

Colorado Sportsperson's Roundtable

August 7, 2021, 9:00 am - 4:00 pm

Virtual & Palisade

Summary

The Colorado Sportsperson's Roundtable met virtually and in-person on August 7, 2021. Sixteen Roundtable members, eleven CPW staff, and the DNR Assistant Director for Parks, Wildlife and Lands participated in this meeting (see Attachment 1). This document summarizes the group's discussion.

Director's welcome

License Allocation

CPW is considering changes to allocation and preference point policies and regulations. Over the coming year, CPW will implement a three-phased process for gathering input from the public, and specifically sportspersons and outfitters, to inform the development of proposed alternative changes.

- Phase 1 - now through the end of 2021, we will engage with staff and invited sportspersons to help frame the questions and topics we will focus on during this process.
- Phase 2 - during the first half of 2022, we will conduct a survey of licensed hunters, hold workshops and provide public comment opportunities to get a broad view of sportspersons' attitudes and opinions for the topic areas identified in phase 1.
- Phase 3 - during the second half of 2022, we will consider all the input we received to develop alternatives that will then be presented to the Commission for possible consideration.

Our goal is to offer multiple channels to capture the voices of licensed Colorado hunters. The Roundtable can expect to hear more on this topic at our meetings in 2022.

Outdoor Regional Partnerships

The first grant round was completed, bringing on 7 coalitions (see below) committed to conserving wildlife and natural resources, ensuring sustainable outdoor recreation opportunities and convening a broad representation of outdoor related interests. These coalitions will participate in developing a statewide plan to support regional efforts. Next steps include welcoming these new coalitions to the Colorado Outdoor Partnership, providing planning resources, and facilitating their grassroots efforts in solving conservation and recreation challenges. CPW encourages this community to reach out and participate in these coalitions:

- Envision Recreation in Balance Partnership
- Metro Denver Nature Alliance
- NoCo PLACES 2050
- Ouray Recreation and Conservation Alliance
- Pikes Peak Outdoor Recreation Alliance

- Routt Recreation Roundtable
- San Luis Valley Great Outdoors

Wolf Public Engagement

- As of the meeting, CPW had held 11 open houses with 5 more to go. Keystone facilitated 17 invitation-only focus groups on the west slope.
- CPW will also have two virtual town halls on Aug 17 and 26, 5-8 pm. There will also be about 10 interest-based focus groups such as the sportsperson’s focus group we are conducting as part of this meeting.
- Altogether CPW is hosting over 40 meetings to gather public input that will be taken into consideration for drafting the wolf restoration and management plan. The public engagement report will be presented to the Commission at its November meeting.

Cameo overview. JT Romatske, NW Regional Director

This big event is drawing top competitors to the new Cameo Complex. One of the best recreational shooting facilities in the world featuring the latest technology. There are multiple ranges (50-200 yards) for rifle, shotgun, pistol & archery. Long Range with targets out to 2,000 yards and sporting clay courses. Opened in 2019. The first year, Cameo hosted 61 events with 1,700 attendees, and 4,500 total visitors between September and December. In 2020, there were 175 events with 9,200 attendees, and this year, (2021) Cameo has had over 16,500 event attendees generating \$600,000.

Legislative Update - Doug Vilsack, DNR Legislative Liaison

Keep Colorado Wild Pass changes how we fund our parks. Similar to other states, a car registration fee added every year will allow entry to state parks. The fee will be less than half the current cost of an annual park pass (max possible = \$40). The intent of this pass is for it to provide for existing park needs, including maintenance and operations. Additional funds will also support Search and Rescue and the Avalanche Center. After allocating the funds mentioned above, remaining money will be split between parks and wildlife funds supporting new parks, trails, and wildlife conservation.

Discussion/ Q&A:

The fee will automatically be added to registration, but it will be optional and anyone can opt out of paying for it. The fee is per vehicle. The goal is to make it low cost enough that many people will support putting the pass on each vehicle. Funding for maintenance and operations for existing parks is a priority. Spillover funds may help in acquiring new state parks.

The initiative 30x30, part of a Federal campaign called “America the Beautiful”, has not been discussed much as part of this legislation. DNR/CPW is engaged with the federal administration about what this effort might mean for Colorado, providing input on the value of private land conservation and current state best practices.

The Keep Colorado Wild Pass will be promoted with the public as part of a marketing campaign.

The Outdoor Equity Grant Program created a new formula for how GOCO money generated from the lottery gets distributed, directing spillover funds to an outdoor equity grant program. These revenue streams are focused on getting kids and families into the outdoors. A new board and staff will manage this program. Here is the link to apply to the Outdoor Equity Grant Board. Applications are due 8/23.

Other Measures:

Numerous funding measures passed this session, supporting new and existing state parks, wildlife, Search and Rescue, and the Avalanche Center. A conservation easement tax credit program bill increased the benefits to participants.

