

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

Steamboat Lake & Pearl Lake

2023 MANAGEMENT PLAN



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Developing the Steamboat Lake and Pearl Lake Management Plan was a collaborative planning process that would not have been possible without the support of the following staff and those that participated in the public involvement process.

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1 Introduction

Park Description

Steamboat and Pearl Lakes are iconic Colorado mountain parks with scenic settings and year-round recreational opportunities. Over 300 inches of annual snowfall provide winter recreationists with ideal conditions and beautiful scenery. Summer camping and water-based activities draw visitors from all over Colorado and beyond. Gold Medal fishing is available at Steamboat Lake, while Pearl Lake offers cutthroat trout and arctic grayling fishing opportunities. Wildlife viewing is popular at both Parks and it is common to see sandhill cranes, pelicans, fox, deer, and much more. The Parks connect with surrounding public lands to create an extensive network of trails for summer hiking, winter cross-country skiing, motorized recreational opportunities, and backcountry hunting. Steamboat Lake State Park was dedicated in 1968 after the construction of the dam and encompasses 2,824 acres. Pearl Lake State Park was established in 1964 and encompasses 300 acres. Steamboat Lake and Pearl Lake State Parks are managed as a “complex” by one Park Manager and their staff.

Purpose of the Plan

The Steamboat Lake & Pearl Lake State Parks Management Plan (Plan) serves as the foremost guiding document for Steamboat Lake State Park and Pearl Lake State Park. The ultimate purpose of developing a state park management plan is to plan for both public enjoyment and protection of the state park's resources. The Plan provides a conceptual planning framework for setting management priorities and providing specific management direction for park resources. The Plan also:

- Serves as a guide and policy document for current and future Park staff, partnering agencies, elected officials, and interested members of the public.
- Guides management of natural, cultural, and recreational resources.
- Provides a framework for monitoring and maintaining resources at Steamboat Lake State Park and Pearl Lake State Park.
- Identifies park enhancement opportunities including possible facility upgrades, new park facilities, restoration and rehabilitation projects, and important management initiatives.
- Serves as a guide for future park budget allocations and annual funding requests.

Included in the plan is a broad description of the complete spectrum of recreational, cultural, and natural resources at Steamboat Lake State Park and Pearl Lake State Park. Implementation of the Plan will assist Park staff in their efforts to preserve and enhance the Parks for future recreational users.

Park managers should regularly review the Plan to evaluate implementation progress. This includes annually reviewing the document and providing it to new staff. Park and other

Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) staff (e.g., planning, region, natural resource and capital/region development staff) should update the Plan every 10 years.

This Management Plan and its implementation is also an opportunity to support Governor Jared Polis' philosophy to build a "Colorado for All." On August 27, 2020, Governor Polis signed Executive Order D-2020-175 directing the Department of Personnel & Administration to advise state agencies in integrating this philosophy into State government's workplaces, community engagement, standards of accessibility, and more. All agencies, including the Department of Natural Resources, of which CPW is a Division, have equity, diversity and inclusion goals focusing on hiring, retention, community partnerships and communication. Over the coming months and years, CPW will use related policies and guidance coming from these initiatives to refine implementation of strategies in the Plan.

Relationship to the CPW Strategic Plan

Using CPW's Strategic Plan as an overall guide, the Management Plan serves as the primary "go-to" planning document for all the Park staff. Specifically, CPW's Strategic Plan is a useful guide for achieving a broad range of CPW-wide goals and objectives, while the Management Plan is the primary guidance document for park-level planning efforts. The Management Plan is consistent with the CPW-wide mission, vision, and goals (as defined in the Strategic Plan), which are highlighted below.

Mission

CPW's mission is "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).

Vision

CPW's vision is to be a national leader in wildlife management, conservation and sustainable outdoor recreation for current and future generations.

Strategic Goals

CPW's Strategic Plan, finalized in November 2015, provides a roadmap for achieving the agency's vision and mission through concrete goals and objectives. The six CPW goals identified in the Strategic Plan are:

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

Park Goals

The future of Steamboat and Pearl Lakes depends on continuing to provide quality nature-based experiences by maintaining the natural spaces and “personality” of these Parks. The management philosophy relies on harnessing knowledge and smart problem solving for current and emerging issues through careful consideration of when to “do” or “not do” a proposed action. The following goals support achieving the long-term vision:

1. Effectively manage visitor use by:
 - a. adapting management strategies based on visitation trends and resource conditions.
 - b. providing opportunities for visitors to learn how to make their visit part of the solution to taking care of the park and its resources.
 - c. meeting the interests of visitors as they change over time.
 - d. communicating the unique aspects of these Parks including what to expect from a remote mountain park to inform trip planning and support enjoyable recreation experiences.
2. Implement Park plans to guide decision making including this Management Plan and Resource Stewardship, Weed Management and Forestry Management Plans.
3. Promote a respectful culture and team atmosphere for all staff and volunteers.

Future Plan Updates

Most of the management plan should remain relevant for many years to come. That is, much of the information in the plan includes historical documentation, and factors that influence park management and recommendations that will remain static or ongoing in perpetuity. The Steamboat Lake & Pearl Lake State Parks Management Plan should be updated every 10 years by Park and other CPW staff (e.g., CPW planning, region, natural resource, and capital/region development staff). To ensure that the Plan is a dynamic document that meets the changing needs of the Parks and park visitors over time, Park managers may supplement the Plan with updated information, provide minor changes to management actions, or add management actions that help the Parks meet changes in recreational trends, visitor demands, adapt to changes in the natural environment, and maintain a high quality visitor experience. This may occur during the annual review or whenever relevant information comes available. In general, park management plans are to be amended when changes in circumstances are significant enough to merit updating the plan. Examples of when formal amendments to the plan may be necessary are listed below.

- There are changes to the land base (e.g., additional lands are purchased or portions of the park are sold off)
- Major new facilities or infrastructure are planned for the park

- A policy or directive is instituted that significantly affects park management direction
- Major changes to land use occur within or adjacent to the park
- Changes to the management zoning
- Significant environmental stress (e.g., fish kill, drought, etc.)

Previous Planning Efforts

The previous Management Plan for Pearl Lake was from 1991 and Steamboat Lake's Management Plan was last revised in 2000. Current plans include:

- Resource Stewardship Plan (2021; Appendix A)
- Forest Management Plan (2019)
- Noxious Weed Management Plan (2016)

Public Input Process

Public input is an important part of the management planning process. While the park manager may have a good idea of what these are without a survey, survey results can help inform, confirm, or clarify the magnitude of an issue or concern from an outsider's perspective.

Visitor Use Analysis

In June 2021, SE Group completed an analysis of visitor use patterns at both Parks. The final report is included in Appendix B and visitation patterns are discussed further in Chapter 3. The fieldwork for this analysis included weekend and weekday observations and surveys at both Parks. Although June sees lower visitation than other summer months the general patterns seen during this analysis are relevant to overall trends for the Parks. Key visitor survey findings include:

- Of the 155 visitors surveyed, 58% were camping (average stay about 4 days) and 42% were visiting for the day (average stay about 3 hours). Most visitors were from the Front Range (40%) or Steamboat Springs area (35%).
- Many visitors participated in a variety of activities during their stay. The top three activities selected were: paddlesports (57%), using trails (35%), and fishing (33%).
- A majority of visitors did not feel that accessing the Parks (traffic and parking) was congested though some reported they purposefully access the Park early in the day to avoid congestion. Pearl Lake, Steamboat Lake's Marina/beach, and Sunrise Vista Campground were ranked as moderately congested zones.
- Visitors share improvements they would like to see such as more campground amenities (e.g., expanded electrical service, more picnic tables, trash cans and shade), expanded swim beaches, more accessible fishing access and more bike trails.

Public Input on Draft Plan

<<placeholder for public input on draft plan >>

Influences on Management

Factors that are not entirely under CPW's control but influence Park management include:

- The Parks are surrounded by Routt National Forest near and along the Parks' boundaries
 - Campers use the Parks as a base for hunting and recreating elsewhere in the area.
 - Cattle grazing in the area have access to Steamboat Lake Park creating management needs such as fencing which requires maintenance and expenditures of staff resources to put up and take down every year. Fences cannot stay up all year due to winter conditions and snow-based recreation.
 - Visitors do not always understand the difference between national forest and state park regulations (e.g., dogs must be leashed on state park lands).
- Distance from town(s) encourages using the Parks as overnight accommodations (i.e., during town sponsored activities/big events or going to town for dinner/shopping is an option during your stay) but is just far enough that visitors need to plan for more limited services and amenities.
- The Parks are not on a major thoroughfare—a visit requires advanced planning and awareness of their location
- Visitation trends to all public lands are increasing statewide. High visitation leads to more social trails, noxious weeds and impacts to sensitive habitats such as riparian areas. Staff are working to understand and address questions and concerns such as:
 - Need to balance quantity of visitors with amenities provided
 - Who is visiting and when seems to be changing (e.g., increased Denver metro residents and increased weekday visitors)
 - Increased law enforcement interactions with visitors that are new to the outdoors in general
 - Impacts that are detrimental to vegetation (e.g., hammocks tied to trees and increased social trails), campsites (e.g., human waste) and water resources (e.g., higher usage)
 - Understanding where the visitor density is changing within the Parks
 - Full campgrounds on summer weekends are “the new normal” requiring more resources (e.g., trash dumpsters and pickups, bathrooms, water usage)
 - Visitors expect same amenities as the larger parks
- Management of Steamboat Ski Resort and other agencies' trailheads affects the Parks' capacity (i.e., people go to the Parks when other places are closed/full) and visitor expectations (e.g., the conditions of groomed trails should be like the ski resort)

- The harsh winter environment challenges maintenance of infrastructure and facilities and the services needed to support them in a remote area

Management Considerations

Management considerations include issues and concerns that have been identified by Park staff based on first-hand experience, knowledge, and information gathered from the public.

Some key management considerations include:

- Steamboat Lake and Pearl Lake are managed as a complex; all staff have duties at both Parks.
- Maintaining groomed trails all winter takes a lot of work and is unique for the Colorado state park system—usually, a local Snow Club and other partners perform this maintenance, not CPW staff. With limited local volunteers in the area’s snow club, Park staff are taking on this responsibility. Adding a CPW staff position to assist with additional winter recreation has been identified as a Parks need.
- Regular law enforcement issues relate to visitor impacts such as dogs off-leash.
- Steamboat Lake has six entrances, which complicates determining visitation as visitors have to enter/exit the Park to move between activities. Park staff is continuing to work to gather the most accurate visitation data.
- Water bodies are a huge draw—while there are lots of recreation opportunities in this area of the state, there are not many opportunities for water-based recreation such as swimming, boating, and fishing
- Visitors prefer the nice facilities/amenities, safety, staff, and services of the Parks even if they will be recreating elsewhere (e.g., there is great backcountry access for hunting, OHV, snowmobiling from the Park)
- Day-to-day staff responsibilities are seasonally dependent. The Parks are essentially two different places in summer and winter and are transformed in the different seasons.
- CPW owns most of the water in the lakes at both Parks, which is important for domestic use, recreation, and habitat for fish and wildlife. The fact that the lake level does not fluctuate in extreme levels (i.e., there are not big releases or weather bases changes) is unique in the Park system.
 - There may be increased pressure on CPW to release water downstream but the quality of the lake needs to be protected
 - Park staff manage the water and wastewater facilities year-round. The water operations are a critical but unseen part of managing these Parks with major investments in staff time and budgets
 - Increased permitting requirements continue to become more complex, more costly and require more staff time to address

- Other funding requests for the Parks are harder to prioritize because there are always requests related to water.
- Management of social trails, invasive species and weeds are challenging with limited staff and increased impacts from rising visitation.
- Overall, natural resources are in good condition with the largest threats including increased visitation, noxious weeds, fire, forestry diseases, and insect infestations.

This information, in addition to knowledge and experience of Park staff, directly influenced development of park Management Zones and Enhancement Opportunities described in Chapters 4 and 5.

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2 Regional Planning Context

This chapter provides information on the regional setting in which Steamboat Lake State Park and Pearl Lake State Park are situated. Regional issues or considerations that may influence management of the Parks include climate, proximity to population centers and other geographical considerations, eco-regional issues, adjacent land ownership, and regional population trends. These areas are discussed in detail below. Unless otherwise noted information comes from the Resource Stewardship Plan (Appendix A).

The Parks are part of CPW's Northwest Region which has 13 State Parks, five of which are in Routt County.

Climate

In general, Colorado experiences over 300 days of sunshine a year and northern Routt County is semi-arid with long, cold winters and cool, short summers. Most precipitation comes in winter months with over 300 inches of snowfall annually.

Physical Setting

Steamboat Lake and Pearl Lake State Parks are about 2 miles apart off of Routt County Road 129 (Map 1). They are in northern Routt County approximately 25 miles north of Steamboat Springs, 8 miles north of Clark and 20 miles south of the Wyoming border. Pearl Lake is surrounded by Routt National Forest (RNF) and Steamboat Lake is surrounded both by the RNF and private land. Farwell Mountain, Hahns Peak and Sand Mountain are a few of the nearby peaks seen from the Parks.

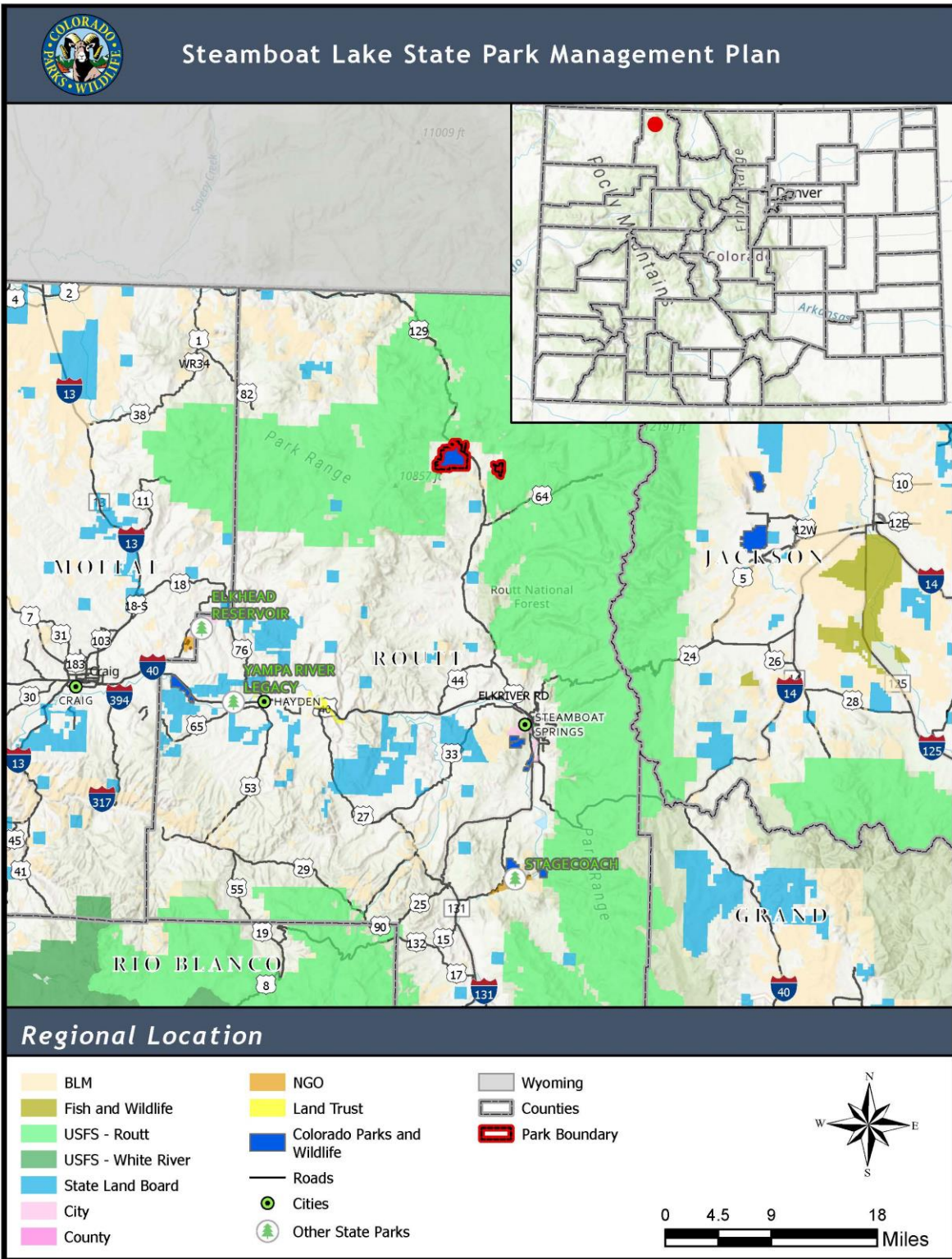
Eco-Regional Setting

The Parks are located at elevations around 8,000 feet in the Elk River basin, within the Southern Rockies Mountain Ecoregion on the west side of the Continental Divide. The Parks are also within the Pacific Flyway for migratory birds. The Parks sit in a broad valley just west of the Park Range which forms the backbone of the Mount Zirkel Wilderness.

Adjacent Land Use and Land Ownership

Steamboat Lake State Park is encircled by private lands that are surrounded by RNF. There are a few small subdivisions and Hahns Peak Village. Sheep and cattle grazing occur throughout the Forest and onto the Park. Pearl Lake is directly bordered by RNF except for private lands touching the northwest corner and western side of the Park. USFS lands are used extensively for recreation by hikers, hunters, snowmobilers and cross-country skiers.

As has happened all over Colorado, the encroachment of development poses concerns for wildlife and their habitat. However, the Parks are partially protected due to a high amount of public lands in the surrounding area. The areas surrounding the Parks have a rich history of mining, logging and ranching. Hahns Peak, originally a mining camp, is still an active community with year-round residents, a museum, cafe and other businesses.



Map 1. Regional Location of Steamboat Lake and Pearl Lake State Parks

Regional Recreation and Tourism Trends, Needs, and Opportunities

The 2020 census showed Colorado's population to be just over 5.8 million people and is forecasted to be near 6.5 million in 2030.

According to the State Demographers Office (demography.dola.colorado.gov), Routt County had a 2020 population of 24,840, which was not much higher than in 2010 or 2015 (23,439 and 23,824, respectively). Over the next decade, the population is estimated to increase to around 30,000 which is a higher rate of growth than recent years and compared to Colorado's expected growth overall. Steamboat Springs hosts the oldest continuously operated ski area in North America, Howelsen Hill, and Steamboat Resort.

Neighboring counties—Jackson, Rio Blanco and Moffat—are seeing slight negative growth trends which are expected to continue. Grand and Eagle Counties are increasing in population at rates slower than the statewide estimates. Together, these counties had just under 100,000 people in 2020.

With an increasing statewide population and interests in outdoor activities, demand for access to outdoor recreation opportunities is also increasing. To coordinate thoughtful planning and decision making in Routt County, the Routt Recreation & Conservation Roundtable (<https://routtrcr.org/>) convened to “provide non-binding insights and recommendations to land managers engaged in recreational planning processes and/or recreational policy decisions in Routt County. The community forum will represent stakeholders and agencies and work to develop a collaborative environment for information sharing, understanding, discussion, collaboration and input.” In addition, the Steamboat Chamber of Commerce hosts a “Know Before you Go” webpage (<https://www.steamboatchamber.com/visit-responsibly/know-before-you-go/winter-recreation/>) to provide information on how to recreate safely and responsibly.

3 Park Setting & Resources

This chapter provides an overview of the current condition of resources and various ongoing factors within the Parks (e.g., visitation, budget, and staffing trends) that affect management efforts. Included in this chapter is a detailed description of current land use and land ownership; park administration and special functions; visitation; existing recreation, natural, and cultural resources; and other information that either directly or indirectly influences management of Steamboat Lake State Park and Pearl Lake State Park. This information provides: 1) a contextual framework for better understanding management needs and constraints and 2) a “baseline” from which to identify Enhancement Opportunities and Management Initiatives (see Chapter 5).

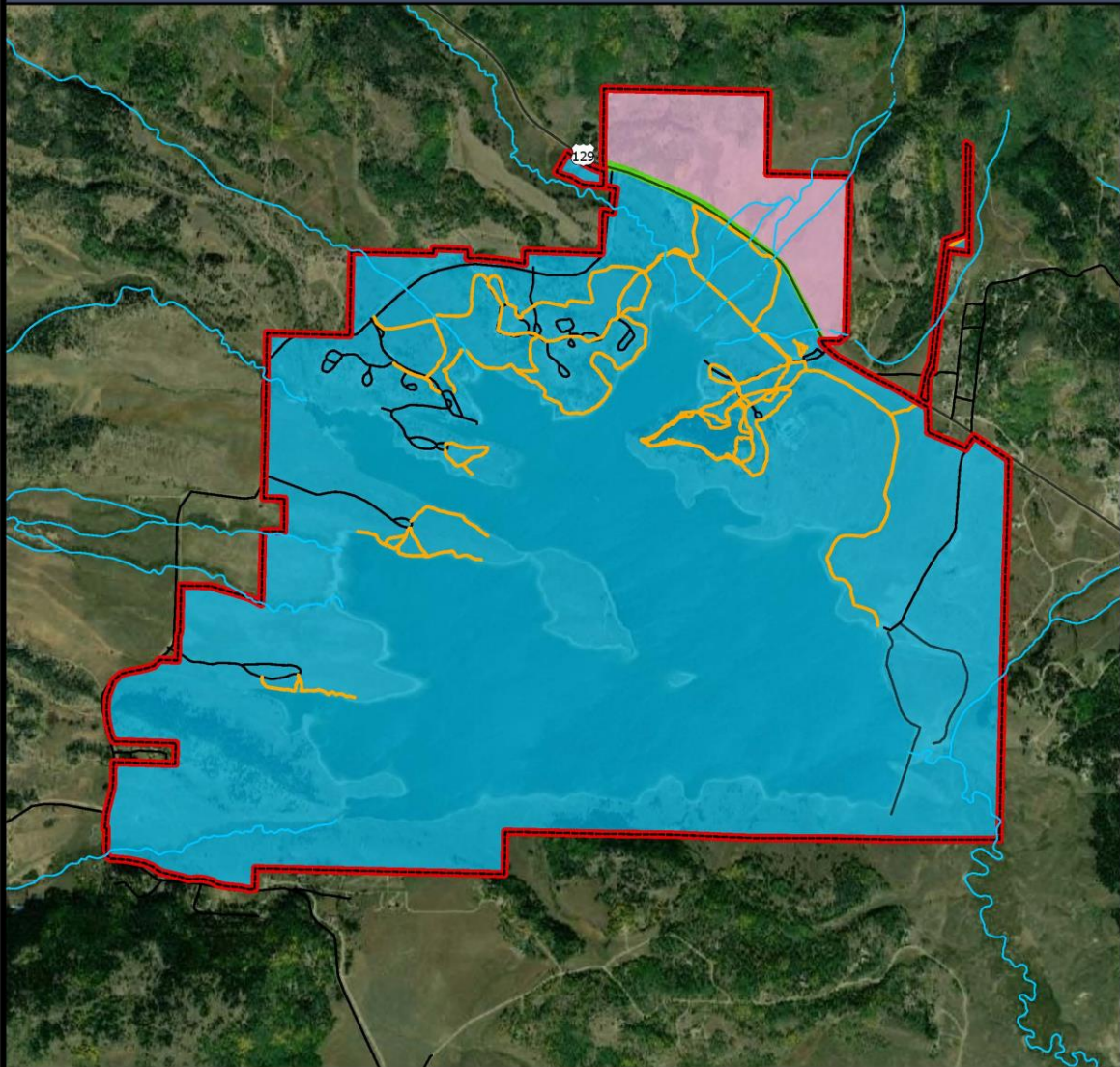
Unless otherwise noted the information in this chapter comes from staff expertise and the 2021 Resource Stewardship Plan (Appendix A). The Stewardship Plan serves as the foremost guiding document for natural and cultural resource management at Steamboat Lake and Pearl Lake State Parks.

