

Support SB21-249 - Keep Colorado Wild Pass



Sponsors: Senators Fenberg & Donovan and Representatives Tipper & Will

Our Challenge

Colorado's great outdoors and wildlife are among our most treasured resources. They enhance our quality of life, bring us prosperity, and represent the fabric of our state. However, rapid expansion in demand for outdoor recreation and population growth are challenging CPW's ability to deliver on its mission to ensure the benefits of the outdoors and wildlife are sustained for future generations. While Colorado's hunters and anglers continue their strong legacy of financial support for wildlife management, there are few opportunities for all those who benefit to contribute to wildlife conservation and the trails and outdoor recreation infrastructure we all enjoy. In addition, many Colorado families lack access to the experience, equipment, and resources necessary to visit our state parks and public lands.

Wild Pass Specifics: Generating Sustainable Funding While Reducing Fees

SB21-249 ensures that all Coloradans have the opportunity to support our great outdoors and also reduces fees to access our state parks and other public lands. The bill directs CPW to create an optional, discounted "Keep Colorado Wild Pass" or "Wild Pass" that will be added when Coloradans register their passenger vehicles, light trucks, motorcycles, and recreational vehicles starting in 2023. This new pass will:

- Provide access to Colorado's 42 state parks and other participating public lands.
- Cost no more than \$40 (half of a parks pass), with a goal to achieve a \$20 price via high participation and cost even less for under-resourced households.
- Ensure that registrants are clearly and transparently given the option to choose not to purchase the pass.
- Authorize CPW to partner with federal land managers to combine resources and minimize access fees.
- Be available at a lower price to under-resourced Colorado households.
- Not replace existing user fees for campgrounds, hunting and fishing, boats, OHVs, and snowmobiles that support specific activities and groups.



Outdoor Access for Under-Resourced Communities

The Wild Pass was designed to increase accessibility to our state parks and other public lands for under-resourced communities. Achieving a \$20 annual Wild Pass, compared to the current daily state parks pass at \$10 and annual pass at \$80, will reduce financial barriers to accessing our state parks, which provide some of the most welcoming, entry-level outdoor recreation opportunities in the state. Recognizing that even a \$20 pass will remain out-of-reach for some, the bill also requires that an even-lower-cost option be developed in consultation with organizations and individuals from under-resourced and disproportionately impacted communities. In addition, the bill includes explicit requirements that ensure transparency during the vehicle registration process, so everyone can decide not purchase the Wild Pass if they don't want to.

Note: A bipartisan compromise between Senate leaders allows car registrants to decline the Wild Pass for the duration of their ownership of the vehicle, with the ability to opt-in in future years if desired.

Wild Pass - 10 Goals

Revenue from Wild Pass sales will be directed toward achieving ten goals to focus CPW's future investments in public lands, outdoor recreation, and wildlife conservation, including:

Strengthen Our Existing State Park System.

Up to \$32.5 million will be directed to adequately fund our existing system of 42 state parks. Wild Pass revenue will replace and supplement existing daily and annual parks pass revenue that supports state parks staffing and operations.

- Goal 1:** Provide a simple and affordable state parks and public lands access pass to ensure that Colorado's outdoors are welcoming and accessible to all and that all users contribute to keeping Colorado wild.
- Goal 2:** Ensure sufficient staffing and resources to manage and conserve Colorado's 42 existing State Parks.

Protect and Educate Outdoor Recreationists.

If available, the next \$2.5 million will fund search and rescue and another \$1 million will fund avalanche safety and awareness to provide information and tools for recreationists to stay safe in the outdoors.

- Goal 3:** Support Search and Rescue volunteers responding to backcountry emergencies.
- Goal 4:** Protect winter recreationists by supporting backcountry avalanche safety programs.

Invest in the Future of Wildlife Conservation and Outdoor Recreation.

Revenue above \$36 million will be split equally between the Parks Cash Fund and Wildlife Cash Fund to achieve the following:

- Goal 5:** Build new state parks in partnership with local governments, conservationists, and recreationists.
- Goal 6:** Grow CPW capacity to address outdoor recreation beyond state parks, including on federal lands.
- Goal 7:** Increase State Trails Program funds for new trails, trail stewardship, and river recreation projects.
- Goal 8:** Dedicate resources for the State Wildlife Action Plan to conserve vulnerable species and habitats.
- Goal 9:** Support CPW initiatives focused on equity, diversity, and inclusion in the outdoors.
- Goal 10:** Fund Colorado Regional Outdoor Partnerships to support community-driven planning and projects.

Wild Pass By The Numbers

Existing State Park entrance fees, including the sale of daily and annual passes, generated \$22 million in FY20 (up from ~\$17 million in FY19). At a \$20 price point, the Wild Pass would generate \$22 million if 22% of Colorado's five-million-plus registered vehicles participate in the program. At 50% participation, a \$20 price point would generate over \$50 million total, including \$7 million each for the Parks Cash Fund and Wildlife Cash Fund to implement Goals 5-10 above. However, it is likely that the low cost of the Wild Pass will increase visitation and operating costs at our parks, offsetting some of these gains. For comparison, Montana achieved a participation rate of nearly 85% at a \$9 price for its opt-out pass for registered vehicles. Conversely, Michigan's opt-in pass achieved a participation rate of only 33% at the \$12 level.



Questions?

For more information, please contact:
Alice Cosgrove, DNR Legislative Director
alice.cosgrove@state.co.us
303-242-7841 (c)