

ISSUES SUBMITTAL FORM

Date: 08/08/2025

ISSUE: Should CPW increase the search and rescue fee for Backcountry search and rescue?
DISCUSSION (FACTS AND FIGURES, EXPLANATION OF ISSUE):

Backcountry Search and Rescue (BSAR) operations and funding have been provided, to a large extent, by the county sheriffs throughout Colorado, volunteer search and rescue groups (working under the authority of the local sheriff), Colorado Search and Rescue Association (CSAR), and other various state and federal entities (Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Colorado Avalanche Information Center, Colorado Department of Public Safety, National Park Service, etc).

Since 1987, a \$0.25 surcharge has been included on every hunting and fishing license sold in Colorado, and every snowmobile, OHV and boat registration through CPW to fund the BSAR fund. In 2021, Senate Bill 21-245 (Keep Colorado Wild Act) established the fund intended to allocate up to \$2.5 million annually for BSAR operations and equipment generated by CPW parks visitors. Additionally, in 2022, Senate Bill 22-168 transferred the BSAR program from the Department of Local Affairs to Colorado Parks and Wildlife with an allocated \$1 million to CPW to help bridge BSAR funding until KCW money was available. This funding has been used to support the programmatic transfer from the Department of Local Affairs to Colorado Parks and Wildlife and to support recommendations from the 2021 BSAR Study.

For fiscal year 2025, the BSAR fund was funded by approximately \$77,000 from snowmobiles and OHVs registrations, \$149,000 from hunting and fishing licenses, \$100,000 from CORSAR cards, and \$2.5 million from the Keep Colorado Wild pass. These funds have been used to; cover BSAR administrative costs, to reimburse BSAR teams for costs incurred during incident response, and to purchase training and equipment for County BSAR teams.

Based on DOLA and CPW incident reports received from counties, the number of incidents requiring search and rescue team activation has doubled since 2009. In addition, the number of highly challenging, risky rescues is also steadily increasing. Teams are working tirelessly to recruit and train highly skilled, capable search and rescue responders needed to meet the current demand.

Under current law, CPW has one opportunity to increase the SAR fees on licenses and registrations to a base level, after which the SAR fee can only be adjusted by CPI.

CPW is recommending an increase in the BSAR fee to \$1.25, and to adjust it with CPI moving forward. The fee increase considers inflation since 1987 and the dramatic increase in the number of search and rescue incident responses over the last fifteen years.

Revenue generated from the recommended fee increase is estimated at \$2 million annually. These funds would be added to existing funds to reimburse BSAR teams for costs incurred during incident response, for SAR equipment, and for the purchase of SAR training services.

STATE LAW REQUIRES CPW TO SOLICIT INPUT FROM STAKEHOLDERS THAT MAY BE AFFECTED POSITIVELY OR NEGATIVELY BY THE PROPOSED RULES. THE FOLLOWING STAKEHOLDERS HAVE BEEN ADVISED OF AND INVITED TO PROVIDE INPUT ON THE REGULATORY CHANGES PROPOSED IN THIS ISSUE PAPER:

***IT IS ASSUMED THAT ALL NECESSARY INTERNAL PARTIES HAVE BEEN NOTIFIED*.**

Colorado Snowmobile Association (CSA) and the Colorado Off Highway Vehicle Coalition (COHVCO) - Members of both organizations were surveyed by their organizational leadership to find a search and rescue agreeable surcharge. Members, in general, were satisfied to pay over \$2.00 for the

surcharge. CPW engaged CSA leadership and representatives at their meeting in Salida on May 17, 2025. CPW received positive support for the fee increase. An engagement meeting was held virtually by Zoom on 6/23/2025 with intentions to address motorcycle, OHV, snow and boating communities. Subsequently, several organizations posted social media posts soliciting feedback on the surcharge. Responses were overwhelmingly positive for the increase and suggested consideration of higher rates.

Sportsperson’s Roundtable - March 2025 – the group generally expressed positive support for search and rescue and for a \$1.25 search and rescue surcharge. Some concerns were raised about the general cost increases. One representative suggested an annual cap on fees or other ways to limit the total annual surcharges an individual will pay if purchasing a large number of products. An email received from a representative after the Sportsperson’s Roundtable expressed disfavor with any increases by suggesting anglers and hunters are unfairly and inequitably supporting BSAR in relation to the number of hunter/angler search and rescue responses. He opined that funding should come from other types of recreationalist like hikers, mountain bikers, non-motorized boaters, etc..

Colorado Wildlife Council – February 2025 – Generally expressed positive support with a \$1.00 increase and expressed appreciation for the work of search and rescue to keep CO safe.

County Sheriffs of Colorado (CSOC) - CSOC has expressed agreement and support with the BSAR surcharge increases during discussions with CSOC representatives on the BSAR Council.

Colorado Search and Rescue Association (CSAR) - CSAR has expressed agreement with BSAR surcharge increases on all licenses and registrations during discussions with CSAR representatives on the BSAR Council.

A public notice of the changes was added to the Engage CPW Webpage on June 2025 with instructions to provide the commission with any comments.

ALTERNATIVES: (POSSIBLE OUTCOMES or POSSIBLE REGULATIONS):

1. **Preferred Alternative:** Adopt a proposed increase of the Backcountry Search and Rescue surcharge from \$0.25 to \$1.25 on every license and registration, sold by CPW (a baseline increase corresponding to the dramatic increases SAR response with an approximate increase in inflation from 1987 to June 2025) and continue subsequent adjustments in alignment with the Consumer Price Index.

Chapter P-7: Passes, Permits, and Registrations

Article I - GENERAL PROVISIONS AND FEES RELATING TO PASSES, PERMITS AND REGISTRATIONS

#709 - REGISTRATION FEE SCHEDULE

5. Backcountry Search and Rescue Fee for annual off-highway vehicle, snowmobile and vessel registration \$1.25

Chapter W-0- General Provisions

Appendix F - Wildlife License and Pass Prices (1) Resident and nonresident licenses

**Plus additional surcharge of \$1.50 for the Wildlife Management Public Education Fund and ~~\$0.25~~\$1.25 for the Backcountry Search and Rescue Fund.

2. **Alternative 2: Status Quo.** Price remains at \$0.25.

Issue Raised by: Ty Petersburg- Assistant Director of Field Services

	Perry Boydston – BSAR Program Manager	
Author of the issue paper (if different than person raising the issue):		
CC:		
APPROVED FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION BY:	Ty Petersburg	
REQUIRES NEW SPACE IN THE BROCHURE?	NO	
ARE ADEQUATE STAFF AND FUNDING RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO IMPLEMENT?	YES	
REGION, BRANCH, OR SECTION LEADING IMPLEMENTATION	Field Services, I&E	
RECOMMENDED FOR CONSENT AGENDA?	NO	