Park Land Ownership

CPW fee-title owns most of both Parks (Maps 2 and 3). Steamboat Lake is 2820 acres, was acquired in 1966, and the south side was a State Wildlife Area until 2002. The State Land Board owns a 161.96 acre parcel (Appendix C). Steamboat Lake has six main areas, each with their own entrances: Meadow Point, Rainbow Ridge, Dutch Hill, Sunrise Vista, Placer Cove and Sage Flat. Pearl Lake is 300 acres and was acquired in 1964. The southern end of Pearl Lake is owned by the U.S. Forest Service. CPW has a permit on these 50 acres (Appendix D) to maintain and operate the lake and dam to provide water for public fishing and outdoor recreation.



Steamboat Lake State Park Management Plan

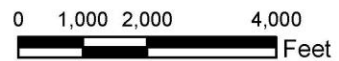


CPW Parcels

Owner

-  Colorado Parks and Wildlife
-  State Land Board
-  County

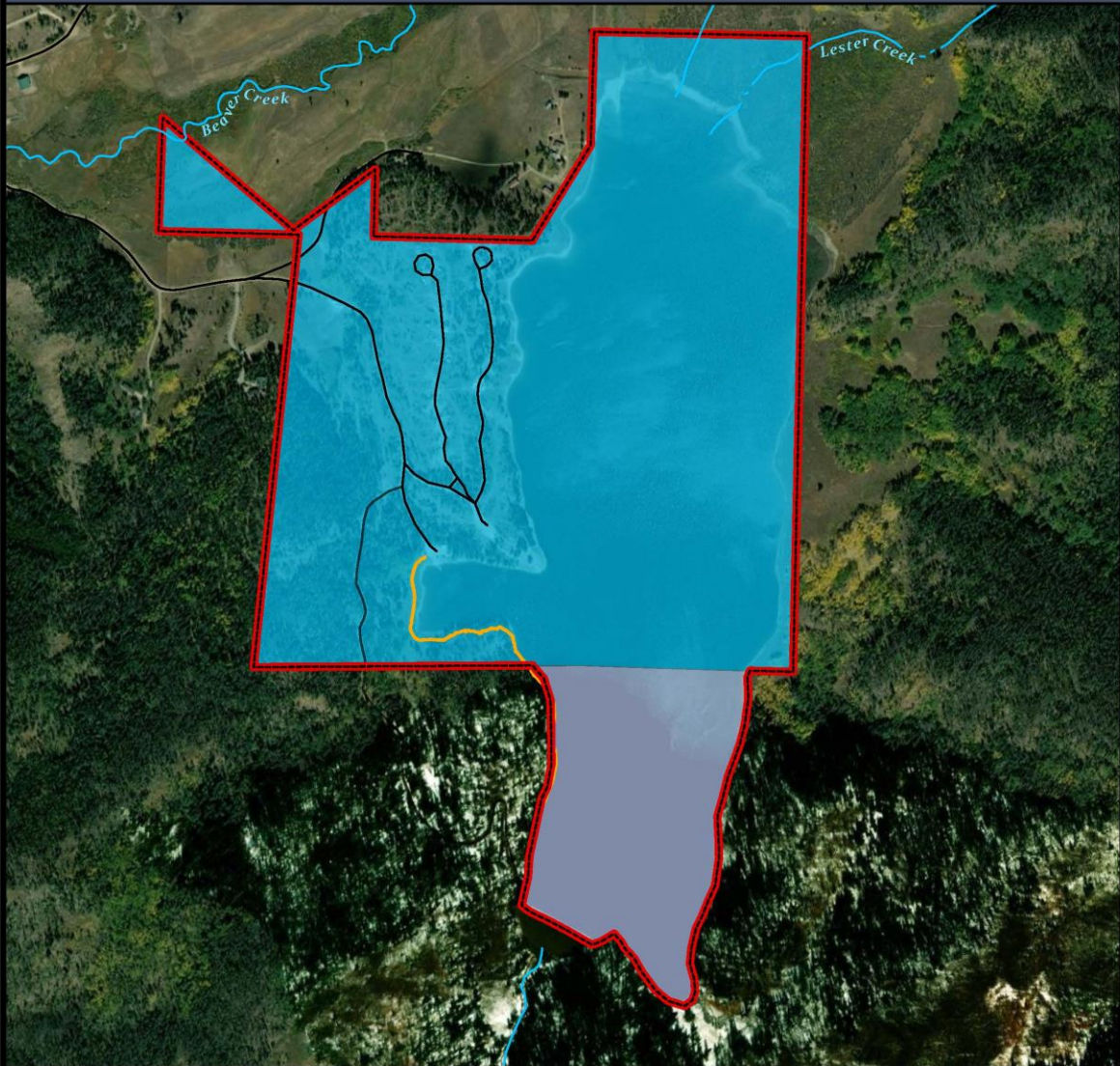
-  Streams
-  Trails
-  Roads
-  Park Boundary



Map 2. Land Ownership within Steamboat Lake State Park



Pearl Lake State Park Management Plan

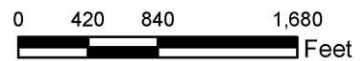
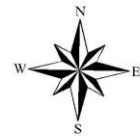


Ownership

Owner

- Colorado Parks and Wildlife
- USFS
- Streams

- Trails
- Roads
- Park Boundary

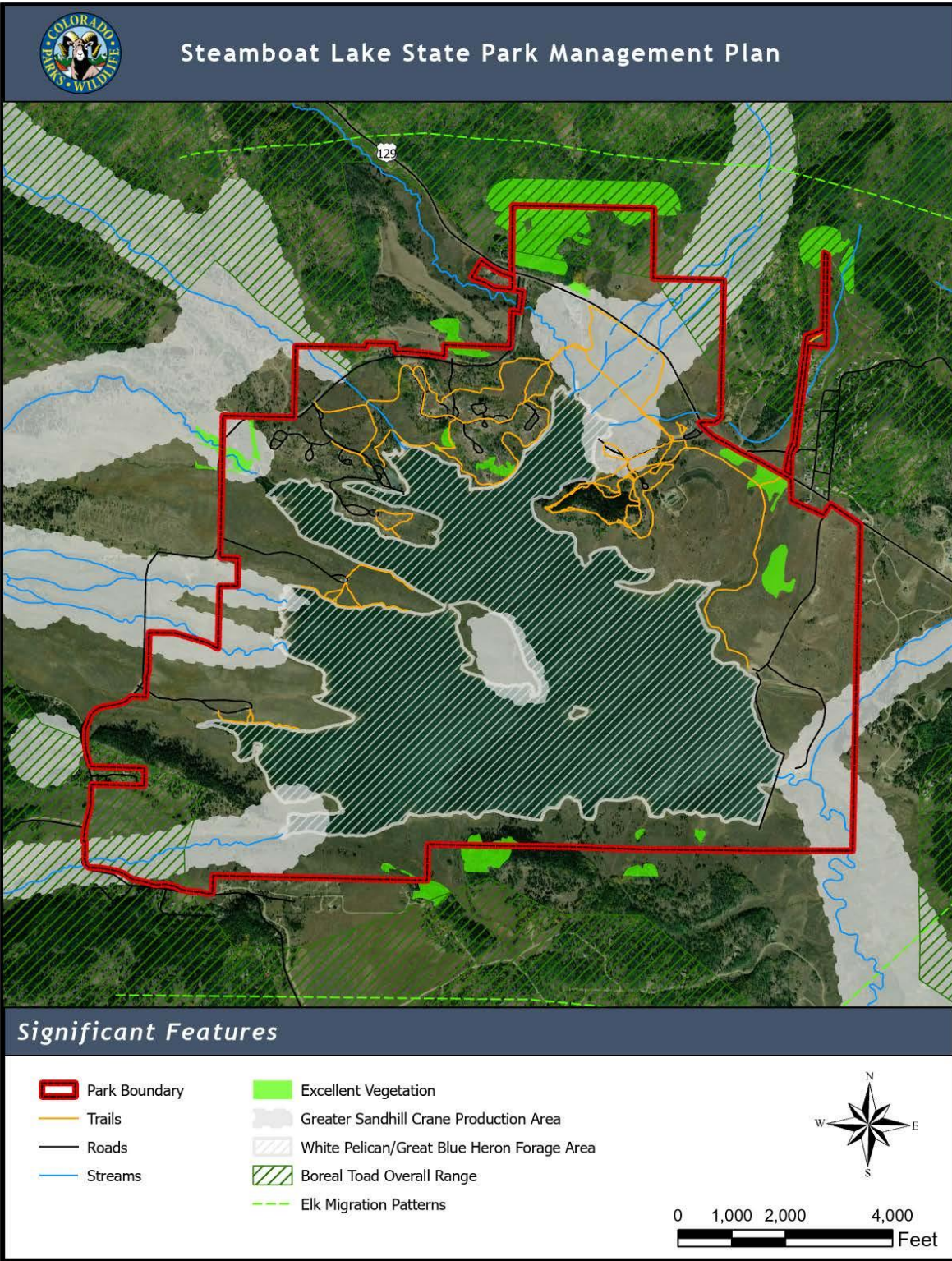


Map 3. Land Ownership within Pearl Lake State Park

Natural Resources

The Parks' lakes mimic natural lakes with a constant level of water throughout the year. The Parks provide a variety of wildlife habitat in forests (aspen, lodgepole pine and northern subalpine), sagebrush shrubland, wetlands, and lakes. The surrounding National Forest provides large tracts of contiguous habitat for migrating and other wide-ranging wildlife. Knowledge of species occurring in the Parks are a result of surveys and monitoring by staff, volunteers and consultants. Maps 4 and 5 depict the most significant natural resources of the Parks and the sections below provide further details about the Parks' resources.

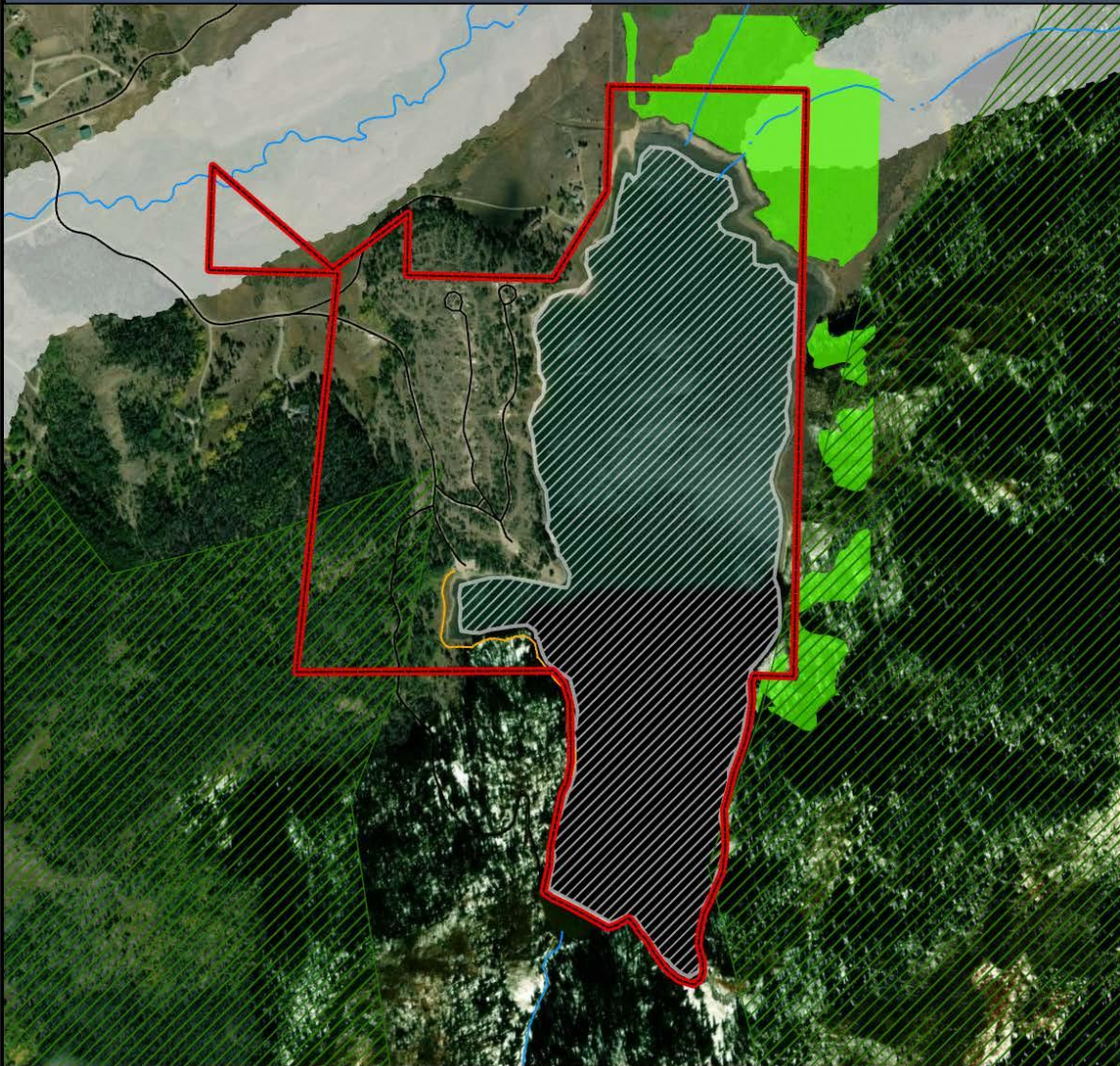
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Map 4. Significant Natural Resources at Steamboat Lake State Park

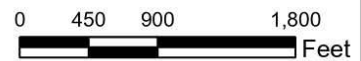
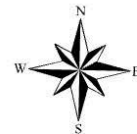


Pearl Lake State Park Management Plan



Significant Features

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| Park Boundary | Excellent Vegetation |
| Trails | Greater Sandhill Crane Production Area |
| Roads | White Pelican/Great Blue Heron Forage Area |
| Streams | Boreal Toad Overall Range |
| | Elk Migration Patterns |



Map 5. Significant Natural Resources at Pearl Lake State Park

Wildlife

Birds: The variety of habitats support a diversity of bird species including over 100 that are found at Steamboat Lake and at least 77 at Pearl Lake during the nesting season (Maps 4 and 5). The Parks also provide important habitat for migratory species. Volunteers monitor bluebird and swallow nesting boxes every year. High quality waterfowl and shorebird habitat is found at Steamboat Lake in and around the inlets on the western side, which have gently sloping shorelines and several hundred acres of emergent marshes, willow carr, cattail marshes and sedge-grass meadows. State-threatened greater sandhill cranes nest at Steamboat Lake. Raptor monitoring and breeding bird surveys documented nesting bald eagles, Cooper's hawk, long-eared owl, osprey and sightings of many other species.

Herptiles: State-endangered boreal toads were historically sighted (in 1998) near Lester Creek at Pearl Lake but were not detected in a 2018 survey. Western tiger salamander, boreal chorus frog and wandering gartersnake occur in the Parks.

Fish: Steamboat and Pearl Lakes are cold-water fisheries stocked with rainbow trout, cutthroat trout and arctic grayling. Both lakes support native mountain suckers. Park staff work closely with the local CPW Aquatic Biologist to manage the fishery at both parks.

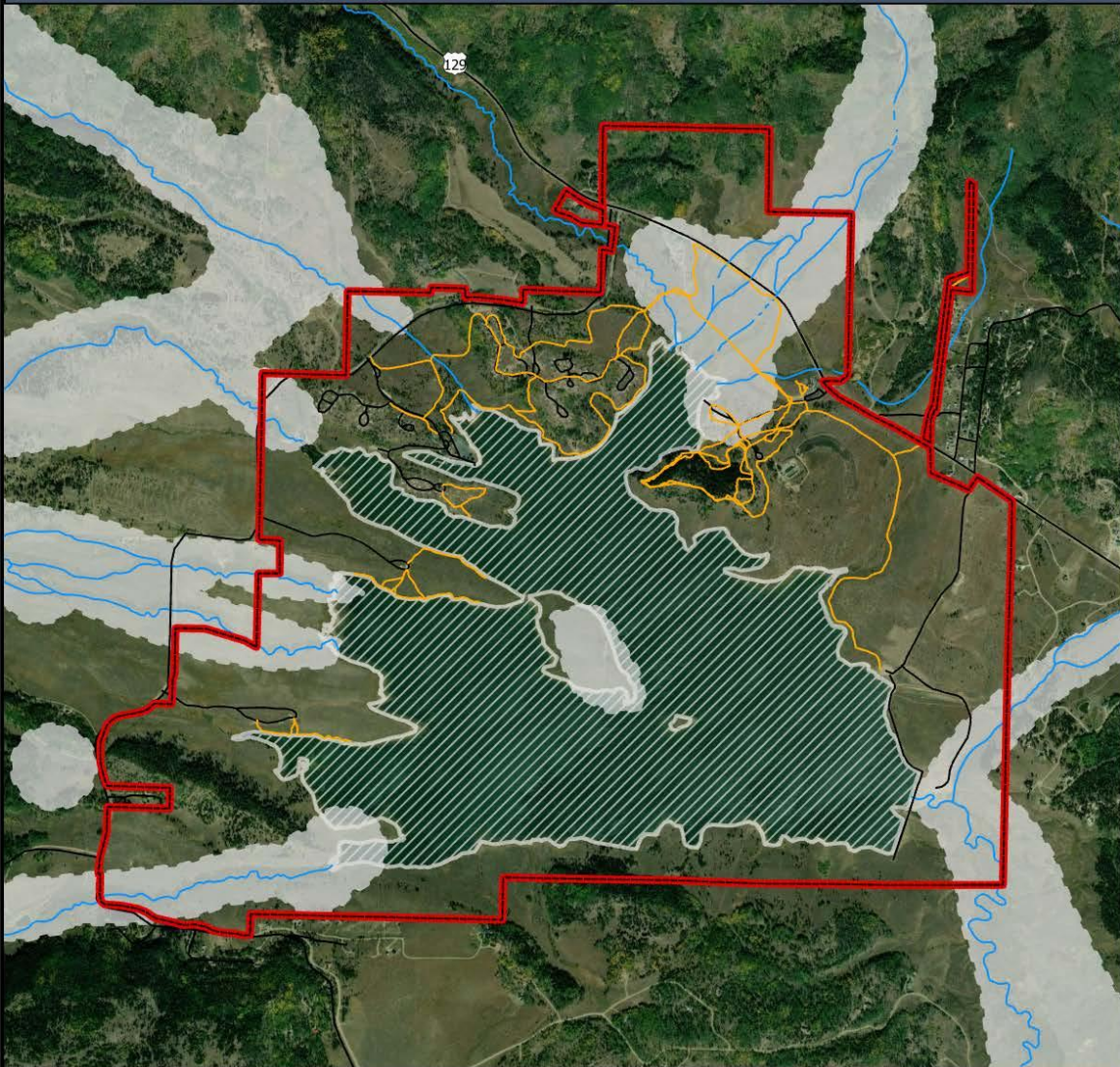
Both lakes have tested positive for whirling disease (WD). WD was first detected in Colorado almost 35 years ago. Whirling disease had significant impacts on susceptible trout populations throughout Colorado once it gained a foothold in the state and has also impacted salmonid populations throughout many western states. Additionally, it had significant impacts on hatchery systems and hatchery production, which now have more rigorous disease inspection protocols. It is very widespread throughout many drainages and is something CPW has been managing for the past 3 decades. It is prevalent throughout the Elk River and Yampa River Drainages. Infectivity levels are variable, and sources of infectivity can be localized. Some of the fish stocked (see "Angling") in Steamboat Lake have higher levels of resistance to the parasite. Anglers and recreationists should decontaminate their gear before recreating in other waters—such as at higher elevations—as they could spread WD and potentially have drastic impacts to susceptible fish populations. WD is just a salmonid disease that does not affect the edibility of the fish at all. The pathogen affects the cartilage/bone structure of the fish.

Invertebrates: Park staff conduct regular butterfly monitoring and have documented high diversity of 62 species with 24 seen regularly. Another 32 species of insects have been documented by staff, volunteers and visitors via iNaturalist. Steamboat Lake and Pearl Lake have not had detailed invertebrate surveys completed, but it is expected that there are significantly greater species present.

Mammals: Well-vegetated drainages in the Park provide linkages to adjacent habitats for species such as mule deer, black bear and mountain lion (Map 8). Elk summer range and production areas overlaps with both Parks. Ample habitat for moose exists in both Parks in the riparian willow shrublands and wetlands. Smaller mammals are frequently sighted in the Parks and 6 bat species have been documented.

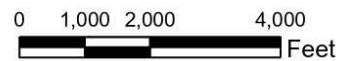
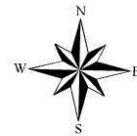


Steamboat Lake State Park Management Plan



Birds

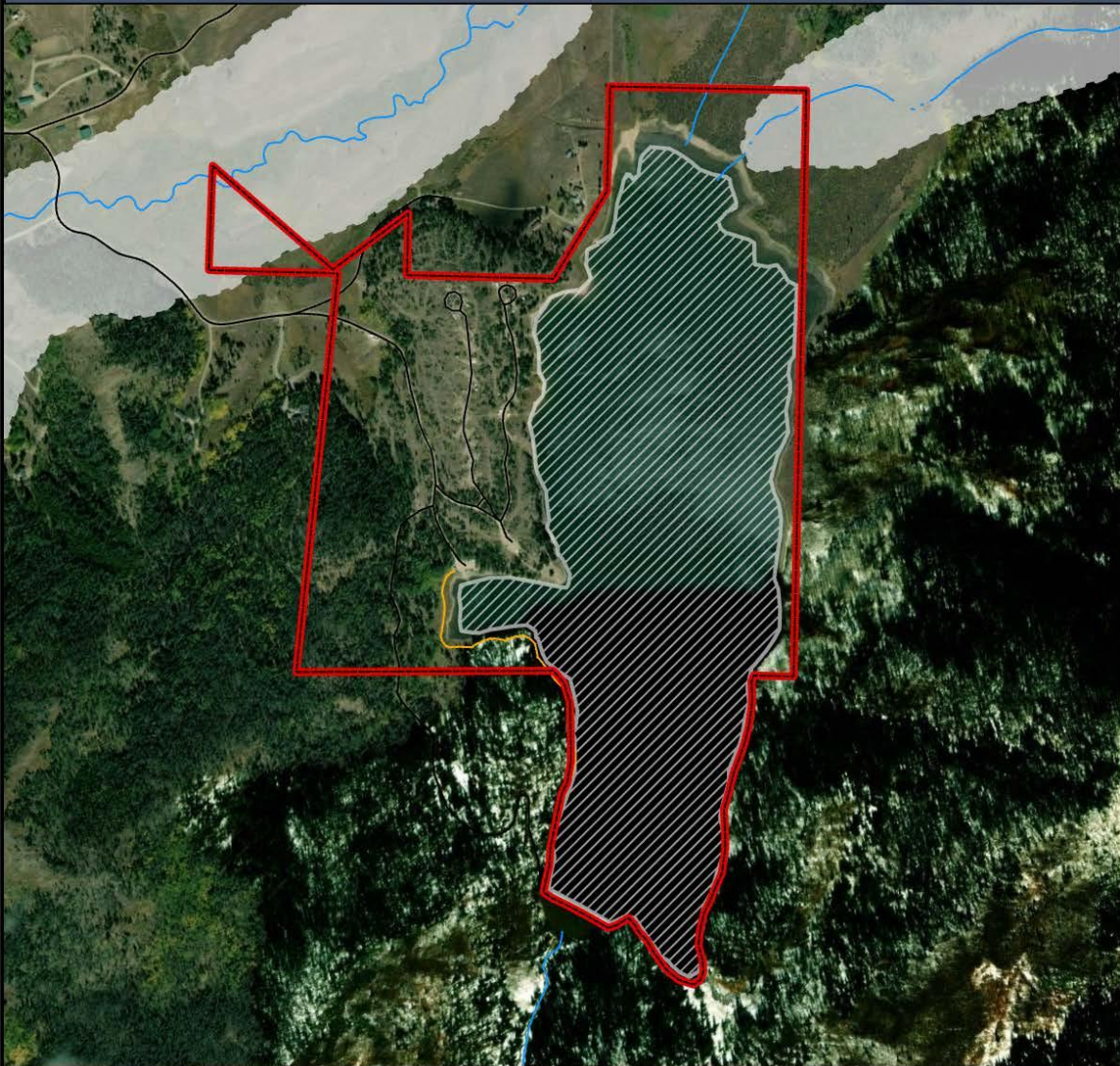
- Park Boundary
- Trails
- Roads
- Streams
- Greater Sandhill Crane Production Area
- White Pelican/Great Blue Heron Forage Area



