review and Synthesize Data and Existing Information**
The best available data on state trends, user-group preferences, natural resources, and outdoor recreation (e.g., hunting, angling, park visitation) was analyzed and considered early in the planning process. This data included but was not limited to the 2014 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, CPW’s 2013 Customer and Market Trends Report, CPW’s Path Forward, and the 2014 GOCO strategic planning effort.

**Parks and Wildlife Commission**
Commissioners were integral to the formulation of the Plan. Four strategic planning workshops were held with Commissioners to support visioning and drafting of goals and objectives. The Commission approved the planning approach and provided direction throughout the process.

**Public and Staff Input**
Input from stakeholders, the general public, and staff was also essential in formulating CPW’s strategic direction. CPW held public and staff workshops across the state, collected thousands of comments online and in person and hosted a telephone town hall to gather feedback to inform the development of the Plan.
Summary of Statewide Engagement

In February 2015, CPW initiated a two-month statewide engagement process. Outcomes from the public and staff engagement reflected many of the findings cited in CPW’s Existing Conditions, Trends and Projections report. Public opinion preferences for natural resources and recreation priorities show Coloradans value state parks, opportunities for wildlife viewing, trail-based activities, preserving open lands and habitat, and maintaining access for recreation. The Public and Staff Engagement Report provides more detail regarding the results of the statewide engagement effort.

Issues and Trends

CPW researched trends and projections for Colorado’s demographics and outdoor recreation that will impact the landscape within which the agency works. This information informed the strategic priorities for the future by providing a framework for understanding the agency’s larger context of CPW’s working environment. An overview is presented in the Existing Conditions, Trends and Projections report.

Demographics

Colorado’s population is forecasted to grow by more than 40% between 2015 and 2040, reaching nearly 8 million residents in the next 25 years. Seventy-five percent of growth is expected to occur on the Front Range. In 2000, 25% of the state’s population was non-white; in 2040, almost half of Coloradans will be non-white. Hispanics are the largest minority group in the state and are projected to make up one-third of the population by 2040.

Outdoor Recreation

The top reasons Coloradans choose to live here are the state’s clean environment, access to public lands and outdoor recreation opportunities, and residents’ ability to maintain a healthy outdoor lifestyle. Over 80% of Coloradans participate in trail-related activities, making these the most popular forms of outdoor recreation.

Colorado State Parks visitation has generally been increasing over the last 10 to 15 years, with about 12 million visits each year for the past seven years. Fishing is the fourth most popular activity by proportion of Coloradans’ participation. After reaching a low in 2000, participation in angling has been increasing. The sale of hunting licenses continues on a general decline since a high in 1998, although the demand for big game hunting licenses continues to exceed supply.

GOAL 1 | Conserve wildlife and habitat to ensure healthy sustainable populations and ecosystems.

Ensure that fish and wildlife populations persist through use of science, habitat preservation, harvest, and other management tools.

**Objective A | Manage sustainable populations of game and non-game species to support fishing, hunting, trapping, and wildlife viewing opportunities.**

**Strategies**
1. Develop, implement and update species management plans and strategies.
2. Enforce CPW regulations, state statutes and federal laws.
3. Assess hatchery output and adjust when necessary.

**Objective B | Preserve and enhance diverse habitat.**

**Strategies**
4. Identify priority habitats for conservation.
5. Collaborate with government, private, and nonprofit entities to fund landscape-scale habitat protection.
6. Ensure the needs of wildlife and habitat are addressed in federal, state and local planning processes and land use decisions.
7. Manage invasive species to reduce impacts on habitat.

**Objective C | Manage and monitor species of greatest conservation need while working with partners to maintain viable populations.**

**Strategies**
9. Maintain viable populations through species conservation planning.
10. Protect rare plant species and unique natural areas.

**Objective D | Protect and enhance water resources for fish and wildlife populations.**

**Strategies**
11. Use the statewide water plan to support wildlife.
12. Pursue partnerships and agreements to enhance in-stream flow and influence water management.
13. Develop water sources to ensure supply.
15. Advocate for adequate water quality and quantity.

