



COLORADO WILDLIFE COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes: Colorado Wildlife Council

March 18, 2026

10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. ~ In-Person

Members Present:

Anderson, Ehrhart-Gemmill, Gray-Bertuglia, Gwinn, Kitching, Twinem, Williams

Members Absent:

Weyand

Also in Attendance:

Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW)/State: Megan Schulz-Collins, Rebecca Ferrell, Patricia Nord, Erik Mason

R&R Partners: Patrick Buller, Angela Suganuma, Sophie Haws, Paul Smith, Jennifer Harlan, Henry Ernaut, Adam Felder, Adam Cook

Public: Campbell Levy, Camille Ziccardi, Melisa Pert

Call to Order / Introductions – Kitching

- Called the meeting to order.

Key Decisions and Actions:

Approve Minutes - February CWC & H/A Subcommittee

- A request was made to edit the February CWC minutes to reflect the council's request for influencer metrics for each individual influencer from R&R.

Motion:

Motion to approve the minutes with the requested edit was made by Williams, seconded by Anderson, and approved unanimously.

Letter from Director Clellan

- The remarks were delivered on behalf of the director, who thanked members for their service and reaffirmed CPW's commitment to hunting and angling as wildlife management tools.

R&R Presentation

Target Audience Review:

- R&R recapped the "Adventurous Environmentalist" and "Hunter Adjacent" target segments.
- Approval for legal hunting is at its highest since 2021 (80%+). The "Supporting Science in the Wild" campaign was cited as a key factor in the defeat of Proposition 127, with "trust in experts" being the top reason voters rejected the initiative.

R&R Action Item: It was requested that R&R find the last completed competitive analysis of the Michigan Wildlife Council.

Initial FY26 Campaign Results:

R&R discussed that the campaign's effective messaging relies on trusted messengers, communication of hunting rules and regulations, and personal impacts. Messaging that is ineffective or should be avoided includes glorifying hunters or focusing on topics such as population control, predator control, and disease. Effective thematic messages include balance, wildlife, resources, natural, and coexistence.

Chosen campaign topics emphasized the following:

- Moral Message: Stating that hunting is regulated and poaching is illegal.
- Conservation Success Stories: Highlighting growing populations, such as the world's largest elk population.
- Emotional Species: Focusing on Elk, Moose, and Bighorn Sheep.
- Surprising Benefits: Showcasing how hunting helps Colorado through wildlife passes, re-seeding, researching bats/mosquitoes, and wildlife rescues.
- Unique Delivery: Using elk hunter graphics, a mural, and statues to deliver the message.

R&R Action Item: Follow up on the current location/status of the elk and fish statues at the Fort Collins Mall.

FY25/26 Highlights Report:

- Google Demand Generation: The click rate was 4.79%, significantly higher than the benchmark CTR of 1.55%.
- YouTube Video/Audio: Achieved a 93% Video Completion Rate (VCR) against a 90% benchmark.
- Streaming TV: Reported a 98.5% VCR, surpassing the 90–96% VCR benchmark range.
- TikTok: Combined VCR was 55%. Specific VCRs were 25.52% for 6-second videos and 7.57% for 15-second videos.

Email Performance Review:

- Email program metrics remain stable and aligned with industry standards for quarterly newsletters.
- Open Rates: Reported as strong, indicating high brand trust and subject line relevance.
- Click-Through Rates (CTR): Lower than average, but noted as a byproduct of the long-form content strategy. Users are consuming the necessary information directly within the email rather than clicking through to the website.

Social Media Performance Review:

- Gained over 760 new followers, with the vast majority coming from the newly launched TikTok account.

- Total impressions exceeded 313,000, a significant year-over-year increase.
- Over 6,000 total engagements recorded.
- Engagement rate averaged 2.12%. While lower than the previous year (4%), it remains above the categorical average for this type of conservation content.

Motion:

Motion to approve the presented TikTok videos for use made by Williams, seconded by Gwinn, and approved unanimously.

