

Public input regarding proposed changes for Jefferson County portion of Golden Gate Canyon State Park's (GGCSP) hunting program

OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED CHANGES

- CPW wants to improve the hunting experience and protect safety for all park visitors.
- The proposed changes would become effective in September 2022.
- Reduce the number of hunters per day from 35 to 15. Very few days (~8%) have more than 15 hunters sign-in.
- Require free reservations for each day you hunt at GGCSP. There would be no limit on the number of days a hunter can make reservations. Reservations would be available ahead of time (14 days or less for small game and 45 days or less for big game) online or by phone. A valid hunting license for the appropriate season would be required.
- Increase communication with hunters and non-hunters (signage at trailheads, discussions with individuals, social media, etc.) regarding multiple recreation opportunities in the same area.

METHODS

HUNTER SURVEY

In August 2021, GGCSP staff used IPAWS to look up emails for all hunters who signed into the hunter check-in log book during the previous two years. GGCSP and Policy & Planning staff developed an online questionnaire using Qualtrics to ask about all proposed changes. The survey was open September 1- 30, 2021. It was emailed to 343 hunters (on September 1st with a reminder on Sept 19th) and advertised via flyers (Attachment A) with a QR code that was available when hunters signed in at the Visitor Center.

Attachment B is the entire survey instrument which included these questions:

1. Why do you hunt? Please select all that apply.
 - a. To spend time in nature
 - b. To harvest meat
 - c. To spend time with friends and family
 - d. To spend time in solitude
 - e. Support Colorado's economy
 - f. Help manage wildlife populations
 - g. Other
2. Why do you chose to hunt at Golden Gate Canyon State Park? Please select all that apply.
 - a. Proximity to home
 - b. Opportunity to hunt at a State Park
 - c. The park is easily accessible for hunting via parking and trails
 - d. Provides revenue to CPW
 - e. Quality hunting experience
 - f. No permits or lotteries to gain access

- g. Other
- 3. While hunting at Golden Gate Canyon State Park what has most impacted your experience (positively or negatively)?
- 4. To what degree do you disagree or agree with the following statements (select one response per statement):
 - a. A free reservation requirement would not affect my likelihood of hunting at Golden Gate Canyon State Park.
 - b. The proposed changes will increase hunting success.
 - c. The proposed changes will increase public safety.
 - d. The proposed changes will improve the hunt experience.
- 5. Please explain your responses in Q4 and/or provide any additional comments you wish to share.

TRAIL USERS SURVEY

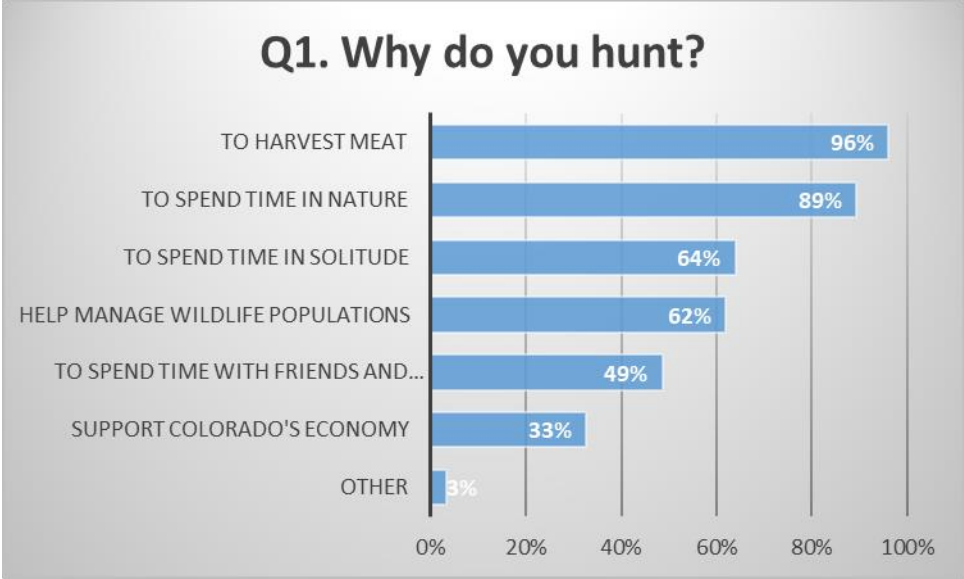
CPW staff have also been conducting an intercept survey of trail users to better understand their preferences. The surveys took place on weekends and weekdays at various trailheads during August and September. These surveys include the following questions:

1. Are you aware that hunting is allowed in the JeffCo (eastern) part of the park Labor Day to Memorial Day?
2. Does knowing that hunting is occurring in that area/in this area of the park influence your decision of whether or not to hike/bike in this area on future visits?
3. Do you hunt? If yes, do you hunt at Golden Gate?