Map 6. Birds of Steamboat Lake State Park

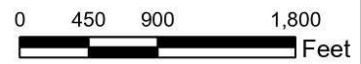
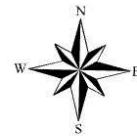


Pearl Lake State Park Management Plan



Birds

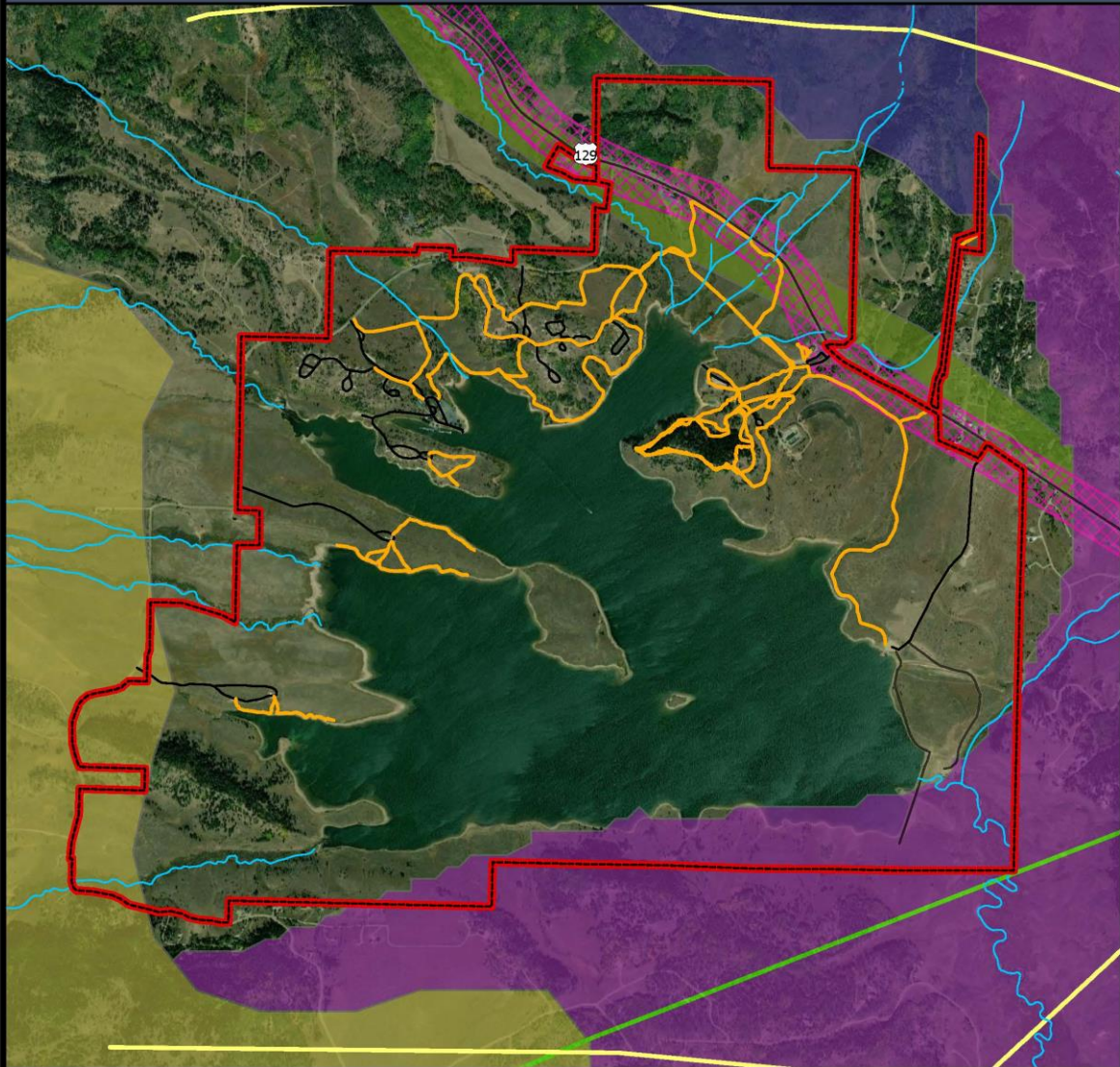
- Park Boundary
- Trails
- Roads
- Streams
- Greater Sandhill Crane Production Area
- White Pelican/Great Blue Heron Forage Area



Map 7. Birds of Pearl Lake State Park



Steamboat Lake State Park Management Plan



Mammals

- | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------|
| Pronghorn Limited Use Area | Elk Summer Concentration Area | Streams |
| Mule Deer Highway Crossing | Elk Highway Crossings | Trails |
| Mule Deer Migration Patterns | Black Bear Summer Concentration | Roads |
| | Elk Migration Patterns | Park Boundary |



Map 8. Big Game Mammals found in and around Steamboat Lake State Park

Sensitive species: The Parks may provide habitat for approximately 30 rare animal species. In most years Park staff detect: American white pelican, bald eagle, Brewer's sparrow, Cassin's finch, Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, greater sandhill crane, northern harrier, rufous hummingbird, Swainson's hawk, and white-faced ibis. In addition, the 2016 bird survey documented loggerhead shrike and northern goshawk. The Stewardship Plan provides details on expected occurrences, natural history and opportunities to monitor and manage for these species. Those sensitive species that do occur currently at the Parks seem to be in good condition.

Vegetation

The Parks' vegetation is dominated by sagebrush shrublands, lodgepole pine and subalpine fir forests, aspen woodlands and open grasslands. Riparian shrublands composed of dense willows surround creeks that drain in the lakes. Wetlands composed of rushes, sedges and cattails surround the lakes. Both natural and human disturbances have played a role in determining the current vegetation communities of the Parks. For example, there are still scars from hydromining on the eastern portion of Steamboat Lake and both Parks have evidence of stand replacing fires in the forests.

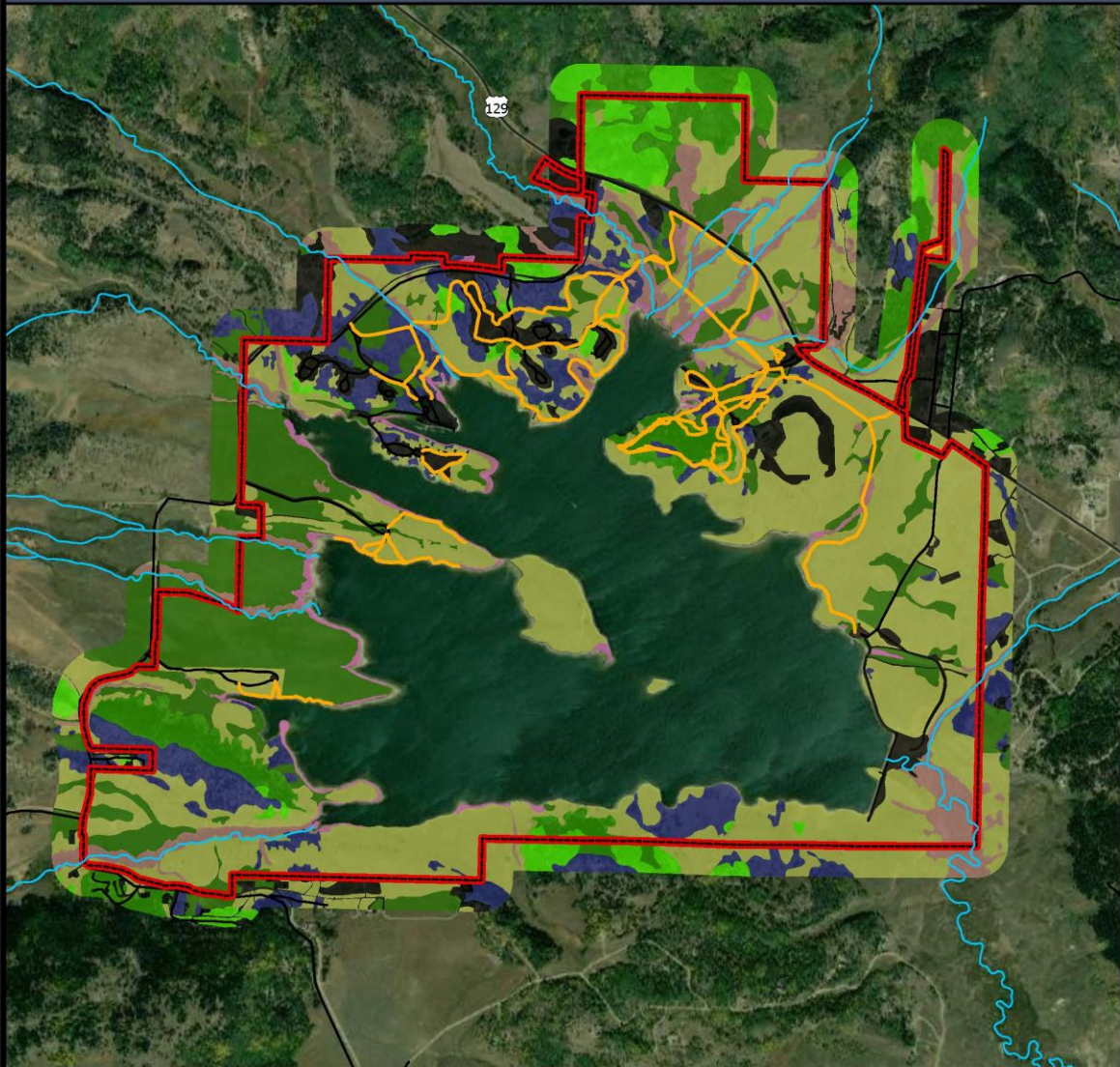
Vegetation communities: A total of 19 communities have been identified in the Parks and are seen on Maps 9 and 10. These maps came from a 2019 study that included a 500 foot buffer (to the Park boundary) but did not include water, nor disturbed and developed areas (e.g., park infrastructure, roads, trails, bare earth, agricultural land). Detailed descriptions of each community type are included in the Stewardship Plan. Sagebrush shrublands are the dominant community in the Parks and these areas provide a wide diversity of forbs and other plants that are utilized by insects, birds and mammals.

Vegetation Conditions: Trespassing free-range cattle can seasonally impact vegetation in the south and west areas of SLSP. Sagebrush shrublands are in excellent condition on the east side of SLSP but in other areas of the Park non-native species are increasing. Upland forest communities have been largely impacted by mountain pine beetle but have been actively managed (through implementation of the Forest Management Plan) to improve health. Maps 11 and 12 depict the overall vegetation condition for the Parks.

Sensitive plants and communities: Rabbit Ears gilia is found only in the vicinity of Rabbit Ears Pass and was documented at SLSP in 2009 after a season of abundant rainfall and may have been seen on the E/SE shoreline of Pearl Lake on USFS land in 2020. The site where the gilia was seen in 2009 is now heavily infested with Canada thistle, likely from unintentional human disturbance (e.g., visitors to the campgrounds). In 2019, two rare plant communities in good condition were documented in the Parks and should be a priority to avoid disturbing. A rare community does not indicate a rare plant but rather a rare association of multiple plants growing together.

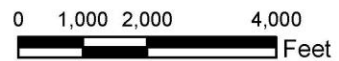


Steamboat Lake State Park Management Plan



Vegetation Type

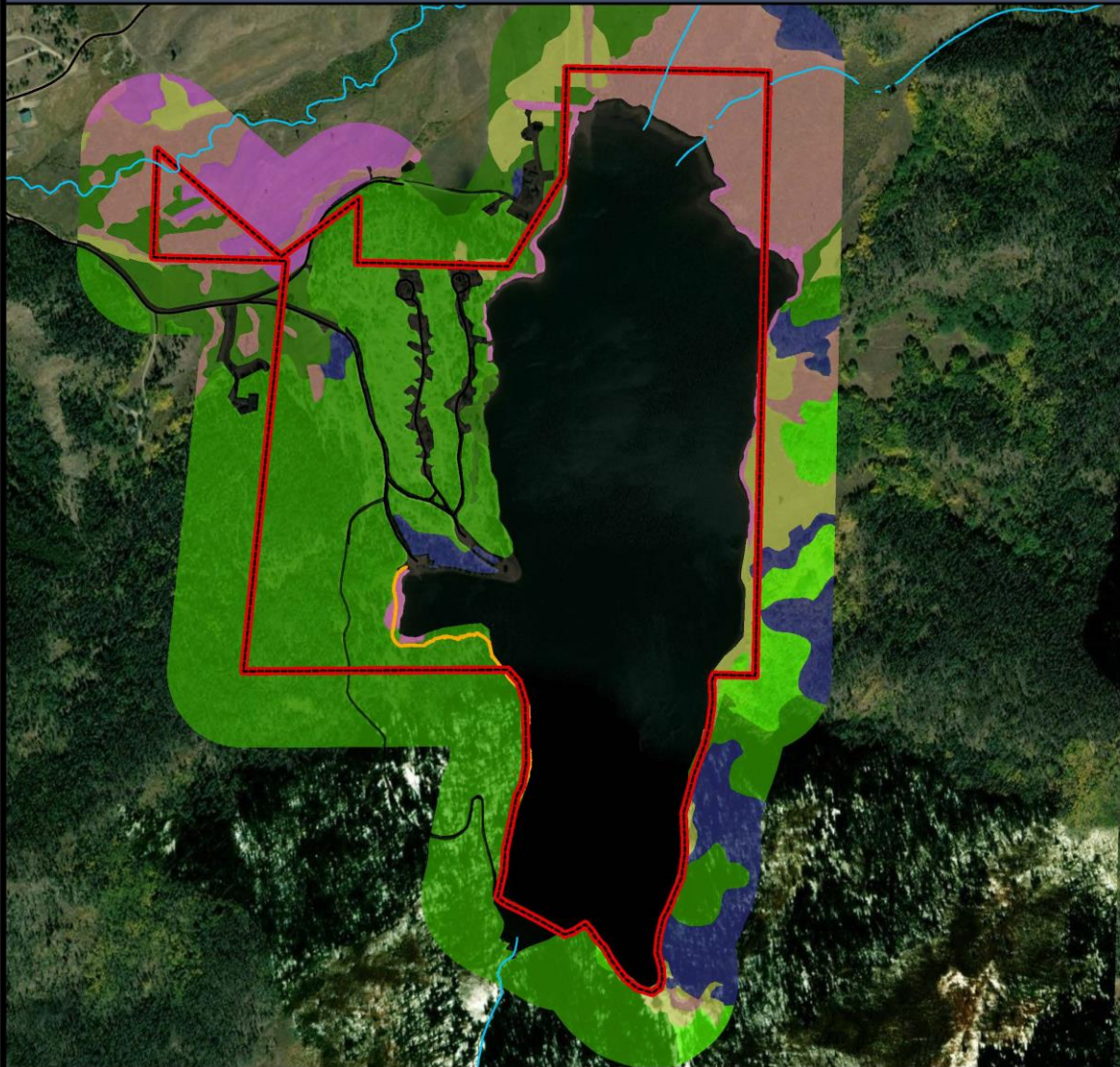
- | | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------|
| ■ Developed | ■ Riparian Woodlands and Shrublands | — Streams |
| ■ Aspen | ■ Sagebrush | — Trails |
| ■ Foothill and Mountain Grasslands | ■ Spruce-Fir | — Roads |
| ■ Lodgepole | ■ Wetlands | ▭ Park Boundary |



Map 9. Vegetation Communities at Steamboat Lake State Park

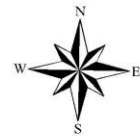


Pearl Lake State Park Management Plan



Vegetation Type

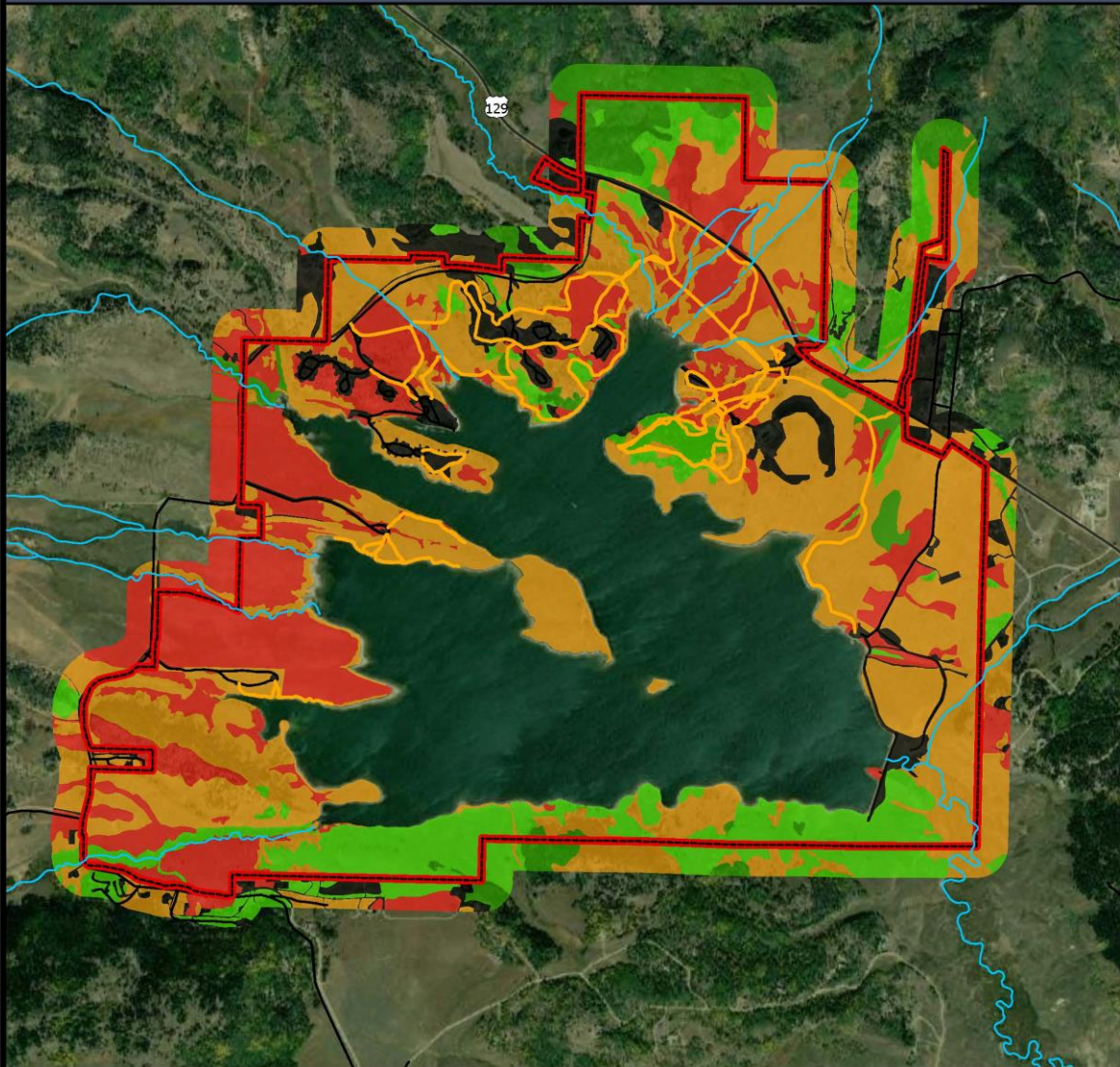
- | | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------|
| ■ Developed | ■ Riparian Woodlands and Shrublands | — Trails |
| ■ Agriculture | ■ Sagebrush | — Roads |
| ■ Aspen | ■ Spruce-Fir | ■ Park Boundary |
| ■ Foothill and Mountain Grasslands | ■ Wetlands | |
| ■ Lodgepole | ■ Streams | |



Map 10. Vegetation Communities at Pearl Lake State Park

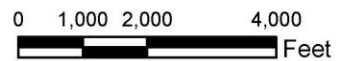


Steamboat Lake State Park Management Plan



Vegetation Condition

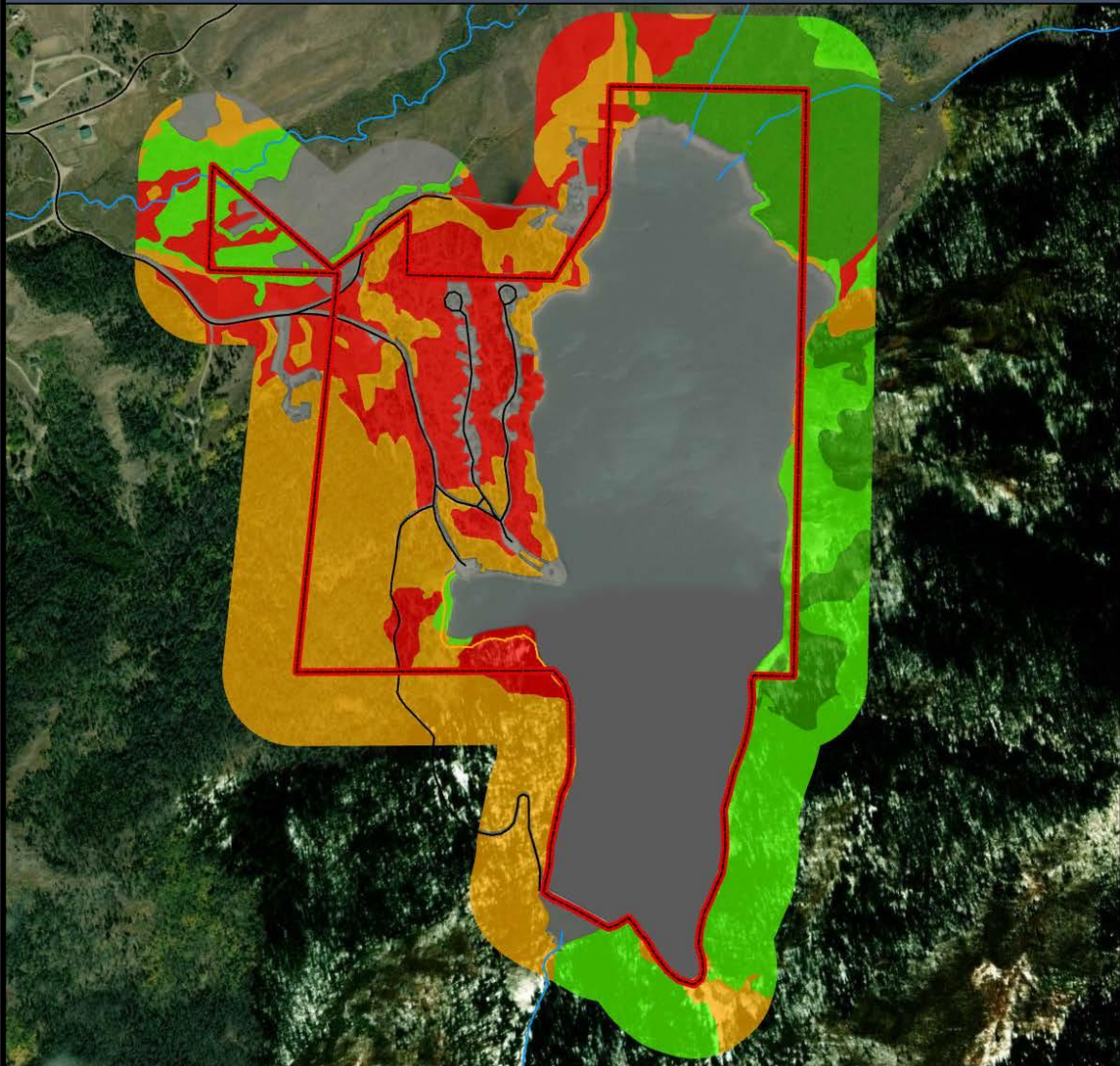
- | | |
|-----------|---------------|
| Excellent | Streams |
| Good | Trails |
| Fair | Roads |
| Poor | Park Boundary |
| Developed | |



Map 11. Vegetation Condition at Steamboat Lake State Park

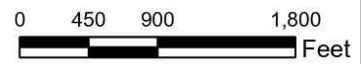
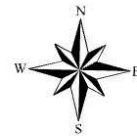


Pearl Lake State Park Management Plan



Vegetation Condition

CONDITION	
Unevaluated	Park Boundary
Excellent	Trails
Good	Streams
Fair	Roads
Poor	



Map 12. Vegetation Condition at Pearl Lake State Park

Hydrology

Both lakes are manmade, CPW owns and manages most of the water, and they are a significant attraction for visitor recreation. Steamboat and Pearl Lakes cover 1,053 and 167 surface acres, respectively. The waters in the Parks (Maps 14 and 15) are important for plants and wildlife, maintenance of high water quality, recreational opportunities, and are locally and regionally significant. Water resources and water quality are currently in good condition and are anticipated to remain fairly stable at Steamboat and Pearl Lakes due to minimal fluctuations in both reservoirs. See “Operations and Maintenance” below for more on the infrastructure required to maintain these lakes as sources of water for the park visitors.

