

Colorado Sportsperson's Roundtable
Tuesday, August 11 and Wednesday, August 12, 2020
5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.
Virtual Meeting

SUMMARY

The Colorado Sportsperson's Roundtable met virtually on August 11 and 12, 2020. Sixteen Roundtable members, sixteen CPW staff, and the DNR Assistant Director for Parks, Wildlife and Lands participated in this meeting (see Attachment 1). Meetings were broadcast live on [CPW's YouTube](#). This document summarizes the group's discussion.

Outcomes:

- Members were notified about the September Parks and Wildlife Commission meeting.
- Feedback on the virtual format of this meeting can be provided to Jody Kennedy at jodykennedy@state.co.us
- Several new members were welcomed to the roundtable.
- Monitoring evolving health advisories, the dates and meeting format for winter Regional Caucuses and a Roundtable meeting are to be determined. Conference calls are possible to discuss pertinent issues in the interim.
- Research related to elk and CWD in deer are shared in Attachments 2 and 3.

Director's Welcome & Updates

CPW Director Dan Prenzlou welcomed the group and congratulated new members. He recognized that groups such as this give CPW the valuable ability to hear what's going on across the state. Director Prenzlou encouraged members and sportspersons to keep an eye on upcoming Parks and Wildlife Commission (PWC) meeting agendas. Relevant topics to be discussed at the September meeting will include the West Slope Mountain Lion Plan, State Wildlife Area (SWA) license requirements, and resident/non-resident license allocation.

DNR Update

Doug Vilsack, DNR Assistant Director for Parks, Wildlife and Lands, conveyed the pride that DNR has in CPW maintaining work around wildlife and recreation in such a tumultuous time. Outdoor recreation participation is high and weekly discussions with federal partners cover methods of adapting to increased use and impact, as well as retaining new users in the long term. DNR is anticipating the release of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Eastern Colorado Resource Management Plan and will work to assess the plan's impacts on hunting and fishing opportunities. Colorado is currently experiencing a significant statewide drought, creating implications for the management of properties and wildlife. DNR has been working closely on implementation of Senate Bill 181. These oil and gas rulemakings have impacts for wildlife which will be discussed in depth by the Colorado Oil and Gas Commission this fall.

CPW Program Updates

State Wildlife Area (SWA) License Requirement

Brett Ackerman, SE Region Manager, provided an overview on SWAs and the recent regulation change in July 2020 requiring anyone accessing a SWA to hold a valid hunting or fishing license. Based on strong situational awareness and field monitoring, there has been an increasing number of users and impacts on these properties. CPW's goal is to ensure that SWAs provide for habitat conservation as intended. In September, CPW staff will update the PWC on conversations with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on program income and discuss possible next steps on SWA access and management. Conversations with various user groups are ongoing, as is public education. Thus far, CPW has seen a positive level of compliance.

Discussion:

- Members were interested in what communication channels exist with federal partners surrounding this regulation and its funding implications. CPW has maintained direct communication with USFWS to explore newly plausible federal contribution and matching methods.
- The group recognized that through strong user group communication on the purpose of SWAs and the impact of recreation on wildlife, CPW and roundtable members may be able to increase public awareness around the changes.
- Members and CPW discussed the ability to re-evaluate certain SWAs on a case by case basis to balance access to recreation and wildlife conservation and in consideration of impacts to adjacent communities.

Habitat Stamp Projects

JT Romatzke, NW Region Manager, discussed the Habitat Stamp Committee and Habitat Stamp Projects. The Habitat Stamp provides major contributions to acquisitions such as Fishers Peak, conservation easements and statewide access. Funding preferences for 2020 include third party conservation easements, increased public access, greater donated values, conservation easements that support wildlife crossings, and working farms and ranches. Through the RFP process, CPW has received 27 proposals. 2020 project recommendations will be presented to the PWC in September.

Discussion:

- CPW provided clarification that as an enterprise agency, unused habitat stamp funds roll over and remain with CPW to be deployed in the future.

CPW Engagement in Local, State and Federal Land Use Management

JT Romatzke provided an overview of CPW's involvement with energy and land use. CPW provides consultation when land management agencies consider changes in land use. Through hiring full time industry liaisons and building relationships with local and federal partners, CPW is working to ensure a proactive approach to conservation. Recommendations to land stewards aim to avoid, minimize and mitigate human impacts to natural resources.

