



Policy and Planning  
6060 Broadway  
Denver, CO 80216

**To: Members of the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission**  
**From: Jonathan Boydston, Policy and Engagement Specialist**  
**Date: December 20, 2024**

**Re: Snowmobile Registration and Permit Fees Public Engagement**

## Background

Snowmobiles that are operated on public land or trails in Colorado must be registered with Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW). Resident users are required to register the snowmobile and nonresidents must purchase a permit. Snowmobile registration and permit fees, which are currently \$30.25 for residents and nonresidents, were last increased in 2007. CPW has heard suggestions to increase snowmobile registration and permit fees from snowmobile users, including from the Colorado Snowmobile Association. Registration and permit fees fund snowmobile related projects including trail grooming, maintenance, and construction. Snowmobile users who have advocated for raising registration and permit fees suggest that the snowmobile program would benefit from additional funding as program expenses such as trail maintenance equipment costs have steadily grown since the last fee increase.

## Public Engagement Process

Prior to developing a staff recommendation on potentially raising registration and permit fees, CPW staff sought input from snowmobile users and other stakeholders. Staff collected both qualitative data on public sentiment about snowmobile fees and program funding, and quantitative data on specific fee levels.

Division staff collaborated with the State Trails Committee to identify possible fee levels to solicit public feedback on. The Trails Committee advises CPW and the Parks and Wildlife Commission on trail programs and funding, including the snowmobile program. Two separate meetings were held with the Trails Committee in September and October. Discussion at the September meeting focused on scoping possible fee levels prior to public engagement. Trails Committee members provided input on appropriate registration and permit fee levels through a facilitated discussion. From that discussion, CPW identified the following fee ranges to use when asking for public input on a potential increase:

- Status Quo (\$30.25)
- \$40-\$49.99
- \$50-\$59.99
- \$60-\$70



CPW notified recent snowmobile registrants and permit purchasers of the potential fee increase and invited them to learn more and share feedback through multiple engagement opportunities. CPW launched an EngageCPW webpage to communicate information and solicit feedback, with an open ‘guestbook’ tool available throughout the public input period in September and October for snowmobile users to share publicly viewable input.

A virtual meeting hosted by CPW at the beginning of the public input period also provided information about the snowmobile program, funding, and registration fees. Virtual meeting attendees responded to polling questions gauging their willingness to pay increased registration fees. Following the introductory virtual meeting, CPW posted the meeting recording on EngageCPW and the polling questions on willingness to pay an increased fee were provided through a survey tool.

Following initial outreach to snowmobile users, the State Trails Committee met again in October to further discuss a potential snowmobile registration and permit fee increase. Members of the public were notified of the Trails Committee meeting and offered the opportunity to provide oral public input during the meeting for CPW staff to consider.

### Input Received on Possible Fee Increase

During the public input period in September and October, 274 individuals responded to the polling questions on EngageCPW and an additional 140 unique comments were submitted through the guestbook tool.

### *Polling Question Results*

Polling question respondents were asked about their snowmobile registration and permit purchase history and their willingness to pay the possible fee levels identified by CPW. Of the 274 responses, 93% (256 individuals) reported purchasing a resident snowmobile registration, and the remaining respondents (7% of total) reported purchasing a nonresident snowmobile permit. When asked about their willingness to pay an increased fee level, 57% of respondents (155 individuals) indicated that they would only be willing to pay the status quo \$30.25 fee. 43% of respondents reported that they would be willing to pay an increased fee, with 27% of total responses preferring the \$40-\$49.99 range, 12% preferring the \$50-\$59.99 range, and only 4% preferring the highest proposed fee range of \$60-\$70.

| <b>Fee Level</b>     | <i>Responses</i> | <i>Percentage</i> |
|----------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Status Quo (\$30.25) | 155              | 56.60%            |
| \$40-\$49.99         | 74               | 27.00%            |
| \$50-\$59.99         | 33               | 12.00%            |
| \$60-\$70            | 12               | 4.40%             |

### *EngageCPW Guestbook Input*

Public feedback shared through the publicly viewable guestbook tool on EngageCPW provided an additional opportunity for snowmobile users to share their perspectives on snowmobiling in Colorado, program funding, and fee levels for resident registration and nonresident permits. Of the 140 total unique comments received, 45% were opposed to a fee increase, 34% were generally supportive of a fee increase, and 17% were neutral.

Respondents opposing a fee increase often cited concerns with equitable trail funding and access. 26% of total comments suggested creating a fee system for other trail users who are not currently required to pay a registration fee. 16% of the responses received were from individuals who do not feel that they benefit from maintained trails and thus should not be charged more. 14% of comments mentioned snowmobile access and infrastructure issues that prevent snowmobile users from using certain trails.