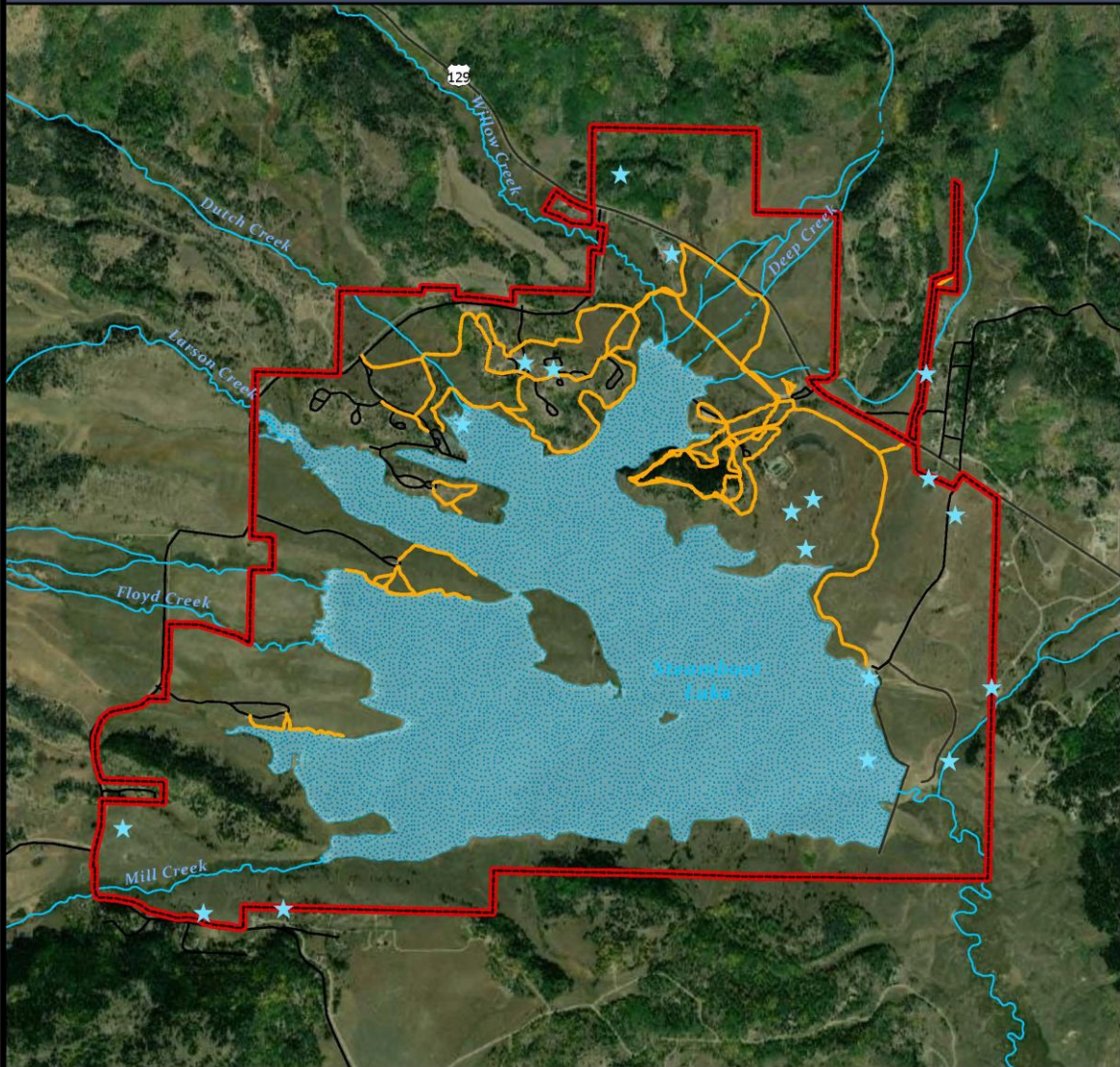
Steamboat Lake: The area that is now Steamboat Lake was once a valley of meandering rivers and creeks and eventually a few constructed ditches. Steamboat Lake was created by a joint venture between the Colorado Department of Game, Fish and Parks (now Colorado Parks and Wildlife), the Colorado Ute Electric Association, Inc., and the Salt River Generating Company. Willow Creek Dam, an earthen structure, was built in 1967 and the reservoir was inundated in 1968. Willow Creek is the main tributary to Steamboat Lake and enters the reservoir near the northeast corner of the Park. Other source waters include: Dutch Creek, Larson Creek, Floyd Creek, Mill Creek, Deep Creek, and several unnamed drainages. The drainages transport runoff from snowmelt in the Park Range, precipitation events and irrigation return water. Water also enters the reservoir as surface flows and groundwater seepage. All source waters for the lake originate in the Routt National Forest and areas east and west of the reservoir. In addition, several ditches flow into the lake including: Mayberry-Wheeler Ditch, White-Wheeler Ditch, Mayberry Ditch, Reynolds Ditch, North Mayberry Ditch, Chris Fetcher Ditch, Morris-Taylor Ditch, and the Larson Creek Ditch.

Water quality in Steamboat Lake appears to be good. Steamboat Lake has been tested in recent years for blue-green algae—also known as cyanobacteria—by CPW’s water quality monitoring program. Blue-green algae occurs naturally in lakes and ponds, but if exposed to warmer temperatures and higher nutrient concentrations, the algae may form large blooms, which produce harmful cyanotoxins that affect people, fish and wildlife. Steamboat Lake tested positive for cyanobacteria in the summer of 2020. This should continue to be monitored to ensure that the levels do not worsen in the future. Water quality in Willow Creek is estimated to be fair. Below the dam, the banks of Willow Creek are very eroded. Water quality and riparian vegetation have likely been affected by cattle grazing.

Pearl Lake: The lake was created by damming Lester Creek, which enters from the northeastern corner. The dam and most of the land surrounding the reservoir is owned by the U.S. Forest Service, reducing the likelihood of development in the Lester Creek watershed. The water quality in Pearl Lake is thought to be very good. However, little monitoring has been conducted to confirm this assumption. The lake is a cold-water fishery that appears to be healthy and maintains high fish productivity. Only wakeless boating is allowed on the lake.

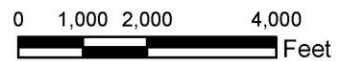


Steamboat Lake State Park Management Plan



Water Resources

- ★ Wells
- Streams
- ▒ Steamboat Lake
- Trails
- Roads
- ▭ Park Boundary



Map 13. Water Resources of Steamboat Lake State Park

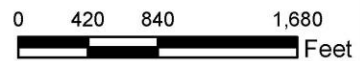
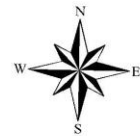


Pearl Lake State Park Management Plan



Water Resources

- ★ Wells
- ▒ Pearl Lake
- Streams
- Trails
- Roads
- ▭ Park Boundary



Map 14. Water Resources of Pearl Lake State Park

Wetlands: The wetlands in the Parks are locally and regionally significant and are important for plants and wildlife, maintenance of high water quality, and recreational opportunities. Both Parks contain a high acreage of wetland and riparian communities that surround the two major lakes, drainages, ponds, and seasonal waterways. The Parks' beauty and natural diversity are greatly enhanced by wetland resources and their preservation or loss will have a direct impact on the overall quality of the Park. Wetlands are common at Steamboat Lake State Park but occupy less area than historically due to the construction of the lake dam. However, Pearl Lake State Park has wetland communities that were likely limited to the margins of creeks and drainages in the area and creation of the dam has probably resulted in more wetland and riparian acreage. Wetland resources at Steamboat Lake and Pearl Lake State Parks were last inventoried in 1995. At that time, the report documented that the quality of wetlands varied greatly, but an update is needed to fully understand the condition, function, and extent of wetland areas at the Parks.

Due to the abundance of water and nutrients wetland areas provide, they are very susceptible to noxious weed invasion. Left uncontrolled, noxious weeds will seriously degrade wetland communities and can even alter natural hydrology. Most weed species thrive in disturbed areas and off-trail use contributes dramatically to this problem. Vegetation was assessed throughout the Park in 2019, including wetland areas. Wetland vegetation was generally healthy, but contained a high abundance of non-native species, including Canada thistle, curly dock, and smooth brome.

Geology, Soils & Paleontology

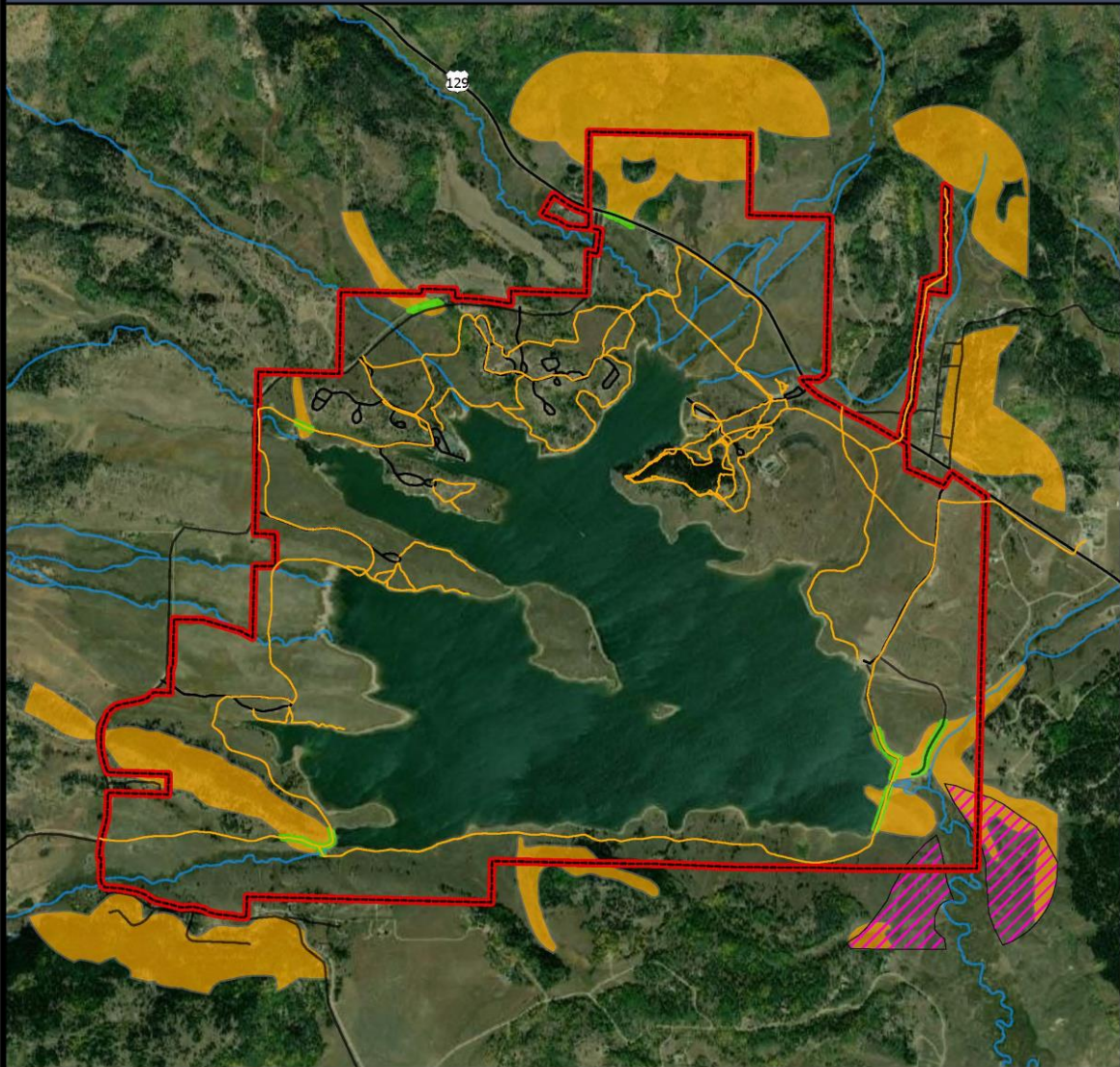
Geology: Both of the Parks contain interesting and noteworthy geologic features that provide information about the past. Geologic features in the Parks are relatively undisturbed and in good condition. Both Parks have Tertiary rock formations and Quaternary surficial deposits, but only Pearl Lake has Proterozoic rock formations exposed at the surface. A fault that runs approximately along the course of Beaver Creek is responsible for this difference. The east side of the fault moved up relative to the west side. Erosion then removed the Triassic, Jurassic, and Cretaceous rocks, exposing the Proterozoic rocks before the Tertiary rocks and Quaternary surficial deposits were formed. On the west side of the fault, the Triassic, Jurassic, and Cretaceous rocks are still present below the Tertiary rocks and Quaternary surficial deposits. Pearl Lake's proterozoic formations are among the oldest rocks in Colorado dating 1.65 to 1.7 billion years old.

Soils: Soils in the Parks are relatively undisturbed and in good condition given the information available on the resource. No official surveys have been conducted to assess soil condition or erosion in the Parks. The NRCS soils data for the Parks indicates there are 16 soil types in the Parks, some of which are highly erosive. Wetland soils act as a filter between surface water and groundwater playing an important role in trapping sediments that would otherwise enter the lakes and in filtering water that percolates into groundwater sources.

Paleontology: There are no records of fossils found in the Parks nor were any found in a 2019 survey. However, fossils have been found nearby and it is possible similar ones may be found in the Parks. Maps 16 and 17 depicts the paleontological sensitivity of rock formations and surficial deposits. The areas with Browns Park Formation and Mancos shale are rated medium as they have some potential to produce fossils which may be scientifically significant and/or vulnerable to erosion.



Steamboat Lake State Park Management Plan



Geohazards

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------|
| Landslides | Roads |
| Rockfall Hazard | Trails |
| Severe | Streams |
| High | Park Boundary |



0 1,000 2,000 4,000
Feet

Map 15. Geohazards at Steamboat Lake State Park



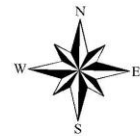
Pearl Lake State Park Management Plan



Geohazards

Rockfall Hazard

- Severe
- High
- Roads
- Trails
- Streams
- Park Boundary



Map 16. Geohazards at Pearl Lake State Park

Threats to Natural Resources

As a whole, the Parks are aggressively managed to protect natural resources and they are a top priority of staff. The following list of threats highlights where to focus limited resources when making management decisions. Details on related actions are included in Chapter 5.

Non-native and Noxious Weeds: Non-native plants typically have little wildlife value, displace native species and can reduce the amount and quality (e.g., structure) of habitat if allowed to spread. Weed occurrence, especially smooth brome, has been increasing at the Parks. Routt County assists with road right-of-way spraying but Park staff are not licensed for restricted use herbicides, so they frequently apply non-restricted herbicides and pull weeds as much as time and resources allow.

Degradation of wetland, riparian, water habitats: Grazing can compact soil, increase turbidity and interfere with water movement. Recreation impacts vegetation via soil compaction, erosion and sedimentation. Willows are showing signs of potential blister (leaf) rust from a fungus that can defoliate shrubs and trees prior to normal autumn leaf drop. The demand for water-based recreation is expected to increase, assuming that high-quality boating and fishing opportunities continue to be available in the lakes.

Degradation of forest habitats: Fire suppression, mining, grazing and logging changed pre-settlement landscape to a lot of overstocked, even-aged forests. Mountain pine beetle greatly impacted the lodgepole pine at both Parks resulting in improved habitat for some species and degraded for others. Forest management over the last decade has improved forest diversity and health overall, increasing resilience to future insect outbreaks.

Unmanaged Cattle Grazing: Currently, ranchers have leases for their cattle to graze on surrounding federal lands. However, these cows are unmanaged by leases during grazing season and the Parks do not have infrastructure (e.g., fencing) or operational capacity to manage fencing therefore there are often cattle on the Parks. While there is a place for grazing in natural resource management, the west and south sides of Steamboat Lake State Park have experienced moderate to heavy cattle grazing, resulting in areas of decreased vegetation cover. Fences installed over the last 20 years have limited the open range access for cattle.

Aquatic Nuisance Species: Current boat inspections by staff are keeping the lakes ANS free. Otherwise, major pests such as zebra and quagga mussels could get introduced, which would greatly affect the lake ecosystems in the Parks.

Increasing visitation: Some examples of impacts from rising visitation include: water-related activities degrading sensitive wetland habitats that are important to many wildlife species at the Parks; increased social trail—especially steep ones from campsites to the lake—are disrupting natural surface runoff and creating erosion channels; braided trails on south side of Steamboat Lake from equestrians and anglers; and increasing number of dogs off-leash.

Wildfire: No recent wildfires and extreme insect infestation have resulted in high density of timber (buildup of fuels) that could result in catastrophic wildfires. Large scale wildfires can clear all vegetation resulting in bare soils, which could then erode and increase sedimentation in waterways.

Additional large-scale concerns:

- Development: increasing housing around the Parks may affect mammal migration corridors and lead to the Parks becoming “habitat islands” through fragmentation of habitat between the Parks and national forest where their boundaries do not touch
- Climate change: global impacts to wildlife and plants as well as local changes such as more extreme drought and fire

Cultural Resources

The Resource Stewardship Plan (Appendix A) contains detailed information and resources on the history of the area and what is now the Park. It will be used to craft how the Park tells its story in any publications, signs, exhibits etc.

The Park lands lie on the ancestral homelands of the Ute (Núu-agma-təvə-pə) (the Yampa Ute band) and Eastern Shoshone peoples. It is likely that the Shoshone and Ute interacted in the vicinity with a potential border somewhere north of the Yampa River. The Shoshone presence was likely more limited with almost all sites (e.g., pottery remains) associated with the Ute peoples.

Very few archeological artifacts have been recovered in the Parks and those that have, lack diagnostic features to identify dates of origin. The lands that are now within Park boundaries were near water and at elevations ideal for summer hunting grounds for nomadic groups. The Ute, mainly the Yampa band, were forcibly removed in the late 19th century.

After the removal of the primary inhabitants of the region, the land was used for resource extraction, homesteading and transportation. Hahns Peak was the first Euro-American settlement in Routt County eventually establishing two mining camps. In addition to gold, coal mining was also active in the area. Placer mining used high-pressure jets of water to dislodge rock material or move sediment leaving devastating impacts on the landscape, some of which can still be seen in Steamboat Lake State Park.

As mining declined in the early 20th century and the railroad arrived, ranching became a primary industry starting with cattle. Later, sheep farmers moved down from Wyoming, which led to “sheep and cattle wars” over grazing rights, where several armed conflicts occurred in the Hahns Peak area. One sheep farmer was John Kelly Heart. His wife Pearl sold their land to the Forest Service in 1962 which later became Pearl Lake State Park. Timber also became a lucrative industry.

There are a number of historic sites at both Parks and three are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places:

- Grand Lake Lumber and Cutting Company/Rankin Sawmill: one of the few mills active after 1930 and the largest sawmill operation in Routt County from 1956-1961. The mill’s basement is still present today.
- Qualey Cabin/Omer Folden Homestead: pioneer homestead and one of the last properties purchased before the construction of the dam that created Steamboat Lake.

- Wheeler Homestead: a family’s homestead that included a cabin which served as a ranger station for Routt National Forest. Much of the site was flooded with the creation of Steamboat Lake, but some gravesites and garden remnants are present.

The building of Steamboat and Pearl Lakes’ dams were part of water control efforts in the western United States, and reflect a turn towards recreation as a focus for the region.

Threats to Cultural Resources

Cultural resources are in good condition and provide an excellent opportunity for visitors to learn about the history of the people who occupied the lands that are now these Parks. Development projects should always consider known and potential cultural resources, and historic structures need to be preserved, particularly from environmental processes and weather.

Scenic Resources

Steamboat Lake provides excellent views of Hahns Peak—a volcanic formation—Sand Mountain and Farewell Mountain, which are all over 10,800 feet. Pearl Lake’s scenic mountain setting is remarkable for its beauty. Both Parks provide plenty of opportunity to gaze at peaceful waters and enjoy fall colors from the large stands of aspen.

Recreation Resources

Although there are plenty of recreation opportunities in the area, there are few water bodies for swimming, boating and fishing, the Parks’ lakes draw in many visitors. The State Park amenities for Park users and those staying for backcountry activities also draw in many visitors. During the summer, Pearl Lake is busy at the campground, day use areas and boat ramp, but offers opportunities for solitude out on the water and trails that lead into the national forest. Steamboat Lake has extreme seasonality in its recreation resource and is transformed between the popular summer activities—like boating and camping—and extended winter season activities, like the Nordic Touring Center and snowmobile trails.

SUMMER

Steamboat Lake State Park

Approximately 10 miles of shoreline and 1,053 surface acres of water provide visitors with a variety of water sports including: fishing, boating, swimming, jet skiing, windsurfing, and water-skiing. There are 25 picnic sites with grills and abundant opportunities for wildlife watching—including nesting sandhill cranes—and nature photography.

Trails

Trail use by visitors often provides the best means of experiencing the natural resources of the Park firsthand and up close.

All trails are non-paved and allow leashed pets and bikes.

- Poverty Bar: Opened in 2005 and highlights the gold mining history of the area. The trail parallels the western edge of Hahns Peak Village and connects to Routt National Forest. It is 1.1 miles, rated “easy,” and only open in summer.

- **Tombstone Nature Trail:** This 1.1-mile loop trail at Placer Cove Day Use Area provides views of Steamboat Lake and highlights features of the area's natural and cultural history. It is rated “easy-to-moderate” and bikes are not allowed.
- **Willow Creek:** Links the Dutch Hill/Marina area to the Sunrise Vista Campground and continues on to the Visitor Center providing 2.5 miles of hiking. From the Visitor Center, the trail continues on 1.3 miles to the Sage Flats Day Use Area. The total mileage is 3.8 miles and is rated “easy” as a great family trail or for jogging.

Camping

The Park's two campgrounds—Sunrise Vista and Dutch Hill—offer 108 nonelectric seasonal campsites, 74 electric seasonal and 14 with electric hookups year-round. Every campsite has a high use pad for a tent and a second pad with a table and ground grill. There are also 10 camper cabins available for rent through the marina concession. The camper cabins provide heat, a refrigerator and beds with mattresses. Vault toilets and water hydrants are dispersed through campgrounds. Campfires are only allowed in provided fire rings. Dutch Hill has had a camper services building and one was built in Sunrise Vista in 2021-2022. There are “timed” showers in both buildings that operate with a button visitors can push more than once. Dutch Hill's showers were coin operated until 2023.

Boating

Some coves and inlets are restricted to wakeless boating and are indicated by buoys. A large portion of the lake is zoned for wake boating, for water-skiers and jet-skiers to enjoy. Registrations and ANS stamps for motor and wind-powered vessels can be purchased at the Visitor Center. A full-service Marina and swim beach are the most popular areas of the Park in summer. Boats and paddlesports equipment can be rented at the Marina. Swimming is allowed in designated areas and is very popular for families, campers and other visitors even though water temperatures stay fairly cool throughout the summer. There are two boat ramps—one at the Marina and Placer Cove. However, Placer Cove's ramp has had limited use in recent years (2020-2023) because of limited staff to run the required ANS inspections station. The staffing issue and new swim beach will likely lead to limiting this boat ramp to hand-launched watercraft that do not require ANS inspection.