Regarding wolves, a bill established that restoration and management may not be funded from the sale of hunting or fishing licenses or associated federal grants. \$1.1 million of general fund was allocated for this purpose for the current fiscal year.

An additional bill supports Search and Rescue by setting up a process to evaluate program needs. An Aquatic Nuisance Species bill will establish a road-based inspections pilot program to see if CPW can increase interceptions of mussels coming into the state. Wildfire recovery/restoration and watershed health saw numerous bills including ones that will benefit wildlife habitat and support implementation of the state water plan.

Wolf Focus Group

General interests shared through opening remarks:

- Ranching
- Outfitting
- Hunting
- Knowledge-based conversations - initiative passed and now it's time to move forward with factual based conversations.
- Complete picture on what management plan will look like, what population level will support a hunting season, and how will problem wolves be addressed.
- Private land manager impacts - how wolves will add responsibilities/work to land owners and managers.

Concerns shared through opening remarks:

- The Yellowstone story, often shared, does not provide a complete picture and portrays biases.
- Game numbers are already down in some areas of CO.
- There are more people, more activities in wildlife habitat, and population growth continues.
- Concern that there is not much room for wolves in CO.

Background

Comment forms are open through August 31st. Keystone will be taking all the input gathered and compiled into a report that will be shared with the Commission, advisory groups, and CPW to inform development of a draft plan. Anticipate more public engagement further in the process. There is a gray wolf newsletter where you can get updates. Videos are available to provide more background on priority discussion topics. All this information can be found at www.wolfengagementco.org/

Engagement, Education and Outreach

Emphasis on the interests of cattle ranchers and agriculture. Importance of talking to a lot of hunters.

How many people have signed up for the CPW newsletter? There is interest in getting more people signed up and getting information out there. There is a lot of misinformation going around.

- Encouragement for others to use social networks to get the word out, come to an open house and/or town hall.
- There are 3,000 people subscribed to the wolf e-news.

Restoration

What constitutes reintroduction?

- This will be determined through the management planning process.

What determines that a population is self-sustaining?

- The population numbers and objectives will be determined through the management planning process.

How does this impact Mexican wolves? Could there be a zone in southern CO to limit the overlap/hybridization?

- Maintaining separation between Mexican wolves and gray wolves is something to be taken into consideration as wolf restoration is planned.
- These are useful ideas that will be considered during this process

What are the anticipated impacts from wolves on ungulate populations?

- Wolves hunt in a pack and, in general, will kill about one elk per month per animal. Kills may vary, but that is the average.

How big a territory do wolves need? Will they need to adjust to seasons and prey availability?

- Territory and movement will be influenced by the prey base.

What are the top two or three places that meet criteria for where to put wolves, considering population density and potential conflicts?

- Models are being developed now to identify options. This will be a big decision of the Commission and CPW is looking for input.

Some boards of county commissioners have passed resolutions against wolf restoration in their counties -- how is that being considered in this process?

- No decisions have been made about where wolves will be released. Will try to work with counties. Putting wolves where they are not welcome may be challenging for successful restoration.

What does success look like? “No litigation”

Wolf proposition 114 specified reintroduction on the west slope, but wolves will likely travel around the state, possibly to eastern plains.

Management

There is interest in hunting wolves.

- The 10(j) process, a section under the ESA that provides a special designation to a population of a threatened or endangered species for restoration purposes, can address the protections/taking of a federally listed species. Wolves are not federally listed in Colorado right now but this decision is being challenged in the court. CPW is looking at other sections of the ESA in discussions with USFWS.

What does compensation and funding look like?

- HB 21-1243 prohibits the use of license sales to support wolf restoration/management.
- \$1.1 million of general fund was approved for this fiscal year to support wolves.
- If legislation changes, then the funding model could be altered.

Will \$1.1 million cover the costs?

- For this year, yes. Will cover facilitation and administration on the front end. Long term costs will shift to management/depredation.

Grand Mesa Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests draft forest plan was created before the wolf plan. What conversations are happening to incorporate wolves into this USFS plan and others?

- Conversation happening at multiple levels, from staff to leadership. There is a USFS representative on the Technical Working Group (TWG).

For some private land managers, a lot of land has been put into conservation easements. Finding more value in wildlife conservation than with domestic grazing, and now shifting away from grazing.

Wolves have the potential to scare elk off public lands.

How will CPW calculate the value of an animal? There is a lot more to consider in the value of a calf from birth to reproductive future.

When a bear kills a calf, it's hard to determine. A bear will conduct the kill and then coyotes will come in and disperse the meat, making it even harder to identify what species caused the kill.

Safari Club International will grant funds to support collars and monitoring of predators.

What are the fact-based lessons-learned from ID, WY, MN and MI departments of wildlife? Has CPW benchmarked concerns & issues with these states? How is wolf management funded in these states?

- CPW's educational videos dig into these issues
- CPW met with other western states. Representatives from other state agencies serve on the TWG.

Looking at Montana, how have wolves impacted license availability?

