



COLORADO

Parks and Wildlife

Department of Natural Resources

Policy & Planning
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To: Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission
From: Jody Kennedy, Public Involvement Planning Specialist
Date: August 23, 2019

Re: Future State Parks Criteria

Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) developed criteria to use when considering properties for new state parks or expanding existing state parks. This memo provides the final criteria, a summary of public input, and an overview of next steps.

Final Criteria

Provides outstanding nature-based recreation: All people, regardless of age, abilities or interest, are connected to Colorado's diverse landscapes. Exceptional nature-based recreation provides for visitor education and enjoyment.

Conserves natural resources: Large natural areas conserve resources and sensitive habitats. They also allow for sustainable outdoor recreation. Connections to conserved public and private lands advance landscape-scale conservation.

Meets Colorado's needs: Attention is given to locations that will benefit from new outdoor recreation opportunities and resource conservation. Factors include distance to population centers, visitation demand, and ease of access. Future state parks offer a range of amenities and experiences, and provide for evolving outdoor recreation interests. Colorado's state park system can adapt to changes in society, the environment and technology.

Provides community value: Future state parks engage nearby communities. Local economies and quality of life improve by having a state park. The benefits of Colorado's state park system reach all people with attention to being inclusive and accessible.

Supports a financially sustainable system: Looking into the future and park system-wide, new state parks are financially practical, considering acquisition, development, operations and management.



Public Input

CPW developed Future State Parks Criteria that reflect the interests and priorities of Coloradans. To capture public input, CPW incorporated feedback from the Parks and Wildlife Commission Forum “Colorado’s Future State Parks,” a Partners in the Outdoors Conference work session, and an online comment form. In addition, CPW reviewed research and available information on public interests related to outdoor recreation and conservation in Colorado.

Public Comment Summary

Draft Future State Parks Criteria were available for public review with an online public comment form for just over three weeks in July and August 2019. The public comment opportunity was promoted through social, print and TV media, partners, CPW email contact lists, and on CPW’s website. CPW received about one thousand online comment forms.

In summary, 63 percent of the comment form respondents were satisfied with the proposed criteria. Just over 90 percent of the general comments were positive. When reviewing comments specific to each criterion, the majority of comments provided were supportive and in agreement with the proposed content.

From the comments, there were many general themes, which include:

- Natural resources conservation and opportunities to be in nature are very important.
- There is concern about increasing population, crowding and development.
- Location is emphasized, with interest in future Front Range/metro area parks, as well as rural and eastern plains parks.
- There is interest in enhancing specific activities, with many comments highlighting camping, water sports, mountain biking, and hunting.
- Sharing the history of a place, providing educational opportunities, and engaging multicultural visitors is valued.
- There is concern with park entrance costs and interest in discounted passes for seniors, volunteers, and neighboring residents.
- Accessibility to the outdoors should be easily available for all people regardless of where they live or their physical ability.
- People value parks that support healthy ecosystems and resilience to climate change.
- Financial sustainability should not be an impediment to creating future state parks.
- The language used for the draft criteria is confusing.

In response to a question about which of the draft Future State Parks Criteria are most important, 33 percent of respondents identified natural resource conservation as the most important followed by outstanding outdoor recreation with 28 percent and meets Colorado’s needs with 11 percent.

Looking at who responded to the public comment form, the average age is 54, the large majority are White/non-Hispanic/Latino (88 percent) and over 50 percent are male. We

received one formal comment letter from Colorado Wildlife Federation and Trout Unlimited, which is included in the public comment compiled for this meeting.

Following review of the input received, CPW revised the criteria to preserve the focus areas while using language that is more readable.

Next Steps

Looking ahead, CPW is integrating the criteria into a process that may be used when considering properties for new state parks or expanding existing state parks.