Discussion:

- The group discussed land closure coordination among land management agencies. Closure-related plans are discussed between CPW and partners routinely. Members were encouraged to bring access-related issues to CPW's attention so that CPW may communicate with associated partners. DNR's COTREX app provides real-time closure information and provides a mechanism for user-sourced updates.
- Reaching out to federal land management regional offices could provide sportspersons an opportunity to remain informed and provide feedback.
- Roundtable members requested that CPW help the group keep abreast of any oil and gas interest in the Fishers Peak State Park area.

Other Regulations

New regulations for furbearers will be implemented this year and improve data collection on furbearer take. Spearfishing regulatory changes will not be discussed at the September PWC meeting but conversations with the fishing community about spearfishing are ongoing.

Outdoor Recreation

Lauren Truitt, Assistant Director for Information & Education, presented on the impact of increased outdoor recreation during COVID-19. This swell has both positive and negative effects on Colorado's physical and economic landscapes. CPW has been at the forefront of providing outdoor recreation opportunities during COVID-19, and strives to 'manage to yes' through finding safe ways of remaining open. CPW has transitioned temporarily to an all-online hunter education process and the PWC approved an extension of the apprentice license program. The Big Game Draw saw an increase of 40,000 applicants from the previous year. An initial assessment of this data suggests that this increase may be largely attributed to reactivated hunters. Lauren asked for feedback from the group on contemplating ways to retain these hunters. CPW and partners such as the Outdoor Recreation Industry Office are promoting responsible recreation and dispersal of recreation pressure across the state through targeted communication channels. CPW is also looking at how to support partners and coalitions at the community level to meet shared objectives to balance conservation and recreation.

Discussion:

- The roundtable asked how CPW is examining the impacts of increased recreation as part of ongoing deer recruitment studies. Jeff Ver Steeg, Assistant Director for Research, Policy & Planning, shared that research is looking to compare user groups and gather baseline information which will be provided to the recreation community to help build understanding. See attachment 2 for more information on elk research.
- Members discussed the value of outreach to support newly recruited sportspersons and recreationists and to build understanding around Leave no Trace principles, as well as the challenges, impacts, and rewards of hunting and fishing.
- The group discussed that by subscribing to the CPW E-Newsletter and various social media accounts, members can stay up to date on relevant agency information and share these resources with their networks.

- Members suggested that this roundtable might tap into and leverage the efforts of existing conservation groups by hosting biannual meetings with groups such as RMEF and Ducks Unlimited.
- A discussion on adaptability touched on embracing change and providing the public information that is easily accessible and understandable.
- Members sought and provided examples of how non-consumptive recreation groups have been participating in stewardship.

Regional Manager Updates

Cory Chick, SW Region Manager, talked about how the agency is addressing biological and social issues within certain units through the Big Game Season Structure. Research studies continue to examine calf recruitment concerns. CPW continues to work in the San Luis Valley to address hunting opportunity and safety considerations in GMU 83. Statewide expansion of mandatory CWD testing will help attain robust prevalence data within the region. The southwest has experienced impacts from increased recreational usage, especially from novice recreationists.

Brett Ackerman, SE Region Manager, discussed how Senate Bill 181 required the Colorado Oil & Gas Conservation Commission (COGCC) to shift towards a more conservation-minded focus. CPW is consulting on how to better consider oil and gas impacts on wildlife. Wildlife-related COGCC hearings will take place this October. The region continues to work on the opening of Fishers Peak State Park and CPW is excited to provide hunting opportunities at the property this fall. The East Slope and Plains Wildlife Prioritization Study, conducted in conjunction with CDOT, will provide useful information on migration corridors and transit pinch points as Colorado experiences population growth. Trash ordinances in Colorado Springs as well as a new bear conflict app will help residents avoid human-bear conflict. Brett recognized that increased visitation provides CPW with funding-related and relevancy-building opportunities.

