

“Colorado The Beautiful Initiative”

In his 2015 State of the State, Governor John Hickenlooper first announced his vision for Colorado and the outdoors. The Governor followed that with the formal proposal for the “Colorado The Beautiful” initiative in June 2015 at the first ever Outdoor Summit sponsored by the Governor, Colorado DNR, GOCO and the Colorado Lottery. The Initiative emphasizes protecting Colorado’s outdoors, connecting people to the outdoors and linking outdoor areas in Colorado. The Governor highlighted the goal of having every Coloradan within a ten-minute walk of a park, trail or open space.

The Initiative includes three components:

- Highlighting important critical trail segments, called the “16 in 2016”.
- Creating a comprehensive statewide map of trails and later parks and open space areas.
- Developing a statewide strategic trails plan.

Critical Trails Segments – “16 in 2016”

The Colorado Department of Natural Resources, Great Outdoors Colorado and Colorado Parks and Wildlife reviewed about 200 possible trail segments across Colorado, before selecting 16 trails as the “16 in 2016” trails. The intent is to elevate these critical trail gaps, missing segments and undeveloped trails so that the public is aware of these as priority trail components for Colorado. The aim of the effort was to generate a more focused, more coordinated discussion to support trails and recreation in Colorado.

Criteria for selection of the “16 in 2016” included:

- Projects with strong local support,
- Improved links to other trails and trail systems,
- Connection to outdoor recreation opportunities,
- Safe alternative transportation options,
- Potential economic development for nearby communities,
- Proximity to underserved communities,
- Capability to benefit multiple types of trail uses,
- Supporting with good environmental stewardship and
- Opportunities for partnerships among various levels of government, nonprofits and the private sector.

The “16 in 2016” selections are:

- Colorado Front Range Trail
- Lower Valley Trail
- Rocky Mountain Greenway Trail

- Colorado Riverfront Trail
- Ring the Peak Trail
- Peak to Plains Trail
- High Line Canal Trail
- Fremont Pass Trail
- Alpine Loop Backcountry Byway
- Crested Butte to Carbondale Trail
- Eagle Valley Trail
- Palisade Plunge Trail
- Paths to Mesa Verde
- North Elk Creek Trail
- Eldo-Walker Trail Connection
- Arkansas River Stage and Rail Trail

Details of the “16 in 2016” are available on the Colorado DNR website for “Colorado The Beautiful”. The State Trails Program funded eight of the above in the 2016 non-motorized grant cycle.

Colorado Trails System – Interactive Trails Map

The Colorado Trails System interactive mapping project will provide targeted, current information about recreational trails opportunities. The State Trails Program and GOCO conducted feasibility studies on this concept in 2006 and 2008. The 2008 report determined that the concept was feasible, however, with an estimated price of \$10 to \$30 per mile of trail mapped and between two to ten years to complete.

During the announcement of “Colorado the Beautiful” in June 2015, Governor Hickenlooper discussed his vision for a comprehensive outdoor recreation map of Colorado that will (eventually) include trails, open spaces, parks and other protected lands. Work is underway with the beta (β) release in 2016.

Colorado 2016 Statewide Trails Strategic Plan

The third component of the “Colorado The Beautiful” initiative is the 2016 Statewide Trails Strategic Plan.

Although not specifically part of the “Colorado The Beautiful” initiative, Governor Hickenlooper established Colorado’s Outdoor Recreation Industry Office (CORIO) in July 2015.

Colorado’s Outdoor Recreation Industry Office

Recognizing the importance of the \$34 billion dollar outdoor industry to Colorado, Governor Hickenlooper took action to strengthen efforts to work with that industry and to coordinate with local interests to help attract and hold on to these businesses. The CORIO is focusing on four key points, determined during a “listening tour” in 2015. These include: economic development, stewardship and conservation, industry anchors and education.

Colorado’s outdoors are a key part of the Colorado lifestyle. They are also a key economic driver for Colorado, generating over \$12.5 to \$13.2 billion annually.¹ The Outdoor Industry Association reports that outdoor firms in Colorado generated 125,000 jobs in Colorado and generated \$994 in state and local tax revenues.²

¹ Development Research Partners. 2015. As reported in “*Progress Colorado – 2016 Business and Economic Guide*”. Accessible at <http://www.progressco.org/recreation-tourism-overview>.

² Outdoor Industry Association. 2015.