- Elk populations as a whole are slightly higher than they were. There are still ample opportunities for residents/nonresidents to hunt. Impacts may vary depending on locations.
- Some units may be impacted more than others -- need to look unit by unit to understand impacts.

Would a declining elk herd in a region impact whether to introduce wolves there or trigger management?

- This issue is being looked into as part of management planning.

Does this apply to moose?

- CPW will need to monitor moose to better understand the relationship/management needs.

This is going to cost CPW a lot of resources/funds when considering all the impacts of wolves on the ground.

Livestock Interactions

Important to engage ranchers. Share materials and information with ranchers, demonstrate what to look for and what to implement for management practices.

Encourage ranchers to keep records of weight, proof of loss, progeny, and genetics.

What meetings are happening with other groups?

- Meeting with other interests including ag producers/ranchers

Encourage CPW to be upfront about compensation, make it clear/straightforward to get payments.

There is going to be a massive amount of data produced moving forward. Will CPW bring on more staff to support data management/statistics?

Looking at the Keep CO Wild pass, is there something similar that could educate the public about the costs associated with wolves and provide them an opportunity to help pay?

Take a pause, consider the risks of another ballot initiative that limits CPW management tools. Similar to bears. Sporting community should keep this in mind. Talk to state representatives to see about state laws addressing CPW management authority and safeguarding this authority in case of future ballot measures.

At a Greater Yellowstone Coalition meeting, ranchers share experiences on how wolves impacted their land/operations.

Outfitters/ landowner voucher holders need to be heard in this process in addition to livestock producers/grazers.

Encourage CPW to pre-monitor the wolves that are selected.

Consider the long-term financing of management, impacts to CPW, impact on revenues and on herds. Wolves could result in a reduction of license demand.

Prioritize education - need to educate the non-hunters, recreationists, and kids about wildlife conservation and that wolves are not a Disney animal. Focus on getting hunter-ed into the schools again.

Regional Caucus Meetings Updates

Southeast

SE Region met July 21st. Provided updates on wolves, State Wildlife Areas, and the legislative session. Discussed the draw process - who got a tag and who didn't, why and why not. First group to hold Facebook live meetings which really broadens participation. More people are tuning in, building on the mission to get more sportsmen involved in what's going on. 6800 people connected through Facebook.

Northeast

Only eight attendees. One vocal anti hunter. Important to get sportspersons engaged. Discussed wildfires, opening up some of the impacted units, especially some prime moose hunting opportunities. Discussed issues with the draw and the existing software, encouraged

to hear that CPW is exploring multiple options. Put out a request for questions on social media and got a few responses.

Open Roundtable

Allocation

Looking at the current thresholds for allocation splits, ask that CPW consider what the characteristics of hunters were at the time those were determined and what the splits/hunt codes would like today to try and match.

Neighboring states continue to make it more difficult for nonresidents to hunt in those states.

CPW could look at adjusting pricing to address increased demand.

Are we going to be looking at sheep, goat and moose? Looked into calculations and it would take a long time for some folks to draw a license for some of these species because they require so many points.

- The pay after you draw has increased the number of applicants. CPW is looking at this closer to consider possible improvements.

Landowner Preference Program (LPP) program -- whether or not allocation should be weighted to public versus private lands.

- LPP is set in statute. The focus of the current process is not looking at LPP, but allocation between resident and non-resident licenses.

Next meeting

This fall, CPW may host of conference call for the Roundtable and will share more details as they develop. The next in person meeting will take place in the winter of 2022.

Attachment 1: August 7, 2021 Sportsman's Roundtable Participation List

Roundtable Member	Residence
Aaron Jones	Antonito
Adam Gall	Crawford
Adam Oberheu	Delta
Brian Braaten	Colorado Springs
Brian Soliday	Frederick
Kassi Smith	Lafayette
Kim Kokesh	Austin

Larry McCormack	Colorado Springs
Mark Scofield	Colorado Springs
Mia Anstine	Pagosa Springs
Roger Cesario	Crested Butte
Ron Goodrich	Pueblo
Roy Karo	Grand Junction
Ryan Britten	Haswell
Steve Schake	Kremmling
Willie Kalaskie	Colorado Springs
CPW/DNR Staff	Title
Dan Prenzlów	Director
Carlee Koutnik	Deputy Director
Jeff Ver Steeg	Assist. Director for Research, Policy & Planning
Doug Vilsack	Assist. Director for Parks, Wildlife and Lands, DNR
Katie Lanter	Policy & Planning Supervisor
Jody Kennedy	Public Involvement Planning Specialist
Brett Ackerman	SE Region Manager
Brian Dreher	Terrestrial Section Manager
Cory Chick	SW Regional Manager
JT Romatzke	NW Regional Manager
Mark Leslie	NE Region Manager
Reid DeWalt	Assist. Director for Aquatic, Terrestrial & Nat. Resources
Focus Group Lead	Organization
Julie Shapiro	Keystone Policy Center