**Objective E | Conduct research and monitoring to inform management decisions.**

**Strategies**
16. Produce biological and social science research to improve knowledge and management of wildlife and habitats.
17. Identify, monitor and assess current aquatic and terrestrial wildlife threats including disease.
18. Maintain robust monitoring to inform species management and planning.

**Benchmarks for success:**
1. Wildlife populations meet agency objectives, using current data.
2. Reduce occurrence of new aquatic invasive species in Colorado.
3. Additional wetland habitats are conserved.
4. Management recommendations are informed by peer-reviewed research.
5. Sportsmen and women are satisfied with their hunting, fishing, and trapping experiences.
GOAL 2 | Manage state parks for world class outdoor recreation.

Offer recreation opportunities for Colorado’s growing and diverse population while showcasing the state’s wealth of outdoor resources.

Objective A | Manage facilities and outdoor recreation amenities within state parks to provide positive experiences for Coloradans and visitors.

**Strategies**
1. Develop and implement parks management and maintenance plans.
2. Develop and implement park stewardship plans to enhance natural resources at state parks.
3. Monitor facility maintenance needs to maintain a baseline of quality standards.
4. Allocate resources for deferred and preventative maintenance.
5. Enforce CPW regulations, state statutes and federal laws.

Objective B | Explore fiscally sound real estate opportunities for new or expanded state parks.

**Strategies**
6. Use assessment tools to ensure recreation opportunities offered are in line with public demand.
7. Expand state parks based on financial viability and needs assessments.
8. Seek new funding to invest in recreational opportunities and facility enhancement.
9. Identify partnerships for acquisition or expansion of properties.

Objective C | Market the special qualities of Colorado’s state parks.

**Strategies**
10. Promote unique qualities of individual state parks.
11. Conduct targeted media campaigns to highlight specific state parks and the broader benefits of outdoor recreation.
12. Enhance technology to provide accessible information and parks products.
13. Partner on community and statewide outdoor recreation initiatives.

**Benchmarks for success:**
1. All state parks create and adhere to regular maintenance plans.
2. Agency-wide guidelines for acquisition of new parks or expansion of existing parks have been developed.
3. Annual state parks visitation is on an increasing trend, while preserving high visitor satisfaction.
Objective A | Identify potential new and broader sources of funding.

**Strategies**
1. Implement Commission and Department of Natural Resources (DNR) fiscal recommendations.
2. Investigate fiscally sound and sustainable alternative income sources.
3. Garner support from public, private, and government entities on financial sustainability initiatives.
4. Improve purchasing and donation processes.

**Objective B | Maintain existing sources of funding.**

**Strategies**
5. Maintain and increase hunting, fishing, and trapping participation.
6. Evaluate and improve current products and services to increase customer base.
7. Work with DNR and the General Assembly to ensure existing revenue matches rising costs.

**Objective C | Deploy financial and workforce resources responsibly.**

**Strategies**
8. Regularly report program outcomes and resource needs.
9. Increase program efficiencies and share outcomes with staff and public.
10. Consider financial implications when making agency decisions.

**Benchmarks for success:**
1. Alternative sources of revenue are identified and evaluated.
2. Improvements in programmatic efficiencies are demonstrated.
3. Revenue sources match current and predicted needs.
4. Future revenue projections and needs are communicated through multiple channels.
GOAL 4 | Maintain dedicated personnel and volunteers.
Recruit, train, retain and support talented, inspired and committed personnel and volunteers.

Objective A | Capitalize on the knowledge and experience of all personnel.
Strategies
1. Use mentoring and succession planning for employee development.
2. Share knowledge, ideas and feedback through multiple channels.

Objective B | Recruit and develop a highly qualified and diverse workforce.
Strategies
3. Provide all personnel with relevant, regular and consistent training and career development programs.
4. Recruit new, diverse staff through multiple channels.

