SHIFT:
The Problem: The greatest threat to the movement’s success is its fragmentation. Compartmentalization of work, replication of effort, lack of communication between principals, and conflict between natural allies are just a few of the challenges that conspire against a united whole.

The Solution: SHIFT (Shifting How we Invest For Tomorrow) unites natural allies around the common goal of protecting our public lands. By providing a unified framework for their stewardship, we increase the effectiveness of our individual efforts.

Held each October in the “crucible of conservation,” Jackson Hole, SHIFT inspires the outdoor recreation/conservation partnership with food, film, speakers, workshops and outdoor adventure. Our objective is to advance on-the-ground solutions that leverage outdoor recreation for conservation gains, and to provide a unified framework for natural allies to better protect our public lands, waters and wildlife.

Background:
During the 2014 SHIFT Festival, The SHIFT Roundtable on Land Conservation, Wilderness Advocacy & Human-Powered Outdoor Recreation, which sought to develop stronger partnerships between natural allies for the benefit of conservation, identified the reduction of division among such allies as a key to successful conservation efforts.

In June 2015, The Conservation and Recreation Summit, held in Grand Teton National Park at The Murie Center, used this observation as the starting point for a conversation between fifteen outdoor recreation enthusiasts, conservation advocates and public land managers who had convened to explore ways to better protect America’s outdoor heritage.

The participants, who came from the three interest groups in roughly equal proportion, agreed that a set of principles that served as a unified framework for natural allies would reduce internal conflict and increase success in the protection of our public lands, waters and wildlife.

At the Summit’s conclusion, the participants therefore proposed six Principles for Advancing Outdoor Recreation and Conservation.

In the fall of 2016 Colorado hosted a similar SHIFT Roundtable to discuss how the Principles for Advancing Outdoor Recreation and Conservation could apply to Colorado’s outdoor recreation and natural resources. These Principles help in defining a Colorado outdoor recreation ethic of taking care of the places that we recreate in. They stand as an opportunity to unite the various recreation opportunities that Colorado has to offer.

Why These Principles?

*Outdoor recreation in natural settings is and always has been an indispensable part of conservation.* Active engagement with the outdoors has produced some of the country’s most inspiring conservation leaders. Our natural places and the recreational activities they provide are essential to us mentally, spiritually, and physically. By immersing people in the natural world, outdoor recreation builds support for conservation of the places we come to love and helps to develop the next generation of stewards. Outdoor recreation offers a remarkable opportunity to reinvigorate conservation efforts by engaging younger generations and diverse populations.
Outdoor recreation adds economic stability, diversity, resilience, and prosperity to communities across the country while creating a broader constituency for protecting our natural resources. Outdoor recreation is a sustainable enterprise, the third largest economic sector in the United States, and fosters human health and well-being.

When unmanaged or poorly managed, outdoor recreation can adversely affect our public lands, as well as the quality of experiences and the numerous benefits they provide. The rapid growth of recreational use on public land, and the evolving nature of this use, often raises concerns that the quality of the lands and waters on which this recreation depends is being degraded. It also stresses the integral relationship between conservation and recreation.

The set of principles that follow, which has been informed by numerous historic and ongoing efforts on the issue, aims to guide collaboration among outdoor recreationists, conservationists, and public land managers and serve as a starting point for collective, strategic conversations and actions to protect our lands, waters and wildlife.

In the fall of 2016 Colorado Parks and Wildlife hosted the “Executive Summit on Colorado’s Natural Resources”. This was a full day meeting that included leaders from recreation, land trust, conservation, sportsmen, businesses and land management organizations and agencies. The purpose of the meeting was to have the leaders share their perspectives on the SHIFT principles and to discuss how to best balance outdoor recreation and sustainable management of wildlife in Colorado. The group reviewed the SHIFT principles and felt it was essential to add a seventh principle that covers the importance and role that private lands play in providing outdoor recreation access and opportunities in Colorado. This new principle was added as a new second principle so that it directly followed the first principle that focuses on publicly owned lands.

SEVEN PRINCIPLES FOR ADVANCING OUTDOOR RECREATION AND CONSERVATION:

Colorado’s Adoption of the SHIFT Principles

Preamble: We believe the uniquely American public land heritage is a privilege and a birthright, and Colorado’s abundant open space and outdoor recreation opportunities contribute to our quality of life and economic vitality. Combined with the North American Model of wildlife management and Private Land Conservation, Coloradans and our visitors enjoy spectacular landscapes to work, play and live. We celebrate the contributions of all sectors of our economy to sustaining a healthy balance of our State’s ecosystem. Responsible recreation respects all interests on lands and waters and works to eliminate conflicts.

For these reasons, Coloradans should feel compelled to care for and conserve landscapes, waterways and wildlife to sustain them and eliminate conflicts for generations to come by adopting the following principles...

1. Outdoor recreation and conservation require that a diversity of lands and waters be available for public access, and taken care of responsibly.

The uniquely American public land heritage is a privilege and a birthright, and the availability of such open space and outdoor recreation opportunities in Colorado is a major part of what has made this one of the most desirable states in which to live. We should seek to
increase the quantity and quality of these public lands and waterways, and do so under the guidance of the other six principles.

2. **Within Colorado’s diversity of land and waters, private land provides a balance of conservation and access for outdoor recreation and conservation of landscapes.**

   Private lands in Colorado are vital components to creating quality outdoor recreation experiences on public lands and to conserving the natural resources and western heritage that has long defined the state. Private landowners increase the viability of our lands, waters and natural assets by keeping habitat connected and in a natural state. Private landowners and vested parties should be involved in these dialogues whenever possible, and turned to for solutions and deeper partnerships.

3. **Recreation and conservation need each other, and both are beneficial to local economic well-being, quality of life and personal health.**

   This mutual need exists because outdoor recreation helps people understand the importance of healthy, intact ecosystems, which builds support for their protection and stewardship, and conservation protects the natural resources and wild places upon which outdoor recreation depends.

4. **All recreation has impact. Coloradans have an obligation to minimize these impacts across the places they recreate and the larger landscape through ethical outdoor behavior.**

   Ethical outdoor behavior demonstrates respect for lands, water, and wildlife, while it values connecting all people to the outdoors. This outdoor ethic is critical and must be developed in all users and in future generations.

5. **Proactive planning and creative management solutions, combined with public education, is necessary to care for the land, water and wildlife to provide a diversity of quality recreation opportunities.**

   Active public engagement in crafting solutions is necessary to ensure land management decisions reflect a consensus and can be effectively implemented. A broad, landscape approach is necessary in order to meet both conservation and recreation needs. Thus better decisions can be made about which activities are best suited for various landscapes to provide a spectrum of opportunities that serve diverse interests.

6. **Physical, biological and social science must inform the management of outdoor recreation.**

   Management decisions should be grounded in the best available scientific information to ensure the protection of natural areas and the sustainability of resources while maintaining and enhancing the quality of outdoor recreation experiences.

7. **Stable, long-term, and diverse funding sources are essential to protect the environment and support outdoor recreation.**
Land management agencies need adequate funding from federal, state, and local government sources, supplemented by (but not replaced by) new and non-traditional funding from private and nonprofit sources.