

## Summary of September 6th Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission Forum, “Envisioning Colorado’s Future State Parks”

The forum consisted of two panel discussions, moderated by Krista Heiner, CPW. The first panel was composed of:

- Jake O’Conner, ReActive Adaptations
- Dan Gates, Coloradans for Responsible Wildlife Management
- Allison Kincaid, Colorado Parks and Recreation Association
- Andrea Kurth, Leadville Ranger District, San Isabel National Forest
- Jackie Radilla, Get Outdoors Leadville!

The second panel was composed of:

- Loretta Pineda, Environmental Learning for Kids
- Mike Pritchard, Roaring Fork Mountain Biking Association
- Jed Selby, South Main
- Janie VanWinkle, VanWinkle Ranch

After a brief introductory presentation by Assistant Director Margaret Taylor and remarks by Commissioner Carrie Besnette Hauser, in which panelists were encouraged to think outside the box about a future state park, Krista asked the panelists several questions including but not limited to the following:

1. Imagine a blank-slate state park; what would you want to see?
2. Do you have any innovative ideas for the future of state parks in Colorado?
3. What can CPW do to meet the needs of your user group better?
4. What are the barriers underrepresented populations face when trying to get outdoors and enjoy state parks?
5. How can state parks better work with and complement other recreation opportunities?
6. How can CPW/state parks better manage multiple and sometimes competing uses/users?
7. How can CPW better engage partners in the design/management of state parks?

The panelists also responded to several questions from the Commissioners and the audience (both in-person and on Facebook live).

Several themes emerged from the panel discussions:

- In addition to designing a new state park, CPW needs to focus on making current state parks more accessible to underrepresented populations.
- A new state park needs to accommodate a wide array of recreational opportunities (e.g., specific ADA-accessible attributes, trails for different users, access to hunting/fishing, etc.).
- Recreation deserts exist in both urban and rural areas of the state.
- When developing a new state park, it is important to continually engage with and ask the local community what they need and want in a park. Doing so helps to establish

trust between local community members and park staff. In addition, it creates a sense of buy-in among various user groups.

- Transportation, information and comfort are often barriers to accessing state parks for underrepresented populations. Having local/familiar faces working at state parks can make underrepresented groups feel more welcome.
- Is it better to understand the needs/wants of the population first and then find the land to accommodate them, or to find the location first and then make appropriate programs and recreational opportunities? Parks need a distinguishing factor to attract people.
- Is it better to have one larger park to accommodate many different types of recreation or several small, specialized parks?
- CPW needs to engage partners, including federal and local governments and private sector concessionaires in the development/design/management of future state parks.
- It is important to manage the natural resources, while balancing different recreational opportunities. Park users need additional education about the tradeoffs that occur between recreation and natural resource management.
- There are opportunities for the coexistence of agriculture and recreation.

Finally, the Commissioners engaged in a 20-minute discussion about lessons learned during the panel discussions and possible next steps.

In addition to those in attendance, the forum reached 15,679 people via the Facebook Live broadcast (with 4,667 video views). The Facebook Live broadcast also generated 153 comments.