Webpage Performance Review:

- Traffic is healthy (20k–40k sessions during campaigns), but engagement rates are low (15%–23%). This is attributed to the site's single-page nature.

Rockies Partnership:

- The chosen promotional day is Wednesday, September 16th, against the Padres.
- R&R Partners was directed to resend the creative to the Rockies for official approval and present it at the next council meeting.
- The Council requested to see the design, budget, and pricing options for the promotional bags and belt buckles.

R&R Action Item: R&R is to inquire with the Rockies about a discounted ticket price for fans who present a hunting and fishing license. This concept could be integrated with the National Hunting and Fishing Day (September 26th) to officially sponsor the governor's holiday.

Treasurers Report

For the March 18, 2026, Colorado Wildlife Council Treasurer Report for FY26, the beginning fund balance for FY26 is \$2.051 million. Revenue and expenses span from July 1, 2025, to March 3, 2025. Total revenue is \$1,149,32 from the Wildlife Education Fund Surcharge and interest income. Total expenditures are \$2,180,741 from travel, advertising, printing, purchased services, supplies, fees, dues and memberships, & official functions. The revenue and expenditures impact on the fund balance is \$524,170. The current ending fund balance is \$1.019 million.

FY27 Budget Review & Recommendations - Patricia Nord

- Hunting and fishing license sales peaked in FY21 and have since flattened. Current volume remains steady at approximately 1.7 million units annually.
- Revenue from the Wildlife Council surcharge has remained flat at roughly \$2.5 million per year. Because the fee is a static dollar amount (\$1.50), revenue does not increase with inflation or license price hikes unless the statute is changed.
- The fund earns 1%–3% interest monthly. However, as the total fund balance decreases, the dollar amount generated from interest is also declining.
- There is an annual deficit of \$434,000–\$463,000 between collections and historical spending levels.
- Patricia presented three "Reserve Floor" options (10%, 20%, or 30%). She suggested a 10% floor (\$256,000) might be sufficient due to the high predictability of license revenue.
- Strategic Options:
 - Statute Change: Increasing the \$1.50 cap requires a legislative bill. This carries the risk of opening up the statute to unwanted external changes or public opposition.
 - Gifts/Grants: The fund can legally accept donations, but the administrative legwork may outweigh the financial return.
 - Contract Reduction: The Council has already reduced the FY27 marketing contract to \$2.5 million to align with incoming revenue.
 - Stair-stepping: The recommended approach is to gradually reduce spending to find a sustainable floor rather than a hard stop later.

Michigan Wildlife Council Update

The Council reviewed data from Michigan, the only state with a parallel Wildlife Council structure, to benchmark Colorado's performance and public sentiment.

- Michigan shows 75% approval for hunting and 82% for fishing, mirroring Colorado's high support levels.
- Public support is strongest when hunting is framed as a tool for food and nature/wildlife balance.
- Negative sentiment is tied to trophy hunting, "sport/challenge" motivations, and negative perceptions of state agencies.

Hunter & Angler Outreach Update - Ehrhart-Gemmill

FY26 Strategy, Goals, Data, & Work Review:

- The subcommittee tracks CWC familiarity through annual tracker surveys:
 - Hunters: Familiarity increased from 58% (2023) to 78% (2024), with a reported 90% in 2025 (note: small sample size for 2025).
 - Anglers: Familiarity increased from 51% (2023) to 60% (2024), hitting 92% in 2025.
 - Data shows that hunters/anglers are more likely to engage by speaking with friends/family or attending events than by volunteering.
- The council reviewed the subcommittee's priorities: securing sponsorships, creating community events, and coordinating the Conservationist of the Year Award.

Set FY27 Goals & Tactics

- Sponsorship Consistency: Discussion regarding the inconsistency of fulfillment at partner banquets (e.g., videos not playing, logos missing).
 - There is a desire to develop a standardized Sponsorship Packet with mandatory requirements rather than conforming to partner packages.
- Tourism Alignment: Interest in a relationship with the Colorado Tourism Office.
 - The Council discussed how these relationships must be mutually beneficial; the Council currently promotes tourism, but needs to see tourism messaging highlighting how fees support "Science in the Wild."