Mark Leslie, NE Region Manager, reviewed the high usage of SWAs by new users in particular. The leased nature of many reservoir-centered SWAs in the region illustrate the need to work with water providers to ensure responsible recreation and intended use. The region is involved with local partners in several water projects providing recreation opportunities. CPW is working with regional and local land managers to employ wildlife management strategies such as hunting. Work with Corners for Conservation and the Novice Hunter Program aims to provide small game and pheasant hunting opportunities. Efforts to create a Sportspersons Access Workgroup are underway as well. CPW is notifying sheep and goat hunters of federal closures around Mount Evans. Planned dispersed camping closures in the West Magnolia area of the USFS Boulder Ranger District have been adjusted to exclude hunters. Three Eastern Plains Herd Management Plan drafts were publicly discussed in a virtual meeting on August 18th.

JT Romatzke, NW Region Manager, shared that several Herd Management Plans will be out for public input and the West Slope Mountain Lion Plan will be presented for approval at the September PWC meeting. The region is closely monitoring resources in the face of extreme

drought and fire issues which have caused some staff evacuations, shooting range and other facility closures. The Cameo Shooting and Education Complex is preparing for several nationally recognized shooting competitions. A significant amount of the region will have mandatory CWD testing this year, which will inform new and innovative ways to manage the disease.

Regional Caucus Updates

The Southeast Region held its caucus online via Zoom and Facebook Live. The meeting received 8,400 views and included discussions on gun ranges, deer overpass installations, biologist presentations, Fishers Peak hunting opportunities and funding sources, and support for new SWA license requirements.

The Southwest Region covered many of the same topics at its caucus meeting as well as wolves and the West Slope Mountain Lion Plan. The focus of their meeting was bringing in new caucus delegates, and the region plans to introduce new members at the next statewide meeting.

Jody shared with new members that regional caucus meetings are open to the public and offer an opportunity to talk with CPW, bring up issues and elect delegates to attend this statewide meeting.

Open Roundtable Discussion

- PWC Commissioner and GOCO board member Charles Garcia invited Roundtable members to email or call him on either CPW or GOCO issues.
- The group pointed out that CPW facilitates various committees in which roundtable members and their constituents might be interested in participating.
- The passage of the Great American Outdoors Act may potentially provide additional LWCF funding for CPW and USFS. Such funding could enable acquisitions and new access in Colorado, which CPW is proactively preparing for.
- The PWC-approved CWD Response Plan is in an implementation phase. Hunting helps suppress chronic wasting disease in Colorado mule deer herds. Applying sufficient hunting pressure may be the key to controlling chronic wasting disease in mule deer, especially early in outbreaks when the disease is scarce. Colorado Parks and Wildlife researchers have a new related article in the Journal of Wildlife Diseases. For a summary, see Attachment 3.

Attachment 1: August 11 and 12, 2020 Sportserson's Roundtable Participation List

Roundtable Member	Residence	Aug 11	Aug 12
Aaron Jones	Antonito	x	x
Adam Oberheu	Delta		x
Brandon Sagrillo	Grand Junction	x	x
Brian Braaten	Colorado Springs		x
Chloe Lomprey	Colorado Springs	x	x
Emily Orbanek	Denver	x	x
Erik Myhre	Black Hawk	x	x
Kim Kokesh	Austin	x	x
Larry McCormack	Colorado Springs		x
Mark Scofield	Colorado Springs	x	x
Roy Karo	Grand Junction	x	x
Ron Goodrich	Pueblo	x	x
Ryan Britten	Haswell	x	x
Sharon Dillon	Platteville	x	x
Trent Peterson	Snyder	x	x
Willie Kalaskie	Colorado Springs	x	x
CPW/DNR Staff and PWC Commissioners	Title		
Dan Prenzlow	Director	x	x
Jeff Ver Steeg	Assist. Director for Research, Policy & Planning	x	x
Doug Vilsack	Assistant Director for Parks, Wildlife and Lands, DNR	x	x
Charlie Garcia	Parks and Wildlife Commissioner	x	x
Betsy Blecha	Parks and Wildlife Commissioner	x	x
Katie Lanter	Policy & Planning Supervisor	x	x
Jody Kennedy	Public Involvement Planning Specialist - organizer	x	x
Brett Ackerman	SE Region Manager	x	x
Cory Chick	SW Region Manager	x	x
Dean Riggs	Northwest Deputy Region Manager	x	x
Lauren Truitt	Assistant Director for Information & Education	x	x
Mark Leslie	NE Region Manager	x	x
Reid DeWalt	Assistant Director for Aquatic, Terrestrial & Natural Resources		x
JT Romatzke	NW Region Manager	x	x