Additionally, a common theme heard in the feedback related to how funds generated through registration and permit fees are used. 20% of total comments received questioned how current fees are spent. Suggestions to provide more information on program expenditures were mentioned by individuals opposing a fee increase as well as by many supporters of a fee increase.

Commenters also suggested new approaches to charging snowmobile registration fees such as varying fee levels depending on the type of snowmobile use. For example, 8% of total comments suggested charging nonresidents a higher fee than residents and 5% of the feedback suggested a higher fee for commercial snowmobile operators. Additionally, 6% of comments raised the idea of a discount for individuals who register multiple snowmobiles or who own antique snowmobiles that are rarely used.

### *State Trails Committee Discussion*

At the Trails Committee's second meeting on this topic in October, committee members considered the possibility of raising registration and permit fees and preliminary feedback received through the public engagement process. The committee discussed major themes shared through the publicly viewable EngageCPW guestbook, including snowmobile access and infrastructure, program expenditures, and future funding needs. Following discussion, the Trails Committee voiced their unanimous support for increasing snowmobile registration and permit fees and asked staff to continue considering public input. Individual committee members suggested possible increased fee levels, but the full committee did not specify a preferred fee level. Five members of the public provided input during the Trails Committee meeting. The committee expressed interest in providing further input once CPW proposed a specific fee level to the Parks and Wildlife Commission and the public responded to that proposal.

**ISSUES SUBMITTAL FORM**

Date: 12/20/2024

**ISSUE: Should snowmobile registration & permit fees be increased?**

**DISCUSSION (FACTS AND FIGURES, EXPLANATION OF ISSUE):**

Background:

Colorado Parks and Wildlife has managed the Snowmobile Program since its inception in 1977. The Snowmobile Program provides funding for winter trail grooming, trail improvements, the Snowmobile Safety Certification Program; it supports the avalanche warning system, and also provides for patrol services to ensure safe snowmobiling and registration compliance and safety. Program funding comes from the sale of snowmobile registrations to residents of Colorado and nonresident snowmobile use permits. Residents and nonresidents who use a snowmobile on publicly owned land in Colorado must register the snowmobile or purchase a permit. Fees collected are deposited in the snowmobile recreation fund.

Registrations and permits are valid for one year from October 1 to September 30 and are issued by agents of the Director of the Division of Parks and Wildlife. To register their snowmobile or receive a permit, the owner must pay a fee in an amount set by the Parks and Wildlife Commission. Registration and permit fees, which are currently \$30 for residents and nonresidents (not including the \$0.25 Backcountry Search and Rescue surcharge), were last increased in 2007. CPW has heard suggestions to increase snowmobile registration and permit fees from some snowmobile users. The attached memo provides more background on the input CPW has heard from snowmobile users on potentially raising registration and permit fees.

**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) which represents the 34 active snowmobile clubs in the state. CPW met with the CSA leadership and members at their quarterly meetings for the last several years and discussed the need to provide more funding from the fund to ensure clubs can continue to perform this work. CSA expressed strong support for a fee increase.

Members of the public who purchased a registration or permit in the last 5 years received emails notifying them of this discussion and inviting them to provide input via the EngageCPW page. Their feedback is summarized in the attached memo.

The Colorado State Recreation Trails Committee, which advises the Parks and Wildlife Commission, were also invited to provide input in two of their public meetings during the fall of 2024. Their feedback is summarized in the attached memo.

**ALTERNATIVES: (POSSIBLE OUTCOMES or POSSIBLE REGULATIONS):**

1. **\*Preferred Alternative\*:** Increase the fee for a resident snowmobile registration and nonresident snowmobile permit to \$45 (not including the \$0.25 backcountry search and rescue surcharge).
2. **Status Quo:** Leave the snowmobile registration and permit fee at \$30 (not including the \$0.25 backcountry search and rescue surcharge). If this alternative is chosen, CPW will work with CSA and

|   |  |
|---|--|
| their snowmobile clubs to gather more information on the current need and refine the proposal for future consideration. |  |
| <b>Issue Raised by:</b>   | Fletcher Jacobs  |
| <b>Author of the issue paper (if different than person raising the issue):</b>  |  |
| <b>CC:</b>  | Jonathan Boydston, Policy and Engagement Specialist; Katie Lanter, Policy and Planning Supervisor; Registrations Unit, Backcountry Search and Rescue Program, Regional Trails Coordinators |
| <b>APPROVED FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION BY:</b>   | Fletcher Jacobs  |
| <b>REQUIRES NEW SPACE IN THE BROCHURE?</b>  | <b>NO</b>  |
| <b>ARE ADEQUATE STAFF AND FUNDING RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO IMPLEMENT?</b>   | <b>YES</b>   |
| <b>REGION, BRANCH, OR SECTION LEADING IMPLEMENTATION</b>  | Outdoor Recreation and Lands   |
| <b>RECOMMENDED FOR CONSENT AGENDA?</b>  | <b>NO</b>  |