Angling

The coves of Steamboat Lake are well known for their sizable rainbow trout and the Park has Gold Medal waters designation. Anglers can bait, lure and fly fish. There is a bag limit of four trout daily with a possession limit of eight trout total. The stability of water levels support this fishery and allows for the good quality lake habitat to grow smaller fish which are better quality when they reach catchable size. It is also more efficient and cost effective for CPW's hatchery system to be able to stock smaller fish. In 2021, nearly 170,000 rainbow and cutthroat trout were stocked in the lake.

Pearl Lake State Park

Pearl Lake has 34 non-electric seasonal campsites and 2 year-round yurts. There are six restrooms—five are in the campground and two of those have running water. Additionally, the Park has seven picnic sites with tables and grills or fire rings. The lake is restricted to

wakeless boating only, and allows wakeless boating and paddlesports—rented out by a concessionaire—May 1 through November 1. There is a short (0.6 miles) trail for hiking and biking within the Park, and connects with the Coulton Creek Trail on to Routt National Forest. As with Steamboat Lake, the consistent water levels and quality lake habitat support arctic grayling and cutthroat trout. Special regulations exist at Pearl Lake, allowing flies and lures only and a limit of two trout 18" or greater. In 2021, CPW stocked 35,000 Colorado River Cutthroat Trout. In 2022, the upper day-use area was upgraded with a patio and bulletin boards to encourage visitors to disperse by using the upper area and alleviating some crowding at the lower lot.

WINTER

Steamboat Lake State Park

Steamboat Lake provides a winter setting ideal for a wide variety of winter recreation pursuits. The Park receives between 250 and 400 inches of 'champagne powder' snow each year. The Park is popular for ice fishing and there are trails for motorized and nonmotorized activities. The Nordic Center has nearly 6 miles of groomed cross-country ski trails—Dutch Hill 1.36 mi, Sunrise Vista Loop 1.58mi, The Meadows 1.2mi, Main Street .2mi, Homestead Meadow .71 mi, and Cross Cut Trail .89mi—and 1.5 miles of a snowshoe trail.

Snowmobilers can ride in the Park or access Routt National Forest and 146 miles of groomed trails and backcountry. Snowmobile use of the Park in the winter months has increased over the years and is a popular activity. The Park hosts the Steamboat Lake Snowclub, which is primarily comprised of snowmobilers. Most visitors that use the Marina lot are snowmobilers for access USFS trails or are traveling to the lakes to icefish.

Fourteen first come first serve electrical hookups are available in the Marina parking lot for self-contained units and the camper cabins are available via reservation. When conditions allow, ice fishing is also available.

Pearl Lake State Park

All roads and facilities are closed except the yurts and a vault restroom. Visitors must reserve the yurts and access the Park via snowshoes, cross-country skis or snowmobile. Ice fishing for cutthroat trout and grayling is allowed. Pearl Lake is restricted to flies and lures only with a two-fish, 18+ inches bag limit. Snowmobiling is allowed within Pearl Lake but not on County Road 209, so any snowmobiles must be trailered down the road to the Park. A small area is available for trailer parking for snowmobile access to the Park.

Hunting

Properly licensed hunters are welcome during all legal seasons beginning the Tuesday after Labor Day and continuing through the Friday prior to Memorial Day. Hunters sign in on the board in front of the Visitor Center prior to hunting in the Park. It is prohibited to discharge firearms, and/or other weapons within 100 yards of any designated campground, picnic area, boat ramp, swimming or water skiing beach, or nature trail and study area (Figure 1).

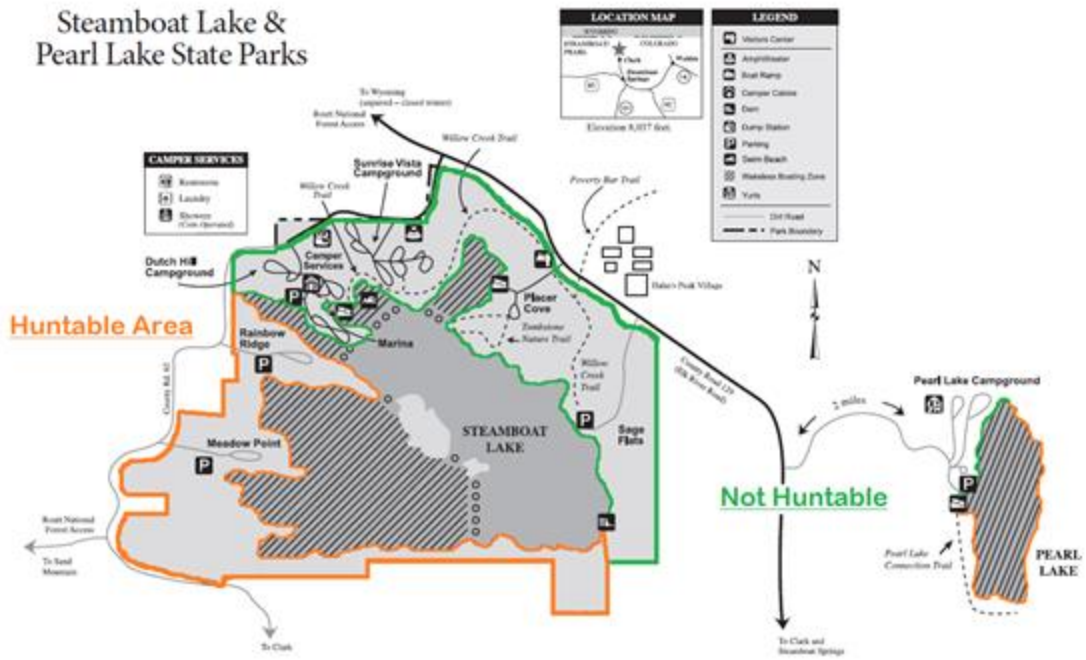


Figure 1. Hutable areas of the Parks.

Interpretation and Environmental Education

The Parks are a premier setting to explore and learn about Colorado’s mountain environment. Interpretive exhibits at the Visitor Center promote an understanding and appreciation of the Parks’ environment as well as opportunities to learn about the entire State Park system.

Interpretive Themes/Messages

The following subjects focus on the unique features of the Park and should be developed further into interpretive themes and messages as part of programming, communications, and signage. The Parks’ Stewardship Plan (Appendix A) may be referenced for more information on natural and cultural resources to aid in program development.

- **Water Through Time:** Water is a critical part of the Parks as a draw for recreation and there are many opportunities to inspire visitors to learn about and take action related to water conservation.
- **Geology & Paleontology:** The faults, dikes, formation of gold deposits and northwestern Colorado’s landscape, environment, and life during the Oligocene and Miocene epochs could all be incorporated into hikes, exhibits and more. Park visitors might be surprised to learn that northern Colorado was once home to camels, elephants, rhinos, and extinct animals like the oreodont and brontothere.

- Cultural Resources:
 - Steamboat Lake State Park can protect its cultural resources by utilizing visually appropriate fencing and signage that informs visitors of the safety issues associated with historic structures and promotes cultural resource appreciation within the Park.
 - Tell the story of people who lived in the area before settlers.
 - Tell the story of the ranching and mining history.
- Flora and Fauna
 - Highlight cranes and other sensitive species present at the Parks.
- Leave No Trace

Facilities and Infrastructure

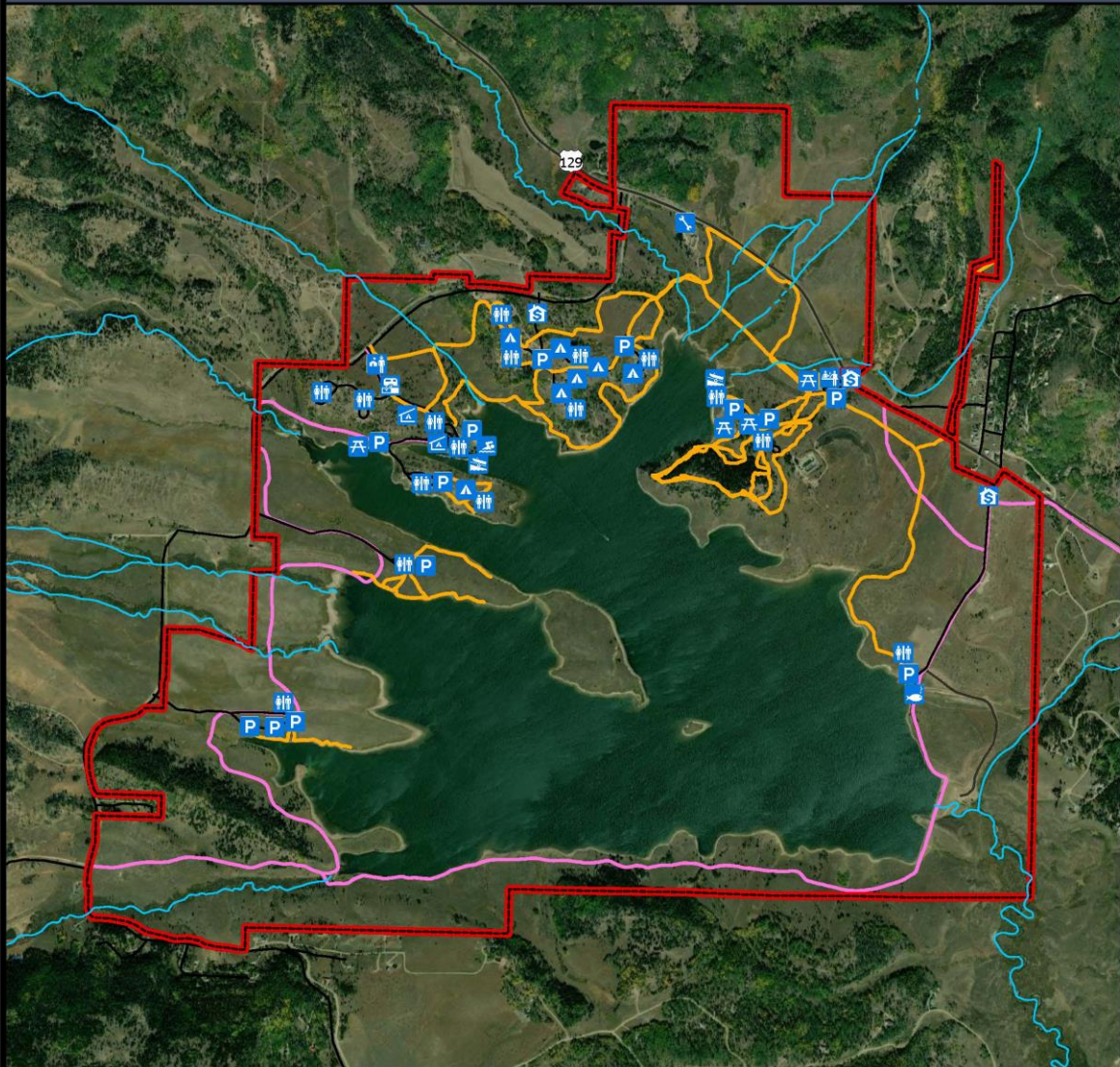
Built using Lottery and GOCO funds, the Visitor Center opened in 1999 and houses permanent staff offices. Many facilities were built to support camping and/or general increasing visitation (Maps 18 and 19). New water treatment and wastewater disposal plants were added in 1995. A seasonal housing unit was built in 1995 to help attract quality seasonal staff, which houses up to 16 people and is also used for agency wide trainings. The rest of the facilities include the following (with years built):

- Pearl Lake State Park
 - Aquatic Nuisance Species check station booth (2000)
 - Dam Controls (2006, modified in (2018)
 - Lower Loop CXT (2015)
 - Pump House (1975)
 - Upper Loop End CXT (2002)
 - Upper Loop Flusher (2015)
 - Vault Toilet - Boat Launch Brink (1993)
 - Vault Toilet - Day Use CXT (2015)
 - Vault Toilet - Lower Loop Brick (1990)
 - Vault Toilet - Upper Loop CXT Yurts (2002)
 - Water Distribution System CXT (2015)
 - Yurts (two; 1999)
- Steamboat Lake State Park
 - Aquatic Nuisance Species check station shed (Marina 2013; Placer Cove 2015)
 - Bridge Island Shade Shelters (2016)
 - Camper Services Building (Dutch Hill 1997; Sunrise Vista 2022)
 - Dam Control Building (2018)
 - Employee Housing Facility (1995)
 - Entrance Station at Dutch Hill (1995)
 - Flush Toilet - Arnica (2002)
 - Placer Cabin (1960)

- Pole Shed (2009)
- Shop (1975)
 - Attached Shed with Ranger boats, trailers and tractor (1998)
 - Vehicle Shed (2008)
 - ATV shed (1998)
 - Fuel shed/station (2015)
- Vault Toilet - Arnica CXT (2002)
- Vault Toilet - Bridge Island Back CXT (2002)
- Vault Toilet - Bridge Island Brick (1985)
- Vault Toilet - Harebell CXT (2002)
- Vault Toilet - Marina Brick (1985)
- Vault Toilet - Meadow Point CXT (2015)
- Vault Toilet - Placer CXT (2017)
- Vault Toilet - Rainbow CXT (2015)
- Vault Toilet - Rosecrown Brick (1985)
- Vault Toilet - Sage Flats Brick (1985)
- Vault Toilet - Wheeler Back Brick (1985)
- Vault Toilet - Wheeler CXT (2015)
- Vault Toilet - Yarrow Brick (1985)
- Visitor Center (1998)
- Waste Water Pumphouse Building (1996)
- Waste Water Treatment Building (1996)
- Water Treatment Building (1996)
- Winter Trails Groomer Shed (2003)

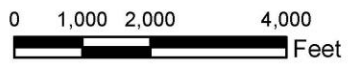
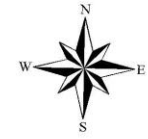


Steamboat Lake State Park Management Plan



Facilities

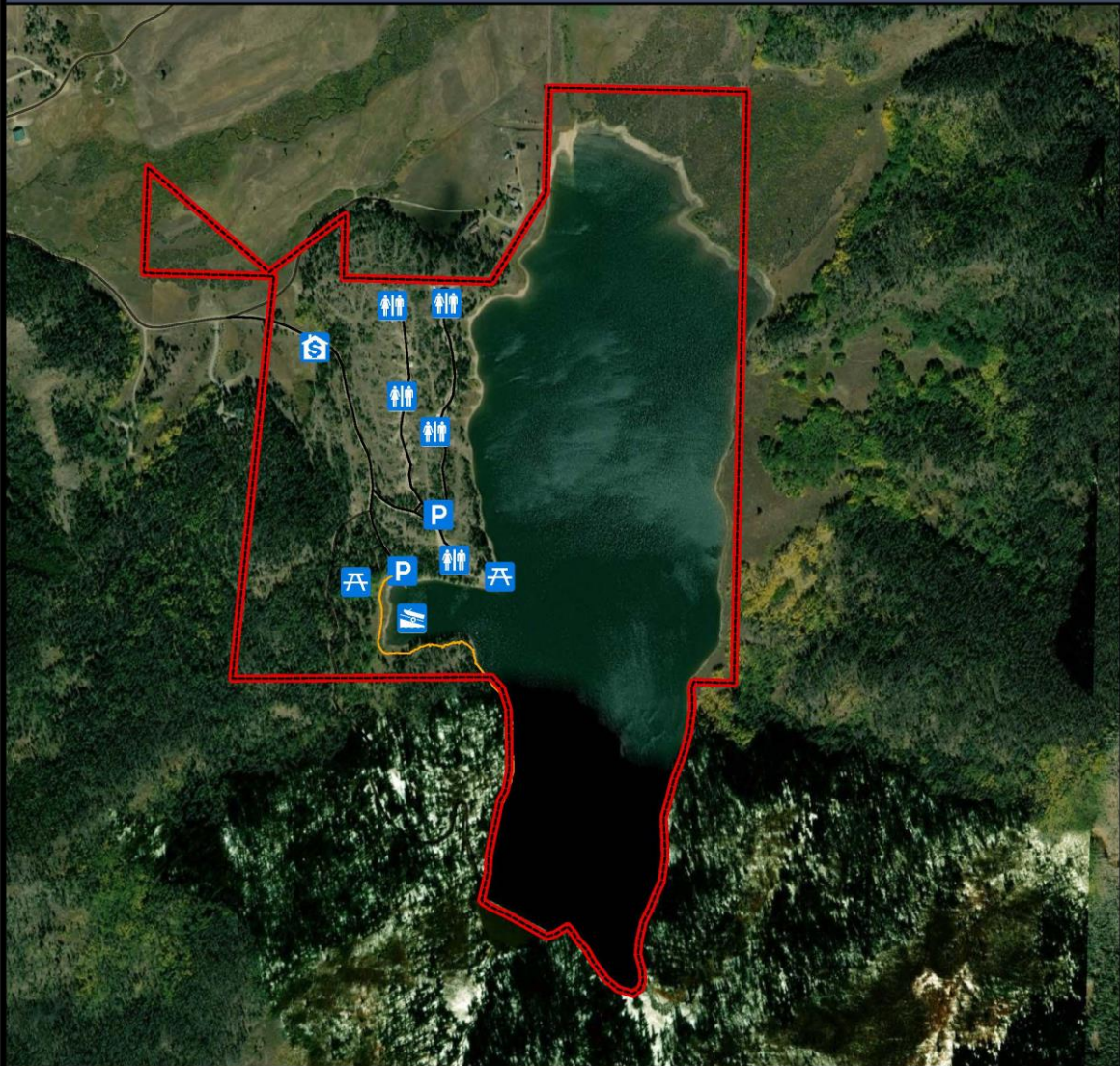
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|--------------------|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Opportunity | Informational | Service | Infrastructure |
| Campground | Camper Services | Boat Ramp | Maintenance Area |
| Fishing | Entrance Station | Restroom | Parking |
| Picnic Area | Fee Station | RV Dump Station | Streams |
| Swim Beach | Visitor Center | Dam | Winter Trails |
| | | | Trails |
| | | | Roads |
| | | | Park Boundary |



Map 17. Steamboat Lake State Park's Facilities

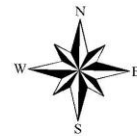


Pearl Lake State Park Management Plan



Facilities

Opportunity	Service	Infrastructure
Picnic Area	Boat Ramp	Parking
Informational	Restroom	Roads
Fee Station		Trails
		Park Boundary



Map 18. Pearl Lake State Park's Facilities

Operations and Maintenance

Steamboat Lake's Water Systems

Water from Steamboat Lake is released to maintain flows in Willow Creel. There is a 5 cubic feet per second (cfs) minimum year round and when flows are higher releases match the inflow to pass water through the lake and manage the lake level consistently. The original storage capacity at Steamboat Lake was 23,064 acre-feet. However, in 1989, management proposed additional storage of 3,300-acre feet, bringing the current storage capacity to 26,364 acre-feet. Colorado Parks and Wildlife owns 21,364-acre feet of the stored water in Steamboat Lake and is responsible for its operations, facilities, and the dam. Colorado Ute Electric Association Inc., also called the Tri-State Utility Company, has a perpetual right to the other 5,000-acre feet, with no allocation for evaporation loss, which the association can request during dry seasons—usually late July, August or September.

Historically, water has been reserved for emergency cooling of the generators at the Hayden power plant. According to the Division of Water Resources Engineer for the area, Tri-State Utility Company would only have to give a few days' notice before they requested the water. The plant could call for it to be released with just a twenty-four hour notice. This would have implications for the management of Steamboat Lake, and the staff should have a plan to address this potential situation. However, Tri-State also owns water at Stagecoach Reservoir that they could call for before calling for water from Steamboat Lake and as of 2023 plant operations may be changing.

The Park also has a lease agreement with the Upper Yampa Water Conservancy District to allow 360 acre-feet annually for augmentation of depletions associated with municipal, irrigation, industrial, commercial, domestic, recreational and out-of-channel piscatorial water uses.

The Park is responsible for the maintenance and operation of the Steamboat Lake Dam, which was built by the Division of Wildlife in 1967. Maintenance on the dam is a joint effort among CPW's engineering staff and the Division of Water Resources. Maintenance construction was performed on the dam in 2019 that included improving the tower structure, lining the outlet structure, and adding a new dam operation building with hydraulic controls and an electrical monitor. Optimum lake elevation is approximately 8,036 feet to 8,037 feet. The emergency spillway for the lake is at an elevation of 8,038 feet.

To accommodate the increasing numbers of visitors, new water treatment and wastewater disposal plants were constructed in 1995. In 1998, the Park staff produced 2,542,200 gallons of fresh drinking water. The water plant operation adheres to guidelines established by the Colorado Department of Public Health Department (CDPHE) for public drinking water. Water quality is monitored throughout the process to ensure regulations are met.

The Park's wastewater plant includes a grinder, two evaporative ponds, a mixing basin, and a spray field. Sandhill cranes are often seen in the fields the effluent is sprayed on, and it could be enhancing habitat for this species. To winterize the plant, the staff draws down the two holding ponds each fall. During the winter months the ponds fill and by spring they are full and ready for the plant to be reactivated.

Water system (System I.D.: CO-0254720): Potable water supply is produced on Park within a small systems direct filtration treatment plant, by means of chemical addition and two separate multi-media filtering skids. The raw water for the treatment plant is supplied from surface water drawn from Steamboat Lake through an intake structure close to the bottom in the Placer Cove area. The pumps are located in wells close to the shoreline where the water is then pumped up into the plant facility approximately ½ mile away. There is a storage supply tank under the treatment facility with a capacity of approximately 60,000 gallons, which also serves as a “contact basin” for disinfection purposes. After that, the potable water goes into the distribution system per demand.

This system is classified as a transient/non-community system that requires a Class-B Operator Certification issued through the Certified Water Professional board. It is also classified as a “seasonal system” meaning that from May 1st through October 31st, staff report daily monitoring activity to the CDPHE every month. The rest of the year, staff report as “off line.” All operations, monitoring, and sampling must be compliant with CDPHE rules and regulations in accordance with the facility classifications.

The annual average production (2017 - 2021) was approximately 2,500,000 gallons produced by a small systems operation rated at 15 GPM, capable of 26 GPM for limited durations.

Approximately 1% or 25,000 gallons may be used for irrigation purposes or those other than drinking and sanitary use annually.

Wastewater system (System I.D.: COX-634078): The wastewater collection system includes three separate lift stations to transport the wastewater from the main collection points to the treatment facility. The third and final lift station is the metering point for the wastewater influent being conveyed into the treatment facility head works for grinding purposes.

The treatment facility is an aeration/facultative lagoon system comprised of two lagoons, each with a full mix cell and a partial mix cell designed to reduce the Bio-Chemical Oxygen Demand (BOD), Total Suspended Solids (TSS), and fecal coliform from the influent water by means of biological consumption and aeration. The raw influent must pass through all four lagoon cells, then through a multi-chambered “contact basin” for final settling and chlorination prior to entering the pump house. At this point, the raw influent has become treated effluent prepared for land application.

The waste-water effluent disposal method is accomplished with permitted land application at agronomic rates in a ten acre spray field with fifteen zones and seven heads per zone. The agronomic rate component includes weather conditions along with application rates to prevent ground water contamination. There are three monitoring wells strategically located in the spray field to fulfill continued sampling requirements for the ground water table underneath the spray field area.

This facility requires a Class-D Operator Certification issued through the Certified Water Professional board. It is also classified as a “seasonal operation” meaning that May 1st through October 31st, staff report daily monitoring activity to the EPA and CDPHE each month. The rest of the year staff report as “off line.” All operations, monitoring, and sampling must be compliant with CDPHE rules and regulations in accordance with the facility permit issued.

The annual average (2017-2021) of influent entering this facility for treatment has been 1,400,000 gallons. This facility's maximum loading capacity has yet to be reached.

Utilities

Other than domestic water and wastewater treatment, all utilities are provided by outside vendors. Electricity is provided by Yampa Valley Electric Association. Steamboat and Pearl Lakes have several meters throughout the Parks, allowing Park staff to manage seasonal use in different areas and budget electricity use. Trash services have historically been provided through Waste Management. Dumpster number, type, location and frequency of dumps can also be monitored and adjusted based on need.

Roads

There are six entrances to Steamboat Lake all of which have short roadways into specific areas of the Park. Visitors and staff must drive out of the Park on to County Roads 129 or 62 to travel between different areas. Pearl Lake has a short entrance off of County Road 209 to the boat ramp and campground.