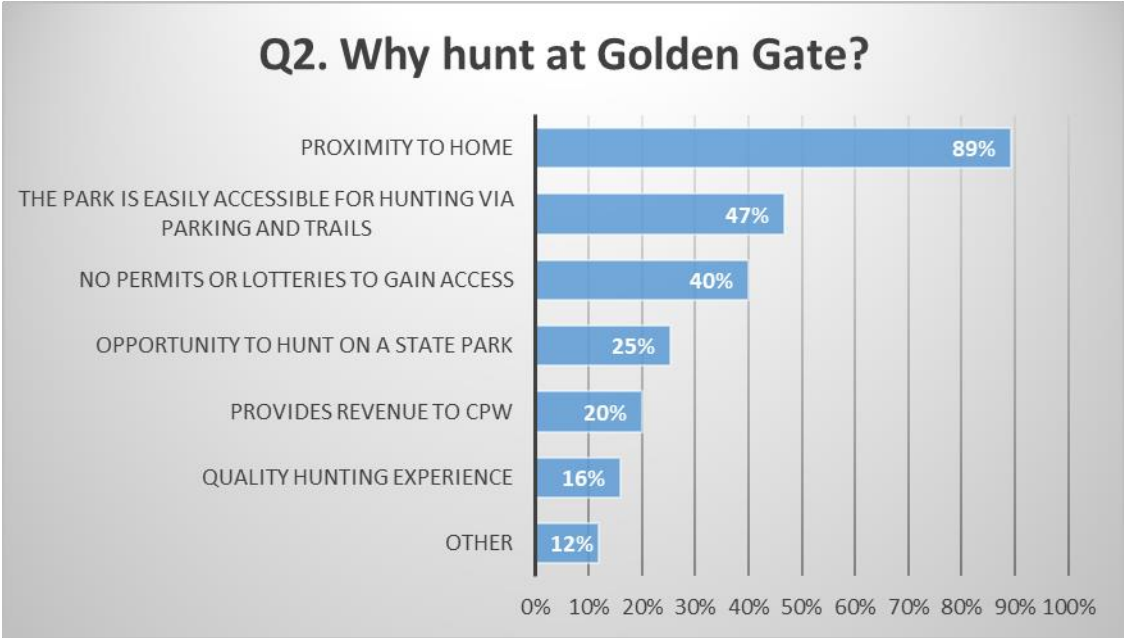
RESULTS

HUNTER SURVEY

Of the 343 emails sent, 3 bounced back as undeliverable and one person responded to say they had moved out of state and would not take the survey. Of the 339 remaining hunters contacted, 144 (43%) filled out the survey. Five people used the QR code to take the survey. All 149 responses are analyzed together. Every question required a response.



Respondents selecting "other" gave the following reasons: field train dogs, Native American tradition, challenge of the hunt and tradition (2 respondents).