Sportsman Day at the Capitol Proposal

- The council reviewed a \$500 sponsorship of the Sportsman Day at the Capitol.

Motion:

Gwinn moved to approve the \$500 sponsorship of Sportsman Day at the Capitol, seconded by Twinem, and the motion was approved unanimously.

CWC Operations & Agency Transition Discussion - Schulz-Collins

- Creative Strategy & Performance
 - Members noted that while the research foundation was solid, the creative executions felt misaligned or lacked a Colorado feel.

- The Council highlighted the need for the agency to implement a more rigorous internal review process to prevent basic errors.
- There is a strong desire for the campaign to be more nimble, shifting messaging to reflect real-time conditions.
- The Council prefers unscripted, field-based content over highly polished broadcast ads to better build trust with the public.
- Operational Efficiency
 - A one-week minimum was set for Council review of all materials to accommodate busy schedules and varying internet access.
 - Emails to the Council should be categorized (e.g., "Urgent" vs. "Routine") to help members prioritize feedback.
- Success Metrics & Data Integration
 - Raw impressions are viewed as less valuable than data showing sentiment shifts and behavior change.
 - The Council seeks to better integrate CPW internal data to validate marketing impact.

The Science of What Makes People Care

- The Council reviewed five principles for behavior change:
 - Audience-First: Lead with the audience's values, not the agency's message.
 - Show, Don't Tell: Use visual language and authentic imagery over abstract concepts.
 - Positive Emotion: Focus on Pride and Awe rather than guilt or sentimentality.
 - Visible Solutions: Use authentic storytelling (e.g., "Day in the Life").
 - Meaningful CTAs: Awareness is insufficient; people need a clear path to action.
- The Council discussed transitioning from "asking the public to refrain from interfering" to providing "positive funnel" actions (e.g., inviting hikers and hunters to a joint trail cleanup).

CWC Messaging Activity - Schulz-Collins

The Council engaged in a series of interactive exercises to align on the future messaging of their campaigns:

- Message Assessment: Members identified a need to move away from exclusively cute/fuzzy animal imagery and defensive tones. Instead, they want to take more creative risks and highlight the human benefits of the outdoors, such as mental health and family legacy.

- Identity Mapping: The Council defined its desired brand as authentic and approachable stewardship. They explicitly rejected any tone that feels like propaganda, bureaucratic, or out-of-touch with everyday Coloradans.
- Finding Common Ground: A Bridge Activity determined that Stewardship is the most effective shared value to connect hunters/anglers with general hikers and outdoor enthusiasts.
- Activation: The group reached a consensus that future campaigns must move beyond mere awareness and provide clear Calls to Action (CTAs) that invite the public to participate in conservation efforts.

Open Discussion & Questions

- None.

Public Comment

- None.

Meeting Adjourned

Motion:

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.



COLORADO WILDLIFE COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes: Colorado Wildlife Council

March 19, 2026

9:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. ~ In-Person

Members Present:

Anderson, Ehrhart-Gemmill, Gray-Bertuglia, Gwinn, Kitching, Twinem, Weyand, Williams

Members Absent:

None.

Also in Attendance:

Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW)/State: Megan Schulz-Collins, Rebecca Ferrell

Public: Campbell Levy, Camille Ziccardi, Melisa Pert

Call to Order / Introductions – Kitching

- Called the meeting to order.

Key Decisions and Actions:

Intro to Karsh

- The new Karsh Hagan team and the high points of their proposal were introduced to the overall Council.
 - The agency will host a Brand Accelerator workshop to define a unified goal for the next campaign.
 - Implementation of behavioral ROI dashboards and custom metrics to measure sentiment shifts instead of just impressions.
 - The foundation and research phase starts in July; new creative concepts are expected by August.
 - Proposed FY27 spend is set at \$2.5M, with formal approval scheduled for July.