At Steamboat Lake, the Park staff plows snow and no chemicals are currently used on the roads during winter due to costs and impacts to the environment. The Visitor Center and the road to the Dutch Hill Marina parking lot remain open throughout the winter. All other park roads are typically closed mid-to-late October until mid-to-late May. Pearl Lake is not plowed. Regular road maintenance such as crack-sealing and resurfacing asphalt is required. Gravel roads need additional work compared to the paved roads, but funding often does not allow for frequent maintenance.

Visitation

Visitation has been increasing and is expected to continue to do so, which adds stress to Park resources and staff. Visitor safety, experience, and resource impacts should determine any needed limits on visitor use. Regular scientific monitoring of wildlife, plants, geology, and soils at the Parks may help establish a maximum number of visitors that the Park can accommodate before resource degradation occurs. Short of rigorous monitoring statistics, staff will need to rely on observations and general trends. The Park manager must exercise judgment to determine at what point the resource degradation necessitates limitations on visitor use.

While general visitation trends are known (see Figures 2-5), exact numbers are not. In 2023, TRAFx counters were purchased to begin collecting this critical data. The Parks' counters are not all functioning and the multiple entrances make data collection challenging. Besides the short survey conducted in 2021 (see Appendix B) and anecdotal evidence, little is known about visitor use, preferences, satisfaction, etc. Note that in 2009 several campground loops were closed due to pine beetle infestation and the resulting forest management (e.g., tree cutting) operations.

After the March 2020 start of the global COVID pandemic, visitation patterns and user types changed noticeably. There were more weekday visitors and new, first-time State Park users. While the staff enjoyed welcoming new families and other visitors to the Parks there was also

an increase in law enforcement interactions, and impacts to resources such as vegetation, campsites and social trails.

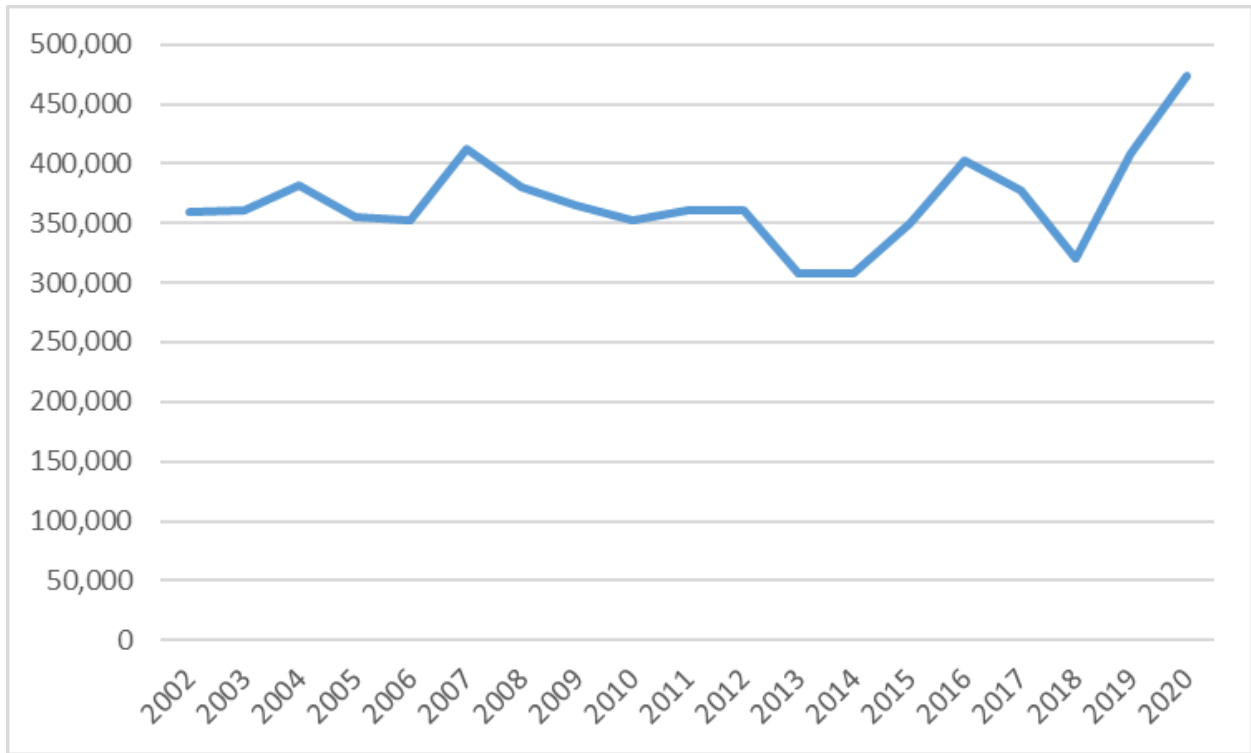


Figure 2. Annual visitation to Steamboat Lake State Park 2002-2020

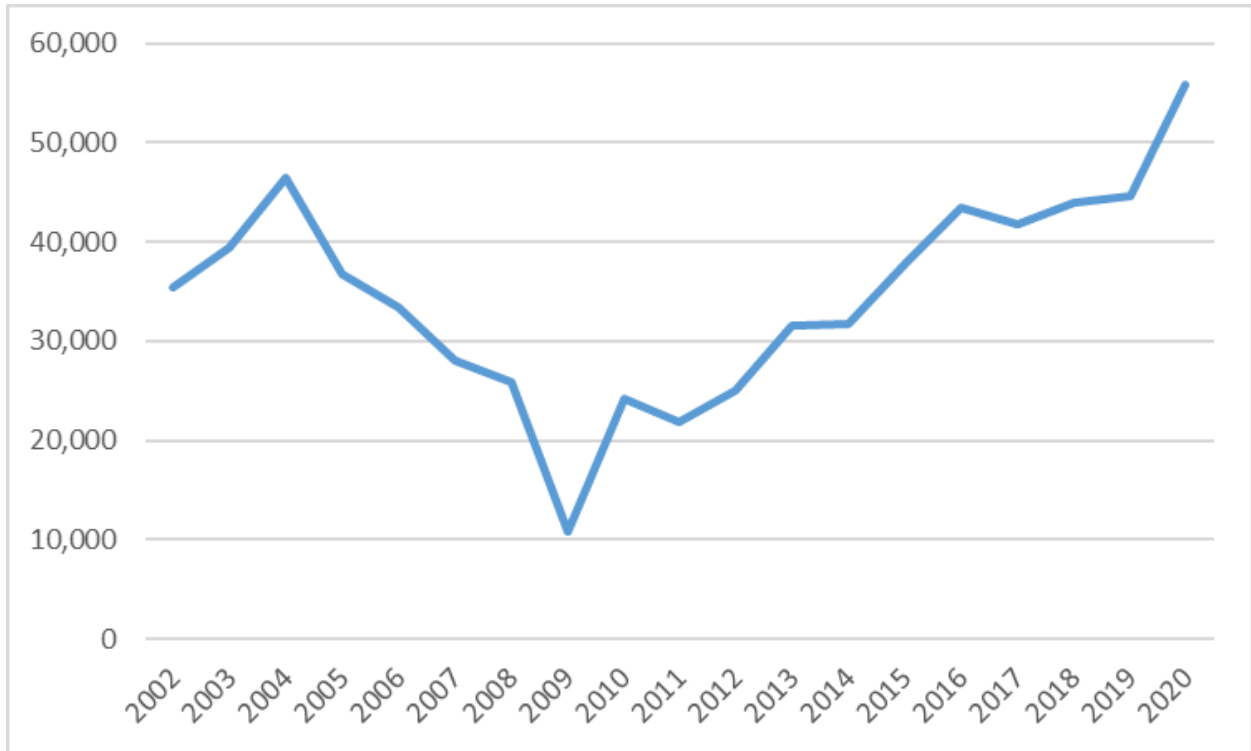


Figure 3. Annual visitation to Pearl Lake State Park 2002-2020

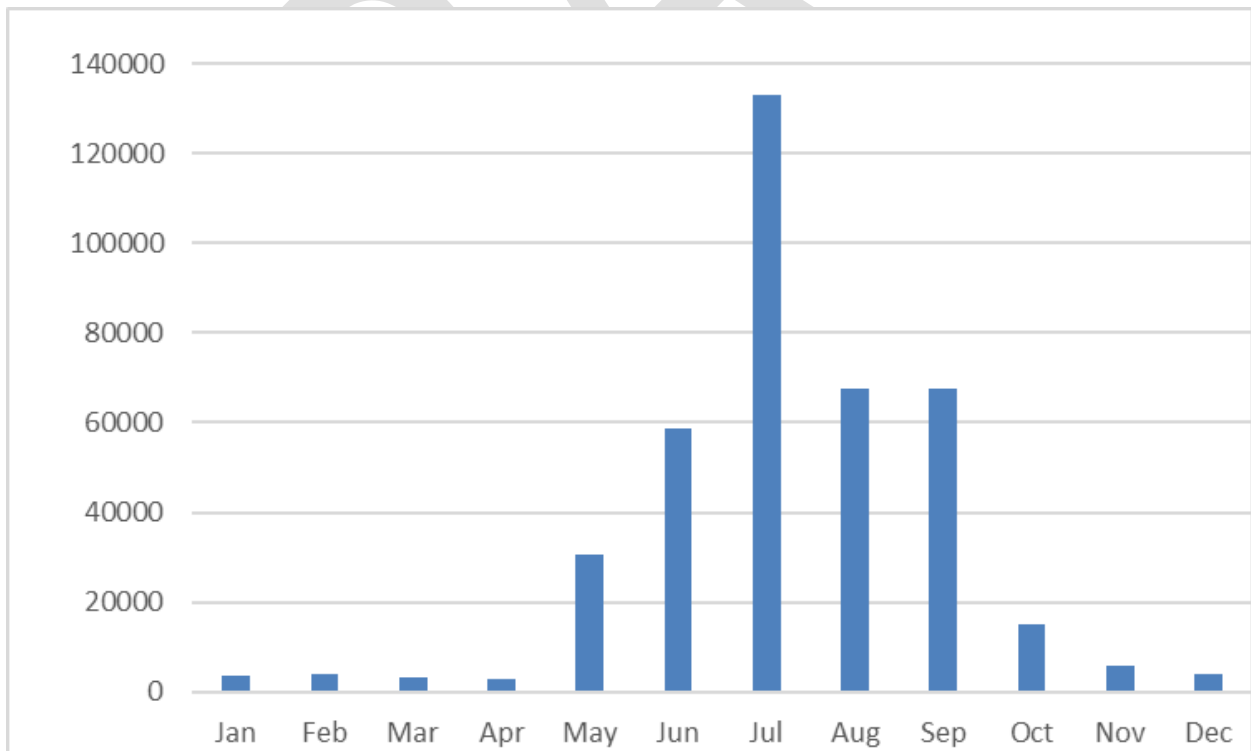


Figure 4. Average monthly visitation at Steamboat Lake State Park 2016-2020.

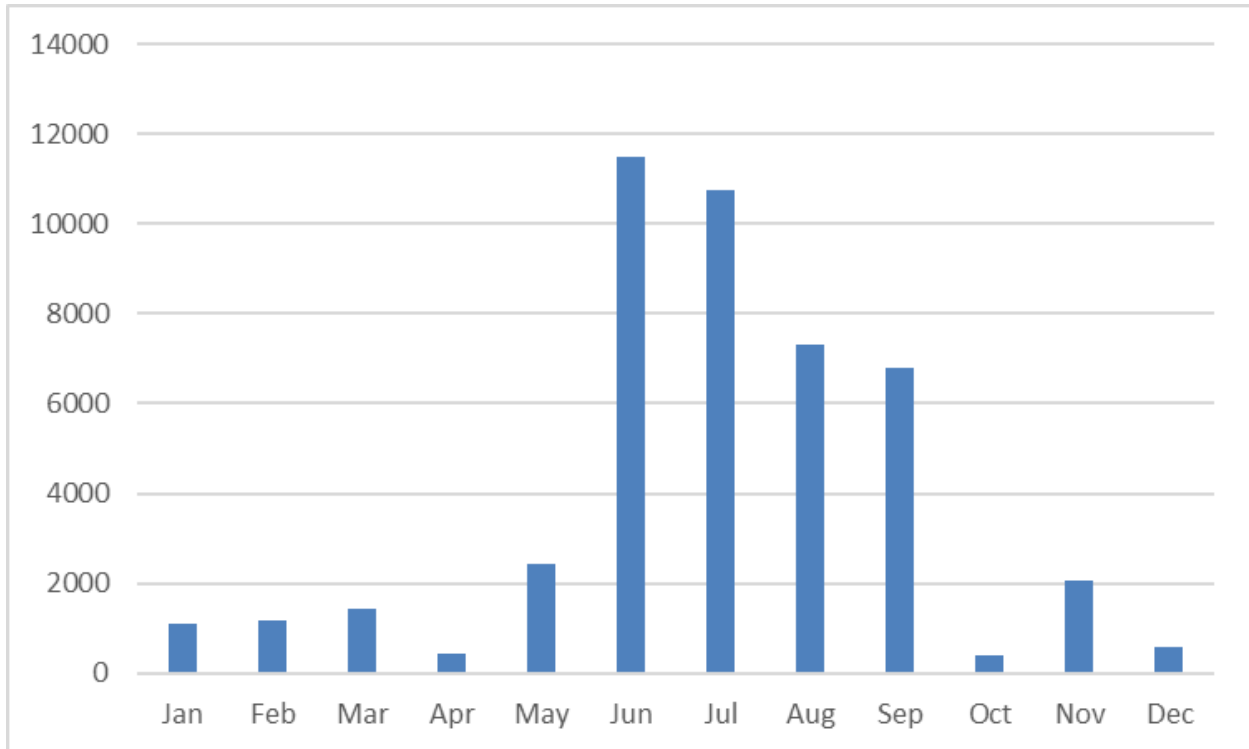


Figure 5. Average monthly visitation at Pearl Lake State Park 2016-2020.

Park Administration and Special Functions

This section provides insight on how resources, visitors, and infrastructure are managed.

Full-time and Seasonal Staffing

As of 2022, the Park Manager has been in her role for over 15 years and is only the third Park Manager at these Parks. The Senior Ranger has also been at the Parks for a total of 15 years and “keeps finding his way back,” and one of the Park Resource Technicians has been on staff for over 13 years. The consistency in staffing brings a lot of expertise to these Parks and speaks for the team and the Parks as a wonderful place to work. There are 6 full-time staff (Figure 6).

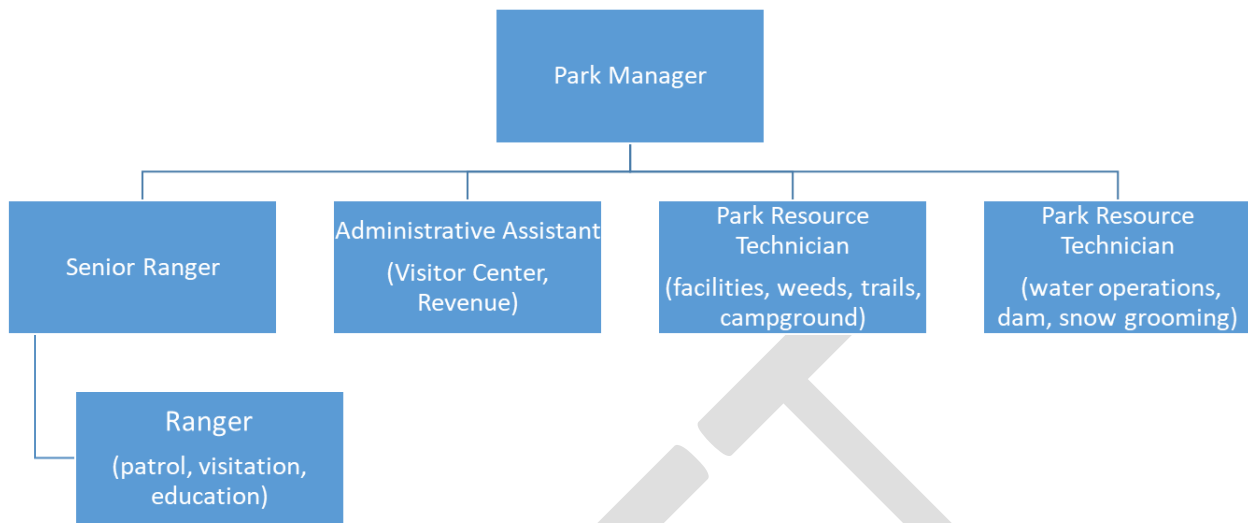


Figure 6. Steamboat and Pearl Lakes Full-time Staff

Most Park visitors are served primarily by our seasonal and temporary employees as well as camp hosts, which makes their supervision, training and role essential. The number of temporary and seasonal staff changes annually based on the budget and other resources.

Volunteers

Volunteers at Steamboat Lake and Pearl Lake are mostly used in the campground host program. The hosts provide customer service for campers, complete administrative duties such as check-ins and check-outs, and maintain campsites and restrooms. Other volunteers work on special projects, provide natural resources monitoring and environmental education. Both Parks also get requests from various groups to provide community service. Park staff will develop tailored projects for these groups to provide meaningful work for Parks and develop a sense of stewardship with these groups.

The Parks partner extensively with the Steamboat Snow Club to manage winter trails through grooming and other maintenance.

Enforcement/Public Safety

Steamboat and Pearl Lake State Parks are within the jurisdiction of the Routt County Sheriff's Department, the Colorado State Patrol, the North Routt Fire Protection District, Classic Air Medical, and Routt County Search and Rescue. These agencies respond to incidents on both of the Parks that include wildland/structure/vehicle fires, medical emergencies, law enforcement, and searches. Due to the remote location of the Parks and the surrounding area—as well as the knowledge of the area and capability to access it—Park's staff routinely respond to areas off the Park to assist these agencies on a wide range of incidents. With the small size of the Sheriff's Department and reliance on volunteers for the Fire Department, Park staff are often the first on scene and requested to solely handle the incident or aid Fire/EMS.

To satisfy the requirements of the Trails Field Presence budgets, Park's staff works with the U.S. Forest Service to conduct snowmobile and OHV patrols on public lands off of Park property.

Hunting patrols of the surrounding area are coordinated with local CPW District Wildlife Officers.

Park's staff work more closely with the Sheriff's Department than the State Patrol, so Park's law enforcement dispatches through Routt County Dispatch instead of the Colorado State Patrol. North Routt Fire Protection District Station 2 is located on Steamboat Lake State Park and they have a 25 year lease which was signed on May 29, 2002. If all provisions of the lease are met it renews automatically for another 25 years.

Park Budget and Finances

The Park relies on various budget allocations (e.g, General Operating, Permanent Personnel Services, etc.). These are commonly referred to as agency Budget Buckets or Categories, which are summarized in the table below. Budgets are requested through various CPW processes on an annual or ad-hoc basis based on the nature of the type of request. State of Colorado Fiscal Years (FY) run July 1 - June 30. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the Park's total expenses in FY 2019-20 and FY 2020-21.

Table 1: Park Expenses (FY 2019-20 and FY 2020-21)

	FY 2019-20	Percent of Total	FY 2020-21	Percent of Total
Pearl Lake State Park				
General Operating	\$ 24,403.27	20%	\$ 19,984.69	21%
Permanent Personal Services	\$ 94,390.37	77%	\$ 8,527.78	9%
POTS (Excluding Leased Space)	\$ 4,521.60	4%	\$ 4,569.60	5%
Special Purpose Grants			\$ 5,600.00	6%
Parks Large Capital Projects Over \$100,000			\$ 5,475.00	6%
Parks Small Capital Projects \$5,000 - \$100,000			\$ 47,034.86	50%
Forest Management Program			\$ 3,276.03	3%
Total	\$ 123,315.24	100%	\$ 94,467.96	100%
Steamboat Lake State Park				
General Operating	\$ 318,937.65	28%	\$ 360,341.97	24%
Permanent Personal Services	\$ 451,654.43	40%	\$ 540,322.95	35%
Retail Operations	\$ 23,422.60	2%	\$ 26,222.45	2%
Snowmobile Grooming	\$ 8,697.10	1%	\$ 4,914.39	0%
Restricted Donations	\$ 80.00	0%		0%
POTS (Excluding Leased Space)	\$ 9,749.27	1%	\$ 9,790.92	1%
Trails Grants (Motorized and Non-motorized)	\$ 8,023.30	1%	\$ 6,032.30	0%
Boat Safety And Boat Education	\$ 8,523.81	1%	\$ 9,948.26	1%
Parks Large Capital Projects Over \$100,000	\$ 263,369.48	23%	\$ 528,524.78	35%
Parks Small Capital Projects \$5,000 - \$100,000	\$ 50,220.94	4%	\$ 40,035.53	3%
Total	\$ 1,142,678.58	100%	\$ 1,526,133.55	100%
Grand Total	\$ 1,265,993.82		\$ 1,620,601.51	

Sections below highlight some of the recent budget allocations and expenses for the primary budget categories shown above.

General Operating Costs

The operating costs for the Park remained relatively constant between FY 2019-20 and FY 2020-21 with some increase the second year. The majority of the operating budget is spent on temporary employees' salary and benefits, followed by property repair, maintenance and improvements, and utilities.

Table 2: General Operating Expenses (FY 2019-20 and FY 2020-21)

	FY 2019-20	Percent of Total	FY 2020-21	Percent of Total
Pearl Lake State Park				
Benefits	\$ 2,098.21	9%	\$ 2,170.19	11%
Motor Vehicle	\$ 3,925.36	16%	\$ 4,000.95	20%
Other Miscellaneous	\$ 249.50	1%	\$ 734.74	4%
Property Maintenance	\$ 5,012.35	21%		0%
Purchase Services		0%	\$ 75.00	0%
Supplies	\$ 2,076.01	9%	\$ 1,222.16	6%
Temporary Pers. Svc.	\$ 9,614.38	39%	\$ 9,702.75	49%
Utilities	\$ 1,427.46	6%	\$ 2,078.90	10%
Total	\$ 24,403.27	100%	\$ 19,984.69	100%
Steamboat Lake State Park				
Benefits	\$ 26,804.56	8%	\$ 32,465.55	9%
Communications	\$ 4,395.89	1%	\$ 4,247.56	1%
Equipment	\$ 8,643.78	3%	\$ 264.53	0%
Motor Vehicle	\$ 16,047.42	5%	\$ 14,647.39	4%
Other Miscellaneous	\$ 1,632.87	1%	\$ 339.26	0%
Other Pers. Svc.	\$ 955.73	0%		0%
Overtime	\$ 2,498.10	1%	\$ 5,239.56	1%
Property Maintenance	\$ 20,004.76	6%	\$ 31,640.15	9%
Publication	\$ 3,765.75	1%	\$ 4,160.03	1%
Purchase Services	\$ 5,690.58	2%	\$ 6,031.61	2%
Shipping	\$ 375.07	0%	\$ 429.93	0%
Supplies	\$ 30,071.90	9%	\$ 36,007.84	10%
Temporary Pers. Svc.	\$ 120,067.67	38%	\$ 139,327.83	39%
Travel	\$ 3,057.48	1%	\$ 982.94	0%
Utilities	\$ 74,926.09	23%	\$ 84,557.79	23%
Total	\$ 318,937.65	100%	\$ 360,341.97	100%
Grand Total	\$ 343,340.92		\$ 380,326.66	

Temporary Staff Resources

In addition to the Parks' 6 full-time employees, the Parks hire additional temporary employees during the summer months as seasonal rangers, gate attendants, visitor center attendants, and maintenance workers.

Table 3: Temporary Employee Expenditure Detail (Salary and Benefits) (FY 2019-20 and FY20-21)

	FY 2019-20	FY 2020-21
RMPL - Pearl Lake State Park		
Environment & Wildlife Education	\$ 510.26	\$ 655.21
Park Recreation	\$ 11,202.33	\$ 11,217.73
Total	\$ 11,712.59	\$ 11,872.94
RMSB - Steamboat Lake State Park		
Environment & Wildlife Education	\$ 3,084.43	\$ 2,910.02
Fishing Recreation	\$ 30,048.35	\$ 33,427.57
Habitat Management	\$ 7,343.11	\$ 9,126.45
Law Enforcement	\$ 700.65	\$ 502.83
Organizational Support	\$ 3,884.42	\$ 4,422.34
Park Recreation	\$ 101,811.27	\$ 121,404.17
Trails Recreation	\$ 5,816.23	\$ 4,914.39
Total	\$ 152,688.46	\$ 176,707.77
Grand Total	\$ 164,401.05	\$ 188,580.71

Large Capital Construction Projects

Large capital construction projects are high-dollar improvements to the Parks that are considered on an annual basis. For example, large capital construction projects included work on both Parks' dams and a new Camper Services building. These expenses do not come directly out of the Park's funds.