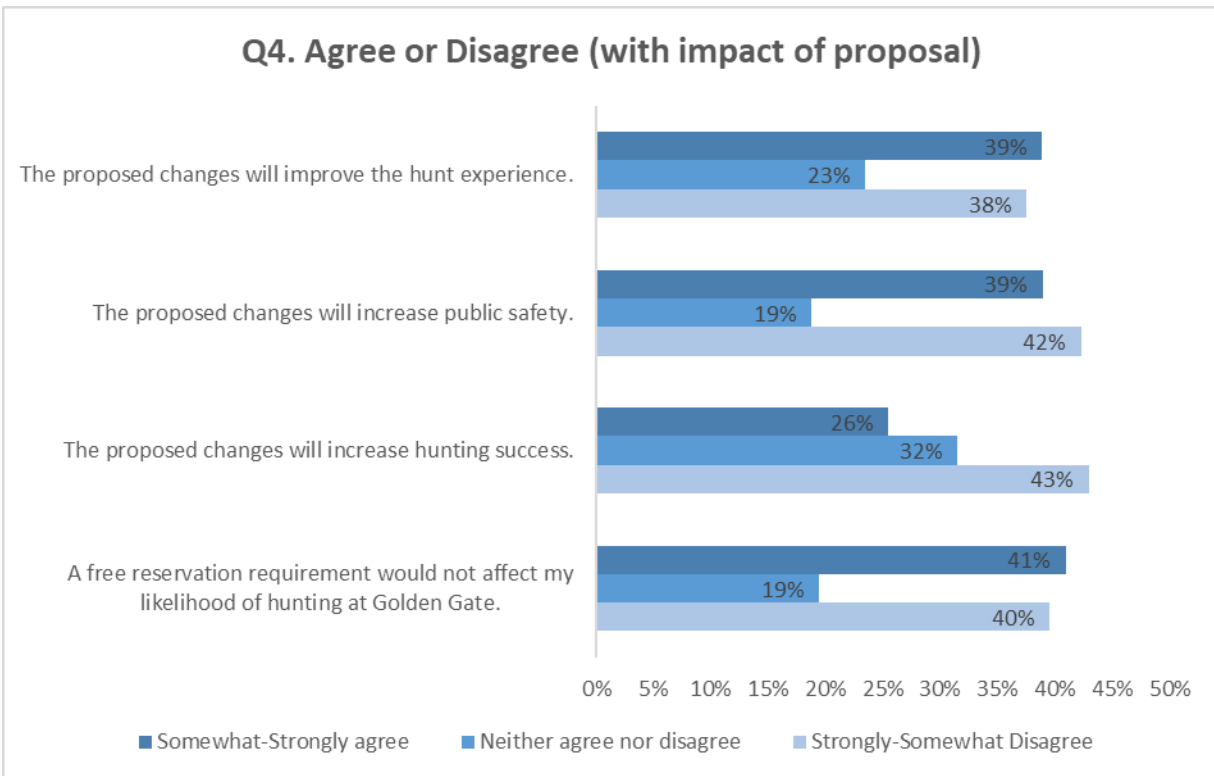


Respondents selecting "other" gave the following reasons: great place to hunt with kids, local forest closures (7 people said this likely in response to the 2020 fires that closed the surrounding national forest), only spots available on the jeffco tag for those who did not win a centennial cone permit, most opportunity given proximity to Denver, long hunting season, nonreservation area that had huntable population, bought a leftover tag, tag availability, length of season, had a doe tag for this unit.

Q3. What has impacted your experience?

Responses including the following themes:

- Too many people
 - In general (n=14)
 - Too many hunters (n=13)
 - Too many nonhunters (n=8)
 - Too many hikers, bikers, dog walkers (n=17)
- Reactions from other users to hunters (n=21): Many comments about being treated negatively, that other trail users were surprised to see hunters, etc.
- Lack of game and haven't harvested anything (n=17)
- Great opportunity for wildlife watching and scenery (n=16)
- Do not like the check-in process (n=12): Travel times negatively affect the experience and there are more hunters at a trailhead than on sign-in sheet.
- Ease of access (n=9): can go on short-notice, no lottery, well-marked trails
- Close to home (n=9)
- Safety concerns (n=9)
- Would like to hunt in more of the park/too small of an area to hunt (n=8)
- Do NOT see too many people (n=7)
- CPW staff are helpful and friendly (n=7)
- Always a great experience (n=6)
- Impact of all users (hunters and nonhunters) to wildlife (n=6)
- Positive interactions with other users (hunters and nonhunters) (n=5)
- Late season/length of season (n=3)
- Dogs off leash (n=2)
- Christmas tree cutting (n=2)



Q5. Please explain your responses in Q4 and/or provide any additional comments you wish to share.

About a third (n=50) of respondents did not have additional or specific comments. In addition to sentiments heard in Q3, the other respondents had a mix of comments including:

- Concerns about being able to get a reservation and/or other hunters making reservations they then do not use (n=25). Not all of these respondents were against reservations, they just are concerned about limits to opportunity and how reservations will be implemented.
- Concerns about limiting “spur of the moment” because of required reservations (n=11) in advance.
- Concerns about lowering the number of hunters and/or limiting already limited tags (not a lot of places to hunt in the GMU) (n=12).
- There was general support for the overall proposal (n=16), increasing communications (n=10) and responses about how reservations will help (n=10) with trip planning and hunt experience.
- Some (n=14) feel the status quo is fine and there is no need to make changes.
- Some (n=16) would like to see changes for nonhunters such as limited access to the area during hunting seasons.

TRAIL USERS SURVEY

So far, 51 people/groups have taken the survey. Of those, 65% were aware of hunting in the park and 59% responded that awareness of hunting would influence where they would chose to hike or bike. Eight participants were hunters with none hunting at GGCSP, 6 are aware of hunting at the park and 3 said it would influence where they hiked or biked.

MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall hunter survey respondents understand user numbers (including hunters) are high at GGCSP leading to human safety and resource protection concerns. The unique opportunity to hunt close to home, in this GMU, and at a park with fantastic scenery, watchable wildlife and great staff is valued.

There is desire to eliminate the requirement to sign-in and out at the Visitor Center. There is not strong agreement that safety and hunter success will improve with the proposed changes but comments indicate this is due to the bigger issue of total number of people using the area (not just number of hunters or ability to make a reservation). Survey respondents are concerned about how they are treated by nonhunters and the impacts of reservations on having an opportunity to hunt. In addition, the trail user survey is showing that hikers and bikers may respond to more information about hunting by choosing to recreate in other areas of the park.