Objective C | Attract inspired staff and volunteers committed to CPW’s mission.
Strategies
5. Offer staff compensation commensurate with responsibility and expertise.
6. Ensure employees are prepared with the appropriate skills for their positions.
7. Provide clear expectations.
8. Support decision making at appropriate agency level.
9. Improve horizontal and vertical communication channels.
10. Follow administrative policies and procedures for Volunteer Program.
11. Foster partnerships with volunteer organizations, agencies, and Friends groups to recruit new volunteers.

Benchmarks for success:
1. Attract and retain highly qualified personnel.
2. Create succession planning and mentoring programs.
3. Provide training programs.
4. Report and analyze annual recruitment efforts.
5. Reciprocal communication exists between CPW staff and leadership.
6. The number of volunteer hours dedicated to CPW increases.
GOAL 5 | Increase awareness and trust for CPW.
Increase transparency, awareness, and trust for CPW’s mission and core services.

Objective A | Communicate information about CPW’s mission, funding and key programs.
Strategies
1. Use a communication plan; identify thematic needs and opportunities to convey information to the public.
2. Provide access to programmatic information.
3. Use consistent messaging regarding mission, services, and funding.

Objective B | Provide information the public and decision makers need in an understandable format.
Strategies
5. Develop mechanisms for public comment, questions and suggestions.
6. Use multiple avenues and technologies to disseminate information.

Objective C | Increase public awareness about the importance of wildlife management.
Strategies
7. Implement communication plan.
8. Message the importance of hunting, fishing, and trapping as wildlife management tools.

Benchmarks for success:
1. A comprehensive communication plan informs agency outreach.
2. Outreach strategies evolve with population interests and needs.
GOAL 6 | Connect people to Colorado’s outdoors.

Increase awareness and promote participation of Coloradans and visitors in hunting, fishing, trapping, and outdoor recreation. This includes connecting more people to Colorado’s outdoors by providing diverse outdoor recreation and educational experiences that appeal to first-time users.

Objective A | Broaden the access and variety of recreation opportunities available to Coloradans and visitors.

Strategies
1. Assess the interests of recreation users and expand opportunities to meet interest.
2. Increase understanding and awareness for how outdoor recreation impacts natural resources.
3. Support safe, responsible, and accessible outdoor recreation.
4. Offer educational, interpretive programs and hands-on training for new or basic outdoor skills.
5. Use marketing to increase awareness of recreational opportunities.
6. Foster partnerships with public, private, and nonprofit entities to introduce new users to outdoor recreation activities.

Objective B | Provide facilities, infrastructure, and access to support opportunities for premier outdoor recreation experiences.

Strategies
7. Maintain existing facilities and infrastructure.
8. Explore expanding recreational opportunities on parks and wildlife properties.
9. Use customer research and capital infrastructure plans to inform the expansion of facilities.

Benchmarks for success:
1. An assessment of existing conditions, recreation interests and opportunities informs agency work.
2. Outreach programs are prioritized and implemented statewide.
3. A marketing plan guides communication regarding programs.
4. Technology allows CPW to connect with more customers.
GOAL 6 continued | Connect people to Colorado’s outdoors.

Increase awareness and promote participation of Coloradans and visitors in hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation. This includes connecting more people to Colorado’s outdoors by providing diverse outdoor recreation and educational experiences that appeal to first-time users.

Objective C | Foster partnerships to enhance recreation opportunities.

Strategies
10. Recognize contributions of recreational partners.
11. Organize regular opportunities to network and learn from each other.
12. Provide print and web resources.

Objective D | Promote the value of CPW’s mission and services to expand awareness, grow CPW’s volunteer network, and inspire stewardship.

Strategies
13. Collaborate with partners to enhance stewardship of natural resources on public and private lands.
14. Offer hands-on volunteer projects and communicate the value of volunteers and stewardship to the public.
15. Create and implement a comprehensive multi-lingual marketing plan.
17. Enhance partnerships to broaden outreach and connect new users to the outdoors.

Objective E | Become familiar with the needs, interests, and expectations of residents and visitors who are new to outdoor recreation.

Strategies
18. Conduct and regularly update market surveys.
19. Identify and address barriers to participation in outdoor recreation.
20. Identify demographic trends and target non-participating populations.
21. Conduct outreach and post-recreation surveys.