Table 4: Large Capital Projects in FY 2019-20 and FY 2020-21

	Project	FY 2019-20	FY 2020-21
Pearl Lake State Park	Dam Maintenance		\$ 5,475.00
Steamboat Lake State Park	Willow Creek Dam Tower Refurbishment	\$ 226,873.34	\$ 371,091.89
	Dam Maintenance	\$ 34,274.14	
	Camper Services Building at Sunrise Vista	\$ 2,222.00	\$ 157,432.89
Total		\$ 263,369.48	\$ 533,999.78

Concessions

The Marina and Camper Cabins are run by a concessionaire. There are also concessionaires providing guided horseback rides at Steamboat Lake and paddlesports equipment at Pearl Lake. There is an annual fee and the Park receives 5% of total gross income from each activity.

4 Management Zones

Methodology for Determining Management Zones

The existing conditions described in earlier chapters provided the spatial context for setting up Management Zones. These zones establish the long term vision for resource protection, visitor experiences, and park operations.

CPW’s park management zoning scheme (Table 5) provides a framework for identifying suitable types of facilities and land uses along with the suggested visitor experience and management focus. The zone types are used across the state park system, but zoning for each park is done at the park scale. This allows for the individual parks to protect their most significant resources and provide unique visitor experiences.

Zoning is based on “desired future conditions”—i.e., beyond the timeframe of this Plan, what should the park resources, management focus, and visitor experience be into the future? Any zone can incorporate seasonal closures or other temporal needs.

Table 5. Management Zone Classification Scheme and Characteristics

Zone Classification	Visitor Experience	Recreation Opportunities	Potential Facilities	Management Focus
Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High social interaction ▪ Low opportunity for solitude ▪ Low opportunity for challenge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High-density recreation ▪ Emphasis on providing opportunities that rely on motor vehicle access via roads, such as picnicking, and at some parks could include RV and tent camping, and potentially motorized uses in designated areas. ▪ Some fishing, boating, equestrian use, mountain biking, hiking, and watchable wildlife may occur in this zone. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Typically parking areas, paved or high-use roads, utilities, group picnic areas, visitor services, restrooms, concessions, interpretive facilities, and developed camping areas at overnight parks. ▪ Less typically this could include marinas, motorized use areas, and dog off-leash areas at some parks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Intense management needs. ▪ Manage to provide sustainable recreation and aesthetic qualities ▪ Prevent weed spread, erosion, or other degradation. ▪ Intense fire prevention mitigation ▪ Revegetate with natives where possible or with non-invasive landscaping.
Passive Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Moderate social interaction/low opportunity for solitude. ▪ Moderate degree of interaction with the natural environment. ▪ Moderate opportunity for challenge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Medium-density recreation. ▪ Emphasis on providing hiking, fishing, equestrian use, mountain biking, and other dispersed recreation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Typically trails, interpretive facilities, and individual picnic areas. ▪ Less typically this could include dirt roads or light use roads, limited motorized uses (in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Moderate to high management needs. ▪ Manage to maintain the natural character and provide

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some picnicking or backcountry camping, canoeing and other non-motorized boating, watchable wildlife opportunities. Interpretive opportunities are likely to occur in this zone. 	<p>larger parks only), hike-in campgrounds, or yurts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimize utilities to the extent possible. 	<p>sustainable recreation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actively manage weeds in order to eradicate or suppress, and prevent erosion, or other degradation. High level of fire prevention. Revegetate with native species.
Natural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low social interaction/moderate opportunity for solitude High degree of interaction with the natural environment Moderate to high opportunity for challenge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medium to low-density recreation. Emphasis on providing low impact, non-motorized, and dispersed recreation. All recreation opportunities in the Passive Recreation Zone are likely to occur here with the exception that there be more of an emphasis on providing non-motorized dispersed recreation. Hunting also permissible at some parks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primarily trails and some interpretive facilities Minimize utilities to the extent possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moderate to low management needs Manage to maintain the natural character, the native flora, the wildlife habitat, and the ecological functions Actively manage weeds for eradication, prevent erosion, or other degradation Moderate to high level of fire prevention Revegetate with native species
Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Typically unmodified natural environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None, or heavily restricted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Least intense management needs Preservation of very sensitive resources or restriction of visitor use for legal or safety reasons.

CPW staff expertise and the various maps in Chapter 3 and the Stewardship Plan (Appendix A) were used to determine appropriate management zones.

Key considerations that were taken into account during the park management zoning process for the Parks include:

- Fortunately, for Steamboat Lake and Pearl Lake State Parks, most of their geologic hazards are relatively minor. The area isn't prone to large, damaging earthquakes, and none of the faults in the Park show evidence of having been active in historical times. None of the rock formations in the Park are known to have consistently high levels of radon. Falling rocks are confined to small areas that are mostly away from Park infrastructure. Likewise, flood hazards and soil hazards occur in relatively small areas that pose little threat to Park infrastructure.
- Several highly erosive soils are present and these areas should be avoided for development purposes
- A survey for paleontological resources was conducted for the first time in 2019 and found areas of interest that could host fossils although none were found during surveys. Sensitive areas should be protected so that undiscovered fossils and resources are not impacted in future years.
- The lodgepole forests were significantly impacted by the mountain pine beetle epidemic. Active, ongoing management of the forest resource is a necessary and critical part of achieving future desired conditions, particularly in the campgrounds and other developed recreation areas. The 2019 Forest Management Plan provides detail on forest conditions and actions for ongoing management.
- Winter recreation patterns use the Park differently than in summer, but with limited impacts to the landscape. Safety concerns keep the heavy trail grooming equipment off the lake.
- South shore of Steamboat Lake was previously owned by Colorado Division of Wildlife but there was a management agreement that said the property was to be managed as part of the Park which continued with the formation of CPW. There is hunting and fishing in this area and it is still managed for wildlife. Park staff consults with local wildlife managers and fisheries biologists as needed. The Park entirely pays for the operations of this property and has funded road maintenance and a vault restroom replacement through small and large capital.
- Ecosensitivity ratings look at: the presence, critical habitat, patterns, corridors and breeding areas for wildlife; vegetation community type and condition; soil health condition and erosion potential; areas of large contiguous habitat; and presence of wildlife and plant species of conservation concern. These characteristics help determine the susceptibility of an area to possible changes of individual attributes of an ecosystem or to the ecosystem as a whole. The sensitivity ratings considered in zoning included:
 - Highest ecosensitivity
 - Wetland and riparian vegetation communities.

- Rare plant historical occurrences, including Rabbit Ears gilia.
- Rare vegetation community occurrences, including Quaking Aspen / Northern Mule's-ears Forest and Subalpine Fir - Engelmann Spruce / Geyer's Sedge Forest.
- Vegetation in excellent and good condition.
- Aquatic habitat, including Steamboat Lake, Pearl Lake, and ponds.
- Moderate ecosensitivity
 - Vegetation in fair condition.
 - Soils with severe erosion hazards that would be vulnerable if exposed to high use.
- Low sensitivity
 - Developed areas such as roads, trails, and other Park infrastructure.
 - Areas dominated by non-native species.
 - Vegetation in poor condition.
 - Areas adjacent to heavily used Park infrastructure.

Description of Management Zones

The purpose of establishing management zones at the park are to provide some broad, yet useful parameters to help guide future use, development, and management of the park. Using the above zoning scheme, a zoning map was developed for Steamboat Lake and Pearl Lake State Parks that identifies appropriate management zones (Maps 20 and 21). Most of the Parks are classified as Protection or Natural (Table 6).

Table 6. Management Zone Acreage

	Acres	Percentage
Steamboat Lake		
Development	122	7%
Passive Recreation	309	17%
Natural	896	50%
Protection	479	27%
Total	1806	100%
Pearl Lake		
Development	24	19%
Natural	85	66%
Protection	20	16%
Total	129	100%

Key features and descriptions of zones for Steamboat Lake include:

Development - 122 acres

- Low ecosensitivity (Map 19)
- Highest density of visitors occurs in these areas:
 - Campgrounds: the zone includes only the actual campsite loops, parking and facilities (surrounding trails, walk-in sites and forest are included in other zones)
 - Boat trailer parking area (just before crossing over Bridge Island)
 - Marina, beach, and picnic area
 - Camper Cabins
 - Visitor Center
 - Placer Cove: Boat inspections and ramp, parking, and restrooms
- Infrastructure critical to park operations (intense management needs)
 - Wastewater facility: includes effluent spray field and is fenced and closed to the public
 - Maintenance shop and seasonal housing
 - Dam and access area: sensitive infrastructure is fenced but the rest is open to the public; anglers fish here; willow removal required for dam safety; the zone is bordered by a “protection” zone as this manmade structure supports wetland habitat

Passive Recreation - 309 acres

- Campgrounds: outside of established facilities—the designated and social trails used by visitors to move around and access lake
- Day use areas
 - Sage Flats
 - Parking and restroom at the lakeshore
 - Willow Creek Trail passes through
 - Horseback riding starts from here
 - One area of the Park with potential for future amenities
 - Meadow Point
 - Rainbow Ridge: visitors walk to shoreline in all directions (for fishing), was hayed and has weeds, waterfowl hunters use the area
- State Land Board parcel

- There is power, a weather station, parking for sheepherders, and an archery range
- This property is used for a winter only snowmobile trail to connect the Park to National Forest winter trails.
- The area currently has limited visitor use. This property was identified and approved for future addition of cabins in the previous management plan and Routt County PUD (Planned Unit Development).

Natural - 896 acres

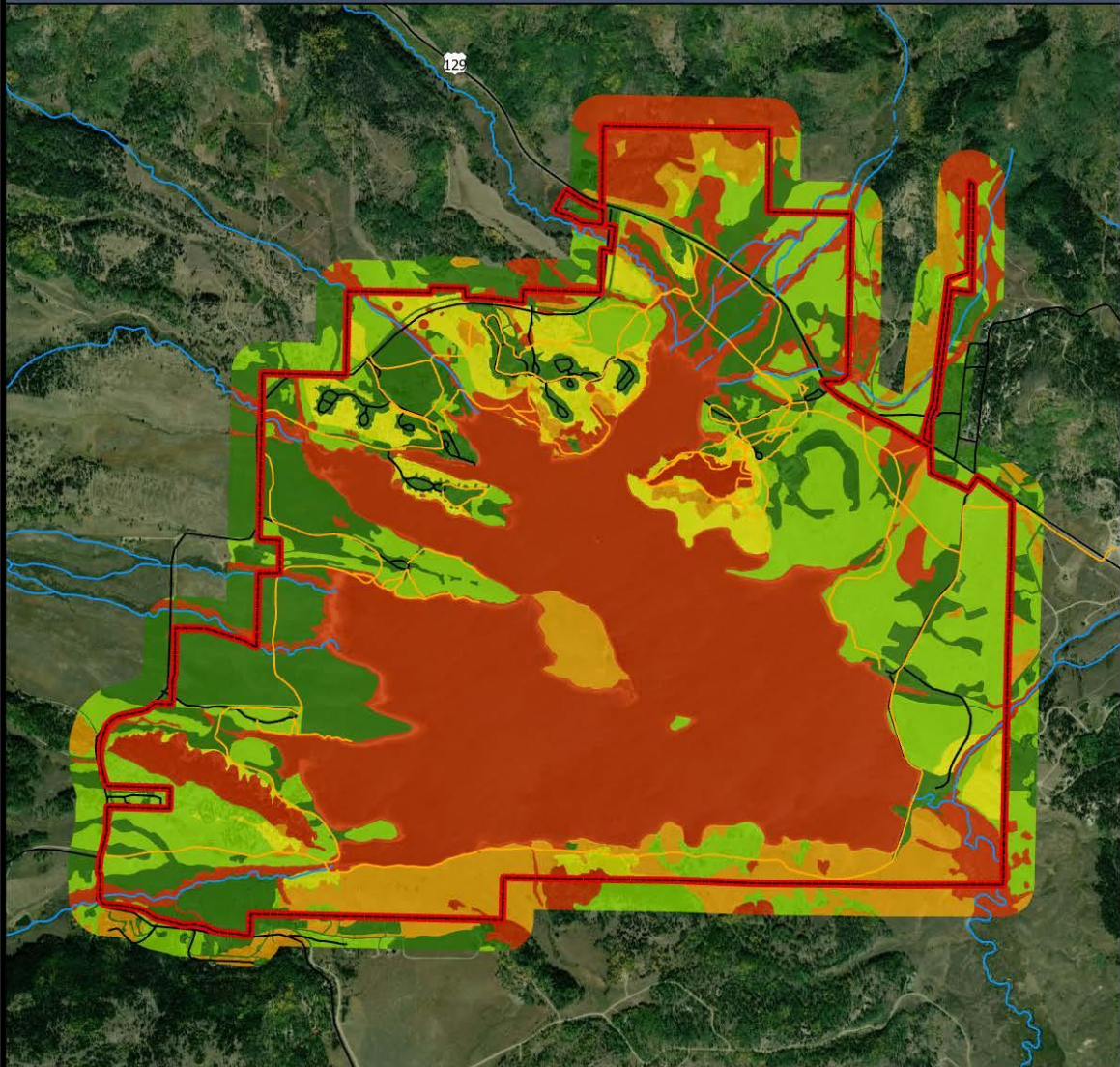
- Areas with known resources in good condition (e.g., butterflies found in marshy areas of Sage Flats)
- Segments of the Willow Creek Trail that provide opportunities for some solitude

Protection - 479 acres

- High ecosensitivity
 - Creeks, inlets, riparian habitat, islands, and forested hilltops
 - Big island: in some years it is a peninsula, no plans to develop, cranes nest here, and deer swim out to it in hunting season; there are infestations of the noxious weed Canada thistle that are treated when possible but it is a challenge to get treatment equipment to the island
 - Small island: nesting geese and used to stage 4th of July fireworks
- Areas with sensitive resources and used by visitors: for long-term protection of the resources and maintaining a unique visitor experience with opportunities for solitude and nature-based activities. Changing the use of these areas requires amending this Plan.
 - Tombstone Trail will be designated “on trail only” in summer and as a quiet zone to experience nature with all your senses. There are nesting birds and the Wheeler historic site. Anglers will still be allowed to use the shoreline in this area.
 - State Land Board Parcel
 - The Qualey cabin is eligible for National Register of Historic Places
 - Southside of CR 129, west of the Visitor Center:
 - Designated as “on trail use only” to protect the wetlands and associated wildlife (e.g., sandhill cranes)
 - Hunters and anglers will be exempt from this requirement
- Dam spillway: this infrastructure creates a manmade wetland that support native flowers, fish, chorus frogs, and other wildlife. Tree removal on the spillway occurs as required for dam safety and maintenance.

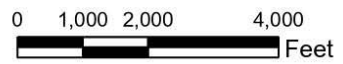
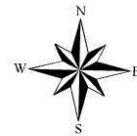


Steamboat Lake State Park Management Plan



Eco-Sensitivity

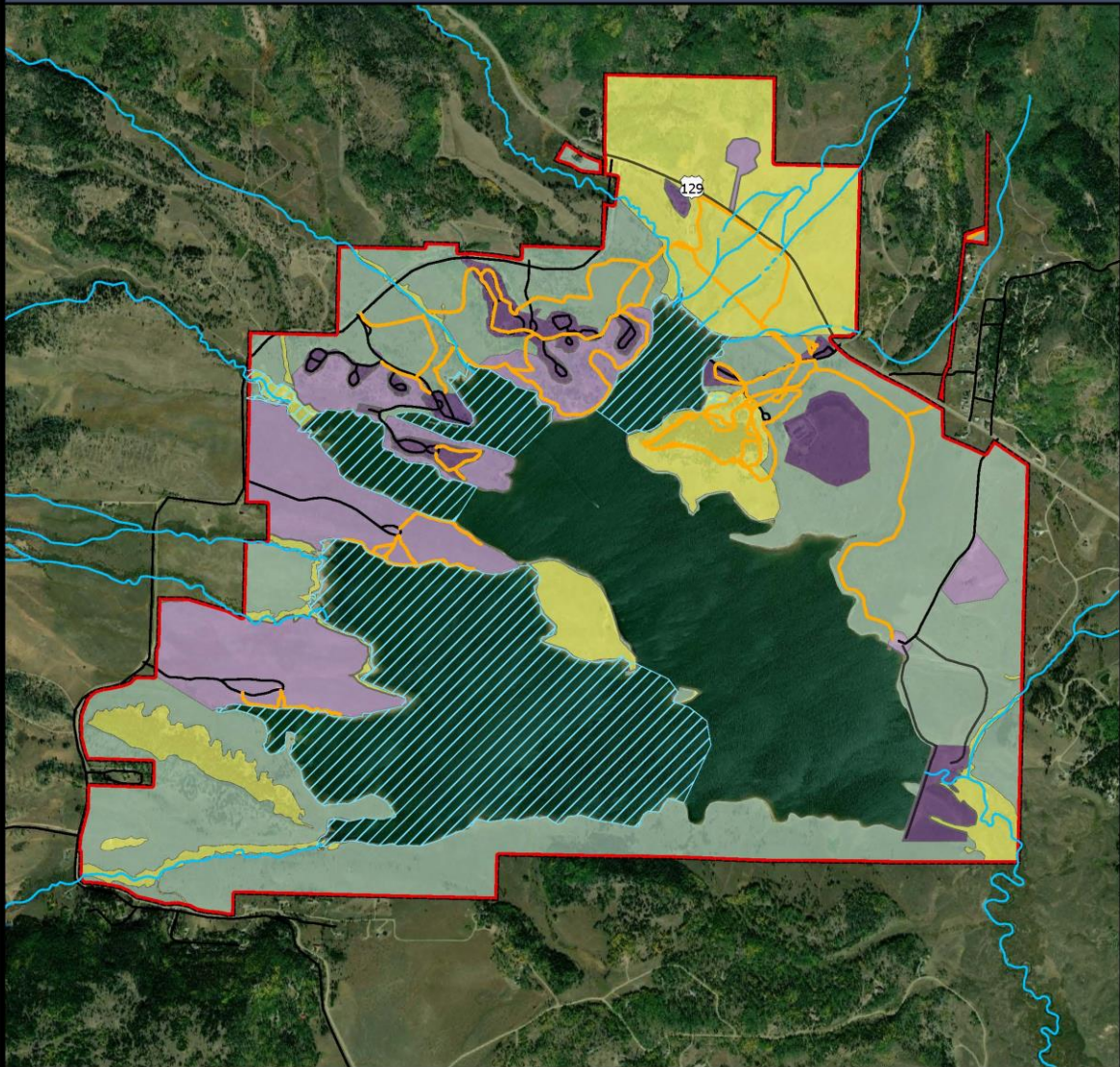
- | | |
|---------------|--------------------------|
| Park Boundary | Sensitivity Level |
| Trails | High |
| Roads | Medium High |
| Streams | Medium |
| | Medium Low |
| | Low |



Map 19. Ecosensitivity ratings at Steamboat Lake State Park



Steamboat Lake State Park Management Plan



Management Zones

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------|
| Protected | No Wake Zone |
| Natural | Streams |
| Passive Recreation | Trails |
| Developed | Roads |
| | Park Boundary |



Map 20. Management Zones for Steamboat Lake State Park

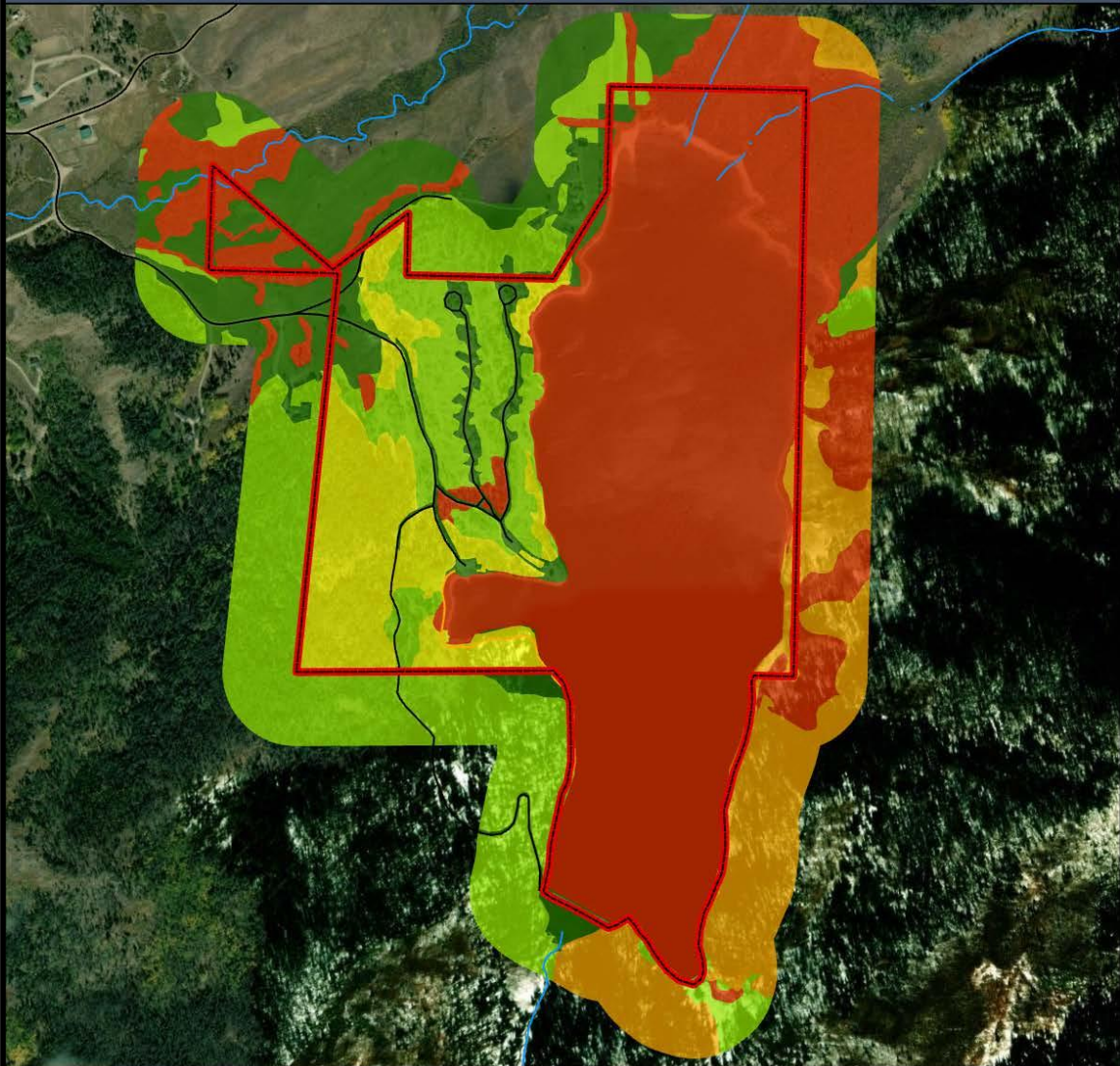
Key features and descriptions of zones for Pearl Lake include:

Pearl Lake has a Development Zone (24 acres) that is extremely busy in summer, however the rest of the Park remains fairly uncrowded. The Development Zone includes the campground, boat ramp, and day use areas. Due to the “all or nothing” visitor use patterns of this Park, there is no Passive Recreation zone. The lake and forest are mostly in a Natural Zone (85 acres) with the northern end of the lake a Protection Zone (20 acres) due to the sensitive and valuable willow-carr and riparian habitats. For a small Park like Pearl Lake State Park, even 10 extra cars on a given day can impact the visitor experience. Managing levels of visitor use at this Park is critical in all zones.