Subcommittee Assignments Review

The council reviewed subcommittee assignments and work:

Social Media Subcommittee:

- Member Assignments: Williams, Twinem, & Kitching
- Focus: Reviewing quarterly calendars and ad hoc posts.

Social Influencer Subcommittee:

- Member Assignments: Weyand, Anderson, Twinem, & Kitching
- Focus: Review quarterly content provided by social media influencers.

Creative Production Subcommittee:

- Member Assignments: Bertuglia, Twinem, Kitching, & Ehrhart-Gemmill
- Focus: Review new creative concepts and approvals needed for various projects throughout the year.

Quarterly Newsletter Subcommittee:

- Member Assignments: Weyand, Kitching, & Ehrhart-Gemmill
- Focus: Reviewing quarterly newsletter content for accuracy and topics.

Hunter & Angler Subcommittee:

- Member Assignments: Weyand, Kitching, Gwinn & Ehrhart-Gemmill
- Focus: focusing on creative ways to spread the “Science in the Wild” messaging to the Hunter and Angler groups.

Motion:

Gwinn motioned to allow others to join the Hunter & Angler subcommittee at any time to create a quorum, seconded by Twinem, and approved unanimously.

Operational Plan Timeline

- The council discussed the timeline for the upcoming FY27 Operational Plan:
 - April: Initial drafting of the plan; secondary review of last year’s goals to ensure continuity.
 - May – June: Internal draft review and final input from outgoing agency partners.
 - July – August: Finalization of the Karsh-specific budget and strategic components.
 - August: Formal approval and final submission of the Operational Plan.

Operational Plan Discussion

FY26-27 Budget Approval:

- The Council approved a consolidated budget for the next fiscal year, prioritizing fiscal responsibility and stabilization of the fund balance.
 - Total Approved Budget: \$2,730,000
 - Marketing Contract: \$2,500,000
 - Hunter Angler Subcommittee: \$200,000
 - Operations/Administration: \$30,000
- Fiscal Strategy: By setting the budget below \$2.8M, the Council aims to slow the negative trend of the reserve fund while remaining within its \$3M spending authority.

Motion:

Moved by Williams to approve the above budget, seconded by Anderson; motion carried unanimously.

Nate Zelensky Proposal:

- Total Cost: \$32,000 (Increased from \$15k to include high-visibility events).
- Key Activations:
 - Fall Arena Activation: Tabling at Colorado Avalanche games.
 - National Western Stock Show: Parade float and high-visibility appearance.
 - Leaf Peeping Trail Talks: Continuing the successful Kenosha Pass education program.

Motion:

Williams made a motion to approve moving forward with a Documented Quote. The motion was seconded by Ehrhart-Gemmill and approved unanimously

Goals & Priorities:

- Prioritize a stable transition to the new agency. This includes ensuring continuity of existing messaging to avoid "dark periods" in media while the new partner evaluates long-term strategy.
- While maintaining current momentum, the Council remains open to new creative directions once the foundation is set.
- Increase focus on localized discussions and specific regional issues to ensure the message resonates with diverse Colorado communities.
- Shift toward "Experiential Engagement" and unscripted, field-based messaging. The goal is to move away from "manufactured" ads toward authentic storytelling.
- Maintain flexible delivery in messaging to address real-time public concerns, ensuring that education remains the primary and most effective output.
- Strictly adhere to statutory obligations while ensuring the Council's independent mission is synchronized with broader agency goals.
- Encourage proactive communication between DNR/CPW leadership and the Council to ensure alignment on nested objectives and a shared strategic vision.
- Continue the strategic focus on the Hunter/Angler subcommittee and refine targeted messaging to turn license holders into active ambassadors.
- Retain the commitment to Strategic Public Information. The Council will focus on making science accessible to the public to support professional wildlife management.

Open Discussion & Questions

Travel approval:

- Kitching requested approval for the Parks and Wildlife Commission meeting in June.

Motion:

Gwinn moved to approve; Kitchings May travel to the commission meeting, seconded by Williams, and approved unanimously.

Public Comment

None.

Meeting Adjourned

Motion:

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.