Heather Dugan	Assistant Director for Field Services	x	x
Deon Kuhl	Statewide Business Operations Coordinator	x	x
Randy Hampton	NW Region Public Information Officer	x	x
Sarah Studebaker	Policy & Planning Research Associate	x	x

Attachment 2. Elk Research Updates

PREDATOR and ELK RESEARCH UPDATE¹

January 2020

Piceance and Arkansas River Predator/Deer Project

The Parks and Wildlife Commission approved the Piceance and Arkansas predator research proposals at its meeting in Fort Collins in December 2016.

Injunction

WildEarth Guardians (WEG) filed for an injunction in May 2017. Judge McGahey denied the request.

Court Ruling

On November 18, 2019 in Denver District Court, judge McGahey ruled favorably on the predator law suit filed by WEG. He rejected all the arguments raised against the two predator studies by WEG and supported CPW's authority to conduct the research.

Piceance Study

This is a 3-year research project designed to examine the impact of spring bear and lion predation on mule deer fawn recruitment.

The predator removal component of the study ended early this summer. CPW is continuing to follow the fates of the 2019 fawn crop through the winter. Analysis of the data will begin in 2020.

Arkansas Study

This is a 9-year project. The first 3 years have concluded. We just entered the "pause" phase where we let the treatment and control areas return to some form of natural equilibrium for 3 years. Then the "cross-over" (i.e., switch) phase of the project will begin. In this third and final phase, the treatment and control units for years 1-3 will be reversed for years 7-9.

CPW is monitoring doe and fawn survival and the lion population (e.g., density, survival, reproduction, conflict).

D-16 is the initial higher lion harvest unit. D-34 is the initial control (then the units are reversed for phase 3). In other words, D-34 begins with low lion harvest (years 1-6) and ends with higher harvest in years 7-9). D-16 follows the reverse course.

Mule deer survival appears relatively high at this very early juncture. Pregnancy rates also appear high. Body condition is overall higher than found in other Colorado studies.

Predation appears to be a significant mortality factor, as information suggested prior to the study.

Lion mortality factors include hunting, conflict, and lion-on-lion, as expected.

Elk Recruitment Studies

These studies were initiated because of concern about declining calf: cow ratios in the southern half of the state.

Pilot studies in Trinidad and Montrose began in 2017. Cow elk body condition did not appear to be a factor in poor elk calf recruitment.

There are several causes of mortality, but predation played a significant role, especially during the first few months after calves were born.

CPW initiated a 6-year follow-up study beginning in 2019.

Bears Ears was added as a control unit (high calf: cow ratios). We are looking at body condition, pregnancy rates, causes of mortality, etc., from birth to age 1.

Elk and Recreation Studies

CPW has begun a 6-year study of the impacts of outdoor recreation (specifically trails) on elk recruitment.

Study areas are the Avalanche Creek elk herd near Aspen and the Bears Ears herd near Steamboat.

Some aspects of this study are similar to the other elk recruitment study, with the addition of the recreational impact assessment component.

¹By providing this summary, CPW does not intend to waive its rights under the Colorado Open Records Act, including CPW's right to maintain the confidentiality of ongoing research projects. CRS § 24-72-204.

Attachment 3. Chronic wasting disease research in Colorado mule deer herds

Hunting helps suppress chronic wasting disease in Colorado mule deer herds

The new paper in the Journal of Wildlife Diseases summarizes an analysis of data from Colorado mule deer across 12 hunting areas, gathered over nearly two decades (2000-2018). Areas with the largest declines in annual hunting license numbers (pressure) showed the largest increases in the percent of infected adult male deer killed by hunters (prevalence). Prevalence stayed comparatively flat in most areas where license numbers remained steady or increased. Further analysis showed that increasing the number of licenses lowered risk of hunters harvesting an infected deer 1-2 years later, and decreasing license numbers increased that risk. The new study shows that CWD prevalence was cut in half in northern Larimer County through a sustained management effort that began back in 2000.