DRAFT

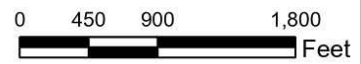
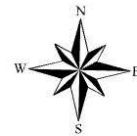


Pearl Lake State Park Management Plan



Eco-Sensitivity

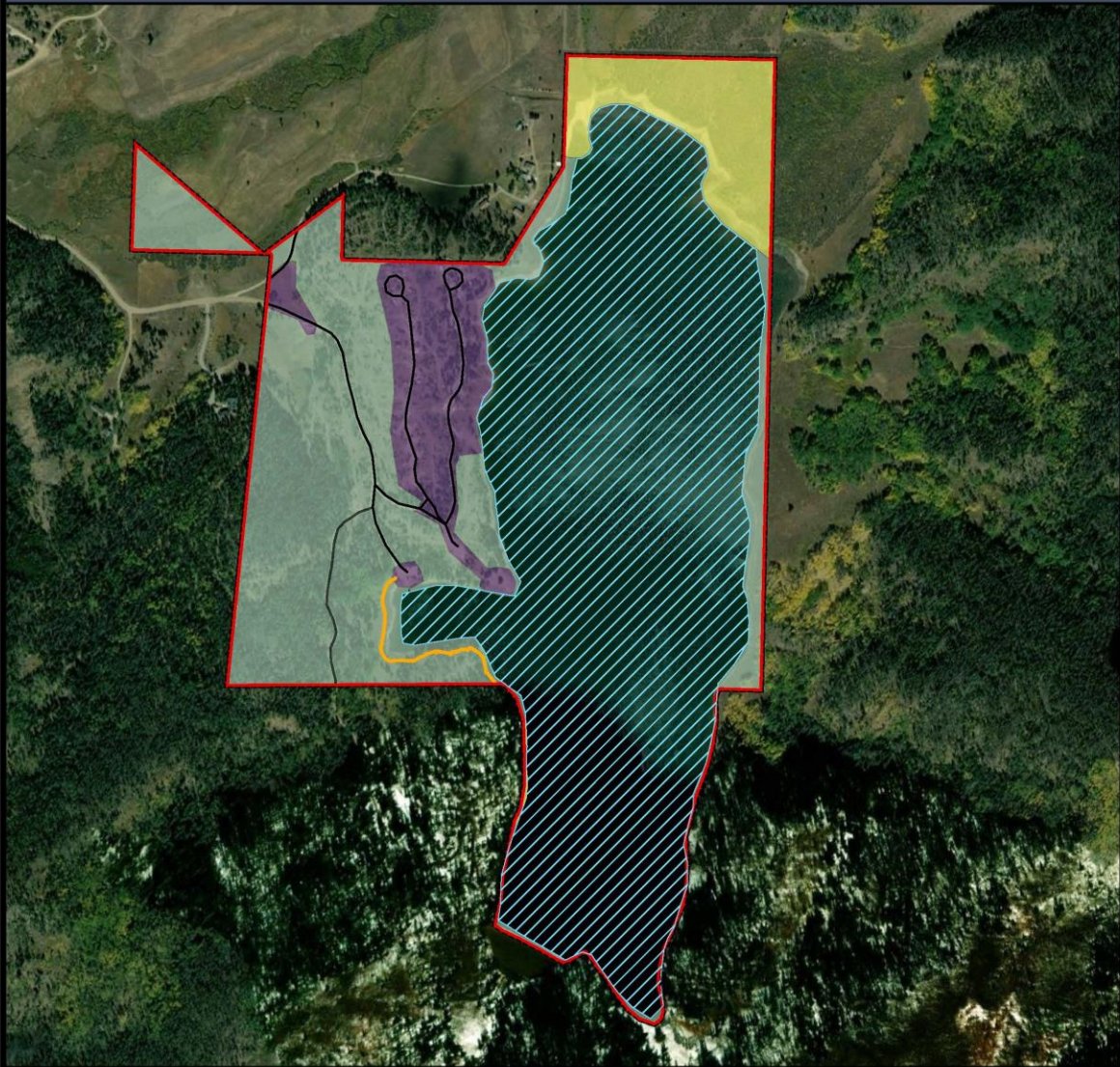
- | | |
|---------------|--------------------------|
| Park Boundary | Sensitivity Level |
| Trails | High |
| Roads | Medium High |
| Streams | Medium |
| | Medium Low |
| | Low |



Map 21. Ecosensitivity ratings for Pearl Lake State Park

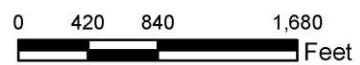


Pearl Lake State Park Management Plan



Management Zones

- | | |
|------------------|---------------|
| Management Zones | No Wake Zone |
| Developed | Trails |
| Natural | Roads |
| Protected | Park Boundary |



Map 22. Management Zones at Pearl Lake State Park

5 Park Enhancement Opportunities & Initiatives

This chapter highlights specific park enhancement opportunities and management initiatives that will help meet Park goals. Enhancement opportunities and management initiatives support the goals outlined previously in the Plan and are situated within appropriate management zones. It is important to note that new development should be balanced with maintaining and conserving what already exists in addition to resource conservation.

Over the next decade, Park staff believe the following priorities will guide decision making that supports their long-term vision:

- Maintaining the natural character of the Parks conserves important resources and provides quality outdoor experiences for visitors.
- Critical operations (e.g., water systems, winter trails, campgrounds, Visitor Center, and managing visitors) require funding and personnel resources to efficiently manage existing staff responsibilities. Supporting existing operations takes priority over adding additional responsibilities. Any new recreation offerings should add to the region not duplicate existing opportunities.
- Building knowledge about visitation (e.g., accurate counts, capacity limits, and visitor use patterns) provides a greater understanding of visitors' interests and needs, and assists gaining insights on when to make changes to communication messages, infrastructure, recreation opportunities offered, and more.
- Education and interpretation is critical to developing stewards of our parks and an informed citizenry that engages in CPW's mission. However, staff must be creative in maintaining a strong presence of education and interpretation with limited resources.

While resources to implement this Management Plan are critical, enhancement opportunities and initiatives are not “commitments” and implementation is contingent on adequate financial and human resources that are considered or weighed within the context of other CPW-wide needs. In addition, new opportunities may need to be added as conditions, recreation trends, and other changes occur over time.

Enhancement Opportunities

Enhancement opportunities for Steamboat Lake and Pearl Lake State Parks were developed based on input from the public, professional knowledge and experience of staff, and discussions with key partners and stakeholders. Park enhancements include:

1. Major rehabilitation or improvements to existing facilities and infrastructure.
2. New facilities and infrastructure.
3. Natural resource rehabilitation and restoration efforts.
4. Management initiatives critical to the long-term operational success of the Park.

For each category the following criteria were used to determine priority levels (i.e., potential weight of consideration in annual planning/funding requests):

- High priority actions (H) are considered extremely important to maintaining the quality of recreation experience and protecting natural resources in the Park. These actions are central to preserving, maintaining, and enhancing park resources and the visitor experience. Many of these projects will be implemented in the next few years or are part of ongoing maintenance.
- Medium priority actions (M) are considered important, but not urgent, and meet a combination of other resource goals and objectives. Many of these projects are generally part of a framework for the next 10 years.
- Low priority actions (L) are considered important, but not critical. Low priority actions do not need to be completed in the immediate future.

1. Existing Facilities and Infrastructure

Historic Structures:

- All standing historic structures in the Park lack structural integrity and should be viewed from a distance in order to protect the resource as well as the safety of Park visitors. Recreational impacts are mostly preventable through fencing, interpretation/signage, periodic monitoring by Park volunteers or staff, and outreach to Park visitors. The Resource Stewardship Plan has recommendations for monitoring and minimizing impacts to these structures.
 - Placer cabin is used for some programming and investments have been made to stabilize this structure. There is electricity and it could be used for winter equipment rentals and/or as a warming hut (L).
 - Qualey cabin needs stabilization to keep it from further deterioration (M).
 - The sawmill site has no development or summer use but winter trails pass by there and it could be part of trail access for Mill Creek hunting and fishing (L).

Campgrounds:

- Remeasure the maximum size of RVs per site and update as needed on the reservations website (M). Campers must fit what is provided, if users arrive with incorrect RV sizes, CPW will not cut trees or vegetation to fit them nor will the sites be enlarged.
- Replace/upgrade fire pits (M).
- Replace border timbers that are old and rotting (L).
- Finish tiles at Yarrow Loop (M) where there is an ephemeral wetland on the hill (which floods fire pits in the first 3 weeks of camping season). Seasonal closures are also put in place as needed.
- Add poles to campsites for shade/hammock hanging (L).
- Add water conservation signage to timed showers (M) in camper services buildings.

Marina/Swim Beach area:

- The Marina needs maintenance and improvement to the site (M). Expectations for required appearance standards will be included in a new contract with the concessionaire.
- The vault restroom is functional but needs to be upgraded (M). The flat roof is a poor design for winter conditions when ice collects and then melts inside the building. This is heavily used year-round.
- Strategies to assist with crowding and traffic flow require staff resources for successful implementation, and include:
 - In 2021, Placer Cove boat launch was opened earlier in the day to draw fishermen to that side of the lake. This did reduce Marina traffic, however, reduced staffing limits when the ANS inspection station can be open and thus the boat ramp. This ramp will be used for only hand-launched and ANS inspection exempt vessels. Placer Cove will be turned into a swim beach in order to relieve pressure from the Marina Parking Lot and separate use of motorized boats and swimming and non-motorized vessels. (H).
 - Line roadways with buck & rail to limit parking out of designated areas (M). The staff resources needed to move fencing each season—for plowing in winter—is an important consideration.
 - Improving the gravel trailer parking area for those staying at the Park helped but is now requiring staff time to patrol the area and run license plates to ensure those using the parking are Park visitors. The Marina is allowed to use part of this lot for dry storage as well which opened up more parking at the Marina. There may be other options for Marina Concession use of this area to free up more parking space.
 - Disperse swimmers by designating all wakeless zones for “swimming at your own risk.” This aligns with shifting park system culture to allow swimming in more areas and require visitors to be safe and responsible. (M)

Upgrade water systems with the following needs:

- Evaluate the distribution system and add valves so the whole system is not shut down when an isolated incident occurs
- Add a stands generator at the potable water treatment facility—this will allow a backup to be able to generate and distribute water when there are power outages originating off the Park
- Address joint issues with sprinkler system (e.g., degrading and coming apart) at the wastewater treatment facility (H).
- Monitor ability to meet water demands of the Park (M).
- Reduce inappropriate waste in system via the RV dump station (M).

- Reduce waste of treated water: for example, RVs fill past needs for their visit and then dump excess before leaving the Park—this also impacts the dump station, which can leave a muddy mess in the gravel);
- See “education” under section 4. Management Initiatives below. Key messages for this issue include: take only what you need; if you need to dump excess water at the end of your visit, help with dust control on the roads (i.e., dump on gravel road as drive out)
- Consider charging for water after allowing a certain amount as part of a camping reservation and/or gating the area to control use
 - May take future technology for this to be effective and not further strain staff resources
- Add another dump site at Placer Cove in order to reduce congestion and degradation in one location (L). Although current conditions are functioning this would be a big improvement.

Pearl Lake

- Address overflow parking along road to campground by adding no parking signs/barriers (H). This road was built to accommodate the numbers of campers not additional day users. Fencing is easier to add at Pearl Lake State Park since the area is not plowed, however, there is limited space to place barriers.
- Add buck and rail from lower lot to restroom to direct visitors to steps and established trails—and discourage use of social trails (L).
- Resurface the road to include a crown and reduce sedimentation in the lake from road runoff (M).
- Improve communications regarding trip planning and what visitors should do if the Park is full (M).
 - Improve signage at the County Road 129 turn off. Include a variable digital sign to indicate when the Park is full.
 - Design and install a bigger, less cluttered sign.
 - Add a sign at the entrance to current standards/logos and move iron ranger to get service (if possible)
 - Direct visitors to Steamboat Lake areas that are less busy
 - Consider day use reservations
 - Use social media, website, and other emerging technology
- Continue existing collaboration with CPW dam engineers and Division of Water Resources regarding leaking collection infrastructure via compromised piping (H).

2. New Facilities and Infrastructure

Tombstone Trail as a “Quiet Area” (L)

This area of the Park is in a Protected Zone and will be designated as “on trail use only” in the summer. There should be simple archways at either end of the trail to create an entry experience into the quiet area. Some signage to encourage listening and using all your senses will support the visitor experience.

Camper Services Building at Sunrise Vista (H)

In 2023, construction concluded for the new building and the disturbed area will need to be treated for weeds and revegetated with native plants appropriate to the area. Buck and rail fencing and other efforts such as the designated foot path from Larkspur, should be used to create “official” routes to the building for campers and limit creation of undesignated trails.

SLB parcel

- Once the Planned Unit Development (PUD) is approved, finalize moving snowmobile staging for National Forest access from the Marina to here. This will free up parking and allow more space for use by anglers, skiers, and snowmobilers recreating inside the Park. This effort has required working with the County to change the PUD, making site improvements and moving the winter concessionaire.
- Determine needs and future use for the Qualey Cabin (L)
- Allow more programming for youth such as Avid for Adventure (H) which is in high demand.

Sage Flats

- Need to rotate fencing to rest parts of this area used by horse concessionaire—especially the gathering up spot—and they need to use weed free hay, which may have cost concerns (M).
- Develop a plan for future group camping areas (M). The history of use in this area (e.g., dam construction equipment) makes it one spot in the Park ideal for additional development. There are trees for shade, a road for access, and fencing to keep out cows. The location is downhill from the main road and village, which allows for some privacy. A trail from the camping area to the lake would keep visitors off the main road and limit undesignated trails. The current campgrounds are not appropriate for large groups and currently, when a large group reserves many sites they often end up disturbing other campers. If developed, this would affect ranger patrols as there is not currently overnight use in this part of the Park.
- Add seasonal canvas shelter for day use picnic area close to the lake (M).
- Upgrade brick bathroom according to existing design plans (M).

Rainbow Ridge and Meadow Point

- Improve fishing access (M)

- Add a trail segment from Marina to Meadow Point with priority considerations for wetland crossings and stream inlets (L)
 - As part of planning this segment, consider feasibility and desire to plan for a trail that circumnavigates the entire lake and could be designed and built in phased segments.
- Add group picnic area at the end of Rainbow Ridge’s peninsula (L). It will be basic, with no water or electric. This site with views of the lake has some existing disturbance. It will be reservable, with the option for visitors to use it if it is not reserved. Reservation will only be approved if they are suitable for the area and would not disturb other users or neighbors.

Pearl Lake:

- Extend trail around the lake to formalize social trails and provide a new recreation opportunity (L). Hikers would rather walk along the lake than continue on National Forest trails to get from the day use areas to the dam. The social trail would become more sustainable as a designated trail.
 - Partner with USFS
 - Accommodate wetlands, willow carr, and drainages that are zoned “Protection”
 - Consider crossings that use “prefabricated bridges, which span from upland to upland
 - Consult and partner with the neighbors who have a boathouse on their private property along the lake. They allow visitor access through a gate. The spillway is also on their property.

3. Natural Resources - Rehabilitation/Restoration Efforts

Implement Resource Stewardship plans and policies (H):

- The Resource Stewardship Plan (Appendix A) contains a wealth of knowledge about the Parks’ cultural and natural resources. Given the high priority of maintaining the natural character of these Parks, implementing this plan should be a management focus (H).
- Surveys and monitoring need to continue or be initiated for a variety of taxa (e.g., Rabbit Ears gilia, raptors, breeding and migratory birds, amphibians, and bats) (H).
- Noxious Weed Plan (H): The Resource Stewardship Plan and Park staff have identified noxious weeds as a top threat to the natural resources of the Parks. Staff is already working to address 30 species and it is a challenge to do more weed management when the season is at the same time as when the Park, and thus staff, is at its busiest. Outside of hiring more temporary staff, some potential solutions include:

- Hiring outside help if a trustworthy local source of crews can be found *and* staff can supervise their work/the hiring process.
- Rotating closures of campgrounds to treat around tent pads and other amenities
- Prioritize resources to minimize the spread of new weeds and address weed patches that are not well established before they get out of control
- Partner with DFPC to burn the big island, which has a very small number of trees and is surrounded by water. This would need to take place after birds finish nesting for the season and in subsequent years, follow up with treating and seeding.
- Consult with Resource Stewardship staff for environmental and cultural review before any ground disturbance in or near areas of high resource sensitivity (H).

Manage informal trails

Many non-designated social trails exist in the Park. These are mostly developed around campgrounds, where people take shortcuts to facilities or to nearby official designated trails. They are also present along the shoreline of the lakes where people go off trail to find a good fishing or sightseeing spot. The riparian and wetland system can most likely support some of these trails without serious degradation, but there are also visible impacts on the vegetation, water quality, and on stream bank erosion in these areas. Generally, greater impacts and threats to resources are associated with social trails than designated trails. Social trails are noticeably impacting the area in terms of vegetation loss, erosion, and the spread of weeds. There have been previous efforts by Park staff to mitigate the impacts of social trails through closing them and increasing formal trails. Changing visitor use patterns adds another complicating factor to limiting social trails. The following opportunities are intended to focus staff efforts in areas of the Park where resources are sensitive and there is a higher likelihood of success in protecting natural resources while allowing visitor access.

- *Mill Creek (M)*
 - Braided trails on the south side of the lake need a formalized, sustainable single trail to protect the willows and other habitat.
 - Add a small parking lot for a trailhead access point
 - Get cars off the road
 - There is not a lot of concern over a new trailhead attracting more visitation. Staff expects the limited visitation in the area—primarily hunters, anglers and bird watchers using approximately a mile of trail that dead ends and is not connected to larger system of trails—to stay the same.
 - Anglers fish in the stream where it meets the lake, particularly in the spring and could benefit from formalized access trail.

- Add waterfowl hunting blinds by reservation only with designated trails to each blind. They can be used for bird watching in other seasons.
- Stay out of line of sight of nesting eagles
 - Most likely blocked naturally by the hillside and trees
 - Work likely done by hand crew using minimal equipment
- Photodocument impacts to the creek to develop plan for this area
- *Campgrounds to the lakes (M)*
 - Visitors will likely want to walk from campgrounds to the lake and tend to prefer easy access from their campsite.
 - The steep terrain has major erosion and safety issues in some areas.
 - Staff will need to identify which areas need protection and/or are most likely to be successful with designated trails
 - Many access points will need to be close to each individual site. Simple signage (e.g., “lake access” with an arrow) could direct visitors to access points.
- *Designate “on trail only” use in Protection Zones that have trails (e.g., Tombstone Trail) (H)*

Vegetation

- Continue revegetation efforts for shade replacement after mountain pine beetle impacts (M). Bridge Island has good succession (growing trees), which is becoming more noticeable.
- Plant fascines (i.e., bundles of live woody stems) along shorelines to reduce erosion (L). These “willow whips” grow into clumps of vegetation that will stabilize the banks. This is needed at Placer Cove and potentially other areas that do not have steep slopes or heavy erosion, so the roots from the woody stems can form. Fascines do not require a lot of ongoing maintenance but should be kept out of areas with livestock.
- Continue working with CSFS to address fir root rot (L)—a fungus that can come in after big cuts—at Pearl and Dutch Hill. There is no management action to take, but staff need to stay aware of potential safety hazards with trees that could break easily in wind storms.

Raptor nesting

- Work with Resource Stewardship staff to conduct GIS analysis for appropriate locations to (L):
 - Add nesting platforms for osprey. Meadow Point is one area of that Park that would be a good spot.
 - Add kestrel boxes at Sage Flats and between Rainbow Ridge and Meadow Point

Pursue Dark Skies designation (L)

- Colorado Mountain College will support this effort, and already does astronomy programs at the Park
- Resource Stewardship has a template to follow for the process

Develop and implement a range management plan (M)

- A plan for grazing and associated fencing is needed to identify: sustainable animal numbers, grazing times, where to add/remove fencing, grazing rotation, and monitoring impacts and restoration efforts needed.
- The planning process would include involving the ranchers surrounding the Parks to maintain positive working relationships and coordinate protection of resources while still providing grazing lands for cattle.
 - Fetcher Ranch works closely with Steamboat Lake State Park on grazing its cattle on the land. About 30 cows are leased to graze on the Park.
 - The Fetcher Family is a primary reason why Steamboat Lake State Park exists. The land was theirs and the dam was an idea they pursued.
 - A concessionaire also grazes horses on the Parks' lands. The Parks also works closely with companies such as Chew Cattle Company, who graze cattle on nearby USFS land allotments. In the fall, the Park works with local sheep companies, such as True Grit owned by Robert Davis. Fences were installed in the past, but a reassessment of the stream conditions should be conducted, and new fence installation should be considered.
- Currently, other ranchers have leases for their cattle to graze on surrounding federal lands and this unmanaged grazing needs to be addressed.

Water quality monitoring (L)

- Work with Riverwatch to monitor water quality beyond current testing at the swim beach and monitoring of both lakes for algae

4. Management Initiatives

The following sections describe potential ideas for understanding Park visitors, strengthening education and interpretation, increasing capacity via volunteers and others, as well as formalizing agreements with partners. As each initiative and strategy is refined, priority actions may then be determined.

MI 1. Increase personnel capacity (H)

Strategy: Participate in CPW efforts to create a 5 year staffing plan. Identify new priority positions and develop a park staffing plan in consultation with Northwest Region leadership.

- Potential staffing needs include: Winter Trails Coordinator, trail crews, ANS Inspectors and positions to assist with interpretation/education and weed management.

Strategy: Work with Region and Statewide Volunteer Coordinators to increase efforts to recruit individual and group volunteers.

- Potential volunteer needs include: recruiting, which can be challenging with so few people living near the Parks; Volunteer Coordinator; Camp Hosts if there are places for them in the park—currently limited host spots; and volunteers to help with citizen science, education programs, Visitor Center staffing, and natural resources and trail management

MI 2. Improve understanding of visitation trends and visitor use (M)

Strategy: Build on 2021 study with more visitor surveys

Strategy: Participate in CPW efforts to standardize multipliers and determine appropriate visitation algorithms.

MI 3. Reduce winter recreation trails management challenges (M)

Strategy: Hire additional CPW staff—both a coordinator and seasonal staff—to supervise seasonal staff and volunteers so that FTE’s with other responsibilities are not running this program.

- Coordinate with Snow Club who owns the snow groomer
- Require specialized skills with significant experience to operate machinery

Strategy: Increase communications about snow conditions and grooming schedules to help visitors with trip planning

- Steamboat Chamber has a “know before you go” but still needs input from someone at the Park to report regularly

MI 4. Continue to offer *Education, Interpretation and Outreach* opportunities

CPW can help customers plan their visit to the Parks so they know what to expect in advance. Experiences at the Parks can affect knowledge, beliefs, and actions of our visitors, potentially leaving lasting impacts to themselves, the Parks, and our state.

The Parks currently do not have staff dedicated to these efforts, and is a part of everyone’s job. The following are strategies that will support developing a “stewardship ethic” in Park visitors in addition to traditional education programs, Visitor Center exhibits, and other such opportunities.

Strategy: Leverage CPW’s agency-wide efforts to communicate with our visitors. Examples include a statewide interpretive sign project and campaigns related to responsible outdoor behavior.

Strategy: Train volunteers and seasonal staff on how the Parks’ water systems operate and “Leave No Trace” messaging. These people interact with Parks’ visitors daily and can help share important messages in face-to-face conversations.

Strategy: Reduce use of educational signs, and add educational art. Art can capture attention and evoke emotions that inspire change and shift visitors’ perspectives of the place they are

in. Art can be a conservation starter and fresh way to engage the public. Explore grant opportunities and ways to engage local artists for public art in the Parks that touch on topics such the water systems, proper disposal of trash, making “your visit is part of the solution to protecting the Park,” amongst many other topics.

Strategy: Evaluate Administrative Signage needs and limit their use.

Ideas discussed but will not be implemented:

- Staff heard from the public for a desire to have amenities similar to other parks—e.g., accommodate larger RVs and provide full hookups—but feel that increasing infrastructure and changing the “look and feel” of existing campgrounds is not appropriate and current paved roads cannot handle larger RVs. The same applies for a dog off leash area. Expectations of visitors don’t always match a park’s natural spaces.
- The public also expressed wanting a boat ramp at Sage Flats. Staff will not redo this area. CPW lacks staffing for ANS inspection, and winds blow to that corner of the lake where the rocky shoreline makes launching boats/paddlesports too challenging.



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