Given the survey results and CPW staff desire to begin reservations, limit number of hunters per day and increase communications the proposal should move forward with continued effort to 1) develop and implement a strategic communications plan and 2) work to increase functionality with HRS in the coming years.

The communications plan will include a message/media/audience matrix to clearly show how and who will be reached in the coming months. Potential media include sandwich boards at trailheads, social media, eNews and press releases. Some example messages (developed based on survey comments and park staff experience) may include:

- Why reservations?
 - not to reduce the number of hunters
 - to work towards eliminating Visitor Center logbook
 - guaranteed entry before leaving home – this is a busy front range park
 - do not take away opportunity from other hunters -use or cancel your reservations
- More awareness for all users of the multiuse nature of this park
 - Where and when hunting occurs in the park

- if you will recreate in hunting area you should consider wearing bright colors, avoiding dawn and dusk, keeping your dog on leash (already required)
- Alternatives for desired hike/ride – where else in the park could you find a similar trail
- Why is there hunting in a State Park?
- Courtesy towards other users
- How GGCSP & all State Parks are funded
- Follow up reports/statistics as these changes are implemented

GGCSP will be the first park to use HRS for big game. There are some similarities with parks using HRS for waterfowl blinds but GGCSP is a much larger park with many entrances making tracking reservations more challenging. HRS does not currently track if people show up or harvest numbers. The desire to eliminate signing in at the Visitor Center and to keep hunters accountable for using their reservations mean some level of staff resources will need to be used to accomplish this. Logbooks could be placed at Reverends Ridge, Knotts Creek and Bridge Creek (or other appropriate trailheads) but that still requires crosschecking with HRS and infrastructure to maintain. Another option would be similar to checking licenses – if asked in the field a hunter would need to show proof they have a reservation or their information would be collected for a crosscheck later. This would require patrols for compliance and crosschecks with HRS. Hopefully over time HRS will have a way to accommodate check-ins and harvest data. CPW staff can continue to discuss creative options for the short-term.

Attention Hunters!

We hope you are excited for fall and the hunting season!

We are asking for your input on a few potential changes to Golden Gate Canyon State Park's hunting program that would begin in Fall 2022.

Use the link or QR code below for more information and a short survey. The survey will be open until September 30, 2021.

<https://bit.ly/37Ty0aH>





Colorado Parks and Wildlife is considering changes to the hunting program on the Jefferson County portion of Golden Gate Canyon State Park (GGCSP). CPW wants to improve the hunting experience and protect safety for all park visitors. The proposed changes would become effective in September 2022 and include:

- Reduce the number of hunters per day from 35 to 15. Very few days (~8%) have more than 15 hunters sign-in.
- Require **free** reservations for each day you hunt at GGCSP. There would be no limit on the number of days a hunter can make reservations. Reservations would be available ahead of time (14 days or less for small game and 45 days or less for big game) online or by phone. A valid hunting license for the appropriate season would be required.
- Increase communication with hunters and non-hunters (signage at trailheads, discussions with individuals, social media, etc.) regarding multiple recreation opportunities in the same area.

We appreciate your input on the potential changes!

Q1. Why do you hunt? Please select all that apply.

- To spend time in nature
- To harvest meat
- To spend time with friends and family
- To spend time in solitude
- Support Colorado's economy
- Help manage wildlife populations
- Other:

Q2. Why do you chose to hunt at Golden Gate Canyon State Park? Please select all that apply.

- Proximity to home
- Opportunity to hunt on a State Park
- The park is easily accessible for hunting via parking and trails
- Provides revenue to CPW
- Quality hunting experience
- No permits or lotteries to gain access
- Other:

Q3. While hunting at Golden Gate Canyon State Park what has most impacted your experience (positively or negatively)?

Q4. To what degree do you disagree or agree with the following statements (select one response per statement):

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
A free reservation requirement would not affect my likelihood of hunting at Golden Gate.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The proposed changes will increase hunting success.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The proposed changes will increase public safety.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The proposed changes will improve the hunt experience.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q5. Please explain your responses in Q4 and/or provide any additional comments you wish to share.

Thank you for your response!

In November 2021 and January 2022, the Parks and Wildlife Commission will determine if regulations should be changed to require reservations for hunting the Jefferson County portion of Golden Gate Canyon State Park. You can sign up to receive email notifications about Commission meetings and the Parks and Wildlife rulemaking process here: [Colorado Parks and Wildlife Email Updates](#). Please complete the Email Updates form and select 'Parks and Wildlife Commission'. You may unsubscribe from email updates at any time.